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AUTUMN 2015 | ISSUE 249

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AGENDA
The Column of the National Chairman

Our Waterways Manifesto proved to be very popular with politicians and, thanks to the sterling efforts of branches and individual members, 289 candidates pledged their support for our five key points. Forty of those candidates were elected as Members of Parliament and we arranged an afternoon reception at the House of Commons in July to which all 40 were invited, along with other MPs with inland waterways within their constituencies.

We encouraged all those who attended to join the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways so that they can demonstrate their support for the inland waterways and help IWA’s ongoing campaign to protect and enhance them.

The new Waterways Minister is Rory Stewart (MP for Penrith and the Border) and we were pleased to meet him at our reception. Every opportunity was taken to remind MPs and the Minister of the important role our waterways play and why they must be adequately funded and protected.

The Environment Agency's problems are particularly noticeable in the Anglian Region but unless the position is addressed they will inevitably spread. IWA finds it completely unacceptable that navigations are being allowed to fall into disuse and we continue to press for these matters to be dealt with. We still firmly believe that the way forward is to transfer EA navigations to the Canal & River Trust with an appropriate funding package, and IWA will continue to campaign for this to happen at the earliest opportunity.

The Environment Agency’s navigations continue to be an area of major concern for us and illustrate very clearly why waterways need to be properly funded. In May a campaign cruise from Boston to Spalding, organised by IWA Lincolnshire Branch, was cancelled at short notice, as EA was unable to operate Fulney Lock. The planning for the event, including EA involvement, had started in November 2014 so it was immensely disappointing that IWA’s attempt to support the Fens Waterways Link was frustrated by EA’s inability to operate the lock.

The Environment Agency's problems are particularly noticeable in the Anglian Region but unless the position is addressed they will inevitably spread. IWA finds it completely unacceptable that navigations are being allowed to fall into disuse and we continue to press for these matters to be dealt with. We still firmly believe that the way forward is to transfer EA navigations to the Canal & River Trust with an appropriate funding package, and IWA will continue to campaign for this to happen at the earliest opportunity.

The mooring problems in London and at the western end of the Kennet & Avon Canal are now well known. I am very pleased that CRT is now taking action to try and ensure that all boaters get a fair opportunity to use the moorings. It is early days and we cannot yet expect to see significant progress. However, CRT is now taking the action it promised and there is evidence that cases are starting to be resolved. Rest assured that IWA will continue to lobby CRT to ensure this progress continues so that all boaters get a fair chance to use moorings and facilities around the system.

August Bank Holiday sees our Festival of Water at Northampton and I am sure it will be as successful as IWA’s Canalway Cavalcade and the IWA Trailboat Festival on the fabulous Northern Reaches of the Lancaster Canal. What a crying shame that the M6 was allowed to cut the Northern Reaches off and what a perfect example of why IWA needs to continue the fight to protect and restore our waterways. IWA is determined that this type of official vandalism is not allowed to happen again.

Les Etheridge
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THE FIFTY-SIXTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

Will be held at Salwarpe Village Hall, Salwarpe, Droitwich, Worcestershire, WR9 0AH

At 11.30am on Saturday 26th September 2015.

AGENDA

1. To receive, and approve the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 27th September 2014.


3. To re-appoint Saffery Champness as auditors of the Association in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Acts and to authorise trustees to agree their remuneration.

4. To note the re-appointment of Les Etheridge and Gillian Smith, and appointment of Paul Birkett, as nationally elected trustees for terms of three years.

5. To note the re-appointment of Roger Holmes as Region Chairman for South West Region for a further term of three years, and the appointment of Mike Carter as Region Chairman for North West Region for a term of three years.

6. To hear an address by the national chairman, Les Etheridge, followed by questions.

By Order of the Trustees
HELEN ELLIOTT-ADAMS,
Company Secretary

NOTES TO THE AGENDA

Programme for the Day: The Annual General Meeting is the formal part of the day-long Annual Members Meeting, which will commence at 10.30am with two short presentations on the theme of ‘IWA initiatives on non-Canal & River Trust Waterways’. After lunch there will be an opportunity to discuss members’ topics with trustees followed by the National Awards Ceremony. Further details of other activities will be available on the Association’s website (www.waterways.org.uk/agm) and in the fortnightly Bulletin, available nearer the time.

Directions to the Annual General Meeting: A map and full directions are available on the Association’s web site (www.waterways.org.uk/agm) or from Head Office.

Lunch Arrangements: Lunch will be available at the conclusion to the Annual General Meeting.

Minutes of the 2014 Annual General Meeting: Copies of the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 27th September 2014 are available on request from Head Office (Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA – Tel: 01494 783453 – e-mail: iwa@waterways.org.uk) and on the Association’s web site at www.waterways.org.uk/information/minutes_of_meetings/minutes_of_meetings.

Proxies: Any person being a member of the Association is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote on his behalf at the Annual General Meeting. A proxy need not be a member of the Association. Forms for nominating a proxy may be obtained from Head Office, as above, to which they should be returned by 2.00pm on Thursday 24th September 2015, in order to be valid.

Subscription Rates: There are no proposals to raise subscription rates this year.

Trustees Ballot 2015: Les Etheridge, Clive Henderson and Gillian Smith retire by rotation. Nominations were received for Paul Birkett, Les Etheridge and Gillian Smith. Thus, there are three (3) nominations for three (3) vacancies, and no requirement for a ballot this year.

Election of Region Chairmen: The posts of region chairmen for North West Region, West Midlands Region, South West Region (each for three-year terms) and Eastern Region (two-year term) were open for election this year. There was just one nomination each for (a) North West Region, being for Mike Carter, and (b) South West Region, being for Roger Holmes so there is no ballot this year. Vaughan Welch retired as chairman of West Midlands Region and Alan Platt retired as chairman of North West Region. There remains a vacancy for the chairman of Eastern Region. Nominations will be sought again in the November edition of Waterways magazine for the posts of region chairmen for Eastern Region and West Midlands Region.

The nomination detail for each of the above trustees is available at www.waterways.org.uk/agm/candidates
Cross-Party Support at Westminster Reception

Over 50 people including MPs, members of the House of Lords and waterway representatives were joined at the Houses of Parliament by the new Waterway Minister, Rory Stewart MP, on 7th July at a reception organised by IWA. The event, which was the first meeting of a waterways group at Westminster in the new Parliament, followed on from IWA’s pre-election campaign which saw over 40 MPs pledging their support to the Association’s Waterway Manifesto.

Among those present at the waterways reception was former waterway minister, Richard Benyon, MP for Newbury, who was a leading figure in the setting up of the Canal & River Trust. Other MPs from across the House took time out of their schedules to drop in to the afternoon session, where IWA representatives outlined the five points of the Manifesto. About a third of the MPs who attended the event were newly elected, and so this was their first opportunity to learn about the work of IWA at a parliamentary level, and to discover more about the waterways in their constituencies.

Among the topics discussed were affordable moorings and issues affecting residential boaters, IWA’s aspiration to see the Environment Agency’s navigations transferred to the Canal & River Trust with a sufficient funding package, waterways heritage and local planning issues, waterway restoration projects and the potential effects of future stages of HS2 on specific waterway locations.

All the MPs and peers who attended were encouraged to join the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways, which will now be reconvened for the new Parliament, as well as being invited to develop a close relationship with local waterway groups such as canal societies and IWA branches in their constituencies.

