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HUNT
& Co

NEWSLETTER No. 262 MARCH 1993

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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

- 4th March - The Wey Navigation by Bob Nicholls of The National Trust.
1st April - "No job for a gentleman" by Commander Compton-Hall,
RN Retd., MBE. History & development of the submarine by the
Director of the RN submarine museum at HMS Haslar.
6th May - The Burgundy Ring by Ron & Myra Glover.
3rd June - A.G.M. - This could be moved to July to accommodate a speaker.
5th August - Members slides.
4th November - Harley Crossley - an artists view of waterways.
1994
3rd March - Hugh McKnight.

FEBRUARY MEETING. George Haysom is a 'Blue Badge' guide for the Tourist Board in Portsmouth and he certainly took us on an informative slide trip round the city. As with his talk on HMS Warrior he had many interesting slides and many details to explain.

We were all quite familiar with the 'Victory' and Southsea front but he introduced us to many aspects of Portsmouth that most of us were quite unaware of. Future visits will certainly be far more interesting.

It is usually possible to judge how members are enjoying their evening by how long they will all stay and listen - and this was yet another very late finish for everybody.

NOTELETS. Other drawings by Brian Evans (similar to the one on the right) are available as notelets from the sales table at Society meetings.

CHICHESTER CANAL. We are still looking for a volunteer to walk/run as a representative of Southampton Canal Society on the 4th April.

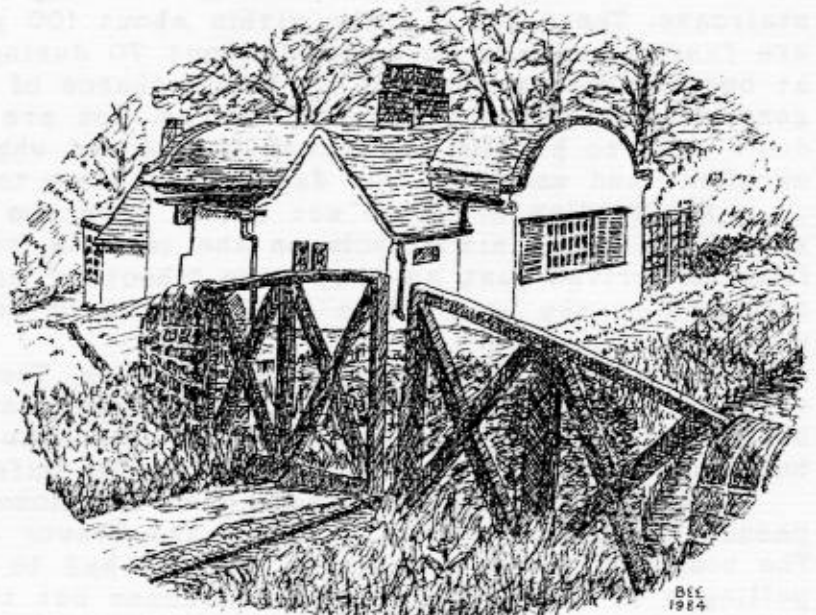
ANOTHER VOLUNTEER (with canoe/small boat) to be sponsored by the Society members on the 1993 River Arun cruise on Sunday 2nd May.

SOCIETY OUTING - Advance notice.

Black Country Museum at Dudley in June - Full details later.

HELP THE EDITOR. Having just typed out the report by Stan, I thought that it might be interesting to hear from the members how their interest in canals started. Just a few notes, not necessarily a report of the first holiday, if it was a holiday, more what made you take the holiday in the first place. Please hand to the Editor or the Chairman or post to the Chairman.

The report over the page has just been found after many years by Stan Whittle. It tells of the first canal holiday taken by Stan in the mid 1960s and also some early restoration work. The trip was organised by the YHA and was on a horse drawn hotel boat. Thanks to Stan for letting us reproduce his diary and apologies from the Editor for having to edit the report slightly.



