

windlass

113

April 1973





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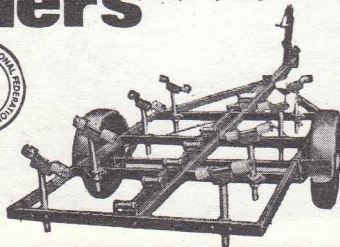
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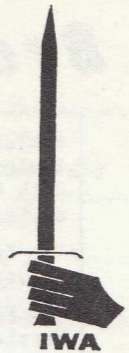
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Inland Waterways Association

London and South East Branch



Patrons	Dame Margot Fonteyn and Sir John Betjeman
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Vice-Chairman	Nigel Stevens, 52 Redcliffe Square S W 10
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Editor	Roderick Atkin, 108A Sutherland Ave W 9
Ass. Secretary	Peter Harrison, Number Two 14 Ashburn Place S W 7

G L C ELECTIONS

It seems to be accepted that the main issue so far has been transport - the Motorway Box and future public transport. Ever since the Prime Minister 'blew his top' the present Conservative Council has been forced on the defensive. As far as waterways progress is concerned, the Labour Manifesto and subsequent press release promise to:

- bring back life to the Thames, London's oldest highway, by ensuring that the construction of the Thames Barrier can and does control tidal flow
- develop the Thames for the carriage of freight and passenger traffic
- finance the B W B in improving the Grand Union Canal between Brentford Dock and Watford

Such pledges may be excessive, and not very well thought through - it is hard to tell. I have received no other party political information, though am told that Sir Desmond Plummer, present G L C Leader, visited Brentford Dock in mid-March. The Times reported endorsement of the Labour Manifesto by Friends of the Earth, Homes Before Roads and the London Branch of the Conservation Society.

The way members vote, and whether we vote at all, obviously depends on many factors - it would be silly, as well as wrong, for a group like ours to advocate any party's cause. Yet we are a pressure group, and we do seek favourable policy commitments from elected representatives. Members are urged to question their candidates, examine the election literature they receive, and make such pressure a reality. Polling day is 12 April.

Roderick Atkin

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of the Inland Waterways Association

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NEXT COPY DATE is Saturday 14 April, for obvious reasons

THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

General Office: 114 Regent's Park Road, London N W 1 (01-586-2510; 01-586-2556)

Chairman - John Heap

General Secretary - John Dodwell

COVER: Memorial photo of demolished bridge at Little Tring, Wendover, by Tom Park

Branch and Routes

Notice is hereby given that the 17th Annual General Meeting of the London and South East Branch of the Inland Waterways Association will be held on Thursday 10th May at Cavell House, Charing Cross Road, W C 1 (Underground to Trafalgar or Leicester Squares) at 7.30 p m.

The following members of the Committee retire by rotation: Peter Heywood, Oliver Turner and Hugh Compton.

The Following Branch members have been co-opted during the year: Peter Harrison, Roderick Atkin, Geoffrey Bradshaw, Trevor Taylor and Les Harris.

Hugh Compton has indicated that he does not wish to stand for re-election, and it is hoped that a member from the Oxford Section will be proposed for this vacancy. Similarly, Peter Heywood has completed four years in judicious control of our finances, and would be pleased to see someone with suitable experience come forward to take over: such members should contact Peter.

More generally, we always need volunteers to help, whether by watching over a waterway or running a specific project like a branch trip or a rally. Do please contact anyone listed on page 1 if you would like to put a little effort where your interests lie, and we'll be happy to talk it over.

All nominations are welcome, and must be in writing, signed by the proposer, seconder and person to be nominated, and lodged with the Secretary at least 14 days before the A G M.

LAST BRANCH MEETING

On the 22nd February, some 85 members gathered to hear Mr Harry Grafton, Freight Services Manager of B W B, talk about his work and ideas for commercial traffic.

Mr Grafton indicated that modern trends are towards larger craft working as far inland as each waterway permits, examples ranging from 140-ton vessels on the Humber to 1,000-ton carriers on the Gloucester and Sharpness. Viable waterborne traffic requires low handling costs. This implies dealing with large packages, hence the BaCat, Seabee and LASH types of operation. On the other hand, integration with other modes of transport was necessary to provide a door-to-door service.

