

# Sou'Wester



## **Presentation of the Brian Sheppard Award to Mike Slade by Roger Holmes**

**May - August 2018 / Issue 178**

**IWA South West and  
South Wales Region**

***[www.waterways.org.uk/southwest](http://www.waterways.org.uk/southwest)***



**INLAND  
WATERWAYS  
ASSOCIATION**

# South West and South Wales Region Committees

## **South West & South Wales Region Committee:**

Chairman: \*Roger Holmes      Members: \*Geoff Brown  
Hon. Secretary: \*Ray Alexander      \*Geoff Harman  
Sou'Wester Editor: \*Joyce Potts      \*Peter Kelly  
Navigation Committee      Linda Martin  
Representative: \*Steve Warwicker      \*Tony Pugh

## **Avon & Wiltshire Branch Committee:**

Chairman: \*Geoff Brown      Member: Steve Warwicker  
Hon. Secretary: \*Tim Wheeldon  
Hon. Treasurer: \*David Chalmers  
Joint Events Officers: \*Geoff Harman / \*Geoff Brown  
100 Club Administrator  
& Publicity: \*Vivienne Hook  
Salisbury Group: \*Ron & Myra Glover      Jon Van de Geer

## **Gloucestershire & Herefordshire Branch Committee:**

Chairman: \*Roger Holmes      Members: Maggie Jones  
Vice Chairman: Vacant      David Ramsey  
Publicity Officer: \*Roger Holmes      Mike Hynd  
Secretary: Sue Holmes  
Treasurer: Vacant

## **South Wales Branch Committee:**

Chairman: \*Tony Pugh      Members: Mike Synan  
Hon. Secretary: Vacant      Chris JL Yewlett  
Treasurer: Henry Brown  
Minutes Secretary: Vacant  
Membership Officer: \*Tony Pugh  
Publicity Officer: Vacant  
Volunteers Co-ordinator: Vacant

## **West Country Branch Committee:**

Chairman: \*Ray Alexander      Members: Julian Gibson  
Hon. Secretary: \*Sally Hillman      Chris Jewell  
Hon. Treasurer & Events: \*Pat Robinson      \*Peter Kelly  
Volunteers Co-ordinator: \*Mike Slade

**\*Contact details for these appear inside the back cover.**

# Region Chairman

I was pleased to see so many of you at the recent AGMs. I have memories of each one all of which were different. The exhibition and presentations at the Swansea Waterfront Museum were outstanding and a hard act to beat.

It was also pleasing to see more active committees than I have seen for a long while which gives me hope for the future of our Association. Unfortunately one AGM was not held due to the venue being in an area of a red snow warning. Please see the reconvened AGM notice on page 4.

I joined IWA in the early 1970's and have been active in various branches and regions since then. There was a lot of very active campaigning back then. I well remember in 1982, when the canal system was under threat, we held a national demonstration in Little Venice with boats filling the area. It got national publicity in the media and was very effective. After one of the national rallies (remember them) we all moved on to a bridge which had been closed which meant a small basin was under threat. Again that brought the problem to a head and the bridge was unblocked. Another example of the effect IWA actions can have.

Those were fun times but bookmakers have a slogan "when the fun stops - Stop". The fun is beginning to stop with my involvement with IWA and I have been wondering whether I should take up a more easy life or give more time to my other many interests and campaigns. Recently I disagreed with a national IWA decision to change the automatic election of region chairs as trustees. I felt this took away the link between trustees and regions (and hence branches and members), and the region committee agreed with me.

Don't get me wrong, I have enjoyed my period as region chair and will remember fondly all the members I have met. However the divergence of my opinions with those of the national body has led me to the decision that it is time for me to step aside and let someone new take the reins.

In my opinion the strength of IWA has always been its members and I hope that one of you will come through to take my place.

# Notices

## Appointment of Region Chairman

The South West and South Wales Region Committee wishes to appoint a new Chairman of the Region, to become effective later this year.

The role of Region Chairman encompasses a variety of activities which includes oversight of the four branches within the Region, representing the Association at meetings and events throughout the Region and liaising with the trustees, other Region Chairmen and officers of the Association.

Members of the Region who are interested in this role should contact the Hon. Secretary, Ray Alexander using the e-mail address on page 23 or by telephoning 07786 176875, by no later than the close of business on Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2018.

## **FORMAL NOTICE OF RECONVENED BRANCH AGM** **Gloucestershire & Herefordshire Branch** **Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018                      7.30pm**

At Malswick House, Newent GL18 1HE

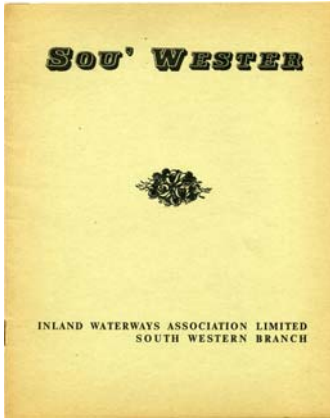
which is on the B4215 Newent to Gloucester Road - This a country inn so food and drink are available.

