

Excalibur

**THE LONDON NEWSLETTER OF
THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION**

NUMBER 35, SPRING 2002

EDITOR : Mike Stevens, 333 Lyham Road, London SW2 5NS

'phone (020) 8674 9387

fax (020) 8674 3724

mobile 07850-665 102

e-mail michael.stevens@which.net

Region web site :

<http://www.waterways.org.uk/regionandbranch/londonregion/index.htm>



*At last year's Canalway Cavalcade.
See pages 4 & 5 for information about this year's event.
Photo by Mike Stevens*

Who's who in London IWA

NB We are in the time of year for AGMs and the post-AGM appointment of Branch & Region Officers. The information here is the most recent to have reached your editor.

☎ = answerphone

LONDON REGION

President

Illtyd Harrington JP, DL

Vice-Presidents

Dr Michael Essex-Lopresti

Arthur Farrand Radley, MBE

Chairman (at time of writing)

Roger Squires (020) 7232 0987 ☎

46 Elephant Lane, London, SE16 4JD

e-mail : rogersquires@ntlworld.com

New officers yet to be appointed

Committee members

Libby Bradshaw (020) 8874 2787 ☎

Stu Carrie 07833 183500

(Middlesex Branch Chairman)

Tim Lewis (020) 8367 6227 ☎

(N&E London Branch Chairman)

David Llewellyn (020) 8653 4862 ☎

(South London Branch Chairman)

Mike Stevens (See page 1 for details)

Colin Edwards (020) 8365 1348

(Chairman of Plan/Nav Committee)

Mike McHugh

(One vacancy)

Official not on the Region Committee

Lewis Phillips (020) 8673 4412 ☎

(London Ring Plaques distribution)

NORTH & EAST LONDON BRANCH

Chairman (at time of writing)

Tim Lewis (020) 8367 6227 ☎

6 Downs Road, Enfield, Middx, EN1 1PA.

e-mail : tim@timlewis.org.uk

New officers yet to be appointed

Committee members

Libby Bradshaw (020) 8874 2787 ☎

(non-voting)

Colin Edwards (020) 8365 1348

Ian Israel

Alex Nunes (020) 8440 8962

Jenny Nunes (020) 8440 8962

Cathy Russell (020) 8529 0689 ☎

Roger Wilkinson (Working overseas)

MIDDLESEX BRANCH

Chairman

Stu Carrie 07833 183500

108 High St, Cranfield, BedfordMK43 0DG

email : stu@scarrie.fslife.co.uk

Vice-Chairman & Treasurer

Mike Mc Hugh

Secretary & Sales Officer

Robin Bishop see below

Committee members

John Ashley (020) 8572 0067

(Plan-Nav rep)

Keith Clayton (020) 8573 0883

(Membership Officer)

Peter Coles (020) 7731 5822

(Social meetings Secretary)

Jim Sitch (020) 8568 9659

(Publicity Officer)

Newsletter Editor (non-committee)

Rosie Limming (01895) 252 011 ☎

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH

Chairman

David Llewellyn (020) 8653 4862 ☎

5 Cornwall Gardens, Tennyson Rd, SE25 5RZ.

Treasurer

Dorothy Robbie (020) 8857 6367 ☎

23 Porcupine Close, Mottingham, SE9 3AE.

Other officers yet to be appointed

Committee members

Libby Bradshaw (020) 8874 2787 ☎

Mary Llewellyn (020) 8653 4862 ☎

Andrew Mann (020) 8692 3637

(Croydon Canal Campaign Co-ordinator)

Lesley Pryde (020) 8679 9866

Mike Stevens See details on front cover

(One vacancy)

Excalibur

Editor

Mike Stevens See details on front cover.

Editorial Assistant

Andrew Mann (020) 8692 3637

43c Halesworth Road, Lewisham, SE13 7TJ

e-mail andremann@freenetname.co.uk

Advertising manager

Robin Bishop (020) 8452 2632

11 Lichfield Road, Cricklewood, NW2 2RE

From the Editor

Things are getting better?

We live in a time when a lot seems to be going well for the waterways movement, some of which has found its way into these pages. On pages 4 & 5, in the context of the *New Openings* theme for this year's Canalway Cavalcade, we note the many waterway restorations and new developments which have either reached or are nearing fruition around now.

But even some of the good developments give rise at times to misgivings. Has, for example, the haste of the restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow (to meet the deadline set by the terms the Millennium Fund grant) produced a canal that will take a lot more money to eliminate the teething problems and make it fully usable for the size of boats for which it was originally built?

On pages 8 & 9, Ron Bingham ends his autobiographical piece with some misgivings about the way canalside development is going. How many readers agree with him? Some letters on the subject would be very welcome.

On page 12 I summarise some of the discussions that have arisen from the AINA report "A Vision for the Strategic Enhancement of Britain's Inland Navigation Network" and its suggested "enhancements" (some would say "distortions") of the waterways system. Again, your letters are invited.

Of the various new developments, the one most local to us is reported on page 10 - the inclusion of the Bow Back Rivers restoration in the latest list of projects to be supported by BW and the Waterways Trust - very welcome news indeed, but far from the whole story of current thinking about those rivers.

Reports I've seen elsewhere talk of some new cuts linking to the Back Rivers. One of these is proposed to link the Back Rivers to the Gasworks Arm off Bow Creek, and another to extend the Back Rivers into an area of new development, known as Stratford Gateway, linking it via Carpenters Road lock to the Back Rivers, thence the Lee Navigation and the rest of the system.

My best guess is that these new arms are planned to satisfy developers, who can now charge a premium price for houses adjacent to canals. My further guess is that a substantial contribution to funding the restoration of the Back Rivers will therefore come from these developers. While some might call such new cuts "Disneyland" waterways, if they help pay for the restoration of the Back Rivers, then I, for one, welcome them.

