

WINDLASS

No. 69 JULY 1968

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(Hugh McKnight Photography)

READING SCENE

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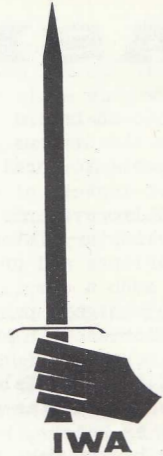
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From the Editor's Cabin

OPERATION ASHTON, a national project of voluntary labour, promises to be the biggest working party ever; we hope to get several hundred volunteers on the job, that of cleaning up as much of the Ashton Canal as possible in 48 hours. September 20th-22nd.

This is the opportunity for every member who has ever said he wished there was something positive he could do for the canals to prove his (or her) sincerity. On a project of this magnitude there will be work for all, young, old, men and women, frail or strong, all are needed. I have been crippled since childhood; there is a job for me, so I shall be there. Every effort is being made to make it as easy as possible for the volunteers; full details appear in a special feature elsewhere in this issue. But in the end everything depends on whether you, the Members, become Working Members for just 48 hours.

* * * * *

THE BRANCH CHAIRMAN.

Mr. Michael Aplin has announced his resignation from the position of Branch Chairman, and will be succeeded by Mr. Desmond Briscoe. We hope to print an appreciation of Mr. Aplin and the work he has done for the Branch in the next (September) issue of "Windlass". Luckily we are not losing him from the Committee entirely, as he will be taking over the position of Lee & Stort representative.

OPERATION ASHTON

The ideas behind this massive working party, apart from the obvious one of improving the canal, are to prove to local authorities it could be an asset instead of a liability; to show what improvements can be made by voluntary labour; to gain experience and prove we can run such a complicated exercise; to gain publicity; and to increase our numbers.

WE WILL PROVIDE sleeping accommodation, catering, and as much mechanised equipment such as hoists, pumps, dumpers and trucks as possible to make the most efficient use of your labour.

YOU WILL NEED gum boots, or waders; a pair of industrial gloves preferably waterproof; a sleeping bag/blankets, a Lilo/camp bed if you have one; plate, mug, cutlery, plus any personal comforts you may wish to bring (within reason!)

TRANSPORT. We hope to arrange for a coach, with volunteer cars ferrying workers to and from the pick-up point, travelling upon the Friday night. If your response to this appeal is worth it your local organiser will do the same or arrange for a car convoy. Those travelling by train or bus can be picked up at appropriate terminals.

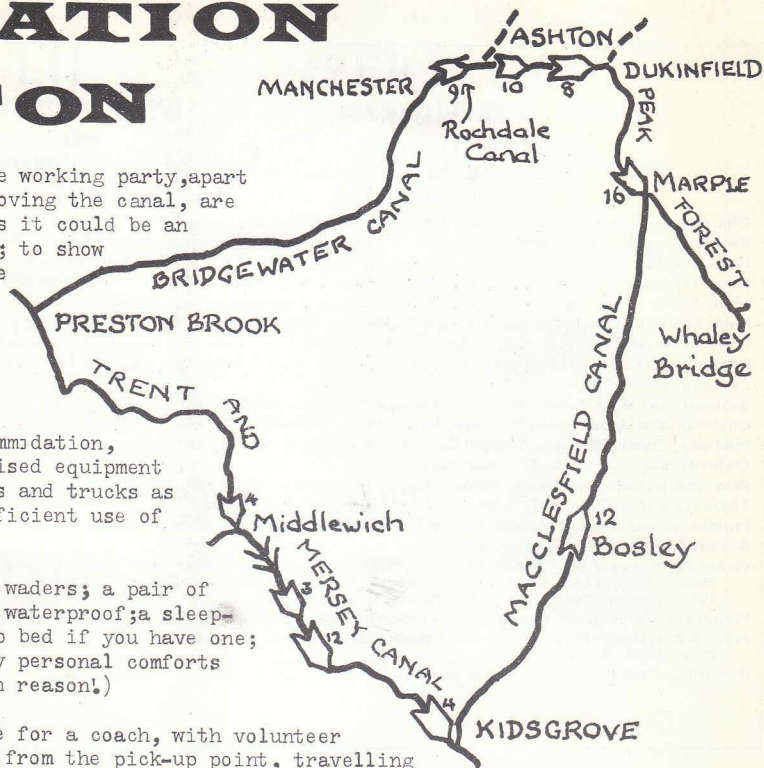
There will be a 'Navvies Get-Together' on the Saturday evening, if a large enough place can be found to hold the multitude.

British Waterways have agreed to control the water levels for us.

