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## A Gentle Reminder (Part 1)

So far this year only one member has paid their subscription. Most members pay in cash at meetings, so for obvious reasons they have not been able to do so. However, it is possible to pay by bank transfer (contact me for the Society's bank details) or by cheque, as I am now able to pay these in. I know the Society has no outlay at the moment but subscriptions are required to maintain your current membership.

## A Gentle Reminder (Part 2)

I forgot to mention in the last Newsletter (Part 1) that the subscription rate for 2020-21 is unchanged at £27.00 for a Joint Membership and £16.00 for a Single Membership. The proposal to increase membership rates, if it had been voted on at this year's AGM, would not have come into effect until 2021-22. The Notice about this year's abbreviated AGM will be posted in next month's Newsletter.

Alfred Derbyshire  
Hon. Treasurer

## Chairman's Column

Dear Members,

I trust that you are keeping safe and well in these troubled times. One day we shall all meet up again. The plan at the moment subject to restrictions etc is to start in January 2021 but we will have to see.

The committee will be holding a slimmed down AGM in November. We have asked for comments and suggestions but at the present time none have been forthcoming so we assume that you are all happy with our suggestions. We must have any comments or requirements by middle October at the latest.

Although AGM notes were put in an earlier newsletter, we will revamp them for the November Newsletter. So please read them.

At the present time we are at last preparing for a couple weeks away on our boat PURTON. She hasn't been out since October last year so we are quite excited about it. We are going to London and back with four other Historic Boats on a celebration of the last long distance coal run to the Kearsley and Tonge Jam Factory at Southall, London 50 years ago. [This event has now been cancelled as a result of Government rules changes on the pandemic.]

You will also be pleased to know the cheese has now been finished. Angie is now collecting more wild fruit for jam making. By the boat we have a wild pear tree. The are similar size to crab apples but pear shaped. So crab pear jam to come.

Weather at moment dry but windy and nights are getting chillier.

Last night we had a visit from Ron and Myra Glover members of SCS and Salisbury IWA. We had a very pleasant evening with them on board sat out in the hold.

Anyway keep safe and we will see you all when we can.

Alan Rose

## Horse-drawn barge business closes after cruelty claims

It was earlier this year that we learnt that the horse-drawn trip boat on the River Wey was not running any trips this year as a result of Covid19.

The following article appeared in The Times on 30 August (we'll forgive the use of the term 'barge'):

The owner of what is thought to be the country's oldest working horse-drawn barge has stopped her river trips after criticism from "snowflake" canal users.

Jenny Roberts, who owns Iona, which was built in 1935, closed the Godalming Packetboat Company after 35 years, citing criticism from people using the towpath. Her horses have been retired and the Iona loaned to the Tiverton Canal Company on the Grand Western Canal in Devon.

Ms Roberts said that "snowflakes" who did not understand the nature of the business had accused her of animal cruelty and that clashes with those who refused to step back to allow the horses to pass had made journeys too stressful.

Ms Roberts has not been able to operate her business in Surrey safely as many people have been using the area for recreation, playing on inflatables and crowding the towpath.

"No one is sadder than me because I have been doing it for 35 years," she said. "It's been getting

worse over the last couple of years. All passenger boats can only operate under Maritime and Coastguard Agency rules and we have come to the conclusion that the River Wey is no longer a safe environment to run a horse-drawn boat. There are now an unprecedented number of unlicensed paddle boards and inflatables with inexperienced people on them.

"This is just an accident waiting to happen, when trying to dodge them with 17 tons of narrowboat that does not stop on a sixpence. With large numbers of speeding bikes, runners, dogs off leads and people with pushchairs, we are also suffering a fair bit of verbal abuse,

the towpath has become totally unusable for a horse. I get people shouting things like 'That's really cruel, what are you doing to those horses?' But they don't understand — it's an easy pull for a horse. I could pull that boat, it's on water so it's not heavy."

There are now only three locations in Britain running horse-drawn barge trips — Llangollen, in Denbighshire, Newbury, Berkshire, and Tiverton.

Since she was built the Iona has hauled coal, steel and even lime juice. She and the horses have appeared in television programmes including Inspector Morse and The Victorian Farm as well as the remake of The Railway Children film in 2000.



