



Newsletter

December 1996

Issue 305



**A Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year
to all Members and Friends**



THE NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK

On Tuesday 29 October, Eric Lewis attended his first meeting of the Parliamentary Waterways Group, held in a committee room of the House of Commons, as representative of SCS. As little about the important topic discussed has appeared in the press, the full minutes are reproduced below:

Sir Anthony Durant (in the chair) introduced the John Grimshaw, the principal engineer for Sustrans, a registered charity recently awarded £42.5 million towards building a National Cycle Network, making extensive use of river and canalside routes. This had caused controversy, for instance the Trent & Mersey Canal Society believed the use of towpaths for this purpose should be rejected.

John Grimshaw gained the MBE in July 1996 for his work in sustainable transport. He hoped to see a future where cycling accounted for a third of all British journeys. He said that only 200 of the 6,500 miles of the National Cycle Network would be on canal towpaths, and only where alternative routes were not available. It was in line with the Government's cycling strategy on grounds of fitness and environmental acceptability. The off-road cycling route created could be used by all users with complete compatibility.

Sustrans had reconstructed the Kennet & Avon Canal towpath from Bath to Devizes as a cycleway. Levels of use had increased noticeably since. Sustrans had learnt to work with other users, anglers, and people with prams, pushchairs and wheelchairs. Other cycleways had been built on the Forth & Clyde, Trent & Mersey and Selby Canal towpaths. A positive contribution could be made to totally derelict canals such as the Calne Branch of the Wilts & Berks. Towpaths would be returned to their original width as far as possible: many had been built to an 8' standard. Sustrans could contribute capital sums to restoration of towpaths for cycling use. They would work with English Nature, navigation authorities and users to achieve a result acceptable to all parties.

In response to a question from Sir Anthony Durant (Chairman), John Grimshaw said that only 310 km of BW were involved and a draft handbook for their construction was being developed with BW. The Trent & Mersey and Caldon Canal Societies said most of the towpaths of these canals in the Stoke on Trent area were due to become part

of the National Cycle Network. The societies were most concerned about the effect on the infrastructure and safety of users, particularly if the new surface encouraged cyclists to travel at high speed. John Grimshaw replied that Sustrans had 12 years' experience of creating shared use paths. He would be willing to meet the Societies and discuss their concerns on site.

The Towpath Action Group said that while providing traffic-free routes for cyclists was laudable, there are many factors which made towpaths less suitable than disused railways for this purpose. Mooring ropes, anglers' poles and slow-moving pedestrians would obstruct cyclists on such a narrow path. If others stepped aside to avoid them they would end up in the canal. Existing users would not look kindly upon the reconstruction of bridges and erection of barriers around locks to provide safety for cyclists, since these changes would alter the traditional appearance of the waterway. However, existing users would like traffic calming measures to slow cyclists down.

John Grimshaw said Sustrans aimed to attract family cyclists rather than high speed cyclists. The K&A cycleway had been begun in 1982 and no example was recorded of a cyclist falling into the canal. A well-designed route made it clear that both walking and cycling were on a permissive basis. Sustrans had no objection to traffic calming and were talking to disabled groups to overcome their problems with this. Each lock would be treated as a separate design problem.

Bill O'Brien MP said the Calder Navigation Society had concerns particularly about safety and asked if Sustrans would meet the Society before any proposals were made. John Grimshaw agreed and said their usual method was to discuss a scheme with the owners of a canal, prepare a detailed study of the length and then discuss it with other parties before final decisions were made. The Rochdale and Derby & Sandiacre Canal Societies said that consultation with users should take place *before* a design was produced. Although a few towpaths had been built to an 8' width, most were 3' or less. It would be better to construct separate cycleways to avoid conflicts of users.

