



Newsletter

November 1998

Issue 325

WATER ABSTRACTION REVIEW

There have been a number of threats to the waterway system in the last couple of years, including the weather and proposals to reorganise British Waterways. Another threat which could be very damaging to the system takes the form of proposed new controls on water abstraction. The following article has been taken from the IWA Head Office Bulletin for October 1998. Whilst not light reading, I have included it in the newsletter as I fear the proposals could have serious consequences for the waterways we all hold dear:

Background. In June 1998, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions published a consultation paper entitled *The Review of the Water Abstraction Licensing System in England and Wales*. This was the successor to a previous request by the Government for representations, in which interested parties were invited to submit their views and concerns as to how, in the future, such a review should take place and what issues would be particularly worthy of consideration.

A response to this earlier consultation was submitted by IWA in July 1997. This highlighted the principal concerns of IWA then as:

- the supply of water to canals used for navigation;
- the effects of abstraction on river navigations and canals, both currently used or under restoration;
- water supplies that will be needed for those waterways which have become derelict but are in the process of restoration;
- the temporary dewatering of engineering works, and in a few cases
- water resources for new canals under construction.

Aim of the Review. Government has stated that it intends the current Review to ensure that "*abstraction licensing and related arrangements provide full protection to the water environment while enabling fair and flexible measures for meeting properly managed demand for water resources*".

The tool with which this is to be achieved is the system of abstraction authorisation, central to which is the consideration of 'economic instruments' which might be employed in the future. Most crucially for IWA, other waterway interest groups and navigation authorities, the Review proposes to draw abstractions for dewatering of construction works and for navigation under far greater control, claiming that these have considerable

environmental impact and should be controlled.

Historic rights. At the time of their construction as important transport arteries, many canals were granted rights of abstraction as part of the legislation which established them as navigations. Such legislation remains in place in a significant number of cases, having never been repealed when many waterways fell into disrepair.

For this reason, the abstraction of water from surface and occasionally groundwater resources to allow navigation along canals has largely been, and remains, unregulated. However, the Review notes that other similar water transfer activities are licensable. The Government considers this an anomalous situation and hence is proposing to bring water abstractions for navigation within the authorisation system.

A three-tier system. The Government proposes a new system involving three types of authorisation. These would relate to the differing duration, purposes and effects of particular abstractions. The three proposed levels of

authorisation would be Permits, Consents and Licences. Of these, only licences would involve any charge being paid.

Abstractions for navigation are classed as water transfers and would be controlled through the use of Consents. Under this procedure, an abstractor would have to keep within a set level of abstraction, but would not have to pay for the right to use the water.

IWA's concerns. IWA recently submitted a response to the Government, highlighting a significant number of concerns with the new system as proposed. These are as follows:

- The points which the IWA made in its first representation to the DETR do not appear to have been adequately considered.
- The actual 'usage', or net loss of water to the resource is small. Canals are artificial channels which require water supplies to work locks (which transfer water from one pound to the next) and to counteract 'losses' from leakage, seepage and evapo-transpiration. Yet almost all such 'losses' eventually return to rivers either via ground water or through streams and channels. All losses by evapo-transpiration are more than balanced over a year by direct input through precipitation. Reduction of the amount of water transferred by a canal or similar waterway can be achieved by back

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Many canals were granted rights of abstraction as part of the legislation which established them

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.

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Paul Herbert
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MEETINGS

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

FORTHCOMING SOCIETY EVENTS

- 5th Nov** "A Small Boat on Local Waterways" by Peter Glover
- 4th Dec** Annual Inter-Society Quiz and American Supper
- 7th Jan** "The History of Water Mills and Windmills" by John Silman
- 4th Feb** "The Ups and Downs of Belgian Waterways" - Ron and Myra Glover
- 4th March** Members' Slide Evening
- 1st April** "Wilts & Berks Canal Restoration" with Clem Barnett
- 6th May** Day Star Theatre
- 3rd June** AGM followed by Waterway Videos

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October Meeting

'Black Country Waterways', the title of the slide show at our October meeting, set a very big task for our speaker to cover. With so many varied aspects, a 'local' who spends much time around the area was needed to do the subject justice. Ron Cousens is just the man.

Regularly boating in the vicinity, he has a slide collection that records the canals of the Black Country and the changes that have taken place to the surroundings over many years.

Ron's memories and little stories that accompanied the pictures were told to us in a very amusing and individual manner. It was a fairly long meeting, but members sat fascinated in their seats and made the most of this very informative evening.



