



Newsletter

February 1997

Issue 306

NEW YEAR ON THE LLANGOLLEN

This month, we start an account of a break on the Llangollen Canal. Many thanks to Chris and Lyn Beahan for the contribution.

It all started last autumn, following a week 'doing' the Stourport Ring, and then a weekend on the Regent's Canal. I said - "wouldn't it be lovely to spend Christmas on a canal somewhere, away from all the hustle and bustle"

My wife's reaction was - "we can't, we have family coming for Christmas Day etc., etc."

I thought no more of it (other than my usual mental meanderings fuelled by Waterways World and the like until, after a particularly hectic period of activity with my fitted kitchen business; Christmas Day finally dawned.

Well! Pride of place amongst the various gifts from my wife was a short break on the Llangollen Canal with a 48ft narrowboat hired from Anglo Welsh's base at Trevor.

We had actually previously spent a super week travelling along this canal in October 1995, although the weather was fairly settled at that time and added to the total enjoyment of the trip.

Winter 1996! I must admit to some cautionary thoughts concerning the possible weather conditions, but these were laid to rest by ensuring that we went suitably equipped for anything which come our way.

It was with high spirits therefore on the morning of Monday the 30th, that my wife, four boys and myself set off on the journey north to pick up our boat; Burleigh, duly arriving in the early afternoon on a cold but otherwise fine day.

Following the usual preamble of stowing gear away, with the family exploring the boat and its facilities, we set off from the base which is right alongside the famous Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. Despite having made this crossing before, I still found myself in awe (and a little fear!) of the weird feeling of sailing through the air some 120 feet above the River Dee tumbling below.

After reaching the other side at Froncysyllte and negotiating the first lift bridge, we settled down to travel to our first, overnight stop at the excellent Poacher's Pocket restaurant at Preesgweene. In travelling this far we had already noticed that the canal level was some 3 inches lower than normal. We were aware that the feeder from Llangollen was closed at Bryn Howell for repairs and pumps were in operation to bring water up from the Dee. one being sited close to the bridge at Vron. Even so, we had no real difficulties with grounding during the whole trip. We had other problems - more of that later!

We awoke on New Year's Eve to find a light powdering of snow, with the promise of more to come, which seemed to

add to the enchantment of the journey ahead. Indeed, not long after we set off we were subjected to a veritable blizzard which on the exposed sections was coming at us horizontally.

We were all suitably attired to cope with the conditions (those of us above decks!) and settled down to a morning's cruising to Ellesmere by way of the 2 locks at New Marton; the only locks on this stretch of canal before those at Grindley Brook.

Having arrived at Ellesmere and taken on water at the British Waterways yard, just after midday we tied up in the arm at Ellesmere to shop for supplies in the town. It was at this point that I happened to hear water entering the engine compartment, and upon inspection found a small split in the hull just on the waterline.

Thoughts of the pumps being unable to cope and the boat sinking ignominiously to the bottom of the canal were foremost in my mind, and with all due haste a telephone call was made to the Anglo Welsh base who despatched their engineer. He arrived in very good time and made his inspection, after which he said that he was unable to affect a repair from inside the boat, and the only course of action was to get the boat into dry-dock in the BW yard. Unfortunately, the yard was closed for the holidays!

This is when the Freephone Canals 'hotline' came into service. In what seemed like double quick time 2 BW personnel met us at the yard with the engineer and supervised the placing of the boat in the dry-dock.

The dock had first to be filled. It is kept empty due to a leakage problem into an adjacent cesspit when full. Some of the stop planks holding back the water from the canal were gradually removed and the dock slowly filled and we were able to bring the boat in stern first. The stop planks were then replaced.

We then spent some 40 minutes whilst the dock was emptied. The arrangement for emptying the dock is a sluice which drains under the canal and into an outfall in the fields adjacent to the canal. Whilst the dock was draining we were able to witness the time-honoured (and seemingly irreplaceable) method of using ashes, mud from the canal, and plastic bags to seal the gaps between the planks. I was impressed by the fact that the BW engineers, although youngish men, were both knowledgeable and interested in the workings of the canal, even though they had been called out whilst looking forward to the festivities of the evening!

In the meantime the AW engineer had returned to and from his base with the necessary welding gear ready to make the repair, arriving as the dock was sufficiently empty to commence work.

(Continued on page 6)

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.