Frequent ministerial changes had aggravated the problems of providing improved services, the Parliamentary ploy of an inquiry having been used more than once. The present regime could not, however, offer even this excuse for its one year's silence over the Sheffield and South Yorkshire scheme. A modest £2.4m is needed to bring this waterway up to an economic standard, the alternative being to downgrade it, in effect, to a 'cruiseaway'. Even this retrograde action would cost £600,000 in maintenance backlog. It all provides further support for the Association's fundamental tenet that it is better to promote the full potential use of the nation's waterways.

In spite of the uncertainty about the future of B W B at the time of the meeting, Harry Grafton's talk was still highly informative, as well as amusing. Members pressed him at length with their questions - not due to a serious divergence of opinions, but more because of the intense interest of members in commercial carrying.

Ernest Pull

READING WATERWAYS COMMITTEE

This committee was set up last year to improve Reading's frontage with both Thames and Kennet, and has already received a report from Cox, Shankland and Partners. Mr Denys Hutchings (Secretary of the K & A Trust) has agreed to liase between the Branch and the Committee - any points should be made to him at The Coppice, Elm Lane, Lower Earley, Reading.

diary dates

April 12 at 7.30: Branch Meeting, with Mr E A Edwards on 'The Great Ouse', at The Albert, Victoria Street - St James Park @ - new members very welcome, make yourselves known.

April 23 all day: South West Branch are walking the Kennet & Avon Canal from Bath, and will be happy to meet anyone walking west: just catch the 09.30 from Paddington to Bedwyn for 11.01 and walk towards Savernake Hotel; then return via the 18.25 from Pewsey.

April 24 at 8.00: Oxford Section meeting at The Royal Oak, Lechlade, with Mr G I G Stevens of the Cirencester Water Ski Club on Water-Ski-ing, with films.

May 8 at 8.00: Oxford Section meeting at The King's Head, Market Square, Aylesbury, with two B W B Films, 'The Gentle Highway' and 'The World of the Waterways'.

May 10 at 7.30: Branch Annual General Meeting, Cavell Hall W C 1, just north of Trafalgar Square - see formal notice in this issue.

June 24 all day: Branch Outing on a Thames tripper from Oxford - details in May issue.

September 22/23 weekend: provisional dates for the City Road Basin Rally.

Looking towards next autumn's season of evening meetings, your Committee would welcome members' suggestions for topics. Ideas already under discussion are very visual: an exponent of photography to tell us where we all go wrong; an exponent of traditional canal painting, to show us how it's done; and a whole evening of waterways films from the last two decades, to show us how it was. Please contact Jim Street with yours.

RALLY RIDDLES

"The definition of the sea was discussed with reference to deciding on the extent of the Inland Waterways." - from an I W A Council Minute

"The Rally Committee strongly advise against attempting this passage in any craft that has not been built and trimmed for open sea work." - from the Ely Rally Entry Form.

Members are advised to ignore all rumours that the 1974 National Rally will be held in Douglas, Isle of Man. . .

More seriously, and for those who cannot or will not go to Ely, it looks as though the Northampton Water Festival on August 17-19 will form a suitable alternative. Boats on the way back from Ely and Peterborough will also call in, making this a suitable second rally in your calendar. A beautiful site, plenty of entertainment, good moorings and a proven ability to convert our cash to the National Waterways Restoration Fund all go to make this a valuable second rally. What price two National Rallies in future years in the first place, which is what we should have done this year?

Roderick Atkin

working parties

Hot news, as from Thursday 22 March, is that the Upper Avon needs navvies every weekend through April and into May. David Hutchings has approval to re-align Stour Lock round the rock slab; Borstal Boys are using plant six days a week for piling work; and some help is urgently needed to keep the plant working through the weekend, particularly from experienced types. Remember that this is the last lock on the Avon, your last chance to help. Please ring Nigel Stevens (01-373-7234) quickly, giving your availability.

