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102 MARCH 1972





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Patrons: Dame Margot Fonteyn and Sir John Betjeman
Chairman: Illytd Harrington, 16 Lea House, Salisbury Street, London N W 8.
Secretary: David Gibson, 4 The Ridgeway, Acton, London W 3.
Editors: Colin and Hilary Isaacson, 29 Gloucester Road, Whitton, Middlesex.

An Hour with Robert Aickman

I recently had the pleasure of visiting the IWA's Founder (and the director of its campaign for the first 18 years) - Robert Aickman. With Illytd Harrington and David Gibson, we discussed the present and future of our waterways and our Association.

Sitting in his Bloomsbury study, Mr Aickman began by saying how interested he had been to read the discussion in 'Windlass' about the purposes of the IWA. He himself had been concerned that in the past few years the original aims had been lost sight of.

For example, it had initially made economic sense to fight for retention of narrow boat traffic: now there were so many people who were excited by the view of a painted boat or by the 'way of life' but who could not appreciate that the commercial future for waterways in this country now unavoidably lay elsewhere.

His concern was increased by the fact that while the IWA was taking a softer line, the waterways in this country were deteriorating so fast that they would, before long, reach a point at which there would be little justification for restoring them. BWB itself had estimated the cost of raising the whole system to commercial waterways standard to be £22 million - a figure which was probably now nearer £35 million.

'I am too depressed by it all to visit the waterways any more, with the exception of the Upper Avon', he said, and it was obvious that he was very unhappy with the state of them, and the way things had gone since the 1968 Transport Act. It was also plain that he did not admire the current policies of the IWA.

The only hope, Mr Aickman declared, was to develop new waterways to modern requirements. The IWA should be promoting this gospel in every possible way.

No time could be lost in getting this campaign rolling. In the not-too-distant future Britain would become, probably, part of the EEC, and if the need for new waterways had not been accepted by then there was the danger that British transport policy might 'poison' the more enlightened attitude of the

other countries and reduce them also to complete dependence on the lorry and the private car.

We had to agree with Mr Aickman, and I asked him how he thought we should go about mounting a campaign of this type.

In his reply he suggested that the IWA was no longer willing nor capable of fighting this battle, or any other real battle.

Illytd could not agree. He emphasised how impressed he had been with the enthusiasm of the Branch at the recent discussion evening, especially the younger members.

I commented that I thought that there might be objections from some members, who thought that the principal use for the waterways was for pleasure cruising. Mr Aickman answered this by pointing out that all canal activities would benefit from the building of new canals. To encourage the 'traditionalists' there was even the possibility that narrow boat traffic would be stimulated on the old canals, as a result of new waterways and traffic.

David Gibson asked about the waterways lobby in Parliament and Mr Aickman agreed that it was certainly powerful. However, their support was in need of direction sometimes, and someone ought to be keeping them up to date with the new needs.

Although nobody prompted him, Robert Aickman made it clear that he had no desire to take the lead in any of this work, pointing out, justifiably, that he had carried the load for 18 years, which he felt was enough, and that he was much occupied as Chairman of the Upper Avon Navigation Trust. He said, however, that he would do all he could to help in the event of a wider and more creative future opening up before the Association.

Recent events have made a significant change to the situation since this meeting, but have not made any of these points irrelevant. The campaign to modify the Government's proposal is the immediate and overriding problem but when the situation has been resolved we would do well to consider the future development of the waterways. Colin Isaacson.

MEMBERS MEETING - WATER SERVICES REORGANISATION

At 2.15 p.m. on March 4th, at Kingsway Hall. I am very sorry that I left the time off the original notice - it was a case of 'new father neurosis'. Kingsway Hall is half way along the West side of Holborn Kingsway, next to the Kodak offices. I look forward to seeing you all there.

WATER SERVICES REORGANISATION

Members Meeting 2.15 p.m. March 4th Kingsway Hall.

The campaign meeting on March 4th will be chaired by Illyd Harrington. John Dodwell will speak on behalf of the IWA and a spokesman for the Department of the Environment will explain the proposals. Nigel Spearing MP, Secretary of the Parliamentary Waterways Group, will sum up.

Birmingham IWA Conference

A conference organised by the IWA in Birmingham on January 22nd was attended by delegates representing 1½ million people with an interest in waterways, to discuss the Government's proposed reorganisation. The meeting unanimously passed the following resolution:

1. A National Waterways Authority should be established controlling all inland navigations, with an adequate income to maintain properly and to modernise the system for amenity and transport uses.
2. The Government should fulfill its pre-election pledge and restore the Public's Right of Navigation.
3. Local Authorities should be strongly encouraged to help financially in the restoration of derelict waterways. During the meeting fears were expressed that the proposal to abolish the British Waterways Board and hand its canals and rivers over to the proposed new Regional Water Authorities would cause navigational and recreational interests to suffer.

