



NEWSLETTER

Chairman's Column

November Meeting

We are pleased to welcome back Chris Cove-Smith to our November meeting, with 'London's Waterways'. Chris is an acknowledged expert on the subject and is the author of "The River Thames Book" – the essential guide to cruising that waterway from the Thames Barrier to Cricklade, and some of its connecting waterways, including the Kennet & Avon Canal to Great Bedwyn; the River Wey; and the Basingstoke Canal.

Cuts in the Government's Funding of the Waterways

Members will be aware from the articles in our last Newsletter that, due to the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) mismanagement of payments due to farmers via the Rural Payments Agency, and the subsequent significant fine imposed by the European Union, that the Government is going to make disastrous and ongoing reductions in its funding of the waterways. This is in despite of the Government's own policy 'Waterways for Tomorrow'.

There is now wide spread action throughout the waterways movement against the funding cuts proposed by DEFRA. For example, this issue was the hot topic at the Parliamentary Waterways Group's meeting on 17 October. All supporters of the waterways are being urged to write to their MP asking them to sign EDM (Early Day Motion) 2757 expressing their concern about the impact of the cuts in waterway funding.

There isn't much time for everyone to make their voices heard on this urgent issue. Southampton Canal Society will definitely be making its own representations but it is essential that as many individual Society members as possible write to their local MP, the Waterways Minister and the Secretary of State of DEFRA. Ways in which you can help the campaign were published in our last Newsletter.

For further information on this very important issue, see the items on pages 2 and 3 of this Newsletter.

(Many thanks to member Ray Brooks for the information concerning the Parliamentary Waterways Group).

Proposed Boat Trip on the Wey & Arun Canal

It was most regrettable that the Wey & Arun Canal Trust was forced to cancel the Society's boat trip at Loxwood on 7 October. I believe this is the first occasion on which a Society outing had to be cancelled. Initially the trip was in doubt due to water shortage in the unconnected length of restored canal at Loxwood. The Canal Trust needed permission from the Environment Agency to allow water to be pumped into the canal. We then had a sustained period of heavy rain which may have resulted in too much water in the canal (though we are not absolutely sure about that). Whatever, in the end, permission from the EA wasn't obtained in time for the pumping to take place.

Maureen proposes to re-arrange the trip sometime next spring. Keep an eye open for an appropriate item in a future Newsletter.

Inter-Society Christmas Quiz

As members are aware, we are hosting the annual waterways quiz at our December meeting. Chris Davey has kindly offered to act as Quizmaster and, at the time of writing, teams taking part will be the IWA Salisbury Group, IWA Solent & Arun Branch and, of course, Southampton Canal Society. We need to finalise our team – I have received the names of a couple of volunteers but there are still available places if you would like to take part. Could you please contact me as soon as possible. As usual, there will be the opportunity for audience participation in the quiz, with a prize to the winner.

American Supper

An important reminder that an American Supper will be following the Inter-Society Quiz. Members have always been generous in their support and provision of food for all to enjoy. We introduced a new system last year, which was very successful, so we will be following the same procedure this year. There will be a list on the Treasurer's table at the November meeting and members are asked to write their names against the food items they would like to bring. The list is by no means definitive and if you would like to bring something that is not on the list, please add the item and your name against it. If you didn't manage to get to the November meeting, all is not lost....just bring with you whatever food you wish on December 7.

January Meeting

Advance warning that in January we will be holding our popular annual Members' Photographic Evening and Competition. Full details will be published in the next Newsletter.

Society 40th Anniversary – 2007

It has been suggested that we might consider producing some kind of Society Archive souvenir, possibly on CD, as part of our 40th anniversary celebrations. Before we can evaluate that idea we have to ascertain what material, viz. news cuttings, stories, photographs etc, might be available. Any members having material that could possibly be used for this purpose are invited to contact me as soon as possible.

Overnight Moorings at Hopwas, Coventry Canal

Society long term members, Alan and Sonja Moore, have lived canalside at Hopwas, on the Coventry Canal, for many years. They would love to see Society members as they are passing through Hopwas and can offer an overnight mooring at the end of their garden. If any member would like to take up Alan and Sonja's offer, they can get contact details from either Eric Lewis or me. *(See also item on Fradley Junction on page 3 of this Newsletter.)*

Refreshments Rota

We do need volunteers to come forward to assist with the monthly refreshments from January onwards. Please contact Gill as soon as possible. Many thanks.