Morning at Windmill End

Brian Evans 1995

Annual Inter-Society Quiz and American Supper

The trophy for winning our annual waterways quiz this year will be contested by five teams:

- ✿ IWA Avon & Wilts Branch
- ✿ IWA Guildford & Reading Branch (for the first time)
- ✿ IWA Salisbury Group
- ✿ IWA Solent & Arun Branch
- ✿ Southampton Canal Society

The quiz will be taking place at the December meeting with questions set on this occasion by local waterways writer, Jon Sims. It promises to be a good evening so come along and pit your wits against the "experts" on the various teams. If any member would like to be on the team representing SCS, please contact your editor as soon as possible.

Don't forget also that after the quiz we will be having our American Supper. For those who haven't a clue what one of those is, the idea is for everyone to bring along something to eat in the Christmas party line, such as sandwiches, sausage rolls, mince pies, cake, etc. This is all put on the table and everyone helps themselves to some of the eats (you don't even have to eat what you brought along if you don't want to!)

Your help please!! I hoping to compile a list of events and meetings for 1999 for next month (so you've got something to put in the diaries you get at Christmas). If anyone knows of anything suitable (within 50 miles), please send contributions to me as soon as possible. Thanks. *Peter Oates*

Bits & Pieces

Learn to paint - Jon Sims is hoping to organise a "Roses and Castles" painting course with well-known painter Dick Harper-White as the tutor. The idea is that it would be run for two days over a weekend early next year at a suitable venue in the Southampton area. The fee is likely to be in the range £40 - £50 to include all materials and tuition. For further details contact Jon Sims on 01703 732868 (preferably in the early evening).

Thanks to Eric and Sue Lewis for accommodating the Cousens overnight after the October meeting.

Romsey & District Society is organising a talk by Tim Kermode (Environment Agency Flood Control Officer) about the control of the water system around Romsey. This will be held on Wednesday 20th January 1999 at 8.00pm in the Court Room at Romsey Town Hall, Market Place, Romsey. All welcome. Non-members £2.00

Chichester Canal Society now has a membership in excess of 1000. Congratulations. However, they are still looking for more - especially those who willing to provide active help. The day-to-day running of the Society is now largely in the hands of just two people. If either becomes ill or is forced to curtail their involvement, the Society will be in severe difficulty.

Meet Father Christmas Boat Trips will be running daily again this year on the Chichester Canal from the Canal Basin during the period 28th November to 24th December.

Change of Address

From 28th September, the address of IWA's Head Office has been:

Inland Waterways Association
P O Box 114
RICKMANSWORTH
WD3 1ZY

Tel: 01923 711114

Fax: 01923 897000

E-Mail: iwa@waterway.demon.co.uk

Web: <http://waterway.demon.co.uk>

Departure times: 10.20, 11.30, 12.40, 13.50 and 15.00. Cost £5.00 adult and child (no concessions). Every child will receive an appropriate present from Santa. Everyone will receive festive refreshment. NB Advance booking is essential. Contact Mrs Sue Fowler on 01243 771724.

Permanent backpumps have now been installed at rising locks on the Grand Union and Oxford Canals to transfer water from Birmingham to Napton summit. Although not needed this summer, such pumps can replace a lockful of water in 20 minutes.

Portsmouth International Festival of the Sea was held over the August Bank Holiday weekend in the Naval Dockyard, Portsmouth. IWA Solent & Arun Branch undertook a publicity mission to popularise the work of the local waterway societies by focussing attention on "the Barge Route to London". Sharing the exhibition space with display material and personnel from Wey & Arun Canal Trust, Chichester Canal Society and Southampton Canal Society, the IWA achieved an excellent public relations result and covered the stand costs by the sales income.

Solent & Arun Progress, Autumn 1998

BW Monthly October 1998

CANAL SOCIETY SALES STAND

GEOProjects Maps

Inland Waterways of Britain NEW!	£4.75
Basingstoke Canal	£3.00
Birmingham Canal Navigations	£3.75
The Broads	£3.75
Caledonian Canal & the Great Glen NEW!	£3.75
Coventry & Ashby Canals COMING SOON!	£3.75
Grand Union Canal (each)	£3.75
Map 1 Birmingham - Fenny Stratford	
Map 2 Braunston - Kings Langley	
Map 3 Fenny Stratford - Thames	
Map 4 Leicester Line - Soar - Erewash	
Kennet & Avon Canal	£3.75
Llangollen and Montgomery Canals	£3.75
London - City and Docklands Atlas	£3.75
Oxford Canal	£3.75
Shropshire Union Canal	£3.75
The Thames Map	£3.75
Trent & Mersey Canal COMING SOON!	£3.75