My one worry is that nothing I have seen about the new projects makes any mention of City Mill Lock. I very much hope that it will also be included in the restoration plans. In the past, BW has been unsympathetic to restoring it, since it was a fairly late (1930) addition to the system and was very rarely used.

If the motivation behind the Back Rivers restoration derives from the new cuts into the development area, then a link from them to the main system could be provided by restoring just Carpenter's Road Lock and the Old River Lee, leaving the Southern part of the Back River alone. I very much hope that this is not what will happen. We must make our voice heard to ensure that the whole of the Back Rivers is restored.

Mike Stevens

COPY DATES

No. 36	Summer 2002	21 st June
No. 37	Winter 2002/3	26 th October
No. 37	Spring 2003	28 th February

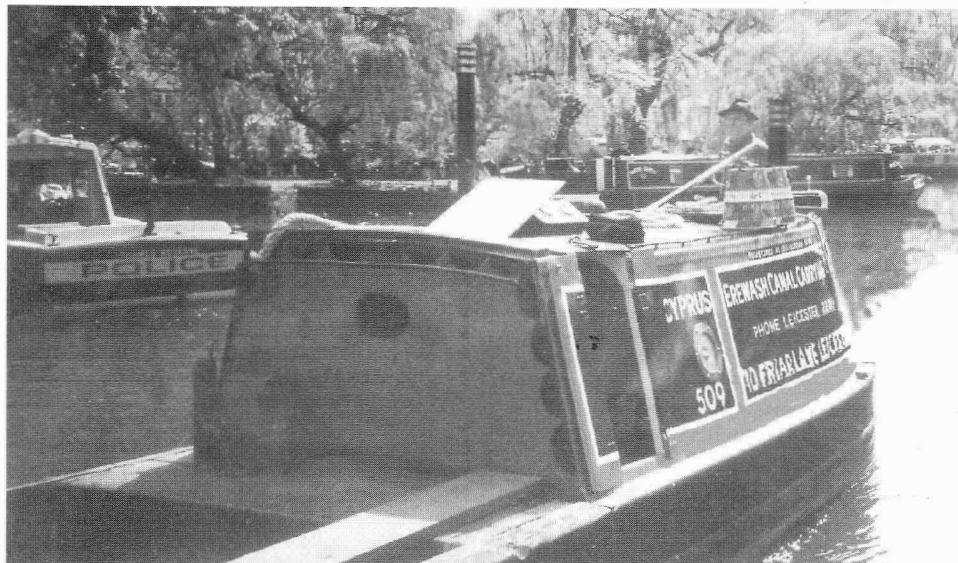
The IWA may not agree with opinions expressed in this magazine but encourages publication as a matter of interest. Nothing printed may be construed as policy or an official announcement unless so stated, otherwise the Association accepts no liability for any matter in the magazine. Although every care is taken with advertising, no responsibility whatsoever can be accepted for any matter advertised.

© IWA London Region 2002

Published by the Region at 3 Norfolk Court,
Norfolk Road, Rickmansworth, WD3 1LT. Tel:
(01923) 711114 Fax (01923) 897999

The Editor reserves the right to edit any article or letter submitted for publication.

CANALWAY CAVALCADE at Little Venice, Saturday 4



*David Daines' historic narrowboat Cyprus at last year's event.
Photo by Mike Stevens*

This year's Canalway Cavalcade takes the theme of "New Openings".

We live in an age of much change for the waterways. 2001 saw the completion of restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, the Forth and Clyde Canal and parts of the Edinburgh-Glasgow Union Canal, all very long-term projects at last brought to fruition. In 2002, the Anderton Boat Lift has already been opened (albeit with a few technical problems) and we confidently expect to see the completion of restoration on the Rochdale Canal and the joining of the Forth & Clyde and Union canals by the spectacular Falkirk Millennium Wheel boat lift. Many other restoration projects are making excellent progress.

New projects are also in hand. The Ribble Link is being built to connect the isolated Lancaster Canal to the rest of the system, and a new link from the Great Ouse at Bedford to the Grand Union at Milton Keynes has had a favourable feasibility study and is at the fund-raising stage.

A lot of regeneration is taking place along the canals and rivers. In London much of this takes place under the umbrella of *London's Waterways Partnership*, a British Waterways-led project which includes funding from the Government's Single Regeneration Budget.

Very close to Little Venice, major new developments have begun around Paddington Basin which will bring life back to what has for many decades been a deserted stretch of water.

Already this development will have changed the appearance of Canalway Cavalcade, as for the first time we shall be using land and moorings on both side of the first part of the arm between the Pool and Paddington Basin.

Another new opening at Canalway Cavalcade will be the national debut of "Wild on Waterways" or *WoW*, the new development of what was *Waterways for Youth*, now a joint project by IWA, BW and the Waterways Trust. Some of the activities in connection

- A FAMILY EVENT

- Monday 6May 2002

with this will take place on board the floating classroom *Beauchamp*, whose opening was reported in our last issue.

All the regular features of the event will be there :

- Opening Ceremony - 2pm Saturday
- Pageant of decorated boats - 2:30 pm Saturday
- Boat-handling competition - Sunday am & pm, Monday am
- Teddy-Bears' picnic - 3pm Sunday
- Procession of illuminated boats 9:30pm Sunday
- Presentation of awards - 1:00pm Monday.

In addition last year's successful parade of historic boats will be repeated on the Monday afternoon.

We are extending the public opening hours slightly this year. They will be :

- Saturday 10 am to 7 pm
- Sunday 10 am to 7 pm plus limited-area opening for the evening
- Monday 10am to 6pm.