We expect groups from all I.W.A. Branches and all other waterway societies to participate. You will be working with kindred spirits from all parts of the country. Although this may not be your canal, remember your canal may need similar help some day.

FILL IN THE COUPON NOW

See you in September



NARROW BOAT FOR SALE. All steel motor boat (60ft. by 6ft. 10ins, drft 1ft. 10 ins.) docked 1967, converted to provide large saloon, fully equipped kitchen, bathroom, two double cabins (4 permanent berths) engine room/workroom. Hot and cold water and central heating. Refrigerator and cooker. Full electrics with Lister generator. Main engine; Parsons "Prawn". £2,000
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Josher's Column

I QUOTE AGAIN FROM THE MAY "WINDLASS", page 4. "One wonders why the public's right to navigate and their ability, through the courts, to enforce proper maintenance are being abolished. I can think of two possible reasons. Firstly, that we have been led up the garden path by the Ministry officials, who will continue to run down and close waterways. I know of an easy way the Ministry can counter this; if I was a Ministry official who sincerely wanted to keep the waterways open I would resent the above suggestion and arrange for the Ministry Press Office to write to the Editor of "Windlass". The Editor now awaits a letter; failing receipt of it, our suspicions will seem justified."

When I first wrote the above, I did so in the expectation that the Ministry would issue an immediate denial; members will no doubt draw their own conclusions from the continued absence of a letter from the Ministry.

READING THROUGH THE HOUSE OF COMMONS "Hansard" reports for May 29th. and 30th. which contain the Report Stage debates on the Transport Bill, I was surprised to see that Mr. Swinger, the Minister of State, said that the Opposition amendments sought to retain the old maintenance standards. I thought I would check up on this and I find that what the amendments tried to do was not to retain the old maintenance standards but to retain the public right of navigation and British Waterways obligation to maintain the nationalised waterways; the Board would not be obliged to maintain to the present statutory dimensions, but would be legally bound to maintain the commercial and cruising waterways in a suitable condition for commercial and cruising craft respectively.

I cannot see what the Government finds objectionable in this. They have declared their intention (in the September White Paper) of keeping the waterways open for the public use and that the Board should be given "the new and positive duty of maintaining these waterways". Is it surprising that the Government's reluctance to accept these amendments is causing the more knowledgeable of our members to wonder what the Government's true purpose is?

There is one conclusion I can come to, and distasteful it is too. This is that Mr. Swinger failed to understand the effect of the amendments and that his advisers likewise failed. This conclusion supports a point I made last month - that the Ministry of Transport civil servants lack sufficient knowledge on the subject of waterways law.

Incidentally, David Watt, the political editor of "The Financial Times" writing on June 14th. about the failure of the current Government in the details of its policies suggests that one probable reason is that "in a number of Ministries - Housing, Power, Technology and Transport are obvious examples - the issues are so technical and complicated that the conventional administrative-class civil servant who is the closest to the Minister under the present dispensation cannot be sufficiently aware of the widest implications of the advice which he is offering". I gave an example of this last month.

"ONE OF THE MOST NOTABLE developments on this score" (improving the utilisation and appearance of waterways) (has been 'Operation Springclean 1968' which is sponsored by a wide range of bodies initially in the North West, and has the purpose of 'cleaning up and brightening up' the industrial areas. The Board made it clear that they were very ready to help bring about the sort of improvements at which Operation Springclean aims, to the extent that the many other calls on their resources permit, and their officers took part in working out the plans for this campaign insofar as the waterways were concerned". An extract from page 14 of the recently published 1967 Annual Report of the British Waterways Board.

The Ashton Canal lies within the area covered by "Operation Springclean" and so it is not really surprising that British Waterways have given their approval to the holding of a giant working party there on September 21-22nd; nonetheless, it is the first time that anything like this will have been done.

As members know, the Ashton Canal, together with the lower Peak Forest Canal forms an unnavigable 16 mile sector of the near 90 mile Cheshire Canal Ring. We allege that these canals are illegally unnavigable and a writ has been served on the Board.

The purpose of this massive working party as I understand it is to tidy up and clean out parts of the Ashton Canal to dovetail in with "Operation Springclean". British Waterways are not, I understand, committed to the eventual restoration of these canals.

Local opinion still needs to be convinced of the potential use of the Canal, as evidenced by the idea of one firm of helping "Operation Springclean" by filling in the Canal outside their factory! Not all the local authorities are convinced yet and this working party can show that the Canal can be an asset, not an eyesore, and that people from all over the country really care about these two canals.

