

Excalibur

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION—LONDON BRANCH SPRING 1991

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*Yes, Cinderella, you shall go to the Ball, and this will be your magic coach.
This dredging machine was launched on 14 January as part of a campaign to clean up some of
London's most forgotten waterways, the Bow Back Rivers. See the article on pages 5-7*

From the Editor

INTRODUCING EXCALIBUR

Editing a new publication is cause for both excitement and terror. Will I get all the articles I've asked for? (Answer: some of them). Will I end up having to write it all myself? (No, thank goodness). Will the printer's machine be able to read my computer disc? (Something of the sort must have happened or *you* wouldn't be able to read *this*).

But *Excalibur* isn't really new. Two issues came out some time ago under Malcolm Bates' editorship. What's new is that now it will appear regularly. IWA's new, smaller South East Region decided to stop publishing *Windlass* and give the money to Branches for their own magazines.

Nor is *Excalibur* just *Windlass* under new management. It may look similar because for this issue we've used the same printing arrangements: that may or may not continue. *Windlass* was primarily a newsheet for the old South East Region. With six branches to cover it had to devote most of its space to their reports and coming events.

Excalibur has only our own London Branch to report on, although we have a friendly interest in neighbouring Branches and other like-minded groups in and around London. If that means you, please send your news and, particularly, your calendar of future events.

In addition the Branch Committee has asked me to publish articles of general waterways interest. Some, but not all, of these will have a London focus. For this issue the London focus is strong, with articles on the Bow Back Rivers and the Thames Tideway. But waterways enthusiasts don't only take interest in canals and rivers near home. Having been hire-boating twice a year for six years until recently, I saw rather more of the BCN than of the London Canals. Now with our own boat again (look out for *Felis Catus II* and say hello to us), Wendy and I are looking forward to rediscovering London by water.

HOW OFTEN WILL EXCALIBUR APPEAR?

I'm glad you asked that question. The funds available at the moment will only cover two issues a year in this format, which neither I nor the Branch Committee feel is enough. To produce more, we must either do it more cheaply (i.e. poorer physical quality and appearance) or raise extra money by taking

advertisements. But I haven't got time to edit it and to sell advertising space, so a volunteer to take on the latter job would be a godsend. Is anyone out there?

At the moment I'm thinking of another issue sometime around August. Let me know your views about the number of issues per year you'd like, how smartly or cheaply you'd like it produced and what you think about adverts.

OVER TO YOU

For any publication to succeed, it must provide something its readers want. Write and tell me the sort of articles you'd like to read and I'll start looking for people to write them. Even better, send me letters and articles on waterways topics you happen to know something about or hold strong opinions on. The article on pages 11 and 12 arrived out of the blue (thank you Roger!) after a request at a Branch Meeting and happened to slot in well with ideas I already had for this issue. An article on your particular interest might do the same, or might trigger new thoughts for a future issue.

GRAND COMPETITION

Hands up all those who know why we use the title *Excalibur*. Hands down again those who can't think what that's got to do with London. Hm, thought so. Frankly, we used the title 'because it's there'. So we decided to run a competition for our readers' ideas. What we'd like is a title which tells new readers at once that it's something to do with the waterways and something to do with London. Hopefully somebody will think of something a bit more inspired than *London Waterways*!

A member of the Branch Committee has offered to donate a prize (which might well come in a bottle) to the reader who comes up with the name we decide to use. The judges will be Branch Chairman Eric Garland, Vice-President Arthur Farrand Radley, Publicity Officer Marion Waters and your long-suffering Editor who has to live with the end-product. IWA members only are eligible, and entries should be sent to me at the address below by 1 July 1991.

MIKE STEVENS

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From the Branch Chairman: Eric Garland

Welcome to your Branch Newsletter. For many of you this will be your only indication of the changes that have taken place at Region level. We are now part of a much smaller Region, which should ensure that the South East is much better represented on Council. The changes do not stop there, as in two years' time a further split will occur and London will be represented by its own Region.

This is actually a very short period of time in which we will need to decide how best the area should be structured at Branch and Region level. At the moment we hold the biggest non-national annual rally in Canalway Cavalcade, and we have a standing sub-committee, Plan/Nav, looking after our interests, both worthy of Region status. Where we are let down is in the number of active members we are able to muster at meetings and other gatherings. We probably have no more active members from a membership of nearly 2,000 than many Branches with memberships in the regions of 600 or 700.

The reasons why this is so, are probably familiar to most of us. The way ahead is probably more difficult to see. I think that one way forward is to go out to the membership and hold meetings in other areas, and on different days of the week and times of the month. It will be very useful if you will give us some ideas on what you want, a particular venue, for instance, or suggestions for a speaker or subject.

The IWA may not agree with opinions expressed in this magazine but encourages publication as a matter of interest. Nothing printed may be construed as policy or an official announcement unless so stated, otherwise the Association accepts no liability for any matter in the magazine. Although every care is taken with advertising, no responsibility whatsoever can be accepted for any matter advertised.

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From the Region Chairman: Dave Moore

As I type this I can look out of the window and see a pretty but very wintery scene. My garden is under one foot of snow, and yet ironically it is only recently that our Water Board repealed its hosepipe ban, imposed in response to last year's drought. Hopefully this weather will mean the replenishment of all the canal reservoirs, but I know that unless we have a wet summer, restrictions will be inevitable. The solution must now be to obtain new sources of water either from wells or new reservoirs. Water is required for other purposes too and Thames Water is seeking to build a new reservoir in Wiltshire on a site that includes part of the Wilts and Berks Canal. Should BW be looking to build new reservoirs and, perhaps in conjunction with a water authority, provide additional domestic water as well.

