

# Newsletter

Issue 344

August 2000

## Canal plan revived after 190-year break

*The following article by Robin Young appeared in The Times on Wednesday July 26:*

BRITAIN'S first new canal for more than a century will cost more than 13 times as much in real terms as it would have done had it gone ahead when first proposed in 1810.

The Bedford to Milton Keynes canal is expected to cost about £70 million. It will run between the river Ouse to the Grand Union Canal, connecting East Anglia to the rest of the inland waterways network.

The last canal to be built in Britain was the Manchester Ship Canal, which opened on New Year's Day, 1894.

The proposed new canal was one of six schemes worth more than £100 million launched by British Waterways, the publicly owned canal authority, at its annual meeting yesterday.

The other schemes included the reconstruction of a dismantled Victorian boat lift in Leicestershire and the restoration of several canals - including the Thames & Severn and the Stroudwater Navigation in the Cotswolds, the Droitwich Barge Canal, the Droitwich Junction Canal and the Montgomery Canal in Wales.

British Waterways also proposes to restore the northern reaches of the Lancaster canal, truncated by the building of the M6 in 1968. It is hoped that the £30 million scheme will create 2,000 jobs and attract more than a million visitors and £14 million in tourist income a year.

The Bedford and Milton Keynes link could be, even more beneficial, James Clifton, the project manager, believes. "This strategic link will be very important both for East Anglia and for the local area in terms of facilities, jobs and the economy," he said.

British Waterways will now develop a partnership between local authorities, landowners, conservation groups and others to look at the scheme's feasibility.

George Greener, Chairman of British Waterways, said yesterday: "I believe we are entering a new waterway age, one of great promise and excitement. Today waterways are playing a valuable role in regeneration, social inclusion, heritage, conservation and the creation of new commercial opportunities. The network has great potential in social and economic terms."

When the Bedford to Milton Keynes project was mooted 190 years ago, the scheme failed because the £180,000 it was expected to cost could not be raised. The Bank of England estimates that the pound of 1810 is equivalent to £28.45 today, so in real terms the present-day cost of the canal would have been about £5,121,000.

In their heyday canals carried more than 30 million tonnes of freight a year. Today they carry 3.5 million tonnes, but British Waterways believes that could soon be doubled or trebled.

It is not yet possible to estimate how long it might take to build the 17-mile Bedford to Milton Keynes link, but in general modern rates of planning and construction are no faster than they were in 1810.

### Hooked on the Itchen

Sir: As an Australian angler who visits England, I am depressed to read that the stretch of the Itchen made famous by the lambent prose of G E M Skues will be allowed to fall into disrepair (report, 12 July). Not only has it probably pleased anglers for several centuries, but for twice that time such rivers were managed for water meadow husbandry and milling, so that the idea of restoring it to a natural condition is to reverse perhaps 1,000 years of conservation. Its true natural state is more likely impenetrable swamp anyway.

SEAN McSHARRY

Castlecrag, New South Wales, Australia

*The Independent, 15 July 2000*

### Water transport

Sir: John Prescott has, it seems, missed a golden chance in his 10-year transport "wonder plan" ("Prescott pledges £180bn to 'get Britain moving'", 21 July); he is silent on the revival of Britain's canal system. Transferring non-perishable loads from road to water would, at a stroke, remove thousands of tons of freight lorries that knock our roads to pieces with contemptuous ease. Mr Prescott should be told that the same amount of fuel can shift far more over a given distance on water than on either road or rail.

JOHN BURROWS

Leicester

*The Independent, 24 July 2000*

## July Meeting

Our July meeting was devoted to the, by now, annual visit of the Day-Star Theatre to entertain us. Peter and Jane Marshall travelled down from their base at Audlem on the Shropshire Union Canal. Crammed into their van were all the props and equipment for the performance together with two children and the family dog.

