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HUNT
& Co

NEWSLETTER No. 263 APRIL 1993

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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

- 1st April - "No job for a gentleman" by Commander Compton-Hall,
RN Retd., MBE. History & development of the submarine by the
Director of the RN submarine museum at HMS Haslar. *Def by*
- 6th May - The Burgundy Ring by Ron & Myra Glover. *Gas/Avat*
- 3rd June - A.G.M. - This could be moved to July to accommodate a speaker.
- 5th August - Members slides.
- 4th November - Harley Crossley - an artists view of waterways.
- 1994
- 3rd March - Hugh McKnight.

MARCH MEETING. Bob Nicholls' illustrated talk on the River Wey not only showed us the beauty of the river but also gave us an insight into the problems of operating a Navigation.

The National Trust, owners of the river, have a very long boundary to keep an eye on, bordering onto farmland, residential and industrial property.

A close watch has to be kept on planning and development of adjoining land, particularly where drainage into the river is concerned.

It was interesting to note that while operating a self supporting navigation, one of the National Trusts first priorities was the preservation of the rivers beautiful natural environment.

LIBRARIAN NEEDED since Mike Smetham has to retire due to other commitments. Volunteers please contact the committee.

Our thanks to Mike for having performed this duty over a long period.

SOCIETY OUTING TO BLACK COUNTRY MUSEUM. Sunday 4th July.

Coach departs - Eassons Garage, Wodehouse Road 8.00am : Bitterne 8.10 :
Law Courts 8.20 : Shirley High Street (Iceland) 8.30 : Avenue (Bassett Ave) 8.40 :
Chandlers Ford (Fryern Arcade) 8.50 : Estimated arrival time at Museum 11.00am.
To save queuing our party will enter the coal mine in 2 groups - at 11.30 and
11.45 : Boat trip into Dudley Tunnel and the Singing Cavern will be at 3.00pm.
Leave the Museum at 5.00pm and return home approx 8.00pm
Cost - Adults £14.00 - OAPs £13.50 - Children under 17 £13.00.

Firm bookings as soon as possible with Eric Lewis. (We only have one brochure so please view at meetings.)

MAPS. A new stock of GEOprojects maps of the Kennet & Avon and Basingstoke Canals are now available from the sales table.

SOUTHERN EVENING ECHO will publish 'a practical and informative guide to the "Best Canal Holiday Options".' soon in the Echo. Read all about it!

SWEAT SHIRTS with embroidered SCS logo. The committee now have prices - but before committing the Society to initial costs, would be interested to know how many would like to purchase.

CANALS 200. The British Waterways Canals 200 events programme is to be officially launched over the weekend of 22nd-23rd May at three main events.

1. At Gloucester Docks historic vessels, activities and entertainments will combine to recreate a working Victorian inland port.
2. The Rickmansworth Canal Festival alongside the Grand Union Canal will have amongst its events the premier of the new Mikron Theatre Company Show and the culmination of a mass movement of freight from various parts of the waterways system when working narrowboats discharge their cargoes at Batchworth Lock.
3. The first Inland Boat Show at Nottingham on the River Trent will have exhibitions, stands and events to interest new and experienced inland waterways users.



SOUTHAMPTON LEGGERS winter trip.

On Sunday 28th February (the coldest day of the year!) a coach load of intrepid canal explorers set off from Gods House Tower to follow the route of the Southampton and Salisbury Canal.

The coach drove through Southampton as close as possible to Canal Walk, which is built on the line of the canal, and down the hill towards the Central Station. The Canal tunnelled underneath the Rose Gardens and the parks obliquely to the railway tunnel (which of course was built at a later date).

We drove to Redbridge to see the site of the first lock and some warehouses. The coach dropped us along Redbridge Lane and we crossed the railway to follow the line of the canal through the Lower Test Valley Nature Reserve. A section of the Canal has been restored for dragonflies and other wildlife. There is an interpretation board by this section.

We then boarded the coach to drive to the Plaza at Romsey. Whilst passing 'the wall' of Broadlands we were able to see the line of the canal just on the other side. The canal through Romsey looks just like a proper canal, still in water but rather shallow. This 1.5 mile section as far as the A3057 Stockbridge Road makes a very pleasant walk. The other side of the main road the canal is once again dry.

The coach then took us on to Lockerley where of one wall of lock number 4 is in remarkably good condition. We continued on by coach to West Dean for lunch at the Red Lion which is half in Hampshire and half in Wiltshire. The pond in front of the pub is a remnant of the canal.

After lunch we crossed over the level crossing, turned left and began walking through some woods. There is a deep depression to the left of the path which Jon Sims suggested was the site of two locks. We emerged from the woods and followed a footpath to where the railway crosses Dean Road. The railway is not built on the line of the canal but crosses it several times.

The coach was waiting and we climbed aboard to be taken the short distance to East Grimstead to see the only original bridge still in existence on the canal. We clambered down to see underneath. It is rather overgrown, but it was lovely to see snowdrops growing in the canal, having spread from the churchyard close by.

The last viewing site was at Whaddon, near Alderbury, where there is a cutting through steep embankments. There is still a lot of water in this section. After 45 minutes to inspect this area (including a snowstorm) it was time to board the coach and thaw out during the drive back to Southampton. We arrived back about 4.50 after a cold but very enjoyable day.

Thanks to Jackie Coles for the report on this exploration of our local canal.

BATCHWORTH CANAL CENTRE. Bound for dry land, the last wooden narrowboat to work on Britain's canals has arrived at Batchworth Lock at Rickmansworth.

The boat, called 'Roger', has been acquired by Rickmansworth Waterways Trust to be turned into a permanent museum. Once it has been converted back to its original condition, visitors to Batchworth Lock will be able to go on board, learn about the history of canal boats through an exhibition and explore Roger from stem to stern.

The last wooden narrowboat to work on the canals, Roger was operated by the legendary Bray family. Built by Bushells of Tring in 1936, the boat has the prototype classic Lister JP2 engine and a complete boatmans cabin.

It is currently being gutted and stripped. It will be lifted onto a piece of land next to the lock before being turned into a museum.

HOW DID IT START? One autumn several years ago we were driving up to the Lake District for a holiday (avoiding the motorways) and we stopped for lunch at the Anchor Hotel just outside Gargrave. Whilst eating we saw a narrowboat going through a lock at the bottom of the garden (Leeds and Liverpool Canal) and decided to have a look. Watching another boat we thought it would make a different holiday. We aquired some brochures and over Christmas suggested to a cousin that it might make a good holiday. He agreed and in May we spent our first week in a narrowboat on the Llangollen Canal. Despite my cousin spending a night in Wrexham Hospital with two broken ribs (he fell onto the edge of the boat trying to manhandle it to make room for another boat to moor at Llangollen) the bug had bitten and we have since had several canal holidays and retained an interest in canals in general.

Tony Coles.