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NEWSLETTER No. 229 FEBRUARY 1990

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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 1st February - Waterways in the South of France - Hugh McKnight.
 - 1st March - Illustrated talk by Ken Gibbons. Mr. Gibbons is a former British Waterways press officer and recently has been the proprietor of PHOTO-FLAIR, a camera & photographic business in Dukes Mill, Romsey
 - 5th April - 'Kennet and Avon Canal, yours to enjoy' - Martin Brown, Recreation Officer for the East end of the Kennet and Avon Canal.
 - 3rd May - To be arranged.
 - 7th June - A G M.
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SAFETY FIRST We have been asked by the St. John Ambulance Association to bring to the attention of Society Members the following fire precautions:-

1. Please do not block the fire exit door.
2. Please do not stack chairs in front of the fires when leaving the hall as they come on automatically during the night.
3. All windows are closed on leaving.
4. All lights are turned out on leaving.

DECEMBER MEETING The Committee changed the format of the Christmas meeting in the hope of attracting a larger number of people, but results were disappointing.

Those present enjoyed ample good food and free tea plus taking part in 2 competitions. A slide quiz on the Midlands canals had been prepared by Trevor Thornton. The prize, an OS Canals Map, was won by Michael Moore with a very high score.

The other competition took the form of 2 large panels of pictures of Hampshire. Eva Drinkwater was able to identify the most pictures and her prize was an OS 1:25,000 New Forest Outdoor Leisure Map.

Our thanks to Trevor Thornton and Jackie Coles for arranging the competitions.

JANUARY MEETING 1990 began with a much larger audience gathering to hear Peter Bates' talk on the Basingstoke Canal.

For those not familiar with the facts, Peter told the story from the beginning of restoration and finished with some up to date news. Some of his before and after slide comparisons were very interesting.

Members may like to know that from time to time Peter skips the 'John Pinkerton' on public trips.

IN A THANK-YOU letter, Laurie Pearce began 'To say that I was overwhelmed, would be an understatement...'

He was totally unprepared for such a gift and emphasised that the satisfaction obtained from doing the Secretaries job, together with the friendship enjoyed with fellow members was all that he would have wished for. He hopes that he and Linda will be able to visit the Society sometime this year.

The clock and barometer will take pride of place in the new home and the Nicholsons Guide (a needed edition) will be in use for extensive cruising. The cheque will provide a bottle of Captain Morgans with which to drink the health of Southampton Canal Society members.

Laurie sends his thanks to members for their very kind thought.

EARLY BOOKINGS are recommended for a possible trip on Sunday, May 13th to the British Waterways Museum at Gloucester. Full details to follow.

DONATION £20 was sent to the Surrey & Hants Canal Society following the talk in January by Peter Dates.

CANAL CAMPS 1990 programme has been published. For details contact the Chairman.

GREEN POWER Last November, 71 year old Lady Arran reached a water speed record of more than 50mph, in an electric boat, on Windermere in the Lake District, to prove that electric power does not have to be slow and that motor boats can be green.

GLOUCESTER DOCKS Development continues apace at Gloucester Docks where it is expected that work on the restoration and adaption of the existing warehouses will be largely complete by the end of this year.

The Britannia warehouse, which was burnt out in 1987, has been completely rebuilt with a new interior structure clad in the original bricks, cleaned up for the purpose. Several of the warehouse reconstructions have included extensive works although none such a complete reconstruction.

Despite all this the essential character of the docks and their matching set of a dozen mills and warehouses, which all date from the same period, has been skillfully preserved.

WAREHOUSE COMMENDATION Llanthony Warehouse in Gloucester Docks, which was converted between 1986 and 1987 to accommodate the South Western Regional Manager's office and the Waterways Museum, has received a Commendation in the 1987 Environment Awards.

Llanthony Warehouse is just one of 20 listed buildings in Gloucester Docks. It was built in 1873 as a grain store and had little natural lighting and no heating before conversion. The building has been adapted with minimal alteration to its external appearance to allow natural light to enter via a well down to the fourth floor. Lift machinery is accommodated without altering the roof profile and the museum even includes a full size reconstruction of a canal lock. The museum also recently received a Tourist Board 'England for Excellence' Award in recognition of its development as an attraction.

STROUDWATER, THAMES & SEVERN The Stroudwater, Thames & Severn Canal Trust is still alive and now reasonably healthy having passed through a period of major reorganisation since the death, last year, of the Trust Secretary, David Boakes.

Work is being carried out both at Eastington on the Stroudwater Canal and the Coates entrance to Sapperton Tunnel on the Thames & Severn.

At Eastington, a very successful Waterway Recovery Group two-week summer camp excavated some 80 tons of infill from Dock Lock. The work here is as yet incomplete but WRG weekend working parties, and hopefully another workcamp, should see the rest cleared and a start made on rebuilding. Slightly further up the canal new stop plank grooves have been cut at the head of Blunder Lock. Newtown Lock, in the same area, is now almost ready for gates which should be fitted during spring this year.

At the Coates tunnel portal, a one week local work camp took place which saw a vast improvement made to the steep path leading down to the entrance and also a certain amount of debris clearance in the canal bed. During the early part of 1987 trips were being run for about half a mile into the tunnel, These however were forced to stop when the water levels receded (the original reason for closure). It is hoped that these electric boat trips will restart early in 1990.

New volunteers are always welcome at either of these locations, the 2nd weekend of the month at Eastington and the last weekend at Coates.

RIVER ARUN GUIDE The long awaited guide to the River Arun which must be one of the most under used rivers in the land is now available.

Historical notes by Richard Cossey and the navigational side by Gerry Skinner, who is able to give the necessary guidance around the 'Amberley Pies' and up to Pöllingham Lock. The guide includes a clear map of the river valley and several interesting photographs.

Price £2.35 from W & A, 43 Killicks, Cranleigh, GU6 7DY. Cheques made payable to Wey & Arun Canal Trust (Part of the profits are to go to the IWA).