Chairman:

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Paul Herbert
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MEETINGS

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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS**6th February 1997**

Canalside Camera
by Jon Sims

6th March 1997

Talk by Mrs Audrey Smith
IWA Chairman

3rd April 1997

BW Customer Relations
Jim Kelly

1st May 1997

Paddle Steamers of the South Coast
Alfred Taylor

3rd July 1997

AGM plus Videos

7th August 1997

Members Slides

2nd October 1997

Bristol to Sharpness
Talk with video - Alan Padwick

6th November 1997

Bugsworth Basin and the
Inland Waterways Protection Society
Ian Edgar

4th December 1997

Annual Inter-Society Quiz
and American Supper

December Meeting

The annual Inter-Society Waterways Quiz was hotly contested between IWA Salisbury Group, IWA Solent & Arun Branch and our Society. The questions were set by Chris Davey of Waterways Recovery Group who achieved an ideal mix of the easy, not-so-easy and downright obscure questions. These managed to keep members of all the teams, and the audience, on their toes and often thinking hard. Helen Davey ably kept the scores. Thanks to both of them for providing an entertaining evening.

Oh, I almost forgot - SCS won!!

January Meeting

The chairman, Brian Evans, gave his illustrated talk on French Waterways to the January meeting. Unfortunately, your editor was unable to attend and no-one has sent him a review. Brian is, of course, too modest to give a review of his own talk.

SCS NEWSLETTER

I would just like to remind/inform members that there was no newsletter for January 1997. The holiday season including Christmas and the New Year, unfortunately, got in the way of production. Normal (?) service resumes with this issue.

I was most glad to receive the two contributions from the membership for the newsletter (see elsewhere in this issue). However, I again would like to issue an appeal for further articles, pictures, comments, letters, indeed anything suitable for publication in the Newsletter. I bash away at this keyboard in the hope of informing/entertaining you.

I make no apology for including articles about "heavy" subjects such as funding for the waterways as I feel that we ignore them at the system's peril. But I also acknowledge that lighter matters also need covering.

Whether I get it right or not, then let me know and preferably include ideas and/or copy to improve YOUR newsletter.

Peter Oates, Editor

Distributed by: Hunt & Co, Chartered Accountants, 123/124 High Street, Southampton, SO14 2AA. Tel: 01703 225255

SCS 30th Anniversary

This year (1997) sees the 30th anniversary of the Society and we intend to order a special sweatshirt for the occasion. I am told that details of the design and cost are still not available but Paul or Ray on the Sales Stand would like to hear from those interested so they can gauge demand.

The Stamp Bank makes donations of up to £250 for specific restoration purposes. Collect used stamps from your Christmas cards and bring them to a SCS meeting by March 1997 and we'll give them to Audrey Smith to pass them on to IWA.

At the March meeting, we will have Audrey Smith, IWA National Chairman, as our guest speaker. If you think there's something not right about the Association, its activities, etc then come along and let the person at the top know. Alternatively, if you consider that the IWA is doing a grand job, then I'm sure Audrey would appreciate a pat on the back!

Canal Society Library

Our librarian, Sue Lewis, is still waiting for your visit, at any meeting, to borrow any of the many interesting books on the waterways and related subjects.

Sue, and the Society, would like to thank Joan Reed for the books that she has kindly donated to the library

IWA Avon and Wilts Branch will be holding their AGM on 15th March 1997 at 6.15pm. The main business will be followed by skittles and a buffet. The meeting will be held in The Crown Hotel, Bathwick Street, Bath. Further details may be obtained from Geoff Harman, 11 Lampeter Rd, Westbury-on-Trim, Bristol BS9 3QQ ☎ 0117 962 3812.

My apologies for a mistake in the last issue wherein I thanked Ron Glover for taking on the storage of the Society's display stand. I see from my notes that I was told it was Peter Glover but strangely I typed the wrong name. My apologies all round.

WATERWAYS IN PARLIAMENT

Our representative at the Parliamentary Waterways Group, Eric Lewis, sends us this report:

I attended my second meeting of the Group on 10th December 1996. The speaker was Michael Meacher MP, Shadow Secretary for Environmental Protection.

Michael Meacher expressed himself stunned at the numbers attending and observed that it indicated enthusiasm for and commitment to the waterways. He recognised the considerable strides made by British Waterways in recent years to turn a priceless part of the heritage into a thriving commercial enterprise. In particular, he had been impressed by the Boat Safety Scheme and innovative schemes for raising income.