One delegate remarked upon the "very happy idea" of where the money would come from once the £2 million Government grant stopped. The future of the inland waterways in their role of goods carriers was often raised.

Organisations represented included many canal societies, boat clubs, angling associations, CPRE, Scouts and Guides, pleasure craft operators and boat builders.

LETTER WRITING

My remarks in the last issue seem to have stimulated members into writing letters. Unfortunately most of them are to me, criticising what I said. I stand by my comments, but I think I should answer some of the points raised.

Inevitably, I was told that many of the "silent majority" was helping in other ways than writing letters particularly by financial support. I agree - in fact I have made that point on more than one occasion in the pages of Windlass - but not enough is being done to forward the aims of the IWA.

This brings me to the next criticism - that members do not agree with campaigning for commercial waterways. This can be a touchy subject but I need only point to the stated aims of the IWA to show what members agreed to support when they joined. The waterways were built as commercial enterprises and they will continue to receive second rate treatment while they serve only amenity purposes.

After all, the Government's proposals are to operate the waterways on a commercial basis, with users paying for their amenities. That should discourage most boat owners enough to allow navigations to be closed for lack of use (funny, that has a familiar ring about it).

Some correspondents pointed out that they do not feel well enough informed to write, and in the case

of these proposals I can well understand their problem. Below, I set out an open letter to the Minister for the Environment which makes the basic points: there are other factors, but the longer a letter is the less impact its different sections make.

"Dear Mr Walker,

"As a member of the Inland Waterways Association, I am writing to express my concern about the Government's proposals to reorganise water and sewage services. On the whole, I think the proposed changes will have beneficial results but there are certain aspects that should be reconsidered.

"In general, the criticism must be that the future of navigable waterways is ignored. The present nationalised British Waterways Board is to be abolished and no measures have been taken for its functions to be properly carried out. Merely to pass on their care to the Regional Water Authorities is to put them at the bottom of a list of responsibilities.

"The vital problem of finance has also been given little attention. At present BWW receives £2 million direct from the Government but there is no suggestion that anything like this amount will be available under the proposed set up.

"A large and growing number of boats are being used on waterways which are not fit to take them and it has been estimated that £30 million is required to bring them up to a satisfactory standard. It seems to be suggested that users of the water should pay for their amenities but it is difficult to see how enough money could be raised from pleasure boating without making it prohibitively expensive for the individual boat owner.

"In some cases local authorities can be expected to contribute financial aid, but in rural areas, where many people prefer to cruise, the amount of money available is not likely to be large. The reorganisation may also discourage local authorities who are considering restoration in collaboration with BWW.

"Some waterways still have potential as commercial carrying routes, one way in which they could be made to pay for their upkeep. It is unlikely that water supply authorities will be interested in developing this aspect, if they are even capable of doing so.

"I understand that consultations are taking place now around the original proposals. Is it possible for full consideration to be given to the idea of a National Navigation Authority and to the interests of the many people who want a viable inland waterway system."

If any members feel like sending a copy of this example to their MP or a national newspaper (with any changes they like to make) I would feel that you had forgiven my sharp comments of last month. Perhaps I should warn you that you are unlikely to notice any response, but the cumulative effect is surprising.

Most MP's hold regular "surgeries". You should take this opportunity to go along and put your waterways points to him.

I shall still be delighted to hear from anybody who would like to join my letter writing syndicate.

Colin Isaacson.

WHAT'S ON - WHAT'S GONE

WINTER MEETINGS

7.15 for 7.30 at The Albert, Victoria St, SW1.

March 16th - Colour Slide Competition

Entries (6 x 35 mm colour slides) must be with Tony Davis, 53 Holme Chase, St George's Avenue, Weybridge, by March 6th.

We know there are some good photographers in the Branch and are hoping to get a large entry - please support us with your pictures.

April 27th - Branch AGM.

Ralph Radbourne is retiring from the Committee. The following members are retiring and are offering themselves for re-election: Claire Johnstone, J Crosby, K Seymour-Walker and N Underwood.

March 4th - Members Meeting, Kingsway Hall, 2.15.

BRANCH RALLY June 10/11, Little Venice.

To be held in conjunction with Westminster Festival as part of the campaign against the Government's proposals for water services reorganisation.

