

THE WINDLASS

No. 35 APRIL, 1963



Mrs. Peter Scott launching the *Robert Aickman*

Journal of
THE LONDON and HOME COUNTIES BRANCH of
The Inland Waterways Association Ltd., Published alternate months

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

CIVILISED TRANSPORT

INSTEAD of writing my notes in their usual form, I give instead an account of the meeting organised by the Branch on February 28th with the title of "Civilised Transport." The meeting was one of the most important ever organised by the Branch, and we were most honoured to have such distinguished participants. Our three guest speakers were: Lord Stonham, Chairman of the National Council on Inland Transport, Professor E. Hondelink, an advisor to the United Nations on Transport matters, and Mr. Robert Aickman. As Lord Stonham had to leave the meeting immediately after his talk to act as one of the hosts at the Labour Party Peers' Dinner (an event postponed last month due to the grievous death of Mr. Gaitskell), the Secretary of the Council, Mr. T. C. Foley, O.B.E., had come along to answer questions in Lord Stonham's place. We should like at this stage to congratulate Mr. Foley on being awarded the O.B.E. in this year's New Years Honours List.

Lord Stonham spoke first, and described the formation and work of the Council. He described it as an amalgamation of numerous organisations with an interest in transport matters. It has about 100 members, including several local authorities, the National Association of Parish Councils, the Railway Unions; and several large firms, such as Whitbreads and Lyons. This wide membership gives the Council, in effect, the support of some 12,000,000 people. The Council seeks to establish a transport policy which will benefit the whole of the community, and replace the present chaos by order.

Though attempting to have the importance of railways to the community recognised, the Council seeks to establish a balanced system, with each type of traffic being encouraged to use the form of transport most suited to it. Such a policy would be achieved by having an overall economic balance which would cause users of each form of transport to pay the true cost of that transport. By such a method, what seems to be an inexpensive method of transport might turn out to be quite costly. For example heavy vehicle road users at present pay only a fraction of the cost of keeping such vehicles on the road. Research shows that lorries of ten tons or more wear roads up to sixty times as much as lighter vehicles up to about a ton. Therefore, those who run such heavy lorries are having their journeys subsidised, both by other road users and by the local authorities (and hence ratepayers) who have to pay for road maintenance. At present, vested interest encouraging road transport only stress the deficit on the railways: but the railways have a true balance sheet produced and the roads do not. The extra wear caused by heavy vehicles, the cost of traffic control (police, lights, etc.) and the capital costs of making the extra roads to take new traffic: none of these are taken into account.

The result of denigrating the railway seems to be that the Beeching plan will meet with Governmental approval; but few realise just how drastic that plan is likely to be. If the lines on the traffic distribution maps are taken as an indication of which lines pay, virtually only two lines will be left: from London to the North-East,

and Bristol to Scotland as far as Glasgow. No branches, no other lines, save for a few commuter services. Is this closure what the public wants: is it to the public advantage.

Concerning the waterways, Lord Stonham confessed to being a beginner in their study: but he was impressed by the strength of the case prepared by the Association. He was glad that Mr. Aickman had agreed to act as the Vice-Chairman of the Council, and felt sure that the Council would help to ensure that waterways are integrated into the National Transport system. He was surprised that, with the evidence available, the I.W.A. had not had greater Parliamentary success: he felt stronger representations were necessary, and undertook to give help in the future.

FIRST PROJECT

Reverting to the work of the Council, Lord Stonham informed Branch members that the first big project of the Council had been the preparation of a memorandum embodying its views for the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister had replied last September that the Transport Minister would look into the matter: the latter's reply had been received late in February. Whilst opposing much of the suggestions of the Council, the Minister had made a number of concessions, one of which seemed to be that certain unremunerative lines might need to be subsidised. This reception of the memo. held promise for the future work of the Council, and Lord Stonham concluded by urging all who could to become affiliated to it.

Professor Hondelink spoke next. Formerly Professor of Transport, Engineering and Economics at Delft University, he is now a Consultant on transport matters to the United Nations Special Agencies, and has done much work for underdeveloped countries.

Professor Hondelink stated that an essential in any country is a well-balanced transport system, which creates facilities for the movement of goods by the means best suited to them. It is a government duty to create an environment wherein such a system can flourish. There are three ways of doing this: by direction of traffic; by neglecting certain forms of transport; and by regulating traffic. The first two methods are bad; the third is both good and practicable. Regulation can be carried out in several ways: for example by the adjustment of the license fees or taxation. Regulation has been tried out in several countries with varying amounts of success; the United Kingdom is not even half-way towards the desired state.

The central problem in British transport matters is the railway deficit, currently running at about £170m. (a figure which blinds the Government to the minuteness of the waterways loss at £1m). This country enjoys the facilities of road, rail

and waterway transport. Only the last two can be computed accurately, but studies in other countries always show that so far as the cost to the community is concerned, road transport is the most costly form of transport. Such studies always agree on two other points: road users do not pay enough for the facilities they enjoy; and heavy road users pay proportionally less than other road users.

Dr. Beeching has proved that most railways do not pay: half the system carries 92% of the traffic. But is this so very unlike other countries; there is the same proportion in Japan, in Manchuria 10% of the rails carry 90% of the traffic, and in Russia, 4% carry about 20%. All these countries are developing their railways. Studies on the distribution of road traffic should also be carried out.

