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NEWSLETTER No. 234 JULY 1990

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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 5th July - The History and Restoration of the Mid Hants Railway by John Adams
2nd August - Members Slides
6th September - David Laing - Canal trip round England. David Laing spoke to the Society in February 1988 about Irish Canals and promised to return to tell us about his travels around English Canals after 'Winkle' was unloaded from the ferry in Liverpool.
4th October - Chris Davey - Waterway Recovery Group. History, aims and objectives, work camps, future plans.
1st November - Peter Brougham - Kennet and Avon boat builder. Construction and fitting out of narrowboats. The tricks of the trade recounted with enthusiasm.

JUNE MEETING - AGM For the Chairman to moan at those present at the AGM would be complaining to the faithful. A note in 'Newsletter', therefore, may get through to those who did not bother to attend. The waterways movement still needs support and that includes at AGMs. It also helps the Committee to actually see that the membership is behind them.

From the Newsletter heading you will note that Les Osborn became Vice Chairman and Graham Smith now looks after Finance and Membership. Dawn Cripps joined the Committee, a welcome volunteer but unfortunately we are now down to 5 members again.

After the business of the AGM, members enjoyed a showing of the 16mm film 'The Sea Port' from the Shell Library. It followed the development of British Ports from early trading days through to the present day. An entertaining film packed with facts and figures.

SOCIETY TRIP Saturday 22nd September. Visit to Claverton Pumping Station, which will be working, and a canal trip aboard 'Ladywood' from Bradford on Avon to Dundas Aqueduct. Bookings to Secretary.

DON'T FORGET that we require your slides to make the August meeting a success and also the tea and biscuits for the interval have gone up to 20p from this meeting.

ARTICLES Where have you been on the waterways recently? Why not write a short account of your holiday or trip on the waterways.

CHICHESTER The Barrel Races will take place this year on 14th July on Chichester Basin.

A COMMUNITY FESTIVAL is to be held again at St. Boniface Centre, Chandlers Ford from 16 - 19th May 1991. If the Society stand was exhibited there, do we have any members who would like to man it for some of that time? Names please to the Committee.

CHESTERFIELD CANAL At an Open Day on Sunday 29th April, the use of the restored Top Lock of the Chesterfield Canal was demonstrated to the public for the first time.

Originally constructed in 1777 the lock was known as Ford Lane Lock, sometimes Lockoford Lane Lock, but has more recently become known as Tapton Lock. It has been restored by the Chesterfield Canal Society and the Waterway Recovery Group, the wooden gates being built at the Callis Mill workshop on the Rochdale Canal.

CROMFORD CANAL At the end of April the Cromford Canal Society advised Derbyshire County Council that it had gone into voluntary liquidation and that it was terminating the licence to operate the trip boats from Cromford Wharf as from 23rd April. The Cromford Canal Society had been maintaining the canal and operating the trip boats for many years, until recently under the management of Simon Stoker.

The announcement was the conclusion of a bizarre series of events and power struggles within the small society.

EDGECASTON RESERVOIR Some residents in the Edgebaston area have complained that the environment of the reservoir has been damaged by British Waterways using the water to keep the canals topped up during the summer of 1989. This protest seems to have been made largely in the cause of the 'environment'. They also objected to water skiing. They require that fluctuations of level should be avoided and that the level should never drop more than 2 metres below weir. Clearly this kind of limitation would have serious implications for the canal system.

Birmingham Chairman, Mike Leigh, contacted Dave Tyrell, the Waterways manager who said he has the right to drain the reservoir completely, if he chooses - and is prepared to do so. If the residents' group wants to limit fluctuations in level it will have to pay the cost of pumping.

WATERWAY RECOVERY GROUP has received a grant from the Countryside Commission towards the purchase of vehicles. The grant runs for 2 years from June 1990 and will match pound for pound their expenditure on vehicles up to a maximum of £15,000.

K & A CELEBRATIONS The list of events below have been organised during July to celebrate the reopening of the Kennet and Avon Canal. The Mikron Theatre Company will also be performing at some of the venues.

6-11th Exhibition of canal paintings, Newbury.

9-13th Canal restoration exhibition, Central Library, Reading.

12-20th Exhibition of canal paintings, Blakes Lock Museum, Reading.

16th Talk on history and restoration of K & A Canal, Newbury.

17th 11.30am Unveiling of milestone to celebrate the relinking of Reading and Newbury by water, Monkey Marsh Lock, Thatcham.

17th Talk on history and restoration of K & A Canal, Birdwood Hall, Thatcham.

18-20th Canal restoration exhibition, Kennet Centre, Newbury.

20th Talk on history and restoration of K & A Canal, Town Hall, Reading.

21st Finals of song writing competition, Waterside Centre, Newbury

23-25th Canal restoration exhibition, Newbury Library.

28th Bath Canal Carnival. Bath City Council and the K & A Canal Trust are holding a carnival on the River Avon at Pulteney Weir and on the adjoining recreation ground from 2.30-11pm. Firework display 9.45pm.

DUDLEY TUNNEL On 25th April a new canal tunnel under Dudley Hill was officially opened. Constructed at a cost of £1.25m the tunnel has been financed by Dudley MBC.

Already the most heavily used stretch of canal in the country the new tunnel enables the Dudley Canal Trust's electric boats to take a circular route within the tunnel complex and thus increase the capacity from three to four boats.

The new tunnel runs from Castle Mill Basin to Little Tess Cavern beyond which the 200 year old rock tunnel has been excavated through to the Singing Cavern. This, in turn, was linked to the main Dudley Tunnel in 1984 by the construction of a new tunnel.

The passenger trips begin at the Black Country Museum and enter the tunnel by the Tipton portal into Lord Ward's Tunnel which was built in the mid 1770s and is the oldest part of the tunnel. This leads to the short Shirt's Mill Basin and soon Castle Mill Basin, a green amphitheatre, from which there are now two exits to the south. The boat enters the newer of the two by which the new tunnel leads to the

Little Tess Cavern. Here a dramatic audio visual presentation relates the geology of the area which is of particular importance as it laid down the foundations of the industrial basis of the Black Country. The boat then proceeds to the Singing Cavern where another audio visual display recounts a Victorian visit to the mines. The return is by the 1984 tunnel, The Well, Cathedral Arch and Castle Mill Basin, which was the basis of the entire trip until this year.