As ever, there will be the usual entertainments - music, theatre, Morris dancers and puppets. In addition to the WoW activities, there will be the usual children's activities organised by the Church Army. Admission is free, but we hope you'll buy a souvenir programme, and spend some money with our exhibitors.

Canalway Cavalcade this year is organised by a committee chaired by Jerry Sanders and responsible to National Waterways Festivals. We are pleased to acknowledge help and sponsorship for the event

from British Waterways (London), the City of Westminster, *Canal Boat Magazine* and Paddington Regeneration Partnership.

How to get there

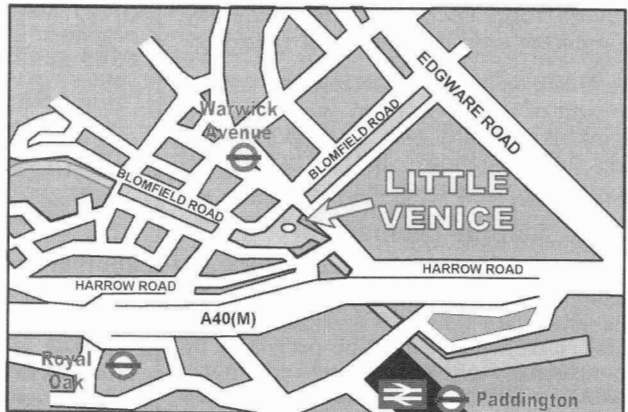
NEAREST TUBE : Warwick Avenue (Bakerloo line) - 3 minutes' walk

NEAREST B.R.: Paddington (15 minutes' walk or one stop on the tube to Warwick Avenue)

BY BUS : Bus routes 6, 16 & 98 run along Edgware Road. Alight at Blomfield Road and walk alongside the canal (4 minutes' walk)

BY CAR : Parking in the immediate area is not easy, so unless you are prepared for a bit of a walk, you are better advised to park elsewhere and do the last bit of the journey by tube.

BY BOAT : Little Venice is the junction of the Regent's Canal and the Paddington Branch of the Grand Union Canal. It can therefore be approached from the G.U. main line at Bull's Bridge (either from the Thames at Brentford or from the Midlands and beyond), or via the Regent's Canal from the Thames at Limehouse or the Lee Navigation via the Hertford Union Canal.



The Canalway Cavalcade web site is at

<http://www.waterways.org.uk/regionandbranch/londonregion/cavalcade/index.htm>

ROUTES AND BRANCHES :

Region, Branch and navigation news

Committee changes

As noted on page 2, we are in the middle of the season when new Branch and Region Committees are elected and Officers appointed. Among this year's changes, there are one or two notable retirements of long-serving Officers.

Vernon Draper, Chairman of Middlesex Branch since 1997 and Region Treasurer since 1995, moved out of our area some months ago and has now retired from both posts, although he will still run the 200 Club.

Mary Llewellyn, Treasurer of South London Branch since its creation in 1995 has given up that post, but remains on the Branch Committee.

But most significant of all is Ron Bingham's retirement from the post of Chairman of the Region's Planning and Navigation Committee. Ron has served on that Committee for longer than any of the rest of us have been around, and has held the offices of Planning Officer, Navigation Officer, Chairman and Liaison Officer, at one time all simultaneously. A while ago he stood down as Planning Officer, and it is tribute to the amount of work he put in that it has taken three of us to replace him in that one rôle. He was also the longest-serving member of IWA's (national) Navigation, Technical and Amenity Committee until its recent restructuring.

We thank Ron wholeheartedly for a huge amount of work over many years, and also thank his wife, Olive, who has supported him actively throughout. Ron's *"Waterways Biography"* appears on pages 8 & 9.

Slough-Thames link?

Among the various proposals around at the moment is one to link the Slough Arm to the non-tidal Thames, thus creating a non-tidal route which might be preferred by some boaters to the Brentford-Teddington passage. This was proposed many years ago by the then IWA London Branch, using a route down the valley of the Colne connecting Cowley Peachey to Staines. The current proposal is different, a new cut

from Slough to join the new Thames Flood Relief Channel near Eton.

My guess is that the Colne Valley proposal is the easier engineering project. But on the other hand, if the alternative route requires some "exciting, innovative" engineering, like the Antonine Wheel, then its headline potential might make it easier to find even the considerably greater amount of money that will be needed.

Ron Bingham expresses some views about new developments in his autobiographical piece on pages 8 & 9, where he says "Any more 'vibrant' developments and it will be shaken to pieces."

Three Mills Rally of Boats

As reported in our last issue, this will take place over the weekend of July 20 & 21, and will be organised by our N&E London Branch in conjunction with St Pancras Cruising Club and with support from the Lea Valley Regional Park.. At the time of writing I'm still awaiting confirmation of some of the details, but I know that there will be one or two organised cruises of the adjacent waterways, and (on the Saturday afternoon) a guided walk around the Bow Back Rivers. Admission will be free and the nearest tube station is Bromley-by-Bow. The boat entries are being handled by Alex Nunes (phone (020) 8440 8962 and the Trade Show organiser is Colin Edwards (phone (020) 8365 1348).

Richmond Lock freed

The Port of London Authority is operating Richmond Half-Tide lock free of charge (for leisure users) for a trial period from March to the end of this year. This sounds to your Editor as another case of "use it or loose it".

Tideway Incident Report Form

The Port of London Authority's *Notice to Mariners No.20 of 2002* reminds us that the achievement of safe marine operations in the Thames is the responsibility of all users, and encourages tideway users to report an

Continued on next page

FROM THE REGION CHAIRMAN :

Roger Squires

This is the time of year when boating, fishing and canal walking again begin to come to the forefront of our minds. The IWA, when it was formed way back in 1946, sought to promote the multi-functional use of the waterways. In many ways the fact that we can enjoy our canals today is very much due to those early IWA pioneers.