IWA NATIONAL RALLY - August 6/7. Bridgewater Canal, Lymm.

Southern Lockwheelers

The fourth meeting of the Sussex group of canal cruisers, which has now acquired the above name, was held at the Schooner Hotel, Albion Street, Southwick on 12th January 1972, and was attended by just under 60 people.

Mr David Gibson, in the absence of Mr Illytd Harrington, told us about the proposals for splitting the responsibility for the canals and rivers among a number of Regional Water Authorities, and discussion followed as to what steps we could take to ensure adequate future maintenance of the inland waterways and to try to keep licence fees to a reasonable figure.

While not wishing to adopt an unnecessarily alarmist attitude at this stage, we felt that some sort of representation to MP's might not be out of place, and the think-tank is bubbling.

We propose to continue the present session of meetings on the second Wednesday of each month until May. If anyone likes to join us, we shall be glad to see them.

John Hankinson.

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East Anglian Waterways Association

The Branch has joined the EAWA in order to improve contact with the Broads, they being in the Branch area. The Committee would like to liaise with the EAWA and have reports on Broadland. There is a vacancy on the EAWA Council and we have been invited to fill it. The Council meets at Huntingdon bi-monthly and transport can be provided to West London (North Circular area), although ideally it should be someone from Broadland.

Barnet Area Newspaper Collection

Would anyone who is not saving their old newspapers because they lack storage space please contact Michael Petch, 81 Bells Hill, Barnet. 01-440 4572

Silver Swords

The following Branch members have been awarded

Silver Swords:

Dr J F Hale, "Lutra Parva"

Mr C F Stephens (2 awards) "The Jolly Roger"

Mr K D Peacock "Viki"

REGENTS CANAL

Consultations on the canal basin are still taking place between the Hospital and the local authorities. The Minister for the Environment has agreed to hold a public enquiry if public demand is great enough. In response to this pledge North Paddington Young Conservatives have launched a "Keep the Basin" campaign.

QUIETLY ADVENTUROUS

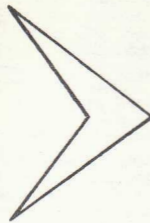
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ASHTON ATTACK



A National Project of Voluntary
Labour organised by the
Waterway Recovery Group

DUKINFIELD JUNCTION, ASHTON·U·LYNE, 25-26th MARCH 1972

PAST

In September 1969 the waterway world was shattered by the news that over 600 volunteers from all over the country had joined together to work, in staggeringly bad conditions on the Ashton Canal in the outskirts of Manchester.

The volunteers that travelled to work on the Ashton that weekend, demonstrated, most practically, their faith in the future of the waterway system, demonstrated by pure physical hard work that, whatever "they" said, we wished to retain and restore the sadly neglected and sabotaged Cheshire Ring Canal system. What is more we were prepared to work for our ideals.

PRESENT

The repercussions of Operation Ashton and its evident success, laid the groundwork for the negotiations that were to follow. The result - complete restoration, scheduled to commence on the 1st April this year. The local authorities having decided to allocate a considerable sum for this purpose, and the Inland Waterways Association having promised £10,000 plus UNLIMITED volunteer labour.

PROBLEM

Restoration is to start on both the Ashton and Lower Peak Forest Canals simultaneously. One of the biggest problems that British Waterways Board and the volunteers will have to face, is the relative inaccessibility of much of the canal. Being situated for all too much of its

length behind high mill walls or out-off from the outside world by railway sidings or rivers.

Generally agreed as one of the MOST inaccessible sections, is the length between Dukinfield Junction and Guide Bridge on the Ashton Canal, access is limited to very narrow entrances at two bridges, and a rather tenuous route through the railway marshalling yards.

Adjoining this length there is another problem length, the Lower Peak Forest Canal, again from the junction to the first swing bridge, where access ranges from good to absolutely terrible. This section contains two low railway bridges and an aqueduct, which severely restrict mechanical plant.

The third and final section is the first mile of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal from Dukinfield Junction to the now filled-in and culverted first lock, access here is the best of all, but there will be a considerably extended lorry run to get the muck which has been shifted from the site to the dump.

With this in mind, and remembering that volunteers can get where mechanical plant cannot, it has been decided to hold the second mammoth working party at Dukinfield Junction, to, if possible, completely clear the inaccessible parts of these three canals in one fell swoop.

British Waterways Board is co-operating with us to the full, and even lending

us a certain amount of plant to assist the project - and draining the waterways prior to the event.

PROJECT

Obviously organising a working party of this magnitude is very difficult, but it will be all worthwhile if you do one of these three things:

- a) Come along and help with the work.
- b) Assist with the catering or volunteer reception.
- c) Send us a donation to cover the cost of the operation.