IWA’s National Chairman, Les Etheridge, said “We were pleased to see the enthusiasm for waterways issues from those attending and to have the opportunity to meet Rory Stewart MP so soon after his appointment as Waterways Minister. I’m also delighted that he has agreed to a further meeting with us to discuss these issues in more detail.”

Canal Festival Bound for Liverpool

Liverpool’s award-winning Eldonian Village on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal will host IWA’s Chester & Merseyside Branch 2016 Canal Festival over the weekend 11th-12th June 2016, to celebrate 200 years since the opening of the canal to Liverpool.

The event will be centred on the canal around Eldonian Community Centre and take in the section down the locks to Stanley Dock. The event revisits the site of IWA’s National Waterways Festival held there in 1968 when 170 craft from all over the country created a major spectacle.

As well as celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, the festival will encourage boating visitors to make the journey down this length of canal and visit Eldonian Village and Liverpool waterfront via the spectacular Liverpool Link Canal. IWA is working in partnership with Eldonian Village Trust, Liverpool City Council and Canal & River Trust to make the festival a great opportunity to showcase this area of the canal and the city.

With the Mersey River Festival taking place the week before the IWA event, visiting boats will be able to experience Liverpool’s waterways at their best. There will be Tall Ships from all over the world and inland waterways craft from all over Britain on display.

For further information and boat booking forms go to IWA Chester & Merseyside Branch website: www.waterways.org.uk/chester/chester_Merseyside; or contact the Branch Secretary/Festival publicity officer on gillian.bolt@waterways.org.uk.
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Campaign Cruise thwarted by lock closure

A campaign cruise organised by IWA Lincolnshire Branch from Boston to Spalding on the River Welland, had to be cancelled in May due to failure by the Environment Agency to maintain Fulney Lock in a navigable condition. The lock gates cannot be operated due to a build-up of silt in the lock gate recesses.

IWA had planned to assemble a flotilla of up to eight boats which would moor in Spalding to demonstrate the unrealised potential for tourism and economic development that the return of recreational boating to Spalding will bring when the Fens Waterways Link is completed.

The River Welland is an historic navigation stretching back to the time when the river was tidal up to and beyond Spalding. Fulney Lock is a flood defence structure, on the outskirts of Spalding, which is part of the tidal defences for the town and the surrounding low lying land of South Holland. EA operating procedures specify that the structure is available for navigation when tides are level with the normal retained height of water through the town. The historic statutory navigation rights extend back to when Spalding was a significant trading port.

IWA started planning the cruise in November 2014 with a view to supporting the Fens Waterways Link project by demonstrating that even now it is possible to cruise from Boston to Spalding and up the Welland as far as Peakirk (near Peterborough). In late April 2015 EA effectively closed the navigation due to their failure to clear siltation behind the lock gates making them impossible to open. A similar cruise was planned in 2012 but also failed for the same reason. It is not clear whether navigation has been possible since 2012. But as recently as 2001 the lock was navigable, having been documented by a group of boaters known as the “Tuesday Night Club”.

The 2015 cruise had been planned with the help and support of Fosdyke Yacht Haven who act as harbour authority on the River Welland tidal outfall from Fulney Lock to the Wash.

On hearing that the cruise had been cancelled, IWA National Chairman Les Etheridge said: “There are various parts of the EA network currently unavailable for use. IWA wants to see them all restored to working order as soon as possible and to ensure there is adequate funding to keep them operational.”

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EPIC ENGINEERING

IWA, CRT and Scottish Canals have worked together to develop a document, Epic Engineering, that explores the challenges faced by waterway restoration projects and celebrates the engineering utilised to overcome them.

The document demonstrates how groups involved in waterway restoration have tackled potential project stoppers by finding solutions that have added, or will add, value to the finished project in a variety of ways. A number of relatively common waterway restoration problems are featured in the document with each covered in a separate section. Each section has at least one case study with details of how the issue has been addressed by a particular group, as well as the contact details of those involved in engineering the solution.

It is hoped that the document will inspire restoration groups, stakeholders and local authorities, to overcome waterway restoration challenges through clever engineering and lateral thinking.

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Fulney Lock.
**New Weed Lifter for the Chelmer & Blackwater**

A new weed lifting boat was delivered to the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation in June, in time to deal with the summer weed growth. The new Dutch built boat is now partnering Essex Waterway's similar weed cutting boat purchased last year.

The purchase of the new boat has been made possible by a grant of £20,000 from the Essex County Council Community Initiatives Fund. County Councillor Roger Hirst, Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Libraries, Planning and the Environment said: “The Community Initiatives Fund is an excellent example of how Essex County Council is supporting communities to help themselves. By increasing the opportunities for local residents, community groups and volunteers individually to shape their local facilities and undertake new ventures, we will see them make Essex an even better place to live and work than it is today.”

Chairman of Essex Waterways, Roy Chandler, commented: “The new weed lifter is already enabling Essex Waterways to deal more efficiently and effectively with the rapid summer weed growth on the 14-mile recreational waterway.

“Unless removed, weed growth prevents boating, canoeing, paddle-boarding and angling and has an adverse effect upon wildlife and fish. We are therefore extremely grateful for this help from the Community Initiatives Fund which allows us to improve our work on the navigation.”

**Spaces still available in IWA Triathlon**

Don’t miss your chance to take part in IWA’s Waterways Triathlon in Essex this summer. On Sunday 20th September you will be able to canoe, cycle and run to raise money for local waterways causes. The routes will take you through Essex countryside, towns and villages, mainly along the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation.

You will have the chance to raise money for Essex Waterways, who manage and improve the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation and will need the funds for important repairs for locks to keep the waterway navigable, and The Susan Trust, who are restoring the historic Chelmer lighter Susan.

The triathlon will be a fun, sociable way to raise money for local amenities with significant historical interest and have a great day out at the same time. There will be a barbecue at the end for everyone who has taken part, as well as their support teams and spectators. Some participants are even participating with their dogs.

All IWA members are encouraged to support what promises to be a memorable day for all involved. If you would like any more information visit www.waterways.org.uk/triathlon or call 01494 783453 extension 611.

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**Titford Pools Plaque**

Birmingham Canal Navigations Society is progressing an initiative to regenerate the Titford Canal, Pools and adjoining public open space. As part of this project, the Society is keen to increase the number of boats navigating the Pools and to encourage this has produced a brass plaque that is now available to all boats that cruise the Pools at any time.

To receive a plaque boaters need to complete and return a form with photographic proof that they navigated the Pools. Forms and further information on collection or delivery is available by emailing boundarypost@gmail.com. The Society recommends that boats travel with at least one other boat to assist in case one of them runs aground. This is a possibility when accessing the Pools but boats should be okay once the Pools are reached, as the water here is deeper.
IWA is holding a fundraising fortnight from Saturday 3rd October to Sunday 18th October. IWA branches have been invited to hold any fundraising activity between these dates to raise money for their own funds. The overall, combined total raised by all branches will showcase the success of local fundraising across the country and provide a great opportunity to show what IWA is doing at a local level.

Those interested in getting involved should contact their local branch to find out what they have planned for the fortnight. If a particular branch is not currently participating, members are encouraged to organise a fundraising activity themselves – anything from a cake sale to an auction or a local community event to help raise money for the local branch.

More information is available from IWA’s Fundraising Officer Toby Gomm at toby.gomm@waterways.org.uk, or telephone 01494 783453 extension 611.
WRG Van Appeal Reaches £60,000

IWA’s appeal to fund the replacement of four Waterway Recovery Group vans (see Summer issue) has raised over £62,000 towards its £120,000 target, exceeding the halfway mark. This means that WRG now has enough money to purchase two of the four vans needed.

