



# Newsletter

July 1997

Issue 311

## Pilot scheme for annual towpath fee is causing fury

The following article appeared in *The Independent* on 30th June under a large colour photograph of the Caen Hill flight of locks at Devizes. I reproduce it below despite a few minor inaccuracies.

**I**t has been dubbed the battle for the bank. The canal bank, that is. From tomorrow [1st July], cyclists will be charged to ride on the towpaths of one of Middle England's most famous waterways.

The pilot project, to make cyclists pay £12.50 a year, will be introduced on the 87 mile Kennet and Avon Canal. British Waterways, who own the picturesque route says it needs the money to fund two rangers who will patrol the towpaths and to pay for necessary improvements.

But the scheme, which could be extended to the rest of the 2,000 miles of the nation's canals, has whipped up a storm of protest over the normally placid waters of the Kennet and Avon waterway.

The problem for the West Country canal is its success. The waterway is considered a jewel of 18th- and 19th-century engineering. Sightseers flock to the 29 locks at Devizes - the longest flight in Britain - and travel the route to see its splendid stone bridges and neo-classical aqueducts - a trademark of John Rennie, its Victorian engineer.

The well-stocked canal is also a magnet for anglers. "It has some of the best fishing in the country. Its carp and tench alone make it a very, very popular venue," Kevin Green, of the *Angling Times*, said.

The ramblers and anglers are joined by cyclists, whose numbers British Waterways estimate topped three-quarters of a million last year. Non-bikers say the permit scheme will help curb a "troublesome" minority who race at excessive speed along the canal.

"Cyclists are able to use the bank for free, whereas anglers pay and so do boat owners," said Peter Lea, the chairman of the National Association of Boat Owners. "And what they do not seem to realise is that they can cause inconvenience to other users." He says that "charging pedestrians should be considered", and points out that some boat owners pay £450 a year to keep a vessel on the canal.

The crowded canal banks can see bikers and fisher-folk come to blows when speeding cyclists knock over the carefully arranged poles and nets of anglers. "I think things become a problem in competitions ... you should ask cyclists to walk, say, for half a mile of the canal," said John Major, a member of the Eastern Angling Association.

The cyclists, however, see themselves singled out as a way of raising revenue for British Waterways, whose bill for repairing the canal network exceeds £94m. "The charge has been mooted to raise cash. It is not going to encourage cycling - which the Government is committed to," said Peter Appleby, co-ordinator of the Stop the Cycle Charge campaign.

Mr Appleby says that ministers have pledged to double the number of cycle journeys by 2003 - which is unlikely to happen, he claims, if the scheme goes nationwide. He says the root of the troubles can be traced to a Mergers and Monopolies Commission report on British Waterways in 1994.

This stated that: "There is considerable scope for BWB to expand its share of water-related leisure markets. The MMC recommends that BWB should ... review charging policies."

Government grant to British Waterways has been reduced in real terms by one-third over 12 years. This year's £51m is a shortfall of £7m on the minimum believed necessary to operate and maintain the late 18th- and

early 19th-century network. Despite the cash shortfall, the local press is firmly set against the new "canal tax". In a leader entitled "Two legs good, two wheels bad", *The Bath Chronicle* concludes: "Aggressive cycling beside the canal can be a nuisance but there has to be a

---

**'The charge is not going to encourage cycling - which the Government is committed to'**

---

better way of stamping it out than penalising the peaceful majority who wish to appreciate the pleasures of the waterway from their saddles."

The fight to reverse British Waterways' decision has started before the first permit has been bought. Local cycling groups are organising a mass trespass for next month and many local bike groups say that the charging regime will badly dent trade.

John Miller, the proprietor of the Bath-based Cycle Surgeon, said: "it's disgusting, the towpath is a civil amenity. It will definitely put people off such as the occasional cyclist who only uses the towpath four or five times a year. This means that less and less people will use the towpath, so the revenue will go down rather than up." Other cyclists say many bike hire shops will have to jack up prices in order to licence their fleets.