Whatever you do, please let us know quickly. The more time we have to make arrangements to accommodate, feed and find you work the better.

Fill in the attached form NOW and send it off right away. All prospective volunteers will be sent a multi-page "volunteer information booklet" nearer the time which will advise on travel arrangements, work details etc.

If you can't make it, please send money to help us do the work.

It is absolutely vital that this operation succeeds. Both from the viewpoint of the future of the waterways and the importance of getting the Cheshire Ring in working order again before the Government proposed reorganisation comes into force.

We have arranged the work, we will with your help have enough mechanical plant to do the job. Accommodation for 800+ has been booked, the local baths will be opened in the evenings. ALL WE NEED NOW IS YOUR HELP.

Three years ago we said "Give us 24 hours of your life and we'll show you what volunteer work can do", 600 did and the result was success. Make it 48, and we'll have the Cheshire Ring Canals open by 1974.

For any further enquiries contact GRAHAM PALMER, 4, Wentworth Court, Wentworth, Ave. Finchley, London N3 1YD or NIGEL STEVENS 52, Redcliffe Square, London SW.10

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Shutlanger, Towcester.

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Narrow Boat Trust may I appeal to your readers for any surplus slides or photographs of narrow or other inland carrying boats which the Trust needs to create a library of pictorial matter, one of the uses of which will be to illustrate the countrywide meetings we are arranging as part of a membership drive.

The Trust needs members, lots of them, also material and fittings for their boats, rescued in pillaged state from boat graveyards. Boating is an expensive business, but a pleasurable out-of-doors pursuit. But almost anyone can take a share in the handling and renovating, now almost historical boats by joining the Trust.

The Trust's Admin. Secretary - Miss Claire Johnstone (Staines 54090) would be delighted to hear from interested persons. But please send the slides or other archival matter to me.

Bill Mayes.

'WINDLASS' is the journal of the London and South East Branch of the Inland Waterways Association and is published ten times a year. Copyright the I&SE Branch IWA 1972. Copy date 1st of the month preceding issue.

Basingstoke Canal

Surrey and Hampshire County Councils are to be asked to give their authority for the making of Compulsory Purchase Orders on the Basingstoke Canal, following the report of Surrey's County Valuer that he is unable to reach an agreement on price with the New Basingstoke Canal Company.

Slough Arm

The Slough Canal Group is organising a working party to clear and improve sections of the towpath on Sunday April 9th. If you can help, please contact Mike Timms, 14 The Ridings, Richings Park, Iver, Bucks. (Iver 1975).

River Wey

The National Trust have again asked the Association for help with manning locks at weekends during the summer. This year the emphasis will be on Weybridge Town and Coxes Locks. These are usually the busiest with craft coming up on day trips from the Thames. If we have enough volunteers from the Guildford area they would like help at Millmead and Bowers Locks as well. The first priority is help on Sundays between the Spring and Summer Bank Holidays; Easter Sunday; and the three Bank Holiday Mondays. If there are sufficient volunteers the Trust would also like help on Saturdays during the season. Would all volunteers please contact me in the first instance.

Tony Davis.

Official Stoppages, London Area

<u>CANAL</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
Oxford	Banbury Lock No. 29	28th Feb.	3rd March
Oxford	Hardwick Lock No. 28	28th Feb.	3rd March
Grand Union	Uxbridge Lock No 88	1st March	2nd March
Oxford	Claydon Flight Locks Nos 17, 18	6th March	8th March
River Lee	Old Ford, Lower West Lock	6th March	11th March
Oxford	Claydon Flight Locks Nos. 19-20	13th March	15th March
Grand Union	Hanwell Lock No. 98	13th March	18th March
Grand Union	Harefield Lock No. 85	13th March	18th March
Grand Union	Dudswell Locks Nos. 48, 47	13th March	17th March
Grand Union	Lock No. 14	20th March	23rd March
(Aylesbury Arm)			
Oxford	Claydon Flight Locks Nos. 21,22	20th March	22nd March
Regent's	Hertford Union, Middle Lock	20th March	26th March
River Lee	Stonebridge West Lock	20th March	26th March
River Lee	Stonebridge East Lock	27th March	29th March
Grand Union	Grove Lock No. 28	10th April	13th April
River Stort	Parndon Lock	10th April	15th April
Grand Union	Common Moor Lock No. 79	17th April	22nd April
Grand Union	Lock No. 7	17th April	22nd April
(Northampton Arm)			
River Stort	Hunsdon Lock	17th April	22nd April
Oxford	Broadmoor Lock No. 24	24th April	27th April

