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**Chester Branch has a new Chairman!**

At a recent Committee meeting, following the 2007 AGM, Brian Phillips was elected to serve as Branch Chairman. Brian lives with his wife Pat in Chester and has been Branch Treasurer for some time. Brian & Pat have been stalwart IWA activists for many years and recently acquired their own boat.

Please read Brian's "Welcome" message below and respond if you can.



Firstly I would like to take this opportunity to thank the previous Chairman, Ron Evans, for his hard work and dedication to the Branch over the last fourteen years. *(An appreciation of Ron's work for the Branch is on the back page of this issue)*

So what of the future? In many ways the Waterways are facing a difficult time, optimism replaced by depression, talk of expanding the Network replaced by Cuts, employment opportunities replaced by redundancies and boat builders collapsing. All the above resulting in increased costs to the boater, higher licence and mooring fees plus the loss of red diesel.

What can we do about it? It is vital we support the IWA in any way we can. IWA needs to campaign from a strong base and I am pleased to see the membership is steadily increasing, but that membership needs to be proactive. This can be achieved in two ways.

**Firstly**, if you are able to spare some time, join the Committee. If not contact a Committee member and put your name forward as someone who is willing to assist at Campaigns or Rallies, especially if you can offer a skill - either manual or intellectual, or both!

**Secondly**, if you have limited time or because of personal circumstances are restricted to what you can do, please consider being the Branch's eyes and ears. In other words keep us advised of anything happening in your area that may have an effect on the Waterways such as planning applications, maintenance back logs or unlicensed boats.

**Three items are causing concern.**

- 1 The cut in Government Grant to BW, which affects maintenance and has a 'knock on' effect on boater's costs.
- 2 The on-going application to build a marina at Billinge Green Flash which is now going before a Planning Inspector.
- 3 BW's plan to freeze the waiting list for moorings and to trial a system of sealed bids to obtain a mooring.

It is often said this is the age of Communication, we now have so many ways of keeping in touch, it is vital that the membership talks to the Committee. Please give us your views and support in whatever medium suits you but the easiest is e-mail to

[chesteranddistrict@waterways.org.uk](mailto:chesteranddistrict@waterways.org.uk)

# Campaigning, Campaigning, Campaigning

The Campaign against the Defra Cuts goes on !  
Chester Branch members took part in a national day of protest again in March (see pictures and detail below) to draw the public's attention to the value of the waterways in their area by demonstrating the range of activities that can take place in, on and around the waterways.

## A 'FAMILY FUN DAY' KEEPS THE CUTS CAMPAIGN IN THE PUBLIC EYE

by Jim Forkin

A family fun day was held in Northwich alongside the River Weaver on Saturday 3rd March, organised by the Chester and District branch members and assisted by friends from the Boat Museum Society, the River Weaver Navigation Society and Northwich Rowing Club.



The weather stayed fine and the event resulted in some very useful publicity for the cause, amongst the local community.

Organisers were also delighted to receive a visit from the Deputy Mayor of Vale Royal, Councillor Douglas Shingler, and his wife Pam, who proved to be very interested in the River Weaver and its future potential.

Local children had fun trying out some WOW activities, including

brass rubbing, whilst hundreds of people signed the petition indicating their support for IWA's stand against the Defra funding cuts. Even the dog joined in!

Our other branches in the Western Region also took part in the national protest with Shrewsbury District & North Wales Branch organising a decorated "Life Ring Race" down the stretch of water leading to the Pontycysyllte aqueduct on the Llangollen (to rescue our canals !) with prizes for the most imaginative decoration.



Stoke Branch also held a Family Fun Day at Cheddleton which was well attended by the public. Charlotte Atkins MP also came and provided support for the media interviews which was much appreciated. For further information on how the Cuts Campaign is progressing see the IWA website [www.waterways.org.uk](http://www.waterways.org.uk).



### YOUR MAGAZINE NEEDS YOU !!

We desperately need a new Editor to take over the production of the Branch magazine. Currently there are two issues per year of the Chester Packet and one issue of the Chester Flyer.

If you would like to know more—please contact the current editor, Gillian Bolt, or our Branch Chairman, Brian Phillips.  
(email: [petergillianbolt1@btinternet.com](mailto:petergillianbolt1@btinternet.com) or [bf.phillips@virgin.net](mailto:bf.phillips@virgin.net))

## WESTERN REGION AGM Saturday, 24 March 2007

2007 was Chester Branch's year to host the Region AGM and we chose Norton Priory as the venue for our annual Get Together. Thankfully it was a beautiful day which enabled visitors to really appreciate this lovely venue and after the formal business (and a delicious lunch, of course) members were treated to a tour round the site.

### Award Presentations.

**The Titania Salver  
for Service to the Waterways  
within the IWA Western Region  
presented by Peter Bolt, Region Chairman**

The recipient of the Titania Salver 2007 was the MP for Staffordshire Moorlands, Charlotte Atkins MP who has been a good friend of the waterways for many years. In his presentation Peter said that she has consistently maintained a helpful relationship with the IWA Stoke-on-Trent Branch and other waterway related groups as her constituency takes in part of the T & M main line, North end of the Harecastle tunnel and some of the more rural sections of the Caldon canal.

She strongly believes in the value for money that the inland waterways give, not only for boaters and anglers, but also for millions of other users enjoying their specific leisure activities. She has taken an interest in understanding how the waterways are maintained and operated and personally discovered the enjoyment that they bring with canal holidays taken in different parts of the UK.

