



Newsletter

March 1997

Issue 307

NEW YEAR ON THE LLANGOLLEN

This month, we continue the account of a break on the Llangollen Canal by Chris and Lyn Beahan.

After travelling through the short Ellesmere Tunnel, we stopped to admire the scenery at nearby Blake Mere which was completely covered in ice and snow. The canal was beginning to ice over at the sides but presented no real difficulty in making way.

The rather exposed section near to Whixall Moss was more icy, and we witnessed the slower progress being made by a smaller boat fitted with an outboard which eventually fell in behind us.

Having negotiated the Whixall Moss stretch we approached the Prees Branch junction with its turn off to Whixall Marina, and turned left under the roving bridge to continue our journey through to Whitchurch. After passing through the 4 lift bridges on this section we finally made our way as light was failing into the initial length of the old Whitchurch arm. Having steered in we found that there was only one other boat which was moored up for the winter. The winding hole 100 metres further on in the arm was completely iced up and unusable.

We subsequently tied up, and after suitable preparation made our way on foot into the town, a distance of some 1 mile from the canal. We were in need of some provisions but, as it was New Year's Day what shops had been open were now closed, and we had to settle for a take-away from an excellent curry house in the town. After returning to the boat and having our meal we turned in for the night with I have to say some worries about the next day.

We awoke on the Thursday with the aim of travelling back up to Ellesmere for an overnight stay. One look at the canal told us that this was rather ambitious as we were by now totally locked in by ice and furthermore the boat was bow first into the arm!

After a conference we decided to break the ice behind us to allow us to reverse the 15 metres into the main canal and then affect an about-turn using the junction as a winding hole. This took the best part of 2 hours with the ice some 2 inches thick in places plus thicker sections where earlier passages had piled ice on ice.

On top of this we required to take on water only to find that the nearby facility at Viking Afloat was closed for the winter. Faced with this we then decided to make our way at the best possible speed and see how far we could progress in the day remaining.

What a long day! Hour after hour of leaning over the boat with poles and boathook breaking up the sheets of ice and forging our way through. I have to say that I was

beginning to feel that this, our 5th trip on the canals, was the trip from hell! Still, we pressed on and as light was beginning to fail reached Platt Lane bridge where the promise of an evening meal in the local hostelry raised our spirits. Looking back on the day we saw that it had taken us 8 hours to travel a distance made in half the time the previous day.

The only other boat moored alongside was a 25 footer we had passed coming out of Whitchurch the day before and who had, after getting as far as Platt Lane found they could go no further. As they lived on the canals they had no problem with the prospect of having to stay put for the duration until either a thaw set in or somebody else would blaze a trail.

We had just moored up when Berwyn, a 65 ft boat also from Trevor with a crew of 6 adults, pulled in having travelled up from Wrenbury and for most of the day being able to take advantage of our ice-breaking ahead of them. Their aim was to reach Chirk the following night returning their boat on the Saturday. They told us we were welcome to have the favour returned by following them the next day if we wished.

During the evening we walked up to the "Waggoners" looking forward to a nice meal, only to be told - "we don't do meals on Thursday evenings"! Staving our disappointment we enjoyed a couple of hours having a drink and playing darts and pool in the warmth of the pub before returning to our boat and endeavouring to rustle up a meal from the bits and pieces on board.

The next morning Berwyn set off at a reasonable pace with their crew literally 'rocking the boat' and breaking the ice just ahead of the bow. We followed in their wake slowing every so often to allow them to get ahead once more. In this fashion we eventually reached, not Chirk but Ellesmere once again as daylight was disappearing, and were relieved at the prospect of being able to take on water again, before mooring for the night.

Some hope! We first of all found that the water hose was frozen solid and spent a frustrating 15 minutes thawing it out with kettles of hot water only to find that our tank pipework had also frozen and we were completely unable to take on any water at all! We had not taken on water since the Tuesday and were aware that it would run out very soon. Sure enough during the evening we ran out completely and of course soon after lost our hot water as well. Fortunately the central heating water was self-contained and we could at least be sure of warmth during the night.

