

Sou'Wester

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IWA South West Region



The Inland
Waterways
Association

www.waterways.org.uk/southwest

South West Region Committees

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Hon. Secretary	Vacant	
Treasurer	Henry Brown	
Membership Officer	Tony Pugh	
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Committee Members	Michelle Davidson	Gareth Hughes Gill Thomas
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West Country Branch Committee:

Chairman	Bob Abbott	bob.abbott@waterways.org.uk
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Volunteers Coordinator	Mike Slade	mike.slade@waterways.org.uk
Committee Members	Pat Robinson	

Region Chairman

I was reappointed at the IWA AGM for a period of a further three years. I am only able to serve for six years so this may be my last term. I was heartened that I had the support of the members in the region and I will try to serve you as best I can.

Pat Cleary took over as South Wales Chair at their 2015 AGM but unfortunately his wife's poor health has caused him to resign I will miss him and send him everybody's best wishes. Tony Pugh has stepped into the breach and is carrying on Pat and Margaret's excellent work in South Wales.

This is the AGM season and the details for your branch are on pages 5 and 6. I would urge you to consider standing for your local branch committee as it is a satisfying way of playing your part in IWA.

Nationally as well as locally there is some concern that volunteers are not coming forward as much as in the past. This is effecting all organisations that rely on volunteers from the National Trust down to small local groups. I believe this to be caused by demographic changes for example fewer people retire early and the retirement age is increasing every year. This is having the effect of reducing the pool of available volunteers to go round.

IWA's financial position is healthy at the moment but we along with many organisations are losing members it is thought there are many reasons for this. Nationally this is being considered and proposals may soon be forthcoming.

I usually highlight the work being done by the local branches but for a change I will mention some of the restoration societies all of which are thriving although sometimes suffering from lack of volunteers.

Cotswold Canal Trust

They have recently submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore the canal from Saul to join up with the existing restoration and thus join Stroud to the main system. IWA are core partners in this bid and it's representatives Vaughan Welch and Martin Turner are proving a valuable resource to the project

Hereford and Gloucester

This group always has a surprise with their imaginative ideas. The latest is running the canal through Newent Railway station between the restored platforms reversing the railway takeover of the canal. Who could have

imagined that the railway would be superseded by the canal?

Wilts and Berks

This group is undergoing through a large reorganisation at present to make it more streamlined and better able to cope with the tasks ahead. There is a very ambitious project to link the canal to the Kennet and Avon via the Melksham Link which will totally transform the area and bring a large sum of money to the Trust to help restore the remaining route of the canal. Their ambition is to have it finished in less than 20 years instead of the much longer time originally planned.

If you want any further information on these restorations contact them direct.

I will finish by wishing you a happy new year for 2016 and hope to meet as many of you as I can at your branch's AGM.

Roger Holmes

YOUR BRANCH (and IWA) NEEDS YOU

Elsewhere in this edition there is a notice for your branch AGM. Somewhere in the agenda is the appointment of new committee members. This is a very important part of branch work it is where decisions are made on a day to day basis and branch policy is formulated. Branches are the life blood of IWA

Being a committee member is not an onerous task. Most branches meet 4 to 6 times a year and it is always a friendly affair. Meetings are held at venues and times to suit members are not formal in any way.

This is a plea for new committee members. Could you please consider joining your local committee. Whatever talent you have will be useful for example organising meetings and social events; Meeting with CRT locally; Planning and navigation matters; and representing IWA on other local bodies. These duties do not take up too much time in fact you can do as little or as much as you want to.

Your local branch needs you. May I end up with a plea for you to consider helping IWA in this way I am sure you will enjoy it and find it satisfying.

The contacts for your local branch are listed on page 2 of this edition. Give any of them a call or email if you are interested. You will be surprised the difference you will make.

Notices

FORMAL NOTICE OF BRANCH AGMs

Each branch will be holding its AGM between 1st and 19th March, 2016
Details of the exact time, venue, date and any events around the AGM can be found below and on the following page.

Agenda (which is common to all branches)

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of 2015 AGM
- 3 Report of Chair
- 4 Treasurers 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.

Avon & Wilts Branch

Saturday, 5th March 2016 2.30pm

At The Swan, 1 Church Street, Bradford on Avon, BA15 1LN

There is no parking at the pub but public pay-and-display parking is available at the nearby station, BA15 1DF, or come by train – there are trains at least half-hourly from Bristol, Keynsham and Bath, and hourly from Salisbury.

10.30am: a towpath walk to Avoncliff Aqueduct and Bradford Wharf – about 3 miles, but no hills. Meet at the far end of the station car park, BA15 1DF.