Peak Forest Canal 7-8 April This trip is still on, but all should check with Nigel
Avon or Elsewhere 19-20 May Depending on progress, and approval for works such as weirs
Titford Canal 2-3 June On the Oldbury Locks, with up to three Smalleys, clearing lock pounds where draglines can't reach - this is a major restoration project with Warley Council involved

RIVER WEY

A small group of people have been working over the winter to revise the River Wey Booklet, which is published by the London & South-East Branch of the I W A. Copies of the new edition are now on sale at 30p each and can be bought from the Branch Sales Officer, David Rayner, 1a Twyford Gardens, Bishops Stortford, Herts; or from the bookstall at the monthly general meetings of the Branch. Please add postage.

One of the I W A Voluntary Lock-keepers, Mr R T Slatter, is having to relinquish his duties at Newark Lock, as he is moving to another job. He writes that he has thoroughly enjoyed his task of keeping the working parts in good order, and the surroundings clean and tidy. He has even planted some shrubs, which hopefully will bloom later in the year! He has found Newark a very pleasant and peaceful spot. Applications to take over his post may be made to me.

STOP PRESS: two stoppage periods are announced, with details as follows:

- Monday 30 April to Friday 18 May between Millmead and Catteshall Locks, there will be obstructions to navigation and water level reductions due to the laying of a sewer
- Monday 21 May to Friday 25 May between New Haw and Weybridge Town Locks, there will be similar stoppages and water level reductions for the same reasons, plus Trust dredging.

Tony Davis

BASINGSTOKE CANAL

At the time of writing (13 March) the position on the Canal is as follows:

Hampshire County Council has given formal notice that it is to seek compulsory purchase of most of the Basingstoke Canal in Hampshire. The notice took effect on 6 December 1972 and has been submitted to the Environment Minister. The section covered is from the County boundary to Greywell Tunnel. It is likely that there will be a public enquiry and it may be mid-1973 before an inspector can be appointed.

Surrey County Council is still trying to establish the ownership of land along the banks of the Canal in Surrey. Authority for the compulsory purchase order has already been given by the Council, and it is expected early this year. It is understood that Woking U D C are pressing the County Council on this matter.

Finally, we hope that a Trust will be set up when the Canal is acquired, giving a unity to the Surrey and Hampshire sections.

Les Harris

RIVER THAMES

Closure dates for Bell Weir have slipped back by about 10 days - they are now from 9 October 1973 to 8 April 1974, which is quite close to an early Easter. Members may also note that Osney bridge headroom will be reduced during repairs between 24 April and 25 May, with off-centre passage giving 7' for 12' beam craft, and 7' 3" for 9' beam.

Other controversial matters: plans for the Pinkhill base are now before the County Council - we expect an agreement to 15 craft, but hope 30-40 will be rejected (see Letters). The proposed moorings at St Alban's, Hampton for boats and residents dispossessed from Tagg's Island are opposed by the Thames Conservancy: I must agree that it's not a good place, though that doesn't help the houseboat residents.

St John's Weir, Lechlade: One of the last of the rymer and paddle weirs, this will be reconstructed this summer. Historically minded members should be quick to photograph it before we become miserably modern. An overflow, for really high water use, will be let into the lock cut - though at overflow stage the river would be quite unnavigable anyway.

More up to date, I have been asked to prepare a brief supporting the incorporation of a lock in the proposed Thames Barrier for the Thames Consultative Committee - so our ideas are not forgotten entirely!

John Crosby

RIVER WAVENEY

The Committee would like to hear from any member willing to examine and report on the feasibility of restoring to navigation by powered craft the River Waveney between Shipmeadow (Geldeston) Lock and Bungay.

GRAND UNION

The swing bridge at Winkwell is reportedly on its last legs, with a scaffolded footbridge already erected for pedestrians. Rumour is that a lift-bridge may be installed.

Lime Juice Boats Saved! Latest news confirms that Ashby Canal Transport Ltd will take over the contract shortly. A second pair of B W B boats is now out of action, and two privately-owned boats have already filled the gap, until the contract is reassigned. Only two pairs will be needed by anyone other than B W B: members may expect more colourful boats, operating mainly September to June through the lime season, on a weekly basis.

OXFORD SECTION BRAINS TRUST

This meeting, in Oxford on 21 February, produced some interesting Question-and-Answer points, with a panel consisting of: Chairman, Gen Sir Hugh Stockwell, and Mr F Taylor (Vice-President, Oxford Anglers), Ald P Bromley (Thames Conservator and Oxford Council), Mr J Collet (Chief Navigation Officer, Thames Conservancy), Mr A Blenkarn (Amenity Service Manager, B W B), Mr H Arnold (Secretary of A P C O and I W A Council Member), and John Dodwell (I W A General Secretary).