THE LEGAL POSITION OF THE privately owned Basingstoke Canal is again coming to the forefront of the never-ending struggle over this canal. The credit for a lot of the recent activity over the Canal should go to the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society, particularly to their Hon. Secretary Jim Woolgar (address; 56 Connaught Crescent, Brookwood, Woking.) I see that the Canal Co., have now refused to issue licences for large powered craft.

There appears to be some doubt as to whether pleasure craft have a right to navigate this Canal. However, in the case of Case v. Midland Railway 1859 27 Beavan 247, it was decided that the right to navigate any public waterway (which this canal is) extends to any form of traffic reasonably suitable to the water highway in question which does not impose an excessive burden on the owner of the soil (or the person liable to repair the water highway) or substantially inconvenience other users. (See Halsbury 3rd. Edition, Volume 19 Highways, page 75 paragraph 109 if you happen to be legally trained.)

This case was about whether a steam powered vessel had a right to navigate a waterway built for horse-drawn boats, and it was decided that any craft suitable to the canal (as maintained to its statutory dimensions) has such a right.

I HEAR THAT THE PLANS for opening up various towpaths includes the one going past one moorings at Broadwater, on the Regent's Canal. Although one must constantly bear in mind the need for the sensible opening up of towpaths, May I, in this instance, question the advisability of this when owners need moorings that are secure from theft and vandalism?

I WRITE THIS ON JUNE 16th. a wonderful day; the coarse rods are back!

By Canoe to Reading

by LES BIRD.

"Mermaid", the canoe I used for this trip is an 11ft. Kayak that I built myself ten years ago to a P.B.K. design, but modified for marine ply construction. It has been severely tested, having completed over this period an estimated total of 2500 miles of inland waterways, estuaries and open sea trips. My kit consisted of a tent fly, sheet, camp bed, sleeping bag, 'Gaz' cooker, utensil and victuals for five days. I also carry a two gallon water container, but with only about half a gallon in it, this extra air space gives me additional buoyancy. Thus I am entirely self contained.

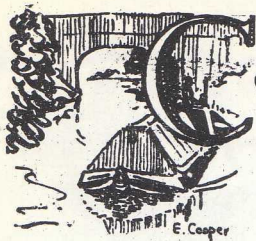
I launched from the Causeway under Southwark Bridge at 2p.m. Thursday, High tide London Bridge 4.45p.m., this gave me three hours 45 minutes of flood tide, which took me to Richmond with 40 minutes to spare. On this section, the wind was strong and combined with the heavy commercial traffic and pleasure steamers gave me some lively sport along the tideway reaches. At half past seven I had passed Kingston Bridge, so decided it was time to seek a suitable spot to disembark for the night. This I found along the Thames Ditton reach, opposite the marina.

The Kayak was heaved ashore, kit emptied out, stove lit and meal on (curried chicken with rice). While this was steadily simmering I assembled the camp bed. This I laid alongside the Kayak, the fly sheet covering the lot. Supper finished I had a cup of coffee, a pipe of 'baccy, and so to bed.

I awakened at 6a.m. on Friday, and having washed, shaved and breakfasted on bacon, eggs and tomatoes, re-packed the Kayak. I was off by 7.30a.m. As I joined the cruisers in the locks, they began to realise that I was still with them. They were amazed at the trip I was making in such a small craft. Most of them were new to the game, so I spread the I.W.A. gospel, and hoped that some will be converted. One crew were going nowhere in particular; I was pleased to meet them again at the Rally.

At 1p.m. I was approaching Bell Weir Lock and made my lunch stop here. As it had been so hot a cold meal seemed favourite (salad, peaches and cream). The Kayak was de-kitted, turned over to empty out surplus water, repacked, and I was away when the lock gates were opened. It was thirsty work paddling, so I called at the next riverside pub and had a most enjoyable pint (or was it two?)

(Concluded on page 9)



oming Events . . .

Recent Activities

AUGUST 2nd. "Evening News" River Thames Pageant. The Branch has accepted Mr. Grange's offer of his boat "Coo-ee" as our entry. Members will remember how splendid this Dutch boer looked at the previous Pageant. Further details of this event are not yet available.

AUGUST 17th/18th. A RAMBLE ALONG THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL. Come along and assess the condition of the Canal for yourself. A weekend ramble has been organised in conjunction with the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society for the weekend of August 17/18th. Commencing at Brookwood Station at 10.45a.m. members will be able to see the Brookwood 14 flight of locks and enjoy some of the finest scenery of any part of the Canal. The walk will finish at Ash Vale and those wishing to go home by train or return to Brookwood can do so from Ash Vale Station adjoining the waterway. Anyone wishing to camp the night is invited to make use of the S.& H.C.S.'s land opposite Ash Vale boathouse. On Sunday 18th. the ramblers will leave the boathouse at 10.30a.m. for the walk to Fleet. The boathouse is 50 yards from the station. Both stations mentioned are on the Waterloo-Alton-Southampton line.

