

Newsletter

Issue 376

November 2003

Chairman's Column

Visit by National Chairman of the Inland Waterways Association

On behalf of Southampton Canal Society I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to John Fletcher, the National Chairman of the Inland Waterways Association to our November meeting, accompanied by Margaret Fletcher, Chairman of IWA North West Region. Prior to the meeting, representatives of the Society and the IWA Solent & Arun Branch enjoyed a 'working supper' with John and Margaret.

Brief details of John's background in the waterways movement are included elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Visit by Day-Star Theatre in October

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Committee (and their spouses etc) for providing such an excellent supper following Day-Star Theatre's performance last month. Thanks also to the volunteers who worked hard laying out the tables and food and undertaking the mammoth task of washing up afterwards.

Refreshments Rota

Speaking of refreshments, many thanks to those volunteers who have assisted with the provision of refreshments at our monthly meetings. Your help is very much appreciated.

However, our current rota is coming to an end and we now need to seek volunteers to add their names to the new list. Please do not be shy about coming forward – give your names and your available dates to Angela Faull, as soon as possible.

Annual Inter-Society Waterways Quiz and American Supper

And still on the issue of food etc – don't forget that at our next meeting, on Thursday December 4, we will be hosting the annual Inter Society Waterways Quiz. As usual, this will be followed by an American Supper and I would remind all members of the need to bring along a selection of food and drink. Many thanks.

Society Quiz Team

And talking about the Annual Quiz, we need to get our own Society team of four together. We already have some volunteers but, if you would like to participate, please let me know as soon as possible. Don't forget, we

are the current holders of the Quiz Cup and therefore must field a strong team if we aim to hold on to it.

Skittles Evening

I understand from Angela Faull that bookings are going well for the Society Skittles Evening to be held at 'The Kings Head' in Hursley on Friday 28 November 2003. There are still places available at £7.50 per head, which will cover the cost of hiring the skittle alley, a buffet supper, and prizes for the winners. Our last skittles evening was sold out so please contact Angela without further delay, to book your place. Her 'phone No. is 023 8047 6112 or, if you have e-mail, her address is: Faull@waitrose.com.

January Meeting

Just another reminder that our January meeting has been re-scheduled for the 8th. Our programme for that date will be our annual Members Photographic Evening. Please see details elsewhere in this Newsletter.

2004 Society Boat Gathering

Following the success of our two previous events, a third Society Boat Gathering will be held at Flecknoe and Braunston over the bank holiday weekend, 1-3 May 2004. I know that is still a long way off but the necessary organisation will need to be started early in the New Year. It is appreciated that, because of the locations of their home moorings, this annual event is more of interest to the 'Warwickshire Branch' of the Society – however, all members are welcome to attend, either by boat or car. I am expecting a record number of boats next year so, to ensure a booking, please contact me as soon as possible if you are intending to participate.

And Finally.....

As members will recall, Laura Sturrock and Peter Oates have been managing to get their photographs included in a number of waterways magazines during the last year. Well, it continues! The front cover (no less) of British Waterways' autumn/winter issue of 'Waterfront' shows a close-up of Laura steering the family narrow boat 'Swallowdale' down Marsworth Locks on the Grand Union Canal. In the background, out of focus but easily recognisable to those of us who know him, is Peter closing one of the lock gates.

Paul Herbert

October Meeting

Day-Star Theatre: 'Another Fine Day'

What can I possibly say about Day-Star Theatre's latest visit to Southampton that will truly give the flavour of their latest production 'Another Fine Day' or give much deserved credit to Pete (Duffy) and Jane?

And what about the audience.....a fantastic full house and it was difficult to squeeze any more into Chilworth Parish Hall!

This was Day-Star's third and final story about the canalside village of Sandy Edge and the folk who live there, and those slowly passing through on the canal on the embankment overlooking the village. A synopsis of this production was included in the October Newsletter and it would therefore be unnecessary duplication for me to repeat the basic story line here. It would also be wrong of me to

describe what happened during the performance, how it ended, and why this had to be the final story from Sandy Edge – that would give the game away to those Society members who were unable to join us in October and might have the opportunity to catch that production at some future date.

