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**NEWSLETTER No. 289
JULY 1995**

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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

6th July 1995
Annual General Meeting followed by canal videos.

3rd August 1995
Members Slides (early warning - go out and take some)

7th December 1995
Inter Club/Section Quiz (Since we won at Chichester last year we host the 1995 quiz)

1st February 1996
Explore the Panama Canal and the River Douro by Hugh McKnight.

Southampton Canal Society Library
Please return any books to Sue Lewis at meetings for the benefit of all members.

JUNE MEETING. '30 Years of Fighting Rust in the Preservation of Transport' was a journey in engineering and enterprise from boyhood to the present. Ian Dean's slides began with model engineering and progressed through most forms of transport to the present ownership of veteran wedding cars and a traction engine. After several years working in the theatre in Eastbourne, Ian took on the job of setting up the Amberley Chalk Pits Museum, where several forms of transport were involved. Throughout the 30 years there were always beautiful old motor coaches, buses and old lorries to be photographed and in some cases owned or part-owned. He was managing director of the Watercress Line for 3 years - so we also saw some trains. At present Ian and his wife run a wedding hire car business and a consultancy, but annually he is involved in organising the Downs Steam Rally and a festival of music. This was an evening of variety with excellent slides and a professional speaker.

CORRECTION. Please note that the Southampton Canal Society celebration for the IWA Jubilee will be on Sunday 19th May 1996 and not on the 18th as published in the June Newsletter.

GEO MAPS. Our stock of these popular maps was nearly sold out at the June meeting, but don't panic, another order has been received and maps are available on the sales stand.

NEXT TIME you feel that it is not your subject on at Canal Society meeting, just think that it might be worth going along to support the cause and spare a thought how embarrassing it is for the Chairman to introduce an excellent speaker to mostly empty chairs. Considering the expertise of our June speaker, the meeting was very badly attended and must have been a disappointment to both our guest and your very hard working secretary who arranges our speakers.

NATIONAL WORKING BOAT GATHERING at The Wharf and Victoria Park, Newbury over the weekend of 29th - 30th July. Organised by the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust and Commercial Narrowboat Owners Association. Boats to be loading and unloading at the wharf with canal fair in park, including stalls, entertainers and boat trips.

GRAND UNION HOLIDAY. We recently took our first narrowboat holiday for eight years (Philip's first ever). We traveled from Blisworth northwards along the Grand Union to Braunston - where the Boat Show was on with lots of boats moored and moving about - and then up the Northern Oxford Canal as far as Hawkesbury Junction. On the way back we moored at Braunston - easier after the show had finished - had a stroll along the towpath and looked at some of the old working boats still moored up. From Gayton Junction we walked along the Northampton Arm to the first few of the 17 narrow locks that takes the canal down to the River Nene. We went past our boatyard and through Blisworth Tunnel to Stoke Bruerne where we wined and moored up for our last night afloat. After a visit to the Museum we had a lovely early evening walk down the locks, very peaceful after all the gongoozlers had gone home. The following morning we entered the 3057 yard long tunnel and could see the exit straight ahead. We loaded the car and then drove home in pouring rain at what seemed an indecent speed, feeling sorry for the new hirers taking over the boat in such wet weather.

Below are some thoughts from the four of us:-

Tony - The canal seemed wider than I remember and it was a lot easier to moor up (contrast to the story overleaf).

Jackie - The broad locks were heavy to work.

Russell (12) - My favourite bits were seeing the wildlife and going through the locks. My job was to help when we moored up. I liked Blisworth Tunnel because it was very wet and I got soaked.

Philip (6) - When we had to fill up with water my job was to see when the water over-flowed. I liked seeing the baby ducks and the colourful boats. My brother's school is Mountbatten and we saw a narrowboat called Mountbatten at Braunston. We met some nice people who worked through the locks with us.

Overall a very successful holiday, when can we go again?

The Coles Family.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE KENNET AND AVON CANAL.

An ambition has been achieved this year when we took "DUORF II" from Napton to Bristol harbour and back. We have waited eagerly for several decades to do this, but it will definitely be the only trip along this picturesque waterway as it involves so much effort. We traveled with two friends on N.B. "RAJAH BROOKE" to share all the work and pleasure.