The first two vans will be purchased later this year, so that they can be used to assist canal restoration projects throughout 2016. It is hoped that the remaining two vans can be purchased later in 2016.

As well as many generous donations, the money has been raised from a variety of activities and events, including endurance challenges, selling fudge and sponsored events. WRG would like to thank everyone who has supported the appeal so far.

Meanwhile, the appeal will be given a further boost by a sponsored walk along the Droitwich Canals, which is being held on 19th September (see page 35). More information on the WRG Van Appeal, including all events and activities planned as part of the Appeal, is available on the IWA website.

IWA Raffle 2015

IWA has launched the 2015 Waterways Restoration Raffle following the huge success of last year’s event when over £13,000 was raised to support 54 restoration societies and their projects across the UK.

Tickets are now on sale and can be found in this issue of Waterways magazine, as well as being available via IWA’s website and through some of the restoration groups hoping to gain support this year. The ambition is to exceed last year’s figure and give at least £15,000 to restoration projects as well as to IWA’s WRG van appeal.

There are ten prizes to be won and buying a raffle ticket gives you the chance to support restoration across the waterways as well as win a fantastic prize:

**FIRST PRIZE**, donated by The Wyvern Shipping Company, is a one week boating holiday on a six-berth narrowboat during June, September or October 2016 worth £800 – £1,500.

**SECOND PRIZE**, donated by Andersen Boats, is a three night (Friday-Monday) or four night (Monday-Friday) boating holiday on a four-berth boat worth up to £700.

**THIRD PRIZE**, donated by Canal Cruising Company, is a weekend boating holiday for four people worth £590.

Other prizes to be won include: a two-night boating break donated by Cambrian Cruisers; a weekend boating holiday donated by Calcutt Boats; a day-boat hire holiday donated by ABC Leisure; a pair of Crick Festival Weekend Tickets donated by Waterways World magazine; £100 worth of vouchers for Midland Chandlers; a 12-month Canal Boat magazine subscription and a copy of each of their books; a hand painted, decorative jug donated by the Stone Boat Building Company.

Tickets are available now. They cost £2 each, in books of 5 tickets. A book of tickets is included in this issue of Waterways. If you wish to purchase more than one book, you can do so online at www.waterways.org.uk/raffle or by telephone on 01494 783453 extension 611.

Furthermore, you can nominate your favourite restoration projects so they receive a bigger share of the funds. The raffle gives you the choice of which project to support with every ticket you purchase. On each ticket stub you can nominate your chosen project and once the raffle has been drawn the number of nominations will be calculated and the money each restoration project receives will be in direct proportion to their total nominations. For example: a project receiving 10% of the total nominations would receive 10% of the money raised.

So make sure you choose your favourite projects when you buy your tickets.

The raffle will be drawn on 31st December 2015 at IWA’s Head Office in Chesham so we will need to receive your ticket stubs by this date.

For more information on raffle prizes, restoration projects and the terms and conditions visit www.waterways.org.uk/raffle or contact the raffle organiser Toby Gomm at toby.gomm@waterways.org.uk or by telephone, number as above.

IWA would like to thank Wyvern Shipping, Andersen Boats, Canal Cruising Company, Cambrian Cruisers, Calcutt Boats, ABC Leisure, Waterways World, Midland Chandlers, Archant and The Stone Boat Building Company.
Montgomery Canal towpath project completed

The Montgomery Canal restoration came under the spotlight on 5th June, at a celebration to mark the completion of a £260,000 towpath improvement project, near Llanymynech, Powys.

A new all-weather surface means walkers, cyclists, anglers and canoeists will now be able to use the mile-long section between Four Crosses and Carreghofa, just south of the town of Llanymynech, whatever the weather. Several new canoe access points have also been created.

Over £1m has already been invested in transforming a 14-mile section of the towpath between Newtown and Welshpool. This is the seventh section of towpath to be upgraded and is being carried out by Glandwr Cymru – the Canal & River Trust in Wales, in partnership with Powys County Council, with funding from the Welsh Government’s Local Transport Fund for 2013-14.

Russell George, Welsh Assembly member for Montgomeryshire, John Dodwell, Montgomery Canal Partnership chairman and Trustee of the Canal & River Trust, and Brenda Harvey, who chairs the Trust’s local waterway partnership, cut a ribbon on Friday 5th June to mark the opening of the new section of towpath.

This was followed by a walk along the canal to Vyrnwy Aqueduct, lunch and presentations and exhibitions giving an update on the Montgomery Canal restoration progress at Llanymynech village hall.

Brenda Harvey said: “We are delighted that another step along the path to the full restoration of the Montgomery Canal has been completed. This section of towpath is popular with both visitors and the local community and we are pleased they can now enjoy this beautiful peaceful waterway in all weathers.”

Welsh Government Transport Minister Edwina Hart commented: “This latest new section will provide a safe, pleasant route for people to walk and cycle to Welshpool and Llanymynech. The Welsh Government is committed to making it easier for people to enjoy the benefits of walking and cycling through the introduction of the Active Travel (Wales) Act and investment in local transport schemes.”

IWA Grant Supports Studley Grange Project

IWA has helped Wilts & Berks Canal Trust to secure funding for the main contract of the Studley Grange project, which aims to restore a 1.25 kilometre section of the Wilts & Berks Canal and create a wildlife trail, with a grant of £4,000, to go towards dredging the canal channel. Meanwhile WBCT has also secured £50,000 from Big Lottery/People’s Millions and agreement from the Underwood Trust to co-fund the dredging and the planting of the Wildlife Corridor.

Funding for the remainder of the basic civil engineering has been made possible by a grant to WBCT of just under £350,000 from Viridor Credits Environmental Company through the Landfill Communities Fund. The main works were scheduled to start towards the end of May, subject to final confirmation from Biffa that the site is ready.

WBCT still needs to reach its remaining funding target of £25,000 to complete the Studley Grange project; the amount raised to date is over £9,000. Information on the Studley Grange project and how to donate to its fund is available from the WBCT website: www.wbct.org.uk.

Thames Bridge Proposed

At the end of June, Transport for London awarded a grant of £170,000 to fund an advanced feasibility study as part of a project to build a new bridge over the River Thames. The proposed footbridge would cross between Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf with an opening section in the middle so that ships can pass. Subject to the results of the feasibility study and subsequent negotiations, the bridge could be in place by 2020.
Lichfield Towpath to be Part of Heart of England Way

Lichfield’s Heritage Towpath Trail, built by Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust volunteers, is to become part of the Heart of England Way.

The path runs alongside Lichfield Canal next to the A51 Tamworth Road. Since its completion, the Trail has been enjoyed by families, walkers, joggers, cyclists and wheelchair-users. It is hoped that even more walkers will enjoy the Trail now the Heart of England Way Association has proposed that the long distance route be diverted on to the towpath.

From Lichfield down Quarry Hills Lane, the Heart of England Way will cross the A51 into Cricket Lane to join the 700-metre section of the Lichfield Canal Heritage Towpath Trail along Borrowcop Locks Canal Park, before re-joining the A51 and the existing Heart of England Way at the Tamworth Road Bridge.

The 104-mile Heart of England Way runs from Milford Common on Cannock Chase to Bourton-on-the-Water in the Cotswolds and the new section will be officially opened later in the year.

