

# Newsletter

December 1997

Issue 316

## LECHLADE TO LONDON & BEYOND

*Peter Glover enjoys using his small boats on both the sea and inland waters. Peter has kindly sent in the following article about some of this year's experiences:*

The idea of rowing down the Thames came after reading of a yacht voyage across Europe via the canals and rivers to the Black Sea and Mediterranean. Although not wishing to emulate such an undertaking, thoughts of a small boat voyage along one of Britain's main rivers would be quite an adventure.

I had met a fellow member of the Dinghy Cruising Association, Aidan de la Mare, from Cornwall, who had similar ideas to mine, so we arranged to meet at Lechlade in June 97 to combine our proposed voyage.

The journey was planned as a passage or adventure rather than a leisurely holiday. The distance to Teddington is 125 miles and 44 locks, so there was rather a long way to go. Aidan's boat is a 12 foot clinker Tideway Class dinghy, mine is a 15 foot plywood, own-design and built skiff. Both boats were equipped with camping covers and provisions for a mini expedition.

My memories of the Thames are of the complete contrast with coastal areas of the Solent - my usual dinghy cruising area. The differing scenery, the silence of rowing along a calm and sheltered waterway, only occasionally passed by a motor cruiser or narrow boat. The friendly people met on route and as a first time on the Thames, not knowing what was round the next bend of the river, made the voyage all very interesting.

Teddington was reached without due mishap, after 9 days, both of us still able to continue our journey and adventure.

The highlight of the journey was to proceed beyond Teddington onto the tidal Thames and attempt to reach Leigh-on-Sea near Southend, to visit the boatyard where

Aidan's dinghy had been built many years previously. An early start at 6am to catch a 4 knot tide, had both boats passing the numerous bridges and sights of London - Big Ben, Tower Bridge, the Cutty Sark at Greenwich - before passing through the Flood Barrier to the open estuary.

Spending the night on a mudbank in Barking Creek allowed another early start to cross the Thames Estuary and find the way into a small creek inside Canvey Island and finish our journey at the Benfleet Yacht Club.

A total of 11 days and 185 miles.

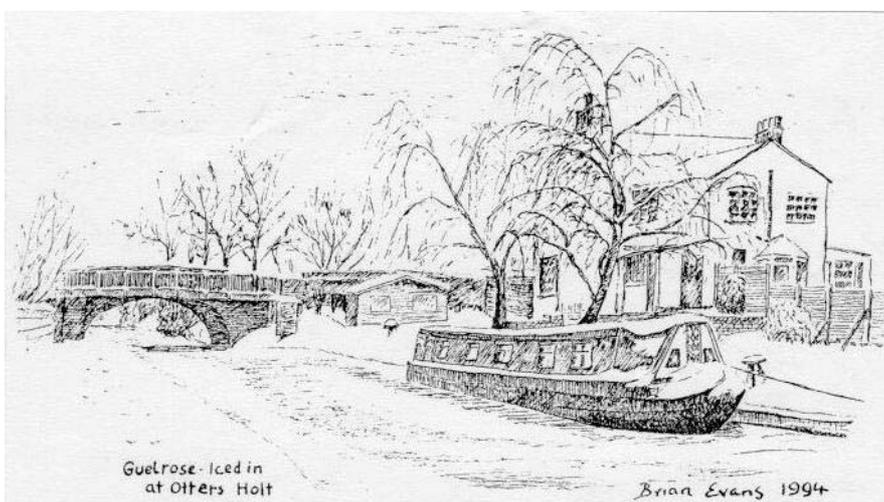
Having spent a few days at home recovering from a rather strenuous adventure, my thoughts returned to the peace and quiet of Lechlade and the possibilities of reaching Cricklade and the source of the Thames.

A week later with my boat reprovisioned I returned to Lechlade alone, and set off 'up-river'. The 4 miles to Hannington Bridge is quite rowable. Beyond the bridge, the river is narrow, overgrown with reeds and rushes, although occasionally clear stretches do appear to encourage one to go just a little further. On the second day after spending the night near the village of Kempsford, I eventually reached Cricklade. It was quite a task, really only navigable for canoes or a flat bottomed boat, such as my skiff.

To get beyond Cricklade was almost an impossibility. I returned to Lechlade the following day, but knowing of the overgrown reeds and shallows, the journey seemed less hazardous.

It had all been a truly unforgettable experience.