Critics say pulling Iona is cruel for horses, but Jenny Roberts says not

## Waterways Events

The following is a list of waterway events due to take place within approximately 50 miles of Southampton. 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.

OS grid references and/or postcodes are shown (where known but not guaranteed) to aid location of the event.

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

Date/Time	Organiser	Details	Venue	Contact
Thu 1 Oct 2020 7.45pm	Southampton CS	<b>MEETING CANCELLED.</b> The postponed Annual General Meeting is to be postponed yet again. See front page of the August Newsletter.		Angela Rose: 02380 675312 Email: <a href="mailto:alanjrose@btinternet.com">alanjrose@btinternet.com</a>
Thu 15 Oct 2020 7.30pm	IWA Salisbury Group	<b>MEETING CANCELLED.</b> Ann Harries was to talk about Admiral Sir George Back whose ship HMS Terror sank whilst searching for the North West Passage. In 2014 his ship was located under water in good condition and is now being examined using modern technology.	The Green Dragon, Old Road, Alderbury, Salisbury, Wilts, SP5 3AR (SU182275).	Ron & Myra Glover: 01722 710322 or 07768 622966 Email: <a href="mailto:glover.3@btinternet.com">glover.3@btinternet.com</a> or <a href="mailto:myra.glover@waterways.org.uk">myra.glover@waterways.org.uk</a> Jon Van de Geer: 01722 412841
Sun 18 Oct 2020 10.00am	Somersetshire Coal CS	<b>Combe Hay Tunnel to Engine Wood</b> - guided walk.	The Avenue, Combe Hay, BA2 7EH (ST732598).	Adrian Tuddenham: 01225 335974
Thu 22 Oct 2020 7.30pm	Somersetshire Coal CS	<b>"The Canals, Railways and Collieries of Camerton and Dunkerton"</b> by Roger Halse.	Radstock Working Men's Club, The Street, Radstock, BA3 3PR (ST688547). For location <a href="#">see map</a>	Steve Page: 01761 433418 Email: <a href="mailto:membership@coalcanal.org.uk">membership@coalcanal.org.uk</a>
Thu 5 Nov 2020 7.45pm	Southampton CS	<b>MEETING CANCELLED.</b> The talk by members Eric & Sue Lewis is to be postponed.		Angela Rose: 02380 675312 Email: <a href="mailto:alanjrose@btinternet.com">alanjrose@btinternet.com</a>
Sun 15 Nov 2020 10.00am	Somersetshire Coal CS	<b>Combe Hay Lock Flight</b> - guided walk.	Layby opposite Bridge Farm BA2 7EE (ST745604).	Derrick Hunt: 07986 972984
Thu 19 Nov 2020 7.00 for 7.30pm	Sussex Ouse Restoration Trust	<b>River Ouse water supply.</b> Lee Dance, Head of Water Resources at South East Water, will describe the River Ouse water supply transfer between Ardingly Reservoir and the Barcombe Reservoirs and water treatment works.	Upper Hall, Perrymount Methodist Church, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath RH16 3DN (TQ331244).	Email: <a href="mailto:info@sxouse.org.uk">info@sxouse.org.uk</a> Web: <a href="http://www.sxouse.org.uk/">www.sxouse.org.uk/</a>
Thu 19 Nov 2020 7.30pm	IWA Salisbury Group	<b>The Royal Military Canal</b> was built in 1804, as a defence against the possible invasion during the Napoleonic Wars. George Fleming is due to tell all about it. MEETING MAY BE CANCELLED. - Phone or email Myra for an update.	The Green Dragon, Old Road, Alderbury, Salisbury, Wilts, SP5 3AR (SU182275).	Ron & Myra Glover: 01722 710322 or 07768 622966 Email: <a href="mailto:glover.3@btinternet.com">glover.3@btinternet.com</a> or <a href="mailto:myra.glover@waterways.org.uk">myra.glover@waterways.org.uk</a> Jon Van de Geer: 01722 412841
Thu 26 Nov 2020 7.30pm	Somersetshire Coal CS	<b>"William Smith's early career in Somerset"</b> by Peter Wigley. William Smith is often known as the Father of English Geology and was involved in the construction of the Coal Canal.	Radstock Working Men's Club, The Street, Radstock, BA3 3PR (ST688547). For location <a href="#">see map here</a>	Steve Page: 01761 433418 Email: <a href="mailto:membership@coalcanal.org.uk">membership@coalcanal.org.uk</a>
Thu 3 Dec 2020 7.45pm	Southampton CS	<b>MEETING CANCELLED.</b> With regret the Inter-Society Waterways Quiz has been cancelled this year.		Angela Rose: 02380 675312 Email: <a href="mailto:alanjrose@btinternet.com">alanjrose@btinternet.com</a>

