

Sou'Wester

April 2015 | Issue 169
IWA South West Region



South West Region Committees

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Region Chairman

During March, I attended the entire Region's branch AGMs except one. I must apologise for not attending the West Country Branch AGM, I had a personal problem that prevented me from attending.

I mentioned at the AGMs the withdrawal of the free membership scheme that will be replaced with another offer. I understand that it will be retained as a reward for volunteering, which is how West Country Branch uses it at present. I also mentioned a review into the branch and region structure, which is underway. My hope is that the work of branches is not changed too much as they are a vital part of the organisation.

It gave me great pleasure at the South Wales Branch AGM to present to Margaret and John Gwalter the Brian Sheppard Award to show the Region's appreciation for all the achievements they have brought about in South Wales. The waterway map in that area would be smaller without them. Margaret, as you may well know, stepped down as branch chair at the AGM and it is hoped to have a more formal presentation in the

future. Margaret was succeeded by Pat Cleary to whom I wish every success.

Nationally, IWA is looking at its press and marketing role and hopes to improve its image in the waterways arena. One reason is to differentiate itself from Canal & River Trust (CRT), it must be remembered that IWA campaigns for all waterways not just these controlled by CRT.

I hope that soon after you read this two important announcements will be made that will put the region in the spotlight, do watch out for these.

Lastly, this edition has been edited and produced by Stefanie Preston whilst we searched for a new editor. We have been lucky and found Joyce Potts, who is very experienced and I am sure she will do a great job. We need to thank Stefanie for standing in and I know that she has arranged to give Joyce every help.

Roger Holmes

Notices

CRT Waterway Forums

Canal & River Trust (CRT) has announced the following 2015 Waterway Forum dates (all meetings are from 6.30-8.30pm):

Wednesday 3rd June, South Wales

The Old Rectory Country Hotel and Golf Club, Llangattock, Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1PH

Wednesday 10th June, Worcestershire

Sixways, Warriors Way, Worcester, WR3 8ZE

Tuesday 20th October, Gloucestershire

Gloucester Dock Office, GL1 2EB

Tuesday 3rd November, Swansea

Pontardawe Arts Centre, Herbert Street, Pontardawe, SA8 4ED

Please contact CRT at enquiries.southwalessevern@canalrivertrust.org.uk or on 01452 318008 if you plan to attend any of the forums.

Region Boat Trip

IWA South West Region members are invited on the Region's River Avon boat trip on Saturday 8th August, from 11am-2.30pm.

The trip will depart from and return to SS Great Britain Pontoon, Bristol. Passengers will be taken along the River Avon to Sea Mills returning via New Cut.

Tickets are £20. There is a bar on board, but no catering facilities, so passengers may wish to bring a picnic lunch.

Queries and bookings to Geoff Harman on 0117 962 3812 or at geoff.harman@waterways.org.uk.

IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch 100 Club

The winners of IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch's 100 Club draw conducted on 21st March:

1st Prize: John Lewis, of Bathford

2nd Prize: Geoff Harman, of Westbury-on-Trym

3rd Prize: Roger Holmes, of Lydney

West Country Branch Trip

Spaces are still available for IWA West Country Branch members on the Branch's coach trip to Brecon. Details under *Forthcoming Events*.

Bridgwater Tidal Surge Barrier

Members may have spotted that IWA West Country Branch has launched a campaign to improve the use of the proposed Tidal Surge Barrier on the River Parrett at Bridgwater. This follows the steps that are currently being taken to bring forward by many years the construction of a Barrier for flood defence purposes, following the extensive flooding of the Somerset Levels and Moors that took place a year ago.



Barge Lock looking towards the River Parrett

IWA West Country Branch Committee has closely monitored developments and has held meetings with Sedgemoor District Council and the Environment Agency at which the opportunities for using the Barrier for navigation

purposes, for facilitating boating upstream of the Barrier and for reopening the link from the River Parrett into the Bridgwater Docks have been promoted.

Although it will take some years to plan and construct the Barrier, the critical period is in the immediate future and IWA West Country Branch will campaign hard to get the best outcome for the future.