Suffice it to say, Pete and Jane gave us a superb evening in their usual unique style, continually changing costume and character, right there on the stage, in full view of the audience. Many thanks to Day-Star for such an entertaining evening.

After clearing away their props and costumes etc, Pete and Jane joined the audience for a well deserved supper.

Paul Herbert

John Fletcher

John Fletcher became National Chairman of the Inland Waterways Association in November 2002, having been a member of IWA since 1975 and a Council Member, as North West Region Chairman, since January 1998. He is a Trustee of The Waterways Trust and is a Trustee and Deputy Chairman of Steam Coal and Canal.

John has been involved in many aspects of the waterways and his biographical notes include: Member of IWA's Navigation Technical and Amenity Committee, Finance and General Purposes Committee and Management Committee. He is a former Chairman of the Manchester Branch and had a number of other branch roles. He was the Site and Services Manager for the 1988 IWA National Rally. He has been involved in several waterway organisations including membership of the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council Working Group on waterway World Heritage Sites and subsequently on Waterway Heritage Planning. John

used to be a Trustee and Hon Company Secretary of the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal Society and, immediately prior to becoming National IWA Chairman, was a member of The Northern Reaches Restoration Group and a member of the Anderton Lift Fund Raising Group.

John is a waterway speaker, writer and photographer; boat owner, towing path walker and has interests in industrial archaeology, waterway books and publishing.

John and Margaret Fletcher are obvious partners in many ways. Margaret is also heavily involved in the waterways, having taken over from John as the IWA North West Region Chairman (which covers Merseyside & West Lancashire, Manchester, and North Lancashire & Cumbria), and as member of the Northern Reaches Restoration Group. Margaret is also Chairman of the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal Society.

John and Margaret, who live in Bolton, also publish a small number of waterway books.

Bugsworth CD-ROM and Restoration Progress

Following the item about the historical archive CD-ROM of Bugsworth Basin and surrounding canals, your editor received the following email from Don Baines of the Inland Waterways Protection Society:

I would like to thank you for including the items about the IWPS and Bugsworth Basin in your recent newsletter.

If anyone would like to buy one of our cd-roms [*£12*], they can also order from myself at 2 Alsfeld Way, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 3DD.

Incidentally, The Peak Forest Canal Company Ltd is the trading subsidiary of the IWPS and not an independent company. All proceeds are transferred in

their entirety to the IWPS - 100% in the case of the cd-rom which is supplied without cost to the society.

We now have contractors on site at Bugsworth with the first phase of the project, the construction of a new wildlife habitat, nearing completion. This will be followed by an archaeological survey recording the features of the monument which will be affected by the leakage repair works. The whole scheme is scheduled to be completed by the spring 2004. Progress reports and newsflashes can be found on our website at www.brocross.com/iwps/index.htm

Regards

Don Baines

WATERWAYS DIARY

The following is a list of waterway events taking place within approximately 50 miles of Southampton. Hopefully you can find something to interest you.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure the correctness of this information, please check with the listed contact who will be glad to supply further details of that event. If YOU know of an event taking place that should be in this list then contact the editor.