The inaugural meeting of the new Thames and South region has taken place (thankfully before the big snow) and their committee is in place. May I wish them and all members in that Region good luck. It has been my privilege to serve you at Council for the past nine years: I hope my efforts on your behalf met with your approval. I will see you one more time at your AGMs to say a personal goodbye: I have many friends and will miss attending your events. I am sure the increased representation at council will benefit the Association.

Congratulations also to the former Amersham section of the old region who have just achieved full Branch status: justification of the battle to create sections.

To return to South East matters: some years ago I asked if there was sufficient interest in reforming the Region Inland Shipping Committee and I was pleasantly surprised by the initial response. Unfortunately, for various reasons, the committee did not get off the ground, but now I have someone who is prepared to ensure that it will. Heather Mitchell is an inland shipping consultant with considerable experience both in this country and in Europe; under her leadership I have great hopes of progress. Many things have changed significantly in the last four years, in particular the demise of the Dock Labour Scheme. I have the basis of a Committee, but if any of those who

offered their services last time are still interested, please get in touch again.

The February Council meeting is being set aside for a discussion of the Association's aims and future. In the beginning the Association was clearly a navigation biased organisation, but in recent years the conservation or "green" lobby has become more active and vocal, and everyone has had to be more conscious of environmental matters. This has led to conflict in some areas and we, like all bodies, have to decide our policy on this issue. Everyone is concerned about the environment, it affects all of us, and it's not just canals; new roads, housing, sea defences, industry are all vital to someone but their effect on someone else's life is not always welcome. Canals were made as navigations and, although the cargoes have changed from coal to holidaymakers, they are essentially still arteries of commerce. The livelihoods of hundreds of people still revolve round them.

Clearly the canal also has many other roles to play, both commercially, as a supplier of water to industry, and recreationally for a variety of purposes. But surely we must always be aware of its primary purpose. As a refuge for wildlife it is one of the most important features in the landscape. One of the joys of exploring the canals, whether on foot or by boat, is the opportunity it offers to observe birds, plants, insects, etc. Somewhere, somehow, all these features must be preserved for all to enjoy, not just our generation but for the future as well. I believe we have a duty to protect and conserve this. Conservation means preservation (*Oxford dictionary*). We are talking about the preservation of part of our history, of something which contributes greatly to the "quality of life" and which gives much enjoyment to many people in many differing ways. I hope this view is shared by our members.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Since writing the above, Dave Moore has retired as Region Chairman. His successor as Region Chairman is David Allison-Beer, former London Branch Secretary. At the London Branch AGM Dave was thanked for his service in the post for the past nine years. We have always felt confident that he would represent the Branch's point of view to Council, even when at times he was simultaneously presenting opposing points of view from other Branches in the Region.



Clearance work at Carpenter's Road Lock, 2-3 March 1991

The Bow Back Rivers

London's Cinderella Waterways

Britain's most-seen waterways map is the title sequence of *Eastenders*. The Thames, Limehouse Cut, Bow Creek and the River Lee are all clearly recognisable. But this well-known map also shows some of London's least known waterways, the Bow Back Rivers.

Much of the Lee Navigation consists of artificial cuts, but the original course of the River Lee (or Lea) still exists. At the tail of Old Ford Lock, the Hackney Cut joins with one branch of the old river to form the section known as the Bow River which goes to Bow Tide Lock, thence to Bow Creek. But this is only one of the channels through which the waters of the Lea reach Bow Creek. Most of these still exist at least in part. They have been navigable and used commercially. All are in a state of neglect, but the first steps are being taken to change that.

Abbey Creek is a fully tidal extension of Bow Creek. The Channelsea River used to flow into it from the Old River Lea, but is now culverted. Part of the Old River Lea, the City Mill river, the Bow Back river and what survives of the Pudding Mill river are kept at the level of the Lee navigation between Old Ford and Bow. The Three Mills Wall river, Waterworks river and Prescott Channel were once semi-tidal, but since the demolition of Prescott Sluice they are once again fully tidal.

HISTORY

The Back Rivers are not well documented. Boyes and Russell give them a couple of pages in *The Canals of Eastern England*. Apart from a story linking them with King Alfred's stranding of the Danish fleet, there are no early references to them. They are not mentioned in the 1767 Act of Parliament which authorised improvements to the Lee Navigation (including the Limehouse and Hackney Cuts) and set tolls.

However, Boyes & Russell say 'Prior to the twentieth century each one of them was used for commercial traffic but by the 1960s only the Channelsea River, the City Mill river and the Bow Back river were carrying any traffic.'

In the 1930s, a joint programme by the West Ham Corporation and the Lee Conservancy Board (with Government funding) made major improvements to the Back Rivers, to improve navigation and drainage and as a job creation scheme. As well as improvements to the channels, this included rebuilding Marshgate (or City Mill) lock (at the 4-way junction of the tidal Three Mills Wall and Waterworks rivers with the non-tidal City Mill and Bow Back rivers), and also of Carpenter's Road Lock on the Old River Lea.