12.30pm: informal lunch at the “Swan” (bookings to Geoff Harman) and tea and biscuits will be available after the meeting.

Enquiries and lunch bookings to Geoff Harman on 0117 9623812 or email geoff.harman@waterways.org.uk

Gloucestershire & Herefordshire Branch:

Thursday, 3rd March, 2016 7.30pm

At The Warehouse, Parliament Street, Gloucester, GL1 1HY

After the AGM we will have talks on cruises around the system. We tend to look at local issues and many do not get the opportunity to look around the system so here is the chance!.

South Wales Branch:

Saturday, 12th March, 2016 11am

At the Fourteen Locks Canal Centre, Cwm Lane, Rogerstone, Newport **NP10 9GN** Phone:01633 892167

Starting at 11am and finishing at approximately 3pm, the day will encompass a walk, talk, AGM and Boat Trips. All South Wales Members are invited to the AGM with Members families joining in the fun day. Weather permitting we will visit the Ty Coch Restoration Project in the afternoon.

Lunch is available at the Canal Centre or at the Rising Sun <http://www.therisingsunnewport.co.uk/index.html>

If you would like lunch at the Centre please contact Tony Pugh at tony.pugh@waterways.org.uk or text 07970413803. Overnight Accommodation is available at the Rising Sun if you would like to make a weekend of the occasion.

West Country Branch

Saturday, 19 March, 2016 11am (Tea & coffee available from 10.30am)

At The Boat & Anchor Inn, alongside the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal, Meads Crossing, Huntworth, Nr. Bridgwater, Somerset, TA7 0AQ.

If travelling from the A38 go across the M5 intersection at J 24. If travelling on the M5 leave at J 24. Follow the Huntworth signs. After about 1 mile of country lane you will need to cross over the swing bridge which will lead you into the Inn's car park area at the rear of the building.

Ample free car parking. The Inn has a good selection of food from 12 noon onwards and the Branch are planning an optional walk or talk in the afternoon, details to be confirmed on the website in due course.

Anyone interested in standing for the committee, please contact Peter Kelly, Hon Sec who can give details of the vacant posts.

IWA Avon and Wilts Branch 100 Club

The winners of the Winter draw for the Branch 100 club were:

1st prize:	Mr R E Lines	£32.30
2nd prize:	Mrs L Martin	£19.38
3rd prize:	Mr John Gornall	£12.92

News

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier Campaign



IWA West Country Branch recently achieved an important milestone in the Association's Campaign to make best use of the proposed tidal barrier to be built at Bridgwater on the River Parrett.

At a combined meeting of the Sedgemoor District Council Scrutiny committees on 5th October it was agreed that the Council and the Environment Agency should include the regeneration potential of the barrier as part of their work programme and that this should be considered in conjunction with an enhanced stakeholder

group, which is to include IWA representation.

IWA has suggested that the tidal barrier should be based on a Thames-style barrier which would include a half-tide barrier option used to enhance existing navigation opportunities on the River Parrett by:

- Impounding water above the barrier at a fixed level during the summer boating season so as to revitalise the navigation and leisure use of the river in Bridgwater and beyond;
- Facilitating the reopening of the link from the River Parrett to Bridgwater Docks (using the Barge lock) and hence to the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal; and
- Facilitating sea-going craft travelling up the River Parrett to Bridgwater and beyond, normally using a lock to be built in conjunction with the barrier.

To support its suggestions, two separate reports have been prepared by Roy Sutton, IWA Hon. Engineer, the first examining the construction and operation of the proposed tidal barrier and the second considering the level of impoundment needed to achieve navigation under the upstream bridges and to enable use of the Barge Lock.

IWA West Country Branch has had initial discussions with Canal & River Trust (CRT) regarding the Association's aspirations for regenerating the Grade II listed Bridgwater Docks, including reopening the Barge Lock, bringing back into use the Bascule Bridge (a significant heritage feature of the Docks) and providing a number of visitor moorings for sea-going craft within the inner basin. CRT currently leases Bridgwater Docks from Somerset County Council, although the lease expires in 2020.

Sedgemoor District Council and the Environment Agency are aiming to complete the tidal barrier in approximately nine years' time. The next two years will, therefore, be critical in determining whether the barrier can be designed to enhance the navigation potential of Bridgwater's waterways and thus bring additional benefits to the local communities through boating, leisure and tourism. IWA's campaigning will be vital in optimising the opportunity that this offers.

