

windlass

107 September 1972



"Just as nowadays we "landscape" the motorways, so we ought to be thinking about "waterscaping" our habitat, wherever there is water available. Thus we clear up derelict land. A dirty river or derelict canal ought to offer a similar challenge; it does not have to remain an eyesore or a hazard."

Mr Eldon Griffiths M P at Lymm Rally.

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Inland Waterways Association

London and South East Branch

Patrons Dame Margot Fonteyn and Sir John Betjeman
Branch Chairman Illtyd Harrington, 16 Lea House, Salisbury St., London N W 8
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branch trip - east london

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 24th

This is a full day trip, starting from Little Venice at 0830, but members and friends may join at Old Ford at 1230 if they wish. British Waterways have made the narrowboat Water Buck specially available, and have surmounted the problem of opening locks on Sundays.

Price: Members £1.35, Non-Members £1.50. It is regretted that the economics of this trip do not allow reductions for children.

Timetable is as follows:

Little Venice (Warwick Ave Θ)	Depart 0830 (sharp)
Old Ford Lock (Mile End Θ)	Depart 1230 (sharp)
Regent's Canal Dock	Arrive 1330
	Depart 1445
Bow Locks	Arrive 1500
	Depart 1530
Hertford Union, bottom	Arrive 1600
" " , top	Depart 1700
Little Venice	Return 2030 (approx)

Members may also leave the boat at any convenient point.

Booking: when we last ran this trip it was well over-subscribed; early booking is advised, to:-

Peter Harrison, No 2, 14 Ashburn Place, London S W 7.

Just send your cheque or postal order and say where you'll be joining, with s.a.e. for reply please.

BRANCH COMMITTEE REPORT

To improve communications in the Branch, the Committee has asked me to write a regular piece for 'Windlass' - this one concerning 13 July meeting.

Concerning waterways reorganization, the Committee feared we would have little time for any effective reply to the DoE proposals, and wrote urging Council to make prompt protestations to the Minister.

Better communications: this report was instituted; and there would be Questions to Committee at future Branch Meetings.

1973 Branch Rally was discussed, with both Oxford and Chelmer & Blackwater proposed for the Spring Bank Holiday period. Other winter and summer events were planned.

Future policy: we had decided to alternate agendas, discussing long-term policy one month, immediate South-East questions the next. This meeting thus heard a very valuable briefing from a member of the G L C Planning Department on the future development of the London docks area - my summary to appear in next month's 'Windlass'.

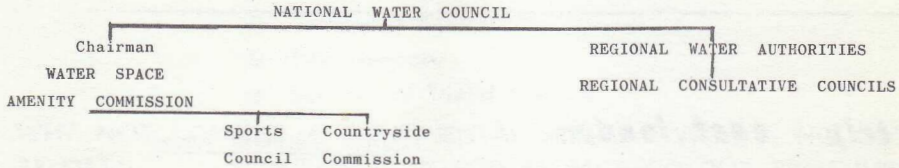
Peter Harrison.

COVER: Paddington Basin - picture courtesy Hugh McKnight Photography
- caption courtesy Mr Eldon Griffiths, M P

WATERWAYS CARVE-UP

Members will be aware that the DoE has at last issued its final Consultation Paper concerning the proposed water reorganization measures, which Paper deals with the 'Amenity Use of Water Space and the Reorganisation of B W B'. This report is a necessarily hasty summary, intended to communicate to members some of the proposals therein. Page 3 opposite carries some initial comment: next month's Windlass will carry the discussion further.

The Consultation Paper first notes the main aims of the reorganization - to improve the water supply and waste disposal functions of the waterways - and then concentrates on the additional amenity aspects. The new Authorities will have imposed upon them a statutory duty to make the best possible amenity use of their waters ("and, wherever appropriate, for freight carrying"), together with general powers to provide facilities, make "reasonable" charges, and make regulatory byelaws. The structure of the organizations involved will be as follows:



WSAC is then seen as the "national forum" for amenity uses of water, "including the definition of standards for craft which could use the inland waterways network as a whole". It could administer the proposed national licensing system for pleasure craft. It would take over from IWAAC too, again as "a central forum".