THE BACK RIVERS TODAY

The area was once a hive of industry, and mills abounded. Today there are still functioning industrial sites in some parts, but others are derelict. The non-tidal sections are to some extent still navigable. From time to time intrepid boaters (often led by a group from London WRG in the ex-GUCC narrowboat *Fulbourne*) try to force a passage round the ring of the Old River Lea, City Mill and Bow Back rivers. Whether an attempt succeeds or not seems to depend on luck and circumstances.

Walkers also have a varying fate. Some towpaths are good, some overgrown and some buried in rubbish. The flora are particularly interesting: the usual plants one expects on derelict land, together with garden escapes and some more exotic plants which have arrived as seeds in cargoes from overseas. Some of the flowers have quite unexpected colours because of the chemicals left in the soil by the industries of the past.

City Mill Lock is very easily accessible from Stratford High Street via a footpath opposite Abbey Lane and is worth a visit. Sadly it is in a very derelict state. Since it holds the water level of the Lee navigation, BW must do something about it. We hear that they plan to stank it off, but in a way that retains the possibility of future restoration.

Carpenter's Road lock was, until recently, accessible only via the towpath of the Old River Lea, but can now once again be reached from Carpenter's Road itself. It is interesting for its radial gates.

THE THREE MILLS

The most important site on the Back Rivers to an industrial archaeologist is Three Mills, at the head of Bow Creek. Of the Three Mills in its name, one was a windmill and no longer exists. The other two were tide mills and remain, although not currently in working order. The Clock Mill is the more attractive of the two, and was restored and converted to offices some years ago for the then occupiers of the site, the wine merchants Hedges and Butler. The House Mill is the biggest tide mill in Britain and is currently undergoing restoration, although the eventual target of returning it to working order is a long way off. (*We may have an article in a future edition*).

The purpose of Prescott Sluice was to impound the tide in the Prescott Channel, Three Mills Wall and Waterworks rivers so that the water was available to work the tide mills beyond the natural period of the ebb. Thus the mills could be worked for almost 24 hours a day.

Hedges and Butler have now left Three Mills, which must make the future of this important site distinctly uncertain. It is to be hoped that some positive and sympathetic development will be forthcoming rather than either abandonment and

decay or the sort of inappropriate development that has happened at some other important sites, like Gas Street Basin.

THE GOOD NEWS

Elsewhere on the Back Rivers the news is more encouraging. The local community has begun to show an interest in cleaning them up, and work of real value is going on.

A clearance project is organised by the Borough of Newham in conjunction with British Waterways and a number of local industrial concerns, most notably Kesslers International whose works are on the banks of the Waterworks River. Areas of the bank are being cleared and turfed, the river bed cleared of rubbish and lifebuoys installed.

The scheme was launched on 14 July 1990 by the Deputy Mayor of Newham, Councillor Amarjit Singh. Volunteer labour was provided from the beginning by local Scout Troops and schools. Pupils from Eastlee Community School and Brampton Manor Secondary School were working on the site when it was visited on 26 September by David Trippier MP, then junior Environment minister.

Shortly afterwards London IWA members joined local groups for a working weekend as their contribution to IWA's national 'Canal Clear-up' weekend (20-21 October). A team of 50 volunteers on this occasion made a real impression on the job. Work has now expanded beyond the immediate vicinity of Kesslers' site and some ten miles of river and towpath will eventually be involved. Some schools have adopted sections of the towpath to do work that not only improves the environment but also ties in with the National Curriculum.

CINDERELLA'S COACH

On 15 November the project received the welcome news that through the City Action Team, Government funding had been granted to hire a 'Watermaster' excavation machine for a period. This made it possible to clear rubbish from the rivers very much quicker than by manual methods, and to move the volunteers on to other parts of the job. The machine was launched on the Waterworks River on 14 January (*see front cover picture*) by Tony Banks MP, who broke a bottle of champagne over it (at the second attempt) and christened it *River of Hope*.

A couple of weeks later, *River of Hope*, driven by Eddie O'Dowd, recovered a briefcase and other property which had just been stolen from a car and dumped in the river.

A BIG DIG

The biggest 'dig' yet on the project was over the weekend of 2/3 March, when London WRG, KESCRG and BITM joined local Scout Troops and schools to make a team of 130 and extend work to

new sites. The WRG groups concentrated their efforts at Carpenters Road Lock. A start was made on clearing the lock chamber, but more work needs doing and will require heavier equipment than was available at the time. Towpaths in the vicinity were cleared and a set of steps built to re-establish access. By the end of the weekend local ramblers, cyclists, anglers and gongoozlers had discovered and were using the new access to the lock.

Scout groups cleared about eighty yards of towpath on a section of the City Mill River popular with anglers. Pupils from Plashet Senior Girls School cleared weeds and rubbish from their adopted section of towpath.

WHITHER THE BACK RIVERS

Much has been achieved already, and much is planned for the future. IWA's Restoration Committee has added the Back Rivers to its official catalogue of restoration projects. But the real questions lie with the amount of derelict land on their banks. Once the current recession is over, this land, close to the City, and served by a number of railway lines and the A11, could be prime development land. Will development help or damage the waterside environment? Will it turn its back on the water? Will it look on the water as a 'feature' to be treated purely cosmetically? Or will it bring some use back to the Back Rivers: either pleasure or commercial

navigation? It's tempting to say "wait and see", but that won't help. We need to be active now, making the Back Rivers better known, supporting the work that has begun, campaigning for their future and creating a climate of public opinion that will enable them to become usable and used navigations when the chance presents itself.