*Peter Glover*



*A Merry Christmas  
and a  
Happy New Year  
on the Waterways  
to all our Readers*

**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.

**Chairman:**

Brian Evans, 19 Lansdowne Gardens, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 8FN. Tel: 01794 517115

**Secretary:**

Eric Lewis, 51 Friars Croft, Calmore, Hampshire, SO40 2SS. Tel: 01703 860384

**Treasurer & Membership:**

Laura Sturrock, 27 Northlands Road, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 5RU. Tel 01794 517614

**Committee:**

Martin Cripps  
Paul Herbert  
Peter Oates  
David Townley-Jones

**Newsletter Editor:**

Peter Oates, 27 Northlands Road, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 5RU. Tel: 01794 517614

**November Meeting**

The campaign for the restoration of Bugsworth Basins began in 1958 with the formation of the Inland Waterways Protection Society and the battle has been going on ever since.

Alongside the campaign has been the gradual restoration of the basins and, despite many setbacks, both campaign and restoration continue due to the determination mainly of a small hardcore of Society stalwarts.

Our speaker, Ian Edgar, has been with the IWPS for most of its years and was able to tell us of the problems of dealing with landowners, local authorities, British Waterways, road contractors, etc ... and the difficulties of the restoration itself.

His slides not only illustrated how important the basins had been in linking the many limestone quarries with industry both local and distant, but also showed the beautiful countryside setting they occupy, so fortunate when related to future modern leisure use.

Ian's pictures told the continuous story of restoration over some thirty odd years and also emphasised how restoration by volunteers has become so much more mechanised and efficient.

When complete, some time to go yet, there will be an exhibition centre with ample car parking. We were told that there is already a very good pub. Public transport is also conveniently close by, but the best way to arrive will be by boat.

**MEETINGS**

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

**Bits & Pieces**

**Donation 1:** As a contribution to the Cotswold Canal Trust's Latton Fund, the Society recently sent £50 towards the Trust's £52,000 share of the cost of the Latton crossing. The bridge under the dual carriageway is now complete; indeed the road was due to open on the 3rd November.

**Donation 2:** Following Ian Edgar's talk on Bugsworth Basin (see above), the Society has sent a donation of £75 to the IWPS. In his thank you letter, Ian said that Southampton was the furthest distance travelled to give a talk on Bugsworth. "It so happens that the fee donated is the largest we have ever received for a talk! Please thank your members once again for the donation and for the kind hospitality."

**Society Library:** Sue Lewis has been running the Library successfully for a number of years. However, for domestic reasons, she will be unable to store the books at home after the next AGM in July. Therefore, we need to find a volunteer to look after the stock. Sue is prepared to either continue running the library, to assist the volunteer in any way or to step aside and let the member run the library on their own. Members have found the library useful and it would be a shame if it has to close next July. Volunteer please!!!

**Day-Star Theatre:** After the much enjoyed performance at our Birthday Party last June, Day-Star have been booked to appear again next June. They will be performing their new production for 1988. The Committee also plans that light refreshments will be available after

*(Continued on page 6)*

**FORTHCOMING SCS EVENTS**

<b>4th December</b>	Annual Inter-Society Quiz and American Supper
<b>1st January 1998</b>	"Paris to Switzerland" with Ron and Myra Glover
<b>5th February</b>	BT Global Challenge by Tom White
<b>5th March</b>	Somersetshire Coal Canal by Roger Halse (Chairman of Somersetshire Coal Canal Society)
<b>2nd April</b>	"Lots to do at the Soo" - A look at North American Waterways with Colin Ward
<b>7th May</b>	River Lea (Part 2) - Bow Back Rivers by Richard Thomas
<b>4th June</b>	Day-Star Theatre with their new show for 1998 (admission charge)
<b>2nd July</b>	AGM and Waterways Videos
<b>6th August</b>	Members' Slides
<b>3rd September</b>	"A Small Boat on Local Waterways" by Peter Glover
<b>1st October</b>	"Black Country Waterways" with Ron Cousens
<b>5th November</b>	"An Evening with our Chairman"

Distributed by: Hunt & Co, Chartered Accountants,  
123/124 High Street, Southampton, SO14 2AA.  
Tel: 01703 225255

## Parliamentary Waterways Group

*Eric Lewis attends meetings of this Group in Westminster on behalf of the Society. Here is his report of the latest meeting:*

The title of this very well attended meeting, held on Tuesday 28th October 1997, was "Whither IWAAC?"

