



Canal Society Members Go Milling

Last Saturday, 22 April, saw a group of 24 Canal Society members enjoying the spring sunshine during their outing to Whitchurch Silk Mill and Longbridge Mill.

Our excellent guide for the tour of the Silk Mill was Derek who was obviously very knowledgeable, not only about the history of the site, but also the workings of the water driven machinery.



On a site mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, in a building first erected in about 1800, and using industrial machinery from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Whitchurch Silk Mill has continued to survive. The business, most recently threatened with closure in 1985, has been saved many times. Now, it more than merely survives, not only by producing silks of outstanding quality, on a commercial basis, mainly for theatrical costumes, interior designers and historic buildings, but by deriving income from visitors. Unfortunately, no silkworms were on view – all the Mill's silk being imported from China.

When erected, the mill was probably used as a fulling mill (for felting wool). By 1830, a silk weaving business was thriving, soon employing 108 people – today there are only three!

After some quick refreshment in the tea room, and a visit to the Mill Shop, it was back into the cars for the drive to Longbridge Mill at Sherfield on Loddon.

A mill of some description has probably existed on the site on the River Loddon since the 1200s. In the 1800s Longbridge Mill had 2 water wheels, four pairs of stones and machinery capable of grinding 30-40 loads of wheat a week.

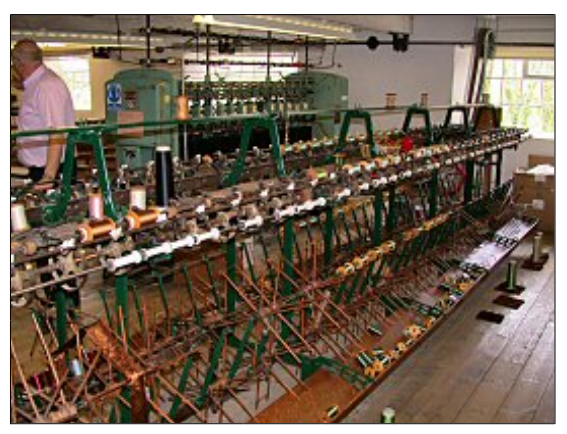


By 1950 it was grinding animal feedstuffs only and the water wheel was no longer in use. The mill closed in 1977. After some years of disuse, members of

Hampshire Mills Group spent many hours clearing up the buildings, hoping for restoration. Unfortunately, in 1991 vandals set light to the building largely destroying it (and the mill still shows signs of that fire damage). Despite this, the Mill was restored to working order, with completion in 1997, when the site was acquired by a Brewery. However, it was a condition of the planning consent that the mill workings be retained and that milling should take place once a month.

Much of the Mill and the former Mill House is now a Pub/Restaurant, where the party enjoyed lunch before being shown around the mill workings by Basil, and his colleagues Bill and Fred of Hampshire Mills Group. Long time member of both the Canal Society and the Mills Group, John Silman, accompanied us around the Mill describing many of the milling procedures.

We were shown the working water wheel, the largest of its kind in Hampshire, and the various machinery and processes which convert wheat etc into wholemeal flour, which is on sale in the adjacent restaurant. At the end of the tour Gill Herbert was given the privilege of closing down the water wheel, by gradually shutting the sluices which control the water flow from the river.



The success of the day's outing was mainly due to the superb organisation of Society members, Maureen Greenham and John Silman, to whom the Society is indebted. During his vote of thanks, our Chairman presented John with a donation to the Hampshire Mills Group and Maureen with a bottle of wine.

Paul Herbert



Top left: Whitchurch Silk Mill.
 Upper right: Machine for winding silk threads onto bobbins.
 Lower left: Part of the floor where corn is ground.
 Lower right: Longbridge Mill.

Photos: Peter Oates

Chairman's Column and Bits 'n' Pieces

Des Townley-Jones

It is with much sadness that I have to advise members of the death, on 17 March, of Des Townley-Jones. Des had been a member of the Society for many years and was a popular figure. Some years ago he, with son David, ran the Sales Stand at our monthly meetings and later assisted with the raffle. Our condolences go to Des's widow, and to David and the family. I sent David an appropriate card on behalf of the Society.