Taking all factors into consideration, including traffic control, maintenance and so on, Professor Hondelink has calculated that the roads are currently costing the taxpayer about £300m. per annum. This makes the total cost to the taxpayer of our transport system about £471m.: to reduce *this* sum the regulator needs to be applied. The tax on heavy vehicles is one way of applying the regulator: using only half of the sixty times as much wear caused by such vehicles as the basis for the tax, an extra £170m. would be raised, i.e. the deficit of the railways. The result of the tax would be that the taxpayer would pay less for keeping transport viable.

But there seemed to be little interest in "official circles" in finding out the true facts and only by pressure being brought to bear as a result of common action will any changes be made. But not only the Government needs to change its attitude: the transport authorities must also acquire a sense of responsibility.

EUROPEAN RECONSTRUCTION

In war-devastated Europe, after the cessation of hostilities, the first need was for a working transport system. A general meeting was called by the three allied powers, at which the three forms of transport were represented, to decide the best policy for reviving the transport undertakings. Certain basic policy principles were agreed: not to repeat the errors made in starting up transport after the first world war; all the work to be done by joint effort; all the changes to be gradual; and the best use to be made of existing material. By working to these principles, transport was restored in Europe within two and a half years, after which time completion was left to the individual countries.

In the U.K. as there was no such wholesale devastation, the principles were disregarded, and in repairing communications there was neither joint action nor smooth progress. Seventeen

years after the war, communications were barely at the 1939 level. Up to 1939, the U.K. had the reputation of possessing the finest railways in the world, and served as a model for other countries. Now, as a result of the policy of destruction rather than development, we are regarded as "poor relations" in transport on the continent: students learning about rail transport spend three months in Germany and France, three days in the U.K.

This decline in facilities (and status) has resulted from a wrong approach to transport matters; because of this Professor Hondelink had agreed to join the Council to give it the benefit of his experience in furthering its work.

Mr. Aickman spoke next. He argued that the I.W.A. has always worked on a basis of facts, and though our Parliamentary success could have been greater, Mr. George Strauss had referred to the waterways lobby as being the most powerful in the House. But Lord Stonham's doubts as to the effectiveness of our campaign were well founded, for a number of reasons too intricate to mention briefly.

END OF THE NARROW BOAT

The outlook for waterways seems gloomy: on the new British Waterways Board there is not one businessman—yet the Board is charged with running such systems as the Aire and Calder Navigation. It was expected that carrying in narrow craft would soon cease, yet the revenue from pleasure traffic at present only forms $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ of the total revenue, and the most sanguine would never put it as much higher than 5%.

If such cessation of commercial traffic irrevocably occurs, what should be the new role of the I.W.A.: should it become a sort of aquatic A.A., serving only its own members' interests; or should it go in for wider issues, seeking to establish a general transport policy of civilised transport. Beyond doubt such a policy needs to be established. In fifty years' time, these foul travelling conditions, on roads especially, will be looked upon as the consequences of ill-planned industrial development, just as today we condemn the slums of the last century.

Mr. Aickman considered that should we go in for the wider issues, historical precedent augurs well for the future: but why are things so bad at present? He dissented from the view of Professor Hondelink that the chaos had resulted from a lack of co-ordination, considering it instead to stem from the country's almost total dependance on the motor industry. Exports, it is claimed, depend upon a solid home market, hence no action is taken to deter would-be road users or to decrease the current usage of the roads. How could such a laissez-faire attitude benefit the community: now that many of the basic problems of

living have been solved, a civilised appreciation of life should be possible. Waterways themselves provide one of the best demonstrations of beauty and utility combined, and as such form a basis for advocating a changed method of thinking. Hence the support of the I.W.A. for the Council, with the hope that such a more broadly based body might accomplish a change of the required nature.

MORE LORRIES

After the talks, Professor Hondelink, Mr. Foley, and Mr. Aickman jointly answered questions. There is no space here to give a full account of the proceedings, but some of the points made by Mr. Foley should be recorded. Concerning the proposed reduction of the number of railhead coal depots from 2,400 to only a few hundred, Mr. Foley argued that this would be bound to increase the numbers and traffic density of coal lorries, and great difficulties have already been created in London by the closures so far effected. So far as lorries are concerned traffic density is reaching absurd proportions: certain residential areas are becoming as congested as the densest industrial parts. The cessation of rail transport in certain areas will create transport facilities akin to those enjoyed during the middle ages.

At the time electrification of the railways was stopped in 1957, Mr. Foley went on to say, construction of the M1, parallel to that railway route, was commenced. Now the road takes much of the traffic and the railways carry less each year. Had the public really been saved money by the construction of the M1?

In answer to a further query about motorways, Professor Hondelink gave it as his opinion that had there been regulation of traffic, construction of an expensive system of motorway need never have been undertaken: before the war, Britain had an excellent system of roads which would have served for vastly greater quantities of traffic with comparatively small expenditure on their modernisation, had the transport of heavy goods been kept to rail and water. The resultant savings in land and costs would have been tremendous.

It was difficult to find words with which to close such a meeting. One could only thank the speakers for having given us a wider appreciation of transport problems and policies, and urge all members to give support of the work of the Council whenever possible.

Will all of you who can help in any way, particularly by encouraging the affiliation of any societies you may think could strengthen the Council, please get in touch with the Secretary. His name and address: Mr. T. C. Foley, O.B.E., Secretary, the National Council of Inland Transport, 4 College Hill, Cannon Street, E.C.4.

Around the Waterways

RIVER STOUR NAVIGATION

FOLLOWING the success of last year's cruise of boats, the Action Committee are to hold two further rallies in 1963.