Having moored up this time opposite the yard as the arm

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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:

Brian Evans, 19 Lansdowne Gardens, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 8FN. Tel: 01794 517115

Secretary:

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Martin Cripps
Paul Herbert
Peter Oates
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Newsletter Editor:

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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 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

5th June 1997

30th Birthday Party including
Daystar Theatre Company

3rd July 1997

AGM plus Videos

7th August 1997

Members Slides

4th September 1997

Ownerships -shared ownership of
narrow boats with Alan Mathews

2nd October 1997

Bristol to Sharpness

Talk with video - Alan Padwick

6th November 1997

Bugsworth Basin and the IWPS
Ian Edgar

4th December 1997

Annual Inter-Society Quiz
and American Supper

February Meeting

The title of Jon Sims' slide show was 'Canalside Camera' but he gave us pictures from just about every other angle too - towpath side, offside, alongside, inside and outside of boats, from below aqueducts; he had even taken some slides of waterways from the air.

As usual Jon's slides were of a very high quality, many of them quite unusual and with each a story of content or how the picture was taken. Some had been published in *Waterways World* along with his reviews of hire boats.

This was about Jon's sixth visit to us and consequently a very relaxed meeting, so much so that many members were able to join in with comments and information making the evening all the more enjoyable.

Watercress Line

All are welcome to attend the following meetings of the Southampton & Waterside Group of the Watercress Line, which will be held at the Eastleigh Railway Institute, Romsey Road, Eastleigh starting at 19.45.

Wed 19th March - More American Railroads with Mike Walker.

Wed 16th April - Red Funnel Ferries, a presentation by a representative of the Isle of Wight ferry company.

Model display

On board the SS Shieldhall, moored in Ocean Village, Southampton, on Sunday 6th April from 10.00am to 5.00pm, there will be a display of models including trams, canals, agricultural machines and live steam engines.

Harecastle Tunnel

An inspection in January revealed an unexpected area of unstable brickwork and the tunnel has been closed until further notice. BW hope that the tunnel will be re-opened by the end of March, but the length of closure will only be known once full investigations have been carried out.

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.

Arrangements have been for a special birthday party at the June meeting which will include a visit by the Daystar Theatre Company and also refreshments. In order to gauge demand, tickets will be issued for the meeting in advance. These will be free to members but a charge of £3.00 will be made to non-members to cover costs. Eric Lewis has all the latest information.

We also ordering a special sweatshirt for the occasion. The design will feature a coloured SCS logo on a grey sweatshirt. Details of the cost are still not available but Paul or Ray on the Sales Stand would still like to hear from those interested so they can order the correct numbers and sizes.

Society Barbecue

Plans are in hand to hold another Canal Society barbecue this year. Again it will be organised in close association with the IWA. This time the venue will be Bursledon Brickworks which lies near the River Hamble and on the same day as the IWA's Small Boat Cruise on the river: Saturday 20 September. If it's only half as successful as last year's barbecue, it should still be an event worth attending. More details later.

Canal Society Library

Our librarian, Sue Lewis, is still waiting at our meetings to lend any of the many interesting and often unusual books on the waterways and related subjects.

Sue, and the Society, would like to their thanks for further donations 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.

Pontoons would help town recover its links with river

ARUNDEL: Public mooring pontoons will help the town recover its historic links with the river, a public meeting has heard.

The meeting at the town hall was called to discuss proposals for the mooring on the west bank of the river at the former Ninevah Shipyard site.

Suggested by Arundel Town Council and Arun District Council, the idea has already won the backing of the IWA, the Norfolk estate and a number of Arundel residents.

Mr David Manley, leisure development manager for Arun District Council, said: "Both Arundel and Littlehampton are popular, year round tourist destinations and the Arun Valley is locally important as a recreational resource.