May Meeting

I am delighted that another of our own members, Bob Dukes, is giving us our monthly talk. Bob's subject is 'The History of the Royal Naval Cordite Works at Poole'.

Society Spring Outing

Our front page feature this month is of the very successful Society outing to Whitchurch Silk Mill and Longbridge Mill on Saturday 22 April.

The Bramble Patch

No – this is not a children's story! Members will recall that, in recognition of Sue Lewis's valuable contribution to the Society, in auditing our annual accounts, she was presented with a one day workshop at 'The Bramble Patch' at Weedon, Northamptonshire. For those interested in patchwork and associated crafts, this is a specialist shop and craft centre catering for that form of artwork. The particular workshop, held in February, was entitled 'Seascape/Landscape' and gave participants the opportunity to create their own restful seascape or landscape in stained glass patchwork. Laura and Gill accompanied Sue on the course and a great day was had by all. At our April meeting Sue and Gill exhibited their finished articles, describing the workshop and the methods used etc. Laura will be exhibiting her work at tonight's meeting.

Falkirk Wheel

Thanks to Laurie Pearce who has discovered that a local firm, Angela Holidays, is running a coach trip to Scotland in July which will take in a boat trip down the Falkirk Wheel. The firm picks people up from various points in Hampshire.

Monday July 17th - Scotland 5 day special coach trip with Glynis & Sheila. Tour number AS690.

A special tour to Scotland with Glynis & Sheila staying at the Abington Hotel at Abington by Biggar, just one hour drive north of Carlisle. This fine hotel offers all rooms with private facilities, TV and tea making facilities. The trip will include:

- Coach travel with hostess service
- 4 Nights dinner, bed & breakfast including special Candlelit Gala Dinner
- Entertainment most nights

Newsletter by Email

Three Society members have successfully trialled receiving their copies of the Newsletter via email for the last two months.

It is now time to ask more members to consider using this method of delivery. It has several advantages for the Society.

Our print run can be reduced saving several sheets of paper for each copy. However, the main saving is in the postal costs for members not attending meetings - about 25p for each copy including an envelope and second class postage. Every month we post around 40 copies, costing the Society about £10. (Add to this my unpaid time folding these Newsletters, stuffing the envelopes,

Future Printing of the Newsletter

Another desperate plea, please, for help with the printing of our monthly Newsletter. Details of our requirements were published in the last Newsletter. If you can help, or might know somebody who can, can you please contact Peter Oates direct. His contact details are on the back page of this Newsletter.

Nick Girdler

For regular listeners of 'Radio Solent' Nick Girdler will need no introduction. For something like 30 years he entertained his many fans and became something of an institution at Solent. Members may remember that, some years ago, he invited our Society on to one of his daily programmes to talk about the inland waterways; three of us went along – Sue Lewis, Gill and me. I spoke about the Society and waterways in general, Gill gave details of her school's long association with the canals via its annual 'Adventure Afloat', and Sue spoke about her recently published children's book, 'Remus the Narrowboat and his First Adventure'. Sadly for his listeners Nick decided a couple of months ago to hang up his microphone and concentrate on other things, namely the preparation of his sailing boat for a two year sail-around of Britain and the exploration of our coastline. When that adventure comes to an end he then intends to explore the inland waterways!

I sent Nick appropriate retirement greetings on behalf of the Society and invited him to get in touch with us, in due course, if he needs any pointers.

Refreshments Rota

Many thanks to all those volunteers who regularly assist with the provision of refreshments at our monthly meetings. We are approaching the end of the current rota and are now looking for volunteers from the July meeting onwards. Please contact Gill as soon as possible.