I became fascinated with them in 1983, on a walk led by David Wood as part of the IWA National Waterways Fortnight. I explored them more fully in preparation for the Three Mills Rally in 1987. Go and see them for yourself; you'll see the fascination, and the potential.

MIKE STEVENS

REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Historical information from "The Canals of Eastern England" by John Boyes & Ronald Russell (David & Charles, 1977).

Information on the clearance project provided by Terry Staples, Road and Water Safety Officer, London Borough of Newham, from whom further details can be obtained by phoning 081-472 1430.

Photos by Norman Smith, Newham Council Technical Services.



25th Newham West Scouts at the launch of the clearance scheme at Waterworks River, 14 July 1990.

On the Metreau

News and Gossip of London's Waterways

BRANCH COMMITTEE CHANGES

Two members of IWA London Branch Committee stood down at this year's AGM in March, but they'll both still be around. David Allison-Beer retired as Branch Secretary to give more time to his other IWA work at Regional and national level. Dave Greatorex also retired from the Committee but will continue to run the Branch 200 Club, which this year has raised over £800 towards the Branch's running expenses. We are grateful to them both for their work for the branch over a number of years.

Marcia Davies returns to the Committee after a gap and has been elected the new Branch Secretary. She is a former Minutes Secretary of the Committee. Tim George was also elected to the Committee. He has already worked for the Branch as one of the guides on the Regent's Canal walks.

YOU TOO COULD BE ON PAGE 3!

Because of the decision made last year to increase the maximum size of the Committee from 12 to 15 there are still three vacancies to which willing volunteers could be co-opted until next year's AGM. A full list of Officers and Committee is on page 3.

LIMEHOUSE DETOUR

A new road is being built under Limehouse Basin. While the current stage of the work is in progress, there is no access to the Basin from the Regent's Canal through Commercial Road lock. London Branch Navigation Officer Ron Bingham advises boaters not to be put off by misleading BW notices which say that the alternative route is via Bow Creek. While that rather long detour is available for those who fancy it, the much easier route via the Hertford Union and Limehouse Cut is also open—and Limehouse Cut has been dredged.

ADOPT A TOWPATH

Have you thought of adopting your own length of towpath? The Branch is keen to persuade people to do so. Volunteers will be asked to walk their section regularly and report to the Branch Committee any problems (blockages, vandalism etc) they come across and any notices of future canalside developments.

You won't be asked to approach any riparian owners or take up any planning issues (unless you feel inclined to); that will be the task of the Branch Committee and its Planning and Navigation Committee.

The Branch area includes the Grand Union (from Brentford to Rickmansworth), the Paddington Arm, the Regent's Canal, the Lee Navigation (from Bow Locks to Waltham Town Lock) and the Bow Back Rivers. This has been divided into 33 sections and we hope to find a volunteer for each.

Details of the scheme are in a leaflet available from:

Tim Lewis
5 Herongate Road
Wanstead E12 5EJ
Telephone 081-530 7926

WHO'S FOR PRESIDENT?

Narrowboat *President* is the only remaining member of the old FMC fleet of steamers to have been restored to steam power. She is owned jointly by the Black Country Museum and the Borough of Dudley and will be well-known to many of our readers. Unfortunately she will be unable in 1991 to repeat last year's welcome visit to Canalway Cavalcade because of a commitment at her home base, but she will be in London a few weeks later.

At 7pm on Thursday 23 May she will leave City Road Basin, FMC's London base, to re-create the sort of fly-run for which the FMC steamers were used in their heyday 80 years ago. Working non-stop (but *not* breaking any speed limits or stealing any locks), she aims to complete the 105 miles and 95 locks to Braunston in 50 hours, compared with 38 hours in her working days.

Supporters are invited to sponsor the effort in aid of the continued preservation of the boat and of the 'Waterways for All' campaign.

Details are available from:

Fly-Run HQ
Thrift House
42 Admiral's Walk
Hoddesdon, Herts, EN11 8AG
Telephone 0992-466180

GOING TO THE NATIONAL?

If you're planning to go to this year's IWA National Waterways Festival at Windmill End, Dudley (24-26 August), aren't going by boat and need to find somewhere to stay, then Kingdom Tours will be able to help you. As in recent years they offer a service offering accommodation at a reasonable price, out of which a donation goes to IWA. This year they offer accommodation at the Station Hotel and Ward Arms Hotel (both in Dudley) and, more cheaply, on the Dudley Campus of Wolverhampton Polytechnic.

For those wanting to make a day visit to the National, the same company are running a bus trip on Sunday 25 August from Tring, picking up at Aylesbury, Lower Heyford, and Banbury. Enquiries for either service to:

Kingdom Tours
29 Kingsbury
Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 2JA
Telephone 0296-433999

ANY OLD STAMPS?