Photo: The River Parrett at low tide – looking downstream from the Barge Lock entrance to Bridgwater Docks

Thanks to Ray Alexander for providing this report and photo.

The Volunteers of the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal & River Tone

There has been a not so quiet revolution down here in the West Country, more specifically in Somerset at Bridgwater and Taunton!

Over 3 years ago when I first joined the Branch committee there was virtually no sign of IWA involvement along this beautiful 15 mile long Environmental Corridor and as I live in Cheddar not that far away I thought as a (then) narrow boat owner that this was rather strange.

I found that this was simply due to lack of coordination rather than lack of interest and it was apparent that British Waterways and more recently CRT had viewed this remainder waterway more as a water supply for Bridgwater and a haven for the live aboard and other boat owners' mainly moored in Bridgwater plus some at Taunton. This situation surely had to change.

Noting that this canal had been made completely navigable again only 21 years ago, largely due to the efforts of IWA and its Members, it seemed to me that it was destined to go that way again. It was not a pretty sight and was only just navigable in some places. The West Country Branch knew something had to be done and after strengthening the Committee began tentatively to encourage Volunteers to form small work parties for the urgent needs of litter picking. This produced almost immediate results and the public at large began to take note and local councils wanted to support us. We ensured we were highly visible in Hi-Viz vests.

Now, less than 2 years later, we have enrolled more than 60 volunteers from all walks of life who gather together either at Bridgwater or Taunton along the two 5 mile sections we have now formally adopted from CRT They have carried out a huge variety of tasks such as scrub and overgrowth clearance, Himalayan balsam removal, towpath improvements plus bulb planting, hedge layering, picnic site/car park renovation and painting to name the most obvious. Our own observers who walk and ride the canals feedback future work locations.

A tremendous amount, of sometimes seemingly impossible work, has been achieved following several of our members being approved to use CRT's work boats. By using 'Usk Valley' literally tons of shopping trolleys, pedal and motor bikes, road cones and fencing, buggy's, tyres and much other detritus and unmentionables have been safely removed from the water. Such is our volunteer's enthusiasm that sometimes they just want to keep going!

The results they have achieved are without precedent. At the time of writing this article our growing band of IWA. Volunteers had clocked up well over 2,300 hours at 65 working parties. We are also seeing that this has had a positive effect elsewhere along the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal and River Tone, inspiring other individuals and groups of volunteers to do the same in their own local districts and the overall effects have been simply amazing. You need to walk, fish, cycle or boat it to believe it! We have ongoing plans for further work and improvements in 2016. If you want more information on how to get involved, contact myself or our branch coordinator (see inside front cover).

Thanks to Bob Abbott for providing this report.

THE EXETER SHIP CANAL

(Written by Bob Abbott with thanks to Charles Hadfield).

The Exeter Ship Canal is considered by the experts as being unique.

This is because it has remained under the control of Local Government for over 450 years following the (no doubt!) contentious building of a weir across the Exe by the Countess of Devon which completely blocked the access in the 13th century.

It was not until 3 centuries had passed that canal construction was to begin in 1564 by John Drew who was an engineer-contractor employed by the City of Exeter and it appears to have been opened for navigation in 1566. A good example of Elizabethan engineering.

Following completion of an almost 2 mile cut, it finally became navigable again down to the tidal river above Topsham at the head of the estuary and thereafter was destined to become the famous working waterway we have all heard about.

There was a 'self opening sluice' (or gates) which, pointing upstream, would have been opened by the incoming tide to control the lower water level. The cut itself was 16ft wide with embankments for much of its length and would have been suitable for small and commercial craft carrying up to 16 tons at that time.

The three turf-sided locks could accommodate several vessels as two of them were 189ft long/23ft wide plus and would have served as passing places. However the third upper lock was much larger and would have also acted as a Basin or Dock.

The work was fully completed in 1567 with the building of a 150 ft quay wall on the riverside and after some improvements in 1581 the Canal remained basically unchanged for approaching 100years.

Thanks to Bob Abbott for providing this report.

“WANTED & UNWANTED”!

Future issues of this magazine will include columns for any items of equipment required by IWA Branches, also any equipment that is no longer required and needing a new home. So if you have anything you want or no longer want, please let me know and I'll put it in the next edition.

Joyce Potts, Editor

souwester@waterways.org.uk

Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal



In November, over twenty H&G CT volunteers planted a variety of 500 native trees including oak, beech, bird cherry, field maple, spindle, sweet chestnut, birch, hazel and alder along the new Canal Basin nearing completion in the Gloucestershire village of Dymock. The banks to the Basin are steep and the roots will give good support once the trees have become established. Local residents joined in as well, and a group from Dymock Parish Council visited the site to see the progress made with both the tree planting and the housing.