Granted the Kennet and Avon Canal is a remainder waterway, but even so it is hazardous. Without a long gangplank it would have been impossible to get ashore because of the weed and reed growth at the edge of the towpath. The water is shallow at the edges making mooring extremely difficult, and with hardly any landing stages at lock approaches it was awkward getting on and off the boat. All the locks have to be left empty with the bottom paddles raised. Going downhill it takes about twenty minutes to pass each one. The reason for this is because there are no byewashes and it prevents water being lost over fields. Then there are the swing bridges - everyone with a different method of operation and some impossible to move. Two motorists had to help Ken and Fred move Theale swingbridge!

We met Joyce Bates at Kintbury where we spent late May bank holiday weekend. There was a flower festival in the church and a medieval street fayre; all very interesting. Joyce invited us and our friends to lunch - Joyce's narrowboat "HORUS" is moored at Napton, so we all know each other well.

Crofton pumps were steaming when we passed. Our son, Roger, and his family met us there, and after looking round the pumphouse they helped us up the last six locks to the summit level.

Duckweed on the long pound towards Horton and round the loop is a big problem to all concerned. It is inches thick and like cruising through porridge. To a lesser extent it is present at Devizes through the first few pounds, but nowhere else on the canal.

The locks at Caen Hill take almost five hours to pass through. Supervision by the lockkeepers means that all goes smoothly, except we managed to get jammed halfway through the bottom gates of one lock! When snatching failed to move the boats, they had to be flushed out. All this took about half an hour.

Imagine our surprise on working our way back up the locks when Eva Drinkwater was standing alongside watching progress. About ten minutes before this we met Peter Wheeble (a former S.C.S. member): at least he did know we would be there that day. We subsequently spent an evening with him and Margaret at Newbury reminiscing about old times at the society and boating generally.

The canal from Bradford-on-Avon westwards is extremely beautiful, but we were determined to reach Bristol, so locked down on to the River Avon at Bath. Finding somewhere to moor proved difficult on the river so we lashed "DUORF II" alongside "RAJAH BROOKE" (which was tied between two trees) for the night between Keynsham and Hanham. Two hours later we were alarmed to discover the water level had risen by two feet. The river is tidal up to Keynsham on high spring tides which we did not know - the guide books do not tell of this. What if we had tied up at the top of the tide? A case of where ignorance is bliss.

The tidal section of the river presented no problems as we were able to go down and back with the tide. Netham to Keynsham Lock took one hour five minutes, the lock at Hanham having gates open at both ends. This would have been an enjoyable trip had it not been raining "stair rods" all the way.

Bristol Harbour has been transformed in recent years and now welcomes visiting narrowboats. The transit moorings alongside Lloyds Bank Headquarters had water points and electricity provided. The harbour wall was level with the roof of the boat, so a ladder was needed for access. We spent two days and nights here visiting the "GREAT BRITAIN" and two museums, maritime and industrial. A water bus operates around the harbour for a moderate charge, saving long walks to the various attractions.

The round trip took seven and a half weeks. The weather for most part was superb; There were very few boats on the move; vegetation alongside had not had time to grow too high; and there were no fishermen.

In fact everything in favour of cruising from April to June.

Margaret Froud, June 1995

Margaret Froud and husband Ken were at one time very active members of the Southampton Canal Society committee. Ken built their first narrowboat in the back garden of their home in Shirley, Southampton. After he took early retirement they lived on the boat on the Engine Arm at Napton while fitting out a larger boat, which has been their home for almost 15 years. Honorary Vice Presidents of S.C.S. they have remained in touch ever since.

Thanks to them for the account of their trip on the Kennet & Avon Canal.

OWNERSHIPS. Following the Grand Union story on page one we have sent for the details of the shared boat ownership scheme. I would like to hear from any S.C.S. member who has had any dealings (good or bad) with Ownerships.

Tony Coles

WANTED: Editor to produce Southampton Canal Society newsletter once a month.

I have been typing away for just over 5 years producing our Newsletter and feel that it is time for a new editor to step into my shoes.

Newsletter Editor

Southampton Canal Society Sales

Embossed Ball Point Pens 50p

Fibre Tip Pens 75p

GEOprojects Maps.

Basingstoke Canal £2.50

Oxford Canal £3.75

Kennet & Avon Canal £3.25

Grand Union Canal

Nos. 1, 2 & 3 - £3.75 each

The Thames Map £3.75

Notelets, with line drawings of
canal scenes £1.00

Screen Printed Tee Shirts £6.50
in Navy - large & extra large
in Red - medium

Embroidered Sweat Shirts £15.00
in Navy - medium
in Bright Royal - medium

Colourful Tea Towels £2.50

Decorated Mugs £2.25

Decorated Trays £1.00 & £2.95