## £45 million programme of works this winter

CRT are planning to carry out a £45.1 million programme of repairs on waterways across England & Wales this winter, replacing lock gates, dredging to ensure the water is deep enough for boats, and carrying out a host of tasks to keep the 200-year old network open and help ensure its resilience to climate change.

Despite forecasting a reduction of income of around 10% (£20 million) due to the pandemic, CRT have been able to prioritise spending to maintain a full winter works programme of 128 large-scale repairs across 50 canal and river navigations. Carried out by their in-house team and specialist contractors, the works take in the World Heritage Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, famous lock flights Caen Hill and Bingley Five-Rise, draining a stretch of canal in East London, and city centre locations in Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, and Wigan.

### Discovering the nation's waterways

Richard Parry, CRT chief executive, said: "More people have discovered the nation's waterways this year, exercising on the towpaths during lockdown and taking staycation hire boat holidays, in addition to those who already know and love them. Set against the challenges of the pandemic, and with research showing being by the water improves wellbeing, it has never been more important to keep the waterways open and available. The network has a vital role in helping to safeguard the physical and mental health of the nation – particularly in urban areas where access to green and blue space is often at such a premium."

Canals are famous for their locks, which operate and use the same

mechanics just as they did during the Industrial Revolution. This winter 99 hand-crafted lock gate leaves are due to be replaced, slightly down on previous years as workshops were forced to close in the spring due to the pandemic. Built by their skilled carpenters in specialist workshops, each gate is unique, fitted to the exact specifications for each lock, and takes between two weeks to over a month to construct.

### Extreme weather taking its toll on the canals

As the nation has been hit by extreme wet and dry weather over the past years, they are carrying out repairs that will improve the waterways' resilience to climate change. Lock gate replacement and repairs, grouting, and lining of the canal bed will prevent leakages and help preserve water levels. A separate programme of work at some of the reservoirs including Knipton, Coombs and Carr Mill, which will secure water supply, is underway.

CRT maintain a dredging programme to ensure the waterways are suitable for navigation, as well as for environmental reasons. This winter, dredging is being carried out on a number of canals including the Upper Peak Forest, Ashby, Bridgwater & Taunton, Caldon, Chesterfield, and Northern Reaches of the Lancaster. Sections of the Rivers Ouse and Severn, Gloucester Docks, Keadby and West Stockwith on the Trent will also be dredged, as well as Pymmes Brook in East London. Additionally, a series of feeder dredging projects are being carried out to improve water flow at Shell Brook, Radcliffe, Boslet and Seend, with another three locations to be confirmed.

## Boat owners sunk as canal level plummets

Another canal related article appeared in The Times on 17 September:

Boat owners in Bath have seen their vessels sink or become stranded on a canal bed after a sluice gate fault led to a dramatic drop in water levels.

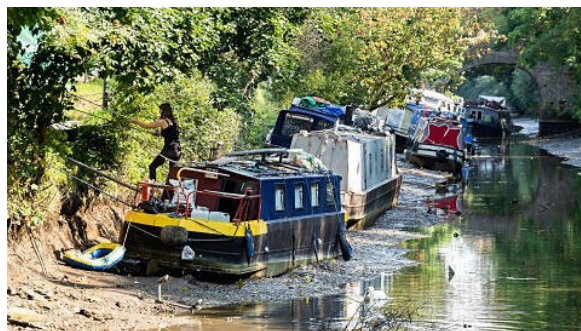
The Environment Agency has apologised for the “disruption and anxiety” caused after water levels plummeted by about 1.8m (6ft) on the Avon river and the Kennet and Avon Canal.