But it is specifically for her support over recent months in leading the parliamentary campaign against DEFRA's grant in aid funding cuts that the IWA Western Region would like to give her their sincere thanks. She took the initiative, even before the voluntary campaign had really got underway, by proposing the infamous EDM (Early Day Motion) 2757 which by the end of the 2005 - 2006 parliamentary session, had been signed by no less than 163 MP's - a staggering number compared to other EDM's that were being presented at the time.

She came to the aid of the waterways movement when we needed her most; it is because of her that hundreds of MP's are more enlightened about the waterways in their own constituency than ever before. Peter was therefore delighted to present her with the Titania Salver, not only on behalf of the Western Region but also (he felt sure) on behalf of the other 18,000 members of the IWA who would like to express their gratitude for her tremendous support.

In reply Charlotte Atkins commented that Candy Atherton had "indoctrinated" her on a trip with her on

the Leeds & Liverpool canal many years ago. Securing the support of the Speaker of the House of Commons had led to the Regional Debate scheduled for Tuesday 29 March 2007. This will be for one and a half hours and involve 21 MPs. This shows tremendous agreement between MPs and had sent a signal to Defra. She is also looking forward to the report from the Defra Consultative Committee. Charlotte felt that the evidence presented by the IWA had been well received as well as that of BW. She was delighted to accept the Titania Salver.



John Fletcher (IWA National Chairman) with Charlotte Atkins MP, Peter Bolt and David Dumbellon

The "Victoria Cup" is awarded in recognition of a special contribution to the work within the Inland Waterways Association in our Region and this year we had no hesitation in making the award to David Dumbellon.

David first thought about restoring the Burslem Arm in Stoke on Trent on a historical walk in 1996. After that he generated interest in a number of local organisations, including our IWA Stoke Branch, and a steering group was set up in 1998 with the object of bringing the boats back to Burslem.

Along with persistent campaigning, two major initiatives by David kept the project in the public eye. The first was the screening of "The Card" (a 1950's film with local Middleport extras). This led to a 5 minute spot on BBC Midlands today. The second was persuading the Titanic Brewery to brew a local beer called "Burslem Porter". It was then taken by boat to

to Burton on Trent giving excellent publicity to the National Festival. This was a great success and featured in ITV's *Waterworld*. In 2006 RENEW recommended the inclusion of the project in the regeneration plans for Middleport and announced the formation of a joint Working Group to take it forward. Without David's determination, inspiration, commitment and above all his patience, the project would never have got this far.

#### RON EVANS 14 YEARS AS CHESTER BRANCH CHAIRMAN

In 1983, when Ron had just started coming to our meetings, a prominent member of the IWA said to me 'keep an eye on that fellow - he's committee material'. How right he was! Not long after this, Ron was persuaded to join the committee and subsequently became our newsletter editor. He won the prestigious Tom Rolt award for the best Branch newsletter - a certain sign of things to come. In 1993 our then Chairman, Richard Drake, was invited to become the Region Chairman and Ron accepted our invitation to become his successor. During his fourteen years as Chairman Ron has achieved so much that it is impossible to record everything except the highlights - seven years of perseverance culminating in the Tom Rolt plaque being unveiled in Chester by Sonia Rolt and Timothy West, record numbers attending meetings, Branch representations at numerous outside events, inaugurating the River Weaver Navigation Society and Runcorn Locks Restoration Society and fighting robustly against anything detrimental to our waterways. The greatest accolade, of course, was the presentation of the Branch Achievement Award 2 years ago.

Ron clearly loves our waterways and everything associated with them, and throughout his period as Chairman he has held together a harmonious and enthusiastic Branch - truly 'committee material'.

*Margaret Pitney*

#### NEWS FROM HEAD OFFICE

\*IWA has strongly condemned British Waterways' plan to put mooring vacancies up for tender! Roger Squires stated that there is a current shortage of moorings and this "Ebay" style auction is totally inappropriate. *(The underlying reason may well be to drive up prices or, as BW puts it—respond to "market forces". Ed)*

\*IWA has launched a "Lengthsman Initiative". This urges all waterway users to report issues which could affect the safe use of the waterways network and provides a simple report form on which to report such things as:

*Faulty locks, abandoned supermarket trolleys and other maintenance issues which affect the safety and/or enjoyment of the network.*

When collated, this information will enable the IWA to assess the practical impact of the Defra cuts on the maintenance of the waterways and therefore continue to hold the authorities and Government to account. To access the forms see the IWA website: [www.waterways.org.uk](http://www.waterways.org.uk)

\*Following an article in The Times which implied that privatising British Waterways might be in the pipeline, the IWA has warned of their concerns about the scheme. They also called again for responsibility for BW to be taken out of Defra and transferred to a department responsible for regeneration which would be more appropriate.

\*The Cuts Campaign continues: John Fletcher had a "robust" meeting with Barry Gardiner on 14 May when he presented the Save our Waterways petition with Will Chapman, founder of the SoW group. Whilst BG tried to focus on past investment, John firmly persuaded him to talk about the future!

#### CHESTER & DISTRICT BRANCH SOCIAL PROGRAMME 2007

9 October 2007

*"The History of the Uttoxeter Canal & its possible future"*

Mike Maryon & Mike Beardsmore

13 November 2007

*"Cruising in Sweden—the Gota Canal"*

Gordon & Betty Diprose

11 December 2006

*"Building the Big Ditch"*

*Victorian magic lantern slides*

*Complete with lantern, of the*

*Construction of the Ship Canal from*

*Pomona to Eastham*

Glen Atkinson, Industrial Historian

8 January, 2008

*"Lost loops on the*

*Northern Oxford Canal"*

Brian Holmes of the

Shropshire Union Canal Society

All meetings in the

Tom Rolt room,

Ellesmere Port Boat Museum,

7.45 pm

Refreshments available