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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 1st March - Illustrated talk by Ken Gibbons. Mr. Gibbons is a former British Waterways press officer and recently has been the proprietor of PHOTO-FLAIR, a camera & photographic business in Dukes Mill, Romsey
- 5th April - 'Kennet and Avon Canal, yours to enjoy' - Martin Brown, Recreation Officer for the East end of the Kennet and Avon Canal.
- 3rd May - Talk by Mike O'Brien, HM Coastguard plus 16mm film.
- 7th June - A G M.

FEBRUARY MEETING Unfortunately the appalling weather kept a number of our members away from a rather special meeting - Hugh McKnight's first visit to this area for many years. Fortunately the announcement in waterways journals brought in several enthusiasts, attracted by the name of a well known speaker. On such a dreary winters night it was cheering to see superb pictures of sunny Southern France and hear Hugh's commentary - a little humorous tale for almost every slide.

He also brought along a large selection of books, new and secondhand, on French and British Waterways, many of them bearing his own name as author. Several members took the opportunity of purchasing signed copies.

Our special thanks to Hugh for braving a long journey on a stormy night and for a very entertaining evening.

SWANS INCREASE Since the ban on the use of lead weights by British anglers there has been a dramatic increase in the mute swan population. Deaths from lead poisoning have fallen 25 percent in 2 years said Frank Voysey, RSPB Southampton Representative Rotheram Towers, Southampton. (from a recent edition of Southern Evening Echo)

BRIDGEWATER & TAUNTON CANAL 1989 proved to be the most successful year so far for 'Ruby', the West Country Branch's trip boat. The takings amounted to £855, some £120 more than the 1988 figure. Since 'Ruby' has operated in the same area for the last three seasons, it has been decided to transfer her to the Creech St Michael area for 1990, assuming a secure mooring can be found. It is planned to start trips on the May Day Bank Holiday and continue on Sundays and Bank Holidays until October.

CALDON CANAL British Waterways announced at the end of November that problems were being experienced with the embankment near Froghall which carries the Caldon Canal above a railway line and the River Churnet. This spectacular length of canal has needed major remedial work on two previous occasions, the presently affected length being between the two existing lengths of concrete channelling. It had been intended that extensive works would be carried out to this section during the 1990/91 winter but ground movements detected at the site have caused engineers to bring the programme forward.

Despite the advantage that contractors already working at nearby Consall Forge are able to undertake the extensive extra work it is not expected that the canal will be reopened before May. This is largely because of the preparation work needed before the actual construction can be started. This includes the need to obtain Department of the Environment approval before letting the contract owing to the cost of the envisaged works. British Waterways engineers are hoping for a mild winter which will not delay concrete work. As the work nears its final stages the Waterway Manager will be able to advise on a likely reopening date:- Telephone 0606 40566

LOCK WALL REBUILT The wall of North Lock on the Grand Union Canal in the centre of Leicester has been rebuilt for a rather unusual reason. The wall had a kink in it which prevented staff from getting their dredger through the lock. The wall, rebuilt by craftsmen from the Grand Union Canal (North), Midland Region, means the dredger can now get to the Mile Straight section of the waterway in Leicester and beyond. Manager, Richard Sawicki, has been waiting to dredge this length for some time so that boating will be easier in the city.

KENNET AND AVON CANAL The official opening of the canal will be at Devizes Wharf, on Wednesday 8th August, by Her Majesty the Queen.

CHIRK TUNNEL A casual observer at Chirk Tunnel might be forgiven for thinking that the Llangollen Canal has been replaced by a road. In fact, the basin between the tunnel and Chirk Aqueduct has been extended to wind 72ft boats and, in mid January, concreting of the enlarged area was nearing completion. The work is part of this winter's £1.5m reconstruction of vulnerable lengths of Britain's most popular canal.

Chirk Tunnel itself is not being altered and canal water still flows naturally to the southern portal which has been dammed. Two giant electric pumps have been installed in the water to supply a 2ft diameter pipe laid around the basin and over the aqueduct. The culverting continues for about 3/4 mile along the towpath, beside the drained length through Chirk Bank, in order to feed the rest of the Llangollen Canal and to maintain supplies to Hurleston reservoir.

Completion of the reconstruction is now scheduled for the 7th April and will bring the total spent on the 'top end' over the last 5 years to £7.5m.

CRUISING AWAY FROM HOME Private boat owners may find the experience of IWA members Mike and Gill Polgreen from Lapworth has a familiar ring. "Each new boating season finds us eager to get the windlass turning. But after the first few weekend forays, the pleasure of cruising the same stretches of canal begin to pall. We long to explore new waterways".

Believing they can't be unique in their spirit of adventure, Gill Polgreen has set up a business called 'Cruise Away'. The objective is to keep a register of boat owners. Boats can then be swapped for holidays or moorings exchanged by people wanting a change of scenery for a while. Using the same principle as a computerised dating service 'Cruise Away' puts boaters with matching requirements into contact. It will give boat owners a chance to get more enjoyment out of the investment they've made in their boat.

For further details write to:- Cruise Away, PO Box 1636, Knowle, Solihull, West Midlands B94 6LL. Tel:- 05643 3654

#### BRITISH WATERWAYS NEWS RELEASES

##### BOATYARDS OPEN DAY

30th January 1990

Try holidaying in Britain this year. Why suffer the agonies of crowded airports, sunburn and 'funny tummy' when you can enjoy a relaxed, touring holiday on the canals and rivers of England and Wales.

To find out all about it the Association of Pleasure Craft Operators, whose members hire out modern narrowboats and motor cruisers from more than one hundred bases on the waterways system, are opening up many of their boatyards on Sunday, 1st April 1990 expressly to welcome former and prospective customers on board examples of their holiday craft.

On that Sunday forty four bases are being opened as their contribution to a National Open day, but at many yards several operators are getting together to Display examples of their respective fleets.

To learn more why not come along on the 1st April to your local boatyard where you will be welcomed aboard.

The nearest hire cruiser operators participating in the Open Day are:-

1. Bradford upon Avon Marina, Trowbridge Road, Bradford upon Avon.  
Contact:- Maurice Griggs. Tel:- 02216 2608
2. Anglo Welsh Waterway Holidays, Bath & Dundas Canal Co, Brass Knocker Bottom Boatyard, Warminster Road, Monckton Combe, Near Bath  
Contact:- Tim Wheeldon Tel:- 0225 722292

#### BRITISH WATERWAYS BUSINESS STRATEGY

6th February 1990

The announcement by Chris Patten, Secretary of State for the Environment, in the House of Commons today, that the Government endorses British Waterways' Integrated Business Strategy and accepts that they should have wider freedom to act on their own account in developing their waterway assets, was immediately welcomed by British Waterways' Chairman, David Ingman.

Commenting on the Statement, David Ingman said, "We are delighted that the Select Committee and the Government recognise the potential of our inland waterways to become one of the major environmental assets in the country. The business freedoms now given to us will allow British Waterways to play a full part in the transformation that is taking place in turning little used stretches of our waterways into highly attractive centres for leisure and tourism, as well as providing valuable settings for living and working".