Government funding was shrinking and a part of the heritage would be at risk if a public contribution failed to be forthcoming for the waterways. A trust to replace BW would be one option. However, he did not feel that a large enough capital sum could be raised to provide sufficient income to maintain the system in perpetuity. The BW system merited government funding in the long term.

An important role was played by waterways in regeneration of the inner cities. BW should be commended for increasing self-generated income to cover the shortfall in Government funding. The Environment Agency needed to retain overall responsibility for pollution control and enhancement of the environment. BW and EA could work in a complementary fashion but it was not practical to combine them in a single role.

Various user groups posed questions. Mr Meacher agreed with NABO that the role of the Waterways Ombudsman should be extended beyond BW to the whole system, and that all consumer organisations should be totally independent and funded by Government. He agreed with the Rochdale Canal Society and the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Trust in the principle of setting up a National Waterways Conservancy. He doubted whether BW's suggestion of creating a trust to ensure future maintenance of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal would be

financially viable. His view was that a public responsibility existed in respect of canals, and the Government should not hve it off.

Several legal changes were suggested which would improve the waterways, but Mr Meacher said that Parliamentary time would be at a premium in the next session.

Sir Anthony Durant (in the chair) said no legal safeguard existed for Remainder waterways and Mr Meacher agreed to consider this aspect. The Residential Boat Owners Association asked how a Labour Government would increase access to waterways by all social groups. Mr Meacher felt that with 9 million visitors annually the waterways were already attracting a good audience.

The next meeting of the Parliamentary Waterways Group will be held on 4th February 1997, the topic for discussion being "Boat Safety Schemes".

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Following the article in the last issue about cycling and towpaths, I received the following letter:

Dear Peter

High speed cyclists, without bells, can be a nuisance on towpaths. Whispering death!

We need to remember, however, that the 20,000 boat owners pay only approximately 10% of canal costs. Tax payers pay most of the balance. The more taxpayers actively use the canals the more chance this will continue.

Thus anglers, walkers and cyclists need to be encouraged. This does not stop us advocating responsible behaviour on their part however.

Yours sincerely

John Whitehouse

Thank you, John, for your view. Does anyone have any comment? For example, if pedal cycles are acceptable, are motor bikes? Where should the line be drawn? How do we ensure cyclists do not upset other towpath users?

SOUTHAMPTON CANAL SOCIETY SALES STAND

Enamel Society Members Badges	75p	Waterway Jigsaws (192 pieces 10" x 13 ³ / ₄ "	£3.50
Embossed Ball Point Pens	50p	Notelets, with line drawings (by Brian Evans) of canal and Romsey scenes	£1.00
GEOprojects Maps		Screen Printed Tee Shirts	£6.50
Basingstoke Canal	£3.00	with Society logo across chest	
Oxford Canal	£3.75	in Navy Blue - medium, large & extra large	
Kennet & Avon Canal	£3.75	in Red - medium	
Grand Union Canal (each)	£3.75	Embroidered Sweat Shirts	£15.00
Map 1 Birmingham - Fenny Stratford		with Society logo on breast	
Map 2 Braunston - Kings Langley		in Navy Blue - large	
Map 3 Fenny Stratford - Thames		in Royal Blue - medium and large	
Map 4 Leicester Line - Soar - Erewash		Cotton Shopper Bags	£2.25
The Thames Map	£3.75	with screen-printed Society logo each side	
London - City and Docklands Atlas	£3.75	Colourful Tea Towels	£2.50
The Broads	£3.75	Decorated Mugs	£2.25
Birmingham Canal Navigations	£3.75	Decorated Trays (two sizes)	£1.00 & £2.95
Shropshire Union Canal	£3.75		
Llangollen and Montgomery Canals	£3.75		

GRANTS FOR WATERWAY RESTORATION

In December, the Millenium Commission announced a grant of £14.8 million, which in partnership with other funding, will complete the restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. The canal, which opened in 1811, was officially closed in 1944, although a number of passages along the canal were made subsequent to this.