The first will be on Sunday, May 12th, and will be from Sudbury to Bures. Its object will be to protect the public right of navigation in this part of the river. This will be the first time the committee has been active on the upper river.

The second will be on Sunday, 15th September, and will be from Langham to Brantham. The object of this cruise will be to draw public attention to the right of navigation and the possibility of restoring the locks to full use.

The Stour Committee are investigating the effects of the Essex Waterworks Bill now before Parliament, which proposes among other things the construction of a weir at Stratford St. Mary. The Committee are seeking an assurance that the weir will not affect the right of navigation on the river.

Please note that the Guide to the River Stour published by the Committee is available from Mr. I. Cane. His new address is: Victoria House Private Hotel, 17 Cliff Terrace, Hunstanton, Norfolk.

J. E. MARRIAGE.

RIVER MEDWAY

AS a result of certain provisions of the Transport Act 1962, the Kent River Board are proposing a new schedule of tolls for the river, commencing 1st April, 1963. This is the first increase in charges for pleasure craft since the 1/- per lock charge was fixed by the Upper Medway Navigation Act in 1911. Under the circumstances an increase in the lock tolls is not unreasonable, though the River Medway Sub-committee are corresponding with the Board about one or two aspects of the new rates.

At present the new schedule of lock tolls for the upper river is as follows:

Category of boat.	Tolls for one passage through a lock. Toll per lock.
Mechanically propelled boat of any size	East Farleigh, Teston, Yalding 3/6 Other six locks 2/6
Every other kind of boat	Any lock 1/-

The present system of charging an additional toll for a dinghy towed by a motor launch will be

discontinued and the new toll paid will also cover the passage of the dinghy.

The Lock Pass Scheme for members of the I.W.A. will again operate in the coming season, and the charges proposed are as follows:

Period	Inclusive Charge
Season	£5 0s. 0d.
28 Days	£2 0s. 0d.

The present differential charge for boats under and over 20 ft. long will end, and the above season charge is for a boat of any length. The charge includes free passage of all locks and use of lock handle. A returnable deposit of 30/- is charged on the handle.

It will readily be seen that the charge for the Lock Pass Scheme is very favourable when compared with the new lock tolls, and it will be greatly in the interest of boat owners on the river to join the Association and participate in the scheme.

Tonbridge Mooring. The Branch's public mooring at Tonbridge will be open once again on April 1st for visiting pleasure craft. It is hoped that as many members as possible will use this facility.
DEREK SALMON.

GRAND UNION AND RIVER LEE

THE great freeze-up on the waterways started even before Christmas, when most of the trading narrow boats were tying up for the holidays. Conditions were so severe that by December 27th, most of the South-East Division of British Waterways was affected (the writer was skating on Christmas Day on the Oxford Canal near Rugby). Ice-breaking began immediately in the areas where traffic was passing; the London area of the Grand Union, on the Regent's, the River Lee, and in the areas serving the Coventry collieries. But the ice thickened so quickly that breaking became impossible where traffic was light.

During the first week in January the unprecedented blizzards had so worsened conditions on the towpath that the movement of dumb craft on the Regent's and Grand Union canals was only possible by tug. By the end of the second week all movement had stopped except for the G.U. below Bulls Bridge, the Paddington Arm, the Regents, and the Lee below Enfield.

Regular and constant ice-breaking routines had by now been established in the London area, involving extensive overtime and weekend work for all operational and maintenance staff.

The routine necessary for passing craft was for an ice-breaking tug to go ahead breaking the young ice in the channel and moving the heavy

flows; to return over the broken passage and with the towing tug haul the barges forward. At this time temperatures were so low that broken ice was freezing into pack ice in a relatively short time, and towing and breaking at the same time was impossible. By the 14th January movement on the Paddington Arm above Alperton was brought to a standstill and by the 16th January it was only possible to work below Kensal Road. The Stonebridge-Tottenham pound of the Lee Navigation needed constant ice breaking over a period of three weeks in the coldest part of the period, and movement and dispersal of broken ice downstream was a continuing task.

During the period several attempts were made to break ice higher up the canal but due to thickness of the ice little progress could be made. The first successful attempt at ice-breaking other than in the immediate London area was at Grove Mill (Watford) on 14th February: by the 4th March the breaker had reached Boxmoor and traffic to this area was re-opened. Breaking on the Upper

Lec started a little later and progress was soon made as far as Ware.

Tremendous efforts were made to keep the channels free and I believe that a tribute is due to the men who worked long hours in appalling conditions.

Mr. A. W. Knight, the Public Relations Officer of the new British Waterways Board, who kindly arranged the loan of the half-tone blocks of the scenes on the River Stort which were used in the Programme for the Bishop's Stortford Rally of Boats, has now donated to our Programme Editor a spare set of attractive line blocks of canal features. Some of these have also appeared in the Programme. These blocks have now been passed to the Canal Press, which as members know, is owned by the Branch and operated by our Chairman, David Horsfall. We are very grateful and hope that they will adorn future Branch publications.

OLIVER TURNER.