### **Agenda**

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of 2017 AGM
- 3 Report of Chair
- 4 Treasurer's report and accounts
- 5 Report of Region Chair
- 6 Election of Committee
- 7 Any other business (previously notified to Chair before the meeting).

Immediately after the AGM, the new Committee will meet to appoint its Officers.

# Letter to the Editor



Longer ago than I care to remember I joined IWA in mid 1950's. Finding your website for IWA I read with interest your 2018 Sou'Wester issue 177 and on two counts this stirred memories of years past. Firstly I ran to earth the previous article and commentary in the current issue on Fred Blampied, a good friend and stalwart campaigner for any cause touching inland waterways. I came to know him, then he was with Port of Bristol Authority, when in late 1960 a working group of then existing IWA members met with the objective of reviving the moribund IWA West of England branch. Interestingly the Committee/Steering Group had Fred Blampied as

Chairman, Don Collinson as Secretary & Treasurer, Ann Hull, John Benn and myself. Together we named, edited, printed, collated and mailed the first edition of Sou'Wester in January 1961. This followed on from the Inaugural Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1960 which was addressed by Robert Aickman.

With the close relationship with David Hutchings, Chairman of IWA Midlands Branch, the first of many working parties was organised to camp at Lapworth on the South Stratford-on-Avon Canal over weekend 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1960. The convoy of 5 carloads leaving Broad Quay, Bristol and others joined along the way from Thornbury, Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Evesham. I recall that a subsequent working party numbered some 50 cars!

By Issue 2 in February 1961, Robert Shopland - later to found Waterways World magazine - joined the Committee and I became Editor. As they say .... the rest is history!

From the above you will appreciate how I came to amass a large collection of 35mm colour slides of waterways and the traffic from the BCN southwards and as far as Taunton. I used photographs of Stroudwater and Thames & Severn Canals to urge the restoration of K&A. This demonstrated that, unlike railways, abandonment of canals brought a shed load of issues - storm water, safety, dumping, health etc.

No longer a member of IWA but an avid supporter of inland waterways. If you have a local meeting I may be able to entertain your members with a power point illustrated talk about those early years.

***Richard C Lord***

# News

## New Year's Day Walk 2018

*Ray Alexander*



36 people and 2 dogs took part in the New Year's Day Walk on the Grand Western Canal organised by the West Country Branch and this year it only rained for 20 minutes! IWA members and volunteers along with members of the Friends of Grand Western Canal and visitors were all well represented.



Starting at the Globe Inn at Sampford Peverell the walk passed through quiet Devon countryside prior to reaching Rock Bridge and on the offside the listed Rock Cottage, where the canal historian Charles Hadfield lived as a boy and started his interest in waterways. This was followed by the site of the 2012 offside breach, where a series of photographs of the breach was on display for walkers to see. The walk ended a little way beyond at Swing Bridge, a bridge that today is made

of steel and crosses the canal at a high level. At the time of the breach an intact Brindley stop gate was discovered buried in the mud at the bridge; this was exposed and surveyed during the course of the works.

Returning to the Globe Inn several hardy souls continued along the towpath and past the canal-side picnic ground site where a Navvies' Fair was held on the second day of the Trail Boat rally in May 2014. This was part of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the opening of the canal and many of the Trail Boats visiting the canal travelled from Tiverton Basin to Sampford Peverell for the day. Not far beyond here, the extended walk ended at the slipway adjacent to Boehill Bridge, built by the Waterway Recovery Group in 2003 and still in excellent condition for trail boaters to use.

Many of the benefits of the walk were subsequently negated by an excellent lunch in the Canal Room at the Globe!

*Photos courtesy of Judith Pope*

# Navigation Committee Update

*Steve Warwicker, NavCom Chairman*

The Navigation committee is looking at ensuring we have good relationships with key influencers on the Canal and River Navigations. Clearly CRT and EA are two major ones but we are starting to work together with British Canoeing and looking to regenerate a relationship with RYA on inland Waterways issues. Recently there was a dinner with the All Parliamentary Working group on the Waterways which was attended by the CEO's of both the CRT and EA amongst MPs with an interest in the waterways. IWA meets regularly with for example CRT management at a series of liaison meetings to review various issues that arise. The most recent discussions included the Middlewich breach, contamination on the River Lea and how they dispose of heritage assets. Also the licence consultation which has now finished but CRT are still working on longer term solutions to such matters as continuous cruisers, wide beam boats on navigations not suitable for such craft etc.