The speaker was the new chairman of the Inland Waterways Amenities Advisory Council (IWAAC) Lady Sheelin Knollys. She has also recently been appointed Chairman of the Broads Authority. Lady Knollys said that the importance of IWAAC lies in leisure with a widening of the customer base for BW through sustainable tourism and urban regeneration. More involvement for the young and the disabled is essential in her view. With her office overlooking City Lock she considers that she views

a wide cross section of user interests.

The role of IWAAC has now been widened beyond BW to include prioritising restoration schemes in order that funding can be targeted on schemes most likely to benefit. Support, however, will be for all projects with the intention of raising profiles locally.

Lady Knollys, in response to members' questions, stated that IWAAC's efforts are strategic and not aimed at individual aspects of BW's activities. Several members expressed the view that IWAAC should have more 'teeth', but it was made very clear that IWAAC is not, has never been, and is not likely to become anything more than an advisory body for BW. The Board is no way obliged to take IWAAC's

advice.

Lady Knollys was of the opinion that radical change must take place regarding funding for BW and membership of IWAAC has widened recently and will continue to widen to help facilitate these and other changes.

Complaints against BW involving possible maladministration must be resolved through the Ombudsman, but all other grievances should be dealt with through BW procedures and local MPs. IWAAC is not in a position to promote the aims or resolve the grievances of individuals or specific associations.

The next meeting will be held on 19th December 1997 and will be on the subject of Towpath Walkers.

### The Longest Narrow Boat Journey in the World

The Society has just heard of 2 videos now available about the trip made by a pair of narrow boats from the Black Country to the Black Sea and return. This included crossing the English Channel, the new Main-Danube Canal and a passage down the Danube at up to 15 knots! The first video describes the outward journey, the second the return home. The price per video is £12.99 inc p&p. Make cheques payable to the skipper: Nick Sanders, The Manor Dairy, Prescote Manor, Cropredy, Oxon, OX17 1PF or bought in person from Cropredy Stores, The Old Coal Wharf, Cropredy.

### Isleworth Shipping Company

We've also had some details of the above company who say they will help you recycle your mooring by assisting you to swap with another boat owner. Alternatively they will help you arrange a boat exchange so that you can enjoy holidays on distant waterways without having to take your boat there.

They will register your mooring or boat free of charge on their computerised data-protected register. The only charges are for searching the register and arranging introductions after which they withdraw to allow you to make mutually satisfactory arrangements about times, access etc. Further details from Willow Cottage, 9 Talbot Road, Isleworth, Middlesex, TW7 7HG or on 0181 891 0192.

### CANAL SOCIETY SALES STAND

#### GEOprojects Maps

Basingstoke Canal .....	£3.00
Oxford Canal .....	£3.75
Kennet & Avon Canal .....	£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	
The Thames Map .....	£3.75
London - City and Docklands Atlas .....	£3.75
The Broads .....	£3.75
Birmingham Canal Navigations.....	£3.75
Shropshire Union Canal.....	£3.75
Llangollen and Montgomery Canals.....	£3.75

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

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

**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

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

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

**Tea Towels** – Various colourful designs..... £2.50 & £3.25

**Decorated Mugs**..... £2.25

**Society Members Badges** – Enamel ..... 75p

**Ball Point Pens** – Embossed ..... 50p

## Building 'Escargot UK' or Noah strikes again!

Over a period of ten and a half weeks during the summer this year a rather curious craft took shape in Rownhams. She measures 18' 6" in length, 6' 0" beam and has headroom in the cabin of 4' 6". She is designed to sleep up to four people, carry necessary canal holiday equipment, and provide exercise for her crew who pedal (yes, pedal) her along canals and similar waterways. With two people pedalling her two seacycle units installed in the cockpit, she will achieve three and a half mph. The seacycle units are hydrodynamically efficient at converting human energy to boat power. They resemble outboard motor design but instead of the nasty smelly noisy engine on top they have a pair of pedals. You proceed therefore in complete silence and with absence of pollution, maintaining the tranquillity and beauty of the waterways and developing your leg muscles as a consequence.

*Escargot* was designed and the prototype built by Philip Thiel, a marine architect who comes from Seattle, USA. Following retirement (with a very small 'r') as professor of marine and civil architecture at Washington University, he designed and built a number of environmentally friendly, pedal-driven vessels. Two of his ex-students, Gary Smart and Jeff Hegg, helped Philip build the prototype in Seattle and they found time in their busy careers in the States to come to Rownhams to help build *Escargot*. Their help was invaluable and they are both superb craftsmen and great to work with.

