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Please note there is no meeting on Thursday 7 May

## Annual General Meeting 2020

A recent on-line meeting of the Committee has decided, in view of the present circumstances, to delay the AGM until later this year. We do not normally meet in August and, if the situation has eased, it is likely that a number of members will be away in September.

We therefore propose to hold the AGM on Thursday 1st October 2020. The AGM papers will be published as usual with the June Newsletter.

## Subscriptions for 2020/21

The Society's year normally starts at the April meeting and subscriptions are due at that point. As agreed at the last AGM, the subscription rate for 2020/21 is unchanged at £16.00 for a single member and £27.00 for joint membership. Since we will not be meeting in May you may want to defer your payment until the next meeting whenever that might be. I would prefer not to receive cheques at this time as I would have to go to the Post Office to pay them in.

Aelred Derbyshire  
Hon Treasurer

## Chairman's Column

Dear Friends,

I trust you are all keeping safe in these troubled times.

We are spending it gardening (Angie) and me making a chimney for Purton. It was going to be for Crick Boat Show but, of course, all boating is cancelled till further notice. We had booked to attend the IWA Festival of Water at Worcester over the August Bank Holiday but that has now been put back till 2021.

We were up at Napton for a few days just as the lockdown went on. Ventnor Marina, where we keep Purton, announced that they were going to close the marina so would we all go home. So we upped and left. The only thing is that we left a big lump of extra strong Cheddar Cheese in the hold. Should be well matured when we eventually get back!

I was going to give you a continuation of our recent talk "Happy in Holland" but I am still awaiting some more information from Rob Dean. I will continue it when I can.

Yesterday, Sunday, we took our wooden seat out to the front on the grass verge, for afternoon tea. Bestist china as well. With that, a number of our neighbours turned up with their chairs and tea and cakes. (All at 2 metres apart!)

As mentioned in the April newsletter we have cancelled all meetings till further notice. If we are able to recommence, we will have the AGM at the October meeting. See note in newsletter.

All the necessary papers will be put in our June Newsletter. Please make sure you read them because we do need a feed back this time.

We did include a note re the Future of the Society in an earlier newsletter asking for suggestions. Unfortunately, we have had no replies from this.

Keep safe

Alan Rose

## Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Since the COVID-19 lockdown, IWA have been lobbying Government on behalf of waterways businesses across the UK. Due to the seasonal nature of waterways businesses, IWA was aware that they were going to be hit particularly hard by the timing of the lockdown and IWA was quick to raise concerns, in a meeting with Defra, around the issues faced by the waterway sector.

Responses to a survey of 1500 businesses (carried out by IWA in partnership with Waterways World) painted a very bleak picture, with the majority of businesses reporting that they are at significant risk of collapse and some already planning to close their doors. This data, alongside findings from a survey carried out by British Marine, led to a joint letter, signed by IWA, British Marine, the Broads Authority and CRT, being sent to Defra asking for much needed financial assistance.

Many waterway businesses fail to meet the

criteria for the Government grant and loan schemes, but finally on 27 April, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak announced a new Bounce Back Loan scheme which aims to help small businesses. It is hoped that this 12-month, interest free loan will go some way towards assisting the 2,000 or so waterways businesses that would otherwise be unlikely to survive the current lockdown but IWA feels that these measures still don't go far enough. IWA is asking for additional financial support, similar to that recently announced for the fishing industry, which will allow navigation authorities to underwrite licence and mooring fees for waterways businesses this year.

Read the full story about IWA's [call for more support for waterways businesses](#).

IWA Bulletin - April 2020

## Extended boat licences

CRT is extending all boat licences by one month in response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The situation will be assessed again in a month's time when a further view will be taken about the extent and likely timescales around the coronavirus disruption on boating.

All boat licences that are due to expire at the end of April will be extended by one month to run until the end of May. All other current boat

licences will be similarly extended by a month from their current expiry date.

With the crisis affecting the Trust's income and funds available to look after the network, it is asking those able to afford it to 'donate' the extra month's licence fee back to the Trust – using the 'donate' button on the charity's website.

From a [CRT Press Release](#) - 24 April 2020

## Waterways Events

As you are doubtless aware, a result of the lockdown in response to the coronavirus pandemic is that many events, not just those on the waterways, have been cancelled nationwide.

At the time of writing, there is no information about any relaxation of the safeguards imposed. In effect all meetings have been banned until a unknown date sometime in the future. Thus, the events feature that

## Waterway Webinars

In April, IWA started a series of webinars (seminars on the web) about waterway related subjects to which you may watch on-line for free. An excellent way of wiling away the lockdown.