Finance: the Department accepts the case that little of the £3 millions by which BWB's waterways operations are subsidised annually is actually attributable to pleasure craft users. Hence most of this recurring cost would be incurred by the RWAs, and "these basic unavoidable costs of maintaining all BWB canals should be regarded as part of the normal finances of each RWA". When any additional cost is incurred for amenity use, "A major proportion of this additional cost should be borne - by charges for the provision of the facilities - by those who benefit from it." New facilities may be financed by grants from local and recreational bodies. Finally, and beyond specific improvements, the Government recognises the need for amenity development, and proposes an Exchequer contribution, which "might be distributed among the RWAs concerned in such proportion as the WSAC might recommend." Hence the total direct Exchequer contribution for old-BWB and new-RWA water recreation, amenity and navigation would be substantially increased.

Rights of Navigation: the present statutory classifications of waterways will continue. Commercial and cruiseway categories will be protected to 1967 standards, just as any remainder waterway may only be upgraded via the Secretary of State. Enforcement of the BWB's maintenance duty was empowered through the courts under the 1968 Transport Act: "new legislation shall contain clear rights for the public, in suitable craft and in suitable manner, to navigate all the waterways classified as 'commercial' and 'cruising'", and the enforcing section 106 of the 1968 Act "will be maintained with minor adaptations."

Commercial carrying: this aspect will not be a major concern of the RWAs, though they must provide facilities. Development of future commercial activity is best done by a body such as the present BWB Freight Services Division. "The best way of dealing with this important matter is under consideration."

B W B itself: "maintenance and engineering operations on the canals can, without serious disturbance, be adapted to the RWA structure." However, the continued operation of the canals as composite entities will entail the continuance of some of the specialised functions of BWB to serve all RWAs on an agency basis. "Examples that come to mind are the waterways engineering sections, estate management, amenity development and the legal branches."

comment

Some sycophantic journalist once dubbed Peter Walker 'The Great Integrator'. First the massive reorganization of local government, now, dragged in its wake, an equally far-sighted approach to the integration of the many bodies concerned with water supply and waste disposal.

Trouble is, though, that we are faced with too much complexity, too many overlaps, conflicts and contradictions. And, as one of the prime managerial text-books teaches, you can only integrate this complexity so far before it must be differentiated again - and vice-versa. Which is to say, you can re-draw local government boundaries so far, and then must differentiate their powers and functions by two-tier systems, whence many conflicts return - as with the allocation of planning powers, for example.

Similarly, for the waterways, a tidy integration based on natural watersheds then needs a differentiated structure to represent national network needs, amenity purposes, freight carrying, central management services, etc., etc..

Thus the central problem in the current RWA battle has been the presence of this 'final solution fallacy'. The initial solution is being gradually amended - but too slowly, too painfully, and with gaps and omissions abounding. Eldon Griffiths' speech to the National Rally at Lymm, for example, omitted to mention the 'remainder' canals at all, and almost totally ignored commercial operations.

Again, there is an unseeing faith that quite conflicting activities will happily reside in the new and shining Water Space Amenity Commission. If it is to dispense advice, coordinating the RWAs, then how will this sit with the irritant functions of the old IWAAC? And if it is to dispense financial largesse, is this not an incentive to some RWAs to lag behind and wait for compensating subsidies? We need the irritant functions of detached criticism, and the statutory and financial powers to implement agreed proposals: the two may sit poorly together, and both be badly provided in the rag-bag WSAC.

So there it is - at least for the moment. The Paper was issued the day after Parliament went into recess, right into what the media call 'the silly season'. For a policy-making cycle which started with Circular 92/71, and which extends at least 2½ years until mid-1974, we are allowed 8 weeks to comment on these belated proposals. Some consultation.