A Canal Basin has been created in the centre of the village on a bend where the Canal approaching from Ledbury to the north turns southwards towards Gloucester. 20 houses have been built adjacent to the Basin consisting of 14 for social housing, 5 houses for sale on the open market and one house to provide an income stream for H&G CT which will be rented out from early next year.

As well as providing invaluable habitats for birds and insects their variety of colours will add interest to the area.

Volunteers planting saplings along the towpath

Thanks to Carolyn Pascall, H&G CT for providing this report and photo

70% raised towards WRG Van Appeal – thank you!

The WRG Van Appeal has had an amazing 8 months – as I write the total raised is £86,232 leaving only £33,768 to go! Thank you to everyone who has donated, helped raise money and sponsored our volunteers during their fundraising adventures. IWA's branches and Canal Restoration Societies have been particularly generous – and we are grateful for all donations received.

We are currently in the process of purchasing two of the new vans so they will arrive in time for the summer Canal Camps, allowing us to run 3 circuits of camps over the summer. Restoration in the South West and Wales will benefit from this with camps being held on the Cotswolds, Mon and Brec, Swansea Canal and Stover Canal in 2016.

So what's been happening - In May, WRG ran a "Van-tastic Fudge" stand at Cavalcade. VAN-illa fudge sold out and supplies ran low of chocolate fudge after 'Mocha Monday' – the stand raised £1,650.75 with Vantastic Fudge being devoured by many people at Cavalcade.



In June, 5 WRG volunteers embarked on the Welsh 3000s Challenge - walking 30 miles, climbing 15 peaks in Snowdonia over 3,000ft, in rain, mist and some sunshine ... all in under 24 hours! The team raised over £1,100 ... and gained a few blisters!

In August, WRG held a small Lock Gate Plaque Auction. Hargreaves Lock Gate Makers kindly donated 5 lock gate plaques to be auctioned raising £200 towards the Appeal.

In September, 37 WRGie walkers took part in the Van-tastic 22 mile Walk along the Droitwich Canals Ring raising over £6,000. A special mention must go to Jude and Mike Palmer and their team 'RFB' who raised over £3,000 dressed as Snow White and the Seven 'Wharfs'!

In November, long time WRG volunteer George 'Bungle' Eycott took on the challenge of going 'Veggie for Vans'. For those of you know Bungle (from Saul Festivals) you will understand this is a big ask! For an entire month he ate just greens raising £1,300!

What's to come: Barn Dance 2016

WRGies and IWAers of old may remember the annual Barn Dance – well next year it's back! See page 21 for full details.

Save the date – it's 12th March, 2016 at Rowington Village Hall, Warwickshire and make sure you bring your dancing feet! All profits from the evening will go to the WRG Van Appeal.

Ways to donate:

Online: See www.wrg.org.uk/wrgvanappeal for how to donate via the Virgin Money Giving appeal page.

Cheque: Please make cheques payable to The Inland Waterways Association and send them to WRG Van Appeal, Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA.

Thank you to Jenny Black, Volunteer Co-ordinator, WRG for this report & photo.

Branch Reports

IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch Report

Allow me to start where I concluded last time, back in the summer, with our Branch's social meetings during the autumn and winter months. I wrote then that we would be back to the upstairs room at the pub on the main road through Saltford, mid-way between Bristol and Bath, where we have been before. It didn't happen. Thanks to Geoff Harman's vigilance and foresight, a preliminary check a few weeks before the first booked date disclosed that there had been yet another change of personnel, and there was no trace of our booking for four Thursday evenings between October and February.

So, a quick dash down the road, figuratively, to Keynsham, and Somerdale Pavilions, the replacement for the former Fry Club, was able to help, although at some expense. That's where we'll be in January and February, and I hope you'll be able to get there and hear Ray Alexander of West Country Branch in January and a speaker from Worcestershire, talking about "Idle Women" in February. We've decided to make January a social meeting rather than a Sunday lunch gathering on this occasion. All the details are in Geoff Harman's listing of our Branch events on page 21 in this issue of "Sou'Wester".

When I wrote my Branch Chairman's piece back in mid-summer, I enquired if there were any members who have their boat moored in Bristol City Docks (as it used to be known), but no-one responded to my plea for information, and I am therefore assuming that everyone who possesses a boat keeps it moored elsewhere, e.g. on the Kennet and Avon Canal, or further north on the main canals of the country's inland waterways.