Time	Organiser	Details	Contact
Thu 6 Nov 2003 7.45 pm	Southampton CS	IWA National Chairman John Fletcher	Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384
Sat 15 Nov 2003 7.30pm	Kennet & Avon CT	K & A Update - Michael Goodenough. Devizes Wharf Centre.	Pete Jordan: 01 380 729489
Sun 16 Nov 2003 10.00 am	Somersetshire Coal CS	Walk 8 - Single Hill to Radstock. Meet at the Village Hall. Park in the Village Hall car park	Roger Halse: 01249 652846
Wed 19 Nov 2003 8.00pm	Surrey & Hampshire CS	Barging into Burgundy by Dick Allan. Problems, costs and benefits of taking a narrow boat to France and his trip south. Westgate Centre, Chobham Road, Woking	Arthur Dungate: arthurdungate@iname.com
Thu 20 Nov 2003 7.30 pm	IWA Salisbury Group	Eric Lewis talking about "Around Britain by canal in the 70s" at Salisbury Rugby Club.	Jon Van de Geer: 01722 412841 or Ron & Myra Glover: 01722 710322
Wed 26 Nov 2003 7.45pm	Kennet & Avon CT	Brian Eighteen - "Watermills on the Kennet". Stone Building, Newbury Wharf.	Jane Elwell: 01635 569647
Fri 28 Nov 2003	Southampton CS	Society Skittles Evening - The Kings Head, Hursley. Cost £7.50	Angela Faull: 023 8047 6112 Faull@waitrose.com
Fri 28 Nov 2003	Kennet & Avon CT	Christmas Party. Southcote Library Hall, Southcote Lane, Reading.	Peter Crawford: 01488 608297
Thu 4 Dec 2003 7.45 pm	Southampton CS	Inter-Society Waterways Quiz and American Supper	Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384
Wed 17 Dec 2003 8.00pm	Surrey & Hampshire CS	Archive Films of Transport, etc - Frank Banfield. Westgate Centre, Chobham Road, Woking.	Arthur Dungate: arthurdungate@iname.com
Thu 8 Jan 2004 7.45pm	Southampton CS	Members' Slides, Prints and Photo Competition Evening. NB this is second Thursday of the month!	Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384
Wed 28 Jan 2004 7.45pm	Kennet & Avon CT	K & A Update - Michael Goodenough. Stone Building, Newbury Wharf	Jane Elwell: 01635 569647
Fri 30 Jan 2004	Kennet & Avon CT	Jan Flanagan & Doug Small -Wilts & Berks. Canal Trust. Southcote Library Hall, Southcote Lane, Reading.	Peter Crawford: 01488 608297
Thu 5 Feb 2004 7.45pm	Southampton CS	Andrew Stumpf, Regeneration Manager (South) British Waterways - who will be talking about the Bedford/Milton Keynes Link, the Cotswolds Canals and, probably, the Droitwich Canals.	Eric Lewis: 023 8086 0384
Wed 25 Feb 2004 7.45pm	Kennet & Avon CT	'Frosts, Freezes and Fairs' - Ian Currie. Stone Building, Newbury Wharf.	Jane Elwell: 01635 569647
Fri 27 Feb 2004	Kennet & Avon CT	Swan Lifeline. Southcote Library Hall, Southcote Lane, Reading.	Peter Crawford: 01488 608297
Wed 31 Mar 2004 7.45pm	Kennet & Avon CT	Richard Thomas - 'The Stort Navigation'. Stone Building, Newbury Wharf	Jane Elwell: 01635 569647
Wed 21 Apr 2004 8pm	Surrey & Hampshire CS	The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway - David Barrie (Chairman of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society). Westgate Centre, Chobham Road, Woking.	Arthur Dungate: arthurdungate@iname.com
Sat 1 May - Mon 3 May	Southampton CS	Third Annual Society Boat Gathering at Flecknoe/Braunston	Paul Herbert: 023 8026 2365 PaulHerbert@aol.com
All year	Wey & Arun CT	Cruises on n/b Zachariah Keppel on the restored section of canal at Loxwood.	WACT Office: 01403 752403 wact@weyandarun.freereserve.co.uk
All year	Chichester CS	Cruises on n/b Egremont on the canal from Chichester Basin.	Bookings: 01243 670786

Members' Slides, Prints and Photo Competition Evening

The meeting on the 8th January will be our annual Members' Slides Evening. This will give everyone the opportunity to show some pictures - even those who feel they might not have enough of interest to make up a whole evening's show. If you can put together up to a maximum of around a dozen pictures (even just one or two) that you feel will entertain / educate / amuse your fellow members, look them out for this evening.

We have the facility to project prints (up to 7" x 5") onto the screen as well as transparencies. So if you don't take slides, you too will be able to show something of waterways interest as well.

Again, like the last couple of years, the evening will also incorporate a photographic competition. To be held just

before the tea interval, this competition is open to all members - you don't have to be showing other slides / prints during the evening. What we're looking for is **one** picture which can be anything to do (even loosely) with the waterways. The competition will be judged by all those present at the meeting.

And as an incentive to enter, there will be a mystery prize given to the winner.

So don't be shy, this is YOUR opportunity to show others your interest in waterways, what you've done or where you went and what you saw on holiday.

Please note the meeting is being held on the **SECOND** Thursday of the month to avoid the effects of New Year's Day!!

