



Newsletter

Chairman's Column

March Meeting

This evening we give a very warm welcome to Tim Coghlan. Tim's talk includes Sonia Rolt and other Idle Women, with an update on Anne Blake who boated with Audrey and Evelyn Hunt, as mentioned in the 1943 diary. Tim has told us:

"When I come to talk to you I will only shortly have returned from the Argentine, where I have finally tracked down the descendants of Anne Blake, the last of the three of the Idle Women who are the subject of Evelyn Hunt's 1943 diary. I will be staying with Anne's daughter in law, who still lives on the same ranch that Anne and her husband ran in the foothills of the Andes after the war until they both died in the early 1990s. Anne's son took over the ranch until he recently died of cancer.

"It will be interesting just to get a feel of Anne's later life, to include in the epilogue to the diary, which I hope to publish later this year. The Southampton Canal Society will be the first to hear about my times in South America, and what I found. [Here is episode 9 of Evelyn's War](#) with Anne as the lead photo, with another one of her later on."

April Meeting

On the 7th April, we will hear about the "Flying Boats of Southampton" with Colin van Geffen.

May Meeting

There will be **NO** May Meeting as the hall may be used for local Elections.

Alan Rose

EA Transfer Campaign Receives Boost

IWA welcomes the announcement by Canal & River Trust and the Environment Agency that a joint working group will explore different options for the running of river navigations currently managed by the Environment Agency.

IWA has long campaigned for the transfer of these navigations from EA to CRT, and before Christmas asked its members in constituencies with EA waterways to write to their MPs in support of the transfer. IWA is pleased to note the confirmation in the announcement that it remains Government policy to transfer responsibility for navigation of these rivers to CRT, subject to affordability and approval by CRT's Trustees.

IWA's National Chairman, Les Etheridge, said "In the light of recent floods there has never been a better time for CRT and EA to start talking about the practicalities of how the transfer would happen. Transfer of navigation responsibility would also allow EA to concentrate on their regulatory functions of pollution and flooding."

IWA looks forwards to contributing to the review, and in the meantime will continue its campaign to demonstrate why the navigations currently run by EA would be better off with CRT.

Find out more about [IWA's navigations transfer campaign](#).

[IWA Press Release](#) 22 February 2016

Background

The working group will explore different options for running the 620 miles of EA-managed river navigations. It will begin with an information and data gathering exercise looking at all of the EA's navigations, including: the non-tidal River Thames; the River Wye; the non-tidal River Medway; the East Anglian navigations and Rye Harbour. The next step will be to investigate the various potential options required for such a complex move and to understand the aspirations and views of users.

No decisions have yet been made on the details of a potential move, however the EA, the Trust and Defra state they are committed to finding a sustainable future for the EA's river navigations and to working with the communities who use them.

The IWA sees the following advantages in a transfer of EA's navigations to CRT:

- **Secure funding** (subject to an appropriate funding package from Government)
- **Improved maintenance** through long term asset management plans
- **Third party funding** opportunities
- **Economies of scale** to be gained from being part of a larger navigation authority

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Bits and Pieces

Annual subscriptions

The Society year ends on 31 March 2016. Subscriptions for the year 2016-17 fall due from 1 April 2016. Subscription rates are unchanged at £16.00 for a single membership and £27.00 for a joint membership. Some members are so keen to pay their subscription that they pay early. Can I ask you to hold off paying your subscription until the meeting on 7 April? It makes the sums so much easier for me at the following year-end.

Aelred Derbyshire

Bulbourne Development

CRT is seeking views on regeneration proposals for the former yard and lock gate workshop on the Grand Union Canal at Bulbourne in Hertfordshire. The plans can be viewed online at <http://www.bulbournyard.co.uk>

Since the workshops closed in 2003 the Trust has been seeking sustainable uses for the site, preserving its important collection of historic buildings. Current proposals include converting the four Grade II Listed buildings and two buildings of historical importance into new dwellings, refurbishing the existing vacant houses on the site, and the building of eight new homes.

Waterways Events

The following is a list of waterway events taking place within approximately 50 miles of Southampton. Whilst every effort is made to ensure the correctness of this information, please check with the listed contact who will be glad to confirm and supply further details.