"The two destinations, although attracting different visitor profiles are inextricably linked by the River Arun and share similar maritime histories, as such this project would make them more accessible by water once more."

Currently the only access to Arundel from the river is at the Black Rabbit Public House, two miles from the centre of the town. "Access is limited at this site due to lack of clearance under the old bridge at Arundel," said Mr Manley. "This being the case the potential economic benefit of both local and tourism visits by boat to Arundel is not being realised."

Speaking at the public meeting, Mr Peter Boyce, chairman of the Solent and Arun Branch of the IWA, said: "Safe, improved access by river will encourage boaters to use the river and visit the town.

"Arundel will recover that historic link with its river that may have been lost in recent times."

He added: "It should bring boaters to Arundel to spend

money in Arundel. It will add to the scene for non-boaters as well. It's an historic riverside town and we feel it will recreate that atmosphere a little. We feel at the moment Arundel has turned its back on the river."

River cruises are already being planned to the town with the reconstruction of the quay providing a mooring, but public moorings further downstream would offer an opportunity for private boat users to visit the town as well.

Mr David Manley, leisure development manager for Arun District Council has produced two schemes for the moorings. The first, which will cost around £13,000, would see two pontoons stretching about 60ft, but these could pose some access difficulties on to the shore.

The second scheme, which is favoured by the town council, would cost around £33,000 and would be three times as long. would comprise six pontoons stretching some 64ft with access via the existing slipway.

He said: "The Environment Agency is doing a great thing in replacing the town quay, but it's not very suitable for public moorings. There is a lack of space and the currents are very strong."

Mr Ivan Olney, district and town councillor, said the scheme was important as a means of regenerating the town. "If you can get a bit more life with alternative transport into the town, and get people using the pubs, the hotels and the restaurants, it will regenerate the town," he said.

It is hoped that the scheme will be financed partly by a National Lottery grant and local authority funding.

Taken from articles in the West Sussex Gazette: January 9 & 16, 1997

Sarah Lucas

We are saddened to report that Sarah Lucas, co-founder of the Mikron Theatre Company and its administrator for over twenty years, died on 26th January following a brave fight against cancer.

Lord Harvington

We were also sorry to hear that the IWA Vice President and long time political campaigner for the waterways in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords died over the New Year.

SOUTHAMPTON CANAL SOCIETY SALES STAND

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|--|---------------|
| Enamel Society Members Badges | 75p | Waterway Jigsaws (192 pieces 10" x 13¾") | £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 | | |

IWA Solent & Arun Branch Events

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

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

20 April (Sun) - Canal Clean-up day on the Titchfield Canal: a gentle stroll along its length collecting rubbish: 10.00am Meon Shore near Sea Mark

18 May (Sun) - Arun Sponsored Cruise, Pulborough to Pallingham - 'Cruise it or lose it'.

25 May (Sun) - Chichester Canal "Whit Walk". Choice of two walks. Sponsors or donation please. Contact: John Cooper 01243 671051.

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

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

15 June (Sun) - Chichester Canal Cream Tea Walk - Guided towpath walk from Birdham to Cream Tea. Contact: Linda Wilkinson 01243 537500.

5 July (Sat) - Chichester Basin Barrel Races - teams of four paddlers in spectacular racing. Contact: Paul Coppard 01903 766585.

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

12 & 13 July (Sat & Sun) - Mikron Theatre Company at the Chichester Canal Basin. Performances start at 8pm. Contact: John Cooper 01243 671051.

19 & 20 July (Sat & Sun) - "Optimist" Sailing for

youngsters at Chichester Canal Basin. Opportunity to try sailing. Contact: John Cooper 01243 671051.

20 July (Sun) - Chichester Canal Cream Tea Walk - as above.

9-10 August (Sat & Sun) - Littlehampton Regatta; WACT stall, IWA carrying mayoral greetings and "mooring news".