The Canal and River Trust alerted boaters to the problem at about 7pm on Tuesday with a post on its website after the Twerton sluice gate malfunctioned. Some who live on the affected boats rushed back to the canal to find their vessels in danger.

The emergency services were called and some people were moved to “safe accommodation” and given “restorative care”. It is understood that no water rescues were necessary.

Avril McGovern, from Bath, lives on a boat and was out for dinner with friends when she received messages about the river levels changing.

“I thought ‘I’m quite safe because I’m behind the lock’, but then there were more posts on the Facebook group that I’m in saying that it was draining, so I raced back to see my boat resting on the bottom,” Ms McGovern said. “Some other boats had sunk and a couple of friends had to find alternative accommodation, so obviously that is going to have quite a devastating impact on them.”



*The sluice gate fault left boats stranded on the bank whilst some boats were partially submerged*



The cause of the failure is still under investigation. “It could be mechanical, a software problem or third-party intervention of vandalism,” Ian Withers, of the Environment Agency, said. “The main thing is we now have control of the gate”.

Another boat owner, Cordelia Britton, told the BBC that “the worry now is the boat doesn’t rise with the water”.

She said: “I met another boater who was in quite a state as he was on a very small boat and the current was so fast. I’ll be keeping a very close eye on the boat all day. This has never happened to me in three years of living on-board. I hope she’ll come back up again.”

The agency said that its workers had closed the gate and were working to manage the restoration of the river

levels.

“The Environment Agency sluice gate at Twerton, Bath, suffered a mechanical fault which resulted in a significant drop to the river levels along the River Avon and Kennet and Avon canal,” a spokesman said.

“We have a team on site and the gate has now been closed and is working in manual operation.

“We are aware of a number of boats being impacted by the river level drop. We are working with the Fire and Rescue service, the Canal and Rivers Trust and other partners to manage the restoration of the river levels in the most effective way.”

## RCR shares update on River Avon rescue

Following the failure of the Twerton sluice gates on the River Avon (see front page), River Canal Rescue managed to pull teams and equipment together, at short notice, to recover 47 boats.

Managing director, Stephanie Horton, reported three boats, moored near steep banks between two weirs, had sunk and six were at risk of sinking. The remainder were stranded due to parts of the river completely drying up.

“One of our members alerted us to the situation midday Wednesday, and then the CRT took control and asked us to manage the recovery process.

“Given the number of craft at risk, we pulled in engineers from around the country, re-juggled their priorities and started amassing extra equipment and getting everything in one place,” explains Stephanie.

Despite supply issues created by the Covid climate, RCR met its

deadline of Thursday to source and have all equipment on site and prepared for recoveries from 6am Friday. Additional items, to find in less than 12 hours, included: 20 bilge pumps and batteries, six Tirfor lifting and pulling machines, 100 metres of rope and 60 metres of hose.

Engineers and office staff arrived at 6am Friday and by 8.30am the first sunken boat was raised. Number two followed by 10.30 and the third, it was hoped would be raised in the afternoon.

Stephanie continues: “Vessels in a perilous position were our next priority and we were confident that by Sunday, every grounded boat would be up and floating again.”

The Environment Agency has agreed to cover the costs incurred by those affected by the incident.

*[Towpath Talk - 21 September 2020](#)*

## Partnership to develop a hydrogen fuel cell battery hybrid power plant

Responding to the UK’s 2019 Clean Maritime Plan (CMP), Barrus has partnered with Hypermotive and HPI-CEproof to develop a fuel cell battery hybrid power plant for inland waterways vessels.

Supported by a recently awarded Niche Vehicle Network (NVN) grant, this proof of concept programme builds on a previous successful technical and commercial feasibility study undertaken by Hypermotive, supported by Barrus.

The 2019 Clean Maritime Plan sets out the aim that by 2050 all vessels in UK waters must be zero-emissions. Barrus will be using knowledge gained by Hypermotive, fuel cell and battery integration specialists to develop a hydrogen-powered zero-emissions power plant to support the move towards zero emissions for the inland waterways market.

Alasdair Reay, Managing Director at HPI-CEproof said, “Many industries are increasingly adopting hydrogen as the fuel of the future and with this project, the boating industry is doing the same.

“One of the perceived impediments to the industry adopting hydrogen is that the gas is not currently addressed in any boating standards and so there is no explicit compliance path to follow.