Green Shield, Co-op, Blue Chip, Pink, Look, Cash, Premier Gold, Supersave, Nationwide, and all other trading stamps; Texaco, Gulf, Mobil, Shell, BP, Esso, Fina, Elf, Heron, Total, Burmah and all types of petrol vouchers; Air Miles, cigarette coupons, aluminium can and ring-pulls, cigarette cards and all denominations of used postage stamps. Most of us throw these away every day. Don't! They can all be turned into cash for the waterways movement by sending them to:

WRG/IWA Charity Bank
6 Spa Lane, Hinckley
Leics, LE10 1BJ

Since 1988, the Charity Bank has raised over £3,500. In 1990 it set a target of £1,250 and actually raised £2,050. Its target for 1991 is £2,250. Let's help them beat it.

CLANDESTINE RENDEZVOUS?

Passers-by in Horseferry Road, Westminster, late one evening last Summer may have been surprised to see IWA London Branch Chairman Eric Garland transferring a large dustbin from a WRG van to the boot of the Lord Mayor's limousine outside a Public House. "Why?", you probably ask, and "What was in it?" Hint: senders of the most ingenious explanations will have the honour of clearing up after this year's Canalway Cavalcade.

THE NORTH CIRCULAR ROAD AQUEDUCT

The North Circular Road is due to be widened, which means that the aqueduct taking the Paddington Arm across it will need to be rebuilt. Quite a long time ago, evidence from BW and IWA was given to the planning enquiry about the effects of a major stoppage for that work to happen, and the Inspector made some helpful recommendations. Unfortunately the Department of Transport seem to have forgotten about these in their later planning, which has led to further negotiations, in which David Allison-Beer and Ron Bingham have played a prominent part on behalf of the Branch.

The final outcome of the talks was that the tender documents would specify one main stoppage, from 6 January to 1 March 1992. There would be a subsequent closure of three days for removal of the piling. Conditions sought by BW and IWA were agreed: a guarantee of a free crane-over service (10 hours/day, 7 days/week) should either stoppage over-run. The towpath would remain open except during these stoppages, and there would be an adequate water supply across the site at all times.

The latest news is that these stringent conditions have led the Department of Transport to reconsider the method they will use to do the job. The conditions will still be met, and the stoppage will still be in the alleged off-season, but they're no longer confident of which year they'll do it!

Of course the original aqueduct was built without any interruption to canal traffic, but that was before the days of high technology.

WHERE CAN WE MEET YOU?

For various reasons the Branch changed its venue for Socials last Autumn to the Union Jack Club. While this is a pleasant venue and easy to get to (right next to Waterloo Station), the room is too small to accommodate our better attendances, so we're looking for other possibilities, preferably within the area defined by the central London railway termini. We are also looking at the possibility of some additional meetings outside the central area. Any suggestions for venues for either purpose to Branch Chairman Eric Garland or any member of the Committee (see page 3) please.



Cruise the London Ring

Excalibur readers, being more aware of such matters than most, will know that central London is on an island. The Thames, Grand Union Canal, Paddington Arm and Regent's Canal form a complete ring of navigable waterways: the London Ring. At the moment, work at Limehouse means a slight diversion is needed to complete this ring, passing along the Hertford Union and part of the Lea Navigation to reach Limehouse Basin along the Limehouse Cut.

For some years IWA London Branch has tried to encourage boaters to cruise the Ring by making a plaque available to those who do. Current supplies of this are about to run out, and the opportunity has been taken to redesign the plaque (*shown above*). At the time of writing we are in process of getting quotations from a number of manufacturers, so I can't give you a price. When ready, the price will be available from Lewis Phillips (*see opposite*).

We hope to have the new plaques ready to launch on the Late Spring Bank Holiday weekend (25-27 May), when St Pancras Cruising Club have organised a London Ring Cruise

(Details of this from Roger Squires on 071-232 0987).

Boaters successfully completing the ring and wishing to purchase a plaque should have some evidence of their feat and should contact Lewis Phillips, 44 Hendrick Avenue, SW12 8TL. Telephone 081-673 4412.

In case some readers are wondering just what is involved in the section of the ring on the Thames Tideway, we publish on the next two pages an article by Roger Squires, who knows the Ring well, which will tell you what you need to know.

If you haven't completed the London Ring before, why not try? If you've already earned the old plaque, why not cruise the Ring again and get the new one to keep it company?

Cruising the Thames Tideway

Anyone who plans to cruise the Thames tideway should recognise that the run of the tide and the numerous commercial craft demand great care. The route is perfectly safe so long as the normal precautions for traversing a tidal river are understood.

It is recommended that the tideway transit is tackled in a clockwise direction. In that way the passage up the Thames receives the double benefit of a 4 to 6 knot tidal flow and extra time because the high tide at Brentford is one hour later than at London Bridge. The 16½ miles with the tide takes 2¾ hours. The journey in the reverse direction either means pushing against the tide, which doubles the transit time, or chasing the ebb tide with the hope of arriving at Limehouse whilst there is sufficient water over the cill to enter the lock. If you miss this window, the restricted lock opening times can conspire to leave you for up to twelve hours on the tideway!

For experienced skippers an anti-clockwise circuit can be achieved by leaving Thames Lock at Brentford as soon as it opens, two hours before high tide, and pushing downstream against the tide. You need to allow a transit time of between 4 and 5 hours and bear in mind that Limehouse Lock shuts promptly at 17.00. The precise speed of such a transit is governed by the significant difference between the volumes and flows of SPRING and NEAP tides (Spring tides have higher Highs and lower Lows which cause faster ebbs and flows). In view of this, a downstream passage is not wise for beginners. The tide flows do not greatly affect up-river transits, albeit there may be a need to wait below Brentford High Street Bridge until headroom is secured. However, this is done with the reassurance of having passed through Brentford Thames Lock.