The National Environment Agency heard of the project and stepped in as major sponsors, along with International Paints, Sika Sealants, Totton Timber, Channelglaze Windows, Wilson Upholstery, David Struckett (surveyor) and Marlec Solar Power, all of whom contributed generously with their products.

*Escargot UK* was launched on 18th July 1997 from the Southampton University boat slipway on the River Itchen, with press, radio and TV coverage. Following a few days for completion she left Rownhams on her brand new

### Look Out for Sick Trees

The Environment Agency (EA) and the Forestry Commission (FC) are becoming increasingly concerned at the spread of disease in alder trees on riverbanks, canal-side locations and flood plains from a fungus called *Phytophthora* (Greek for 'plant destroyer'). Until 1993, the fungus had never been reported in alder although a similar form was known to affect various other species.

The EA and the FC, which have jointly studied the disease over the past three years, want people to report sightings of dead or unhealthy alders. They say an estimated 18,000 of a possible 580,000 trees have already died. The alder, along with the willow, is one of the most familiar trees along the river banks of England and Wales. It is important for wildlife and its roots help stabilise river

Indispension trailer heading by road for Birmingham. Over the next ten days she was pedalled by relays of intrepid Waterways Recovery Group volunteers some 167 miles along the Grand Union & Oxford Canals through to the River Thames to reach Henley for the three day August Bank Holiday National Inland Waterways Festival. Here she created considerable interest, and will be used to promote awareness of environmental issues nationally.

Building such a craft to a deadline is not a single handed effort, and I would like to record my sincere thanks to the many people who helped in many ways. Jon Sims, a respected contributor to waterways journals, was central to the project, undertaking PR and other tasks as well as being involved with the building programme. My family, Angela, Andrew, Simon and Peter were heavily involved and a special thanks to Angela for providing sustenance and support for the six 'lads' doing the building! Many friends from Rownhams, 28 in all, lent their muscle power at vital times such as turning the hull over, and loading on to the road trailer. When deadlines loomed for finishing a hardworking group from Southampton Canal Society descended on us, armed with glasspaper and paintbrushes, and in one day transformed the bare wood to gleaming paint and varnish.

And so *Escargot UK* was built, tried and tested. She is now in the hands of the National Environment Agency whose aims are in complete sympathy with the philosophy of her designer and builders - to raise people's awareness of the beautiful world in which we live, and to take care of it.

If any readers are sufficiently intrigued to want to know more, you can ring me on 01703 733788.

Colin Jones

*The above article was given to your Editor by Jon Sims and was first published in the Nursling & Rownhams Twin Spires News.*

*Both Jon Sims and Colin Jones would like to thank SCS for all their interest and especially Brian, Ray and everyone else who turned up and got stuck in at our critical moment! You literally saved the day. Thank you.*

banks. Any major disease affecting it will have a serious and far-reaching impact on river ecology, landscape and bank erosion.

From a distance, diseased alders attract attention in mid to late summer because the leaves are abnormally small, yellow and sparse. They frequently fall prematurely, leaving the trees bare. On closer inspection, the lower portion of the tree trunk is often marked with tarry/rusty patches indicating that the bark is dead.

Canal societies and others involved in the management of waterways should refrain from planting alders unless they are absolutely certain of their being disease free. Any instances of disease in existing trees should be reported to the local office of either the Agency or the Commission. Copies of a leaflet "Phytophthora Disease in Alder" are available from EA offices.

IWA Undercurrents Nov 1997

## SUIAG TRIPS '98

SCS member Jon Sims, wearing his hat as Chairman of the Southampton University Industrial Archaeological Group (SUIAG), is organising two trips for that group (not nearly as highbrow as the title might imply). Members of SCS are welcome to go on either trip, although bookings for the Forest of Dean outing were going very well the last I heard. Further details from Jon Sims on 01703 732868.

## GLOUCESTER DOCKS

**Saturday Feb 7th**

Escape the winter gloom with a day trip to Gloucester Docks and its fabulous collection of tall and stately warehouses. One of these contains the **British Waterways National Waterway Museum** with floor after floor of exhibits, displays, artefacts and state of the art interpretations on all things to do with canal and river

navigation. A great one for the kids. Outside in the docks are several boats, in a variety of widths and lengths, which are open for exploration. Don't miss the steam powered bucket dredger. Another warehouse contains the equally fascinating **Museum of Advertising and Packaging**. A great insight into a much overlooked subject. Cafes and bars are available in the docks complex.