This year we will see various re-openings of waterways and lifts that a few years ago would have seemed impossible. This has not happened overnight. It has been the result of many years of hard work, much of it behind the scenes. It has often been quoted, that to get the politics of restoration right it can take 30 years. The actual task of restoring is now down to having the funding in place and local commitment for it to take place. When we consider that nearly 50 % of the Rochdale Canal is being restored in under 18 months, it shows just what can be achieved now.

Big projects are in the news, but we must never forget that smaller local schemes also need nurturing. A good example is the concept of a Croydon Canal Trail. I believe that everyone accepts that the Croydon Canal cannot be restored, but that its memory and few remaining artefacts do need protecting. The idea of a Croydon Canal Trail is being promoted by the South London Branch. Their aim is to identify a modern route, which mirrors the old canal line, from the Thames at Rotherhithe, to the start of the Croydon Canal proper north of New Cross and thence via Forest Hill, Anerley and South Norwood to West Croydon, to identify the key sites en-route and the few remains, and then create a series of Marker/ Interpretation Boards to assist modern canal explorers to follow the old line. A small Sub-Committee is working on the project, but they need your help and support.

In the East of London, the Bow Back Rivers have become silted again. The prospect of

getting them fully revived might be possible if potential plans for a new development around the planned Stratford European Gateway Station come to fruition. Here again, the Planning Officer in North and East London Branch cannot do all of the groundwork himself. Far more active support is necessary locally, if something is to materialise out of this opportunity.

In central London, the revival of City Road Basin is coming to the fore. Will it offer facilities for boaters and walkers? Will the local Canoe Club be protected? What amenities for the public at large will be provided? These are all questions that need to be asked and followed up. Here again local volunteers are needed to keep up the pressure to ensure that a proper balance is achieved.

In the west, developments at Brentford are proceeding apace. The river front opposite Kew Gardens has been overrun by large slab blocks of Flats. What is going to be provided to ensure that the waterside and the potential of a river walkway are going to be open to all? These are the sorts of issues that our local Planning Team are working on. However, they do need your input and especially your help in monitoring what is going on. All too often we have seen developers initially offer major concessions, only to find them later removed because of the 'economic downturn' or lack of funds. Again it is down to the actions of local people to monitor what is going on and to help fight any changes that are not beneficial to all.

The IWA is a national organisation. However, it relies on the local Branches to ensure that the waterways in their area are protected and enhanced in a positive way. When I was appointed Region Chairman, I indicated that it was the Branches that I wished to support. This I have tried to do. I also ask that you, the individual members, do the same. Please do your bit for the IWA in 2002.

... *Roots and Branches continued.*

navigational incidents or occurrences, including near misses, so that any safety issues can be properly addressed. Upstream of Crayfordness such reports should go to Woolwich Radio on Channel 14, by phone

to (020) 8855 0315 or on the incident report form available from the PLA by post or from their web site. Perhaps we should all report incidents involving excessive or dangerous wash.

MY WATERWAY BIOGRAPHY

When I first discovered London's canals in 1973, they were still that secret world, fenced in and closed to the public. Accesses, few in number, had to be discovered. They were usually an apparently locked black door, but which would open with a push against a spring. I walked the Regent's Canal by stages from the entrances I found.

I realised that I had discovered a little-known transport system, which fascinated me. I transferred my boat from the Medway to a mooring on the Bow Back Rivers.

The next stage, and the most important, in my education was realisation that this system had existed, little changed, since the Industrial Revolution. Not deliberately preserved as in a museum, but still used, albeit not much, for its original purpose. More of this later.

Each lock on the Regent's had a lock-keeper who went off duty at noon on Saturday, when the locks were closed until Monday, because they had no by-washes and lock-keepers were needed to adjust the levels to prevent flooding. Soon afterwards, the second chamber at each of the Regent's locks (except the top lock) was converted to weirs, so that private boaters could use the locks all the weekend. Ours was the first to take advantage of this, arriving at Hampstead Road lock a few minutes after noon, where the lock-keeper refused us passage. He maintained that no one had told him of the change.

The manned locks on the Lee, up to Brimsdown where the commercial traffic ended, were closed at weekends. The hydraulics were controlled by the lock-keeper, all of whom used the same system of raising the paddles half-way, checking the boat's licence and details, then raising the paddles fully. This sequence of operation is mimicked by the DIY pedestal system (but the lock-keeper knew that it is safe to fill an empty lock for a waiting boat with all paddles fully up!

The locks above Brimsdown were worked by pleasure boaters, as they are now.

As the commercial traffic continued to decline, I started a campaign to have all the Lee locks (and thus the Lee to GU link) open at weekends. The Lee boaters were very parochial and seldom ventured below Enfield, so my efforts turned out to be a one-man campaign, which took many years to achieve. Eventually, one chamber at each lock was equipped with "granny gear" with which boaters could operate the lock.

Having discovered that very few seemed to know or care about Three Mills (the lady in the reference section of the local library only half a mile away denied their existence), the way was open for me to take a group of boats down there, where the boats were photographed in the mill pool, by the press. Then started another one-man campaign, this time to get the mills recognised for what they were, preserved, and hopefully restored.

In those pre-Tesco days, Three Mill Lane was hardly used, even by the locals. It twisted between corrugated-iron enclosing derelict sites, and was very threatening, even to the bold. There followed years of correspondence with Mrs Thomas of Newham Planning Department, who was very sympathetic and later supportive, but there was little she could do. I gained the interest of the influential Passmore Edwards museum in Stratford. But the owners of the mills, the distillers Hedges and Butler, were opposed, fearing for their security. How the Mills eventually came to be restored is a long story.

At this time, there was still commercial traffic in Regent's canal dock, and lock-keepers were on duty day and night at the state of tide that suited ships coming up the Thames. We had a lock-keeper knock us up at 4am to ask if we wanted to go out on the tide (fortunately, we did).