Ball Point Pens – Embossed 50p

Burgees – Navy Blue - screen printed Society logo on each side £8.00

Decorated Mugs £2.25

Notelets – with drawings of canal and Romsey scenes £1.00
 (by Brian Evans)

Shopper Bags – Cotton with screen-printed Society logo each side .. £2.25

Society Members Badges – Enamel 75p

Sweat Shirts – 30th Anniversary in Light Grey £16.00
 with multi-coloured embroidered Society logo on breast

Sweat Shirts – Standard in Navy or Royal Blue £15.00
 with Society logo embroidered on breast

Tea Towels – Various colourful designs £2.50 & £3.25

Tee Shirts – Screen printed with Society logo across chest £6.50
 in Navy Blue - medium, large & extra large
 in Red - medium

Visit the Sales Stand at Society meetings and place your orders with Paul Herbert or Ray Brooks.

Navvies on the Buckingham

Following on from his slides on the Buckingham Arm of the Grand Union Canal at the September meeting, thanks to Brian Evans for contributing the following article:

While recently spending a weekend in Buckingham, 17/18th October, I happened to read a letter in the Buckingham and Winslow Advertiser announcing that on the Saturday morning, in conjunction with 'Yellow Pages Make a Difference Day', there would be a working party on the canal towpath near the by-pass, and local residents were invited to take part.

Making a brief visit, for the site was only a walk from our accommodation, I found 8 stalwarts of the Buckingham Canal Society clearing vegetation, mostly nettles from the path. Alas no local residents were to be seen.

Unfortunately, instead of doing real navvies' work the Society members were having to clear a path which was surfaced and signposted by the local authority and should have been maintained in good order. However, the workers were not too unhappy since the newspaper photographer had visited and their complaints would end up as additional publicity.

Better news is that the farmer owning the section would like to see it back in water, the supply being the River Ouse, just a few yards away. To take advantage of a situation where the local landowner is in a positive frame of mind, it is to be hoped that the Buckingham Canal Society will get the maximum support.

For the Doubting Thomases - don't forget that even IWAAC has included the canal on its restoration list, albeit near to the bottom.

True or False? (Answers to last month's questions)

1. True: Locomotives were used experimentally prior to the First World War to haul boats on the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal.
2. True: Rudyard Kipling's parents did name him after the Trent & Mersey Canal's Rudyard Reservoir.
3. False: A ship navigating the Panama Canal does not cause over 1 million gallons to pass from the Atlantic to the Pacific. As on any summit canal, water passes to both oceans from the summit.
4. True: A local history refers to the employment of female navvies on the construction of Greywell Tunnel on the Basingstoke Canal. It is also believed that French prisoners-of-war assisted with building the tunnel and canal in the Odiham area.

Botley Village Quay

A development deal recently brought this historic site complete with its 18th Century "bark store" warehouse back into public ownership.

The IWA celebrated the return of public access with the local history society and the Southampton Canal Society in 1997 by organising a boat cruise with a cargo delivery of items brought up river and sold at the quay. We proposed treatment and functions for the site in a paper written by Peter Boyce and took a party of local councillors to look at Chichester Canal Basin to illustrate appropriate practice for quay side landscaping.

Hampshire County Council have now properly gated and cleared the site of the spoil heaps that contained the remains of demolished (20th century) workshops and has started the renovation of the bark store. The IWA will endeavour to maintain an influence on the restoration of the site which might in due course provide an interesting opportunity for a WRG project. A picnic cruise to the Quay will be part of the 1999 Solent & Arun Flotilla Cruise Programme.

Upper Arun SSSI Water Level Management Plan

This is a consultation document by Peter Brett Associates. The SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) consists of the river and a 5m wide strip on each bank between Billingshurst and Stopham (13km).

The report commissioned by the Environment Agency concedes that "... incremental restoration of the Wey and Arun Canal should not cause a detriment to the SSSI in the short term ...", but goes on to say: "... if the long term goal of total restoration is pursued it is likely to be at the expense of a valuable SSSI." The validity of this and other unsubstantiated assertions in the report have been vigorously challenged by the IWA's Honorary Engineer Tony Harrison, and the S&S Branch has sought assurance that the unmodified document will not be used as the basis of a Management Strategy agreement due to be made with English Nature.