Press coverage

The Guardian's Editorial gave 'two touselled cheers' for the Government's attempts, but its reporter quoted John Dodwell on WSAC ("You can give advice till you're blue in the face") and asked what powers and sanctions, statutory and financial, would lay behind this well-meaning advice. The Times covered the Paper in its Business News, and pointed out that if most of the present B W B departments were to be retained, why go to all the trouble of these new organizations? Further, the Board's staff had already shrunk from 5,000 to 3,000, and it was finding enough difficulty in filling some skilled posts. The Evening Standard Editorial pointed to its early campaign against the RWAs, and argued for real powers for WSAC as well as noting the "disturbingly vague" policy on commercial traffic.

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PADDINGTON BASIN INQUIRY

The Inquiry was ordered by the Secretary of State when building plans put forward by the Governors of St Mary's Hospital were opposed by the G L C: it was a non-statutory affair, mounted as an attempt at arbitration, and lasted 15 days in all.

The Hospital had been urging extensions to its cramped facilities for over a decade. Its early plans envisaged building up to the edge of the basin: later plans, over about two-thirds of its length; and finally on both sides of it. This encroachment allowed planning objections from the G L C, hence this was the first time that a London Teaching Hospital - backed by the D H S S - found itself having to justify its mammoth planning proposals in public. The Hospital's case was that the old Paddington General - a district hospital a mile along Harrow Road - should be unified with the Praed Street unit, together with teaching units and the Eastman Dental School. This would need a large site, and that meant the Basin. Their consultant architects had designed a modular hospital with a central core of services, including courtyards for car parking, to accommodate 1200 beds and 500 students. Fresh plans would take two years to produce. The Dean of Medicine asserted that to leave any of the Basin next to the Hospital after its extension would allow disease to flourish. Hospital car parks were no real health problem. Westminster City Council, in rather uninspired planning support, were happy to move their refuse department from the Basin to the vacated Harrow Road site.

On the protesting side were ranged the G L C Planning Department; Sir Hugh Casson for R I B A; I W A, Regent's Canal Group and the Paddington Society; Westminster & City of London Society of Architects. Not the least of our allies was Mrs Kay McNicholas of the Warwick Avenue Tenants Association, who strongly opposed the destruction of the community's local Harrow Road hospital. And a London Chamber of Commerce man added his voice, on behalf of future tourism and freighting interests. The voluntary societies had briefed Mr Leslie Ginsburg, a planning consultant, who undertook the main evidence and conducted all the cross-examinations. This formidable task he carried out in a brilliant and imaginative manner. He concentrated on social aspects of planning and land use for the local community, and showed that several alternatives existed. The idea that medical studies should be incorporated, for at least part of the training, within the broader disciplines of London University had not found favour with the St Mary's Governors. Again, perhaps the teaching functions would be better moved out of central London, to Uxbridge or Reading for example. Nor had the expanded hospital been well related to likely future needs of the changing and shrinking Paddington community. There are precedents in other London Teaching Hospitals for divided sites - much depends upon the division of functions. Finally, the plans ignored an undisclosed amount of land still available to the south of Praed Street, whilst other land could be accessed around Paddington Station and on premises presently occupied by the Post Office. The case for the amenity use of water space is well known (see front cover). Paddington Basin is the largest canal Basin in London, covering 3 acres and 1400 feet - and it is the closest to Marble Arch and the amenity-conscious West End.

***compiled from notes supplied by Col P N Flower, Chairman, Paddington Waterways Society; press cuttings; and I W A Press Release.

our sponsor says

"Let me say from the outset that, like you, I am convinced that the inland water spaces of England are a precious national asset. They are absolutely irreplaceable. We need them for water supply. We need them for land drainage. Some of them too serve a valuable transport role. But above all, we need canals as a setting for leisure and recreation. It would be shameful if these benefits were lost through default, carelessness or the ravages of time."