Major features of the restoration scheme include the removal of major blockages in Huddersfield, Stalybridge and Slaithwaite as well as restoration of Standedge Tunnel, the longest, highest and deepest canal tunnel in the UK. Following the announcement of Millenium funding for the Rochdale Canal in 1995, this will complete a Lancashire / Yorkshire ring of restored waterways over the Pennines.

Audrey Smith, IWA's national chairman, said: "The Huddersfield Canal Society, the local authorities and British Waterways are to be thoroughly congratulated for their many years of hard work and confidence that this scheme would eventually succeed. This announcement is also a tribute both to the far sighted former Greater Manchester Metropolitan County Council who left the restoration a substantial funding legacy on their demise and to the founding members of the Society."

The Millenium Commission also announced grants to two other waterway projects: £8.1m to the Cross River Partnership for building a new bridge over the River Thames at Westminster and £1.1m to the Broads Authority towards dredging on Barton Broad in Norfolk.

Decisions on grant applications by the Ribble Link Trust and by British Waterways for restoration of the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals in Scotland were deferred until January 1997 (no news of these yet).

It has also been announced that £18m is to be spent around London's waterways resulting from BW's successful bid for SRB funding. A grant of £1m from the Rural Development Commission has been made for restoration of the northern reaches of the Ashby Canal and a grant of £1m towards regeneration of the Rochdale Canal corridor including improvements to water supply.

1997: THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR BOATS ON CANALS AND RIVERS

The cost of a boat licence from BW is set to rise by more than 30% in real terms over the next three years starting in January 1997. Also 1st January saw the introduction of compulsory third party insurance and the Boat Safety Scheme. The IWA recognises that these are necessary, but is outraged at the massive licence increase which will hit boaters especially hard at this time.

"It seems as if Government wants to force boaters off the water just when they should be encouraging new boaters and new licences to help raise funding for our woefully neglected waterways," says Audrey Smith. "Many other waterway users - the walkers, the naturalists, the cyclists, industry, drainage concerns and water users - pay virtually nothing towards maintenance of our inland waterways."

PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES AND THE WATERWAYS

During January, Audrey Smith wrote to members of the IWA giving details of a letter sent to every parliamentary candidate of the main political parties. This is part of a lobbying campaign led by IWA and supported by other representative waterway bodies in the lead up to the forthcoming general election.

Although addressed to IWA members, anyone else interested in the waterways might wish to help further the campaign and extracts from her letters appear below.

"Whoever wins the election we must ensure that they take the views of IWA seriously, particularly on the contentious issues of properly funding the waterways into the future and of funding the backlog of essential maintenance work."

She called on all members to further the campaign by writing to their local MP and the other main candidates in their constituency - even their local paper - asking questions about their views, policies and solutions for the secure funding of the waterways in the future.

"The IWA is calling for a minimum level of Grant-in-Aid funding to British Waterways from the Department of the Environment of £58 million - at today's prices - to ensure proper maintenance of the canal and river network. We also need to ensure that the navigation account of the Environment Agency receives at least £4.3 million of Grant-in-Aid. Otherwise the present backlog of maintenance will only continue to escalate - there is already over £125 million in urgent structural work needed on BW's and the Agency's waterways - just to keep the system operational and safe."

"Regrettably the Grants-in-Aid recently announced by the Government fall short of these figures by £7m per year for BW and £2m for the EA's navigation function, up to and beyond the Millenium. There is acute danger of waterways being closed to users because of safety concerns."

"If a candidate turns up on your doorstep, then you know what to ask. If you go to a local candidate's meeting or debate, you know what to ask. Don't be put off with dismissive answers. If they don't know the answers then suggest a few of your own and also suggest that they do their homework! And you can tell them that we are very angry with BW's latest license increases - seemingly forced by Government grant cutbacks.

"It is vital that we put real pressure on the political parties at a time when they are promising the electorate all sorts of things. It helps us in the future to remind them of their promises.

"I am counting on you to write and ask your questions and demand answers - the sort of questions we want to hear. A bunch of letters through the letterbox from potential electors cannot be ignored."

"Please send a copy of your letters, as well as the answers you receive, to IWA Head Office."

PROPOSED EASTLEIGH TRANSPORT HERITAGE CENTRE

Our Chairman, Brian Evans, received a letter in December from Jon Honeysett. Parts of this are reproduced below.