The press release can be found on the IWA Website at West Country Branch News and also in the March 2015 IWA Bulletin.

Thanks to Ray Alexander for providing this report.

Burbage Crane Restoration Completed

The Burbage Crane, situated on Burbage Wharf on the summit level of the Kennet & Avon Canal (K&A), between Wootton Rivers and Bruce Tunnel, is the last survivor of a simple hand operated design of which there were originally many along the Canal. The timberwork was renewed in the 1970s but by the beginning of this century it was unsafe and the jib had to be propped up. In 2002, a site meeting was held between

Crown Estates (the then owners), British Waterways, the K&A Trust and IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch. It was decided that the crane was a unique and important feature of the Canal and that further restoration should be carried out using high quality oak to give it a life of at least another fifty years, before major work was required.



The Final Task Completed, left to right: John Webb (K&A Trust), Geoff Harman (IWA), Derek Godwin (IWA), Blair Murray (K&A Trust) and Ian Herve (K&A Trust) (Geoff Harman)

It has taken from 2002 until October 2014 to complete the work, the final task being to install an information board on the towpath opposite the wharf. The project is a great example of co-operation between the two public and two charitable organisations. The Crown Estates provided the funds for the massive timbers; the Claverton Pumping Station team of the Trust did the major work of

shaping the timbers, fitting the original ironwork and on-site assembly; John Webb acted as Project Manager and the IWA Branch participated in the site work, funded the information board and the paving around the base of the crane.

This was a major job on a listed structure, carried out at a cost of about £10,000 compared with an estimate of well over £100,000 if it had been carried out commercially.

There is no public access to the site but a good view is obtained from both the water and the towpath opposite.

Thanks to Geoff Harman for providing this report.

IWA South Wales Branch Announces Name of Proposed Waterway

After consultation with interested parties, IWA South Wales Branch has announced that the proposed integrated waterway, which would link the Swansea Canal to the Neath and Tennant Canals via a new route through Swansea Vale, the River Tawe and the Docks, is to be called the Swansea Bay Inland Waterway.

The proposed waterway would provide a 37-mile navigation from close to the Brecon Beacons National Park, via the Tawe and Neath valleys, to the South Wales coast at Swansea and Neath.

Mon & Brecon Canal: Waterworks – Ty Coch Restoration Project Update

The Ty Coch Restoration Project aims to restore a derelict section, including eight locks, of the Mon & Brecon Canal in Cwmbran. It is supported by a £854,500 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant awarded to Torfaen County Borough Council in partnership with Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust.

Over the last year there have been many developments including a new road leading to the compound off Hollybush Way and a new workshop. Progress has also been made on five of the eight locks due for renovation. A start has been made on the slipway at Brake Lock; all work except for the gates, which are now being manufactured at the new workshop, has been completed at Shop Lock; Lower Brake Lock is just waiting for the lower gate, which is being manufactured by a

contractor; and good progress on the slipways and re-pointing at Tredaegar and Ty Coch Bottom locks has been made.



Lower Brake Lock in the foreground with the top gate installed. Ty Coch Bottom Lock in the background with scaffolding and cover sheets in place (Pat Cleary)

There is still a long way to go for the Project and four teams of volunteers are being created to support the on-going work. For more information on how to get involved as a volunteer email waterworks@torfaen.gov.uk or call Heidi Carey 01633 648072.

Thanks to Pat Cleary for providing this report.

The Bude Canal

The Bude Canal has two miles of canal in water with a Sea Lock and two inland locks all of which are in working order. The Sea Lock is used on a regular basis by local

sea-going boats and when needed by visiting craft. The Sea Lock and Canal are owned by Cornwall Council. The operation of the Sea Lock is carried out by the Harbourmaster assisted by a local volunteer lock crew.

The inland locks, whilst operational, cannot be used at present by trailboats etc. for two reasons:

1. There is no slipway above Falcon Bridge in Bude to give access to the Canal.
2. Rodds Bridge (about 1 mile inland) does not have sufficient headroom to allow powered vessels to pass through and access the inland locks and the remaining part of the barge Canal up to Helebridge (about another mile beyond Rodds Bridge).