SEPTEMBER 15th. (Sunday). BOAT TRIP ON THE GRAND UNION. N.B. "Linda" (used to carry H.M. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother when she re-opened the Stratford on Avon Canal) has been hired for a six hour cruise from COSGROVE and/or WOLVERTON, starting mid-morning, and returning around tea-time. Tickets, price 15/- (members & children) and 17/6 (non-members) available from D.J.M. Clements, 121 Sycamore Road, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Herts. (Stamped, addressed envelope please, and cheques payable to above) Tea aboard the "Linda" may be ordered in advance only, price 3/6. This is your chance to join one of the most distant outings organised by the Branch, and explore one of the lesser-known stretches of the Grand Union. Both Cosgrove and Wolverton are easily reached by car up the M.1/A.5. Please state on your application for tickets whether you are able to offer or require a lift and your starting point, and/or route. If enough lifts can be provided to cater for all those without cars it will be possible to delay the start of the trip to a time more convenient than the present railway service to Wolverton allows (9.05 Euston arrives at Wolverton at 10.18.)

SEPTEMBER 15th. RIVER STOUR DAY CRUISE for canoes and light craft, from Langham to Brantham. The object is to support the aims of the proposed River Stour Trust for the re-opening of locks on this section for pleasure purposes.

NATIONAL RALLY OF BOATS, 1968, LIVERPOOL.

JULY 26th.- 30th. The official Rally programme has been circulated, and by the time this issue of "Windlass" appears many boats will be on their way by one or other of the routes to Liverpool. This is the major event of the year, and we want it to be a good one.

Con gratulations !

The Branch extends its warmest congratulations to our Chairman Michael Aplin on his recent marriage. We all wish him and his charming bride Penny long years of happiness. A greetings telegram was sent by the Committee. We hope the honeymoon was spent on the waterways.



Reading

This Branch has a magnificent reputation for successful Rallies; the Kennet & Avon Trust likewise; combine the two for a joint rally, and what do you get? Reading, '68, a weekend that sparkled.

The site was an attractive one, with space for the marquees and sideshows to display their wares and attractions without people tripping over each other. The boats were packed in with a metaphorical shoehorn, two or three abreast, gay with bunting balloons and flowers. Among the craft present were several narrow boats, a magnificent steam launch, cruisers of all shapes and sizes, from places as far apart as Tewkesbury and Banbury, Gayton and Hertford, a splendid turnout which amazed both the representatives of British Waterways, and the Thames Conservancy. The Mayor of Reading was particularly enthusiastic.

There were sideshows and competitions (the Editor of "Windlass" was not amused by the game titled Shoot the Cat); the redoubtable Margaret Hutchings was in charge of the refreshments which, naturally, were excellent; the I.W.A. and K. & A. sales and information stands were colourful and busy; also present were noted waterway publishers David & Charles with a fine display of their books; background music was never loud enough to annoy, but prevented that empty feeling when crowds are thin (not that they often were).

The Playford Dancers from Reading University provided music and colour; folk dancing has now become an integral part of our rallies, and this group performed in 18th. century costume which made it doubly attractive. Music of another kind was provided by the Sea Cadets band whose marching and playing attracted a large audience. On Sunday Mr. Chapman, from the Canal Boatman's Institute took the Sunday Service at the site, with the Salvation Army Band. Noise of a more cacophonous variety was provided by the massed hooters and whistles of the assembled craft when they welcomed the inspection party on their waterborne circuit.

There were the inevitable canoe events, races and demonstrations. The Saturday evening saw the crew's get together, and Sunday the film show and fireworks. There was something happening all the time, Public boat trips were an important feature as always.

Monday saw the cruise to Burghfield, and, for three small portagable craft, to Tile Mill Lock. The weather, which had been fine for the weekend, broke up with a dramatic thunderstorm and torrential rain. The boats which got through to Tile Mill were warmly welcomed by the lock keeper, and stared at in amazement by many motorists as they worked the swing bridges.

The joint Rally Committee deserve the warmest congratulations for organising such a happy and successful Rally.

BRANCH CRUISING GUIDES. Revised editions are to be published of the Handbooks to the Rivers Wey and Medway. Will readers who have spotted errors, or have additional useful information they believe should be included please write without delay to Derek Salmon, Springhill Cottage, Yardley Park Road, Tonbridge, Kent. Please do this as soon as possible, to enable us to get the reprint published in time for the next Boat Show.