One aspect IWA will be looking to members to help gather information is on Boaters facilities and we will be using the recently published policy on these facilities as a guide. IWA will generate a matrix to try to highlight where there are deficiencies. Alison Smedley will be asking for help from Branches over the coming weeks and months.

An initiative that has been taken this year is to try and develop improved relationships with other key users of the systems and we have developed a relationship with British Canoeing who are promoting Canoe Trails (several of which are on the Canal and River navigations). If you look on the British Canoeing Web site you can see the various ones in place at the moment.

Navcom is also looking to run some of its meeting by video links to ease the burden of travelling and to be more inclusive.

Further work on relationship aspects is planned over the coming months.

## **Something to think about in branches ?**

The way many projects get done these days is by community action and getting other interested groups in the community to work together. Perhaps with our branch meetings we should consider inviting other groups to our talks and possibly widen the interest level that may be of greater interest to more members and visitors. I recently attended a focus group for another organisation which had people who were experts in various aspects of wildlife and other activities. Some of this type of activity might be of interest to members and help build better local relationships.



## Honorary Life Presidents

*Maggie Jones*  
*H&G CT*



Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust have appointed two long-standing volunteers, Janet Moulton and Cliff Penny, as Honorary Life Presidents following their standing down

from the former Council of Management during the past months. This is in recognition of their exceptional voluntary contribution in progressing a small preservation initiative into an inland waterways project that is often used nationally as an example of best practice of a sustainable canal restoration.

Janet Moulton with her late husband, Brian played their part in the restoration of the K&A. Since moving to Hereford, Janet has worked in so many different ways to progress the work of the H&G CT, including two terms as Chairman. Janet continues to work for H&G CT in a number of supportive ways, in Sales and Promotion and distribution of The Wharfinger. Janet also runs the very successful Monthly Socials at Much Marcle and the Grand Holiday Draw. On many occasions over the years, despite other commitments, Janet has dependably stepped into the breach to get a task successfully completed.

Cliff Penny was the last Chairman of the former Canal Society and the first Chairman of the H&G Canal Trust way back in 1992. He has served on the Committee/Council of Management of the Society/H&G Canal Trust for 30 years. Cliff has utilised his professional skills as a Chartered Civil Engineer and Chartered Town Planner to promote and successfully defend the H&G Canal in numerous ways, assisted by son David, who has taken over all of this crucial aspect for H&G CT in the more recent years. Some of you will all know Cliff as the former Editor of The Wharfinger. Cliff's wife, Joan, was also a very active volunteer in the earlier years and son David continues to be a hard-working Trustee of H&G CT – so the Pennys are very much a family of Canal volunteers!

Both Janet and Cliff have frequently acknowledged that their successes would not have been possible without the teamwork of our valued H&G CT volunteers – with both pen and spade and every conceivable way in between. Whilst no individual can ever justifiably claim to be responsible for the success of an organisation such as ours, Janet and Cliff's contributions are recognised by the Board of Trustees as playing a significant part in the successes of the H&G CT to date – hence the unanimous decision to make both Janet and Cliff, Honorary Life Presidents.

A short ceremony to thank Janet and Cliff for the thousands of hours that they have so



far spent as volunteers in a multitude of significant roles was planned for 20<sup>th</sup> March at the commencement of our Social Evening at the Royal Oak, Much Marcle. Sadly, Cliff was taken ill the previous week and remains in hospital. Janet was honoured with the award on the evening. She was presented with a bespoke H&G Buckby Can and a certificate by our Chairman, Vaughan Welch. We hope you will all join us in saying a big thank you to them both for their massive support to canal restoration and send Cliff our best wishes.

*Photo of Janet Moulton courtesy of Dick Skeet*

*Photo of Cliff Penny courtesy of Joan Penny*

## **The Brian Sheppard Award**

Brian Sheppard was born in Pontypridd near the Glamorganshire Canal in which he became interested at an early age. He became an IWA member and had an absorbing interest in canals - in their history and engineering and in cruising widely over our waterways system. An engineer by profession, Brian and his family lived for many years in the Bridgend area and, latterly, after retirement, they moved to Llansawel, Carmarthenshire, with Brian retaining his waterways interests.

In January 2001, Brian died suddenly whilst abroad on holiday. A substantial sum of money, donated in lieu of flowers by many people attending the funeral, was given to the IWA South Wales Branch by the family. The Branch Committee decided it would be appropriate to commemorate Brian's life and his contribution to the waterways cause by making an annual award.

After discussion with Brian's family, it was decided that the award should take the form of an authentic model of a Glamorganshire Canal Boat designed and made by John Burden, who is an acknowledged expert in this field.

This year it was awarded to Mike Slade, Volunteers Co-ordinator for the West Country Branch at their recent AGM by the Region Chairman, Roger Holmes. Roger stated that through Mike's careful management and control the volunteers were one of IWA's most successful volunteer working groups and he congratulated him on achieving this.