NEWS OF THE TRADE

TH**ERE** has been a complete reorganisation of the companies operating from the Canal Basin at Aylesbury, on the Grand Union. The Aylesbury Boat Co. Ltd. have yacht broking as their main theme, and have over 100 craft on their books, ranging in price from £100 to £3,000. Although they specialise in canal cruisers and narrow boats, they intend to extend their field to include river and coastal craft up to £3,000 in value. Moorings in the basin remain under their jurisdiction, and there are moorings available at present. The company are frequently being asked if they would start a narrow boat passenger service on the Arm, and although they are unable to do so themselves, they would gladly assist anyone else who would like to engage in this worthwhile project. A narrow boat would be made available on very economic terms, and the conversion could be carried out at a favourable price. The passenger run would be from the basin to the Red House at Aston Clinton, where there is a wharf, and where teas could be provided. Anyone interested please contact the company direct, their address appears on another page.

The Aylesbury Cruiser Co. Ltd. has recently been formed by Mr. J. F. H. Waldron, whose father, Mr. Leo J. Waldron, was the Secretary and Founder of the Upper Thames Motor Boat Club. The company will specialise in the hiring out of 4 and 6-8 berth self-drive canal cruisers.

The third company now operating at Aylesbury is Yacht and Boat Services Ltd., which will engage in refitting, repairing and converting of all types of cruisers and narrow boats.

MESSRS. J. TIMS & SONS LTD. are building two 2-berth cruisers for addition to their hire fleet this season. *Cool Water* and *Calm Water* represent luxury cruising combined with an elegance of design and solidity of construction which pleases the eye.

The saloon has an L-shaped settee converting at night into a full-size double bunk. The galley equipment includes Calor gas refrigerator, stainless steel sink in formica and multipoint water heater supplying both sink and wash basin surround. The toilet compartment forward is charmingly tiled in pink.

The engine is the Watermota Ford "Sea Wolf" and the large cockpit, which can sleep an extra person, can be totally enclosed with folding hood and side curtains. Length: 24 ft.; Beam: 8 ft. 9 in.; Headroom: 6 ft.

ON Saturday, March 2nd, Mrs. Peter Scott launched the latest addition to the hire fleet of Maid Line Cruisers Ltd., of Thames Ditton. This was the *Robert Aickman*, named for our Founder, and intended to be the first of a new Inland Waterways Association Class. Mr. Aickman was present at the launching, and addressed the crowd with his usual eloquence. The weather was perfect, and the *Robert Aickman* was a fine sight as she went smoothly down the slipway into the water. She has been designed to the largest dimensions which will pass through every navigation in Great Britain, 48 ft. x 7 ft., and has many luxurious innovations, including a bath.

COMING EVENTS RECENT ACTIVITIES

APRIL 5th. BRAINS TRUST. The Kennet & Avon Canal Trust are having a Brains Trust on waterways and allied subjects. This will be held at the Small Town Hall, Reading, at 8 p.m. The panel will consist of Peter Chaplin, Capt. L. R. Munk, L. T. C. Rolt, and Viscount St. Davids. All are welcome; please bring your friends, and plenty of questions. There will be a silver collection.

APRIL 12th-14th. EASTER RALLY OF BOATS, at Bishop's Stortford. The Rally programme having already gone out to all members, only a brief summary is given here. The first craft are scheduled to arrive on the afternoon and evening of Good Friday, and the last on Easter Saturday morning. After the briefing of Captains at 10 a.m. the Rally will be officially opened by Councillor R. Merrill, J.P. This will be followed by canoe races, public boat trips, side shows, Bishop's Stortford Town Band, a concert on canal craft, open-air filmshow, fireworks, and illuminations. Easter Sunday morning will be a Public View Day, and craft will disperse after Midday. Rally entry forms have already been circulated, additional copies may be obtained from the Rally Secretary, c/o 3b Drayton Road, Tonbridge, Kent, to whom all other enquiries should be addressed. The Rally is organised by the Branch in conjunction with the Bishop's Stortford and District Committee of the British Empire Cancer Campaign. Everyone is urged to come, whether by boat or not. Bishop's Stortford is only 30 miles from London, and trains are fast and frequent. Please come and help make this, the second Branch Rally, a resounding success.

APRIL 26th (Friday). BRANCH ANNUAL DINNER. This will be held at the Casino Hotel, Taggs Island, Hampton, 7.30 for 8 p.m. Tickets, price 25/- for members and 27/6d. for non-members, are available from the Branch Social Secretary, James Street, 52 Moreton Street, S.W.1. Please apply early as accommodation is limited, sending a stamped addressed envelope. Cheques should be made payable to I.W.A. Ltd., London & Home Counties Branch. The nearest station to Tagg's Island is Hampton Wick (Southern Railway) about ten minutes' walk away. There is ample parking space for cars. It is hoped that some members will come by water. It may be possible to arrange an alternative on the menu for those who do not wish to eat meat on a Friday. Please state on your application if you would like this if it can be arranged, and if mooring facilities are required.

MAY 11th. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the whole Association at the Royal Society of Arts, John Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C.2, at 3 p.m. Refreshments will be available afterwards (price 1/-), please notify the Head Office of the Association, 4 Emerald Street, W.C.1, in advance if required.

MAY 12th (Sunday). MEDWAY BOAT TRIP. On this year's popular Medway trip we will be visiting the lower river and the estuary. The boat will leave Strood Pier at 10.45 a.m., run down to Sheerness, past Upnor and Chatham Dockyard, and then up Stangate Creek and Halstow Creek to Lower Halstow, where we shall land. The return trip will end at Sun Pier, Chatham, for tea at the Sun Hotel. A frequent bus service runs from Chatham to Strood. Bring packed lunch and protection from the weather. Tickets are members, 12/6; non-members, 15/-; tea, 3/6. Cash and 3d. stamp with applications please, to Mr. D. Salmon, Springhill Cottage, Yardley Park Road, Tonbridge, Kent. Cheques should be made payable to The London & Home Counties Branch, I.W.A.