OS grid references and/or postcodes are shown (where known but not guaranteed) to aid location of the event.

If YOU know of an event taking place that should be in this list then please contact the editor.

Date / Time	Organiser	Details	Contact
Thu 3 Mar 2016 7.45pm	Southampton CS	"Sonia Rolt and other Idle Women" with Tim Coghlan. Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton, SO16 7JZ (SU410184).	Angela Rose: 02380 675312 Email: alanjrose@btinternet.com
Sat 5 Mar 2016 10.00am	Kennet & Avon CT (Reading Br)	Reading R.E.S.C.U.E. Towpath clear-up. Contact David Copley for assembly details	David Copley: 0118 959 8247
Mon 7 Mar 2016 7.30pm	Wilts & Berks CT	"The Hereford & Gloucester Canal - Past, Present & Future" by Dick Skeet. Church Hall, United Reformed Church, Wood Street, Royal Wootton Bassett, SN4 7BD (SU065826). Free parking in the Borough Fields (Sainsburys SN4 7AX) car park whence footpath to Wood St. £2.00 to cover costs inc refreshments.	Cheryll Yeowell: 01793 812708 Email: cheryll.yeowell@wbct.org.uk Web: http://www.wbct.org.uk
Tue 15 Mar 2016 7.45pm	Kennet & Avon CT (Reading Br)	Branch AGM + Speaker – Mike Wyatt BEM – '60 years of the Reading Branch' . Grange Free Church Hall, Circuit Lane, Southcote, Reading, RG30 3HD (SU692718). £2.50 (incl K&A members) to help pay for room hire.	John Swift: 0118 941 5540 Email: swift.john21@gmail.com Mobile: 07533 886917.
Wed 16 Mar 2016 8.00pm	Basingstoke CS	"Coals to Croxley (and beyond)" by Ian McKechnie. Ian and friends bought a derelict ex-GUCC Large Northwich motor, and, after fitting it out, decided to load coal delivering it to the paper mill at Croxley. The Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road, Chobham, Surrey, GU24 8AZ (SU974615).	David Millett: 01252 617364 Email: david.millett@basingstoke-canal.org.uk Web: http://www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk
Thu 17 Mar 2016 7.30pm	IWA Salisbury Group	"The South Pennine Ring" - Roger Squires will talk about this circular canal route in Northern England, 70 miles long with 198 locks. The Green Dragon, Old Road, Alderbury, Salisbury, Wilts, SP5 3AR (SU182275).	Ron & Myra Glover: 01722 710322 Email: glover.3@btinternet.com Jon Van de Geer: 01722 412841
Thu 17 Mar 2016 7.30pm	Somersetshire Coal CS	Social Evening. "The Restoration of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway." The Radstock Working Mens' Club, The Street, Radstock, BA3 3PR (ST688547). See map at http://www.coalcanal.org/maps/other/RVMCmap.gif	Steve Page: 01761 433418 Email: membership@coalcanal.org.uk
Sun 20 Mar 2016 10.00am	Somersetshire Coal CS	Walk - Writlington and Wellow. Meet at Wellow public car park BA2 8QB (ST738580). See map at http://www.coalcanal.org/maps/other/WellowCP.gif	Mike Chapman: 01225 426948 Email: history@coalcanal.org.uk
Thu 7 Apr 2016 7.45pm	Southampton CS	"Flying Boats of Southampton" with Colin van Geffen. Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton, SO16 7JZ (SU410184).	Angela Rose: 02380 675312 Email: alanjrose@btinternet.com
Thu 7 Apr 2016 7.45pm	Kennet & Avon CT (Newbury Br)	Branch AGM and talk "How from the brewing of beer came boats for disabled people" by David Bruce. The Stone Building, Newbury, RG14 5AS (SU472671). Free entry. Car parking £1.00.	Email: newbury.secretary@katrust.org.uk
Sun 17 Apr 2016 10.00am	Somersetshire Coal CS	Walk - Rugbourne Farm. Further details from Mike Chapman.	Mike Chapman: 01225 426948 Email: history@coalcanal.org.uk
Thu 21 Apr 2016 7.30pm	Somersetshire Coal CS	Social Evening. "The Claverton Pump and Burbage Crane" by Peter Dunn. The Radstock Working Mens' Club, The Street, Radstock, BA3 3PR (ST688547). See map at http://www.coalcanal.org/maps/other/RVMCmap.gif	Steve Page: 01761 433418 Email: membership@coalcanal.org.uk
Tue 19 Apr 2016 7.45pm	Kennet & Avon CT (Reading Br)	'Wilton Windmill' – James Arnold-Baker. Grange Free Church Hall, Circuit Lane, Southcote, Reading, RG30 3HD (SU692718). £2.50 (incl K&A members) to help pay for room hire.	John Swift: 0118 941 5540 Email: swift.john21@gmail.com Mobile: 07533 886917.
Wed 20 Apr 2016 8.00pm	Basingstoke CS	'What happened when the money ran out – 18th Century Canal Tokens' by Dave Jones. Dave is a collector of 18th Century canal tokens and he has written articles on canal tokens and will talk about how tokens were made, why tokens came into being at the end of the 18th.Century plus more.	David Millett: 01252 617364 Email: david.millett@basingstoke-canal.org.uk Web: http://www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk
Thu 21 Apr 2016 7.30pm	IWA Salisbury Group	"Heroes & Villains of the Basingstoke Canal" with Roger Cansdale. It is surprising that this canal still exists. In no small part, it is due to the actions of a fairly small number of people. Sometimes soundly commercial or altruistic, sometimes fraudulent and criminal but without these heroes and villains the canal would not exist today and they may well be needed in the future!	Ron & Myra Glover: 01722 710322 Email: glover.3@btinternet.com Jon Van de Geer: 01722 412841
Thu 5 May 2016	Southampton CS	There will be NO May Meeting as the hall may be used for local Elections	Angela Rose: 02380 675312 Email: alanjrose@btinternet.com
Tue 17 May 2016 7.45pm	Kennet & Avon CT (Reading Br)	'Salter's Steamers' – Dr. Simon Wenham. Joint meeting with IWA . Grange Free Church Hall, Circuit Lane, Southcote, Reading, RG30 3HD (SU692718). £2.50 (incl K&A members) to help pay for room hire.	John Swift: 0118 941 5540 Email: swift.john21@gmail.com Mobile: 07533 886917.