Swansea Bay Inland Waterway Meeting

An inaugural meeting of organisations interested in the development of the Swansea Bay Inland Waterway (SBIW) was held on 22nd June at the Neath Port Talbot Council offices in Baglan Bay. The proposal is to link the Neath, Swansea and Tenant canals via the River Tawe to form a 37-mile network of waterways.

Organisations represented included Neath, Port Talbot and Swansea councils, Swansea Canal Society, Neath & Tennant Canal Trust, Canal & River Trust, Sustrans, Swansea Community Boat Trust and IWA. All agreed to commit to supporting the proposed development subject to suitable funding sources being identified. A further meeting was arranged for late July when it is hoped a structure to coordinate and oversee the project will be established.

Further HS2 Developments

On 23rd June, The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Robert Goodwill, formally set out the motion to ask the existing HS2 Phase 1 Select Committee to consider Instruction No. 3 to the House of Commons. This process, which was debated, asks the Select Committee to consider changes to the Bill including:

- Amendments relating to the vertical and horizontal alignment of the proposed railway in the vicinity of the A38 and Trent & Mersey Canal in the parishes of Fradley and Streethay, King’s Bromley and Whittington, in the county of Staffordshire – which includes the changes IWA and CRT have been petitioning for, removing three of the four rail viaducts over the Trent & Mersey Canal. However, it also adds a realigned road next to the canal, which is of concern to IWA.

- Amendments conferring additional power to carry out works in the Borough of Slough and in the parish of her in the county of Buckinghamshire for the purpose of providing a new Heathrow Express depot in the Borough of Slough (to the north east of Langley railway station), in consequence of the displacement of the existing depot because of the exercise of powers conferred by the Bill. This is a new provision and affects the Grand Union Canal Slough Arm so IWA will be looking at the details.

- Amendments conferring additional power to provide sidings for Crossrail services at Old Oak Common in the London Boroughs of Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, that could be extended in the future to create a connection between the West Coast Main Line Railway and the Great Western Main Line. Again IWA will be looking at the detail here.

- Amendments to accommodate the requirements of landowners and occupiers in several places.

- Amendments to accommodate changes to the design of the works authorised by the Bill in several places.

- More details of the planned changes were due to be published on 13th July. For the additional environmental statement, which will appear on that date, there will be a public consultation lasting 42 days, from 17th July to 28th August. There will also be a petitioning period of four weeks for those directly or specially affected by the changes in this second additional provision, so that they can submit petitions. That petitioning period will begin on 17th July and end on 14th August for all petitioners.

IWA will be studying the documents produced on 13th July, to see how the changed or new proposals will affect inland waterways. Subject to the outcome, IWA will submit comments on the environmental statement and submit a petition on any unresolved issues. IWA will confirm the location of the details when they are available.

More information on HS2 is available on the IWA website.
Festival News

Spectacular Canalway Cavalcade

Crowds flocked to the junction of the Grand Union (Paddington Arm) and Regent’s canals at Little Venice over the early May Bank Holiday, 2nd-4th May, to enjoy the sun and spectacle of IWA’s annual Canalway Cavalcade. The Cavalcade was attended by 147 boats from across the waterway network in addition to the many visitors on the towpath.

The event was opened on Saturday afternoon by Councillor Audrey Lewis, Lord Mayor of Westminster, who praised IWA volunteers for organising the festival for the 33rd year. The opening ceremony also featured speeches from Les Etheridge, IWA National Chairman, who welcomed visitors and thanked all the volunteers who had planned, organised and staffed the event, and Richard Parry, Chief Executive of the Canal & River Trust. Libby Bradshaw, Event Manager, also took the opportunity to thank British Land, who had supported all the waterborne events at the Festival.

There was plenty on offer for visitors to enjoy including stalls and colourful boats lining the towpath. A number of the visiting boats took part in the Canalway Cavalcade pageant, themed “Canals in Bloom”, on Saturday and the procession of illuminated boats on Sunday evening.

Jerry Sanders, Chairman and Commercial Director of IWA’s Canalway Cavalcade Organising Committee, said: “Building on last year’s success, we increased the number of stalls and extended the trade show. The word soon spread that Canalway Cavalcade at Little Venice was the place to enjoy real ale, good food and a terrific atmosphere, so the crowds just poured in.”

In addition to the entertainment and food, there was once again a number of trophies for boaters to compete for at Canalway Cavalcade. A full list of winners is published on IWA’s website.

Successful Trailboat Festival

Despite mixed weather, IWA’s 2015 National Trailboat Festival was a well-attended and successful event. It was staged on the Lancaster Canal at the Westmorland Show Ground, Crooklands over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend 30th May-1st June. Hosted and organised by Lancaster Canal Trust and forming part of the ‘Country Fest’ show, it attracted healthy visitor numbers and a good turnout of trailboats, including almost 30 from the Wilderness Boat Owners Club.

The festival was opened on the Saturday morning by Councillor Jon Barry, Mayor of Lancaster. Attractions over the next three days included a boat handling competition, kite flying, dry stone walling demonstrations, trips aboard the Lancaster Canal Trust’s Waterwitch, stalls and refreshments, and a colourful illuminated boat procession on the Sunday evening. The event concluded with an awards ceremony, after which many craft followed the Waterwitch to the end of the canal’s navigable section and then continued on foot to view Hincaster Tunnel.

A full list of award winners is published on the Lancaster Canal Trust website – www.lctrust.co.uk.
Successful Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally

A total of 81 historic narrowboats attended this year’s 13th Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally. It was a significant improvement on last years 63, and this was despite the growing popularity of similar events around the waterways; in particular the new Manchester-based Lymm Historic Transport Day, which was held head-to-head on the Sunday. That event attracted a number of northern-based historic narrowboats, several of which have been seen at Braunston rallies in past years.

There have been numerous warm tributes from those who attended the Braunston event. Former working boatman David Blagrove and now Chairman of the Friends of the National Waterways Museum, Stoke Bruerne, said: “The Braunston Show is the one that gets closest to the heart of what it is all about. I think this view is borne out by the numbers of those who bring historic boats from long distances just to be there.” One such, the Madely, had travelled from Skipton in Yorkshire, as it has done almost every year since the Rally began in 2003.

The Rally was formally opened by the Canal & River Trust CEO Richard Parry aboard the last surviving steam narrowboat President. Accompanying him was his Chairman Tony Hales steering the butty Northolt, which is better know as Sunny Valley by its appearance in the 1945 Ealing Studios film Painted Boats. Together they steered the pair of boats from the Grand Union Canal into Braunston Marina.

Cuckoo named Dawn Rose

The first new Cuckoo boat to be built for over 80 years was officially named Dawn Rose at Worksop Water Day in June. Cllr Sybil Fielding, the Chair of Nottinghamshire County Council, presided over a ceremony that included saying some traditional verses, pouring beer and throwing a mirror into the canal. This was the culmination of over a decade of planning, fund-raising and hard work by a group of volunteers from the Chesterfield Canal Trust.

Cuckoo boats were unique to the Chesterfield Canal. They never had engines, being horse drawn right up to the end of commercial working in the 1950s. They had a mast in order to sail when they ventured onto the River Trent. The last Cuckoo boat known to be in existence rotted away over 20 years ago. It was called Dawn. This gave the inspiration for the name of the new boat.

The actual building work started four years ago. It was led by David Bownes who worked on Cuckoo boats as a young man, so he was one of the very few people alive – possibly the only one – with real working knowledge of their construction.