The photo of Mike Slade with the award and Roger Holmes features on this issue's front cover.

*Photo courtesy of Julian Gibson, West Country Branch committee member*

*Thanks also go to John Blount, Team Leader, West Country Branch for his help in making the photo print ready.*

# Claverton Pumping Station

*Peter Dunn*



When the Limpley Stoke Valley section of the Kennet & Avon Canal was opened, it was found to have a problem retaining water. The canal sits on the hillside above the River Avon and this area is geologically very unstable and movement of the hill would cause the “Clay puddling” to open and then leakage would occur.

Continual draining down for maintenance was not a viable option therefore, an alternative water supply was sought. After some consideration, it was decided to ask

John Rennie, the canals engineer, to supply a pump which would replace the water leakage and replenish the water lost through the flight of locks at Bath.

The pumping station at Claverton was completed in 1812/13. It was not powered by steam but used the head of water at the nearby Warleigh Weir. The Avon River water powered the 25ft wide water wheel which drove a double beam pump. The water was supplied to the canal some 48 foot above the river through a cast iron pipe.

The pumping station was operational until 1952 with much of the maintenance carried out by the GWR (Great Western Railway) after the railway purchased the canal in 1852. Some important modifications to the water wheel were carried out by the GWR in 1864. It is interesting to note that although the railway companies are blamed for a decline in canal usage, without the maintenance works done by GWR, and the fact that they paid an engineer to man the pumping station, the pumping station at Claverton would not have survived in its almost original form.

There was always a full-time engine keeper at Claverton. He lived on site with his family. A cottage was built in 1813 which also survives today. We have researched the history of the cottage and its occupants and found that there were only four engine men during the working life of the pump. The first was Benjamin Whittaker, from 1813 to 1876, a total of 63 years.

In more recent times, the Station was restored by volunteers between 1967 and 1977. Rather like the old engine keeper’s, the volunteers often stay for a number of years and sometimes even decades. At present, there is a group who have spent over 25 years at Claverton. There is an atmosphere that makes people feel at home which seems to be generated by the machinery and the building itself.

We are all still volunteers for the Canal & River Trust (CRT) who still own the site and have supported it well over recent years. The Pump House will be open and running on alternate Saturdays in 2018 from 14<sup>th</sup> April until 13<sup>th</sup> October.

## Working Parties in the Region Update

*Derrick Hunt, Avon & Wilts member*

Just a few of the various CRT Planned Preventative Maintenance work parties taking place over the winter at Devizes, Bradford on Avon, Bath, Dundas on the K&A Canal and Bathpool on the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal.



**Avoncliff**



**Bathpool Yard**



**Bathampton**



**Devizes**



**Dundas**



**Bathampton**



**Bathampton**

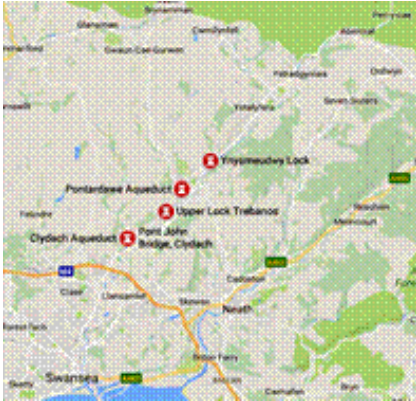
*Photos courtesy of  
CRT's Volunteer  
Update*

# Canoeing the Swansea Canal

Continued from Sou'wester issue 175 - the concluding part

Nearly 70 years ago (1949), Ian Wright and his friend Penry, navigated the derelict Swansea Canal on behalf of the fledgling IWA in a two-seater canoe named *Cheswardine*. Using his trip log, Martin Davies recounts his journey for Waterways World, September 2016.

## Godre'r Graig to Ystradgynlais:



The remains of Thick's Lock (17) is the finest of these seven locks and, though in poor state, is Cadw listed. In 1949, it had as Wright says, “a canal workshop with a large undershot water wheel on the towpath side, and on the other side, a boat repair and building yard”. Here the last Swansea Canal day-boat, *Grace Darling*, was built.

The pair were soon to hit the wall, as Wright's notes make clear: “Nine miles of portages around locks and so early a start had begun to have an effect on us. We were tired and the sight of this flight of locks was almost too much”.



Wright had become so weary that he no longer recorded the journey times. Help from some more local children saved them. “Three youngsters, who had begun to follow us, offered to help by carrying our paddles and gear to the top. The offer was unexpected as it was welcome. I had

expected opposition and abuse from the canalside urchins on the Swansea but throughout our 11-mile voyage there was no unpleasantness whatsoever.”

Much cheered by this hospitality, the pair made the ascent in easy stages to Lock 22, only to be met by a landslip which had completely blocked the canal. They carried the boat once more, before bow-hauling her through the outfall of a colliery washery. Eventually, Wright was able to get back into the boat and Penry directed him “through shallow and tin-filled water to the bridge by Ystlyfera station”. Then it began to rain.