Paul Herbert

- Day excursion to Edinburgh
- Entry to Rosslyn Chapel featured in the new movie The Da Vinci Code
- Sail under the Antonine Wall and then have a ride on the Falkirk Wheel, the world's first and only rotating boat lift connecting the Union Canal with the Forth & Clyde Canal
- Day tour to Stirling with its mighty castle

PRICE £249. Optional holiday insurance £12.50. Travel Club Members receive a £9 discount on this holiday.

Further details from:

Angela Holidays, Oaktree House, Lowford, Bursledon, Southampton, SO31 8ES. Tel: 023 8040 4536.

Website: www.angelaholidays.co.uk

Email: bookings@angelaholidays.co.uk

sticking on stamps and going to the post-box.)

To help reduce the Society's costs, please consider adding your name to the email distribution list. If you find that this method of delivery doesn't suit you, you can always change back to receiving printed copies.

To join the email list, please include your name(s) in an email to newsletter@whitenap.plus.com, even if you have already expressed a desire to receive the Newsletter this way to Laura or myself. Thanks.

Peter Oates

Waterways Diary

The following is a list of waterway events taking place within approximately 50 miles of Southampton. Hopefully you can find something to interest you. 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 of that event.

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

| Time | Organiser | Details | Contact |
|---|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Thu 27 April 2006 7.45pm | Southampton CS | "History of the Royal Naval Cordite Works at Poole" with SCS member Bob Dukes. NB: this is the "May" meeting! Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton. | Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384 |
| Sat 6 May 2006 | Basingstoke Canal Authority | Dawn Chorus walk. Join a Ranger for an early morning stroll down the Canal, listen and learn about birdsongs. £2 per person. Booking essential. Location to be confirmed. | BCA: 01252 370073 |
| Sun 14 May 2006 10.00am to 4.00pm | Wey & Arun CT | The Winston Harwood Memorial Small Boats Rally at Lordings, south of Newbridge near Wisborough Green, West Sussex. Within a small area, you can see a waterwheel, a restored lock and aqueduct, as well as a turf-sided flood lock. | Sally Schupke: 01483 503029 Email: rallies@weyandarun.co.uk |
| Sun 14 May 2006 | IWA Guildford & Reading Branch | Small boat cruise on Abbey River - this 2 mile long stream bypasses Chertsey Lock on the Thames. | Tony Clark: 01932 340607 Email: tony@tugno1.org.uk |
| Thu 18 May 2006 7.30pm | IWA Salisbury Group | "Lots to do at the Soo". A look at North American waterways with Colin Ward. The Green Dragon, Alderbury, Salisbury. | Jon Van de Geer: 01722 412841. Ron & Myra Glover: 01722 710322 Email: ronmyra.glover@virgin.net |
| Sun 21 May 2006 9.00am to 4.00pm | Wey & Arun CT | Annual Small Boats Rally at Loxwood, West Sussex. See the ongoing work to build a new lock and deepen the channel under the B2133 to a lowered Brewhurst Lock.. | Sally Schupke: 01483 503029 Email: rallies@weyandarun.co.uk |
| Sat 27 - Mon 29 May 2006 | Inland Waterways Association | IWA National Campaign Rally. The objectives of the rally are to safeguard and ensure the long-term future of the Basingstoke Canal. Brookwood Country Park, near A324, close to the A322 junction. | Booking enquiries: James Bell - 01932 830493 Email: publicity@brookwood2006.com |
| Thu 1 June 2006 7.45pm | Southampton CS | "Idle Women" by Runnalls Davis with the story of the women who stepped in to operate the working narrow boats during World War II. Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton. | Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384 |
| Fri 9 - Sun 11 June 2006 | The Child-Beale Trust | Beale Park Thames Boat Show. Beale Park, Pangbourne, near Reading. | Tel: 0870 7777160 Email: events@bealepark.co.uk |