Mr Eldon Griffiths M P at the National Rally of Boats, Lymm.

INK-WORRY

For the Inquiry as a process was marked by piles of documents, strewn by ink-covered plans and designs, and punctuated by the scribbles of the Inspector, whilst counsel patiently waited for him to capture their ponderous points. It was held in the very comfortable surroundings of the Chamber and Reception Rooms of the Westminster Council House in Marylebone Road - plush seats for all. All numbering about 30 souls, mostly suited but by no means excessively formal. For, on my two visits, I was struck by the open nature of the proceedings. Anyone can register as an objector, present evidence and even cross-examine witnesses - all in a manner remarkably free of formal courtroom discourse. The major obstacle to fuller public participation is the hours of sessions - five hours a day, from 10.00 to 4.00, and with little certainty as to the precise timing of any contribution.

As to the content of the Inquiry, I was saddened primarily by the miserable role of the British Waterways Board. True, the Hospital side had recruited their own renegade boat-owner, who gaily asserted that there was no excess demand for moorings in central London (without mentioning price), and said the canal could always be widened for moorings (when his cruiser is a 22-footer, and ignoring the passage of large-beam craft). But B W B gave him their blessing, and their man sat with the Hospital team during their evidence and then was put down as 'missing, presumed dead'. Certainly there was no defence of the Basin from these latter-day guardians of our national heritage. Though it is not the case that B W B owns the land adjoining the Basin: apparently this was neatly safeguarded at the time of waterways nationalisation, and still resides with the Grand Junction company, with the Board as leaseholders.

So what of the future for the Basin? The hospital plans have been long in the making, since long before waterways were appreciated as now, and may have too much momentum to be stopped. But some gains have certainly been made by the amenity lobby. Experience, for one thing. A bit more respect by some bureaucratic public bodies, for another. And whatever the final outcome, any water left in the vicinity is bound to be better utilised. So perhaps the outlook for City Road Basin, and other as yet unthreatened, is just a little brighter already.

RODERICK ATKIN

PRESS COVERAGE was quite good, recognising the interesting conflict of two public bodies. The Guardian seems to switch waterways topics over several correspondents, this time its Social Services man. The Times carried a series of very informative pieces, whilst the Sunday Times printed a somewhat flippant article redeemed by a generous photo of Leslie Ginsburg and John Dodwell. Specialist press notices occurred in Building, Building Design and Estate Times. The Financial Times noted the struggle, as did even the Wolverhampton Express & Star (where they are now planning to dig their own basin. . .).

our patron writes

Dear Mr Dodwell

Paddington Basin is as important to Paddington as a public park. In an area of noise and fumes it is a haven of peace and, incidentally, a distinguished piece of civil engineering, and good to look at. To destroy it would be reactionary and uncharacteristic of a government which is trying to put "the environment" on the map. Once destroyed the basin can never be replaced. Water is as much an adornment as are trees and grass. The basin is an essential lung of Paddington. If St Mary's cuts it out it will be killing a whole area.

Yours sincerely

John Betjeman

branch and routes

LEAVING. . .

Derek Clements is finishing his long and successful stint running Publicity and the Annual Branch Draw. The latter, especially, he made his own, showing considerable flair and energy, and inspiring a loyal response which has greatly benefitted the Branch and its finances. He deserves the gratitude of the Branch, and will be missed.

Colin and Hilary Isaacson have finished their year's stint as Editors of 'Windlass', on moving house, job and family to Southampton. They put the Branch journal back on its feet, leaving an easy job for any successor: Thank You (Ed)

ARRIVING. . ?

Draw Organiser needed: success in this job can do as much for the Branch as any other. Work involves contacting donors for prizes, having tickets printed and dealing with returned money and counterfoils. It therefore needs some annual effort and organising ability, but can be done as and when you have time. Guidance available. Contact David Gibson (992-8846).