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ROUND THE WATERWAYS

THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL.

"What is the London & Home Counties Branch doing about the Basingstoke Canal? Is it working closely enough with the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society? Why don't we hear more about what is happening?"

The Editor tells me that one or two members have been asking questions of this sort; I hope that the following may help to answer them. I suspect, though, that some of the enquiries stem from frustration rather than ignorance of the present situation. During the last 12 months the Canal has been the subject of a great deal of publicity as a result of the New Basingstoke Canal Company's controversial proposals for the future of the waterway. The Branch has always kept a very close watch on developments, and has put forward proposals for restoration. But for various historical reasons our approach has been through channels other than the company. Because of the nature of discussions it has been considered unwise to publicise our activities.

Nevertheless the need for a public campaign has become increasingly necessary, and has been well handled by the S.S. & H.C.S. A close contact with the Society was established from the inaugural meeting and in fact more than half the Committee members belong to the I.W.A. and this Branch. It was decided from the outset that the Society should be independent of other organisations so as to have every opportunity of opening a friendly relationship with the Canal Co., At present the Branch is co-operating with the Society in the production of a joint publication on the canal's future.

The first important event to bring the Canal into the news was the publication of the Company's proposed future policy which appeared in July last year. The report made all the usual arguments against restoration. Whilst it acknowledged the existence of the Canal as an integral part of the local surface water drainage system, and noted the amenity value, it proposed that the 'nuisance' factor to development should be eliminated. I need hardly add how this should be achieved; by replacing locks with weirs and culverting certain sections for filling in. Further, the facilities provided for recreational use should be paid for by the local authorities. Obviously such a policy is quite unacceptable to us. Apart from the fact that adoption would end the possibilities of restoration forever, the expenditure of public money on a privately controlled enterprise cannot, in my opinion, be accepted by any section of the community.

The proposals were given wide coverage in the local press and was followed by an alternative policy for restoration, published by the S. & H.C.S. This was equally well reported. But who can implement it?

One suggestion is that Hampshire and Surrey County Councils should purchase the Canal. It has been known for some time that both Councils have shown an interest in the waterway. This fact prompted the Society to organise a private conference for councillors in the Autumn of 1967. The Society put forward proposals for restoration under public ownership, which it estimated would cost around £25,000-£30,000 using voluntary labour, and excluding the cost of purchase. Again, the press made the most of the event.

The Canal, and the activities of the S. & H.C.S. has been in the news ever since, although not much more was heard from the Canal Company. That is, until recently. The Easter protest cruise (reported in "Windlass") prompted the Company to make a bitter attack on the Society's activities, which was answered by Society and Branch members. For the first time the complex legal situation was touched on, concerning the

Company's rights under the original Act of 1778; in particular their control or otherwise to public use of the navigation was questioned. It seems likely that the Act only applied to the original Company and its successors as defined by company law. As the first Company went into liquidation it would appear that the provisions made do not apply to subsequent companies. There is no disputing the ownership of the Canal; but its responsibilities regarding maintenance and navigation are far from clear.

A further recent development has been the Company's refusal to issue any further licenses or to renew them for craft over ten feet in length or being powered. The Company indicated that it was opposed to powered craft in its policy document. The excuse being that such craft spoiled the amenities for other users. Like rubbish dumpers, perhaps?

H.D. JEBENS.

KENNET & AVON CANAL.

The navigation works stood up well to the considerable and unaccustomed traffic immediately following the Reading Rally. Although an unfortunate incident resulted in County Lock having to be worked with care for a while, this was speedily rectified by British Waterways during the following week:

The work at Burghfield Lock and the associated dredging is now expected to be completed shortly. It has been suggested that there should be an official re-opening ceremony for this and Sulhamstead Lock later in the season, when it is hoped that a modest number of boats will be present; details will be circulated when known. Apart from this the River Kennet now needs navigating to prove the demand for reopening it further westwards. A revised set of "Navigation Notes" up to Tile Mill Lock are to be published shortly, and it is hoped to review these in the next issue of "Windlass".

With the opening of the fishing season on what is notoriously a good fishing river, and the fact that water will be available for cruising which has not been so for some time, may I make a special plea for both boating people and anglers to show consideration for each other. We hope the passage of boats and other improved maintenance will improve the water for fishing as well. If boats will slow down to avoid wash when passing fishermen, (especially during competitions) and if fishermen will understand that there are places such as bridges and locks where boats need a clear passage, then I hope that a mutual respect and understanding for each other's needs will grow, so that the situation will never arise where it becomes necessary to restrict the use of the waterway by either boats or fishermen. My own experience of anglers on the River Kennet is that they are very reasonable if shown consideration. If any incidents do arise in which members are concerned, I shall be glad if they will let me know of them.