Members Exploits

Back in August, your editor received an email from our member Gordon Osborn. My apologies for not including it before, Gordon, but it got overlooked with all the summer's activities. I think other members will want to know about it:

If it is of interest, the following press release by British Waterways refers to some software development I have been working on for the last few years.

My interest in canals started many years ago, but I have become involved with various project for BW for the last eight years or so.

Regards

Gordon Osborn

Canals flowing freely despite dry spell 07 August 2003

Innovative advances in water management are ensuring that the 2,000 miles of canals and rivers managed by British Waterways can remain open where previously water shortages resulted in closures and restrictions. The new computer modelling, which includes the effects of lock usage, is believed to be a world-first.

Met Office data from January to June this year already shows we've received 15% less rainfall this year compared with the long-term average. In previous years, such as 1995, when reservoirs started the year at comparable levels and rainfall was similar to 2003, waterway visitors, boaters and wildlife were all adversely affected by water shortages and boating restrictions.

Recycling water at locks, live monitoring of water levels using 500 sensors throughout the network, combined with an innovative new computer modelling system, is enabling the organisation to make the most effective use of its water resources. This means that a consistent supply of water can be maintained for boats and to support the thriving diversity of wildlife that flourishes along the waterway corridors - especially important in years of low rainfall or hot dry summers.

The latest development in water management

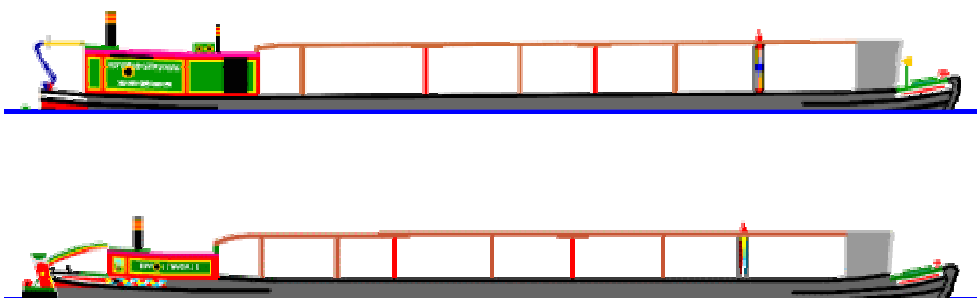
software was developed in conjunction with ABP Mer - the research arm of Associated British Ports - and is now being tested by British Waterways. The new computer modelling software takes a fully integrated and holistic view of the waterway network, where historically canal water management had been at a more localised level, and gives British Waterways managers support to the most effective deployment of its water resources.

Darren Leftley, Head of Hydrology at British Waterways, comments: "Previously, prolonged spells of dry and hot weather would adversely affect sections of the network - the Oxford, Grand Union and Leeds & Liverpool canals were all prone to closure in periods of drought. This year, as the UK enjoys the hottest week of the summer, none of our waterways is closed because of water shortage.

"It's all about making the best use of the water resources we have, which benefits the ten million waterway visitors and is kind to the environment."

The new 'water optimisation model' is one of a number of innovations that British Waterways is using to improve its water supplies for the benefit of all its waterway customers. Other initiatives include a national Water Management Plan that will provide a 25-year strategic framework to meet the future pressures on the waterway network, including climate change.

Editor's note: My experience this year around the system certainly bears out the comments in the above BW press release. Back in 1995 and even the infamous 1976 there were extensive waterway closures. Things have definitely improved since those days. Well done, Gordon. However, in view of the article on page 5 about water resources, despite Gordon's best efforts, we may not be in the clear just yet.



Water Resources - Drought

The continuing low levels of rainfall in October led to increased lock restrictions at Marple and Bosley locks on the Peak Forest and Macclesfield canals, and there eventual closure to navigation on 26th October when water supplies in reservoirs had dwindled to only 10% of capacity. The remaining water supplies were conserved to avoid harm to fish stocks and other wildlife. The two canals remain open for use other than at the lock flights.

Use of the locks on the eastern side of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal has been restricted to boats that have notified their passage to the canal office at Standedge, and water supplies on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal are also running very low.