Committee members also required: we are also short of one or two people. Anyone with any reserves of time and ability should seriously consider putting some energy where their interest lies. Please 'make yourself known' to David Gibson or the Editor.

A new Editor has been 'evolved'. Any readable and relevant contribution is hereby invited - and how about fresh photos from this year's expeditions? Address on page 1; contributions by end-September.

next branch meeting

SEPTEMBER 28th: Film - 'The Prendergast File', where a Whitehall bureaucrat scorns canal carrying, takes a narrowboat trip. . . 'The Albert', Victoria St, 7.30

Future meetings will debate impending legislation, hear talks and films on Wey & Arun, revitalised commercial traffic, Kennet & Avon and Dudley Tunnel, as well as French canal system.

WORKING PARTIES

16-17 September: Ashton, probably at the Manchester end. Accommodation - inform Nigel Stevens.

7-8 October: probably Caldon Canal, with N E Midlands.

Future local working parties: we'll arrange these where you want them, if we know where you want them - please ring Nigel Stevens (01-373-7234).

GRAND UNION

The future of the Wendover Arm has been threatened by bridge re-building proposals at Little Tring and Buckland Wharf further up. Neville New for GUCS is urging long-term restoration for navigation, and the Chiltern Society supports the amenity case. Tring RDC has now referred the matter back to the British Waterways Board.

K Seymour-Walker.

RIVER WEY

Throughout the summer, Coxes and Weybridge Town locks have been manned on Sundays by volunteers from the Branch. This effort has been much appreciated, and I would like to thank Peter Wall and his helpers for all their endeavour.

It will shortly be necessary to reprint the IWA publication of the River Wey Guide. If any members have any alterations or additions they think should be made, please contact me as soon as possible (53 Holme Chase, St George's Avenue, Weybridge, Surrey.)

Facilities for the emptying of chemical toilets have kindly been provided by the Waterside Centre at Guildford, just upstream from the Row Barge Inn. A new landing stage has been erected and the disposal point is at the end of a brick building behind the large green clubhouse. The door will be left open during daylight hours.

Tony Davis.

OXFORD CANAL and RIVER

Plans are apparently being made to improve the water frontage through Oxford (just as a ginger group is urging similar action upon Reading). As noted elsewhere, Oxford is one possible Branch rally site for 1973. Banbury Museum is staging an interesting exhibition, open until July 1973, on the history of the Oxford Canal, its boats, boat-building, boatmen and canal art.

LETTERS

Billingshurst, Sussex.

Dear Sir,

According to the report of the London and S. E. Branch's Annual General Meeting in the recent issue of 'Windlass', the Chairman, Mr I Harrington, said that he personally thought the battle to keep the canals outside the proposed Regional Water Authorities was already lost. If he thinks this way I would suggest that the sooner he retires from the Chairmanship of the branch the better. Almost as surprising was the report that after giving his personal views he left the meeting.

The Inland Waterway Association firstly under John Humphries and John Dodwell's leadership (and now with Captain Munk in place of John Humphries) is putting up a most spirited and determined fight, I suggest with the support of the great majority of the membership of the Association, to see that the amenity and commercial use of all the rivers and canals of the country are kept under unified control. For the Chairman of the S.E. Branches to take such a defeatist attitude and to declare it publicly at an Annual General Meeting and still to remain as Chairman seems to me to be intolerable.

I hope we shall soon have a chance to elect someone in Mr Harrington's place who is prepared to back the excellent leadership of the Association.

Sir Peter Mursell.

Your chance to elect a Chairman was at that same meeting, which you seem not to have attended. Further facts follow: Iltyd Harrington has resigned, but from the Council with which he disagrees. Your whole Branch Committee fears that IWA Council is insufficiently spirited - see page 1. General Secretary Dodwell seems to doubt proposals supported by Government Adviser Humphries (page 3). Iltyd Harrington has heavy duties elsewhere, as minority Labour Group Leader on the GLC, and may leave us if next year's elections change the balance. Sir Peter and others wishing to reinforce the Branch should see page 6. (Editor).