Barrel-roofed cottage, nr Lapworth

I left my luggage at Whaley Bridge and spent the night at Buxton Youth Hostel. I set off next morning to walk about 7 miles but I had a slight mix-up and ended up in a cement works. However, after a time, I eventually arrived at Whaley Bridge. I was the first to arrive and the boat was waiting a short way from the station.

The crew consisted of Rosie and Jeff, who I already knew as previous hostel wardens, and Jane who was in charge of 'Jim'. Very capable too! We had 13 on board but another couple did not arrive.

After settling in and a cup of tea we left for Marple, 6 miles from Whaley Bridge. We started on the Peak Forest Canal and it was necessary to pole the boat along the canal as the water was very shallow. I was walking along the towpath and I got on the wrong side of the tow rope. Needless to say Jim jerked me into the canal. It was very frightening for Jane who was steering the boat, but after supper I was able to clean up at the launderette.

"Pamela" was previously used for towing salvage for the Birmingham Corporation. Jim is in semi-retirement and usually covers about 16 miles a day. He was used to pulling a lighter of about 120 tons over a longer distance. He now pulls about 16 tons which means he can relax and can compare favourably with powered boats.

In places the towpath is in a bad state of repair, but with gentle persuasion we proceeded very well. The traditional bargee paints his boat with very bright colours and "Pamela" was attractively adorned by a sign-writer. The firm is called Hostel-Craft and the season starts in May from Slough, working up country and ending at Trevor on the Llangollen Canal. We went on 5 canals, Peak Forest, Macclesfield, Trent & Mersey, Shropshire Union and Llangollen.

On July 23rd it was my birthday and Rosina celebrated with a cake which was very acceptable. Next day we had arranged for a blacksmith to meet us to fit Jim with a new set of shoes. The smithy had a mobile forge and the job only took 30 minutes. I have one of Jim's shoes as a souvenir which I have covered with silver foil and it makes an attractive decoration for my room.

On Thursday we passed through Grindley Brook and the locks are known as a staircase. There are 5 locks within about 100 yards of each other. The locks are fascinating and we entered about 70 during our holiday. We all took a turn at operating them. Most of us had a chance of steering the boat and helping in general, including the domestic chores. You are not obliged to help if you don't want to but we all mucked in and did what we could. The food was excellent and we ended our day with a visit to the local.

At Grindley Brook we met a film crew who were making a film on Canals. We saw a man riding his bicycle on the towpath, to add a bit of locality to the film. We arrived just as they were "shooting" him. He would have liked to have appeared on the boat as he used to work on her when she was used for salvage work.

We stopped at Ellesmere for shopping. The Mere is a vast lake and a nice warm evening gives it a sylvan setting. We passed several canal boats and river boats (noddy boats to the Bargee). We also saw on the bank a bath fitted with buoyancy tanks with a sign "Collecting for Oxfam".

The holiday was fast drawing to its close and we had had good weather. We passed through 3 tunnels at Chirk and Trevor which were about 200 yards long. The boat had to be man hauled and Jim had to go over the top. You can imagine pulling a 16 ton barge in pitch darkness but there is a handrail on the towpath but we were all glad when we saw the sunlight again.

Our last momentous occasion was the crossing of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, 1007 feet long and 121 feet high above the river Dee, having stood since 1805.

Well, it had to end, and just after the aqueduct it was journeys end and we regrettably tied up Pamela for the last time. Next morning, after breakfast, it was a sad parting as we had become part of the crew. We hoped to meet again next year.

In September 1967, Stan and 3 other members of Southampton Canal Society headed north to Marple to take part, along with about 600 other volunteers, in Operation Ashton. They found several interesting items including a live shell, a tin hat, TVs and furniture and an old butty which had been left since before the war. Despite the atrocious weather they left with a tinge of regret, but with the knowledge of achieving a worthwhile job in keeping the canals clear for boating and safety.