Paul Herbert

SAVE OUR WATERWAYS

The waterways of England and Wales are facing their most severe crisis for many years, possibly the most severe since the immediate post-WWII years when many people expected the whole canal system to close down within a few years. That fear spawned the creation of the Inland Waterways Association and the rest of the voluntary waterways movement. The canals were saved and went on in due course to grow a new future, mainly as a leisure amenity rather than a transport industry.

While the present crisis is not as great as the worst fears of 1946, it is unmistakably severe. The cuts already imposed by DEFRA on the budgets of the Environment Agency and, more immediately, of British Waterways, will set back by a huge amount the advances that have been made in the last 60 years. If the projected further cuts in the next few years take place, the results will be catastrophic.

Writing Letters

Letters from private individuals, and from waterway businesses and local communities, to relevant arms of the Government are an important part of any campaign.

Ideally you should aim to write four letters. Each of them should include some of the general points outlined below, but each should also be targeted to the recipient.

1. To your own MP

For contact details of your MP, go to the following web site: <http://www.writetothem.com/> or write to him at: The House of Commons, LONDON, SW1A 0AA.

This is the most important letter, as your own MP is the only one with an obligation to reply to you.

- Ask the MP to sign one or more of the Early Day Motions relevant to the waterways campaign (see item on page 3). These must be signed before 15 November 2006.
- Talk about the benefits given by specific waterways (if there are any) within your MP's constituency, including regeneration, open space, wildlife, industrial heritage.
- Use local examples
- Ask the MP to take the matter up on your behalf with David Miliband (Environment Minister), Barry Gardiner (Waterways Minister) and Gordon Brown (Chancellor of the Exchequer). If they do so, your MP will be obliged to seek a response along with giving his or her own views on the proposed cuts. Suggest to your MP that in doing so, they might like to use some of the points listed below.
- Ask for their continued support by raising questions in the House.

2. To the Waterways Minister, Barry Gardiner

Barry Gardner MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, DEFRA, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR

- Once again, make use of examples local to the constituency.
- Talk about the threat to both direct and indirect benefits given by the waterways such as education, community, economic uplift, exercise, activity, leisure, heritage.
- Mention the economic, environmental and heritage value of living waterways.
- Ask for an assurance that current threats of reduced grant are false and the BW will be supported.
- Ask why BW, waterways users and waterside communities, should be penalised for mismanagement of the Rural Farm Payments scheme and the cost of precautions against Avian Flu.

- Seek a timetable for implementation of the final decisions.
- Point out that nowadays the waterways are so well-used and popular that a serious threat to them would be a vote-loser.

3. To the Environment Minister, David Miliband

The Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Secretary of State, DEFRA, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR

- Ask him to decide that reasonable grant levels to BW (at least £60m yearly) will be maintained for the next three years.
- Suggest that making the waterways and their users foot part of the bill for failings in an entirely different part of DEFRA is an unfair penalty.
- Ask if the Government's current policy document Waterways for Tomorrow is now defunct. The text of this document is at : www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/iw/tomorrow/index.htm

4. To the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown

The Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ .

- Make some of the general points below, and those listed for the Environment Secretary.
- Point out the unfairness in making the millions of people who enjoy the waterways in one way or another pay a share of a financial shortfall in a totally separate area of DEFRA.
- Argue in particular that any part of this shortfall which is caused by EU-imposed fines of withholding of grant by the EU is a penalty imposed on the UK Government and should therefore be met from Government central funds.
- Point out that the sums of money involved, while huge in waterways terms, are tiny in Government terms.

General points

There are some general points that can (and some should) come into any of these letters.

- the facts about the cuts as set out in last month's newsletter.
- the pleasure of visiting waterways, whether by boat, on foot or by cycle,
- the contribution to society made by a living waterways system, including the thriving leisure economy they host and the burgeoning shoots of a possible re-growth of waterborne freight as an ecologically-friendlier mode of transport that will ease road congestion,
- how the cuts threaten the real progress that has been made under the Government's Waterways for Tomorrow policy and
- an individual or local focus relevant to yourself as the writer.

Letters to the press

You might also like to make some of the same points in letters to the national or local press.