IWA are rolling out a regular programme of speakers for their supporters, to cover topic areas including their campaign successes, waterways heritage, their canal adoption schemes and more. They are committed to continue a programme of activities for their members as much as possible in these challenging times. They have some very good speakers lined up and topics you might be interested in. The webinars last approximately one hour.

It's easy to join using a desktop computer, tablet or smart phone. You can also dial in.

Places are limited so register now to avoid disappointment. The following are scheduled for the next month:

### Protecting our Waterways Heritage

Presented by Amy Tillson, IWA Campaigns Officer  
Tuesday 5th May – 12.30pm

[Register now for 'Protecting our Waterways Heritage'](#)

### Boston to Peterborough Wetland Corridor - water transfer

Presented by Chris Howes, IWA trustee and Eastern Region Chairman  
Tuesday 12th May – 7:30pm

[Register now for Boston to Peterborough Wetland Corridor - water transfer](#)

### Canal archaeology

Presented by Ralph Mills  
Tuesday 19th May - 12.30pm

[Register now for Canal archaeology](#)

### Invasive species & biosecurity

Presented by Alex Melson, IWA volunteer coordinator  
Thursday 21st May – 12:30pm

[Register now for Invasive species & biosecurity](#)

## Canals on TV

Last month a few thoughts were given about things you might want to look at about waterways on the internet ([April Newsletter](#)) as the real thing is not available. Here are several further ideas of canal oriented viewing - this time on your TV.

There is a series of five half hour television programmes called "Canal Boat Diaries" which was first broadcast last year. These programmes show Robbie Cumming as he embarks on a 300-mile journey across the Midlands and northern England in his narrowboat from Shardlow to Liverpool via Stoke-on-Trent, Bugsworth, Huddersfield and Manchester.

The first three episodes were transmitted again on BBC4 on Sunday evenings at 7.30pm during April. These episodes are available on BBC iPlayer - however, the first episode is only available for about another week. Also there appear to be no plans to transmit the remaining two episodes either on BBC4 or via iPlayer. However, it has been announced that a second series is to be made this year although the pandemic might have affected this. More details can be found on the internet at

appears monthly on these pages has itself been cancelled.

When definite news of the re-introduction of public gatherings becomes available, this feature will return. It is also my intention that more immediate news of events will be published on the Society's [website](#).

*Peter Oates*

### Sustainable propulsion for the inland waterways

Presented by Bowman Bradley, IWA Navigation Committee  
Tuesday 26th May - 7.30pm

[Register now for sustainable propulsion for the inland waterways](#)

### Scottish Waterways – now and the future

Presented by Jonathan Mosse  
Tuesday 2nd June – 7:30pm

[Register now for Scottish Waterways – now and the future](#)

### Biodiversity Net Gain

Tuesday 11th June- 12:30pm  
Presented by Alex Melson, IWA Restoration Team

[Register now for Biodiversity Net Gain](#)

In addition, a number of our branches are moving their public meetings and socials online. Check the [IWA calendar for details](#).

### Unlimited access to webinars on IWA's YouTube channel

IWA are uploading many of their online presentations to YouTube for you to watch at a time which is best for you. Subscribe to our channel to get notifications when webinars are ready to view. Webinars held in April were:

#### IWA - more relevant than ever

Presented by IWA National Chairman, Paul Rodgers

#### One Arm...many heads - transforming the Northampton Arm

Presented by Geoff Wood / Mick Butler, IWA Northampton Branch work party organisers

#### Bringing waterways to the attention of government

Presented by Alison Smedley, IWA Campaigns & Public Affairs Manager

#### Changing the face of the Ashton Canal

Presented by Maarja Kaaristo, IWA Manchester Branch

#### View webinars and subscribe to our YouTube channel

In addition, the IWA YouTube channel has many other videos about various aspects of the waterways scene.

<https://www.youtube.com/robbiecumming>.

Also available on BBC iPlayer is a half-hour programme from a series called "Nairn Across Britain." The second episode called "Trans-Pennine Canal" was about the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and was first transmitted in 1972. In it, Ian Nairn travels by boat along the canal across the Pennines looking at the industrial area of the North.