Price £7 Adults, £3 Children. Please note this does not include admission to the museums. This can be paid on the day depending on your choice. Party rates will apply (eg Adult £3.50 at the Waterways Museum, £1.95 at t'other one). If you move quickly you should be able to visit both!

## FOREST OF DEAN 1998

**April 17th-19th**

A return to the superb welcome of The Fountain Inn at Parkend, a

museum in itself sitting amidst a wealth IA. This year we will be including a ride on the Dean Forest Railway as well as more tramway hunting through the forest. Other visits may include the Dean Heritage Centre or the ancient iron diggings at Clearwell Caves plus a drive through the glorious Wye Valley. Limited accommodation remains in the pub with plenty of places still available in The Lodge. This features comfortable bunk rooms (with a variety of different sized rooms if you are choosy about your sleeping partners!). There are excellent hot shower facilities, a kitchen for coffee etc and a TV lounge if you wish to bring some IA Videos.

Pub £90 (£95 single), Lodge £70 including coach travel, accommodation and all meals including packed lunches. Bargain of the year. For flexibility, admission charges are not included but these will be at party rates.

## Regulated Hedgerows

BW's hedges are an important part of canal history. Most were planted by the original canal companies, usually of pure hawthorn. 200 years later they have a much greater 'biodiversity' than just hawthorn. Many have become important parts of each canal's heritage, landscape and wildlife value. This value also means that they are covered by the government's 1997 Hedgerow Regulations

BW generally retain hedges wherever possible and their main concern is management, not removal. But they often manage hedges only on a local basis. BW are undertaking a survey on the southern Grand Union with a view to producing a five-year management strategy for the whole canal.

*BW Monthly November 1997*

### Chichester Canal Society 'Santa Special' Boat Trips Christmas 1997

**Period of Operation:** 29th November - 24th December

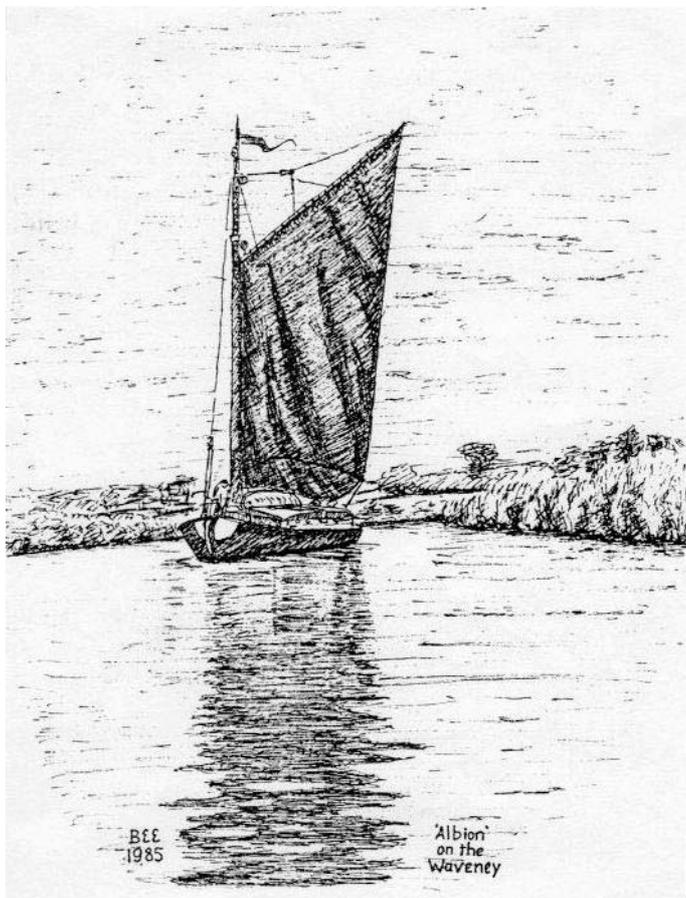
**Departure Times** (Canal Basin): 0915, 1030, 1200, 1330 & 1500

**Cost:** £4.00 per passenger, adult or child.  
(NB No concessions)

**Rewards:** Every child will receive a present from Santa  
Every adult will receive festive refreshment

**Booking:** Advance booking essential  
Contact Vic Nicholls on 01243 605631

**NB Book early to avoid disappointment**



## Bits & Pieces

(Continued from page 2)

the performance. Unfortunately, we shall have to make an admission charge this time to cover the not inconsiderable costs. Initially, tickets will be offered exclusively to SCS members at a price of £2.50 until the end of March. Thereafter, tickets will be available to the public at a charge of £3.50. Eric Lewis will have the tickets on sale in the New Year.