Until Cornwall Council provide a slipway and remove the restriction to navigation at Rodds Bridge there is no way that boats other than canoes and rowing boats can use the Canal to Helebridge. Bude Canal Harbour Society (BCHS) endeavours to hold a Navigation Event each year, at which pilot gig boats and canoes that can pass under Rodds Bridge use the whole length of the waterway via the two inland locks to Helebridge. In this case the inland locks are operated

by staff employed by Cormac Solutions which is an "arms-length" company belonging to Cornwall Council.

What is needed is for Cornwall Council to be canvassed to indicate when these restrictions on the use of the canal by boats will be removed. BCHS has endeavoured to get this problem resolved with Cornwall Council since the Bude Canal Regeneration Project was completed in 2009. The original proposals did involve rebuilding Rodds Bridge and providing a slipway but these elements of the project were removed due to a shortfall in funding.

As Cornwall has been awarded a huge amount of funds from the E.U. surely it is not beyond the wit of Cornwall Council to devise a scheme to deal with both of these issues. The benefits to the tourist economy and the environment of the Bude Valley and the well-being of residents and tourists alike are worthy outcomes.

Thanks to Chris Jewell for providing this report.

MTB Re-launched at Bridgwater Docks

On Saturday 31st January, the 1941 Motor Torpedo Boat 219 was re-

launched at a ceremony at Bridgwater Docks on the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal. The ceremony was attended by a large crowd, local dignitaries, the press and the Sea Scouts marching band, all of whom gathered to watch the renovated hull being craned into the Docks.



1941 Motor Torpedo Boat 219 craned into Bridgwater Docks (Bob Abbott)

Grand Western Canal Photo Competition

Grand Western Canal Country Park & Local Nature Reserve has launched its Canal photo competition. Budding photographers are encouraged to capture the beauty of the Grand Western Canal for a special competition this year.

There are £350 worth of photography vouchers up for grabs, plus the chance of the

pictures appearing on the website and Facebook pages.

There are three categories; Canal Landscapes, Canal Activities and Canal Wildlife. Entries are welcome from any amateur photographers and only ten pictures can be entered per person.

The competition is open and runs until 30th November 2015, so plenty of time to look for those perfect views and images. Winners will be announced in December.

The photography and print studio, Photo Lesk on Gold Street in Tiverton, has kindly donated vouchers towards the prizes. For each category there will be a first prize of £100 of Photo Lesk vouchers and a second prize of £50 of Photo Lesk vouchers.

For details on how to enter, visit www.devon.gov.uk/gwcphotos.

Walking the Bude Canal for Charity

On Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th February 2015, Doug Hamilton-Cox walked along sections of the Bude Canal, as part of his challenge to walk the entire UK canal network, which is over 2500 miles long.

In February 2012, Doug Hamilton-Cox, a former sapper with the Royal Engineers, began a series of walks that would take him along the footpaths of the UK's canal network to raise money for charities supporting wounded servicemen and women. After three years he has completed over 2000 miles of the network and raised £42,000.

This is just one of a number of Doug's fundraising initiatives, which have raised more than £91,000 for charities like *Help for Heroes*. Doug chose the canals for his latest challenge so that he could both raise money for the troops and help raise the profile of canals and the work being done by volunteers to restore them, having discovered an interest in the waterways on previous walking challenges.

For the Bude Canal section of the challenge, which added a further 11 miles to his total distance walked, Doug was met at the Sea Lock by Chris Jewell. They walked along the Barge Section of the Canal to Helebridge and then alongside the Marhamchurch Inclined Plane into the village, about 2½ miles. They then picked up the Planekeepers Path from Cann Orchard to the top of the Hobbacott Inclined Plane, which was another 1½ miles.

The following day Doug walked along the Bude Aqueduct Section of the Canal, about 5 miles, accompanied by Mike Degan and Tim Dingle, trustees of the Bude Canal Trust, which owns that part of the canal. Doug was then again accompanied by Chris Jewell as they walked from Druxton Wharf to Tamartown, about 1½ miles each way.