The volunteers decided to do it the traditional way, so they used only hand tools. No power tools were used at any stage. Even the dead straight 25ft mast was carved out by hand. As the culmination of the naming ceremony, bunting was hoisted up the mast topped by a pennant bearing its name.

Worksop Water Day was organised by the East Midlands Waterways Partnership, the Canal & River Trust, Chesterfield Canal Trust, the Angling Trust, Focus on Young People in Bassetlaw and Bassetlaw District Council. It was supported by the Grafton Angling Association, Worksop & District Anglers Association, Pleasley Canoe Club and the Lock Keeper Pub.
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FREIGHT NEWS

Britain and Europe in agreement

At a March 2015 inland waterways transport (IWT) conference in Brussels it was interesting to see the remarkable agreement between Britain and its mainland neighbours on problems and strategies.

Their waterways and ours may be very different in scale but they point to the same problems as ourselves and the strategies to deal with the problems are similar.

IWT has an under-utilised capacity and there is great potential for modal shift but there is little evidence for such a shift despite increasing concern for the environment. For this to happen there must be improvement of the waterway infrastructure and elimination of bottlenecks and gaps in the network because poor navigability favours counter shift – traffic to and not from the roads.

IWT needs to be an element in designated, fully integrated, multi-modal corridors. In Britain the Manchester Ship Canal is such and proposed development of Leeds as an inland port could be the same. In Europe it is believed that there must be greater emphasis on non-traditional IWT freight (containers, pallets, food and drinks) and the possibility of short as well as long distance hauls. Arguably, the recent success of the MSC reflects just this and there could be containers and steel products to Leeds.

It is both an advantage and disadvantage of IWT that barges last far longer than lorries and the age of much of the capacity needs addressing and new tonnage with low carbon footprints brought into use.

If all this sounds familiar it could be because the Inland Waterways Freight Group has been making these points for many years and fully supports the Commercial Boat Operators Association and the Freight Transport Association in efforts to make things happen.

The Manchester Ship Canal saw increased traffic in 2014.

Here and there

Increased traffic on the Manchester Ship Canal is reflected in Runcorn’s record 408,000 tonnes in 2014 and expected further growth to over 450,000 tonnes this year. A £1.4m investment in improved facilities has helped. Also on the MSC at Port Salford, Barton, there is planning permission for the UK’s first tri-modal inland port and this is a main element in the Atlantic Gateway concept with direct barge access to the Port of Liverpool and reduction of road haulage.

On the Thames work is well under way at the Battersea Power Station redevelopment and the associated Northern Line underground link with Elephant and Castle. Barges took sections of the Battersea wharf’s dismantled coal cranes to Tilbury where they will be restored for return to Battersea on completion of building works. The underground tunnel will create 5,000 tonnes of spoil a day to be removed by barge and tunnel linings will be brought in that way. Floating equipment and barge traffic is also much in evidence at the Wood Wharf, West India Dock, second development phase.

Meanwhile, on the Trent the Bio Dynamic firm is increasing the capacity of its anaerobic digester/power generating plant at Colwick and the river is expected to provide barge transport for what might amount to 150,000 tonnes a year. Cory on the Thames is thought to provide a good example of this sort of operation and the Nottingham Campaign for Better Transport has encouraged the idea.

Don Evans

An obituary to Don appeared in the May 2015 Bulletin of the IWA. He became a member of IWA in 1960 and was very active in many of the protests and campaigns of the time; his wide ranging campaigning on behalf of the waterways was acknowledged with his award of the Association’s Richard Bird Medal for his many services to waterways.

Don was a long standing member of IWA’s Inland Shipping Group and very much opposed to its change of name to the Freight Group – a possible reflection of his own very wide interest in waterways? Don had technical expertise in mechanical and electrical engineering and in recent years provided the group with knowledge of things technical which might otherwise have been lacking – engine power and hull design being the most obvious examples. Many IWA members with boat problems benefited from Don’s willing assistance. Don was always a great help in storing and transporting the IWFG’s display panels and devoting time on the stand at IWA events. He will be sadly missed.
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“Blisworth Tunnel, one of the system’s longest at 3,076 yards”
The Southern Grand Union Canal

Few would argue with the assertion that the Grand Union Canal is the greatest trunk route of the British waterway system, its Main Line running for no less than 158 miles from Salford Junction, Birmingham to Brentford. Here we cover the canal’s southern section between Gayton Junction and the Thames, together with the Northampton, Buckingham, Aylesbury, Wendover, Slough and Paddington arms. We’ll also take a brief look at the beautiful River Nene, with IWA’s Northampton Festival of Water scheduled to take place on the river over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

Our journey begins at Gayton Junction, where the Northampton Arm leaves on its short but eventful descent to the Nene (see right). The drama begins almost immediately, as we come to Blisworth Tunnel, one of the system’s longest at 3,076 yards. Many years of inadequate maintenance led to its closure for four years in the early 1980s, but following much campaigning by IWA and others, the tunnel was reopened in August 1984.

HISTORY
The canal opened at the start of the 19th century as the Grand Junction Canal, creating a long-awaited broad gauge connection between Braunston and Brentford in place of the slower passage via the narrow Oxford Canal and the Thames.

The new Warwick & Napton and Warwick & Birmingham canals completed the link to the Midlands, via a short stretch of the Oxford Canal. These were soon joined by a further connection to Leicester, and short arms to Aylesbury, Buckingham, Wendover, and Northampton (and the Nene). Meanwhile, the Paddington Arm connected commercial carriers to the vast new Paddington Basin; the Regent’s Canal extended this route further to Limehouse and the docks.

The fate of all these waterways was tied up together, and so it was logical that in 1929 they should merge under the aegis of the Regent’s Canal to form the new Grand Union. At the same time, they created a huge new Grand Union Canal Carrying Company fleet with the aim of holding off rail and motor competition. Commercial carrying did continue longer here than on most of the Midland canals, but the southern GU is now the preserve of leisure boaters – even if many regard the waterway as merely a convenient through route to somewhere else.

NORTHAMPTON ARM
Leading off the Grand Union Canal at Gayton Junction, the Northampton Arm makes a rapid descent through 17 narrow-beam locks and a couple of lift-bridges to the Nene at Northampton. Initially rural in character, it suddenly plunges headlong beneath the M1 motorway to meet Northampton’s suburbs and industrial estates coming the other way. The last mile or so is resolutely urban, and most boaters are pleased to lock into the Nene below Lock 17 and commence their river journey.

It is a matter of eternal regret that the locks of the Northampton Arm were built to narrow-beam dimensions, thus preventing wide-beam craft from travelling from the Grand Union Canal to the waterways of East Anglia. A missed opportunity indeed!

The Northampton Arm has benefited from much volunteer work over recent years, organised and coordinated by IWA. Here one of Northampton Branch’s regular work parties were joined by employees from Santander who set to work painting Lock 2.

We head south on an epic journey from Gayton Junction to the Thames at Brentford, exploring the GU’s numerous arms as we go...
It was 1713 when an Act of Parliament was first passed to make the Nene navigable to Northampton. Works proceeded slowly, however, and it was 1761 before the county town was finally reached – 250 years ago this year. During the 1800s, the Nene Valley Drainage & Improvement Act was passed, but lack of adequate funding meant that the river remained an unreliable navigation.