| Sun 11 Jun 2006 | Wey & Arun CT | 34th Annual PADDLE Sponsored Walk 2006. start and finish at Mill Pool House, in Godalming, Surrey with lunch at Hascombe Village Hall. To raise money towards the gates at the new Lock in Loxwood. | Jo Beagles: 01483 418195 Email: office@weyandarun.co.uk Website: www.weyandarun.co.uk |
| Sat 17 Jun 2006 | Wey & Arun CT | Sponsored Walk along the Wey South Path. Organised in aid of Macmillan Cancer and the Wey & Arun Canal Trust. | Bridget Glynne-Jones: 01403 752403 Email: office@weyandarun.co.uk Website: www.weyandarun.co.uk |
| Fri 23 June 2006 7.30pm | Reading Borough Council | Mikron Theatre. Open air performance at Abbey Ruins, Reading. | Jo Keen - Events Officer: 0118 939 0373 |
| Sat 24 Jun 2006 | IWA Solent & Arun Branch | River Arun Relay Cruise. Larger boats: Littlehampton to Pulborough; smaller boats: Pulborough to Pallingham. | Peter Boyce: 07729 139765 Email: pete@greensleeves.freemove.co.uk |
| Sat 24 Jun 2006 | Reading Borough Council | Reading Water Fest on the Kennet at Abbey Ruins, Chestnut Walk, Riverside Walk and the Riverside Museum from 11.00am | Jo Keen - Events Officer: 0118 939 0373 |
| Thu 6 July 2006 7.45pm | Southampton CS | "Waterways at War" with George Fleming. Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton. | Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384 |
| Fri 7 July 2006 Open from 6.30pm onwards | Wey & Arun CT | Mikron Theatre - I. K. Brunel from Mrs Brunel's perspective. Fisher's Farm Park, Newpound Lane, Wisborough Green. Tickets £8 to include free car parking at Fisher's Farm Park. Advance booking essential | Tel: 01483 503029 Email: office@weyandarun.co.uk |
| Sun 9 July 2006 5.00pm | Surrey & Hants CS | Mikron Theatre with their new production "Mrs Brunel". The Fox and Hounds, Crookham Road, Fleet. | Peter Coxhead: 01923 344564 or David Millett: 01252 617364 |
| Thu 20 Jul 2006 7.00pm | IWA Salisbury Group | Boules & BBQ at the Green Dragon, Alderbury, Salisbury. | Jon Van de Geer: 01722 412841. Ron & Myra Glover: 01722 710322 Email: ronmyra.glover@virgin.net |
| Sun 23 July 2006 | IWA Solent & Arun Branch | Chichester Harbour Cruise - Itchenor to Dell Quay and beyond. | Peter Boyce: 07729 139765 Email: pete@greensleeves.freemove.co.uk |
| Thu 27 July 2006 7.45pm | Southampton CS | Annual General Meeting followed by waterways DVD. NB: this is the "August" meeting! Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton. | Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384 |
| Sun 30 July 2006 | Kennet & Avon CT | Newbury Waterways Festival. Victoria Park, Newbury. | Graham Smith: 01635 580356. Email: grahamv.smith@virgin.net |
| Sat 26 - Mon 28 August 2006 | Inland Waterways Assn | 2006 IWA National Waterways Festival and Boat Show on the River Thames. Beale Park, Pangbourne, near Reading. | IWA Head Office: 01923 711114. Website: www.waterways.org.uk |
| Thu 7 Sept 2006 7.45pm | Southampton CS | "Early Canalling Days on Standard 8 Cine" with Brian Evans. Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton. | Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384 |
| 29 Apr - 1 May, 27-29 May, 24-25 Jun, 29 - 30 Jul | Kennet & Avon CT | Crofton Pumping Station - Steaming days 2006. Open from 10.30am to 5.00pm. Adults £5.00, Seniors £4.00, Children £1.00, Children under 5 free, Families (2 adults & 2 children) £10.00. | Phone: 01672 870300 Website: www.croftonbeamengines.org Email: eq01ntz9@CroftonBeamEngines.org |
| 14 Apr - 1 Oct 2006. 10.30am to 5.00pm | Kennet & Avon CT | Crofton Pumping Station - Non-Steam days: Adults £3.00, Seniors £2.50, Children £1.00, Children under 5 free, Families (2 adults & 2 children) £7.00. Open 7 days/week. | Phone: 01672 870300 Website: www.croftonbeamengines.org Email: eq01ntz9@CroftonBeamEngines.org |

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:

Normally 1st Thursday each month at 7.45pm.
Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton.

