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NEWSLETTER No. 274 MARCH 1994

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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

- 3rd March - Dieter Jebens with his view of the River Thames.
- 7th April - Return to Lock 19, Basingstoke Canal - Jon Sims.
- 5th May - Canal dead ends - Eric Lewis.
- Canal de Nivernais - Brian Evans.
- 2nd June - AGM and film night.

FEBRUARY MEETING. Another super evening with Hugh McKnight. Last year Hugh showed us slides of the opening of the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal which he attended with the co-owners of his boat, 'Avonbay', June and John Humphries.

At our February meeting Hugh showed two 45 minute reels of 16mm film of the opening, passage through the canal and onto the Danube. Most of the camera work was by June Humphries, the commentary by John and editing by Hugh and they should be complimented on turning such a mammoth task into an excellent film.

The plan had been to continue cruising on down the Danube but floods prevented this. A breakdown and having to be towed on the fast flowing river presented subject for some exciting footage.

As usual Hugh brought along a large stock of books, both new and secondhand, some rare, which members had the opportunity to purchase. Our thanks to Hugh for a wonderful evenings entertainment.

DIARY DATES.

- 5th March - Kennet and Avon Canal lock open day, Devizes.
- 9th March - The world's largest three masted ship, Kaskelot, will return to Gloucester Docks for the filming of the BBC period adaptation of Charles Dickens novel Martin Chuzzlewit.
- 1st to 4th April - Devizes to Westminster International Canoe and Kayak Race.

All the events below are in Chichester.

- 9th April - Duck racing at the Canal Basin.
- 10th April - Sponsored 5km canal fun run. Start 10.30.
- 2nd July - Gala Day, Priory Park.
- 3rd July - Canal guided walk and strawberry cream tea, Canal Basin.
- 9th July - Beer barrel races, Canal Basin.
- 10th July - Canoe fun day, Canal Basin. Start 10.00.
- 28th August - Water Fayre, Canal Basin. Start 11.00.

MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL celebrates its centenary on 21st May with a gathering of ships, cruises for visitors and other events.

BASINGSTOKE CANAL. English Nature is expected to designate up to 25 miles of the Basingstoke Canal as an SSSI in the Spring of 1994. This follows agreement between Hampshire & Surrey County Councils and English Nature on a maintenance and operational plan. Navigation interests, represented by the Canal Society and the IWA, successfully eradicated the most contentious proposals.

The proposal to limit boat movements to 1000 a year has been increased to 1300 a year. A proposal to restrict weed cutting to a 16ft 4in to 19ft 6in centre channel width has been agreed at 19ft 6in wide, although English Nature anticipates clearance by the passage of boats and not generally by the use of a weed cutter.

While nature conservationists acknowledge a need for periodic dredging, the plan calls for a time consuming and expensive procedure of plant identification and removal to other sites before dredging can commence.

Ironically, English Nature points to a deterioration of the half mile length of canal beyond the Whitewater winding hole to Greywell Tunnel, as a wildlife habitat, from which motorised boating has been banned for some years.

Much has been written already about the flooding in Chichester. We have seen how the combined emergency services worked day and night to prevent the serious situation which would have arisen, had the River Lavant burst through the dam in the Hornet. There seems little doubt that the floodwaters could have done much greater damage to property and businesses in the City and the subsequent clean up operation would have been extremely costly.

But was it necessary to pump the majority of the floodwater through the City Centre three miles to Fishbourne? It is true that after some prompting by the Society, some was directed to the Canal Basin and that this complemented the excess that was entering the Canal from a variety of formal and informal sources.

We believe that the obvious and most straightforward option in the event of future flooding from the River Lavant is to use the Canal. Clearly substantial works will have to be carried out before it can be used - new navigable bridges at Donnington and Birdham, the restoration of Manhood End Lock as well as substantial dredging to remove the majority of the dense reedbeds which currently choke the Canal. But the cost of that need not exceed £2 million and this would include the two bridges which would use up half that sum! A lot of money, but well worth it to protect historic Chichester and to give back to the community an amenity of considerable importance to all.

We have started a publicity campaign to raise public awareness and to gain extra members. Letters have been written to the Chichester Observer, MPs, local councillors at all levels, the statutory undertakings and other interested parties. Small A4 posters are available to drive home the message and the bright yellow banner at the Basin arouses considerable attention. Please write to your local MP to reinforce the message. The target is to at least double the membership this year. This is our opportunity to secure the full restoration of the Chichester Canal and to promote the case for the more difficult Hunston to Ford link.

The Society is still in urgent need of volunteers to skipper the tripboat, 'EGREMONT', during the coming season. This is not physically arduous work and normally starts at 9.30am and finishes at 6.00pm. Anyone with a day to spare please contact John Cooper on 0243 573839.

This years Fun Run (10th April) is to be entry by Sponsorship only. To encourage entrants to maximise the sponsorship that they obtain the Society is offering a 14" colour television to the person obtaining the most sponsorship. Is there a member of Southampton Canal Society willing to represent us at the fun run? Please see the Chairman.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE CHICHESTER CANAL.

1. Measures to construct a Canal linking Chichester to the sea was first recorded in 1585 when an Act of Parliament was passed.
2. For customs purposes the Port of Chichester was defined in 1680 as extending from Felpham in the east to Hermitage Creek near Emsworth in the west.
3. The maximum penalty for:- Breaking or destroying bridges, banks, locks or buildings was Transportation for 14 years.
4. No vessel having more than 28lbs of gunpowder was allowed within 0.5 mile of Chichester or Portsmouth.
5. It was offence to bathe in the canal. Penalty was a fine of £2 or 1 month hard labour in the gaol.
6. 6 Iron Swivel Bridges crossed the canal between the Basin and the Harbour. These were all made in 1820 by the firm C.H.Tickell of Southampton.
7. The digging of the Basin in 1819 revealed 700 Roman Dinarii.
8. The opening of the canal soon had an effect on the City. On 15th Sept 1823 the Sussex Weekly Advertiser reported "The streets and shops in the city were for the first time illuminated with gas."
9. The largest vessel in regular use on the canal was a Square Rigger of 167 gross tons named "Stephen and Elizabeth", owned by H.Farndell of Appledram.

Family membership is only £5.00. If you would like to join The Chichester Canal Society we have some membership application forms.