When the commercial traffic ended, so did the night-time opening, and the tidal locks were opened by the clock rather than the tide. There followed a running battle with Mr Bensted, who was forever wanting to reduce the opening hours of the locks on to the Thames. The co-operation of AWCC, hNBOC and other like groups was sought and organised, and a

by Ron Bingham

united front presented, except for one sad occasion when one group, without warning, defected to the other side and it all fell apart.

Since the advance booking system for Bow locks at any time, and the others out of office hours came into force, things have been more stable, but vigilance is still needed.

During the reign of the GLC, I became aware that this uniquely still-working, little-changed relic of the Industrial Revolution was under serious threat, not of closure, but of being changed out of all recognition by those who knew little, and cared even less for our heritage.

Since that time, I have tried to resist those who would turn linear history into a linear municipal park, with a water feature. Even before I fully appreciated how important the history of the cut is, I appreciated it as something fascinatingly different. It is no

longer a well-kept secret, and I am quite happy to share it with those who appreciate it for itself.

But I shudder when I hear of another over-funded towpath "improvement" scheme. One of the greatest threats is that in urban areas it is fast becoming one vast housing estate. Any more "vibrant" developments and it will be shaken to pieces. Another threat exists where a park runs alongside the cut, there is pressure to "integrate it into the park", i.e. to make the cut an extension of the park with a seamless interface - rather than something fascinatingly different to be discovered while in the park.

This battle, the most important I have fought, I am clearly losing, and it makes me very sad. The cut has changed more in the past 25 years than it had in the previous 200, and certainly not, from the paramount heritage aspect or in my view, for the better.

BOW BACK RIVERS SAVED?

On 19 March, British Waterways announced a package of what it called the "Largest Ever Waterway Investment". This was the latest group of restoration and development projects that they, along with the Waterways Trust, plan to support and bring to completion. They listed projects in two phases.

Phase 1 consists of projects we know all about, and which have reached, or are on the verge of, completion, such as the Anderton Lift and the Falkirk Wheel, The Huddersfield Narrow and the Rochdale.

Much of Phase 2 also consists of commitment to plans already announced, the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway, the Cotswold Canals, the Droitwich Canals, the Foxton Inclined Plane, the Liverpool Extension to Leeds & Liverpool Canal, the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal, the Montgomery Canal, and the Northern Reaches of Lancaster Canal, extending the national waterway network north to the Lake District.

But for the first time the Bow Back Rivers featured in the list. The BW announcement says the following about them :

"The Bow Back Rivers are a network of tributaries of the River Lee Navigation in east London. Having fallen into decline, they now thread through a largely derelict but strategically important area and have great potential for revitalisation. British Waterways has commissioned a technical, economic and environmental feasibility study into the project to be completed by summer 2002.

- restoration of 3½ -mile waterway network in east London
- strategically important location adjacent to the emerging Stratford City and new Channel Tunnel rail link
- feasibility study to be completed Summer 2002"

This restoration is something that we in London IWA have campaigned for over many years, so the news is welcome.

ON THE METREAU :

Canal wardens

Thames 21 is an environmental organisation which started its life as *ThamesClean*, and now has a wider remit. It is expanding its horizons to cover London's canals as well as the Thames, and is shortly to launch a Canal Wardens scheme. They have in mind volunteers taking on sections of canal and ensuring that environmental and other problems can be tackled before they cause wider problems. Your editor spoke recently with Theo Thomas of *Thames 21* and discovered that the details are not yet ready for a launch, as they want to make sure they've got the necessary support mechanism in place first - something we didn't quite get right when the old IWA London Branch attempted to launch a similar scheme some years ago. It's a welcome scheme and we expect to support it.

Black or blue (not green)

What colour are BW uniforms? We all know them as green. But when we were out boating this summer, we found the famous Mick and Crystal, lock-keepers at Foxton, dressed in black-and-white on a Sunday, which they told us is officially the "number one" uniform. Then, early this year, we were boating through Cowroast lock and saw the lock-keeper there in what appeared to us to be a black uniform, which he told us was the new colour that is being phased in as the old uniforms need replacing.

Now I read in the internet newsgroups that the new BW uniform is actually blue. Well, perhaps it's a very dark blue that can be mistaken for black.

Ron Bingham points out that the reason given when the uniform was changed to green was that BW employees didn't like the previous colour - blue!

More IWA help for the Museum

IN our last issue we reported on the unveiling of two new display boards at the London Canal Museum, one of which had been financed by IWA London Region and IWA Sales, in memory of the late Len House.

Since then IWA has made a further donation to the Museum. A share of the profits from each year's National Waterways Festival is given to a waterways charity nominated by the IWA Region in whose area the "National" was held. For the 2000 event at Waltham Abbey, it fell to IWA South-East Region to decide the destination of £2,000. They decided to donate it to the Museum, to be used as a further step in paying off the mortgage on the Museum's premises.

The presentation was made by the Region Chairman, Doug Beard, at the Region AGM on 7 March.

A useful reference

The *Traintaxi* guide lists taxi ranks and operators serving all train, tram, metro and underground stations in GB, and is on sale from booksellers at £4.75 or Amazon on the Internet at £3. Extracts from the guide can be seen on www.traintaxi.co.uk.

This might be of particular interest to "weekending" boaters.

Thoughts on the Antonine Wheel

This new kind of boat lift is due to open very soon, prompting the following thoughts from Ron Bingham :

In BW's *Waterfront* magazine, on the subject of the Antonine wheel: "*Boats enter one of the caissons filled with water*". Won't the boats then drag on the bottom? Perhaps they meant: "*Boats enter one of the water-filled caissons*".