Take Part in Campaign Events

A Protest Rally of boats will be held in Birmingham over the weekend of 25/26 November. The main focus will be a blockade of Salvage Turn, outside the Mailbox development at noon on the Sunday, to coincide with the broadcast from there of The Politics Show. Similar events will take place at more than 15 other locations around the system. Full up-to-date details of these and other events in the coming months may be found on the website: www.saveourwaterways.org.uk

Much of the information on this page has come from the website www.saveourwaterways.org.uk

United Campaign Against Waterway Funding Cuts

Following the news that British Waterways is likely to suffer a Government funding shortfall of up to £60m over the next five years, ten national groups representing tens of thousands of waterway visitors and users are gearing up to campaign against the current thinking of the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Speaking at BW's annual meeting earlier this month, Chief Executive, Robin Evans told over 100 waterway group representatives that "the cuts are clearly a threat to our strategic objectives" and "they will make life very much more difficult for us". The overwhelming reaction from his audience was one of anger and disappointment that the Government should claim the waterways network as a contemporary success yet deprive navigation authorities such as British Waterways and the Environment Agency of sufficient funding to continue the renaissance of the historic waterways network.

Since the meeting, a wide range of waterways' interest groups have come together to plan activities and events that they intend will make DEFRA realise the benefits that arise from a vibrant, active and attractive waterways network, and they are confident other organisations will support them. Representing boaters, anglers, cyclists, canoeists, rowers, horse riders, runners, walkers, environmentalists and local communities across the country, the newly formed alliance is aiming to bring the serious threat to the future of the waterways network to the widest possible audience across the UK.

Along with lobbying the hundreds of MPs who have a waterway within their constituency, the groups plan to arrange a number of public events that will encourage all fans of the waterways to join in the campaign for adequate public funding of the UK's historic network of canals and rivers. With forthcoming Government spending rounds about to begin, the Alliance believe that 'people power' will help greatly in showing that waterways are held dear by millions of people right across the country.

URGENT AND IMPORTANT

On 17 October Charlotte Atkins MP tabled an Early Day Motion (number 2757) in the House of Commons calling for funding to be returned to the waterways and remain so into the future. The wording of the motion is on the House of Commons website <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/> along with the list of MPs who have signed it so far.

This kind of motion needs a lot of signatures from MPs across Party lines. If it doesn't get hundreds of signatures before the new session of Parliament starts on 15 November, it will fall. Please all write to your MPs NOW urging them to sign Early Day Motion 2757. This can be done either in the course of a letter as outlined

Fradley Junction

Many boaters, perhaps the majority, approaching Fradley Junction where the Trent & Mersey and Coventry Canals join, just continue on their intended journey rather than stop to explore the immediate area. There have certainly been some changes at this popular canal junction in recent years, particularly during the last few months.

Sadly, Swan Line Cruisers, the very long established hire boat company, based at the junction, is no more. However, there is still a dry dock and other limited boatyard facilities available.

There are now two new cafes at the junction.....one is located at the entrance to the caravan and mobile home site, by 'The Swan' whilst the other is situated on the BW Wharf, below the lock, where there is also a new gift shop and information centre. Both

A campaign spokesman speaking on behalf of the groups involved, says: "We are all deeply concerned that the tremendous progress made in caring for, opening up and putting to active use the historic waterway network of the UK over the last few years is not only about to come to an end but could actually be reversed. The benefits of pleasant, well maintained and accessible waterways are wide ranging and improve the lives of millions of local people who live close by them or who use them in the course of their leisure time activities. Why should they be deprived because of DEFRA's incompetence?"

"We will not rest until the fight is won. Authorities such as British Waterways and the Environment Agency should not be punished because of mismanagement by DEFRA, nor should the millions of people who love Britain's waterways. The Government will realise very soon that there are millions of votes attached to those who care about and make use of waterways, and they will lose these if common sense does not return to Government thinking."

Joint Press Release - 22 October 2006

The waterways interest groups taking part in this collective alliance are (in alphabetical order):

- * The Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs (AWCC)
- * The British Canoe Union (BCU)
- * The British Marine Federation (BMF)
- * DBA The Barge Association
- * The Historic Narrow Boat Owners Club (HNBOC)
- * The Horseboating Society (HBS)
- * The Inland Waterways Association (IWA)
- * The National Association of Boat Owners (NABO)
- * The Residential Boat Owners' Association (RBOA)
- * The Royal Yachting Association (RYA)
- * Save our Waterways

page 2, or as an urgent e-mail by itself.

To date (27 October) 107 MPs have signed the Motion.

There are now two more Early Day Motions you could usefully point out to your MP.