With it rapidly becoming dark, the pair were now desperate for a camping spot. After paddling across the still magnificent three-span Twrch Aqueduct into Breconshire (now Powys), Wright headed off to find a place. He then



returned to the boat having received a farmer's permission to stay on his land.

“Accompanied by some muttering and groaning we carried *Cheswardine* up to the spot, half a mile below the village of Ystradgynlais,” Wright notes. It was 8pm by the time the tent was assembled, and having covered 11 miles and 21 locks that

day, the pair enjoyed a good night's sleep.

### **Limit of Navigation**

The next day's journey was very short. In dry, sunny weather, they carried the canoe past Lock 27 and paddled into what was the last length in water, barely 100 yards long. Ahead they could see Lock 28. “Its top gate had gone and water poured in from the very long disused part of the canal which stretched for a further two miles to Hen Neuadd in Abercrave.” However, they could go no further.

The completion of their difficult journey was marked by another chance meeting. Mr. T. S. White, the retired canal manager who lived alongside the lock, spotted the pair and told them that *Cheswardine* was the first boat to work up to Ystradgynlais in 30 years. “No one to his knowledge had ever been through the canal by canoe before,” reports Wright. “Presumably, I would be the last person, too.”

### **EPILOGUE**

The thought of canoeing back to Morrision Station was too much for Wright and Penry and the two men decided to leave *Cheswardine* at Penygoraf Farm, which adjoined Lock 27. Later that month the boat was brought by road to Aberdulais on the Tennant Canal and from there worked down to Clyne on the Neath Canal. A few weeks later, Wright began exploring these two disused canals.

Though the condition of South Wales' canals was no worse than many others in 1949, any hope of the fledgling IWA getting behind a push to restore them was quashed by the fact they were linear waterways, unconnected each other. Only the Mon & Brec received concerted support.

The Swansea Canal declined for another 30 years and it was only when no more than 5 of its original 16 miles were left in water that the mood turned. The Swansea Canal Society was formed in 1981, and the Swansea Bay Inland Waterway Partnership now lobbies for a 32-mile navigable waterway linking the Neath, Tennant and Swansea canals via the River Tawe and Prince of Wales Docks.



Clydach to Ynysmeudwy to remember Wright and his companion’s pioneering work for the IWA.

*Photo on page 12: Bus on the newly constructed A4067 next to the reduced canal at Godre’r Graig, C1970*

*Photo on page 13: A mid-20<sup>th</sup> century photo of Twrch Aqueduct*

*Photo above: Canoes recently returned to the Swansea Canal.*

## **THE STOVER CANAL TRUST RESTORATION UPDATE**



Work is continuing to restore water into a small section of the long redundant Stover Canal.



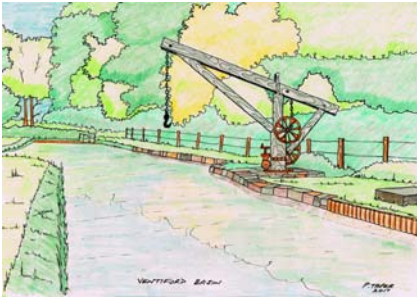
The project started in 2016 when many years of accumulated silt was excavated from the Ventiford Basin in Teigngrace at the terminus of the 2 mile long canal. Four old barges were found in the process and three of these were carefully uncovered and their details fully recorded. The granite walls of the basin have been painted with a lime mortar mix to make them water resistant.



In the meantime, planning permission has been obtained to construct a small dam at the downstream end of the basin and suitable types of waterproof lining were investigated. A grant application has been lodged with the National Lottery and we are hopeful that sufficient funds will be forthcoming to complete construction this summer. We are also receiving funds from the Tesco “Bags of Help” initiative.

The remaining barge is to be excavated

during May leaving the way clear to build the dam. However, given the accumulation of water seen over the current winter showing that there is still an impervious layer present, it is now planned to use puddling clay as a liner. Once this is in place it is expected that floodwater will fill the basin over next winter.



Landscaping will complete the project with advice from a qualified ecologist. A replica derrick will be put in place to show how goods were loaded into the barges before they made their way down the canal to the River Teign and then onto the port at Teignmouth. The area will be furnished as a picnic area with information boards which will describe the activities carried out on the site in the heyday of the canal.

It is anticipated that the works will be completed by early 2019.

All works are carried out by volunteers with specialist help as required from local craftspeople and contractors. Activities are funded by grants and donations. We are grateful for the great deal of help and support we get from Sibelco who own the adjacent land to the east of the canal.

