



Chairman : Brian Evans, 19 Lansdowne Gardens,
: Romsey. Tel:- 0794 517115
Treasurer & : Les Osborn.
Membership :
Secretary : Martin Cripps, 42 Delamere Road,
: Southsea. Tel:- 0705 753241



NEWSLETTER No. 253 APRIL 1992

MEETINGS - 1st Thursday each month at 7.45 pm.
St. John Ambulance Hall, King's Park Road, Southampton.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 2nd April - 'My Latest Waterways Slides' - The Chairman.
- 7th May - 'Threats to the Waterways' - David Stevenson - Chairman IWA.
- 4th June - AGM + Film Night.
- 2nd July - History and Preservation of the Ffestiniog Railway by a member of the Ffestiniog Railway Society.
- 6th August - Members Slides.
- 3rd September - 'Big Digs & Little Digs' - Jon Sims.
- 1st October - Narrowboat Joinery & Wheelwrighting - Peter Brougham.
- 5th November - Film & Slides on Canal Lifts in Belgium - Hugh Mcknight.

MARCH MEETING. "I'm telling you this so that you can appear knowledgeable next time you are in a windmill or watermill," said our speaker at the March meeting. By the end of the evening everyone had had a thorough grounding in the history, building, engineering and development of both.

John Silman not only taught us a great deal about mills but his enthusiasm for the subject was such that many members will, no doubt, be going to see more for themselves. In many cases they will not have to travel far, for John showed us slides of an amazing number of mills or 'remains of' that still exist in the South.

Our thanks to John for the introduction to the subject and also for a fine evenings entertainment.

FUN RUN FOR EUROPE. - Chichester Canal Society. Sunday 5th April 1992.

Veteran, founder member and our Librarian, Mike Smetham, has agreed to be our runner (walker). By the end of the March meeting, Southampton Canal Society members had pledged over £50 in sponsorship. If your name is not on his form and you would like to add your support, please see Mike at the April meeting or send a cheque to:- 61 Firs Road, Firsdown, Salisbury, SP5 1SW
All proceeds will go to equip a tripboat on the Chichester Canal for able-bodied and disabled people.

NOW THAT WE have a volunteer for the Fun Run for Europe - do we have a member with a small boat or canoe who can represent us and be sponsored for the Inland Waterways Association, Solent and Arun Branch Sponsored Cruise.

Light craft and cruising boats up to 15ft can be launched at the Waters Edge Pub, Station Road, Pulborough.

Enjoy a pleasant half days boating on a beautiful stretch of river, which is an SSSI, and help raise money for the restoration of the Wey and Arun Canal. PLEASE - contact the Chairman for more details.

THE SOLENT STEAM PACKET LIMITED.

SS Shieldhall sailing and events programme for 1992.

- 6th-7th June - Ocean Village steam spectacular. Shieldhall to be in steam, moored to the berth, with other steam yachts, traction engines and models.
- 14th June - Passenger sailing to the Needles, leaving 10.30am, cost £20.
- 26th July - Passenger sailing to Portsmouth Harbour, leaving 10.30am, £20.
- 5th September - Passenger sailing with PS Waverley to the Nab Tower, leaving Town Quay at 10.30am, cost £30.

Enquiries and bookings for sailings should be made to:-

The Solent Steam Packet Limited, c/o Inglenook Cottage, Lower Chase Road, Swanmore, Southampton, Hants. Tel:- 0489 892874.

MAY MEETING. So soon after Ken Goodwin's visit to the Society, we are very fortunate to be welcoming his successor as IWA Chairman, David Stevenson.

Members will be aware of the importance of Davids position in relation to all British Waterways as leader of our movement.

Please let us fill the St John Ambulance Hall. Bring along friends. Let anyone that you think may be interested know about the meeting.

SOMERSET COAL CANAL. On a dull Saturday morning, 23 intrepid explorers met at Nursling for the long trek to rural Somerset to search out the lost Coal Canal. Amongst the gathered group there were a couple of members of Southampton Canal Society. We travelled through the worsening weather to Radstock, where one arm of the Canal ended. Unfortunately the canal basin at Radstock has been obliterated but there is a large coal pit winding wheel on display to show that this was a coal mining area. At its peak in about 1858, the Coal Canal carried over 165,000 tons from the 23 collieries it served. Despite the drizzle, we had a walk to look at the winding wheel and where the railways that replaced the canal used to run. Most of these railways are now disused.

We left Radstock and drove through the countryside to Camerton and crossed the main arm of the Coal Canal that ran to Paulton, then continued into Bath and had views of the River Avon and the start of the Kennet & Avon Canal. We stopped in a layby on the A36 and walked down to Dundas Aqueduct, the weather having cleared up, and along the first section of the Coal Canal (we had the permission of the owner to do so). The first few hundred yards of the canal have been restored by Tim Wheeldon and are used as a marina. The section of the Kennet & Avon Canal from Dundas Aqueduct towards Bath had been de-watered to allow a new plastic membrane to be inserted and a concrete channel to be built to try and solve the water leakage problems. It was interesting to see the profile of the canal bed without water and several of our expedition were surprised how shallow the canal seemed at the banks, the deepest channel only being about six feet wide.

We then drove through Monkton Combe to Tucking Mill where we again alighted from the coach and walked along the old, overgrown canal to Midford. This short walk was just to give us an appetite for lunch in a 300 year old pub which sits between the line of the Somerset & Dorset Railway and the Coal Canal. It also happens to be in the Good Beer Guide.

Following an excellent lunch (giving the sun the chance to come out) we started the serious walking of the day. After only a short distance we found Midford Aqueduct where the two branches of the Canal joined for the last section to Dundas. The main structure of the aqueduct remains with a few of the stone blocks lying around. The next mile or so was a very pleasant stroll through rural Somerset in the sunshine, the Canal bed looking as though it only needed water to make it navigable again. The stonework of the first 3 locks of the Combe Hay flight is still all in place, if overgrown with brambles and bushes. The junction of the original line (below the inclined plane) and the Combe Hay flight is still visible. There is no sign of the next three locks but just before a road is crossed it is possible to discern the line of the inclined plane.

After crossing the road and going under a much later railway bridge we saw most of the Combe Hay flight going round the outside of a field, almost in a semicircle. These locks have been cleared of undergrowth and generally tidied up by the Avon Industrial Buildings Trust. AIBT have also erected an information board giving some details of the Coal Canal. After 5 locks there is the sharpest turn I have ever seen on the canal system. We then left the canal side to walk up through Engine Wood where we found the site of the old Engine House which was used to pump water from the foot of the flight, into a feeder channel, which is also visible, and then to the top of the flight. A short walk brought us to the village of Combe Hay and then on to where the coach was waiting for us.

After a short stop at Warminster we arrived back at Southampton at about 7.30pm after a very interesting trip to see one of the less well known canals that is not too far away. Thanks go to Jon Sims for arranging the trip and for acting as guide along with Peter Oates.

Tony Coles

PS. If any of our members are planning to go and visit the Coal Canal, I have some old Ordnance Survey maps that may be of interest.