Doug and Chris at the Lock Head with the Breakwater in the background (Mike Moore)

All monies raised will go to charities supporting wounded servicemen and women. Donations can be made at www.bmycharity.com/hamiltoncox and more information is available at Doug's website, www.dougwalking.co.uk.

Thanks to Chris Jewell & Mike Moore who compiled this report based on Doug's press release.

Branch Reports

IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch Report

After a gap of quite a few months, I've picked up the reins of writing for *Sou'Wester*. My thanks to everyone who has solicitously enquired after my health and well-being; I'm glad to say that, so far as I know at the time of writing, all my treatment is over, and I sincerely hope to hear from my consultant in a couple of weeks time that there are no more defective lymph nodes left in my neck.

The other members of the Branch Committee have strenuously carried on the good work without me, and we held our AGM in Bathampton only a day ago. I only wish there could have been more members attending, but the business of the meeting proceeded very smoothly. Our Branch membership is back up to a level of more than two years ago, after a definite slide twelve months or so ago, and our bank balance is safely in the black.

Our social programme has had an interesting passage since New Year. In January, our regular annual Sunday Lunch gathering at

Bristol Golf Club was attended by twenty something members and friends, for a very decent three course meal.

We should have met at The Crown Inn, Saltford, in February, but days before the planned meeting, our Events Organiser, Geoff Harman, discovered that the pub was about to shut. We rapidly re-arranged the venue to the Fry Club in Keynsham for an illustrated talk by our member, Patrick Moss, chairman of the Somersetshire Coal Canal Society, about the current and recent work of restoration and development on the Canal. Driving past yesterday, en-route to Bathampton, the place appeared to be very much open again.

One recent dark cloud over the horizon has been the official approval for the construction of a pedestrian bridge across Bristol Harbour, upstream of Bristol Bridge, just before the 90 degree bend around the former Courage's Brewery site. The design of the bridge is such that the width of the water surface is restricted to start with, and what remains will be the regular navigable channel, as the deepest water, as we well know, is

always around the outside of a bend. I feel, as do the others of the Branch Committee, that the presence of the bridge will make this stretch of water fraught with danger. It's not as though the Harbour is only used by powered craft, there are also plenty of unpowered vessels – rowing eights and fours, sculls, canoes, both in training for regatta events, and simply as leisure activity. Accidental grounding is also a potential hazard, as the Castle Ditch discharges into the Harbour on the apex of the bend, and silt and refuse can create shoals. On behalf of the Association, I wrote to Bristol City Council to object to the proposal, but was unsuccessful. I will however be following the progress very closely and liaise with the Harbour Master's office over all possible safety and ameliorating aspects.

If you read this before setting out for a summer of waterway travel, I hope you have pleasant voyages, and if you plan to include Bristol and the annual Harbour Festival in your itinerary, by all means let me know by email (address inside front cover) when you're planning to drop anchor, and I'll see if I can spot you in the crowds!

John Gornall
john.gornall@waterways.org.uk
Branch Chairman

IWA Gloucestershire & Herefordshire Branch Report

Things have, over the last few months, been a little slow but no doubt that will change!

The most important event that is happening on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal is the news that over the next two years the bridges will be automated. Starting with a public Trial at Sandfield this August followed in 2016 by the automation of bridges from Saul to Gloucester and later from Saul to Purton. This is a most welcome change for users of the Canal – no more closures and hopefully open from dawn till dusk. Something IWA has lobbied for, for many years. Operation will be by phone apps or numbers so you will have to make sure you have the information. IWA will be closely involved with the discussion on how the operation is to be implemented and we will keep you informed. CRT is organising a full local consulting operation and we will help as much as we can to get the best for all users of the Canal and the people who live in the vicinity.

Our social programme this season has been excellent with talks as diverse as eels and sunken ships!

We also had an excellent Christmas social with, as usual, a wonderful Christmas Cake by Sue Holmes.

Unfortunately, Gloucester Yacht Club has had to close down due to lack of support so we have lost our venue. We have though sourced an alternative venue nearby called The Warehouse where already we have had two meetings. The room is better and we can, if required, upgrade to a larger room plus there is a bar open till 10.30pm and a restaurant. So come along to our meetings and have a really good night out. Our attendances are currently excellent and we hope to repeat these next season.