Swan Bridge Slipway, Pulborough

The Environment Agency has agreed to carry out repairs costing £2,000+ to this slipway, the only public launching ramp on the Arun north of Littlehampton. This steep slipway will never provide easy access but IWA are pleased with EA's positive response to their persistence.

Solent & Arun Progress, Autumn 1998

More True or False (answers next month)

5. The Grand Junction Canal Company built a practice boat lift at Bulls Bridge Depot as a trial run for Foxton.
6. The Coventry and Oxford Canal companies built their canals parallel and only a few yards apart for a mile because they could not agree on where the junction should be.
7. James Brindley's wife was called Cleopatra.
8. The Beeston Canal had a chain padlocked across it to prevent boating on Sundays.

Events and Meetings in 1998

19th November (Thu) - Canalware Painting by Bocraft. Salisbury Rugby Club, Castle Road, Salisbury at 7.30pm. Details from Tony Fry.

23rd November (Mon) - Grand Surrey Canal and Surrey Commercial Docks by Arthur Farrand Radley MBE. IWA Guildford & Reading Branch at Byfleet Boat Club at 8.00pm. Details from Paul Fisher.

28th November - 24th December - Father Christmas Trips daily on the Chichester Canal. Details from John Cooper.

4th December (Thu) - Southampton CS meeting - Annual Inter-Society Quiz and American Supper. Details Eric Lewis.

First Wednesday in most months - IWA Dorchester Group meets. Information Graham Pugh 01305 262305.

Throughout the year - Wey & Arun Canal Trust run cruises on n/b *Zachariah Keppel* on the restored canal. Information from John Lisk.

Throughout the year - Chichester Canal Society run cruises on n/b *Egremont* on the canal from Chichester. Information from John Cooper.

Telephone numbers of contacts are:

John Cooper (Chichester Canal Society) 01243 671051

Tony Fry (IWA Salisbury Group) 01722 710192

Eric Lewis (Southampton Canal Society) 01703 860384

John Lisk (Wey & Arun Canal Trust) 01493 752403

Paul Fisher (IWA Guildford & Reading Br) 01932 401505

Water abstraction

(Continued from page 1)

pumping lockage water.

- There appeared to be no recognition of artificial waterways as anything more than navigation channels. In truth, such waterways are, after centuries of maturation, complex multi-value assets, the benefits of which include:

(a) the high value of the navigation and recreation resource supporting local tourism and business;

(b) the great historical and amenity value of the built heritage of operational buildings and engineering structures which is nationally and internationally recognised;

(c) the scenic value of the canal within the landscape;

(d) Rich wildlife habitat and green corridor for both wildlife and recreation;

(e) Temporary storage of surface water which would otherwise be lost to the sea faster as a result of often over-efficient drainage systems.

- Under the new proposals, the Environment Agency would have the task of determining, monitoring and enforcing levels of abstraction at all points across the entire canal network. This would require a huge practical and administrative undertaking which, given the Agency's minimal practical experience of the operation of canals and their water requirements, may pose significant problems.

- The enabling Acts often gave canal authorities statutory duties such as to maintain certain water levels and such legislation might require amending. This would, again, be a significant and lengthy undertaking.

- The maintenance of relatively constant water levels in canals is of crucial importance to the future stability and integrity of canal banks and canalside features. If water levels vary significantly, banks may suffer cracking of the clay lining and greater damage may be caused by burrowing animals. This would, in turn, result in greater problems associated with leakage and flood defence. Canalside buildings - many of which are

of great importance as heritage features - are at risk of damage through subsidence should water levels be allowed to drop too regularly.

- The Review gives no indication of guidelines which set out where priorities for abstraction may lie. IWA is concerned that abstractions for waterways should receive equal weight to those for domestic and commercial needs, although the paper implies that this will not be the case.
- The Review does nothing to consider or encourage greater water retention in drainage systems. Over past decades, water levels have dropped significantly in watercourses largely as a result of over aggressive land

Canalside buildings are at risk of damage through subsidence should water levels be allowed to drop too regularly

drainage and flood defence initiatives together with increasing urbanisation. If this trend could be reversed there would be less pressure on those resources which are available.

- The Government is proposing to investigate the use of economic instruments such as tradable licences. IWA is concerned that such a 'market' would result in a high degree of competition for abstraction rights. In order to protect rights held under a Consent, an abstractor - such as a navigation authority - may have to convert its consent to a licence, which has a higher degree of protection against the loss of the right to abstract. This would involve the navigation authority having to pay for its abstractions and it might have to bid in competition with another potential abstractor so as to secure those rights. The theory behind this is that the abstractor who values the rights most will pay the most for them. The financial constraints faced by many navigation authorities, however, mean that they may not be in the position to compete on a financial basis with other companies.