T. DODWELL.

RIVER WEY.

The work at Papercourt Lock was duly completed on schedule, and the lock open to traffic for the usual busy weekend at Whitsun.

The volunteer lock-manning scheme is now under way for the summer season, with members of the Surrey & Hants Canal Society at Bowers Lock, and Branch members at Pyrford. It had originally been planned to cover Coxes Lock as well, when possible, but we have now been asked if we can man Millmead Lock in the middle of Guildford instead. As a result we need more volunteers, particularly from the Guildford area - names please to Allan Pizey, who is organising the roster, at 39 Grosvenor Gardens, Kingston-upon-Thames, 'phone KIN 1363.

Redevelopment plans affecting the river frontage at Guildford are in the air, and the first phase will begin in the fairly near future. This will affect the area between Friary Street and the river, and will involve the demolition of the present navigation offices. These will be transferred at a date to be announced later to Dapdune Lea, Wharf Road, Guildford, which is adjacent to Dapdune Wharf. The wheel-crane and adjoining barn are to remain in place, and will be incorporated in a pedestrian area between the new road and the river at the lower end of which there will be a new road bridge giving a headroom of some 14ft. above normal water level. The wheel-crane itself will remain the property of the National Trust, but Guildford Corporation will be taking over responsibility for its maintenance. We have put forward a suggestion that a suitable display of photographs and

a map showing Guildford's place in the waterways system should be located nearby. It is encouraging to know that this piece of Guildford's history is to be preserved, and that the local authority is looking on the river as an asset in its plans. Later stages propose the provision of a riverside walk and other riverside uses which are most welcome.

Although the event took place on the Thames, it is pleasing to note that our members the Wey Cruising Club came second in the team competition at the Association of Thames Yacht Clubs Rally at Sunbury on Sunday June 9th., and that their reserve boat (!) won the trophy for scoring the most individual points.

TIM DODWELL.

GRAND UNION CANAL.

May was noteworthy for two social events - the first being the joint London & Home Counties I.W.A. and Grand Union Canal Society cruise to Slough to let the residents know we still care for their neglected canal. Unfortunately "Arcturus" booked to take passengers was out of action. With members coming from all over the Home Counties no means of stopping them and no boat to put them on, it was heartening to see members arriving with their boats, and in true Dunkirk style all were taken aboard, to have a pleasant and perhaps eye-opening trip to Slough. In appreciation of their efforts, the Branch made a gift to the crews involved.

The second event, the Rickmansworth Mini-Rally held in conjunction with the Rickmansworth Round Table - began as the Slough trip ended - in continuous rain! However, on the Sunday the weather changed and an estimated 5000 people inspected the boats. In all there were 34 gaily bedecked craft. Miss Janette Stewart-Wood, the World Champion Water Skier, inspected the craft and was escorted across the adjacent lake to open the Aqua Show, which provided seven hours of continuous entertainment for the boat crews. Altogether a mini-rally with maxi impact, setting the pattern for future events, we hope.

The Grand Union Canal Society is continuing its work to "Put Slough Back on the Waterways Map". On June 7th. the Chairman and I were invited to join the Inland Waterways Advisory Council on its inspection of the Slough Arm. In view of the Society's experience of Slough, we were invited to prepare a report on the Arm's present state, the effect of filling in a section for a road, the vital importance of a Thames/Slough canal, the full potential amenity development of the Arm as a National Park for anglers, boaters, nature lovers, etc., and the possibility of commercial traffic. It is hoped that this Report will assist the Advisory Council in its dealings with the Minister of Transport.

BOB HAMPSON.

BEDFORD BOATING FESTIVAL. There is to be a rally/festival on the Ouse at Bedford, on September 14th. organised by Bedford Chamber of Commerce. The Branch is to have a sales and information stand here, and offers to man it from anyone going there will be most gratefully received.

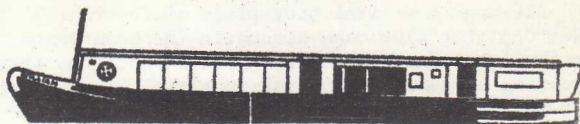
By Canoe to Reading. Continued from page 4.