Gordon Prentice MP expressed his support for the scheme. He asked if BW were co-operative and John Grimshaw confirmed this. Jim Kelly of BW said they were

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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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MEETINGS

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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS**5th December 1996**

Annual Inter-Society Quiz and
American Supper

2nd January 1997

Further Visits to French Waterways
Brian Evans with slides of
the Briare, Canal du Berry, River
Cher, River Vilaine and la Venise
Verte

6th February 1997

Canalside Camera
by Jon Sims

6th March 1997

Talk by Mrs Audrey Smith
IWA Chairman

3rd April 1997

BW Customer Relations
Jim Kelly

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November Meeting

The 46 members and friends who attended the November meeting were treated to a delightful series of films from members of the Ordnance Survey Cine Club.

The subject matter ranged from the Kennet & Avon Canal and various features along it to the Arzvillier Lift in France via the Grand Union Canal.

Ranging from the 1960's up to this year, the pictures showed parts of the waterway system as others see them; often from the viewpoint of the non-enthusiast. This is by no means a criticism as it is refreshing to see the waterways from a different direction. The older films were also a nostalgic reminder of what the canals were like several decades ago.

The film-makers, Alex & Jean Dunn, Tom Phillips, Jim Lanigan and Brian Evans, are to be congratulated for putting on a most enjoyable evening's entertainment. Thank you!

New Canals for Old

This talk is to be given by Chris Davey of the WRG to the Romsey and District Society in Romsey Town Hall on Wednesday 15th January 1997 at 8.00pm. All welcome. Non-members £1.00 entrance fee.

SCS 30th Anniversary

Next year (1997) sees the 30th anniversary of the Society and we are going to order a special sweatshirt for the occasion. Details of the design and cost are not yet available but Paul or Ray on the Sales Stand would like to hear from those interested so they can gauge demand.

Thank you to Ron Glover on behalf of the Society (and particularly Paul Herbert) for volunteering to store the Society display stand following the appeals in the Newsletter. Our thanks go to Chris Williams who also volunteered storage space but got pipped to the post for the honour.

The Stamp Bank makes donations of up to £250 for specific restoration purposes. Collect used stamps from your Christmas cards and bring them to a SCS meeting by March 1997 and we'll send them on to IWA.

EPS Dinghy

Jim Lanigan has sent in the following article:

Members and visitors to the November meeting (OS Cine Club) will have seen my short film of the type of boating Monica and I enjoyed during the years 1976-79.

The film featured a second hand sailing dinghy 11' 3" x 5' beam, being carried by car to explore South Coast Rivers. We made more than 70 trips during our ownership, mostly with the use of a 40+ Seagull outboard.

It was in 1969 that Barry Bucknell of DIY fame, and joint designer of the Mirror dinghy, decided to work with a new material to produce a moulded lightweight dinghy of EPS ("Expanded Polystyrene"). The exterior of the hull was protected by a thin layer of fibre glass mat.



The basic cost new was under £60 complete with small sails and equipment. The cranked roof-rack and larger sails were extra. The hull weight was about 65lbs, quite a consideration when traditional dinghies of that size were twice this! The craft had to be lifted on and off the car four times each trip!

These dinghies were designed for family use, with no pretensions of yacht-like beauty or gleaming varnish; ours was kept within the roof of our garage, therefore lasted much longer. Dents could be and were filled with exterior Polyfilla, rubbed down and painted.

Thank you for the article, Jim.

Make my job simpler . . .

The Editor welcomes articles, pictures, comments, letters, indeed anything suitable for publication in the Newsletter.

The National Cycle Network

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forced to consider other sources of income and wished to attract new types of user to canals. Conflicts could be minimised by good management. Only about a tenth of the system would be affected and there was no intention to give Sustrans carte blanche.

The National Association of Boat Owners said the BW London Area Waterway Manager had closed the towpath to avoid the recurrence of two serious accidents involving cyclists. In the South East most cyclists seemed to travel too fast on towpaths. How would Sustrans control the speed of cyclists and had they considered who would pay for the future maintenance of improved towpaths? John Grimshaw said Sustrans favoured a stone surface which was not suitable for high speed cycling.