On 3rd March 1989, in company with the late Mr Harry Firth, I presented the above proposal to Eastleigh Leisure & Tourism officers, Mr Roberto Tambini and Mr Paul Herbert, for their consideration as a project for the town. The proposed Centre would be constructed on a derelict site bounded on the north-east by the Eastleigh to Fareham railway; on the north-west by the planned privately-funded extension of Chickenhall Lane; on the south by part of Southampton Airport and in the south-east corner, by the Itchen Navigation Canal.

My proposal envisaged construction of quality accommodation for restored aircraft, buses and commercial road vehicles, locomotives and rolling stock of the steam, diesel, and electric era, well-equipped workshop facilities for their restoration with skilled craftspersons and apprentices, and the re-opening of 1.5 miles of the Itchen Navigation canal to boat traffic within the Itchen Valley Country Park. Visitors would access the Centre by road to a large car and coach park, and a newly constructed rail station just east of Eastleigh South Junction. Within the Centre would be two restaurants, the

South's largest working model railway, and a Canal Wharf set in landscaped escarpment on both sides of the canal. Eastleigh's own Southern steam locomotive No 828, and No 850 "LORD NELSON" from Carnforth could be permanently based here.

Accordingly, the Tourism Sub-Committee's conclusion on 15th November 1990 read as follows:- "The proposed Eastleigh Transport Heritage Centre is one of the most exciting projects currently being examined by the Council. There is no doubt that such a Centre would be a major tourism, technological, and educational attraction, and would put the Borough on the Tourism map, whilst at the same time recording the important part that the development of transport has played in the history of Eastleigh." Unfortunately, economic recession has meant the project being put on 'the back burner' until now; new figures for tourism confirm it as Britain's biggest earner of revenue with more than two million foreign visitors to the South in 1995.

If you have any thoughts or comments to make on this proposal, please pass these on to Brian Evans who has been invited to join a Working Party to discuss implementation of this proposal.

Rare skating marathon warms Dutch hearts

The Netherlands will come to a stop for the rarely run Elfstedentocht, the legendary Friesian "11-cities" skating marathon which is one of the most gruelling sporting events in the world.

This skating-crazy nation has been waiting 11 years for a freeze to provide sufficient ice to carry more than 16,000 skaters along the 125 mile route through waterways and lakes linking 11 towns and villages in the northern province of Friesland. Today's marathon will be only the 15th race in the event's 88-year history.

One million spectators are expected for the start at 5.30am and the rest of the nation will be glued to live television coverage of the day-long marathon. Such is the passion for the race that parliament went into recess during the last two races in 1985 and 1986, and Queen Beatrix cut short a foreign holiday.

To qualify for the race skaters either have to hold a Dutch marathon skater's licence or be members of the Elfstedentocht club. The organisation also holds a special lottery for additional racers. Funding comes from a mixture of provincial government subsidy, local sponsorship and broadcasting rights.

Attention will focus on the 300 top amateur marathon skaters. These fanatics, all Dutch and including dairy farmers and a police detective, will be released from the steel cages at the start of the tour in Leeuwarden, the Friesian capital.

They first have to run almost a mile before donning their

skates and climbing on to the ice in darkness. They are expected to complete the course in around seven hours, averaging almost 19 miles an hour.

Although there is no prize money for the winner, who receives a silver cup, the first skater to cross the finishing line will almost certainly become a guilder-millionaire through sponsorship deals. The 16,000 other "tour skaters", have to finish by midnight to receive a silver medal.

Once away from the lights in the towns, there is no special floodlighting. Some skaters carry hand-held torches. Both groups of racers are motivated purely by the event's mythical status.

"There is no other marathon like it in the world. It's not called the race of races for nothing," said Evert van Benthem, the winner in 1985 and 1986. After making a grave error last year when they misread weather conditions, the organising committee anticipated the freeze this week.

The three Friesian words, *It giet oan* (it's going ahead), were spoken on Thursday, although the ice on some parts of the course had not yet thickened to the required 6in.

Fireman have been working round the clock sawing chunks of ice out of disused canals and transplanting them to holes in the course.

Thanks to Martin Cripps for sending me this article from The Times of Saturday 4th January 1997.

IWA Solent & Arun Branch Events

The S&A Branch are advertising the following events in the area (in addition to our own):

21 March - Solent & Arun Branch AGM at 7.30pm in Chichester.

20 April - Canal Clean-up day on the Titchfield Canal: a gentle stroll along its length collecting rubbish: 10.00am Meon Shore

18 May - Arun Sponsored Cruise, Pulborough to Pallingham

8 June - "The Poddle" - Wey & Arun Canal Trust sponsored walk - 25th anniversary of this annual event. Contact: John Lisk 01403 752403.