Trains :

Charing Cross, 9.36 a.m. Strood, 10.32 a.m.
Strood, 5.7 p.m. Charing Cross, 6.5 p.m.
Strood, 5.32 p.m. Charing Cross, 6.48 p.m.

Strood Pier is opposite the station, and there is plenty of parking space.

JUNE 23rd. BOAT TRIP. Newbury to Hamstead Lock on the Kennet & Avon. This will be a round trip departing at 11.30 a.m. from Newbury wharf, 10 minutes from the station. A suitable train leaves Paddington at 9.15, arrives Newbury 10.56. Bring a packed lunch. Tickets are 6/- members, 7/6 non-members. Numbers will be limited. All inquiries to the Hon. Secretary, address on page 3. As it may be possible to arrange for a party ticket, will all those likely to go by train please contact the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible.

MID JULY. A carnival will be held at Tonbridge in mid July, and anyone interested in helping to organise or enter craft for a river pageant on the Medway please contact the Hon. Secretary.

WINTER MEETING ON JANUARY 24th. Despite the inclement weather some 40 members attended this meeting at the Bridge House Restaurant, and it was unanimously agreed afterwards that it was well worthwhile making the effort to be present. Our worthy Chairman being absent due to influenza, our Founder, Mr. R. F. Aickman, who had come along as a guest, was prevailed upon at very short notice to take the chair, which he did with his usual aplomb. Our

guest speaker, Mr. Mitchell, of Mitchell Lighterage Co., after assuring us that he was not much of a speaker, then went on to prove that he was both an excellent speaker and after an interval for refreshment also an excellent conjuror. The subject of Mr. Mitchell's discourse was based on his experience of Lighterage and Barges with which business his family has been connected for some 130 years and today consists of six brothers and five nephews, all Mitchells. Mr. Mitchell had many amusing anecdotes and funny stories about his experiences on the river, etc., and one got the impression that he could have talked for hours.

AUGUST 14th - 19th. NATIONAL RALLY at Little Venice, Paddington. Arrangement with British Waterways. J. C. S.

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PART VII

THE SOMERSET COAL CANAL

THE vigorous growth of the North Somerset coal field was the direct reason for this canal, as its name implies. Southern England needed coal, and the distance from the Midland and Northern mines was too great to bring coal into the area at a reasonable price. With this in view the Somerset mine owners wanted to improve communications in the area most favourable to their trade. The nearest markets were Bristol and Bath, and consequently two lines of canal were projected to run from different parts of the coal field to Limpley Stoke on the then proposed Kennet & Avon Canal. This proposal was formulated in 1794. The Kennet & Avon had promised support for the line and the River Avon section of its own line was to be given priority.

The proposed line ran from Limpley Stoke to Midford where it forked, one branch going through Combe Hay, Dunkerton, and Camerton to Timsbury, the other through Wellow and Writhington to Radstock. The main line to Timsbury was $10\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, and the Radstock branch $7\frac{1}{4}$. Horse tramways joined the collieries to the canals. Capital authorised was £80,000 with powers to raise another £40,000. The Company's Act was passed in 1795. A good future seemed assured, with other canals giving direct access to many parts of Southern England. The engineer was William Smith, better known as a geologist. In 1793 he had made a survey under Rennie, and after the Act was passed toured England, studying canals and railways.

Trouble soon arose at the junction of the two lines, where there was a large change in levels to be overcome. Between Midford and Combe Hay there was a rise of 130 ft., and to overcome this Robert Weldon approached the canal company about providing a lift. The year 1798 saw trials of his design, first failures and then successful. In October of the same year the Timsbury line was opened from Camerton to Dunkerton, and at about this time the company announced its intention to build two more lifts, another at Combe Hay and one at Midford.

The first lift consisted of a single watertight caisson of wood, capable of holding a boat carrying up to thirty tons. The caisson was totally immersed in water and had a lift of 46 ft. The chamber was 88 ft. high, 20 ft. in width tapering to $11\frac{1}{2}$ ft. at the ends, and of 88 ft. length.

The following year saw difficulties arising, as water was getting behind the lift walls and making them bulge. In May the company asked for tenders for rebuilding the lift and for building others.

At this stage William Smith was dismissed, and after lengthy arguments Messrs. Whitmore & Norton offered to build another lift, probably of the balanced type, without payment but with the proviso that, if successful, they should receive £17,300 and a royalty of 4d. a ton on goods passed.

Two other engineers were called in, and Benjamin Outram, whose speciality was plateways, suggested the replacement of the colliery tramways by others taking 2-ton wagons. These could run on to 90 ft. x 9 ft. rafts, each taking twelve. They would then be taken to the top of an inclined plane, run down it, and loaded into boats at the foot. This plan would cost £22,035, including £3,500 for widening.

The other engineer, John Sutcliffe, criticised this plan, saying that widening would cost at least £10,500 and that rafts would be very susceptible to the wind which could blow them into the banks and hence damage both. He also thought that smaller wagons, of 12-14 cwt., in strings of six would be easier to handle with less breakage. Instead of the incline he suggested locks at a cost of £22,323 with a lower rate of maintenance.

Outram then suggested a railway joining the levels, with the coal contained in boxes and transhipped by crane at top and bottom. This plan was accepted and carried into effect, but abandoned in 1802 in favour of locks. These were constructed to the Midland size of 70 ft. x 7 ft.