The construction of a new channel from Stanground to the Wash facilitated easier access into the Nene, with the old winding course of the river becoming part of the Middle Level system. Further improvements resulted from the establishment of the Nene Catchment Board in 1931, not least the construction of the Dog-in-a-Doublet Tidal Lock six years later which gave a permanent water level up to Peterborough. The Nene was fully navigable once more, and is today a well-maintained waterway under the control of the Environment Agency.

The Nene is a beautiful river; unspoilt and uncrowded, with many boaters still being put off, it would appear, by the 38 locks to be tackled within its 62 miles. However, virtually all the once-feared guillotine gates have been electrified so it’s an easier prospect than it used to be.

Northampton (venue for this summer’s Festival of Water – see page 14) is a distinguished county town which certainly repays exploration, but the river’s prime attractions lie downstream, as it flows through rural England at its best: a timeless landscape of watermeadows, weathered mills and quaint villages.

Wadenhoe, Oundle and Fotheringhay all enchant the visitor, before more Fenland scenery is on the agenda as the river approaches Peterborough, a thriving city with a fine waterside promenade. Passing the entrance to Stanground Lock – which gives access to the Middle Level Navigations – the river flows as straight as an arrow for a further 5 miles to the sluice and lock at Dog-in-a-Doublet.
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*All prices correct at time of going to press - July 2015.
Stoke Bruerne is as pretty as a picture. Lovingly-kept flower gardens enhance the canal’s passage through Stoke Bruerne.
SOUTH OF BLISWORTH TUNNEL
Stoke Bruerne, at the southern end, is one of the most picturesque and popular villages on the system, the canal effectively forming the main street here. Thatched pub and canal museum face each other across the water, with a scattering of characterful cottages looking on. Despite the crowds that understandably flock here in summer, Stoke Bruerne never loses its ability to beguile even those with only a casual interest in its fascinating history.

Cosgrove is notable, aside from its pleasant pubs, for the impressive aqueduct carrying the canal over the youthful Great Ouse, a river that attains navigable status many miles away at Bedford. Here too is the junction with the former Old Stratford & Buckingham Branch, a waterway that is currently undergoing restoration.

And so to Milton Keynes, a sprawling ‘new town’ that nevertheless turns its best face to the Grand Union Canal, with plenty of well manicured gardens leading down to the water. Bridge 82 stands close to the start of the proposed Bedford-Milton Keynes Waterway that may one day provide a convenient link to the Great Ouse and thus the entire Fenland network.

The three locks that climb up the Soulbury flight are picturesquely set with a fine canalside pub alongside. Drinkers at the Three Locks have a grandstand view of the action as boaters tackle the locks in front of their eyes.

Beyond Leighton Lock the canal reaches the twin towns of Linslade (to the west) and Leighton Buzzard (on the eastern, towpath side). Beyond the towns, we head into the country again and keep climbing at the rate of roughly a lock a mile through another four locks. At one point the waterway lies within a few hundred yards of the railway bridge that was the scene of the infamous Great Train Robbery of 1963.

Marsworth Junction sits amidst attractive countryside and is usually busy with boaters, walkers, anglers and car-borne visitors. Here the Aylesbury Arm sets off on its journey to Buckinghamshire’s thriving county town.

The Buckingham Canal Society, now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, grows from strength to strength. Restoration work continues at Bourton Meadow in Buckingham and the nearby Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve at Hyde Lane, which BCS leases from the local wildlife trust. A recent £2,000 grant from Bucks County Council has allowed the society to restore and signpost a section of towpath here.

Meanwhile, between Cosgrove and the A5, restoration work continues with the Old Stratford Arm. More information can be found at www.buckingham canal.org.uk.
After the junction the canal climbs swiftly up through the seven Marsworth Locks towards its summit at Tring. At the top of the flight is Bulbourne Junction where the Wendover Arm begins its journey to this delightful town on the edge of the Chiltern Hills.

The canal plunges into a long, dark tunnel of overhanging trees as it traverses the three-mile Tring summit level. Emerging at the far end, we pass Cowroast marina and Lock, attended by a row of pretty lock cottages. It’s all downhill to London now!

The canal enters Berkhamsted, once full of busy canalside wharves and industry but now merely just another affluent commuter town. The entry to the town is delightful – large, smart houses with long gardens that sweep down to a wide canal lined with big, luxuriant trees. Four more locks and we reach the large, town centre park – an ideal stopping point, which is why it is generally busy. There is a supermarket a short walk away, and the rest of the town, including the railway station, is within easy reach.

AYLESBURY ARM

The Aylesbury Arm mirrors the Northampton Arm, in that it features a considerable number of narrow-beam locks within a comparatively short distance (16 in 6 miles). It is quite delectable, drifting quietly through the timeless countryside of the Vale of Aylesbury.

The Aylesbury Canal Society – now based at Circus Field – has done much to improve and promote use of the Arm and their ‘welcome boat’ greets and informs visiting boaters. Visitor moorings are available at both Circus Field and Town Basin.

Aylesbury itself is a lively, vibrant town with a host of good pubs and restaurants, as well as some quiet corners tucked away down a maze of lanes and alleyways. The County Museum & Art Gallery is well worth a visit, its Roald Dahl Exhibition being a big hit with children.

WENDOVER ARM

The Wendover Arm Trust was formed in 1989 to restore the unnavigable section of the Arm. The first half mile from the former stop lock at Little Tring to the basin/winding hole opened for navigation in 2005, a total of a little over a mile from the main line junction at Bulbourne. Relining the next couple of miles from Little Tring is ongoing with two footbridges completed and 350 yards at the Drayton Beauchamp end in water with a further 500 yards to be rewatered by the end of the year.

Meanwhile, the historic pumping station site at Whitehouses is being restored as a project by Kent & East Sussex Canal Restoration Group, both as a site of archaeological interest and as an operational feature for dropping surplus water into Wilstone Reservoir. Further details at www.wendoverarmtrust.co.uk

Boats and anglers on the Aylesbury Arm.
The canal heads out of the town through three more locks, and is joined by the River Bulbourne – one of several local rivers that flow in and out of the canal en route toward London. These can cause changes in levels and flow after heavy rain as well as some awkward cross-flows in places. There’s no respite in the locking, with ten to negotiate in the four miles to Hemel Hempstead – as well as a rarity on the GU, a road swing-bridge at Winkwell.

The big canalside Apsley development in Hemel Hempstead is impressive, with a curvaceous steel footbridge crossing the canal by the BWML marina and its surrounding housing.

The canal follows the winding course of the River Glade through a wide, shallow valley where the huge M25 bridge finally signals entry into the Greater London conurbation. The evocatively named Lady Capel’s Lock heralds a picturesque and popular section dominated by what were once two large, lordly estates. Grove Park is now a luxury hotel and championship golf course.

Two sharp bends take us under the famous ornamental bridge, part of the bargain extracted by the Earl of Essex if the canal were to run through his Cassiobury Park estate. The huge grounds
are now a 'green lung' for neighbouring Watford and Rickmansworth – and greatly appreciated by the local population.

Rickmansworth is a typically affluent Home Counties town, with lots of small traditional shops jostling for space along its well-to-do High Street. Meanwhile, the canal continues to meander south along the line of the Glade while the rivers Colne and Chess also add their waters to the flow. This is still wide, flat countryside, and increasingly dominated by former quarries now flooded to become wildlife reserves and water parks. It is tranquil and relaxing cruising territory, with the pretty Black Jack's Lock adding to the appeal.