LIMEHOUSE

This note considers a clockwise transit starting at Limehouse. Take great care at Limehouse basin as over the next three years the Basin area will be halved in size and converted into a marina. The first phase, building a road under part of the Basin, is currently under way. At Limehouse, follow the instructions of the Lock Master at all times. The grand Ship Lock has been replaced by a smaller lock with radial

gates. These open slightly to let the water out, so make sure your craft is held secure by ropes fore and aft during the locking process.

The choice of when to depart from Limehouse and join the tideway is constrained by the opening times of both Limehouse and Thames (Brentford) locks and the 2¾ hours transit time. Also by the need to go upstream with the flow of the tide. High tide at Brentford is one hour later than it is at Limehouse. Brentford locks are only open for two hours either side of High Tide. The cill at Limehouse restricts exit at low water. The safe window for the transit is thus a departure from Limehouse between 3½ and 1¾ hours before High Tide at Tower Bridge. If you go earlier, Brentford Lock is not open. If you go later the tide will be on the turn at Kew.

SAFETY

People often ask about safety on the tideway. Like all tidal waters the River has to be treated with the greatest respect. Clearly basic checks for adequate fuel and coolant are essential. Make sure your prop is clear of rubbish as well. You do need an anchor and at least 20 metres of line in case your engine fails. Life jackets will protect any who have the misfortune to go overboard. The tide runs fast. So any moves you make have to be well planned and timely. It is easy to get pushed onto the buoys and bridge piers, which need a wide berth. The section between Limehouse and Tower Bridge is wide and prone to winds. This can mean that waves will make your craft bounce about. But do not let this put you off. The trip through central London is one of England's cruising delights. It is perfectly safe in normal weather conditions.

The rule of the river is KEEP TO THE RIGHT. Take the right-hand arches of all the lower reach bridges. The navigation arches are clearly marked with lights. Also keep a watch for faster craft coming up from behind, especially in the section up to Wandsworth Bridge.

LIMEHOUSE TO LONDON BRIDGE

The Lower Pool, leading to Tower Bridge, has a long row of mooring buoys. I have always found that shallow drafted canal craft can safely take the inner route along this section, which is usually less choppy. Care has to be taken at the exit before Tower Bridge, but even here the route is wide. The main navigation arch at Tower Bridge is under the bascules. However, canal

boats are able to take the right-hand span and this is often advisable, especially if larger craft are coming downstream. Once under the bridge, watch out for craft leaving Tower Pier and for the buoys in the Pool.

On the right above London Bridge is Swan Lane pier. This is a regular stop for the river bus. Again be ready for craft pulling out or crossing the tideway. The tide runs strongly under Cannon Street railway bridge and Southwark Bridge, beyond which a rubbish collection boat is moored adjacent to the right bank. Keep to the left of this and don't steer too close.

BLACKFRIARS TO HAMMERSMITH

There are three sets of bridge piers in close proximity at Blackfriars. The tide runs strongly here. Steer a middle course through the right-hand arches. The well-known skyline of London unfolds as the river curves under Waterloo Bridge. Once you get past Hungerford foot and railway bridges you need to proceed with care. Westminster Pier, on the right, is the source of the majority of trip boats. They arrive and leave every two minutes in peak season. Normally the skippers are watchful for smaller craft and offer you a route through. Craft travelling upstream with the tide have right of way. If you spot a crisis, give FIVE SHORT BLASTS on your horn: "I do not consider you are taking sufficient action to keep clear of me".

Once under Westminster Bridge, the river traffic subsides, but you still need to keep a careful watch. The river police are not too keen for craft to pass too close to the walls of the Houses of Parliament. Ahead are Lambeth and Vauxhall Bridges. Just beyond Grosvenor Bridge, barges are marshalled into the remains of the Grosvenor Canal, so pass under this bridge with care. The next reach past Battersea Park, with the Chelsea Hospital on the right, and under Chelsea and Albert Bridges, is normally free from trip boats. Beyond, look to the right for the houseboats moored on Chelsea Reach. Ahead lies the grand scheme of Chelsea Harbour, with a tide indicator gracing the top of the tall apartment block. The river curves under Wandsworth Bridge, beyond which the last of the regular river traffic services the waste disposal sites on the left bank. Beyond Putney Bridge the river is regularly used by rowing clubs, so take care. Single scullers do not keep a forward look-out and tend to use the calmer waters to the right of the fairway. A blast on the horn will advise them of your presence.

The river bank beyond Hammersmith Suspension Bridge has its fair share of pubs, but none offer easy access, the most rural stretch of the route is between Chiswick and Kew Bridge. Strand-on-the-Green, where the reed-lined eyot has great appeal, is the most scenic section of all. Towards the top of the tide one can moor by the pub at the Strand, but don't linger too long.

BRENTFORD

Beyond Kew Bridge, the tower of the Beam Engine Museum and the tall Brentford gas-holder loom large. Just beyond the second of the tree-covered islands on the right is the entrance to Brentford Creek and the access channel to the pair of Thames Locks at Brentford. This is where we join the Grand Union Canal. At High water, both gates of the Thames Locks are opened. At other times be guided by the lock-keeper as to which of the pair of locks to use.