The new play performed this year was entitled "The Last Run". The story ranged from the present day and back and forth over the last fifty five years centring on an old wooden narrow boat and those involved with her. These included a boating family whose daughter had eloped with the boss's son and an ageing secret agent with a liking for working locks.

In addition there was a convoluted conspiracy plot which sought to explain the adventures of Miles and Leaf, otherwise known as 'Telford & Brindley', who regular watchers of Day-Star will have encountered

before. To be honest, there were times when I got a little confused and was not sure quite who was who and what was what. It certainly kept your attention!

As usual there were plenty of comic boating antics and comments on the canal scene past and present. These were delivered with Peter and Jane's usual inimitable style and more than made up for the slight confusion over the plot.

I'm sure that all those who watched the play will join me in thanking Day-Star for a most entertaining evening.

After the performance, the meeting was rounded off with an excellent spread of food and an opportunity to chat with members and friends (including the cast of Day-Star).

A big "thank you" must be extended to all those who helped in the organisation of the ample refreshments.

*Peter Oates*

## WATERWAYS DIARY 2000

The following is a list of waterway events taking place within approximately 50 miles of Southampton.

Hopefully you can find something to interest you. If YOU know of an event taking place that should be in this list then contact the editor.

Date	Organisers	Details of Event	Contact
Thu 03/08/00 7.45pm	Southampton CS	Brian Evans will present more slides of his visit to China.	Peter Oates 01794 517614
Sun 20/08/00	Chichester Canal Society	Canalside Water Fair with a Pirate Theme. Chichester Basin. Adult 50p child free. Starts at 12 noon.	Canal Basin (day): 01243 771363
Sun 20/08/00	IWA Solent & Arun Branch	Chichester Canal Cruise in association with Canalside Water Fair	Alan White: 01243 573765
Fri - Mon 25-28/08/00	IWA	IWA National Waterways Festival at Waltham Abbey on the River Lee	Ian Gall: 01925 740291
Thu 07/09/00 7.45pm	Southampton CS	Archaeology on the River Itchen with Dr Andrew Russel	Peter Oates: 01794 517614
Fri - Sun 15-24/09/00	National Boat Shows Ltd	Southampton Boat Show, Mayflower Park, Southampton	
Sun 17/09/00 10.30am	IWA Solent & Arun Branch	Beaulieu River Picnic Cruise - Buckler's Hard first downstream, then upstream to Beaulieu for a picnic	Alan White: 01243 573765
Thu 21/09/00 7.30pm	IWA Salisbury Branch	Social Evening	Tony Fry: 01722 710192
Thu 21/09/00 7.30pm	IWA Avon & Wilts Branch	"The Severn Passage" by Tom Higgs. Venue: Riverside pub, Saltford Marina, Saltford, Bristol (just off the A4 between Bristol and Bath).	Bob Kelly: 0117 9744221
Thu 05/10/00 7.45pm	Southampton CS	Frank Stokes will show slides of his visit to Projekt 17 in Germany and to the Shannon-Erne Waterway in Ireland	Peter Oates: 01794 517614
Thu 19/10/00 7.30pm	IWA Avon & Wilts Branch	"From the Cradle to the Grave and back again" - A talk about the story of the Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canal by Phil Hughes. Venue: Riverside pub, Saltford Marina, Saltford, Bristol.	Bob Kelly: 0117 9744221
Thu 02/11/00 7.45pm	Southampton CS	"Navigating where others cannot reach" with Chris Coburn	Peter Oates: 01794 517614
Thu 07/12/00 7.45pm	Southampton CS	Annual Inter-Society Waterways Quiz and American Supper	Peter Oates: 01794 517614
First Wed of month	IWA Dorchester Group	Evening meetings. Further details from Graham Pugh.	Graham Pugh: 01305 262305
4th Thursday of month	Wey & Arun CT	Interesting but not too arduous walks in Sussex come rain or shine. Lunch at well chosen establishment en route or at end. Donation to WACT appreciated.	Don Gibson: 01903 201375
All year	Wey & Arun CT	Cruises on n/b <i>Zachariah Keppel</i> on the restored canal at Loxwood.	John Lisk: 01493 752403.
All year	Chichester CS	Cruises on n/b <i>Egremont</i> on Chichester Canal.	Bookings: 01243 670786

## PRESCOTT'S CHARTER FOR THE WATERWAYS

Although extensively reported in the waterways press, and in contrast to some of the comments therein, the following is the text of an article published in the British Waterways staff newspaper, BW Monthly, in June.