Tony Kemp, the British Waterways project manager who suggested the cycle tariff, said that new sources of money

(Continued on page 4)

**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

**MEETINGS**

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

**FORTHCOMING EVENTS****3rd July 1997**

AGM plus Videos

**7th August 1997**

Members Slides

**4th September 1997**

Ownerships - shared ownership of narrow boats with Alan Mathews

**20th September 1997**

SCS / IWA Small Boat Cruise and Barbecue

**2nd October 1997**

Bristol to Sharpness

Talk with video - Alan Padwick

**6th November 1997**

Bugsworth Basin and the IWPS  
Ian Edgar

**4th December 1997**

Annual Inter-Society Quiz  
and American Supper

**Canal Society Library**

Don't forget the Society Library is open at our meetings to lend any of the many interesting and often unusual books on the waterways.

**June Meeting**

**O**ur 30th Anniversary Party was celebrated in style by about 75 members and friends with a visit by the Day-Star Theatre Company and an excellent buffet.

I far as I know, the Society had never before hosted a performance by a theatre company - even one with only two performers. (If I'm wrong, I'm sure Brian Evans will put me right!.) Duffy and Jane Marshall provided us with a performance of their new play *Something in the Water*. As usual they managed to portray a good variety of well characterised individuals; I, for one, lost count of the number of costume changes that they made but it must have been around twenty - each!!! As one member said to me: "thoroughly entertaining." Thank you Day-Star for helping to make our evening enjoyable.

After the performance, the meeting turned its focus towards the wide variety of marvellous food that had been prepared. This was obviously well received as by the end of the meeting it was nearly all gone.

It was particularly good to see such a good turn out, especially by those people who don't normally attend our meetings for a variety of good reasons. It was also very gratifying to see so many old and new friends meeting up, sometimes after an interval of a few years, swapping reminiscences and catching up on the news. The atmosphere was very lively and friendly.

I feel that the Committee worked well as a team in organising the evening and providing the food. I'm sure everyone will wish to join me in thanking them for their efforts. However, we must not forget to thank also the other members who contributed on the night towards a very successful evening.

If you were unable to attend, I'm sorry but you missed a very good evening. Hope to see you all at the next anniversary (if not before).

*Peter Oates*

**Alan Firth's Generosity**

Members who attended the March meeting or who read the subsequent report in 'Newsletter 308' will have been aware of the special presentation made on behalf of the Society to Brian Evans, by the IWA Chairman, Audrey Smith, to celebrate his 30th anniversary as our Chairman. The surprise gift of a limited edition, framed print by the renowned waterways artist, Alan Firth, fair took Brian's breath away.

At this year's Braunston Boat Show, our Vice-Chairman, Paul Herbert and Gill Herbert took the opportunity to have a chat with Alan Firth. They have a number of Alan's prints on display at their Chandler's Ford home including a limited edition of their own. In addition, their son Steven had collected Brian's presentation print from Alan's home near Coventry. Paul told Alan about the presentation to Brian and how delighted he had been with such a splendid gift, explained to Alan that the Southampton Canal Society was about to celebrate its 30th anniversary and that a special party had been arranged. Alan very generously donated one of his framed prints to be raffled at the anniversary party in aid of the Society's funds. Gill was delighted to be able to make the selection from the large array of prints on display and picked a typical snow scene - "Winter Near Rickmansworth - Grand Union Canal".

At the special party on 5 June the print was won by one of our guests for the evening, Tony Fry of the IWA Salisbury Branch. Paul has now written to Alan Firth on behalf of the Society thanking him for his generous gift and advising him of the winner.

**Society Barbecue**

Hopefully you have noted in your diary this year's Canal Society barbecue. The venue will be Bursledon Brickworks which lies near the River Hamble and on the same day as the IWA's Small Boat Cruise on the river: Saturday 20th September.

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

## IWA Solent & Arun Branch Events

The S&A Branch are advertising the following events in the area (in addition to our own):

**5 July (Sat)** - Chichester Basin Barrel Races - teams of four paddlers in spectacular racing. Contact: Paul Coppard 01903 766585.

**6 July (Sun)** - Avon and Stour Small Boat Cruise, Christchurch. Contact: Alan White 01243 573765.

**12 & 13 July (Sat & Sun)** - Mikron Theatre Company at the Chichester Canal Basin. Performances start at 8pm. Contact: John Cooper 01243 671051.

**19 & 20 July (Sat & Sun)** - "Optimist" Sailing for youngsters at Chichester Canal Basin. Opportunity to try sailing. Contact: John Cooper 01243 671051.

**20 July (Sun)** - Chichester Canal Cream Tea Walk - Guided towpath walk from Birdham to Cream Tea. Contact: Linda Wilkinson 01243 537500.