Brentford creek is semi-tidal and winds through to Brentford High Street Bridge. At the top of a Spring Tide there is restricted headroom here, so proceed with care. Beyond lies Brentford Gauging Lock. The lock-keeper here will inspect your BW cruising licence, so have the number ready.

BRENTFORD TO TEDDINGTON

For those who wish to continue upstream to Teddington, the journey with the tide takes about 1¼ hours. A direct transit through the Half Tide Barrier at Richmond can be made 1¼ hours either side of the top of the tide. The barriers are normally open for longer. If they are shut, the lock on the left can be used on payment of a fee. It is wise to travel with the tide. Boats leaving Limehouse should do so at the latest 2¾ hours before High Tide at London Bridge. Boats leaving Thames Lock should aim to leave as soon as it opens (2 hours before High Tide at Brentford) and not later than 1 hour before High Tide.

For the downstream transit it is recommended that boats aim to lock out of Teddington about 10 minutes before High Tide there. This will enable them to reach Brentford Thames Lock before the ebb is flowing out too strongly.

Full details of all London's Waterways are covered in *London's Waterway Guide* by Chris Cove-Smith, published by Imray.

ROGER W SQUIRES

Canalway Cavalcade 1991



This drawing of the Toll House at Paddington Stop has been specially created by Alex Prowse, of the Cascade Art Gallery as the design of the 1991 Canalway Cavalcade rally plaque.

Saturday 4 — Monday 6 May at Little Venice

Canalway Cavalcade is *the* event of the year on the London Waterways. It is the largest annual non-national rally anywhere on the Inland Waterways. At the time of writing, planning is well advanced, and boat bookings are coming in even quicker than last year, which was a record. All your favourite annual events will be there, the Pageant on Saturday afternoon, the boat-handling competition (this year probably run in two sections on Sunday morning and afternoon), the Teddy Bears' Picnic on Sunday afternoon, the illuminated boats and fireworks on Sunday evening and, of course boat trips, the trade show and the usual galaxy of entertainers. We will have our usual generous sponsorship (most notably from the city of Westminster), so we shan't have to stint on what we can offer you. If you've been before, you'll know how good it is. This year will be no exception. If you've never been, you owe it to yourself to give it a try. There's something for all the family, it's a lot of fun, it publicises the waterways and IWA to Londoners and tourists, and it raises a lot of money for waterways causes.

CONTACTS

Boat entries: Ann Hancox: 081-542 8998

Water events: Chris Port: 0923-671146

Entertainments: Alison Fisher: 081-659 7486

General queries: Mike Stevens: 081-674 9387

GETTING THERE

Tube to Warwick Avenue:

straight ahead as you leave the station until you reach the corner of Blomfield Road.

Or a number 8, 16 or 16A bus along Edgware Road: get off at Blomfield Avenue and walk beside the canal until you reach Browning's Pool. Or a number 6 or 46 bus to Warwick Avenue.

Or via the London Waterbus Company service from Camden Lock.

Waterways Events in and around London

MAY

Saturday 4th-Monday 6th Sunday 5th 2.30pm	CANALWAY CAVALCADE IWA LONDON BRANCH	LITTLE VENICE Walk from Camden Town station along the Regent's Canal to Paddington
Wednesday 8th 6.45pm	Ramblers Association	Walk from Westbourne Park station along the Regents Canal to Camden Town
Saturday 11th Tuesday 14th 6.30pm	Lea & Stort Rivers Society IWA LONDON BRANCH	Barbecue at Feakes Lock Walk from Camden Town station along the Regent's Canal to Islington
Thursday 16th 7.0 for 7.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Union Jack Club, Sandell St, SE1 (Close to Waterloo station.) Jim Macdonald: 'Boats and boat disasters—as seen by a surveyor'
Saturday 18th Saturday 18th 7.30 for 8.0pm	Lea & Stort Rivers Society IWA Kent & East Sussex Branch	Hallingbury Open Day Annual dinner at the 'Old House at Home', Maidstone (£12.50)
Tuesday 21st 7.45 for 8.0pm	IWA Chelmsford Branch	Springfield WI Hall, Chelmsford: Jim MacDonald: 'Boats and boating disasters—as seen by a surveyor'
Tuesday 21st 8pm	IWA Herts Branch	Hatfield Cricket Club, Welwyn Garden City: Peter Waszak: 'Nene Valley Railway'
Wednesday 22nd 6.45pm	Ramblers Association	Walk from Tottenham Hale tube station along the Lea Navigation to Hackney Wick
Thursday 23rd 7pm Saturday 25th 1pm	nb <i>President</i> begins a fly-run from City Road Basin to Braunston Borough of Ealing	Cruise from the 'Old Oak Tree', Southall to the Hanwell flight (£3.50, booking essential)
Saturday 25th-Monday 27th Saturday 25th-Monday 27th	Wendover Arm Trust St Pancras Cruising Club	Wendover Canal Festival London Ring Cruise (details from Roger Squires on 071-232 0987)
Saturday 25th-Monday 27th Thursday 30th 12.30pm	LONDON WRG DIG Borough of Ealing	Venue to be announced Children's cruise from Berkeley Avenue, Greenford. (£2.00, booking essential)