**Thanks** are due to Eric Lewis and Ray Brooks for providing the new trophy to be presented to the winning team at this month's Waterways Quiz.

**Working Parties:** The Society has not been actively involved with restoration work parties for a number of years. Paul Herbert has suggested that some members might like to attend occasional working parties, say once or twice a year, to work on, for instance, the Wilts & Berks or the Thames & Severn Canals. Anyone interested is asked to contact Paul either on the Sales Stand at meetings or on 01703 262365

**Bude, Cornwall** is the new home for Ruth Small, who feels unable to continue as a member of the Society. However, she hopes "to see some of the members on the canal network next year (Penkenna, based at Warwick)."

**Subscriptions:** Laura, our Membership Secretary, says that to save postage, she will not be sending receipts to those members who have renewed their subscriptions by cheque by post.

**"Cycling fanatic"** Frank Acaster, when renewing his membership, says that clashing activities prevent him from attending SCS meetings. However, he wishes to be remembered to fellow member and cyclist Eva Drinkwater. He says he still

**Sweatshirts:** Following the overwhelming demand for the 30th Anniversary sweatshirt earlier this year, maybe members would be interested in a further design for either a sweatshirt, T-shirt or polo shirt in the coming year. If this idea appeals, please contact Paul Herbert. You might even have ideas for designs?

**Special offers:** IWA (Sales) has reduced the prices of a few items of their stock. Please see the Chairman for a list.

**January Newsletter:** Just a reminder that, as usual with the Christmas / New Year holidays interfering, there will not be a newsletter next month (January).

## IWA Guildford & Reading Branch Events

The branch are holding the following meetings at the Basingstoke Canal Centre, Mytchett Place Road, Mytchett, Surrey (off A321 Frimley - Guildford road). Talks are illustrated by colour slide or video. Doors open 7.30pm, start 8.00pm.

**26 January 1998 (Mon)** - "River Thames, Limehouse to Lechlade" by Ian Fletcher.

**23 February 1998 (Mon)** - "Basingstoke Canal, History and Restoration" by Tony Harmsworth.

**23 March 1998 (Mon)** - Branch AGM, followed by "Limehouse to the Medway by Narrow boat" by Norman Woolley.

**20 April 1998 (Mon)** - "Kennet and Avon Heritage Lottery Fund" by John Laverick (BW Project Manager).

**Boat Rally: July 1998** - Godalming Working Boat Rally. Largest ever (?) gathering of working boats at the southernmost point of Britain's connected inland waterway system. Full weekend event, precise date still to be confirmed. All information from Mike Adams 01483 773512.

## Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society

SHCS holds a series of illustrated talks each winter. The venue is the Westgate Centre, Woking, alongside the Basingstoke Canal, at Chobham Road Bridge. Meetings start at 8pm. Admission free. Tea, coffee and biscuits provided.

**10 December (Tue)** - An informal Social Evening. If you have any slides, please bring them with you. We may even have some more of those hot mince pies which disappeared so quickly last time!

**13 January (Tue)** - "A Visit to China" by Robin Higgs. Robin was Chairman of SHCS for many years and campaigns extensively on behalf of our inland waterways. He is also President of the Mid-Hants Railway (the Watercress Line), and his interest in railways worldwide has resulted in a number of trips to see railways in foreign lands.

**10 February (Tue)** - "Direct Television from Alexandra Palace" by Arthur Dugate. Arthur produces Audio Visual displays for SHCS. He used to work for the BBC Television Service in the 1950s. This talk recounts some of his experiences of Television in those pioneering days.

**10 March (Tue)** - Panama (provisional) by John Humphries. John in association with Hugh McKnight has in previous years presented 16mm films of his voyages along the canals of the continent. Although circumstances have prevented him from visiting SHCS recently, hopefully in March he will be able to present a film trip, possibly on Panama.

**8 April (Tue)** - "The Foxton Inclined Plane" by Mike Beech (Curator of the museum of the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust). This talk will detail the Trust's plans to restore and rebuild this engineering marvel to full operation.

cycles, even at the age of 85.

## IWA Salisbury Group

The group meet at the Salisbury Rugby Club, Castle Road, Salisbury at 7.30pm on the following occasions:

**15th January (Thu)** - Group AGM followed by Ron and Myra's travels.

**19th March (Thu)** - The BCN Marathon Challenge presentation by Chris and Helen Davey.

More details from Tony Fry on 01722 710192