10 August (Sun) - Chichester Canal Cream Tea Walk - as above.

17 August (Sun) - Chichester Canal Water Fair and Steam Boat Rally. Many attractions on and off the water. Parade for all boat types; chance to cruise the canal in your own boat. Contact: Paul Coppard 01903 766585.

23/24/25 August (Sat, Sun & Mon) - National Waterways Festival, Henley on Thames.

7 September (Sun) - Chichester Canal Cream Tea Walk - Last opportunity this year. See above.

20 September (Sat) - Hamble Small Boat Cruise - Autumn cruise including visit Bursledon Brickworks and Botley Village Quay. Easy launching at public slipway at Swanwick. Also SCS barbecue at Bursledon Brickworks.

19 October (Sun) - River Rother Guided Walk, Stopham to Shopham. Guided walk, donation please.

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

RIBBLE LINK TO GO AHEAD

On 19th January, a grant of £2.7million from the Millennium Commission was announced. This will be put towards the £5.4million project to construct the 'Ribble Link'. This proposed new navigation will follow the line of Savick Brook, a tributary of the River Ribble. The new waterway will connect the currently isolated Lancaster Canal to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and thus to the waterway network via the Rivers Ribble and Douglas.

The project has been promoted since 1984 when the Ribble Link Trust was formed. It has been strongly supported since its inception by the IWA, and, in 1996, IWA's Waterway Recovery Group held two weeks of Canal Camps to build a new bridge over the line of the proposed new navigation.

Creation of the Ribble Link will require the construction of new locks, bridges and other structures as well as the realignment of service pipes, etc. The route of the new navigation will run for about 4.5 miles from near bridge 15 on the Lancaster Canal to the point where Savick Brook currently enters the River Ribble. Construction should be complete and the waterway opened in about 4 years time.

IWA Press Release, January 19, 1997

NEW YEAR ON THE LLANGOLLEN

(Continued from page 1)

was solidly frozen, we discussed our next move. No boats were on the move although Berwyn was planning on continuing on Saturday. Faced with the fact that we needed to start our journey back to Southampton on the Saturday morning, we decided after agreement with Anglo Welsh to leave the boat at Ellesmere.

The following morning 2 of us were collected and taken back to Trevor to pick up our cars and travel back to Ellesmere (30 minutes by road - 7 hours by boat!). After cleaning the boat and packing all our belongings into our cars, we duly locked up the boat after shutting off the electrics as requested and set off on our return to Southampton.

Despite, or should I say because of the events of the week, the trip was judged by all to be a resounding success, having given us a completely different view of life on the canal. We are now looking forward to our next trip, feeling sure that we are ready for whatever may come our way!

Chris and Lyn Beahan and family - 1997

Dorset & Somerset Canal

The IWA West Country Branch has published a new edition of its leaflet guide to the historic remains of the Dorset & Somerset Canal, near Frome.

The latest edition includes a map showing the whole of the canal's planned route from the Kennet & Avon Canal to the South Coast. The leaflet costs just 15p (plus SAE) and can be obtained from Gerry Hollington, 75 Prankerds Road, Milborne Port, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 5BX.

(A full set of 12 West Country Waterway Guide Leaflets costs £2.15, including postage; cheques payable to G M Hollington.)

Although construction of the canal was never completed, significant structures including two aqueducts at Coleford

and Murtry, near Frome, were built. Both aqueducts survive today even after two centuries of neglect but at Murtry severe problems were developing due to trees and vegetation growing out of the masonry.

As there is no society for the Dorset & Somerset Canal, a small group of Somersetshire Coal Canal Society members was formed to look after its interests. This group came to the rescue by providing work parties for two days in December 1996 to clear away the vegetation and cut down the trees.

Already the results are spectacular, with landowners, tenants and local people being very pleased with the progress made.