It's good to see that Bath and North-East Somerset Council has been extending the provision of safety railings alongside the river path in Bath, and all the way around to the approach to Pulteney Weir adjacent to the Recreation Ground, the home of Bath Rugby Club. So far, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been no accidents, or fatalities, of young people falling into the river during the hours of darkness, whilst, perhaps, making their way home or to student accommodation after a sociable evening with friends in the centre of the city. I sincerely hope that this remains the case in the new year, and the railings prove their worth.

Lastly, to mention that the Branch AGM has been arranged for Saturday

March 5th, at the Swan Hotel, 1, Church Street, Bradford-on-Avon, and I do hope that members living in and around Bradford and Trowbridge will turn out to attend the meeting, and make your committee's efforts in arranging the date and the venue worthwhile. We're proposing a morning walk out to Avoncliff Aqueduct and back, lunch in the hotel, and the business meeting in the afternoon, and, hopefully perhaps, arrangements for tea and biscuits afterwards, before departing homewards.

I hope to see you there, if not before in Keynsham. Publication of this issue of "Sou'Wester" is not expected before early January, so I can hardly wish everyone a Happy Christmas, but I will take the opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year.

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

IWA Gloucestershire & Herefordshire Branch Report

Our social evenings continue to be a great success at our new venue, The Warehouse in Gloucester, with record numbers at our excellent talk by Ray Alexander on what is happening down in Bridgwater on the proposed tidal barrier and the opportunity it gives to regenerate the waterways in the area and Bridgwater itself. In September, another fascinating talk by Kathy Kilbey on the Lydney Canal and Lydney Harbour. The amount of interesting history she talked about and the development of industry in the area was one of the best talks we have had.

On the bridges front I have had a meeting with CRT and the local parish councils. The bridge at Sandfield is now fully installed and will be finally complete in January. This will be followed by trials over the following few months. It is important that the protocols are sorted. The IWA will be organising a convoy of boats to go up and down through the bridge to trial these and help the engineers get it right. The engineers will then trial the bridge through normal operation and see if there are any bugs. It is also very important that local road users are content that the operation will not upset their daily lives. Gloucestershire County Council are likely to put in yellow lines on the approaches to stop parked cars clogging up the roads. Plus in addition extra lights have to be fitted at the junction road to help safety. Other points to be sorted include actual operation by boaters, mooring facilities etc. It is important we get it right for all and far as boaters are concerned operation has to be simple, reliable and with improved operating times. IWA is doing its best to achieve this. The main control will

be at Frampton in the bridge house.

We have another meeting in February. It looks at present as if the first batch of bridges from Saul to Gloucester will be converted in 2017/18 and the rest 2018/19 but it all depends on funding so could well change .

Many of you will be aware of the Proposal to restore the Cotswold Canals. IWA is a member of the core group which oversees the whole project and has assisted in getting together the application for the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The project is an incredible one and we will hear in April the HLF decision.

Locally we wondered how we could support the bid in a constructive way that would show the HLF the community effort created by the initial restoration. Jan Thomas an IWA member suggested that a new group be formed to help people in need to enjoy the waterways fro a unique aspect, that is via a special canoe or boat. We had some trials last year on borrowed boats and they were a great success. So it was agreed that the project would go ahead, a special double hulled Karta Canoe was given by another member and after deliberation it was agreed we should go ahead with trying to buy a special Wheeleyboat. The IWA decided that the money raised at the Gloucester Tall Ships £540 be given to the group to help them start and have an official opening on the Canal so that the press ,media and local dignitaries could see the progress.



At the end of October the event was held and it was a great success the photos and report making part of the HLF bid and interest gained to start fund raising. The group is called Cotswold Boatability - have a look at the website.

In Gloucester a few weeks ago a major tragedy occurred with the fire at Bakers Quay where the Mill was burnt down. This Grade 2 building had been left for twenty years to deteriorate in itself a situation that should not be allowed. WE believe strongly it should be rebuilt externally to the original design and internally incorporate as much as possible of the columns and features.

Its AGM time again and as usual ours is on our normal Thursday slot, see page 6 for details.

[Martin Turner, Branch Chairman](#)

IWA South Wales Branch Report

Mon & Brec Canal: Waterworks – Ty Coch Restoration Project is continuing. There is still a long way to go for the Project. For more information on how to get involved as a volunteer email waterworks@torfaen.gov.uk or call Heidi Carey 01633 648072.



Fourteen Locks, Mon and Brec Canal, Newport - Funds have now been found to repair the leak at Lock 20,

Looking into the hole on the left of the picture is Andrew Stumpf CRT with colleague and also Tom Mahoney, Fourteen Locks Education Officer.