“HPI-CEproof, however, has formal accreditations to certify both boats and pressure equipment and using our knowledge from these areas, we look forward to ensuring the product that the project will realise, is compliant with the requirements of both the UK and EU markets.”

*[Towpath Talk - 22 September 2020](#)*



## Every river and lake in England fails pollution test

*After an investigation into water pollution and a series of articles, The Times had this report on 18th September:*

All rivers and lakes monitored in England have failed tests for chemical pollution and 84 per cent do not meet the government's target of good ecological status, official figures reveal.

There has been no progress in the past four years towards meeting the government's long-term target that at least three quarters of water bodies, including rivers, lakes, canals, coastal waters and groundwater, will be restored to be as close as possible to their natural state.

Raw sewage spilling from thousands of storm overflows and fertiliser and manure flowing off farmland are among the main reasons for the poor quality of water in rivers.

The figures for last year show that England has one of the worst records in Europe for pollution of water bodies, with only 16 per cent in good health compared with a European average of 40 per cent. In Scotland 66 per cent of water bodies are healthy, with 46 per cent of rivers healthy in Wales and 31 per cent in Northern Ireland.

The Environment Agency published the long-delayed results as it emerged that the government faces a legal challenge to its approach to managing rivers by Feargal Sharkey, the former Undertones singer and a keen fly fisherman.

"Government has proved incapable of being held to account and we're going to change that," Sharkey told ENDS Report, an environmental news service.

He has accused the government of failing to stop water companies discharging raw sewage into rivers and allowing water companies and farmers to extract too much water from them.

The agency has admitted reducing the frequency of testing of rivers and has been accused of seeking to water down the testing programme after Brexit to make it easier for rivers to meet the target.

The results show that 14 per cent of rivers and 16 per cent of all tested water bodies meet the criteria for "good ecological status or potential" against a long-term target of 75 per cent. The overall results are unchanged on the last report in 2016.

No water body achieved "good chemical status" after improved methods of testing fish and shellfish flesh detected contamination with flame retardants and other toxic substances. In 2016, 97 per cent of water bodies passed the chemicals tests but the agency said that was because less sophisticated methods had been used then.

The agency also admitted there had been "some deterioration" in the quality of groundwater, though it said it was "broadly similar" to results in 2015.

Waterways rated as having "bad" ecological status, the worst score, include the Lee in Hertfordshire, the Wandle in south London, the Alver in Hampshire and tributaries of the Tyne, Tees, Wharfe, Derwent, Trent, Severn, Teme and Avon.

Rebecca Pow, the environment minister, effectively admitted the results were an embarrassment for the government.

"These results show we have a long way to go, with a new way of testing for chemicals more accurately reflecting what is in our water environment," she said.



"While it's not comfortable reading, this will allow us to plan more effectively to tackle the scourge of pollution."

She said urgent action was needed, including on reducing pollution from storm overflows, which spilled sewage into rivers on more than 200,000 occasions in England last year.

Ms Pow this month met water companies which manage these overflows to discuss the problem and she has established a "storm overflows taskforce" to consider solutions.

The government has also proposed new legally binding targets on reducing water pollution in the Environment Bill and is reviewing licences to reduce how much water is removed from the rivers.

The Angling Trust said the results were "shameful". It added: "The government has made great play that they want 75 per cent of rivers, lakes and streams to meet good standards by 2027. Good means clean water and a healthy environment. The last time they looked, in 2016, only 14 per cent met this standard. Today, we find out that none of them do, not a single one. This is shameful."

"Our rivers are officially the dirtiest in Europe. So much for the government's ambition to leave the environment in a better state for future generations. This shows they are failing and failing badly. What we need is leadership, not excuses. The comprehensive spending review will be a real test to see if the political leadership our rivers, lakes and streams need is there. We have to see funding to clean up our environment massively increased. We need regulators who can do their job properly and we need to hold polluters to account."

Richard Benwell, chief executive of Wildlife and Countryside Link, a coalition of conservation groups, said: "Chemicals, sewage, manure, and plastic are polluting our rivers, invasive weeds are choking them, and climate change and over-abstraction are drying them out."