Tranquility ends a couple of miles later at Denham Deep Lock, the deepest on the whole GU at 11ft 1in. Beyond lies busy, bustling Uxbridge. Residential boats are much in evidence hereabouts, being the source of much local controversy and debate. Suffice it to say, they do little to enhance the canal environment. Uxbridge town centre lies just minutes away and offers shops, pubs and restaurants galore.
It is a busy stretch down to Cowley Peachey Junction where the Slough Arm heads off for five lock-free miles to its terminal basin. With its standard blue-brick overbridges and largely straight alignment, the Arm is hardly the most charismatic of canals, but a good number of boaters make the trip – if only to say they’ve been! Slough itself was well known for many years as an important brick making centre, before acquiring further (although probably transitory) fame as the setting for Ricky Gervais’s popular TV comedy series The Office.

Back on the main line, another junction – Bulls Bridge – soon follows. Here the lock-free Paddington Arm heads into the heart of London at Paddington Basin, and thus a connection with Docklands via the eternally popular Regent’s Canal.

The seven Hanwell Locks are well kept and attended by three attractive keepers’ cottages. The canal runs past the wall of the old ‘county asylum’. Look out for the bricked up entrance to the old Asylum Dock where boats delivered coal and took away surplus produce from the inmates’ gardens.

We have almost reached Brentford now, and the canal resumes a meandering course as it flows with the River Brent through two final locks at Osterley and Clitheroe, before emerging from under the A4 bridge into the high-rise modernity of Brentford. Here are more waterside apartment blocks and their mooring jetties. There are plenty of towpath moorings here and a shopping centre is a few minutes away. Transit to the Thames is via the keeper-operated Gauging Lock at Brentford.

Half a mile down the River Brent to Thames Lock, we emerge into the Thames itself, swapping the relatively sedate waters of the GU for the challenges presented by the tidal river.

We will be covering the remainder of the Grand Union Canal, north to Birmingham, in a future issue of Waterways.
Tell us about how you first became involved with the inland waterways.
In 2002 my wife Val and I were faced with entertaining two teenagers for a few days and hiring a boat seemed like a good idea. The teenagers were mildly interested but we were hooked – within six months we bought a boat and we’ve never looked back.

When did you first join IWA?
As soon as we bought the boat.

What prompted you to join the Association?
It seemed the obvious thing to do – and IWA was the only waterways group we’d heard of!

Which IWA activities did you participate in during the early days?
Occasional branch meetings – and several National Festivals.

When did you first become a member of IWA Events Committee?
Late in 2012. I was persuaded to take on the administration for the 2013 National Festival at Cassiobury Park.

Becoming its chairman when?
I left the committee briefly, then joined it again as Chairman last summer – just when most of the work arranging the Saul Waterways Pageant had already been done by other members of the committee, but still in time to take some of the credit.

Could you describe the work of the Events Committee?
We select sites and then arrange festivals. It sounds simple, but straightforward it certainly is not, and it could not function without the team of incredibly hardworking volunteers who make it all possible. We’re a very friendly team so event planning and management is a sociable experience as well as hard work. We are looking for new team members with an interest in publicity or event administration. Anyone who’s interested can call me any time for a chat.

“We are determined that there will be a Festival of Water every August Bank Holiday weekend.”

We talk to IWA Events Committee Chairman John Butler
How often does the Committee meet?
Every two months for the main Events Committee, alternating with meetings of the organising teams for specific events.

What factors does the Committee consider when planning, for example, the venue for a future Trailboat Festival?
We have to consider the suitability of a variety of sites and we also try to move around the country as much as we can. Trailboat Festivals are organised by local groups with the help and encouragement of Trailboat Director Derek Smith and a grant from IWA toward the organisation costs.

How far in advance do you plan future events?
Trailboat Festivals are arranged three or four years in advance. We are aiming for a similar timescale for our main August event, but that is proving a little more difficult. We have agreed next year’s venue and we are still looking for sites for 2017 onwards. National Campaign Festivals are occasional events and tend to reflect local restoration or campaigning issues.

There is still some disquiet – among a number of IWA members – about the decision to dispense with the annual National Festival, which had for so many years been the focal point of the summer’s events. Why did the Association decide to dispense with the ‘National’?
The National in its old form outgrew itself. The last National at Cassiobury Park involved a large team of volunteers for three weeks of on-site build and one week of breaking down. The time had come to consider what’s right for our members and to create something that reflects our charitable status.

How do you see the event developing in the future?
We’re still holding an annual event, just not in the same form. Our ambition each summer is to create a memorable festival, tailored to the location and satisfying the needs of boaters, traders and the general public. This year’s Northampton Festival of Water will be very different from last year’s event at Saul Junction, and future events will be tailor made for the chosen venues. We are determined that there will be a Festival of Water every August Bank Holiday weekend and that it will be worth a visit.

What exciting events lie ahead in the years to come? How about giving Waterways a ‘major scoop’…
Look out for a Campaign Festival next year, as well as the August event at Pelsall Junction on the Wyrley & Essington Canal. We are working on some exciting ideas for 2017, but my lips are sealed. Talk to me about joining Events Committee to be one of the first to know!

So how does your Events Committee work impinge upon your free time – do you still get the chance to get out and about on the waterways from time to time?
We are keen boaters and aim for two extended cruises every year, but I can keep in touch thanks to the internet, and I can get to IWA meetings thanks to so many main line stations being near a canal. We are also keen walkers and cyclists, but for some reason we tend to do quite a lot of both on canals!

Where do you like to go?
Anywhere the boat can get to, but favourite spots are Bugsworth, Audlem and Llangollen.

And if you had to select just one waterway to spend a long holiday on, which would it be?
Probably the Macclesfield.

Finally, what has been the best thing about being a member of IWA – and what would you say to potential new members to persuade them to join?
Probably the friendliness. I’m a newcomer compared with the many members who’ve been involved with the waterways for forty or fifty years, but I’ve always been made welcome at every level. On second thoughts perhaps that’s because nobody else wants to be Events Committee Chairman! As to potential new members, I’d say come and join us and help us keep the waterways alive. And have a really good time into the bargain.
This year IWA’s Festival of Water comes to Northampton to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the opening of the Northampton Arm in 1815.

IWA’s festivals have come a long way since the first one was held in 1950 at Market Harborough when membership of the Association could be counted at around 800. Northampton waited until 1971 before being selected to host the event but were lucky enough to be chosen in IWA’s Jubilee year. There were around 650 boats moored on the River Nene, the majority of which made passage down the Northampton Arm. The theme of the rally was heightened awareness of the plight of the so named ‘remainder waterways’ identified in the 1968 Transport Act and the retention of the Northampton Arm in a navigable state. Northampton Branch has been holding regular rallies and boat gatherings in Northampton ever since, the most recent being the Campaign Festival in 2011. This year, the campaigning element is to highlight IWA’s call for the Environment Agency’s waterways to be transferred to Canal & River Trust, and to encourage boaters to visit the under-visited Nene.’

The Festival marks 200 years since the Northampton Arm connected the Grand Union Canal (or Grand Junction as it was then known) to the Nene in Northampton, creating a route to the East Anglian waterways and the Wash by water. It replaced an earlier horse drawn railway between Gayton Junction and an unloading point at Far Cotton where a restored historic crane still stands. The arm enabled ironstone and limestone to be carried to local blast furnaces, grain and flour to and from mills along the Nene, coal from North Warwickshire and timber from London’s Surrey Docks to Northampton. The bicentenary celebrations will showcase Northampton as the gateway to Peterborough, Ely, Cambridge, St Ives, Huntingdon and Bedford encouraging traffic onto the Nene, Middle Level and Fenland waterways. To this end the Environment Agency is making special temporary licensing arrangements to encourage boaters to explore these little travelled waterways.