I cannot understand what all the trumpeting of the "innovative" and "unique" Wheel is about. The principle of raising and lowering boats in water-filled caissons and the tricky bit - the sealing of the caissons while boats are entering, and when they are moving - was established over a century ago.

The Wheel is certainly not innovative. Some lifts move boats vertically, some on an incline. The only thing "unique" about the Wheel is that the boats follow a different (semicircular) path, surely not as earth-

news and gossip of London's waterways

shattering as BW would have us believe. If we class the Barton Swing Aqueduct as a caisson, which it is, then that caisson also follows a curved path, (as did those at Foxton after the rails had subsided, albeit unintentionally).

Twickenham Yacht Club

The Club is seeking additional cruiser members, and has moorings available. They are predominantly a dinghy-sailing club,

sailing on the Twickenham reach of the Thames tideway, but for many years have had an active cruiser section which has been in decline in recent years. The Club has its own fore-and-aft mid-river moorings, licensed by the PLA, for which it charges £10 per foot per year. At present they are actively seeking to rebuild their cruiser section and would welcome new cruiser members and offer them moorings. Anybody interested should contact the club Harbourmaster, Lewis Read, on (020) 8894 1858.

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD : THE NITTS & STUFFS CANAL

By Mike Stevens

(Part 1)

Why, when someone from WRG or IWA wants a hypothetical example of a canal, do they always choose the Nitts & Stuffs? Extensive research at the bottom of a gin bottle has come up with the answer, lost to recent generations but presumably known to the founding fathers of the canal restoration movement. Now I can reveal the true story of the Nitts & Stuffs Canal.

The valley of the River Stuff, in Uphamshire, was famous for its sheep. Indeed all London barristers who had not yet reached the eminence of King's Counsel, were compelled to wear gowns of Stuff wool. But when the wool industry began to get mechanised, the town of Stuffitt lacked suitable motive power. The River Stuff was too small and too low-lying to have enough power to drive water-mills, and the surrounding hills blocked off any wind to drive windmills. But those hills themselves contained coal, which was discovered in the middle of the 18th Century at Nittinshaw, on land which belonged to the Barons Gomery.

If was Alexander, the fifth Baron Gomery who decided to build a canal to bring his coal to the town. This was several years before the Bridgewater canal, and may have been the inspiration for the latter. However the Nittinshaw & Stuffitt Canal did not attract the same public attention as the Bridgewater. This was probably because it did not need an Act of Parliament, since the whole course of the canal passed through Lord Gomery's own land.

The canal was not difficult to engineer. Coal was brought from the hills on gravity-powered tramroads, and loaded into barges on the canal, which crossed the river on the

level (thus ensuring its supply of water) and wended its gradual way down the valley to the town.

A flourishing woollen manufacturing trade grew at Stuffitt, which came during the Napoleonic Wars to specialise in military and naval uniforms.

By 1834, when Alexander's grandson, Montmorency, inherited the title, the lands and the canal, trade was dropping off in the post-war slump and specific lack of demand for uniforms. The only factory in the town still doing good business was a boot factory founded during the war and surviving through the patronage of the victor of Waterloo, who allowed the works to sell its boots under his Ducal title. Other factories were ailing. Workers were being laid off. They didn't have the vote. But other small businesses - shops, stables, craft workshops - were also suffering, and their proprietors did have the vote.

On top of these people who felt the effect of the slump, there was a class of ladies and gentlemen who had made their profits in the war, invested well, and felt secure against the economic swing, so the fashionable society of Stuffitt, the surrounding countryside and the neighbouring cathedral city of Upham continued unabated.

"Mont" Gomery belonged economically to this class, but was not wholly of their way of thought. He was the richest man in the area, and his only heir was his beautiful daughter, Araminta. She was sought in marriage by the two rival leaders of Stuffitt's political scene.

TO BE CONTINUED

Heritage or leisure?

The views in this article are personal ones of the author, not those of the IWA .

In January the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities published 'A Vision for the Strategic Enhancement of Britain's Inland Navigation Network'. This proposed some "enhancements" of the waterways to extend the cruising ranges of broad-beam and/or full-length boats. It has proved controversial, mirroring in a way the arguments between Tom Rolt, Robert Aickman and Charles Hadfield in the early days of the IWA, about the relative priorities of the waterways' heritage and their leisure use.

So far the IWA has, wisely, responded cautiously : "IWA looks forward to the opportunity, presented by AINA, to debate these and other development options."

Elsewhere the argument is animated. I'm following it, and joining in, on the relevant internet fora, where discussion has centred on three particular proposals.

(1) Broadening the GU's Foxton summit, whose track was originally built broad, with just the locks at Foxton and Watford as bottlenecks (at the insistence of the Grand Junction who didn't want broad boats in their tunnels). BW already backs the restoration of the Foxton Plane. Would they then cease to maintain the locks beside it? Would there be parallel broad locks at Watford?

(2) Broadening the Northampton Arm is mentioned. At first this was taken to mean replacing the present narrow locks, but the intention now seems to be building a parallel flight of broad ones. Local enthusiasts point out that this would ruin the setting, and would in any case have difficulty getting under the M1. One alternative might be a lateral canal alongside the Nene with a lift of some kind to the GU further North. Or a link from Northampton to the proposed Bedford-Milton Keynes waterway.

(3) Lengthening the locks on the Calder & Hebble and the Huddersfield Broad to take full-length narrowboats is also proposed, now that the Rochdale and the Huddersfield Narrow will soon enable such boats to reach both ends of these canals. Proponents argue that it would open up the cruising range for owners of full-length narrowboats to include the new "Pennine Ring".