"Urgent investment is needed now to turn our suffering waters into thriving blue corridors for wildlife. It means investment, industry change and improved standards are essential, with the legal underpinning in the Environment Bill to make our waters well again."

The number of water samples collected by the agency has fallen by a quarter since 2014 but it claimed this was due to "a more risk-based monitoring approach".

Sir James Bevan, the Environment Agency chief executive, was criticised by environment groups last month after appearing to suggest a change to EU methods of testing water quality after Brexit which could improve the scores for English rivers.

He questioned the EU's "one out, all out" rule, under which rivers cannot be classed as good if they fail on any of the four categories in the water framework directive. He said this meant scores might not reflect improvements in some areas.

Surfers Against Sewage said more action on the causes of pollution was needed rather than "engineering the testing programme" to achieve better scores.

The agency denied that Sir James was trying to weaken laws on water quality and said he believed any changes should deliver better outcomes.

## 'Vietnamese boat people'

A few months ago, our Hong Kong correspondent talked with British resident Les Bird, who came to Hong Kong from Staffordshire in 1976, so just a year after the Vietnam War ended. He joined the Marine Police in the then British colony. Previously for the Southampton Canal Society Newsletter Les talked to Annemarie about his work in the late 1980s trying to stop speedboats that would smuggle goods between Hong Kong and mainland China. Les was in the Marine Police from 1976 until the Hong Kong handover in June 1997. In this article he talks about the years he spent intercepting and helping tens of thousands of Vietnamese "boat people" who fled Vietnam from 1976 onwards.



*Les Bird's Marine Police patrol launch (PL 50) escorting a Vietnamese refugee vessel towards Hong Kong in 1979. This boat, which had 89 people on board, had been spotted in international waters by a Royal Auxiliary Air Force helicopter.*



*This Vietnamese wooden vessel was intercepted off Fan Lau Point to the south-west of Lantau Island in 1979. This sailing vessel had 210 refugees crammed on board and had taken 19 days to sail from Vung Tau in southern Vietnam, across the South China Sea, to Hong Kong.*



*Two little girls peek out of a porthole of the people-smuggling freighter, the Huey Fong. They would be over 40 years old now. The Huey Fong arrived south of Hong Kong waters in December, 1978. The 4,187-ton freighter had 2,703 Vietnamese refugees as its cargo.*

For the next 13 years of his career, Les would often work on Hong Kong's "Southern Colony Boundary", south of the islands of Lantau, Lamma, where Annemarie lives, and Cheung Chau. The Vietnamese would make a perilous 1500km voyage, often in boats that were not up to the task.

"To varying degrees you could have described our job as rescue rather than intercept," says Les, 68, who has retired in Hong Kong. Les and the other Marine Police officers would sit and wait along the territorial boundary in police vessels. Many of the passengers were children, and while the Marine Police crews only had rudimentary supplies, they would often have to identify cases of malnutrition, dehydration and cholera.

The array of vessels that the Vietnamese arrived in was astonishing. Sailboats, flat-keeled river boats, motorboats. Some of the vessels literally sank in front of the police boats as they moved in to take the boat people off. During his career, Les carried a camera in his bag and would take photos when opportunity allowed. He now has a unique collection of more than 100 photographs of the Vietnamese vessels and refugees entering Hong Kong. The boat people were then moved into detention camps in Hong Kong, and the vast majority then found new homes in the US, Canada, Britain and other third countries in later years.

"We would sit and wait for them to come in as we had no jurisdiction outside of the territorial boundary, the Hong Kong Colony boundary, it was international waters. But for emergency rescue you "throw the book away" and go and do emergency rescue if you think it is necessary," says Les. "So from time to time we would identify vessels that were having difficulty getting to us. They were coming towards us, they could see us, but they were looking like they wouldn't make it. In which case we would go out and the intercept would then become a rescue."

At the end of the 1970s, Hong Kong adopted the "port of first asylum" policy, something that Les takes pride in. But the numbers were overwhelming. In 1979, more than 68,000 refugees arrived, mostly by sea. As the number increased, he requisitioned vessels from other government departments to ensure the boatpeople could be picked up. So there were boats from the Marine Department, Fire Services, tugboats, which was a bit of a logistics challenge. Les, a long distance endurance swimmer, also dived in when a boat capsized one night. Then there was a violent typhoon after which no Vietnamese refugee boats arrived for two weeks, and Les wonders how many people were lost at sea.