New towpath to top off Caen Hill repairs

A £180,000 project to resurface a 700m stretch of towpath near Caen Hill in Devizes has started this week

The work between Prison Bridge and Town Bridge is being carried out in partnership with Wiltshire Council, and will widen and resurface the existing towpath after significant damage was caused to the waterway late last year.

Emergency repairs were needed after a lock paddle left open on the canal allowed a huge amount of water to flow down the famous lock flight, the weight of which caused an embankment to collapse and wrecked sections of the towpath. While the canal has since

reopened, this project will improve the towpath for all-weather use.

Mark Evans, waterway manager at the Canal & River Trust, said: "The damage caused to Caen Hill was really disheartening, so it's fantastic this project will get the towpath here in an even better condition than it was before. The canal gets huge numbers of visitors all year round, and this project will make a real difference to everyone coming to enjoy it."

The project is expected to take eight weeks to complete, with diversions in place for cyclists and pedestrians throughout.

[Canal & River Trust](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk) 25 February 2016

February Meeting

“In the Wake of the Cockleshell Heroes” with Roger & Sandra Downton

This is the true wartime story of a courageous World War 2 attack by canoe on enemy shipping in the docks of Bordeaux, cleverly interwoven with a present day escapade by Roger & Sandra Downton.

“Sardine”, a 16 foot canoe, was put through its paces in Poole harbour. Then loaded up with the necessary supplies and camping gear, it was towed with their camper van to France. Armed with very little canoeing experience and a waterproof navigation chart, they survived the many mood swings of the giant, rapid flowing waters of the River Gironde, paddling for seven hours on their first day. Roger and Sandra planned their trip in July and allowed ten days for their mission.

Their talk was punctuated with the six men commander mission in 1942 led by Herbert Haslar and William “Bill” Sparks. Their work was to destroy German Merchant Shipping which supplied German occupied France. On December 21st there were spring tides and it was very cold. Three canoes drifted under the bows of a tanker and a destroyer, the worry of being squashed as a guard was shining his

torch and listening. Limpet mines were set and primed ready, two canoes drifted on to attach their explosives a bird call was given as the signal.