The unseasonably low rainfall in October (about 70% of average - the driest for ten years) followed the record dry months of August and September, and six months of below-average rainfall before this. As well as the low levels of nearly all reservoirs, the Environment Agency has become increasingly worried at low groundwater levels and river flows. Despite rain at the end of October, the soil is very dry in nearly all parts of the country, and will soak up a great deal of rain before there is replenishment of groundwater, and flows into reservoirs will be reduced.

The eight-month period to 30th September has been

the driest in many places since 1929. August and September has been the driest in many areas since records began in 1888. Reservoir levels (overall - not just those for navigation purposes) are at a five-year low and there are now spray irrigation restrictions in the Midlands, Thames area and the South West. The Lower Thames Operating Agreement has been invoked, which allows Thames Water to reduce flows over Teddington Weir to meet public water supply needs. The source and upper parts of some rivers have dried up.

The following table shows the average reservoir volumes (for general water supply) in each of the Environment Agency's regions in England and Wales as at 30th September:

	Sept 2003 volume as % of capacity	Sept 2002 volume as % of capacity
Anglian	73%	86%
Midlands	62%	78%
North East	62%	83%
North West	44%	66%
South West	57%	73%
Southern	51%	80%
Thames	57%	84%
Wales	60%	72%

Unless there is a wet winter, there are almost certainly likely to be water supply problems, both for navigation and for other users, through 2004.

IWA Head Office Bulletin - November 2003

Right: Eric Lewis and Peter Oates manning the IWA stand at the Southampton Boat Show last September.

Back page: Attending to the crowds!

Below: Some of the range of goods on sale.



Southampton International Boat Show 2003

Photos courtesy of Ray Brooks

A Trip to the Norfolk Broads

We enjoy the canals on our 44ft Springer based on the Staffs and Worcester at Calf Heath. We also enjoy the Norfolk Broads, spending four weeks each year in a rented riverside bungalow.

Olive suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and this means taking a lot of equipment, wheelchair, mattress, loo seat, etc. In turn this means we need a large car. The boat is fully equipped for her so this year we decided on a fresh approach. We would transfer the boat.

Ray Bown from Streethay Wharf arranged things: craning and transport. We left the boat at Teddesley Boats and Ray phoned a few days later to confirm it was ready for us at Richardsons of Stalham. The return cost was about 50% more than the bungalow rent but we could have an extended season, more comfort and with full use of the boat for cruising.

We based ourselves at Martham about 100 yards from our usual bungalow. The moorings and the bungalow are owned by Martham Boats who are old friends. Moorings are plentiful but those with easy road access are very limited. We need this access. The bankside mooring has originally been quay headed but these had long since rotted away but we had a manageable section. The bank is very popular with fishermen, because of the easy access, who tended to fish immediately in front and behind the boat leaving hooks in mooring lines, slippers, dog's feet and my hand! Fortunately they were very friendly and moved clear when we explained the problem. So different to many

Midlands anglers.

Martham is well situated, above the low bridge at Potter Heigham which restricts cruiser access and close to the nature reserves which include Hickling, Martham and Horsey Mere broads. I find these delightful.

The Broads were over-exploited in the seventies with far too many hire boats leading at times to traffic jams. Over the past few years the number has halved, very sad for the boatyards concerned, but bringing a big improvement for all users.

There are about 110 miles of lock-free rivers, some of which are strongly tidal. We restricted ourselves this year to the northern Broads where the tides are much gentler. Our boat is very slow, but we found this to be no problem. There is plenty of depth and we never went aground. Marked channels must be respected.

Until about 5 years ago, there were no narrow boats on the Broads. Now there are about eight. The boats act as an immediate introduction and we talked to all the others during our stay. One actually has lived on his boat for several years.

Because of certain constraints we were only able to stay for nine weeks but thoroughly enjoyed it. The weather was superb, allowing me to potter about in my Mirror dinghy.

The boat is now back at Calf Heath but we hope to go back about next Easter for an extended spell with, we hope, a smaller car.