14-15 June - Beaulieu Classic Boat Festival, Bucklers Hard. Solent & Arun boats and stand.

6 July - Avon and Stour Small Boat Cruise, Christchurch.

17 August - Chichester Canal Water Fair and Steam Boat Rally. Contacts: Ms L Wilkinson 01243 537500 or Paul Coppard 01903 766585.

23/24/25 August - National Waterways Festival, Henley on Thames

20 September - Hamble Small Boat Cruise - visit Bursledon Brickworks and Botley.

19 October - River Rother Guided Walk, Stopham to Shopham.

Except as noted above, further details may be obtained from:

Peter Boyce, Greensleeves Cottage, Hambledon Road, Denmead, Waterlooville, Hants PO7 6PW.

Tel (home) 01705 269642, (office and answer machine) 01730 829016, (work) 01705 693611 ext 1364. E-mail: iwa.solent.arun@dial.pipex.com

From IWA Council News:

£50,000 Golden Jubilee Success - The IWA has announced that the Golden Jubilee Appeal reached its original target just a few days before Christmas. A new JCB 803 excavator has already been purchased and the balance will allow two of WRG's ageing crew buses to be replaced. Fund raising will continue into 1997 as two further vans still need to be replaced.

IWA's Restoration Committee has been approached for advice on a proposed restoration of the Sussex Ouse from near Lewes to near Haywards Heath. IWA members who would like to join in a restoration project right at the beginning should write in to Head Office so that they can be put in contact with those developing the projects.

Wilts & Berks Canal Trust will soon be formed to further restoration of the canal. The founding members will be the local authorities and the Canal Group. The new Trust plans to commission a feasibility study in 1997 of the whole Wilts & Berks system, including the North Wilts and Calne branches.

Canal Camps are week long conservation holidays that take place on the inland waterways system throughout Britain and Ireland. Participants in a Camp help in a wide and varied range of tasks, and can expect to learn the basics of skills such as environmental and industrial conservation, bricklaying, building works and how to operate simple plant and equipment.

All the Canal Camp projects are part of major restoration schemes to restore old navigations for leisure, conservation and amenity use. Local experts supervise the tasks and no previous experience is necessary: tuition is given on site as required. Canal Camps provide basic 'Youth Hostel' style accommodation free of charge, but participants contribute £35 per week towards the cost of food. Free information pack from Waterways Recovery Group, 114 Regents Park Road, London NW1 8UQ. Tel: 0171 586 2510. Fax: 0171 722 7213. E-mail: wrg@waterway.demon.co.uk

NEW YEAR ON THE LLANGOLLEN

(Continued from page 1)

The damage to the hull was a gash some 30mm long which appeared to have been caused by collision with some sharp underwater object, and required only the welding on of a simple metal plate to seal the leak.

We then waited whilst the dock was refilled, which took some 20 minutes, and the boat was refloated and taken out of the dock. Having given our sincere thanks to all concerned, we left them to re-empty the dock and moved back onto the moorings in the Ellesmere arm.

The engineer from Anglo Welsh was able to confirm that instead of us having to return the boat to Trevor on Friday morning, we were at liberty to keep the boat until the following Monday if we wished, to compensate us for the problem we had encountered. This was accepted as being a very generous offer, although we resolved to return to the base on the Saturday due to university and school reopenings.

We then settled down to spend New Year's Eve in a more carefree mood, and after a meal in town at the Black Lion, returned to the boat at its snow-covered moorings looking forward to a good night's sleep after the days activities. The moorings were fairly well occupied with about 8 private boats at winter mooring and some 4 or 5 boats stopping overnight. The canal was at this stage showing signs of thin ice forming particularly in the arm itself.

New Year's Day! We awoke to find a thicker blanket of snow everywhere plus a fairly thick ice sheet down the complete arm. Whilst looking undeniably picturesque, we were now left wondering about progress on the main canal. However, upon inspection the ice seemed to be confined mainly to the arm and after heralding in the New Year with a glass of Buck's Fizz, we set off following another boat which had already made its way out onto the canal.

To be continued next month