The “Sardine” and crew continued the seventy five mile exact course of this dangerous mission, camping rough on banks of the muddy river. An occasional proper camp site and good food helped, plus the chance to talk to local people and fishermen.

The presentation detailed the history of Operation Frankton, as verified by Bill Sparks, the last survivor of the Operation, who Roger met and interviewed before his death. Haslar was helped by the Resistance to return home safely. The other four were arrested, interrogated and shot.

A display of many pictures, their BBC TV and radio extracts, plus original visual props from the Operation Frankton raid were on display. Their nostalgic and engaging presentation created a respectfully light-hearted account of their challenging adventure” in the wake of the legendary “Cockleshell Heroes”

Angela Rose

Amazing efforts of volunteers praised

Volunteer hours pass the 3,000 hour milestone as local people help us clean up after the Boxing Day floods.

Since Christmas we've seen volunteers, aged from 8 to 80, give over 3,000 hours to repair towpaths, rebuild walls, clean up mud and clear rubbish and other debris from the Aire & Calder Navigation, Rochdale Canal and Calder & Hebble Navigation.

The figure is the equivalent of one person working eight hours a day for a full working year and it is estimated that the volunteers' efforts have been worth more than £40,000, though the benefit in helping to reopen stretches of towpath and canal is incalculable.

Highlights include:

- Volunteers on the Rochdale Canal moved over 200 tonnes of stone to reopen 9km of towpath between Hebden Bridge and Sowerby Bridge
- 100 volunteers aged from 8 to 80 helped clear the towpath and rebuild a dry stone wall at Elland
- An allotment group in Todmorden shored up a canal bank with sandbags to stop water loss
- Volunteers from Sanderson Weatherall property agents cleared up a section of the Aire & Calder Navigation in the heart of Leeds

[Canal & River Trust](#) 29 February 2016

Rail plans wreck £3m dream

Chesterfield Canal volunteers will demand compensation whether or not HS2 goes ahead – after missing out on almost £3 million of funding. The volunteers have already had to hand back a £400,000 grant and drop a £2.4m lottery bid because they can no longer guarantee the canal will be available for public use in the future.

The proposed routes would destroy much of the work already done and scupper the remaining plans.

Robin Stonebridge, chairman of Chesterfield Canal Trust, said: “If the rail link goes ahead, we will be looking for alteration, compensation and mitigation from HS2.

“Even if it doesn't go ahead, we'll have lost four years of opportunity and hard cash so we'll be looking for compensation.

“The plan has major implications for the canal restoration. We've got a £2.4m lottery bid that went on the back burner and we had a grant for £400,000 which we were unable to take up because we couldn't guarantee that the canal would be available for public use in 25 years time which is a common requirement for grant funding.”

Under the plan, a 1200-metre stretch of the canal between Renishaw and Killamarsh would be obliterated because the track would be at the same height and on the same alignment as the waterway.

The proposed route for the £42bn rail link from London to Leeds would impinge on the following areas:

- Staveley - The link would cut through the Hartington lock and Bell House basin, slice through one end of Staveley Puddle Bank and then again through the Puddle Bank next to an aqueduct which will carry

the canal over the River Doe Lea.

The trust claims that a map submitted by HS2 Ltd to the Government at the end of March 2012 does not show Staveley Town Basin and shows a road going south-west from the basin that does not exist. The basin construction began in March 2011 and the first canal boat entered the new basin two months before the Engineering Options Report was presented by HS2 Ltd.

- Renishaw - The proposed route slices through the canal and goes straight through Sitwell Arms Hotel.
- Approaching Killamarsh - The canal is buried by an embankment.
- Between Renishaw and Killamarsh - The proposed route would slice through Brindley Loops where the canal trust plans to rescue the original route of the waterway. The canal was diverted away from this area in the 1890s when the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway was built.

Clive Green, spokesman for HS2 Ltd, said: “HS2 Ltd is aware that Chesterfield Canal Trust has plans for the area and knows that they are important to the community. We are currently reviewing all the responses to HS2's consultation route and we work closely with organisations including the Canals & Rivers Trust and local authorities as we develop the programme to deliver Britain's new high speed rail network.