NATIONAL RALLY

As the Mancunian hordes poured on to the muddy field, they were assaulted from all sides by huge brightly-painted slogans designed to awaken them to the dangers of the waterway carve-up, whilst bright young girls in miniskirts pressed leaflets into their hands. Martial music blared from the omni-present loudspeakers, whilst orators whipped the crowds into frenzied petition-signing, and the Minister for Sport and Foulness Airport was mobbed and almost thrown into the canal, together with his Government Adviser. . .

In fact, of course, Lymm was just another boring Rally, its only distinction (that of being the silliest rally site ever) being taken from it the week before with the announcement that next year's Rally was to be at ELY. . . The site was less than two miles from the breach, and only one mile from the car park (reduced from 50p to 25p). And it rained. But they are repairing the breach. Rally Director Ken Goodwin ran an efficient organisation. Any profits will go to the repairing Manchester Ship Canal Company.

A. G.

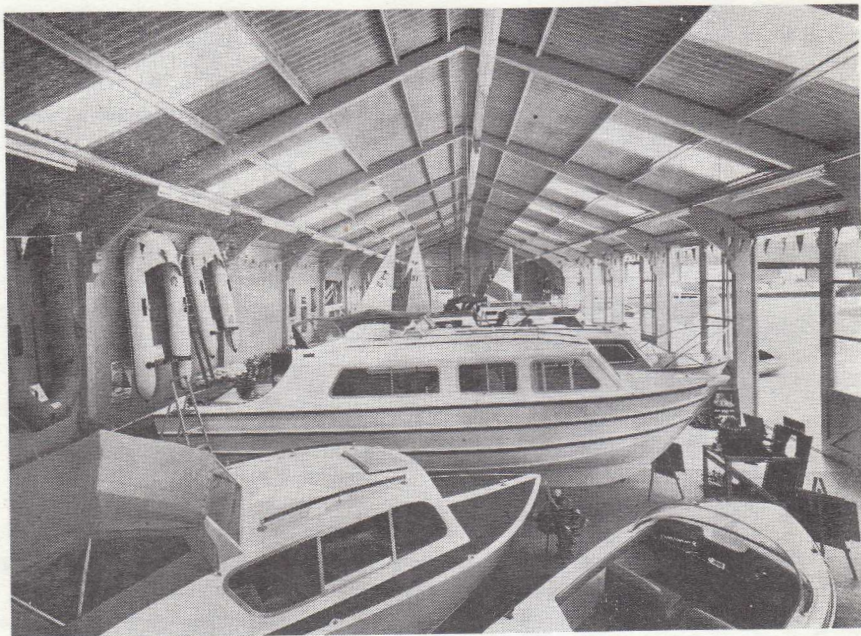
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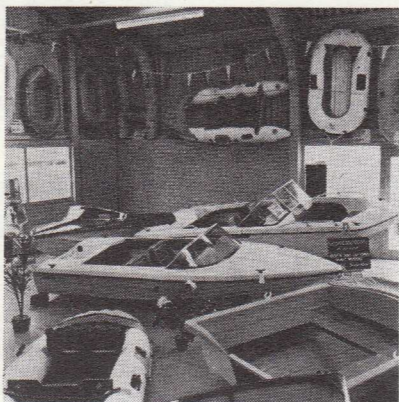
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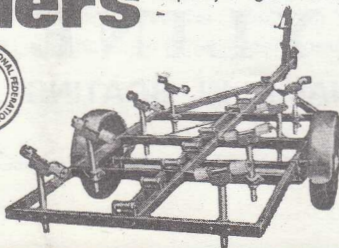
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