**Rob Harris, Stover Canal Trust**—[www.stovercanal.co.uk](http://www.stovercanal.co.uk)

## Branch Reports

### IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch Salisbury Group

**At our January meeting:** Chris Marshall, a Coastal Ranger for the New Forest National Park, was able to tell us about her work in areas and with communities along Southampton Water and the Solent. Her main remit is education, working within the community and with volunteers across this area. The New Forest was designated as a National Park in 2005. It is a small park, 220 square miles in area but has a large population. Half of the area is open heath and it has a 26 mile coastline.

The park has a large mosaic of habitats which leads to a great variety of plants, reptiles and birds. In the area will be found lowland, wet and dry heaths, mires and bogs, ancient pasture and woodland, coniferous plantations, acid grassland, mixed farmland and a wide range of coastal habitats.

Historical places within the park include :-

- \* Eling Tide Mill - its double tide made it good for the maritime trade.
- \* The Cornmill at Ashlet Creek.

- \* Calshot Spit with its ancient 1580 Castle and modern outdoor sport centre.
- \* Lepe, a hotspot for visitors where the D Day Mulberry Harbour was constructed.
- \* The privately owned Beaulieu River and the old ship building village of Bucklers Hard.
- \* The salt pans and salt barns which were a major industry between the 1700s and 1850.

It is important that there is a balance between conservation and recreation. The coastal Ranger liaises with the public to ensure heritage & conservation co-exist with tourism & activities in this special environment.

**At our February meeting:** We welcomed Tim Wheeldon to tell us about the excavation, restoration and development of the first quarter of a mile along the long-time derelict Somerset Coal Canal. Throughout the talk we were shown fascinating pictures and photographs of the canal together with the adjoining Dundas aqueduct so we were able to see the various views and developments throughout their histories.

To start, Tim introduced us to the Dundas Aqueduct which carries the Kennet & Avon Canal over the River Avon and the railway line. It is 150 yards long with three arches built in Bath stone by John Rennie and completed in 1805. The aqueduct was named after Charles Dundas, the first chairman of the K&A Canal Company. During its lifetime leaks have developed, it has been closed for repair on several occasions. More modern photos showed us the relining of the aqueduct, some members had even walked along the bed of the aqueduct at this time. One interesting fact was that originally a wall was built across the towpath; this was where the horses were changed without the boat even having to stop. Sadly contractors demolished this wall in recent times and it can still be seen as a pile of stones alongside the towpath.

Tim bought the first section of the Somerset Coal Canal when it was totally derelict and when the entrance lock was filled in and used as the garden for the cottage. Tim, together with his family and business partner, have worked hard for many years in order to bring this section of the canal to life. It is now in water and the first boat entered in June 1986. It has been a hire base for Anglo Welsh and is now a popular mooring for private craft.

The story of the lock at the entrance to the canal is most interesting. When it was dug out it was discovered that originally it had been a wide lock which at some time had been altered into a narrow beam lock. Also during excavation it was discovered that there was third gate in the centre of the lock. Originally there had been only a change of seven inches in level between the two canals; owners were very guarded about their own water. Now the levels are the same. There had been a traditional brick accommodation bridge over the



entrance to the canal. Tim used to be a helicopter pilot and used the canals as his guide to navigation. Flying over the Oxford Canal he noticed a surplus metal lift bridge in a yard. This lift bridge was duly purchased and now is at the entrance to his section of the Somerset Coal Canal.

After all of this hard work Tim now has a thriving business in this short section of canal; moorings, café, cycle hire and electric day boat hire and, with the help of European funding, an active visitor's centre.

**At our March meeting:** We welcomed John Pomfret to talk to us about the history of transport on the canal system and in particular at Braunston and Stoke Bruerne.

We started with a transport time line from the Romans to the present day. Originally goods would have been transported by road where the responsibility and the upkeep were down to the local parishes. Goods would have been transported by pack horses then carts followed by the use of river barges in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The use of canals for transport would have started on rivers using flash locks and pounds. Canals themselves could be built almost anywhere. The Bridgewater Canal was the first, and then everyone wanted a canal through their area to transport their goods, especially coal which had to be transported in large quantities to major towns and cities. By using canals the prices were much reduced.

On 17<sup>th</sup> January, 1770 a standard size of boat was decided for the Midland Canals. A narrow boat with one horse could pull 25-30 tons. In 1774 Braunston appeared on the map and the wharf there became very important as a transport hub. Canal transport from Braunston to London eventually came into existence in the late 1700s.

**The Decline:** The railway era then began to dominate; this led to a boatman's strike in 1923. Canals were in decline. When the M1 was opened in 1959, road transport grew and largely took over from canals.

**Stirrings:** New uses were put to the canals, camping boats and purpose built hire boats. Willow Wren originally transported goods; they now started to hire out their boats for holidays.

**New Era:** Changes now brought the canal system into modern use. Reservoirs could be changed to marinas, hire fleets created & moorings for private boats made possible.