Opponents (including one well-known steerer of a full-length boat) say that it would ruin the heritage element, by destroying almost the last surviving navigations built to any of the historic barge sizes native to England. Indeed, when one proponent of the change posted that now that the Huddersfield and Rochdale are being completed, there is no reason not to lengthen these locks, the aforementioned full-length boater, who is also a prominent WRGy, responded that he wished he'd known that before he did any restoration work on the Huddersfield and Rochdale.

My own view is that the diversity of the waterways is one of their great attractions, and not to be sacrificed to the convenience of modern leisure boating. With the exception of the midlands canals, built to Brindley's narrowboat gauge, the concept that a boat should be able to go anywhere is an alien one to the system. The rivers and early broad canals were each built to their own standards, and many of us would fight to keep those standards.

This, to me, is a much more important consideration than the convenience of modern leisure boaters. I see it as quite proper, and part of the pleasure, for somebody who wants a "go-anywhere" boat to have to choose one of the right dimensions (just under 7ft wide by just under 60ft long). Alternatively, owners of full-length narrowboats or broad-beam barges can always hire or borrow a different boat for trips outside their normal cruising range.

To those people who really want to cruise our UK waterways in 72ft by 14ft barges, I'd say "are you sure you're in the right country?" In one of the internet discussions, I've already suggested the formation of what I now think of as CREB : *The Campaign for Repatriation of European Barges*. OK, I was joking. But not that much.

The question is one of priority and balance. I'm sure that the issues have been well to the fore in the debates on IWA's Channel Dimensions Policy, which is rumoured to be nearing completion. I look forward with interest to seeing what line it takes!

Mike Stevens

Waterways events in and around London.

See back page for details of venues and contacts for further information.

For up-dates to this list, watch the Diary page on the Region web site

at <http://www.london.waterways.org.uk>

MAY 2002

- Throughout the month LONDON CANAL MUSEUM. Temporary Exhibition continues. *Islington, Rural Retreat to Industrial Heartland*. The story of the part played by the Canal in Islington
- Thursday 2nd 7 for 7.30pm LONDON CANAL MUSEUM LECTURE. *The Military on English Waterways* by Hugh Compton.
- Thursday 2nd 8pm IWA KENT & EAST SUSSEX BRANCH. *Isambard Kingdom Brunel and the Thames Tunnel* by Bob Barnes.
- Saturday 4th to Monday 6th IWA CANALWAY CAVALCADE. London's Premier Waterway Event, at Little Venice. See pages 4 & 5 for details.
- Week 4th - 12th LOCAL HISTORY WEEK at the London Canal Museum.
- Saturday 5th 2.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS -GUIDED TOWPATH WALK*: The Regent's Canal, Camden to Little Venice (finishes at Canalway Cavalcade). Meet at Chalk Farm tube station. About 2 hours. £5 per head (concessions £4).
- Wednesday 8th 8pm IWA SOUTH LONDON BRANCH AT SOUTH NORWOOD. *The Two Brunels* by Walter Rose
- Thursday 9th 6.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS -GUIDED TOWPATH WALK*. The Regent's Canal, Islington to Mile End. Meet at Islington tube station. About 2 hours. £5 per head (Concessions £4).
- Week 11th - 17th ADULKT LEARNERS WEEK at the London Canal Museum
- Tuesday 14th 8pm IWA MIDDLESEX BRANCH. *Cotswold Canals Restoration*.
- Thursday 16th 8pm IWA LONDON REGION CENTRAL LONDON SOCIAL. Speaker (subject to confirmation) from the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust.
- Sunday 19th 2.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS. GUIDED TOWPATH WALK*. Three Mills and the Bow Back Rivers. About 2 hours. Meet at Bromley-by-Bow tube station. £5 per head. (concessions £4)
- Tuesday 21st 8pm IWA NORTH & EAST LONDON BRANCH. Social meeting, speaker to be arranged.
- Thursday 23rd 6.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS GUIDED TOWPATH WALK*. The Regent's Canal, Mile End to Limehouse. About 2 hours. Meet at Mile End tube station. £5 per head (concessions £4)
- Friday 24th 8pm IWA SOUTH LONDON BRANCH AT MOTTINGHAM. *Future restoration plans* : video & discussion..

JUNE 2002

- Throughout the month LONDON CANAL MUSEUM Temporary Exhibition continues until 16th June. *Islington, Rural Retreat to Industrial Heartland*. The story of the Canal in Islington.
- Sunday 2nd 2.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS, GUIDED TOWPATH WALK*. The Regent's Canal. King's Cross to Camden. About 2 hours. Meet at King's Cross station (by the taxi rank). £5 a head (concessions £4).
- Thursday 6th 7 for 7.30pm LONDON CANAL MUSEUM LECTURE. *Old Postcard Views of the Grand Union Canal* by Ian Wilson.
- Sunday 9th 2pm LONDON CANAL MUSEUM. GUIDED TOWPATH WALK from the Museum to Camden.
- Tuesday 11th 8pm IWA MIDDLESEX BRANCH. Skittles match.
- Wednesday 12th 8pm IWA SOUTH LONDON BRANCH AT SOUTH NORWOOD. Waterways Quiz.
- Thursday 13th 6.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS, GUIDED TOWPATH WALK*. The Regent's Canal. Paddington to Camden. About 2 hours. Meet at Warwick Avenue tube station. £5 per head (concessions £4).
- Saturday 15th IWA NORTH & EAST LONDON BRANCH. to be arranged, probably an outing of some sort.
- Sunday 16th 2.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS, GUIDED TOWPATH WALK*. The Regent's Canal. Islington to Mile End. About 2 hours. Meet at Islington tube station. £5 per head. (concessions £4).
- Sunday 16th LONDON CANAL MUSEUM. Temporary Exhibition ends. *Islington, Rural Retreat to Industrial Heartland*.
- Tuesday 18th LONDON CANAL MUSEUM. Temporary Exhibition opens. *Boating Life and Work. Poland's River Oder in the 1950s*.
- Thursday 20th 8pm IWA LONDON REGION CENTRAL LONDON SOCIAL . No meeting so that members can attend the item below :
- Thursday 20th 8pm LONDON CANAL MUSEUM. Mikron Theatre performance. *Warehouse Hill*. The Story of the Huddersfield Canal.
- Friday 21st 8pm LONDON CANAL MUSEUM. Mikron Theatre performance. *Richard Trevithick, Giant of Steam*.
- Thursday 27th 6.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS, GUIDED TOWPATH WALK*. The Regent's Canal. King's Cross to Camden. About 2 hours. Meet at King's Cross station (by the taxi rank). £5 per head (concessions £4).
- Sunday 30th IWA CHILTERN BRANCH. Day Trip to The Black Country Museum, Tipton and the Dudley Canal (Northern Portal).
- Friday 28th 8pm IWA SOUTH LONDON BRANCH. to be arranged, possibly a visit somewhere.