**9-10 August (Sat & Sun)** - Littlehampton Regatta; WACT stall, IWA carrying mayoral greetings and "mooring news".

**10 August (Sun)** - Chichester Canal Cream Tea Walk - as above.

**17 August (Sun)** - Chichester Canal Water Fair and Steam Boat Rally. Many attractions on and off the water. Parade for all boat types; chance to cruise the canal in your own boat. Contact: Paul Coppard 01903 766585.

**23/24/25 August (Sat, Sun & Mon)** - National Waterways Festival, Henley on Thames.

**7 September (Sun)** - Chichester Canal Cream Tea Walk - Last opportunity this year. See above.

**20 September (Sat)** - Hamble Small Boat Cruise - Autumn cruise including visit Bursledon Brickworks and Botley Village Quay. Easy launching at public slipway at Swanwick. Contact: Alan White 01243 573765. Also SCS barbecue at Bursledon Brickworks.

**19 October (Sun)** - River Rother Guided Walk, Stopham to Shopham. Guided walk, donation please.

Except as noted above, further details may be obtained from:

Peter Boyce, Greensleeves Cottage, Hambledon Road, Denmead, Waterlooville, Hants PO7 6PW.  
Tel (home) 01705 269642, (office and answer machine) 01730 829016, (work) 01705 693611 ext 1364.  
E-mail: [iwa.solent.arun@dial.pipex.com](mailto:iwa.solent.arun@dial.pipex.com)

## NEWS FROM THE SALES STAND

### Anniversary Sweat Shirts

For the information of those members who were unable to attend our meeting last month, Paul Herbert is pleased to advise that the Society 30th Anniversary Sweat Shirts are now in stock. This special "limited edition" line is in light grey with a multi-coloured Society logo. Demand at the June meeting was very high and stocks of the most popular sizes soon ran out and we have already had to re-order. So, if you would like to show you are a member of "the team" get your sweat shirts from Paul or Ray at any Society meeting. If we haven't got your size, no problem - we can place a special order.

### Standard Sweat Shirts

The stock of standard sweat shirts has been sold out for some time. It is intended to order a new stock. So, if you

would like to buy a new sweat shirt in the standard colours of either Royal Blue or Navy Blue (though other colours can be ordered from the supplier), just see Paul or Ray on the Sales Stand and place your order.

### GEOprojects Maps

The Sales Stand stocks a large variety of GEOprojects waterways maps. A new map, *Inland Waterways of Britain*, is shortly to be published by GEOprojects and a limited supply has been ordered. If you would like to reserve a copy please see Paul or Ray.

### Mail Order

If you cannot get along to Society evenings but would still like a sweat shirt (or any item stocked by the Sales Stand - see advertisement below) just ring Paul on 01703 262365 and he can arrange mail-order.

## SOUTHAMPTON CANAL SOCIETY SALES STAND

Enamel Society Members Badges	75p	Notelets, with line drawings (by Brian Evans) of canal and Romsey scenes	£1.00
Embossed Ball Point Pens	50p	Screen Printed Tee Shirts	£6.50
<b>GEOprojects Maps</b>		with Society logo across chest	
Basingstoke Canal	£3.00	in Navy Blue - medium, large & extra large	
Oxford Canal	£3.75	in Red - medium	
Kennet & Avon Canal	£3.75	30th Anniversary Embroidered Sweat Shirts	£16.00
Grand Union Canal (each)	£3.75	in light grey with multi-coloured Society logo on breast	
Map 1 Birmingham - Fenny Stratford		Embroidered Sweat Shirts (Standard)	£15.00
Map 2 Braunston - Kings Langley		with Society logo on breast in Navy or Royal Blue	
Map 3 Fenny Stratford - Thames		Burgees	£8.00
Map 4 Leicester Line - Soar - Erewash		Navy Blue - screen printed Society logo each side	
The Thames Map	£3.75	Cotton Shopper Bags	£2.25
London - City and Docklands Atlas	£3.75	with screen-printed Society logo each side	
The Broads	£3.75	Colourful Tea Towels	£2.50 & £3.25
Birmingham Canal Navigations	£3.75	Decorated Mugs	£2.25
Shropshire Union Canal	£3.75		
Llangollen and Montgomery Canals	£3.75		

## Around the Waterways

### Pumps On

The mammoth task to transfer water from underground supplies and rivers in the Midlands to the water-starved summits on the southern Oxford and Grand Union canals (see front page of last month's newsletter) is complete. A series of pumps can now deliver 50 million litres per day to Braunston. Other parts of the Grand Union are benefiting from the drought task force's projects. Phase one of the Northern Engines scheme to backpump water from Milton Keynes toward Tring summit is in operation. Work is almost complete on the summit's southern slope.