EDM 2829 was tabled on 23 October by David Drew MP and deals with EA funding. It currently has 30 signatures.

EDM 2863 was tabled on 25 October by Paul Rowan MP, and deals with the effect of the cuts on the Rochdale Canal. It currently has 11 signatures.

offer a good range of refreshments and have internal seating as well as outdoor picnic benches etc. On the opposite side of the canal to the wharf the former canal reservoir has been transformed into the delightful Fradley Pool Nature Reserve, well worth a visit.

I mustn't forget 'The Swan' of course, which is situated immediately opposite the junction. It offers a good menu and I must particularly recommend their excellent Sunday carvery lunches, available between 12.00 and 2.30pm. However, be warned, the moorings get taken fairly early and you cannot book for lunch, so you will need to carefully plan your cruise and arrival time.

Paul Herbert

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. (See Waterways Diary.) Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton.

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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 2 Nov 2006 7.45pm	Southampton CS	London's Waterways with the expert, Chris Cove-Smith. Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton.	Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384
Wed 15 Nov 2006 8.00pm	Surrey & Hampshire CS	"The Moving Meadow" by Peter Boyce describing a trip from Bath to London with a flowering meadow aboard a narrow boat. Parish Pavilion, Station Road, Chobham, Surrey.	David Millett: 01252 617364
Thu 23 Nov 2006	Sussex Ouse Restoration Trust	Talk by Steve Haywood, author, journalist and broadcaster, based upon his very successful book "Fruit Flies Like a Banana". Newton Room, Southover Grange, Southover High Street, Lewes, East Sussex	Secretary of SORT: Email: info@sxouse.org.uk
Fri 24 Nov 2006 7.45 for 8.00pm	Kennet & Avon CT	A talk by Vernon Coles on "Midget Submarines in World War II". Turnham's Farm Hall, Little Heath Road, Tilehurst, Reading.	John and Pam Swift: 0118 9415540 Email: johns@360swift.com
Wed 29 Nov 2006 7.45pm	Kennet & Avon CT	"The Douro River" by Roger Squires. The Stone Building, Newbury Wharf, Newbury.	Graham Smith: 01635 580356 Email: grahamv.smith@virgin.net
Thu 7 Dec 2006 7.45pm	Southampton CS	Inter-society Waterways Quiz. Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton.	Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384
Wed 20 Dec 2006 8.00pm	Surrey & Hampshire CS	"The Thames Creeks" with Roger Squires illustrating St Pancras Cruising Club's various visits to fascinating Thames creeks. Parish Pavilion, Station Road, Chobham, Surrey.	David Millett: 01252 617364
Thu 4 Jan 2007 7.45pm	Southampton CS	Members' Slides, Prints and Photo Competition. Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton.	Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384

October Meeting

'A Calendar of British Wildlife' - Dennis Bright

An excellent audience welcomed back Dennis Bright for his fourth visit to the Society. As he explained at the outset, his talk was really about 'A Calendar of Hampshire Wildlife'.

It is always a challenge to do a write-up on Dennis's talks because of the large variety in his programme and his wide range of photographic subjects. Needless to say, the standard of his photographs was up to the exceedingly high standard that we have come to expect of him. He described how he managed to take some of his shots, many of which took extensive and often ingenious planning, and sometimes many months to achieve.

In addition to his superb shots of a wide range of birds and animals, Dennis exhibited some of his more unusual shots. Examples included the mistle thrush nesting on a crane jib at Colden Common scrap yard; a young but very large cuckoo being fed, in turn, by a robin, a bull finch and finally by a dunnock/hedge sparrow. We saw Dennis's 'tame' robin feeding from his hand; a badger eating Madeira cake off a high log; and Dennis feeding a

wild fox cub by hand – first with tuna and then with Pedigree Chum! We met the moorhen tightrope walker and the starling nesting in the mouth of a stone lion! Dennis had taken some delightful photographs of kingfishers and explained that in order to get his shots he had got through 1500 small fish last year, all of which he had to pay for! Oh, and I mustn't forget the blackbird which also nested at the Colden Common scrap yard, complete with her young family.

Throughout his presentation Dennis kept us amused with his anecdotes and his stories of the trials and tribulations of a wild life photographer. We also learned about the various equipment he uses, his cameras, and his move into digital.

Many thanks Dennis for a great evening. We know that we haven't yet exhausted your programme of talks so will look forward to inviting you back in the future.

Paul Herbert