Questions were many and varied, from high speeds to locked loos, and some are given here, with necessarily brief summaries of the answers:

Q Is it envisaged that any new canal routes may be built?

A The only possibilities would be from the Wash to Birmingham, or the Severn to Birmingham, now that we are in the Common Market. There is no movement towards this yet.

Q Would you limit the number of boats on the Thames (from a fisherman)

A No. We cannot unless the law is changed, as the Thames is a highway. Even then, it would lead to a black market in licences. The present position is that the Thames has 100 boats per mile, Broads 200, and canals only 10 per mile. 45 boats per mile on the canals would be a possible maximum, but this would take several years to achieve, and there was no thought of limiting the number at present. Mr Taylor was worried about the size of boats coming onto the Thames.

Q Will not speeding, and speed events, spoil the very tranquillity of the canals which B W B is presently advertising?

A Water-skiing was restricted to club boundaries, which were arranged with fishermen etc. Uniformed water police cost money, which can find better uses at present, and the same goes for employing staff on radar or stop-watch traps. The hull shape of a boat was more important than its speed in causing wash, as proved by B W B tests. Speed limits vary from waterways to waterways, from 4 m p h on canals to no limit on the Thames. The best course of action was to report a speeding boat: there were 10-12 prosecutions last year (which could perhaps be publicised more widely).

Q Would there still be enough water on the Oxford Canal, especially with more marinas?

A There was a plan to spend £35,000 on installing pumps for the Napton flight, returning water to the summit from 1974 (if the money became available to support our Water Space). Even then, each lock of water would cost B W B about £1.00.

Q There was a marked lack of sanitary stations on Thames and Canals, could not Oxford supply one at its moorings?

A There was no mains sewer at the Oxford moorings - though, admittedly, tankers were used to empty other Thames sanitary stations. On the canals, there were now 106 B W B sites plus other private stations. Keys to open stations would be made available to every licence-holder very soon, probably at a 25p charge.

Q Litter! A farmer made a forceful presentation on the effects of bottles, plastic bags etc on his animals, to some applause.

A Both fishing and boating elements admitted that there was a point here, and did all they could to bring the matter to the notice of their members. Plastic bags with necks tied could be used to supplement dustbins - which could easily be full since collections at some rural sites were only made fortnightly, and then cost B W B money. A twist of irony came when the farmer's attention was drawn to the large plastic fertiliser bags often to be found in canals, when not round hooks or propellers.

This report is taken from the Aylesbury Canal Society Newsletter, ably edited by Tom Park.

LETTERS

Wraysbury, Bucks.

Dear Mr Atkin

The point about Caribbeans and Bermudas at Pinkhill is not an objection to the craft but to the numbers proposed - too much of a good thing. Caribbeans have been travelling to Lechlade for some years but those few venturing above Oxford have been from hire fleets based well downstream, and thus have been to some extent dispersed, and their crews with some handling experience.

The present proposal to start with 12-15 of these types at Pinkhill might be bearable, though adding substantially to present traffic above Oxford (two Caribbeans fill a lock remember!). The planned expansion to 40 such craft is a very different matter. Putting such a fleet, as big as any on the river, on one of the narrowest winding frontages to be found for miles is the negation of any river-side planning.

Already the whole atmosphere of the upper river has changed. Some think it a pity that the low Osney bridge has not kept these 30 miles as a haven for the smaller craft, the camping punts and canoes, whose use below Oxford has been made almost impossible by the ever-increasing traffic - both in numbers and in size. With the population expansion of Swindon and North Berkshire the demand for recreational space also increases - but the scope of the proposed Pinkhill base does seem to need reconsidering, as we hope the County is now doing.