Just sixteen months after launching *Unlocking the potential*, the government's plan for BW's future, deputy prime minister John Prescott was back on the Grand Union Canal to launch another groundbreaking document, *Waterways for Tomorrow*.

Speaking to journalists and guests at Willowtree Marina, he said: "I'm a big fan of inland waterways. Back in the 60s a lot of the system had become disused but Barbara Castle's 1968 Transport Act ensured the nationalised waterways survived.

"Now, with our *Waterways for Tomorrow* document, we're looking to the future. And we see partnership as the key. First, by bringing together all the bodies which manage waterways. And second, waterway authorities must form partnerships with public, private and voluntary sectors.

"Our inland waterways are one of our most important national assets. By revitalising them we can deliver real benefits to the environment, to business and to communities."

The new document is the inland waterways policy paper promised when the government published its transport White Paper *A New Deal for Transport; Better for Everyone* in 1998. It covers the waterways of England and Wales - the Scottish Executive will consider whether to publish a document on Scotland's waterways.

### support for BW

But *Waterways for Tomorrow* goes well beyond transport to cover leisure, heritage, wildlife, regeneration, new business development and operational management, all in the context of partnerships. Its tone is supportive of waterway interests and there are many expressions of government support for BW policies.

In fact, BW features a lot in its pages. In his foreword, John Prescott writes: 'British Waterways is making excellent progress in pursuing these (1999) initiatives within a clear strategic framework'. Complimentary comments are also made about BW 'pursuing its tasks enthusiastically and imaginatively' and 'forming successful partnerships with the private sector'.

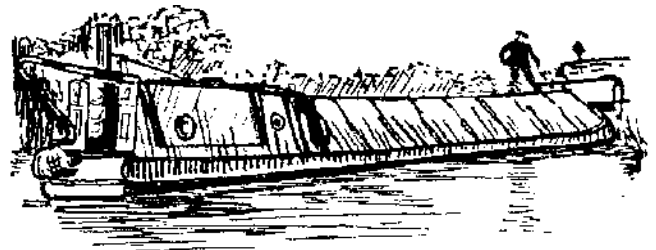
### recommendations accepted

In particular, the government accepts what BW

recommended after last year's public consultation. The result is that The Waterways Trust is to become the proposed charitable trust; it will establish itself as an independent body. BW will launch a subscription information service which will be part of a Waterways Trust scheme to raise waterway funds; and BW will improve consultation procedures to include a wider range of users.

Overall, government aims for the waterways are three-fold:

1. an improving quality of infrastructure;
2. a better experience for users through more co-operation among navigation authorities;
3. increased opportunities for all through sustainable development.



The document outlines the government's strategy to achieve these aims and covers the various aspects of both stewarding the waterways and increasing their value to society.

It welcomes the collaboration agreement signed recently by BW and the Environment Agency. It also states the government's intention to review the Environment Agency's navigation responsibilities as part of a wider routine five-year review of the Agency, due to start later this year.

Welcoming the publication of *Waterways for Tomorrow*, chairman George Greener said: "We're delighted that the government is so supportive of waterways. This policy paper will help create the climate we need to secure the future of the waterways."

Chief executive Dave Fletcher will have briefed managers on the content of the document on 4 July. All staff should in turn be briefed by their managers.

Copies of *Waterways for Tomorrow* are available free of charge from Customer Services in Watford or from the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, Free Literature, PO Box 236, Wetherby LS23 7NB, tel 0870 122 6236. Or you can browse its pages on the DETR web site [www.detr.gov.uk](http://www.detr.gov.uk).