Our AGM was held in March and the committee was re-elected though we have had resignations from Martin Phillips after twelve years, Gordon Harrower and Sue Holmes, so we are short of help please if you can volunteer.

Martin Turner
martin.turner@waterways.org.uk
Branch Chairman

IWA South Wales Branch Report

Firstly, as many of you may know, Margaret Gwalter has retired as chair of IWA South Wales Branch. Her efforts over the years are

greatly appreciated and we thank her for all she has done for the Branch. I have been elected chair to succeed her and as I am currently also the secretary, we urgently need someone willing to attend committee meetings four times a year to take minutes and deal with routine administration. If you feel able to assist please contact me in the first instance at pat.cleary@waterways.org.uk.

At last month's branch AGM, the Region Chair stated: *'You are seen as being active and praise is due for the way you have led waterways restoration in the whole area.'* This indicates that we have a busy and productive Branch that is really making a difference to our community and to the economy and environment of South Wales. Come and join us!

The Branch's main concern at present is the forthcoming Neath Port Talbot LDP hearing on 21st April. Margaret Gwalter will represent the Branch's interests in collaboration with Canal & River Trust's Jane Hennall, among others. I hope to be there also. The outcome is fundamental for the future of the Swansea Bay Inland Waterway and the three constituent canals.

As you can see from the news item in *Sou'Wester*, restoration of the

Ty-Coch flight on the Mon & Brec continues apace. I am planning to visit the restoration site once a month and to place regular reports on our webpage, so keep an eye out for them.

Other activity on the Mon & Brec includes a possible event on the Crumlin Arm. If this goes ahead it will be the first for a long time.

Pat Cleary

pat.cleary@waterways.org.uk

Branch Chairman

IWA West Country Branch Report

What the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal lacks in length and water depth is balanced by enthusiasm and happenings in abundance! Our volunteer workforce is building almost weekly to the point that sometimes we are embarrassed when the job is completed quicker than planned.

However, spring and summer lies ahead and the tables may be turned as we have now adopted some parts of the Canal and new challenges will manifest themselves, especially when the Canal & River Trust workboat *Usk Valley* returns soon after its massive refit and we will be able to actually use it for what it was originally intended... work!

There is much more for us to do around the Historic Bridgwater Dock with lots of flotsam, which simply drifts or is windswept downstream only to end up in the Basin and for which locally moored boats often and unfairly get criticised, to be regularly collected. We are still part way through the cosmetic refurbishment of what seems to be increasing amounts of various metal structures around the Dock. We also have our sights firmly set on the old dock crane which is Grade 2 listed and so is taking time to obtain permissions to bring it back to its former glory.

Following our appeal for a small boat to carry out our own inspections and identify potential trouble spots and areas that need attention by volunteers, we have been fortunate in having the 15ft dinghy *Somerset Dream* loaned to the Branch. Another well wisher has given us a 4hp outboard to save us a lot of rowing. Both need some TLC and we now need some funding to insure and licence it. Any offers?

A recent and unusual new addition to the dock is the only surviving type of a 70ft WWII Motor Torpedo Boat no 219, where it is being restored by a charitable trust and it could be that others from that era may follow if the will by all authorities is forthcoming.

Well worth looking at and locally we are doing what we can to support it. The owners are now on our volunteer register.

Much committee time has been taken up by a proliferation of meetings and workshops organised by Sedgemoor D.C. and the Environment Agency relating to the proposed Tidal Flood Barrier and the ten year programme and to which we worked hard to be invited. We know we have presented very strong points to them highlighting that we should not only maintain navigation rights to and from the Sea but that the construction should be such that allows waters to be penned well upstream so that in non tidal conditions this would allow boating once again from Taunton, through Bridgwater's (currently unusable) Barge Lock, up the River Parrett and through the Town centre as far as Langport and beyond. This would initially allow a waterway length of at least 35 miles. Surely not too much to ask? Anyone who can lobby on our behalf would be most welcome and should you know someone, or a group, who can support our lobbying and may wish to meet and discuss our 1 hour long presentation, then please contact me as soon as possible.