**Problems:** In the 1970s, both tunnels at Blisworth and Braunston had to be closed due to failure. The drought of 1976 saw many waterways short of water and of course ongoing maintenance is always required.

**Today:** The canal system is flourishing due to the popularity of cruising on the Inland Waterways.

***Ron & Myra Glover***

## IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch

Our winter programme of talks has now finished, with the AGM taking place on 17<sup>th</sup> March, preceded by a walk along the K&A canal and a dinner at a local restaurant. The weather was very cold, and I personally did not take part in the walk, but that was due to an injury I sustained the previous month and not the weather.

I would like to draw the attention of members to events they could get involved in, which although not IWA organised, are waterway based.

1 Although we do not have our own work parties, there are working groups that anyone can be involved in. The lead volunteer for CRT in the Bath area is Trevor Clark who can be contacted on 07533 529089, or email at [t.clark603@btinternet.com](mailto:t.clark603@btinternet.com). Other canal groups such as Wilts & Berks Trust and Somerset Coal Canal group also have working parties in our area.

2 I am aware that all our meetings are based around the Bristol and Bath area, with a small, but active group in Salisbury. This leaves a large area of north and east Wiltshire a long way from any meetings.

The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust have branches in Melksham, Wootton Bassett, & Swindon, all of which welcome non members. Details of these meetings can be found on the Wilts & Berks Trust website, and anyone living in these areas would be more than welcome to attend. Further south, but still some distance from Salisbury, the K&A Canal Trust also have groups along the line of their canal.

I am making these suggestions in line with my belief that we need to have more interaction and co-operation with other like minded groups, if we are all going to thrive in the future.

*Geoff Brown, Branch Chairman*

### IWA Avon and Wilts Branch 100 Club

**The winners of the Christmas 2017 Draw  
for the Branch 100 club were:**

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Prize:</b>	Vivienne Hook	£31.16
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Prize:</b>	Mrs Hunter	£18.70
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Prize:</b>	Mr Jenkins	£12.46

**The winners of the 2018 Spring Draw  
for the Branch 100 club were:**

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Prize:</b>	Mrs J Godwin	£27.66
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Prize:</b>	Mr and Mrs Glover	£16.60
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Prize:</b>	Mr L Gibney	£11.06

Monies raised in 2018 will be given to The Kennet and Avon Trust.

For details about the 100 Club contact Vivienne Hook on 0117 9771373 or [vivienne.m.hook@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:vivienne.m.hook@blueyonder.co.uk).

## **IWA Gloucestershire & Herefordshire Branch Report**

With summer comes the boating season and our round of social events finishes. I am not, at present, sure what will happen in autumn as speakers and venues are getting very expensive and coupled with a drop in numbers I wonder if they are still viable.

The AGM was cancelled at the last minute because Gloucester was covered by a very rare red snow warning and was inaccessible

It has to be rearranged by 31<sup>st</sup> May and details are given on page 4.

***Roger Holmes, Branch Chairman***

## **IWA West Country Branch Report**

At the Annual General Meeting of the Branch held on 10<sup>th</sup> March, Bob Abbott stepped down from the Branch committee and subsequently our Hon. Secretary Peter Kelly resigned from his role and I also resigned from my role as Hon. Treasurer of the Branch.

This led to a reshuffle of committee roles, with Sally Hillman taking on the role of Hon. Secretary, Pat Robinson taking over as Hon. Treasurer and the committee appointing myself as Chairman of the Branch.

The Annual General Meeting was followed by an excellent presentation by David and Karen Binney from the hotel boat “Wessex Rose”, which illustrated to great effect the construction and fit out of “Wessex Rose” that now cruises on the Kennet & Avon Canal, Grand Union Canal and the River Thames. Our thanks to David and Karen for this.

The objectives of the Branch for the next 12 months include the continuation of our regular and successful volunteer work parties, a focus on lobbying for improvements to the heritage Bridgwater Docks, including the Bascule Bridge, and continuing our participation in the project being led by Langport Town Council to enhance the use of the ‘Upper’ Parrett across the Somerset Levels. In addition, we are supporting the efforts of the Bude Canal and Harbour Society to lobby Cornwall Council to complete the outstanding work necessary to enable navigation on the Bude Barge canal and are contributing to the vision for the new Taunton Garden Town, with particular emphasis on the town making greater use of its waterways.

By the time you read this, the Waterway Recovery Group should have visited Langport for a weekend and cleared the significant amount of mud, silt and grass that has accumulated on the slipway at Huish Bridge. This is a first step towards making some complex repairs that are required to the lower end of the slipway, in order that it can be once again be used for access to the River Parrett by trail boats and other craft.

***Ray Alexander, Branch Chairman***

## IWA South Wales Branch Report

In South Wales we held another successful AGM and Exhibition at the Waterfront Museum, Swansea with more attending on the day and an additional Member for our Committee.