41 Vale Grove,
Gosport.

Dear Editors,

The arrival of Windlass and the comments therein have prompted me to do a bit of letter writing, (but not for the first time I assure you). First, are we to be asked to solicit public support by means of petitions again. For this, it seems to me, presents a difficulty in explaining to people why they should have to sign again, (especially in this rather apathetic area). In 1968 we did have a clear cut issue, whether the main system was to be closed or not, just that. Now how do you explain why and how the RWA scheme is going to affect the maintenance with the anomalies and division of responsibilities especially with the financing, that will arise? We all know, but will the average man in the street be able to understand (and if he doesn't, he certainly won't care). If we are to solicit public support, there is only one way to gain it and that is to have a march to Downing Street again (as was planned last time and was called off on publication of the White Paper). If this is given - if taken up - full publicity on press and TV, then and only then, will the public realise something important is afoot, and why they would be presented with petition forms. Otherwise, all that will be said is, "What, again? I thought we'd saved the canals last time".

Now I have written one letter, to Barbara Castle. She replied supporting my views and passed on the letter to Mr Howell who has also replied supporting and expressed intention of fully pursuing the matter in the Commons. This is of course the reply one might expect. Although I had commented on the fact that a national heritage was above party politics, it is perhaps inevitable that this issue should creep in. Secondly, one can only write effective letters if one gets the facts right and twice in recent years I have written letters, one to my MP (and which need not have been written), and the other to a councillor who it seems did not exist, at least not in the name he was given. This letter got passed on to a Borough Engineer who replied regretting one or two things I had said. Of course I replied to this giving my source of information but expression the opinion that in matters of importance those who only spoke in whispers did not get heard.

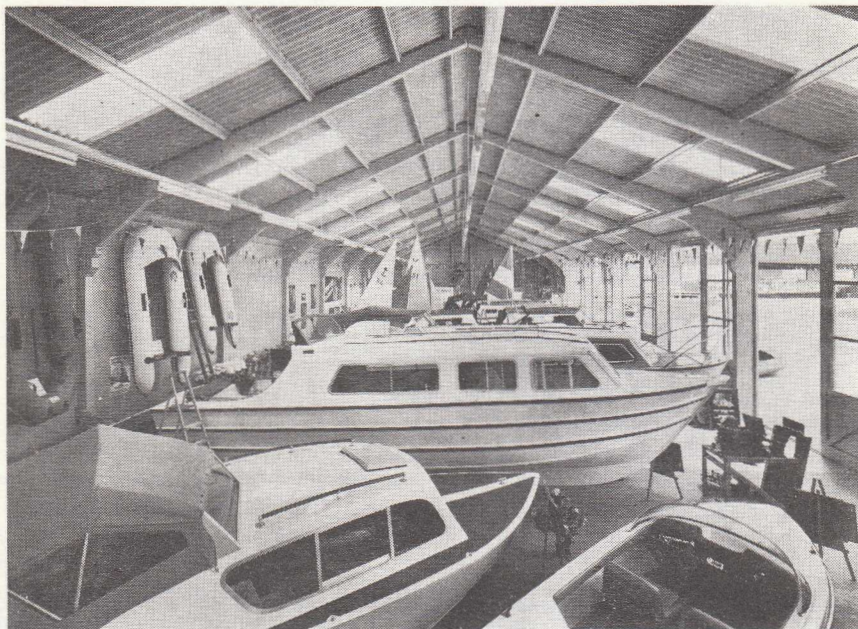
I feel that those who write publicly and private magazine-wise must endeavour to get their facts right if they expect people to write.

E N Taylor.

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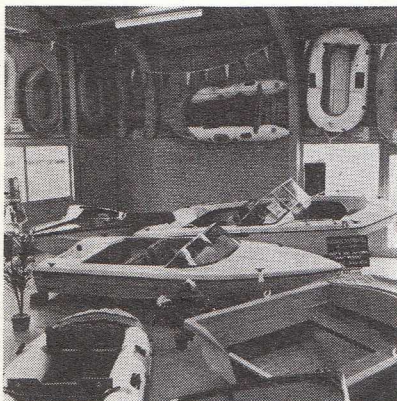
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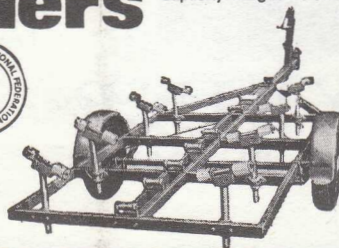
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