The canal journey begins at Worsley and continues through Leigh, Wigan Chorley, Blackburn, Burnley, through the Foulridge tunnel, past Skipton, Bingley, Saltaire, and into Leeds. The canal-side towns fall under Nairn's critical eye and he asks 'why ignore the canals when they could revitalise a whole slice of the industrial North?'. It gives an opportunity to see the canal as it was nearly fifty years ago. The episode is available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p01rwfkm/nairn-across-britain-2-transpennine-canal>. It also shows how TV documentaries have changed over the years!

## On the water in Hong Kong

*Hong Kong doesn't have any canals, as such, but it's got plenty of ocean, inlets, harbours and all sorts of vessels. And there's also been plenty of smuggling over the years. The SCS Foreign Correspondent, Annemarie Evans talks with a British former Marine commander who she interviewed for her radio programme "Hong Kong Heritage".*

Les Bird, 68, who originates from Staffordshire, joined Hong Kong's Marine Police in 1976 at the age of 22 and was in the force for more than 20 years. He's recently published a memoir about some of his experiences called: "A Small Band of Men: An Englishman's Adventures in Hong Kong's Marine Police". The Small Band of Men in the title refers to an elite force within the Marine Police of about 100 men, who were involved in special operations including busting up drug gangs in Hong Kong waters, and anti-terrorist training, boarding container ships from small police pursuit craft alongside and going up the side of the ships on small rope ladders.

But a key part of the work that was done by Les while he was in charge of the Special Boat Unit at the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s was in anti-smuggling operations. The smugglers would come from mainland China into Hong Kong on high-powered speedboats and



*Les Bird stands beside a captured 'daai fei' speedboat, circa 1990.*

British colony until June 1997.

"I was in charge of what was called a fast-pursuit unit and our job was to try and stop the smuggling by sea which was occurring between Hong Kong and mainland China. At that time China was becoming more and more wealthy," says Les. "It was a case of demand and no supply of luxury cars and high-end electrical goods. So it either was being stolen in Hong Kong or bought in Hong Kong and then illegally imported in to China."

His unit was based in the Tolo Channel, a waterway in the northeast of Hong Kong's territory with a succession of narrow inlets and hidden jetties, a perfect habitat for smugglers offering safe havens for loading up contraband and speeding it across the waters of Mirs Bay and on up to mainland China.

The armour-plated speedboats used by the smugglers were custom made to be able to transport a car over to the



*A typical fast pursuit craft used by the marine police in the early 1990s.*

*Photo: Hong Kong Police Force*



*Les Bird pictured in February on a sampan in Aberdeen Harbour.*

mainland. They're called "daai fei" in Cantonese – big flyers. The grey, fiberglass speedboats would have five outboard engines on the back giving them over 1000 horsepower and a speed of more than 90mph. The men manning the boat would also carry extra fuel in cans on the deck. What added to the danger was the operations would be conducted at night with no lights. The speedboats could be lethal and Les describes in his book how one of his team was killed outright when a speedboat went straight over the top of one of their launches.

"The daai feis were purpose-built for a car, so the compartment that the car would be lowered into via a sling at the pier would be just big enough for a car," says Les. "They wanted to get back to the mainland at all costs. With the amount of fuel on board, you just needed a spark for them to go up. Very dangerous, and they would be going at such a speed in the dark. I'm amazed not more people were killed."

In his memoir, Les describes the tension of waiting in the darkness on their police pursuit craft as he and his second-in-command and longtime friend Joe Poon looked through night-vision goggles and watched a lorry of electronic goods being offloaded at jetty and on to a speedboat.

"For us to get a conviction in court we had to provide evidence of exporting unmanifested cargo, which meant we had to catch them in the act of smuggling," says Les. "If we arrested them at the loading point our evidence was weak. So we preferred to catch them underway."

Joe Poon would be on one pursuit craft and go to the pier in an attempt to make arrests. If that failed and the speedboat headed off, then Les and his men would pursue the daai fei.

To snare the propellers of these smuggling speedboats, the Marine police introduced a floating barrier across Tolo Channel, which is still there today. Les recalls a case of a fishing trawler captain who asked for the barrier to be raised so his vessel could pass.

"As the trawler went through, there was something odd about it," says Les. The bow was too low in the water. When officers asked the captain



*A Special Duty Unit training exercise, photographed by Les Bird in the late 1980s. He had just climbed up himself.*



*A daai fei, a smuggling speedboat, with a stolen car on board, heads towards Mirs Bay, Hong Kong, in 1991. Photo: Hong Kong Police Force.*

to raise his fishing net, there was a Mercedes Benz, perfectly dry and wrapped in synthetic rubber or Neoprene, in the net. "It was known as the car in the condom case," laughs Les.