JUNE

Sunday 2nd 2.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Walk from Camden Town tube station along the Regent's Canal to Islington
Sunday 2nd 10.0am	IWA Chelmsford Branch	'Bar-B-Cue Cruise' (sponsored walk) Starting at Little Hallingbury Mill
Wednesday 5th 6.45pm	Ramblers Association	Walk from Camden Town station along the Regent's Canal to Islington, visiting Camley Street Natural Park.
Friday 7th 8pm	IWA Chelmsford Branch	Dinner/cruise on the Chelmer & Blackwater. Starting at Paper Mill Lock, Little Baddow. Tickets £12.50.
Sunday 9th 11.0am	IWA Kent & East Sussex Branch	Walk from the Law courts in Maidstone along the towpath to Watlington. Bring a packed lunch.
Tuesday 11th 6.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Walk from Camden Town station along the Regent's Canal to Paddington
Saturday 15th-Sunday 16th Tuesday 18th 6.30pm	LONDON WRG DIG IWA LONDON BRANCH	Wilts and Berks Canal Walk from Camden Town station along the Regent's Canal to Islington
Tuesday 18th 8.0pm	IWA Herts Branch	Hatfield Cricket Club, Welwyn Garden City: Peter Hardy: 'Waterways of North Humberside'

Wednesday 19th 6.45pm	Ramblers Association	East London Canals walk from Bethnal Green station
Thursday 20th 7.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	NOGGIN & NATTER at the 'Narrow Boat', Wharf Road, Islington (Angel tube, left City Road, left-Colebrook Row, right-Noel St., straight down to Wharf Rd)
Monday 24th 7.30pm	Borough of Ealing	Cruise from the 'Hambrough Tavern', Ealing to Horsenden Hill. (£3.50, booking essential)
Saturday 29th	Lea & Stort Rivers Society	Barbecue at Roydon

JULY

Wednesday 3rd 6.45pm	Ramblers Association	Lea Valley waterscapes walk from Clapton BR station
Saturday 6th-Sunday 7th	LONDON WRG DIG	Venue to be announced
Sunday 7th 2.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Walk from Camden Town station along the Regent's Canal to Paddington
Tuesday 16th 6.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Walk from Camden Town station along the Regent's Canal to Paddington
Wednesday 17th 6.45pm	Ramblers Association	Walk from Angel station along the Regent's Canal to Mile End
Saturday 20th 1.00pm	Borough of Ealing	Cruise from the 'Old Oak Tree', Southall to the Hanwell flight. (£3.50, booking essential)
Tuesday 23rd 6.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Walk from Camden Town station along the Regent's Canal to Islington
Friday 26th 7.30pm	MIKRON THEATRE	PERFORMANCE at Richmond Yacht Club, Twickenham (sponsored by IWA London Branch)
Saturday 27th-Sunday 28th	LONDON WRG DIG	Chesterfield Canal
Sunday 28th 2.30pm	Borough of Ealing	Canalside walk from 'Old Oak Tree', Southall Common to Hanwell
Monday 29th 7.30pm	MIKRON THEATRE	PERFORMANCE at the Fisheries Inn, Harefield (sponsored by IWA London Branch)
Wednesday 31st 6.45pm	Ramblers Association	Walk from Warwick Avenue station along the Paddington Branch to Willesden

AUGUST

Sunday 4th 2.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Walk from Camden Town station along the Regent's Canal to Islington
Tuesday 13th 6.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Walk from Camden Town station along the Regent's Canal to Paddington
Wednesday 14th 6.45pm	Ramblers Association	Walk from Bromley by Bow station along the River Lea & Hertford Union Canal to Mile End
Tuesday 20th 6.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Walk from Camden Town station along the Regent's Canal to Islington
Saturday 24th 1.00pm	Borough of Ealing	Cruise from the 'Hambrough Tavern', Ealing to Horsenden Hill (£3.50, booking essential)

FURTHER DETAILS FROM

Borough of Ealing	Charlotte Deason-Barrow	081-758 5916
Canalway Cavalcade	Mike Stevens	081-674 9387
IWA Chelmsford Branch	Molly Beard	0702-554492
IWA Herts Branch	Greta Wright	0727-325850
IWA Kent & E Sussex Branch	Angela Madle	0634 722661
IWA London Branch Meetings	Tim Lewis	081-530 7926
IWA London Branch Walks	Dr Michael Essex-Lopresti	081-882 1337
Lee & Stort Rivers Society	Richard Young	0245 251519
London WRG	Lesley McFayden	081-693 3266
Ramblers Association (London)	Derek Purcell	8 Dryburgh Mansions, SW15

The Fifteenth Year of Guided Walks along The Regent's Canal 1991

Meet at **CAMDEN TOWN** underground station to walk to:

ISLINGTON

past St. Pancras and
Islington Tunnel
(ends near Angel
underground station)

at 2.30 p.m. on SUNDAY

3 February

7 April

2 June

4 August

6 October

at 6.30 p.m on TUESDAY

14 May

18 June

23 July

20 August

PADDINGTON

past the Zoo and
Maida Hill Tunnel (ends
near Warwick Avenue
underground station)

at 2.30 p.m. on SUNDAY

3 March

5 May

7 July

1 September

3 November

at 6.30 p.m. on TUESDAY

11 June

16 July

13 August

Each walk last about two hours

Suggested contribution for the I.W.A. £3.00

The Inland Waterways Association

114 Regent's Park Road, London NW1 8UQ

Telephone: 071-586 2510 and 2556