At our AGM at Torrington, and at the following lunch and tour of the Rolle Canal, there were twenty-two persons in attendance with four notified apologies. Three of our Committee stood down which is a blow so we are now looking for some keen and active replacements. You would not find our activities boring or bureaucratic and would be welcomed into this busy and friendly Branch.

I finish where I started... there's lots happening down in the South West!

Bob Abbott

bob.abbott@waterways.org.uk

Branch Chairman

IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch Salisbury Group

At the January meeting Chris Witts returned to our group to give us a very informative talk about the Severn Bore. This included explanation of why the bore occurs, the best positions on the River to view the bore, films of the bore and why surfers are so attracted to riding it. The presentation closed with a look at fishing on the Severn. Chris is an expert on the River Severn and his knowledge and enthusiasm resulted in a most informative

and, at times, humorous talk thoroughly enjoyed by all present.

At the February meeting we welcomed Stuart Burroughs, director of “The Museum of Bath at Work”, who gave us a presentation entitled “Fallout”. This lecture covered the origins of The Inland Waterways Association and the falling out between the two founder members, Tom Rolt and Robert Aickman. It was interesting to hear how other well-known figures in society became involved including Sir Peter Scott, Charles Hadfield and the author Elizabeth Jane Howard at the beginning of this now well established venture.

At the March meeting Di Harris gave us an illustrated presentation

about the twinning between the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Canal du Nivernais in the Burgundy area of France. The twinning came about thanks to an English man, Jo Parfitt, living in France who had worked on the K&A restoration project and proposed the twinning of the two canals as both navigations had a lot in common, as Di’s history of the canals revealed. Working together helped the resolution of leaks in France and both canals have learnt from the other via many exchange visits.

Ron & Myra Glover

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Forthcoming Events

IWA South West

Region Social

Programme

Saturday 8th August 2015, 11am-2.30pm

Region members’ boat trip on the River Avon, Bristol. Tickets £20, please see *Notices* for details. Queries and bookings to Geoff

Harman on 0117 962 3812 or at geoff.harman@waterways.org.uk.

IWA West Country Branch Events

Saturday 9th May 2015, 2.45pm

Public meeting and presentation on Historic Boats by Paul Childs at The Tom Fraser Hall, Staplegrove Village Hall, Staplegrove Road, Taunton, TA2 6AL.

Sunday 19th July 2015

Branch coach trip to the Mon & Brec Canal. Itinerary: 10.30am coach pick-up Taunton, 11am coach pick-up Bridgwater, 12.40pm coach arrives in Brecon (free time), 3pm trip on the Canal aboard *Dragonfly* (board at 2.40pm), 5.30pm *Dragonfly* returns, 6pm coach leaves for Somerset. For more information or to book your place, tickets cost £23.50, please contact Mike Slade at mike.slade@waterways.org.uk.

May, June & July 2015

Work parties twice a monthly. More details from Mike Slade mike.slade@waterways.org.uk.

IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch Salisbury Group Programme

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

Dates:

Thursday 21st May 2015, 7.30pm

“A Day in the Life of a Thames Tug”, Richard Thomas.

Thursday 18th June 2015, 7.30pm

“Trail Boat Festivals on Isolated Waterways around Britain”, Ron & Myra Glover.

Thursday 16th July 2015, 7.00pm

Boules & BBQ

Further information can be obtained from Ron & Myra Glover at ron.glover@waterways.org.uk or myra.glover@waterways.org.uk or 01722 710322, or from Jon Van de Geer on 01722 412841.

Next Issue of *Sou'Wester*

The next issue of *Sou'Wester* will be compiled by the new editor Joyce Potts. Please get your submissions to her in plenty of time so she has a chance to familiarise herself with assembling the newsletter.

The next issue of *Sou'Wester* is due out in August. Any content should be sent to the Editor at souwester@waterways.org.uk by **Friday 24th July 2015**.

Front cover image: Shop Lock (number 42) on the Mon & Brec Canal, under restoration and looking much improved (Pat Cleary)

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

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