By this time the full capital had been used up with the exception of £3,768 in forfeited shares. A new Act of 1802 authorised the raising of a further £22,000 to pay off debts and finish the works. Another financial move was the setting up of a Lock Fund of £45,000 for the locks joining both branches to the main line. The Kennet & Avon and Wilts. & Berks. canals contributed £15,000 each. A joint committee was set up to superintend the building and managing of the locks. 22 were built in the Combe Hay flight and the Timsbury branch opened throughout on 5th April, 1805. Two steam pumping engines were installed at Combe Hay and Dunkerton to pump water to the summit level.

The Radstock branch was built from Radstock to Wellow but the connection to the main line does not seem to have been made although a tramway is mentioned by some authorities and appears to be a likely guess. Although the main line is said to have terminated at Timsbury, Bradshaw of 1832 is one authority of several that give

Paulton as the terminus. Others again give Camerton. It is possible that branches were proposed to several collieries but laid as tramways.

At this stage tramways make a bigger impact on the system. The Radstock arm was closed for several reasons, one its incomplete state, another the difficulties caused by riparian rights. It also becomes clear that a continuous line of communication was essential. In 1814 it was decided to make a line of tramway along the canal tow-path and extend it to the junction with the Timsbury line. This was completed on July 20th, 1815. Wagons holding 27 cwt. were used in trains of 8-9, drawn by three horses. The tramway was nearly eight miles long with six miles on the level and the rest inclined to bring it down to the level of the canal. The track was laid as a plate-way. Horses seem to have remained the motive power until its closure in 1871, although it has been said that a steam locomotive was tried at Radstock in 1825, but proof on this point is lacking. On the subject of steam it is of interest to note that the world's first compound engine was erected at Radstock by Jonathan Hornblower in 1782.

Before examining the changeover to railway it may be as well to give a brief review of the trade done on this combined canal-tramway system. Revenue from the system and from the Lock Fund was good after the bad start. Nearly £15,000 was the sum for 1828, and by 1838 it had passed £17,000. By this time coal traffic had risen considerably since the opening and for 1838 the tonnage carried was nearly 140,000. Coal being a highly competitive commodity, this new means of distribution enabled Somerset coal to compete successfully over South and South-Western England. Price wars were frequent and subsidies were also in vogue. Naturally this increased trade also increased the prosperity of the Kennet & Avon and Wilts' & Berks. canals. At Midford there was a weighing machine for boats, and the canal authorities were often complimented on their fair measure.

However, railway competition soon changed the story and further price cuts resulted in a revenue of £6,120 for 1868, although the tonnage was much the same as thirty years earlier. During this period it was sometimes necessary for coal merchants to raise the question of high tolls, but the railway soon brought such charges down to a more realistic level.

A high in tonnage seems to have been over the year 1864 when 157,000 tons left the canal. This prosperity led to the canal company being one of the few paying more than 5% consistently, but the coalfield was gradually being worked out and the second half of the century saw its decline and that of the canal with it.

1871 was the beginning of the end, for in that

year the Radstock tramway was sold to the Somerset & Dorset Railway for its conversion to a full-scale railway. This company used the site of the tramway and also that of the canal for the construction of their main line extension from Evercreech to Bath. The whole section was opened in 1874. Purchase of the tramway cost the S. & D.R. £20,000. At the time of the closure the tramway was carrying over 100,000 tons per year, and besides giving the S. & D.R. access to Bath its sale enabled them to take over the coal traffic from the South-eastern part of the field.

The history of the S. & D.R. is well chronicled elsewhere so suffice it to say that, after the normal G.W.R./L.S.W.R. gauge war, and the opening of the Bath extension, it became a joint line under the L.S.W.R., with the Midland Railway as partner. Its route is from Bath nearly to Bourne-mouth, with several branches, one of which we shall meet again later in this series.

Now we must return to the remaining line of canal. By 1873 the Bristol & North Somerset Railway had reached Radstock and was taking coal from the northern part of the coalfield. This, combined with the loss of the Radstock tramway and the declining field, led to the reduction in tonnage to 24,581 by 1884. The last dividend was paid in 1889, and by 1893 the tonnage had fallen to only 11,400 and the company went into liquidation. Five years later water ceased being pumped to the summit level.

In 1902 the Board of Trade held an inquiry into the canal and reported it as being derelict with little hope of re-opening, as the collieries in the area had been closed. The G.W.R., however, wanted to buy the site, and in 1904 obtained an Act of Abandonment which enabled them to do so. A branch line from Limpley Stoke to Camerton was then built on the site and opened in sections up to 1910. One point here is that Combe Hay tunnel, some 66 yards in length, shared the distinction of being one of the two canal tunnels later adapted for railway use, the other being, of course, Frindsbury tunnel on the Thames & Medway. The G.W.R. paid £20,000 for the canal and this was divided amongst the shareholders, the preference shares receiving about £25 for each £150 share. The ordinary shareholders received next to nothing. The first section from Camerton to Dunkerton Colliery was opened for freight on 26th August, 1907. 9th May, 1910 saw the opening through to Limpley Stoke and the start of passenger services.

Of later developments a word might be of interest. First the Camerton branch was extended to meet the North Somerset, Bristol-Radstock line. However, in the long run, although part of a much wider system, it had a much shorter career than the canal it superseded. The line has now

been closed to passenger traffic for many years, but its last claim to fame came after this.