“The Government intends to announce its plans for Phase Two later this year.”

[Derbyshire Times](#) 18 February 2016

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 are normally held on the first Thursday of each month at 7.45pm (see Waterways Events) at Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton, SO16 7JZ. OS Grid Ref: SU410184. Contact the Secretary for further information.

This Newsletter is normally published during the first week of each month in time for the Society's meeting.

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Wilts & Berks Canal scheme nears completion

The restoration of the 1.2km stretch of the Wilts & Berks Canal at Studley Grange, south west of Swindon, has been an active project now for some years but it was only in the last year that the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (WBCT) managed to complete the environmental impact study around the adjacent landfill site, and also conclude the discussions with BIFFA Waste Ltd who own the route and who have been most supportive. BIFFA have agreed to lease the canal route to the Trust at a token rent for the foreseeable future.

The subsequent construction tendering process resulted in Land and Water Services (LAWS) starting work in June, with a completion date of 9th November 2015. Despite ecology studies and a pre-commencement walk over the site, the unexpected discovery of a Great Crested Newt resulted in the requirement for further ecologist input and investigation prior to undertaking site clearance and excavation.

LAWS were back at work in July but since then two additional issues have emerged:

First, land slippage may require an element of re-design following discussions between consultants WYG and Land and Water.

Bricklaying starts at new canal bridge

A MAJOR step towards completion of a new canal crossing at in Surrey was made when volunteer bricklayers began work.

Following on from contractors finishing the Compasses Bridge structure, the brickies are carrying out the next stage of a project that will see the reopening of a section of historic waterway.

They are laying the brick cladding on the new bridge, which spans the Wey & Arun Canal at the Alfold entrance to Dunsfold Park aerodrome and business complex.

This phase of the work began last weekend (Jan 23-24), when the bricklayers joined the Wey & Arun Canal Trust's regular working party at the site. As well as cladding the sides and training walls in bricks, they are laying paving on the bridge surface.

"My grateful thanks went out to the team after a fantastic weekend when lots of good work was completed," said Canal Trust site manager Dave Evans. "We didn't expect to get so much done two days in a row and the paving in particular looks great.

"There is still a lot to do on the bridge and the canal but we have had an impressive response to our requests for help from volunteers. We have people with all kinds of valuable skills giving their spare time to work at the site."

Second, LAWS have determined that the site conditions have had an impact on the construction process and they have therefore taken the decision to postpone further works until the winter weather has passed.

The WBCT project team is frustrated that this work could not be completed in 2015 but if you visit Bincknoll Lane you will see what looks like a completed canal. Unfortunately as the towpath works have yet to be completed it is not yet possible to access this section of canal.

The new stretch will be completed as early as possible in 2016 and it is hoped that work will re-commence in April/May, the exact date being dependent on how wet this winter is. The towpath surfacing will be one of the first jobs and that will allow the planting of the banks, marginal areas and hedgerow infilling to be done. Kate Jones, our project leader for the Wildlife Trail, is organising some brilliant interpretation boards and leaflets with local students doing a lot of the illustrations.

<http://www.wbct.org.uk/about-the-trust/trust-news>

The Trust's northern area working party was bolstered by members of the Newbury Working Party Group, another band of canal restoration volunteers who helped the Trust enormously over the weekend.

Contractors CJ Thorne are due to return next month (February) to prepare for the realignment of the access road into Dunsfold Park, which is planned to take place around Easter.

Once this is done, volunteers will partially demolish the 1930s concrete causeway currently blocking the waterway, part of which will be made into a public viewing area.

The Trust aims to re-open most of the canal between Tickner's Heath in Dunsfold and Fast Bridge on the A281 at Alfold at the beginning of October. Small boats will be able to navigate that stretch for the first time in more than 150 years.

The re-opening will coincide with the Trust's celebrations to mark the 200th anniversary of the 23-mile Wey & Arun Canal being declared open at the Compasses site.

Keep up to date with the Trust's restoration projects or make a donation to the bridge project at www.weyandarun.co.uk.

<http://www.weyandarun.co.uk/latestnews.php?id=%2094> 28/01/16