The Pocklington Canal Society expressed support for the National Cycle Network, which did not include the Pocklington Canal. The Dutch Barge Association said a project by Sustrans on the River Lee had been carried out without proper consultation, had resulted in high speed cycling and had changed the character of the towpath. Traffic calming and railings would alter the appearance of the waterways. John Grimshaw responded that the

cycleway in question was constructed for Hertfordshire County Council who were responsible for consultation.

In response to a question from the River Cam Conservators, John Grimshaw said most riverside paths were away from the water and cyclists would slow down if groups of people were watching activities on the river. The Commercial Narrow Boat Association supported cycling as friendly to the environment.

Sir Anthony Durant MP thanked the speaker and the meeting concluded at 7pm.

Anybody interested to know more about the proposed National Cycle Network can contact Eric Lewis to view a copy of Sustrans' latest presentation document.

Does anyone have any views about the National Cycle Network as it affects the canals? Should we welcome cyclists or are towpaths not the place for them? Let the Editor know your feelings in a letter.

The next meeting of the Parliamentary Waterways Group will be held on Tuesday 10 December 1996 when the speaker will be Joan Ruddock MP Shadow Minister for Environmental Protection. Under a Labour Government, Joan Ruddock MP would be responsible for the Inland Waterways.

Meet Santa Claus Boat Trips

The Chichester Canal Society is organising these enjoyable Christmas trips again this year. The trip will cost £4.00 for adults and children and the latter will receive a suitable personalised present and everybody will be offered festive hospitality. *Egremont* will leave Chichester Canal Basin everyday from Saturday 30 November to Tuesday 24 December at 10.30, 12.00, 13.30 and 15.00. The maximum number of passengers is 12, irrespective of age. Trips by advanced booking only so Santa has the right presents in his sack! Bookings: Vic Nicholls on 01243 605631 or write to 7 Orpen Place, Selsey, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 0EN.

IWA Solent & Arun Branch Activities

When you're filling in your new diary this Christmas in preparation for the New Year, you might like to note the following events (details at a later date):

20 April 1997 - Canal Clean-up day on the Titchfield Canal: a gentle stroll along its length collecting rubbish: 10.00am Meon Shore

18 May 1997 - Arun Cruise, Pulborough to Pallingham

6 July 1997 - Avon and Stour Small Boat Cruise, Christchurch

20 September 1997 - Hamble Small Boat Cruise - visit Bursledon Brickworks and Botley.

SOUTHAMPTON CANAL SOCIETY SALES STAND

Enamel Society Members Badges	75p	Waterway Jigsaws (192 pieces 10" x 13¾")	£3.50
Embossed Ball Point Pens	50p	Notelets, with line drawings (by Brian Evans) of canal and Romsey scenes	£1.00
GEOprojects Maps		Screen Printed Tee Shirts	£6.50
Basingstoke Canal	£3.00	with Society logo across chest	
Oxford Canal	£3.75	in Navy Blue - medium, large & extra large	
Kennet & Avon Canal	£3.75	in Red - medium	
Grand Union Canal (each)	£3.75	Embroidered Sweat Shirts	£15.00
Map 1 Birmingham - Fenny Stratford		with Society logo on breast	
Map 2 Braunston - Kings Langley		in Navy Blue - large	
Map 3 Fenny Stratford - Thames		in Royal Blue - medium and large	
Map 4 Leicester Line - Soar - Erewash		Cotton Shopper Bags	£2.25
The Thames Map	£3.75	with screen-printed Society logo each side	
London - City and Docklands Atlas	£3.75	Colourful Tea Towels	£2.50
The Broads	£3.75	Decorated Mugs	£2.25
Birmingham Canal Navigations	£3.75	Decorated Trays (two sizes)	£1.00 & £2.95
Shropshire Union Canal	£3.75		
Llangollen and Montgomery Canals	£3.75		