I was making pretty good going even though it was "uphill" all the way, missing the current by cutting along the inside of bends and also creeping along under the shade of the overhanging trees. At 6 p.m. I had reached Windsor, where I quenched my thirst at the "Castle" for the last stretch to Maidenhead. I passed through Boulton's Lock at 8.30 p.m. and found a nice spot on an island to camp for the night. The routine was the same as the previous night, except the packet was Vesta Paella, which was a grand meal. I was serenaded to sleep by a combination of squabbling water fowl, hooting owls and a passing steamer with a "jam session" in progress.

Saturday morning I set off early, reaching Cookham Lock by 7.30 and having to wait till nine for it to open. Here I was joined by another rally bound cruiser. By 10 a.m. I was paddling along the Henley Regatta course, and stopped in the town for lunch and shopping. Then off again on the last lap. I was approaching the town of my birth, bringing back memories of many a happy weekend cruise in skiffs, gigs and camping punts.

As I rounded into the Kennet by the Horse-Shoe Bridge I was given three loud blasts. Imagine my surprise as I looked over my shoulder and saw the "President". We locked through Blakes together, and arrived at the Rally site about 7 p.m. It was a grand trip, and the success of the Rally added up to a most pleasant experience.

A Boat Called 'WILLIAM'



The "William" a traditional narrow boat, formerly owned by Messrs. A. Wander Ltd. was used for carrying coal to their factory on the Grand Union Canal. Built by Walker Bros. at Rickmansworth in 1926, it was purchased by Beauchamp Lodge Settlement in 1958 to convert into a camping craft. Originally it was intended that "William" would be used by Beauchamp Lodge Clubs, but the old Bollinder engine continually broke down, and money for conversion was extremely scarce. Finally, with the appointment of the present Warden in 1960 it was decided to embark on a project designed to give holidays to children who might not otherwise have the opportunity. The 3 cylinder marine diesel was donated to replace the old Bollinder engine, and later reconditioned.

"William" has cruised approximately 9,000 miles during the past eight years. It is one of the very few canal narrow boats to have navigated the Wash from Boston, via the Trent to Wisbech on the river Nene, and is believed to be the only canal narrow boat to have navigated the River Medway to Tonbridge. It made history in 1966 when it successfully navigated the Thames estuary and the Swale, causing a little consternation by entering Whitstable Harbour! The enforced hasty retreat was probably responsible for 'running a big end' on the return journey off Faversham Creek, where, befriended by the proprietor of the Boat Yard at Hollow Shore, it spent a month or so on a mud berth whilst Messrs. Petters repaired the engine.

As members of the Inland Waterways Association we have attended the following rallies; 1962, Basingstoke and Stourbridge; 1963, Bishops Stortford and Little Venice; 1964, Godalming and Stratford on Avon; 1965, Harlow and Blackburn (Lydiate); 1966, Uxbridge and Marple; 1967, Tonbridge and Leicester. We also attended the Wellingborough River Festival in 1966 and 1967.

The "William" has now given some 1,250 children holidays afloat. Many of them have been normal children from happy homes, but mingled among them have been some from financially deprived or unhappy home circumstances; many have been enuretic, maladjusted, on probation - one boy was totally blind and several have been physically handicapped. Some of the boys and girls who came as children in their early teens and are now in their early twenties, still come on the cruises as Helpers.

As with all projects catering for robust youngsters, there are hazards and problems. The children often ruffle the peace and quiet of canal-side dwellers, and tempers have to be calmed. For the staff and helpers it is a most exacting job; it is often difficult to combine a good public image and at the same time serve some of the more maladjusted youngsters. We therefore do our best for the former, but concentrate on the latter in the hope that the observers along the canal bank will understand.

High on the list of events of the 1967 cruise was the visit to the Leicester Rally. "William" was dressed overall, and the boys and girls explored the Rally Site during our four day stay. The Rally Dinner was attended by the Warden and one boy and one girl who represented the crew. Ghost stories are much in demand at night, the staff usually being the ones to scare the youngsters. One night, however, three boys attempted to scare the staff by parading along the side of the boat in sheets - it was unfortunate that one of the 'ghosts' should trip, thereby ending up in the water. The Warden himself suffered an upset when attempting to remove an obstruction from the propeller by leaning over the side of the dinghy. His 18 stone proved too much and the dinghy overturned with the Warden under it in the water, to the great applause and delight of the onlookers.

(Reprinted from the Annual Report of the "William's" cruise, by permission of the Warden, Mr. Dennis Jewiss. To be continued in the September issue of "Windlass".