“How about a French Canal Camp?”

The editor of *Navvies*, Martin Ludgate, ran an article on French canal restoration in the August-September issue. Lo and behold - appearing in *Letters to the Editor* in the latest issue:

Dear Martin

Canal de Berry

I was very interested to see 'French Connections in *Navvies* '170' since in recent years my wife and I have spent a number of camping holidays in the area covered by your articles. Could I add a few details, some of them in the form of updates, to your comprehensive report on the Canal de Berry.

The museum, where your picture of the Berrichon was taken, is at Magnette, near Reugny, about half way between Montluçon and St-Amand-Montrond. In addition to the tow Berrichons there is a large collection of canal fixtures and fittings and indoors there are many documents, photos and maps. All have been assembled over the years under the leadership of René Chambareau. Although the site is publicly owned, there has so far been little in the way of grants or sponsorship. René is a member of the IWA and a founder member of Inland Waterways International, so imagine his frustration when reading of British restoration projects in 'Waterways' etc, while his own local canal deteriorates.

“...so I don't suppose reinstatement of the Berry is a high priority” - to quote half of one of your sentences. That could be true for the distant observer, but for a 'local' monitoring the deterioration the picture is very different. I enclose a picture [*not published*] of the lock at the end of La Tranchasse aqueduct. It was filled in with rubbish shortly before our visit to the Berry two years ago. So the vandalism continues, thus providing the urgency.

However, there is some hope. Several meetings are planned for the near future: first at St-Amand-Montrond a gathering of the leaders of the seven 'Communes' [local government areas] from Montluçon to Vallon-en-Sully through which the canal passes. A driving force in the area is the 'Association pour le Développement Touristique de la Vallée du Cher'. This covers the river valley from source to confluence with the Loire, though unfortunately not all of the eastern arm of the Canal de Berry. Now that boating has been restored to the lower Cher and a few kilometres of the Berry at its west end, the city of Bourges would also like to be put on the boating map.

Scientific(?) Research

Imagine you are a nature conservation organisation. You are concerned about the effect that a possible increase in the number of boats through an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) might have on biodiversity and uncommon species in that section of canal. The only piece of research anyone has ever done on the subject suggests that more than a 1000 boats per year might damage the SSSI. But when you set up boat-counters you find that **over 3000 boats a year** are already using the canal. What do you do? Go back and re-do your research a bit more thoroughly? No, not if you're the Environment Agency - you simply decide that the boat-counters must be at fault. Because you know that if there were over 1000 boats using the canal there wouldn't be any biodiversity. Because the research says so.

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At a later and larger meeting it is hoped to gather together Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Officers of Tourism, leaders of the four 'Départements' [larger local government areas, roughly the size of UK counties], local authorities and MPs, plus someone connected with the restoration of the River Lot. (Would any input from WRG be of help?) This meeting could lead to the setting up of a study committee followed by a feasibility study, costing and grant application. A trip boat is planned to operate at St-Amand-Montrond.

Sadly there seems to be no national pressure group or volunteer labour force interested in the canal.

As well as the work on the canal, there is still lots to be done on the museum site and René Chambareau would welcome help. How about a French holiday canal camp to set an example to the locals, and also to help out a fellow IWA member?

The museum at Magnette is open Saturdays and Sundays, July to September, and for parties by special arrangement. Contact: René Chambareau (who speaks English) at Les Vignauds, 18 Rue des Godignons, 03190 REUGNY, France.

Canal de Briare / Canal Latéral à la Loire

Before the building of the aqueduct at Briare, barges made their crossing of the Loire some 4.5km upriver near Châtillon sur Loire. Large basins were necessary either side of the river where barges often had to wait for a flooded Loire to subside.

At the end of July 1998 the basin at Mantelot on the southern bank was connected back to the Canal Latéral à la Loire following restoration of two locks on the old course of the canal. The last peniche [barge] travelled this way in 1932.

The locks have been beautifully restored with traditional wooden gates and were opened with much celebration by a large gathering of people and a flotilla of boats. François Bordry, head of VNF [French equivalent of BW], was present, being still responsible for this section of waterway.

Now that the massive basin at Mantelot is connected to the French waterways system, it will be interesting to see to what use that area of water will be put.

Brian Evans
Chairman, Southampton Canal Society