John Whitehead

Southampton Canal Society at

The 2003 IWA National Waterways Festival & Inland Boat Show

I was surprised and delighted to see so many Canal Society members at this year's National Waterways Festival held at Beale Park on the River Thames, near Pangbourne over the bank holiday weekend, 22-25 August. Eight Society boats joined the massed ranks of over 600 other boats moored up to six abreast along the river bank, whilst at least two Society families stayed in the very large campsite. I soon lost count of the number of other Society members who visited the site by car or train – the ones I didn't see personally were seen by others moored at the site.

The weather leading up to the weekend, and over the four days of the Festival itself, was glorious. A number of us were fortunate to be able to cruise the upper Thames to the head of navigation (for large craft) at Inglesham where we discovered that the former dammed off entrance to the Thames & Severn Canal had been dredged by the Environment Agency just days before the Festival, in anticipation of the large numbers of boats expected to reach that location. One could clearly see the stretch of canal leading off the Thames to the first lock just beyond the bridge over the canal. A hint of things hopefully to come in about five years?

Speaking for the Society members visiting by boat, the Festival was a great success and very enjoyable.

Southampton International Boat Show

As has become usual, a number of stalwarts from the Southampton Canal Society worked on the Inland Waterways Association's Sales Stand at this year's Southampton Boat Show, between 12 and 21 September. They assisted Stand Manager, Peter Oates, with the sale of a wide range of inland waterways related items (including Rosie & Jim, not forgetting Peter's favourite – the quacking Duck!!!) and providing information and advice to potential visitors to the inland waterways. *See pictures elsewhere in this Newsletter.*

Cutweb Internet Boating Club Annual Rally

Crews from three 'Society' boats attended the 3rd Cutweb Rally held at Napton Top Lock on the Oxford Canal over the weekend 19-21 September and a good time was had by all. If you would like information about Cutweb, please have a word with me.

Paul Herbert

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.

Meetings:

1st Thursday each month at 7.45pm
Chilworth Parish Hall, Chilworth, Southampton

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Brian Evans.

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Society Website:

<http://www.whitenap.plus.com>

FORTHCOMING SOCIETY EVENTS

6th November 2003 - IWA National Chairman John Fletcher.

28th November 2003 - Society Skittles Evening - The Kings Head, Hursley. Cost £7.50 Bookings: Angela Faull on 023 8047 6112 or Faull@waitrose.com

4th December 2003 - Inter-Society Waterways Quiz and American Supper

8th January 2004 - Members' Slides, Prints and Photo Competition Evening. NB this is **second** Thursday of the month!

5th February 2004 - Andrew Stumpf, Regeneration Manager (South) British Waterways, will be talking about the Bedford/Milton Keynes Link, the Cotswolds Canals and, probably, the Droitwich Canals.

1st - 3rd May 2004 - Third Annual Society Boat Gathering at Flecknoe/Braunston

Additions to the Library

The Society has been given a number of new (old) books which I shall keep separately until they get mixed up with the others!

Thanks to Mrs Janet Charnley for a booklet by a tutor of hers when she was at college:

- It Happened Round Manchester - Canals and Waterways by A H Body. This is a summary from earliest times to 1968.

We are indebted to Mr Peter Warner who recently moved house in Hythe and had to let some of his library go in order to leave room to eat!!! The books, split between canals and industrial archaeology, are:

- A hundred years of the Manchester Ship Canal by Ted Gray, which ends optimistically with the Salford Quays shopping centre development.
- Canal by Anthony Burton and Derek Pratt.
- Building Britain's Canals by David Gladwin, which contains many historic drawings and photographs including one of Peter Oates!
- Archaeology of the Montgomeryshire Canal by Stephen Hughes.
- Canal Architecture by Peter L Smith.
- Narrow Boats at Work by Michael Ware, again with many historic photos.
- Great Days of the Canals by Anthony Burton.
- Foxton Locks and Inclined Plane by the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust.
- Hampshire Railways in Old Photographs, collected by Kevin Robertson.
- A Coalville Miner's Story by Maurice Woodward.
- Ironworking by W K V Gale.
- The Village Wheelwright and Carpenter by Jocelyn Bailey.
- Lead and Leadmining by Lynn Willies.

Tim Boddington, who gave the talk on the Macclesfield Canal a couple of months ago, commented that the library was the best and most wide ranging archive he had seen in his travels round canal societies. So if anyone wishes to add to the library I should be delighted.

Alan Howarth