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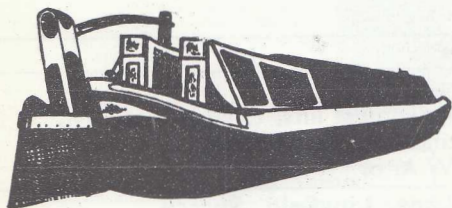
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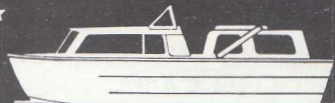


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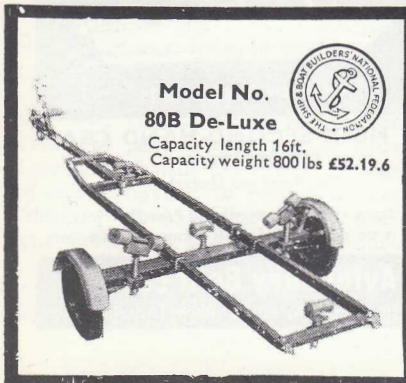
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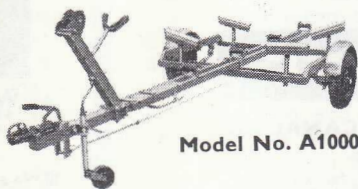
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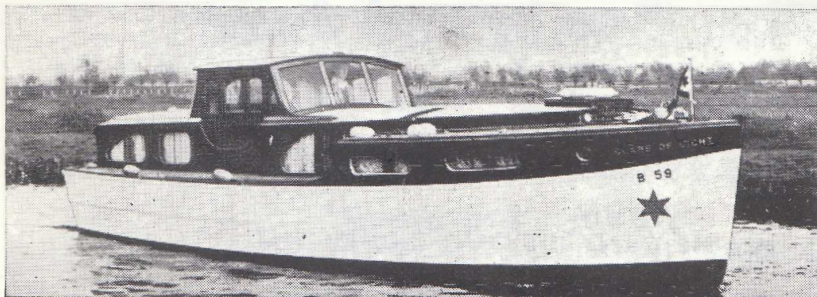


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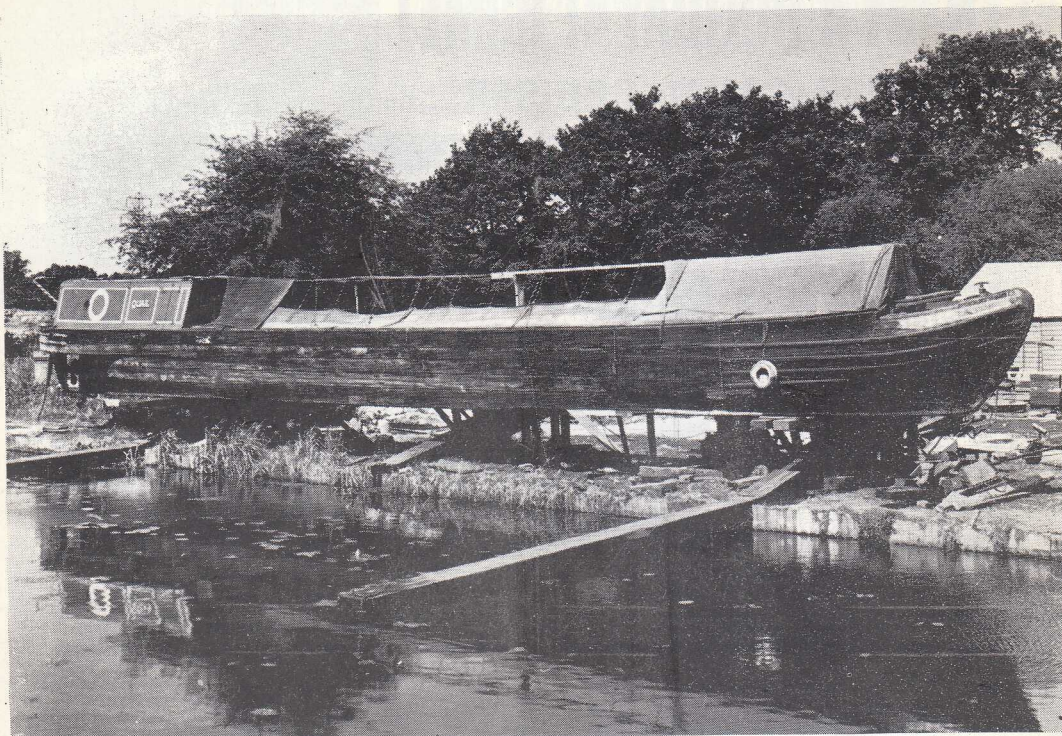
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