JULY 2002

- Thursday 4th 7 for 7.30pm LONDON CANAL MUSEUM LECTURE. *The River Beat* by Steve Davis, River Division, Metropolitan Police.
- Sunday 7th 2.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS*. GUIDED TOWPATH WALK. The Regent's Canal. Mile End to Limehouse. About 2 hours. Meet at Mile End tube station. £5 a head (concessions £4).
- Thursday 11th 6.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS*. GUIDED TOWPATH WALK. The Regent's Canal. Islington to Mile End. About 2 hours. Meet at Angel tube station. £5 a head (concessions £4)
- Weekend 20th & 21st IWA NORTH & EAST LONDON BRANCH with ST PANCRAS CRUISING CLUB. THREE MILLS RALLY OF BOATS. (see page 6 for more details)
- Sunday 21st 2.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS*. GUIDED TOWPATH WALK. The Regent's Canal. Paddington to Camden. About 2 hours. Meet at Warwick Avenue tube station. £5 a head (concessions £4).
- Thursday 25th 6.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS*. GUIDED TOWPATH WALK. The Regent's Canal. Mile End to Limehouse. About 2 hours. Meet at Mile End tube station. £5 a head (concessions £4)

AUGUST 2002

- Sunday 1st 7.30pm LONDON CANAL MUSEUM. GUIDED TOWPATH WALK, starting at the Museum.
- Sunday 4th 2.30 LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS*. GUIDED TOWPATH WALK. The Regent's Canal. King's Cross to Camden. About 2 hours. Meet at King's Cross station (by the taxi rank). £5 per head (concessions £4).
- Thursday 8th 6.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS*. GUIDED TOWPATH WALK. The Regent's Canal. Paddington to Camden. About 2 hours. Meet at Warwick Avenue tube station. £5 per head (concessions £4).
- Sunday 18th 2.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS*. GUIDED TOWPATH WALK. The Regent's Canal. Mile End to Limehouse. About 2 hours. Meet at Mile End tube station. £5 per head (concessions £4).
- Thursday 22nd 2.30pm LONDON IWA with *THE ORIGINAL LONDON WALKS*. GUIDED TOWPATH WALK. The Regent's Canal. King's Cross to Camden. About 2 hours. Meet at King's Cross station (by the taxi rank). £5 per head (concessions £4).

Venue details & contact people

<u>MEETING</u>	<u>VENUE</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
IWA CENTRAL LONDON	<i>The Lamb</i> Lamb's Conduit Street, WC1 (Nearest tube Russell Square)	Mike Stevens (see details on page 1)
IWA MIDDLESEX BRANCH	Hillingdon Canal Club, Uxbridge Wharf, Waterloo Rd, Uxbridge	Peter Coles 020) 7731 5822
IWA N & E LONDON BRANCH	SPEAKER MEETINGS AT EDMONTON Millfield Arts Centre, Silver St., Edmonton, N18. (near the Great Cambridge Rd. junction. ⁵ / ₈ mile west of Silver Street BR station).	Tim Lewis (020) 8367 6227
IWA SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (SOUTH NORWOOD)	S.Norwood Conservative Club South Norwood Hill SE25 (Close to Norwood Junction BR)	Mary Llewellyn (0181) 653 4862
IWA SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (MOTTINGHAM)	<i>The Royal Tavern</i> , Mottingham (corner of Court Rd & Sidcup Rd, close to Mottingham BR).	Libby Bradshaw (020) 8874 2787
LONDON IWA / LONDON WALKS	TOWPATH WALKS As listed. Each about 2 hours. £5.00 (concessions £3.50).	London Walks (020) 7624 3978
LONDON WATERWAY RECOVERY GROUP	Meeting point for digs is usually Waterloo Station 7 pm on Friday to travel to site. Socials the <i>Jugged Hare</i> pub Vauxhall Bridge Road, SW1. (Victoria tube station)	Lesley McFadyen (020) 8693 3266
LONDON CANAL MUSEUM	12 New Wharf Road, King's Cross, London, N1 9RT Opens Tues. to Sun, 10 am - 4:30 pm. Admission £2.50, concessions £1.25, Admission to lectures £2.50, concessions £1.25..	(020) 7713 0836
IWA CHILTERN BRANCH	Old Market Hall, Amersham	Colin Bird 01932 248178
IWA KENT & E SUSSEX BRANCH	<i>The Bull</i> , East Farleigh	Sid Sharman 01795 872839
IWA LEE & STORT BRANCH	<i>The New Inn</i> , Roydon	Craig Haslam 07956 848025
IWA HERTS BRANCH	Hatfield Cricket Club	Celia Byham 01992 466180

*Type-set by Mike Stevens in Lucida Casual and Arial using Pagemaker software
and printed by Leighton Printing Company, 15 Palmer Place, London N7 8DH*