*Annemarie Evans*



## 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 in this issue) at Chilworth Village 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.

### President:

Brian Evans.

### Chairman:

Alan Rose, 33 Brackley Way, Totton, Hampshire, SO40 3HP. Tel: 02380 675312.

Email: [alanjrose@btinternet.com](mailto:alanjrose@btinternet.com)

### Secretary:

Angela Rose, 33 Brackley Way, Totton, Hampshire, SO40 3HP. Tel: 02380 675312.

Email: [alanjrose@btinternet.com](mailto:alanjrose@btinternet.com)

### Treasurer & Membership Secretary:

Aelred Derbyshire, 31 Nelson Close, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 7DA. Tel: 01794 651350.

Email: [aelred41@sky.com](mailto:aelred41@sky.com)

### Committee:

Sue Derbyshire, Gordon Osborn.

### Newsletter Editor & Webmaster:

Peter Oates, 8 Field View, Braunston, Daventry, Northants, NN11 7JS. Tel: 01788 890102.

Email: [scs@sotoncs.org.uk](mailto:scs@sotoncs.org.uk)

**Society Website:** <http://www.sotoncs.org.uk>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/SouthamptonCanalSociety>

## Hydrogen fuel cell powered boat



An EU-funded project is supporting the construction of a hydrogen fuel cell-powered push boat in a French city.

The €6.8m FLAGSHIPS project aims to realise the barge vessel, due to be based in Lyon and designed to

get its clean hydrogen from the Rhone river's hydroelectric power.

Two 200kW fuel cells will be connected to a mobile compressed-hydrogen fuel tank. This fuel tank can be removed and refilled with green hydrogen, which will be created at an electrolysis plant using power from the Rhône hydroelectric dams.

Victor Laravoire is new-building project manager at transport group

Sogestran, which owns Compagnie Fluviale De Transport (CFT), a member of the FLAGSHIPS project and future owner of the hydrogen push boat.

He said: "The great river's water flow will create the energy, which will create the hydrogen which then is used on a barge on the river. On the barge the water formed in the fuel cell reaction to create power is then returned to the river as the bi-product from the fuel cell."

The design for the vessel encompasses a mobile fuel tank with a 300kg compressed hydrogen capacity, enough to power the push boat for two weeks said Mr Laravoire. When it is empty it will be replaced by a second tank, and the first one taken by road to the refilling station located just beside the dock area to be refilled with compressed hydrogen.

Roles of the vessel will include shuttling empty and loaded barges from the loading cranes to the standby area.

CFT has tenders out for a yard to build the vessel, with delivery anticipated in mid 2021.

*[Maritime Journal](#) - 3 April 2020*

## Helping Kiel reach zero emission targets

**While working on the construction of the first hybrid ferry for Schlepp - und Fährgesellschaft Kiel (SFK), the keel laying for the second, fully electric, ferry took place on Wednesday April 1, 2020 at Holland Shipyards Group's yard in Hardinxveld-Giessendam, The Netherlands.**

The vessel will operate within the area of Kiel, between Reventlou and Wellingdorf and has a capacity of 140 pedestrians and 60 bicycles. It is expected to enter service at the end of 2020. The project is supported by the German state department of traffic and digital infrastructure as part of the clean-air-program.

In May 2019, SFK awarded Holland Shipyards Group the design and delivery of a new ferry, named *Gaarden*. During the construction of this first ferry, SFK opted for the design and delivery of a second ferry, named *Düsternbrook*. Both vessels are part of the long-overdue regeneration of the city's passenger fleet. Opting to build this second ferry at Holland Shipyards Group is in line with the ambition of the city of Kiel to ensure consistency in their fleet, and also fits perfectly within its goals to provide zero-emission public transport in the area of Kiel.

This fully-electric ferry, 24.70m LOA and 6.50m beam, is completely emission-free and entirely battery powered. Besides the battery pack,

the vessel also has 20 solar panels on the roof to provide the onboard power supply network so hotel loads do not adversely affect the range.

The ferry also features an automated mooring system using mooring hooks in both sides of the ship. The mooring system, which is one-man operated, is easily controlled from the wheelhouse. While mooring, the engine is not in use, resulting in further reductions in energy consumption.



*The vessel has a capacity of 140 pedestrians and 60 bicycles*

*[Maritime Journal](#) - 6 April 2020*