### Reservoir Stocks

Near average rainfall during the first two weeks of May ended the dry spell and brought about an increase in reservoir stocks. In contrast, the last two weeks of May were very dry and, combined with the demands of the Bank Holiday period, there was significant drawdown on most reservoirs. At 30th May, most reservoirs held stocks of 70% or more of capacity. However, reservoirs on the Leicester summit and the southern Oxford held only 50% and 58% respectively. Hopefully, the rain in the last weeks of June will have improved stocks.

### Linton Lock

Troubled Linton Lock on the River Ouse above York has secured a £765,000 Lottery grant toward its restoration. BW and IWA will contribute towards the project's £1m cost. When work is complete next spring, it is expected that BW will take over responsibility for the lock and adjacent navigation from the cash

starved Linton Lock Commissioners.

### River Nene

Due to the malfunction of a sluice gate on the river at Whiston, the navigation has been closed for 1½ miles between Whiston and Cogenhoe. The Environment Agency is carrying out emergency repairs but no reopening date has been announced. IWA is concerned at the heavy backlog of maintenance and renewal work on the Nene, which is apparently due to a lack of funding for the EA's navigation function. Works previously maintained on the Nene for flood defence are no longer deemed necessary for this function and £10m of remedial work is outstanding for which there appears to be no budget.

### Thames & Severn Canal

Following representations made by Cotswold Canal Trust, IWA and other parties, it is understood that a 'high-level' review of the lack of provision for a navigable culvert under the Latton by-pass was due to be undertaken by the Deputy Prime Minister, Rt Hon John Prescott MP during June. (See also last month's *Newsletter*.)

It is understood that the report on this problem in the Sunday Times on 1st June has also caused concern and encouraged re-examination of some of the issues within appropriate Government departments.

### Staffs & Worcs Canal - Stafford Br.

A Stafford Branch Navigation Heritage Trust has been formed to campaign for restoration of the branch. Secretary of the Trust is Bob Bowden - Tel 01902 843918.

*Sources: BW Monthly and IWA Head Office Bulletin, June 1997*

## Friends of Romsey Signal Box

Friends of Romsey Signal Box have recently reported that they now have 73 members, having fulfilled their target of "recruit eleven in '97".

However, with the increasing difficulties in maintaining and developing the box and the site with the existing volunteers, all of whom are experiencing reduced availability due to work and domestic commitments, the Friends feel that they are unable to survive without an increase in the membership.

They put on regular Open Days, the next on 6th July, and others later in the year on 3rd August, 7th September and 5th October, all from 10.00am until 5.00pm. During these events the Friends take the opportunity of recruiting new members whenever possible.

Anyone wishing to find out more about the project, wishing to become a member or able to make a donation towards funds should contact Dick Hewett on 01794 522979.

## IWA Salisbury Group

The group is holding the following meetings at the Salisbury Rugby Clubrooms, Castle Road Salisbury commencing at 7.30pm. For further details, contact Tony Fry on 01722 710192.

**Thursday 17th July** - The Boat Safety Scheme - presentation by Peter Wallace Chairman ABSE.

**Sunday 14/21 September** - A boat trip on the River Wey near Guildford (*rather a long trip?*).

## Cycling on the K&A

*(Continued from page 1)*

were needed to repair the canal's towpaths. He also pointed out that a £3 charge had existed in the early Nineties but had been removed to see if there were ways of getting towpath users to co-exist. The result was not a success. "the new charge will also mean that cyclists are insured; and we are not charging under-16s. I do not think it will affect the numbers of cyclists using the towpaths," he said.

The nation's waterways are seen by the Government as a possible way of shifting traffic from the roads. Ministers are already considering restarting a river bus service on

the Thames in London. The thousands of miles of waterways could also provide a cheap and effective way of regenerating depressed areas. Already a number of innovative schemes have been proposed and lottery money could enable the realisation of many projects. Private investors appear keen to develop marinas, waterside restaurants and pubs.

This is little consolation to the cyclists. They point out that the Kennet and Avon Canal received a huge slice of the lottery cake - worth nearly £25m - and cyclists are still being penalised.