Photo by Tony Pugh

<http://fourteenlocks.mbact.org.uk/index.php>

For other canal restorations in South Wales. See:

www.neath-tennant-canals.org.uk/,

www.swansea-canal-society.com,

www.mbact.org.uk and our web page at

https://www.waterways.org.uk/southwales/south_wales

Tony Pugh, Branch Chairman
tony.pugh@waterways.org.uk

IWA West Country Branch Report

Again, there has been much activity within our Branch since the last issue of Sou'Wester, as follows:

Your busy committee have attended several meetings with the new CRT management and their Bridgwater & Taunton Canal staff covering both local issues and our aspirations for the future of the Canal, the River, and Somerset's Waterways in general. These took place on 21, 24, and 28 July at Bridgwater, then at their Caen Hill anniversary, on the 8 Sept and then again on 22nd Sept at the Bridgwater Docks. Some of us also went to CRT's open Canal Users meeting on 8 Oct at North Petherton. This was really only a fact finding mission for them rather than information being passed to us although it was followed up later with a summary of the issues about which

we would like to see action but at time of writing no work plans/remedial works/dates have been released. Perhaps there may be more representatives of the more wider users next time, not just boaters.

We have met with the Sea Cadets in Bridgwater to discuss the feasibility of constructing a new slipway in the Dock that would address the needs for both safe access to launch their canoes, kayaks and larger rowed and powered boats, as well as the need we see for access by Trail boats plus the possibility for some permanently moored boats to be taken out of/returned to the water. The other (CRT) slipway is some 14 miles distant at Bathpool, Taunton. We have asked a marine engineering company to prepare and cost a plan and are in discussions with CRT regarding key funding issues. We still have to meet with the Somerset County Council asset managers to discuss how this could be done bearing in mind that the Historic Dock is Grade 2 listed and they are the freeholders. It will not be easy I suspect!

Our Volunteer work force continues to grow and we now have over 60 persons with various skills who at various times been invited to help at work parties along our 2 x 5miles adopted sections at Taunton and Bridgwater. The tasks are varied and numerous with one or more events taking place weekly carrying out litter picking, structure painting, overgrowth clearing, landing stage clearance etc. Detritus from the waterway is constantly being removed from towpaths, hedgerows and the waterside utilising CRT's workboat 'Usk Valley' by using our approved Helmsmen and Deckhands. This is proving to be a demanding but popular task. More volunteer's training is being programmed with CRT to include first aid. We will of course always welcome more volunteers for all sorts of tasks and if you would like to take part in this useful, and sociable, activity then please contact our coordinator Mike Slade, (see inside front cover). To date we have carried out well over 1,000 hours of productive recycling!

Myself, Ray Alexander and Mike Slade have attended, and will likely be attending many more, meetings over the next few years organised by ourselves and others to keep them updated with our aspirations and to encourage their support for the increased use of "all things water" for the benefits of the wider community. We see no let up if we are to achieve success working within our major campaign to lobby for a Sea Lock to be incorporated within the proposed Tidal Barrier at Bridgwater and which could lead to the reopening of the Barge Lock from the Dock into the River. This proposal is gaining momentum and Ray and I were invited to Sedgemoor Council on 5th Oct to attend as "witnesses" and report to their full Scrutiny committee our findings and recommendations. Though daunt-

ing, this gave us an opportunity to put forward the detailed plans that IWA's Hon. Consulting Engineer, Roy Sutton has put forward. We have plans to invite him to another meeting with the Environment Agency, of whom I sense we have yet to convince. There are some years work ahead of us I fear.

Moving further South, you may be aware that there are moves by Exeter City Council to set up new governance of the Ship Canal and this Committee have been involved in local discussions with user groups and individuals who are concerned with some of the possible outcomes. There is a proposal to set up the 'Friends of Exeter Canal' with the support of the Exeter Civic Society and we support their aims to show there is a consensus of opinion from those with strong local interests in maintaining this Historic Waterway* which has been under Local Government control for over 450 years! If you want to help them you can contact Ray Alexander (see inside front cover) who can supply you more info.

*(see the separate article about the Exeter Ship Canal on Page 10).

Bob Abbott, Branch Chairman
bob.abbott@waterways.org.uk

IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch Salisbury Group

JOEYS, JOSHERS & JAMES: At our October meeting, Phil Clayton introduced us to the three Js:

JOEYS: - Open boats for daily use, sometimes with a small cabin, used locally around the BCN, where usually crews were able to go home at the end of the day.