Along with the small boats, throughout 1979 three large freighters arrived – these were where the Vietnamese refugees paid people smugglers to take them. The third vessel was called the *Sen On*, a rusty freighter. When the vessel arrived in the neighbouring Portuguese enclave of Macau, the people smugglers jumped off, pointed the refugees in the direction of Hong Kong and told them to drive the boat. It crashed into a beach in Lantau when Les was an inspector on the island. He found many of the Vietnamese already sitting on the beach. Les processed all the people on the vessel. The people smugglers were never caught.

Last year, Les wrote a memoir about his time in the Marine Police and through that some of the Vietnamese, who now live in Canada but were on the *Sen On* as children, got in touch with Les. They don't remember how they arrived, so Les has been able to help them fill in the gaps on this childhood perilous journey. One father also bought a motorized boat and literally drove it himself the whole distance to get his family to safety. His daughter was born in the detention camp in Hong Kong. They asked Les for some photos of that time and they are now framed in the family's three shops in London.

[Les Bird is the author of: *A Small Band of Men: An Englishman's Adventures in Hong Kong's Marine Police*]



*Top: Some of the younger refugees.*

*Middle and Bottom: Examples of the type of river and sail craft that people were using on this 1500km (over 900 mile) sea voyage.*



## 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.

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

## New barge traffic is a triumph for Leeds City Council's planning policies

The Commercial Boat Operators Association is delighted that a new barge traffic carrying marine dredged aggregates has started from Hull to Leeds. The 500 tonnes capacity barge arrived at Knostrop, east Leeds, yesterday.

This is the culmination of many years' hard work by various groups. It started with Leeds City Council's minerals planning policy decision to safeguard from unsuitable developments a number of wharves in the City, including ones at Knostrop and at Stourton so they could be used to unload aggregates and other cargoes.

Behind this lay a wish to see more use of marine dredged aggregates in Leeds and West Yorkshire rather than from inland quarries with consequential road haulage.

The use of marine dredged aggregates (from the North Sea) is a sustainable activity as nature replenished the deposits at sea. Not so with land based supplies. The use of 500 tonne capacity barges and thus avoiding using heavy vehicles from inland quarries will be beneficial for the environment.

Each barge will take off the crowded M62 18 articulated lorries carrying 28 tonnes. Barges emit 75% less CO2 than heavy lorries. They cause less dust and less noise than lorries. Barges can help Leeds City Council in its efforts to improve air pollution and improve the well-being of its citizens.

The combination of using marine dredged aggregates and of using barges for transport to Leeds is a "win/win" for the environment. With increased construction activity expected in Leeds and West Yorkshire, this is a very good time to be using barges to bring aggregates and other construction materials into Leeds.

CBOA chairman David Lowe said: "We have worked hard with Leeds City Council planners to create the basis for increased use by barges of the waterways of Leeds and the surrounding area. Today is the realisation of many years' efforts.

"We are delighted that the use of barges creates the opportunity to reduce air pollution in Leeds by negating the need for HGVs and improve the well-being of its citizens. The proposed inland Port of Leeds at Stourton will increase the opportunities for more barge use."

Andy Collins of AC Marine Aggregates, the company whose aggregates have been brought to Leeds, said "The use of barges from Hull means

we can enter a new market for us – the area around Leeds and into West Yorkshire. We have been bringing sea dredged aggregates into Hull for some years to serve the local markets.



The 500 tonnes capacity barge 'Fusedale H' en route from Hull to Leeds with sea-dredged aggregates (credit: Maik Brown)

"We are grateful to the CBOA and their member firms for enabling us to turn into a reality our hopes to improve the environment by using "green" transport and extending the use of aggregates from a sustainable source."

The area being used at Knostrop is about one-tenth of an acre and is seen as a temporary phase. The Canal & River Trust's wider ambitions are to see the development of a 10 acre site at Stourton on the outskirts of east Leeds.

Full planning permission has been obtained and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority have offered £3.17m towards the costs. The Trust is now seeking the balance of the funds required. The business plan is based on moving 200, 000 tonnes a year of marine aggregates – the equivalent of 8 barges a week.