John B Crosby

Cambridge

Dear Sir

I congratulate you on the March issue of 'Windlass', received this morning. The feature on the commercial use of our canals is of special interest to me, because I believe that work is more important than play, is indeed the main guiding force in every man's endeavours. The Continental waterways are primarily turned to good use commercially, and are vital economic factors in the countries which they serve. The English (I nearly said "as usual") led the world in the 18th century in inland navigation. Would the joy-riders of the twentieth century be enjoying the network of roads we have in this country if it had not been for their commercial potential? If one-fiftieth part of the money spent on road maintenance and development had been used on the improvement of our unrivalled canal system there would be a thriving and invaluable contribution to national transport. If no more money had been spent on the roads than has been spent on the canals, we should still be dependent on one-horse, two-wheeled carts.

Moreover, commercial usage keeps canals in top working order, clean, dredged, policed, and developed. Look at 'poor little Belgium' - and its Ronquieres Lift. Consider the fantastic development in France, all over the country, in replacing manually operated locks by electrical control, often using "electric eyes" so that they are self-operating and virtually automatic. Why could not something of this kind have been undertaken here over the last 25 years?

What I cannot understand is that in the midst of all the political activity of the 'Waterways Front' of the past two or three years, and a fundamental revision of policy, including drainage, conservation, usage, and water-supply, no mention has been made of the monumental work of the late John Pownall, published I think by the I W A, under the title of "The Grand Contour Canal". It was John Pownall's life-work, and it comprehended all, but all, the subjects under review, and dealt with them after years of research in a masterly fashion. It is as though there was a conspiracy of silence to hide the truth.

E W R Peterson

Dear Mr Atkin

Mr R T Putnam mentions that certain locks throughout the system are fitted with counters, in the March 'Windlass'. It is of course impossible for these to count boats, they can only count 'lockfulls'. There is some difference between a single narrowboat which finds the lock set against it, and three 20' cruisers which find the lock set for them!

Hope you have the Chelmsford Rally in your diary!

David R Johnson

(Chelmsford Rally Secretary, and a cunning publicist to boot - Editor.)

MORE ON STOPPAGES

On the general issue of stoppages, and following the comments in last 'Windlass', members may be interested to learn that non-maintenance stoppages are charged out to those causing them at a rate of £50 rising to £100 per day. Should a stoppage exceed its scheduled time, as with some Milton Keynes examples, B W B merely increase the daily charge to £200. Such charges may act as some small incentive to contractors to speed their works - though we should then be pressing for higher charges, should we not? (And one hopes that the National Trust is aware of this game, as in their River Wey stoppages). For the last set of Milton Keynes stoppages were countered only by activists of the Narrowboat Owners and the Ashby Canal Transport, who are most likely to move in winter. Money might help.

NEW COMPLAN

Glaxo deserve a plug for this, their new milk-based food drink, since they are the only remaining waterways shipper on the Regent's Canal, taking a good proportion of their dried milk intake by barge to Greenford.

Three heaped dessertspoons of this powdered product, mixed with hot or cold water and then flavoured to taste, is apparently the equivalent of two poached eggs on a slice of, buttered toast, plus a cup of tea containing milk and sugar. Costing only about 5p, New Complan comes in a waterproof package, an added advantage. Members are exhorted to drink plenty of New Complan, to keep both themselves and the waterways active! It is hoped that samples will be available at the Ely and Northampton rallies.

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The Gladwin & White trilogy ENGLISH CANALS is now available in a second edition, comprising Part 1 "A Concise History"; Part 2 "Engineers and Engineering"; Part 3 "Boats and Boatmen". It may be purchased in individual parts at £1.05 + 14p postage each, or in a cloth binding at £2.40 + 7p postage, from The Oakwood Press, Tandridge Lane, Lingfield, Surrey RH7 6LW, or from the Branch Sales Officer as under RIVER WEY. Also available from The Oakwood Press: "The Wilts & Berks Canal" by L J Dalby, 90p + 8p postage.

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Hanbury Marina, Hanbury Road, Droitwich, Worcs. Tel: Droitwich 3002 and 4012.

Mountsorrel Marine Centre, 14-20 Loughborough Road, Mountsorrel, Nr. Loughborough Leics.

Tel: Rothley 2144

The Swag Boat Centre, Barns, Lane, Stubber's Green, Nr. Aldridge, Staffordshire.

Tel: Aldridge 55448

Nor' West Marina, Canal Wharf, Galgate, Nr. Lancaster, Tel. Galgate 368

Leeds Boat Centre, 396a York Road, Leeds 9, Yorks, Tel: Leeds 27142.

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