JOSHERS: - Are Fellowes Morton and Clayton trading boats.

JAMES BRINDLEY: - Who was one of the major designers and constructors of the BCN.

We were shown pictures and pen & ink drawings of the BCN in its heyday compared with as it is today. Also we were shown other aspects such as toll houses, gauging docks and pumping stations, which in some cases pumped water out of old mine workings to top up water levels, also Chase-water Reservoir to store the water. All these were necessary as Birmingham is built on a plateau and all boats aiming for Birmingham have to travel up flights of locks from all directions.

The reason for the construction of the BCN was that the Birmingham area became heavily industrialised and materials and constructed components could in those days only be moved by water. One classic example of this is that chain and anchors were made, the most famous of this being Titanic's anchor chain. Birmingham must be one of the furthest industrial sites from the sea! Another example being Thomas Clayton who specialised in liquid cargoes e.g. tar transported in specially constructed tar boats like modern day road tankers.

Phil covered the necessity for tunnels and compared the Dudley tunnel, one of the first built where barges had to be legged through, with the 1850 Netherton tunnel, one and three quarters miles long with tow paths on both sides and gas lighting. He explained how the BCN continued to be built and modified throughout its working life and how there were in fact three different levels of the main line constructed. We saw ice boats to keep the navigations open during the winter which didn't always work however, as in 1947 the canals were covered in 18 inches of solid ice and trade ground to a halt.

Phil was also able to show how modern development continues to change the BCN and showed where factories and wharfs have disappeared to be replaced by accommodation blocks for new universities and modern housing for today's residents of Birmingham. Large shopping centres, smart restaurants and leisure facilities have been built to suit today's society.

Phil rounded off the evening by quoting a well-known statement that roadways not railways killed the canals and that the BCN Society continues to restore the Birmingham canals and this will be an ongoing task!

ANYTHING THAT FLOATS: At our November meeting, Elaine Kirby made a third visit to us in her position as archivist for the Kennet & Avon Trust. Over the years she has obtained many pictures relating to the history of the K&A, including many photographs of craft that have plied the canal.

Elaine started by talking about the community at Honeystreet. This community developed as a result of Robbins, Lane and Pinnegar setting up their barge building business and timber yard. She talked about The Barge Inn beside the canal that catered for the boating community by having a bakery, butchers shop and generally supplying goods required by the bargees.

We were shown pictures of many craft; trading boats that have operated over the years, the flyboats that travelled from Bradford on Avon to Bath in an hour and a half, horse drawn boats in the 1800s, as well as wide boats and narrow boats. The oldest photo that we saw was of West Mills New-

bury in 1865 where coal was being unloaded where it had been brought from the Somerset Coal Canal.

It was interesting to see the maintenance boats that were used over the years to keep the canal functional. This included the steam dredger “Iron Duke”, a 1926 photo of a GWR maintenance boat at Bradford on Avon, a 1920 spoon dredger, taking us right up to date with “Avondale” work boat still in use today.

There were pictures of various steam boats, including the Crofton Society steam trip boat in 1977. The boiler eventually failed and the craft had to be scrapped, another was a steam dinghy where the photo was taken in 1985.

It was interesting to see early days of leisure activities. The Kennet and Avon youth division using a paddle boat in the 1970s at Cotes Bridge, a boat gathering in 1964 at Sulhamstead, a skiff on the Devizes flight, a 1955 photo of paddling along the canal to take a petition to the government protesting against the closure of the canal to name just a few. There was also a photo of the motor boat “Formidable” on the Caen Hill which was the last to travel on this flight prior to the closure of the canal.

This reports on only a very small selection of the many pictures that Elaine showed us. She informs us that she is still receiving old pictures of great interest showing life on the Kennet and Avon Canal and how vital this archive is for the future.

Ron & Myra Glover

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Forthcoming Events

WRG Barn Dance - 12th March, 2016

at Rowington Village Hall, Warwickshire

All profits from the evening will go to the WRG Van Appeal

Pre-booked Tickets £15 pp - dinner included

Lovingly prepared by a top WRG cook and team - a selection of local beers and other beverages available at the bar.

A live band, featuring WRG members, will be keeping you on your feet and dancing the night away!

Contact Emma Matthars at Head Office for more information on 01494 783453 ext 610 or email emma.matthars@waterways.org.uk. Cheques for £15 per person made payable to "Inland Waterways Association" please and post with the booking form to: WRG Barn Dance, Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA.

IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch Programme

Venue, unless otherwise indicated: Somerdale Pavilions, Cross Street, Keynsham, BS31 2FW This is on the site of the old Fry's Club, with access off Station Road.

DATES:

Thursday 14th January, 2016 at 7.30pm

"Somerset Waterways" by Ray Alexander

Some history and all the latest developments including the proposed Bridgewater Barrier. There are more Somerset waterways than you think!

Thursday 11th February, 2016 at 7.30pm

"Idle Women" by Vince Williams

The story of the women working on the canals in the second world war

Saturday, 5th March, 2016 at 2.30pm at The Swan, Bradford on Avon

Branch AGM with morning walk and informal lunch.

For full details see the main AGM announcement on page 5.

All enquiries or bookings to Geoff Harman on 0117 9623812 or at geoff.harman@waterways.org.uk

IWA Avon & Wiltshire Branch Salisbury Group Programme

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

Thursday, 21st January 7.30pm

Robert Dean & his wife Julie hired a boat on **“Australia’s River Murray.”**

This river is continuously navigable for 1,241 miles, providing many opportunities for visitors to enjoy Australia’s great outdoors and fascinating wild-life aboard a luxurious hire boat,

Thursday, 18th February 7.30pm

“Port To Port”

An historical journey along the length & breadth of the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal.

Paul Barnett will take us on a pictorial journey from Sharpness stopping at points of interest and “hovering to” in Gloucester’s historic docks. He will use information from re-discovered documentary evidence & images from the early 1950s.

Thursday, 17th March 7.30pm

“The South Pennine Ring” is a circular canal route in Northern England, 70 miles long with 198 locks. It includes the Huddersfield Broad & Narrow Canals, Ashton Canal, most of the Rochdale Canal and part of the Calder and Hebble Navigation.

Roger Squires will give us an illustrated talk about this interesting and varied region.

Thursday, 21st April 7.30pm

“Heroes & Villains of the Basingstoke Canal”

The most surprising thing about this canal is that it still exists at all. This is largely due to the activities of a fairly small number of people who appeared at critical points in its history. Their actions were in some cases soundly commercial or altruistic and in others fraudulent and criminal but without these heroes and villains the canal would not exist today and they may well be needed in the future.

Roger Cansdale tells us this intriguing story.

Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Branch

Social meetings

Venue: The Warehouse, Parliament St, Gloucester, GL1 1HY,
just by the docks – free parking nearby.

Tuesday, 19th January, 2016 7.30 for 8pm

This is a joint meeting with Hereford & Gloucester Canal Trust at:
The Royal Oak, Much Marcle, Herefordshire. HR8 2ND

Dick Skeet - At Your Convenience!

A look at Sanitary Stations on the waterways in Dick's inimitable fashion.
Everyone will be talking about this.

Thursday, 4th February, 7.30pm

Clive Henderson, The Stratford canal restoration

Thursday, 3rd March, 7.30pm AGM See programme on page 6.

Thursday, 7th April, 7.30pm Liz Payne CCT.

Next Issue of *Sou'Wester*

The next issue of *Sou'Wester* is due out in May.

Please send all copy to the Editor at

souwester@waterways.org.uk by

Friday, 1st April, 2016.

Joy Yates 1925 – 2015



The West Country Branch, Inland Waterways Association, is saddened to announce the death of Joy Yates who died in hospital 28 April, 2015 after a short illness. Joy had been a long time member and supporter of the IWA, serving on the West Country Branch Committee for many years, including some time as Hon. Treasurer until 2005.

Joy's interest in canals included many hire-boat holidays, starting in 1971, which included explorations in her folding dinghy, there was also some five holidays with friends in chartered hotel boats.

She was always there to support Jean Hall when presenting slide shows for the Branch and together they produced guides and sketches for post-cards for the West Country canals to introduce them to the wider public. Much of this work produced useful funding for West Country Branch accounts thereby helping them to carry on their good work in turn.

She enjoyed organising the IWA stall at many events and in 2006 was awarded the Richard Bird Medal for her work on behalf of the IWA. This care and dedication to the West Country waterways was also recognised by the South West Region of the IWA by the Committee's joint award of the Brian Sheppard Award to her and Jean Hall.

Joy's departure will be sorely missed throughout the West Country Waterways.

Jean Hall

Front cover image: "The Balmoral" on the River Avon, heading for Bristol Floating Harbour Lock Gates - taken on the Regional Outing in August (Bob Abbott).

Photo on page 15: "kart a canoes" at the recent opening of the boat mobility project on the newly restored Stroudwater at Ebley Mill. (Martin Turner)

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

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