Although an obscure line, a great many people know it since, in June, 1952, it became the scene of Titfield & Mallingford Railway, for the Ealing Studios film, "The Titfield Thunderbolt." This, however, although the most recent, is not the only time the line has appeared on film. Before the war "The Ghost Train," with Jack Hulbert, was also filmed there. This latest time was the line's swan-song, as it is now closed.

A strange history, indeed. First of all a successful canal serving a prosperous coalfield. Then after the coal ran out a country branch railway, and last of all the scene for a comedy film.

The gradient change at Midford is still very evident as the S. & D.J.R. is carried over the Camerton branch on an eight-arched viaduct, 168 yards long. The S. & D.J.R. section we are concerned with is still a well-patronised line for through trains, and since the closure of the North Somerset and Camerton branches it has been the only railway in the area for local traffic. Now this

line is in danger of closing. The W.R. say that freight traffic is not sufficient, and that the line is difficult to work, which is no doubt true. If this line is closed the area will have no rail service at all and it will involve also the re-routing of several through trains. The result may or may not be an improvement. This remains to be seen. Another point is that Midford might have become a more important rail centre if a proposal for a new station at Bath, for both G.W.R. and S. & D.J.R., had come into being. A new line would have been built from the G.W.R. West of England main line to the S. & D.J.R. at Midford and thence by the latter to Bath.

In conclusion it may be said that the canal and tramway system of North Somerset served a very useful purpose, and when that purpose was no more, it died a more or less natural death. Whether the same applies to the railways later superimposed is more doubtful in our present day, when the only cure presented for British Railways' difficulties is a more and more drastic pruning.

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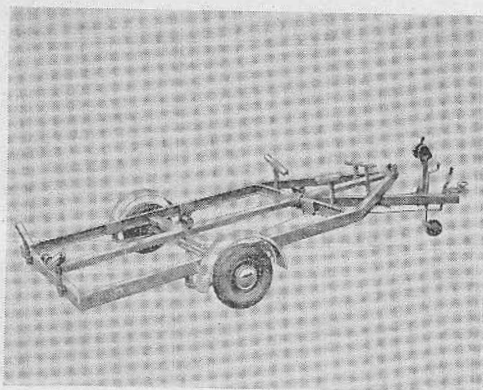
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Summer Holiday Cruise of Reedling

by JOHN BLAKESLEY

PART II

The next day we reached the objective of our whole cruise—Peterborough. Here we did shopping and sightseeing. We went down Stanground Creek to the Sluice where we had a look at the weedy Middle Level. The lock-keeper said that only three boats had been through the navigation this year. We then cruised the dreary five miles to Dog-in-a-Doublet Sluice, an impressive but disappointing climax to a most enjoyable holiday. We moored for the night above Orton Stauch.

On Saturday we experienced the most dramatic incident of the cruise. While cruising past the moorings of the Peterboro Cruising Club, we were hailed from the shore. The upshot of all the excitement was that we lost our Skipper and now were in no hurry to complete the trip within three weeks. We also managed to tow a cruiser with an overheated engine. At night mooring was made above Wansford.

As the time was not now such a problem, we just pottered along during the next few days. On Sunday, we covered a mere ten miles almost to Oundle. On the way we stopped to look at the villages of Tansor and Cotterstock. We were very impressed by Oundle which we visited in the evening and shopped in in the morning. It is a very old and attractive town in the local Northamptonshire stone, dominated by the famous Public School.

On the following morning, we moored just below Oundle Bridge for shopping in the town. Unsuccessfully enquiries regarding our lost windlass were also made at the head offices of the River Board. We moored for the night only 5½ miles from our previous night's mooring.

On Tuesday, we covered ten miles to the village at Woodford, stopping for lunch en route at Wadenhoe, a delightful village with an interesting Churchyard and a Public House. We stopped once more at the M.N.C.C. at Thrapston for shopping. We could not help noticing that, although the whole river runs through attractive countryside, by far the most enjoyable section of the river is between Thrapston and Peterborough. Above this point, the scenery becomes less magnificent, navigation becomes more tortuous, and more locks make for heavy going.

Next morning, as on many previous days, we went mushrooming in one of the many great meadows through which the Nene flows. Above Higham Ferrers Lock, we waited with the boat with which we were locking through while an attempt was made to lower the level of the river by opening the top gate paddles. This was in order that there would be less of a risk in going

under a dangerously low bridge. In fact, we failed to lower the level at all, and managed to squeeze under the bridge quite safely. Between this lock and Wellingborough we once more had considerable difficulty with weeds. Below Lower Wellingborough Lock, we towed a boat with weed trouble about a mile to the lock, no mean feat with weeds, a strong wind, and against the current. Above Wellingborough, we saw that narrow boats were now operating to the flour mill there. We moored for the night above Wollaston Lock.

On Thursday, we had a hard trip. Although we only covered 16 miles, we passed through 28 locks. On our way to Northampton, where we shopped and handed back our Nene lock keys, we called in at the Boat Club to inquire about our windlass but with no success. We left the River Nene, a navigation we had found unexpectedly attractive, and joined the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal. We moored the night on the Arm, near Gayton.

Next morning, we went down to Blisworth Tunnel, where we walked over the tunnel following the line by the air shafts. We reached Stoke Bruerne Top Lock where we had hoped to get a lift back by boat, but we were unlucky and so had to walk back. While we were moored the other side of the tunnel, we saw a pair of working narrow-boats enter the tunnel. After five or ten minutes there was a banging sound from it. Soon afterwards, a small pleasure cruiser came out into the sunshine with part of her hull stove in. The people in the boat seemed fairly unshaken, so we left upstream for Bucky Flight of locks.