*IWA Sou'wester No 114 and
Weigh-House (Somersetshire Coal Canal Society newsletter) No 18.*

BCN Marathon Challenge Cruise

The IWA's 1997 BCN Marathon Challenge will take place over the weekend of 28th & 29th June 1997. Helen Davey, one of the event organisers, said, "Why not accept our challenge and cruise some of the under used sections of the BCN and the associated Midlands canal network.

Let's prove to everyone that canal enthusiasts from all over the country, regardless of the size of craft, are still prepared to "Cruise 'em or lose 'em!" All types of boats from narrow boat to canoe are welcome to take part.

Details by sending SAE to Helen Davey, 5 Heathfield Close, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9PS. Tel: 01730 814670.

Other Dates for your Diary

Sunday 16th March 10.00am - Somersetshire Coal Canal Society hold a walk - Twinhoe and Midford. Meet at the public car park in Wellow. Contact: Derrick Hunt 01761 434618.

Thursday 20th March 7.30pm - IWA Avon & Wilts Branch, Salisbury Group have a presentation by Chris Davey on 'The Waterway Recovery Group' at Salisbury Rugby Club. Contact Eric Lewis 01703 860384.

Saturday/Sunday 19th/20th April 2.00pm to 5.00pm - Somersetshire Coal Canal Society hold an exhibition - "The Coal Canal at South Stoke, Coombe Hay and Monkton Combe", held at the Parish Hall, South Stoke (off B3110 Bath to Hinton Charterhouse road). Admission £1.50. Details from Roger Halse 01249 652846.

Saturday 26th April 7.30pm - A musical play - "A Somerset Navigation" (or "No Caisson to Answer") performed by Jeremy Gibson and Martin Horley. Followed by an illustrated talk - "The Midford Weigh-house" by Roger Halse, held at the Parish Hall, South Stoke (off B3110 Bath to Hinton Charterhouse road). Admission £1.50. Details from Roger Halse 01249 652846.

Sunday 11th May - Somersetshire Coal Canal Society - Work Party - Combe Hay Locks. Contact: Bob Parnell 01225 428055

Saturday 17th May 8.00pm - Illustrated talk - "The Tramways of Radstock" by Chris Handley at the Old Down Inn, Emborough (junction of the B3139 and A37 west of Chilcompton). Admission £1.50. Contact: Derrick Hunt 01761 434618.

Sunday 18th May 10.00am - Walk Radstock Basin & Welton Tramway with Chris Handley. Meet at the car park in Waterloo Road, Radstock (near Market Hall). Contact: Derrick Hunt 01761 434618.

Largest Ever Waterway Restoration Lottery Award

In January came an announcement of a grant of £32m by the Millennium Commission which, in partnership with another £46m of matched funding, will complete the restoration of the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals through the lowlands of central Scotland, linking Glasgow and Edinburgh.

In four years, 70 miles of wide beam waterways will be opened from sea to sea with a striking new feature - the Antonine Wheel - transferring boats between the two canals in place of 11 abandoned locks at Falkirk. The radical new structure, which will use an energy efficient system based on ancient waterwheel technology, will be a major tourist attraction in its own right, rivalling other 'wonders of the waterways' in years to come. Conceived from first principles by Scottish architects, the 80ft diameter wheel will support tanks which will carry boats between the two canals. Work will also include a tunnel and aqueduct on the Union Canal approach to the Wheel.

Audrey Smith, IWA National Chairman, said, "The IWA has strongly supported the full restoration of the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals and fiercely objected to the closure of the Forth & Clyde Canal in the early 1960s."

The Forth & Clyde Canal was closed on 1st January 1963 largely to avoid the provision of a navigable culvert and save on road building costs. The locks connecting the two canals at Falkirk were closed in 1936 and subsequently filled in. The Union Canal then gradually deteriorated. Both waterways suffered considerably from misguided calls to have them filled in so as to prevent children falling in and drowning. Public perceptions began to change during the 1970s and calls for restoration combined with volunteer work-parties eventually led to official backing for the restoration of both waterways.

IWA Press Release and BW newways Feb 1997