## SOUTHAMPTON CANAL SOCIETY

Established 1967

The objectives of the Society are to foster interest in canals and inland waterways, to assist in their preservation, restoration and development, and to give practical help on waterway projects.

### Meetings:

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

### Chairman:

Brian Evans, 19 Lansdowne Gardens, Romsey,  
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### Society Website:

<http://www.users.waitrose.com/~whitenap/index.htm>

## ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Just another reminder that annual subscriptions are now due for the next year. It should be noted that the AGM approved increases in the subscriptions to £7.00 single and £10.00 for a family. To those who have already paid - thank you! For those who have not, I am assured that the Treasurer, Laura Sturrock, is eager to help you remedy the situation.



## SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

Your editor will be busy over the next month or so with various activities. This includes two separate weeks holiday, the last of which is due to end just a few days before the September meeting. The Southampton Boat Show is also looming on the horizon with the necessary preparations to be attended to. So it is unlikely that time will be found to collate, edit and type a newsletter in time for the September meeting. You have been warned!

## FORTHCOMING SOCIETY EVENTS

### 3rd August 2000

Brian Evans will present more slides of his visit to China.

### 7th September 2000

Archaeology on the River Itchen with Dr Andrew Russel

### 5th October 2000

Frank Stokes will show slides of his visit to Projekt 17 in Germany and to the Shannon-Erne Waterway in Ireland

### 2nd November 2000

"Navigating where others cannot reach" with Chris Coburn

### 7th December 2000

Annual Inter-Society Waterways Quiz and American Supper

## CANAL SOCIETY SALES STAND

### GEOProjects Maps:

Inland Waterways of Britain .....	£4.75
Basingstoke Canal .....	£3.00
Birmingham Canal Navigations .....	£3.75
The Broads .....	£3.75
Caledonian Canal & the Great Glen .....	£3.75
Coventry & Ashby Canals .....	£3.75
Grand Union Canal (each).....	£3.75
Map 1 Birmingham - Fenny Stratford	
Map 2 Braunston - Kings Langley	
Map 3 Fenny Stratford - Thames	
Map 4 Leicester Line - Soar - Erewash	
Kennet & Avon Canal .....	£3.75
Llangollen and Montgomery Canals .....	£3.75
London - City and Docklands Atlas .....	£3.75
Oxford Canal .....	£3.75
Shropshire Union Canal .....	£3.75
Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal <i>with the River Severn and</i>	
<i>the Gloucester &amp; Sharpness Canal</i> .....	£3.75
The Thames Map .....	£3.75
Trent & Mersey Canal - Map 1 Preston Brook to Fradley Junction..	£3.75
Trent & Mersey Canal and River Trent - Map 2 Great	
Haywood Junction to Cromwell Lock.....	£3.75

**Ball Point Pens:** Embossed ..... 50p

**Burgees:** Navy Blue - screen printed Society logo on each side ..... £8.00

**Decorated Mugs:** ..... £2.25

**Notelets:** with drawings of canal and Romsey scenes ..... £1.00  
(by Brian Evans)

**Shopper Bags:** Cotton with screen-printed Society logo each side. £2.25

**Society Members Badges:** Enamel ..... 75p

**Sweat Shirts:** 30th Anniversary in Light Grey ..... £16.00  
with multi-coloured embroidered Society logo on breast

**Sweat Shirts:** Standard in Navy or Royal Blue ..... £15.00  
with Society logo embroidered on breast

**Tea Towels:** Various colourful designs ..... £2.50 & £3.25

**Tee Shirts:** Screen printed with Society logo across chest ..... £6.50  
in Navy Blue - medium, large & extra large; in Red - medium

Visit the Sales Stand at Society meetings and place your orders with Paul Herbert or Ray Brooks - or ring Paul on 01703 262365