We stopped above the Top Lock for a little shopping and a drink at the "New Inn". We also had a word with the lock-keeper about Braunston Tunnel which we navigated without incident on the next day. We were generally depressed by his gloomy prophecy about the future of the canals. We moored for the night just off the Main Line in the Leicester section of the Grand Union Canal.

On Saturday, we travelled a mere three miles to Braunston. Here, we were to leave the boat for three or four weeks. We cleaned the boat, and made last minute preparations. After lunch on Sunday we reluctantly took our leave of the boat and the waterways. We had had a really most enjoyable three weeks' holiday. What was more, we hoped to return for an additional week's holiday in September. Perhaps the weather would be kinder.

(to be continued)

FROM THE EDITOR'S CABIN

The great ice age of 1962-63 will be a talking point for many a year, and no doubt a boring point for a good many grandchildren. Many a chilly tale of frozen pipes and electric fires as dim as a cheap tin of salmon will be told. Your Editor, of course, chose this delightful time to move into a Thames-side bungalow, where she sat and watched the ice creep across the river, and thought evil thoughts about all those song writers who prattle about a "Yum-yummy world in the winter." Joking aside, it is a delight to be away from the noise and dirt of city life, and to have a waterway at the end of one's garden, complete with landing stage. Any waterborne I.W.A. members passing by may tie up and drop in for a cuppa (contents variable) anytime. Don't try it in the middle of the night though, the Editorial aim with a can of cold water is skilled and well practised.

Last year's Easter Rally at Woking created the precedent for this year's effort at Bishop's Stortford. The success of the last venture was far greater than we had dared to hope, and given a modicum of fine weather, this year's should be better still. One point of contrast is that this time there has been no need for preliminary working parties to dredge and dig. Considering the recent weather, this is a very lucky thing. Everyone likes a day out at Easter, and everyone with sense dislikes the nose-to-tail crawl to and from the coast. This Rally is, therefore, a boon to everyone without a boat who wants a day away from the towns. Come to the Rally, as many of you who can; Bishop's Stortford is only 30 miles from London, and rail services are good. If you are a motorist, why not try the railway for a change? And if you must come by car, then most of the holiday traffic will be heading South anyway. But come and support the Rally; support our cause, and the most deserving one of the British Empire Cancer Campaign. Judging from the official programme there will be plenty to do.

Our member Viscount St. Davids has a regular spot in an I.T.V. programme for young viewers, "Tuesday Rendezvous." Lord St. Davids speaks about our waterways, and shows pictures and films. A waterways contest recently brought in over 100 entries, many of them from youngsters already members of the Association. The next in the series will be on April 2nd, and there will be five more afterwards, at fortnightly intervals. All junior members should watch, and try and get their schoolmates to watch as well.

Another activity which is occupying Lord St. Davids is the organisation of a Branch of the I.W.A. at Cambridge University. There is as yet no such branch planned for Oxford. Come on the

Dark Blues! Anyone interested in starting an Oxford Branch should contact Viscount St. Davids direct, at 15 St. Mark's Crescent, London, N.W.1.

Owing to pressure of space, Letters to the Editor will appear in the next issue.

GREAT OUSE RESTORATION SOCIETY An Appeal for £15,000

This is an appeal to all river lovers and to all guardians of our national heritage.

At the end of the last century traffic ceased on the river between Bedford and St. Neots, and so to the sea. The locks became derelict and public funds were, and still are, insufficient for their repair. Their restoration is, in consequence, largely dependent upon a voluntary organisation. The long period of neglect continued until 1955 when Bedford Town Lock was re-opened and the Society made a substantial contribution to the cost incurred. Since then the number of those using the river for recreational purposes such as angling, rowing and sailing has greatly increased and now work is in progress, and nearing completion, on the second lock downstream. Here the Society has pledged itself to pay the entire cost of the bottom gates without which the lock cannot be used by boats.

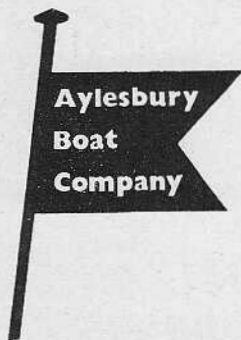
They are confident that the sum of £15,000 will discharge present and future commitments in respect of the remaining locks above St. Neots, and so make the river navigable once again to the sea. Bedford is by far the largest town on the Ouse and the restoration of the waterway will make it an important inland port and a centre to which people will come by river from all parts of the country for the varied attractions the district has to offer.

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RIVER STOUR ACTION COMMITTEE.

CRUISE OF BOATS - 12th MAY, 1963.

The River Stour Action Committee is holding a cruise for small boats and canoes on the Upper River Stour on Sunday, 12th May, 1963.

As several locks and weirs will have to be portaged round, entrants are advised to bring canoes or small boats with outboards^{*} which can be easily portaged.

Entrants are also advised to take packed lunches and a stop will be made en route.

The cruise will begin at 10.30 a.m. for 11.00 a.m. at the headquarters of the Sudbury Boat Club, Sudbury, Suffolk, where boats can be launched and cars parked, and finish at Bures Weir (Laylands Farm), Bures, Suffolk, around 4.00 p.m. Both points are easily accessible by car.

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