We appear to be setting a trend with the Exhibition and Conference and may have a volunteer to coordinate it for next year. Watch this space.

Our bank balance is secure so we can plan for the coming year but we do need more help from members in feedback as to what is going on in their area throughout South Wales.

For what's going on in South Wales check the up to date websites of the South Wales Canal Trusts as follows:

**The Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust**

<http://www.mbact.org.uk>

**The Neath & Tennant Canals Trust** <http://www.neath-tennant-canals.org.uk/>

**The Swansea Canal Society** <http://www.swansea canal society.com>

**Friends of the Montgomery Canal**

<http://www.montgomerycanal.me.uk/mwrt.html>

*Tony Pugh, Branch Chairman*

## Forthcoming Events

### IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch Salisbury Group Programme

Venue: The Green Dragon, Old Road, Alderbury, Salisbury, SP5 3AR

**Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2018** 7pm

Boules and BBQ at The Green Dragon.

**There will be no meetings in May, July, August or September**

All enquiries to Ron & Myra Glover - contact details can be found on page 23.  
Or Jon Van de Geer - 01722 412841

## IWA Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Branch Meetings

**Venue:** The Warehouse Climbing Centre, Parliament Street, Gloucester, GL1 1HB which is just by Gloucester Dock - There is a bar where simple food is served. Parking is available in the Dock or Brunswick Square nearby.

The branch social meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month - 7.30pm start.

No events advertised at present apart from the reconvened AGM on page 4.

All enquiries to Roger Holmes - contact details can be found on page 23.

## IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch Programme

**Venue (unless otherwise stated):**

The Community Room, Wickhouse Close, Saltford, BS31 3BZ  
Access from the main Bath Road, where there are regular bus services from both Bristol and Bath, is via Norman Road. The Room is close to the Saltford Hall, where we have met before; turn left in front of the Hall.

No events until October 2018.

All enquiries to Geoff Harman - contact details can be found on page 23.

## IWA West Country Branch Events

### Visit to Curry Moor Pumping Station

Cuts Road, Athelney, Taunton, Somerset. TA7 0SE

**Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2018 at 2pm**

Led by John Rowlands from the Environment Agency

The West Country Branch has arranged a visit for members to the Pumping Station at Curry Moor. **Please note that there is limited parking and therefore car sharing is requested wherever possible.**

The pumping station comprises a small (450 litres per second) electric pump, two new electric pumps (2,400 litres per second each) and two semi-permanent diesel pumps (1,000 litres per second each) giving a total capacity of 7,250 litres of water per second or 7.25 tonnes of water per second when conditions allow. There are also two diesel engines which are now in retirement but are still able to be fired up. The old steam engine has not run since the 1960s.

**All are welcome**

# Waterways in the IWA South West and South Wales Region

## Avon & Wilts Branch

- Rivers Avon & Severn: Tidal navigation that is the responsibility of the Bristol Haven Conservancy, downstream of the second Severn crossing
- Avon Navigation: Hanham to Avonmouth, including River Avon & Bristol Docks
- Kennet & Avon Canal: Hanham Lock to Froxfield Bridge
- North Wilts Canal
- Somersetshire Coal Canal
- Wilts & Berks Canal: Kennet & Avon Canal to County Boundary 1m West of Shrivenham

## Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Branch

- Coombe Hill Canal Gloucester & Sharpness Canal
- Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Leominster Canal
- Lydney Canal
- River Severn: from Mythe Bridge, Tewkesbury to a point on the tidal navigation which is the seaward extent of responsibility of the Gloucester Harbour Trustees, downstream of the Second Severn Crossing
- Stroudwater Navigation Thames & Severn Canal
- River Wye: Hay-on-Wye to Severn Estuary

## South Wales Branch

- Brecon & Abergavenny Canal Glamorganshire and Aberdare Canals
- Monmouthshire Canal Neath & Tennant Canals
- Swansea Canal River Usk
- River Wye - Hay-on-Wye to source

## West Country Branch

- Bridgwater & Taunton Canal Bude Canal
- Cann Quarry Canal Chard Canal
- Dorset & Somerset Canal Exeter Ship Canal
- Grand Western Canal Liskeard & Looe Canal
- Par Canal River Parrett
- Somerset Navigations Stover Canal
- Tavistock Canal River Tone
- Torrington (Lord Rolle's) Canal Westport Canal

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## Next Issue of *Sou'Wester*

The next issue of *Sou'Wester* is due out in September, 2018.

Please send all copy to the Editor at

[souwester@waterways.org.uk](mailto:souwester@waterways.org.uk) by

**Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2018**

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of IWA.

The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) is a non-profit distribution company limited by guarantee. Registered Office: Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 1WA. Tel. 01494 783453

Registered in England no. 612245. Registered as a Charity no 212343.

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