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Brian Evans.

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Email: paul@herbertpaul.wanadoo.co.uk

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Society Website:

<http://www.whitenap.plus.com>

March Meeting

David and Margaret James – “Odds and Ends but not what you think!”

Those who attended our March meeting found out the meaning of the strange title of David and Margaret's talk. For those who were unable to get along, I will let you into the plot.

As David explained, the intention of their talk was to base it on slides of the ends of various canal and river navigations, with some other interesting and perhaps quirky bits thrown in for good measure. However, when reviewing their collection of slides they discovered they had very few shots of such ends. Nothing daunted, they went off in their motor-home travelling to many locations they had previously visited by boat, in order to get the appropriate photographs.

In an interesting presentation, interlaced with examples of David's well known sense of humour, we were entertained with scenes of the ends of many waterways, far too numerous to mention here, but they covered the country, from the River Wey & Godalming Navigation in the South; to the Ripon Canal in the North; the River

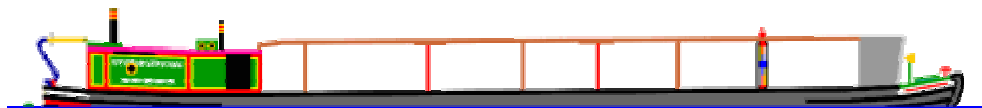
Avon at Bristol in the West; and the Rivers Great Ouse, Cam and Witham (etc) in the East....and, of course, the majority of waterways in between!

We then saw a number of unusual sights including a bag of new bristle-less toothbrushes, a floating leg, skateboarding on top of a hire boat, a disappearing Christmas Tree, a mammoth on the River Soar in Leicester and a couple of gorillas somewhere else on their travels.

Then we mustn't forget the Pooh Sticks Championships at Day's Lock on the River Thames or the World Conker Championships near Oundle on the River Nene.

David and Margaret, who have been Society members for many years, gave us a very interesting and entertaining evening – many thanks to you both.

Paul Herbert



April Meeting

Sue and Eric Lewis – “The BCN Then and Now – Early 1970's and 2005”

Sue and Eric, who have been Society Members for many years, are fairly regular presenters at our meetings and always give us an interesting illustrated talk. Our April meeting was no exception. On this occasion the verbal part of the presentation was given by Sue with Eric juggling with not one, but two slide projectors at the same time!

Sue introduced the presentation by giving us the background to their project. Their long time friend, the late Graham Capelin, a former member of our Society, was a keen photographer, particularly of canals and railways. He had bequeathed his very large collection of slides to Eric but there were just one or two problems – the slides were all mixed up, and none of them were labelled. There followed a massive task involving Eric and Sue, and others with specialist knowledge, trying to identify the locations of the slides, particularly those covering the Birmingham Canal Navigations and connecting waterways, which had been taken in the early and mid 1970s. Having completed that task, which took considerable time, Eric and Sue decided to cruise the

BCN during 2005 and try and take photographs of the same locations. As one can imagine, there was considerable planning involved, once Graham's original locations had been identified, to ensure that their holiday cruise covered as many of Graham's locations as practicable.

Sue gave us a brief history of the BCN and then, using a large map, indicated their various routes through that system.

Using the two projectors we were then shown a large number of slides showing BCN scenes in the 1970s and the same location in 2005. In some areas there was little change whilst in others it was extremely difficult to recognise the spot, so much alteration and development having taken place.

Sue and Eric's presentation was excellent and we are indebted to them for the considerable time it had taken them to prepare their programme. As we discovered, the actual presentation was only the tip of the iceberg! Many thanks to you both.

Paul Herbert