The Festival of Water will also champion Northampton’s riverside recognising the value of the waterway to the town and its people and to encourage more people to use the river for boating, recreation and leisure. The future of the local riverside is bright with the arrival of Northampton Marina, a new skate park, a floating restaurant and, currently under construction, a new home for the University of Northampton.

A GREAT DAY OUT FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY
Entry to the IWA Northampton Festival of Water is completely free. There is plenty of local free car parking, and a campsite in Delapre Park, with shuttle bus, is just under one mile away. Boat mooring should be booked in advance.

The Festival is being organised by IWA’s Event Team and Northampton Branch with the full support of Northampton Borough Council, the Environment Agency and Canal & River Trust. There will be plenty of things for visitors to see and do on land and water so come along and enjoy the spectacle.

For full details of what’s on and when go to www.waterways.org.uk/festivalofwater. See you there.
THE BECKET BOOT TROPHY

IWA Northampton Branch holds regular canal clean-ups and encourages the use of the Westbridge Arm (also known as the Brampton Arm) by running the Westbridge Challenge event with the awarding of the Becket Boot trophy at annual branch boat gatherings in Becket’s Park.

So where does the name Becket originate? The Becket Park area was previously known as Cow Meadow but in 1935 had its name changed after Thomas Becket, Henry II’s Archbishop of Canterbury. At the edge of the park is a well by which it is reputed Thomas Becket rested and drank on escaping from Northampton Castle after his trial in 1164 for ‘Defiance of Royal Authority’. The Becket Boot will be making an appearance at the Northampton Festival of Water.

WHAT’S ON

ENTERTAINMENTS MARQUEE
Saturday 11am-6pm Martin Day & Friends, Dave Fry, Chris Tymco, Chris Tobin, Braunston Pickle
Sunday 9.30am Church Service
Sunday 11am-6pm Martin Day & Friends, Dave Fry, Braunston Pickle, Uke Box Jury
Monday 11am-4pm Martin Day & Friends, Chris Tymco, Braunston Pickle, Harvesters Country Band

ISLAND MARQUEE
Friday 5pm BBQ and 8pm Boaters’ Quiz
Saturday 11.30am onwards talks from Tim Coghlan – Sonia Rolt & Other Idle Women, David Blagrove – A Working Boat Miscellany, Liz Payne – Cotswold Canal Restoration, John Pomfret – Down the Nene & Across the Fens
Saturday 8pm Boaters’ Entertainment – Grandma’s Wooden Leg & Boaters Bar
Sunday 8pm Open Mic & Boaters Bar

ON THE WATER
Saturday & Sunday 10am-6pm Westbridge Challenge, Boat Handling Competition, Sea Cadets v Narrowboat Races, Crusader Community Boat trips
Sunday 8pm Illuminated Boat Parade
Monday 10am-4pm Crusader Community Boat Trips

IN THE PARK
Saturday 2pm & 3.30pm Queen’s Oak Ladies Morris
Sunday 2pm & 3.30pm Brackley Morris Men
Monday 2pm Duston German Shepherd Dog Display Team

ALL WEEKEND
Children’s entertainment with Chucklefoot, balloon modelling, Thomas the Tank engine train rides, bouncy slide, fairground rides, water zorbing, face painting, IWA’s Wild Over Water, trade & craft market, plenty of refreshment choices from espresso to ice cream, crepes and jerk chicken, and bar.
IWA waterways
Autumn 2015

Shorts dusted off, red t-shirts on and hard hats at the ready, WRG has been busy in the sun – and the canal restoration work goes on into the autumn...

Each year around a third of IWA’s subscription income is spent supporting the work of IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group hands on restoration work around the canal network. WRG then uses this money to carry out over 40,000 volunteer hours each year restoring canals, planning Canal Camps, attending festivals, publishing WRG’s Navvies magazine, as well as teaching junior navvies how to bricklay and drive diggers. The work undertaken by WRG volunteers is usually part of projects being led by local waterway restoration groups that welcome the expertise that WRG can offer.

Cotswold Canals Trust is one such group that WRG has supported for a number of years. Dave Marshall, the Canal Project Manager at Stroud District Council, explains how the Trust’s relationship with WRG has benefitted the restoration of the Cotswold Canals: “It is fair to say that without WRG, our project would struggle! To us, WRG has two main strengths – the ability to do a lot of work in a short time and the ability to do specialised tasks. Coupled with a ‘can do’ attitude and a high degree of professionalism, this makes them invaluable. One weekend of WRG work enables our own volunteers to carry on for a few more weeks. We regard WRG as part of ‘Team Cotswold’ – our grateful thanks and long may it continue!”

It’s not just the Trust that benefits from the relationship as WRG volunteers are always keen to have sites to visit so that they can develop and learn new skills, as well as embracing the opportunity to work with other volunteers that share their passion for waterways restoration. Through partnerships like this, the restoration of waterways is more achievable, an important factor considering the benefits a restored waterway can bring to its locality.

MIKE PALMER, WRG CHAIRMAN AWARDED MBE
On 13th June it was announced that IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group Chairman, Mike Palmer, has been appointed an MBE for voluntary service to the restoration of British waterways.

Mike Palmer, a WRG volunteer for nearly 40 years and chairman for the past 19 years, is one of the leading figures in voluntary restoration work on the UK’s inland waterways. Through dedication and commitment he has championed best practice in volunteer canal restoration in regards to health and safety, restoration skills and techniques, and plant operation.

Over the years he has also been involved in countless restoration projects throughout the UK, including Aston Locks on the Montgomery Canal and the Hanbury flight on the Droitwich Canal. These and other restoration projects have brought wide and substantial economic benefit to many waterside communities. Mike is a perfect example of how volunteering can be done professionally, but also with passion.

Mike Palmer said: “It seems very strange to get an award for something that has been, above all else, tremendous fun. This award would not have happened without thousands of volunteers who believed they could make a difference. I have tremendous pride in what we have achieved together and thank all those who have inspired me along the way.”

ANNUAL BONFIRE BASH ON THE UTTOXETER CANAL
WRG’s Bonfire Bash is our big annual get together and working party for over 100 volunteers clearing vegetation along the line of a canal, and warming ourselves by bonfires! This year we are on the Uttoxeter Canal on the 7th-8th November. Volunteers will be travelling across the country to attend the Bonfire Bash, helping to give this project a big push.

George Rogers, Bonfire Bash Co-leader said “Big trees, small trees and scrub – this site has it all and more. There’s technical bits, easy bits, wet bits and dry bits – and all with the chance of encountering big yellow shiny toys. Nestled behind the JCB factory, we’ll be clearing over a mile of the Uttoxeter Canal so there is plenty of work for everyone. It promises to be a great weekend.”
BUSY SUMMER
This year WRG has had a busy summer of canal restoration, with over 400 volunteers signed up to participate in week-long canal camps. WRG are visiting 10 restoration sites working on 10 locks, 2 bridges, 3 towpaths, and clearing vegetation in several locations.

Look out for WRG and their red t-shirts this summer:

Big Push on the Cotswold Canals
19th July-21st August
WRG volunteers will be returning for the final big push to return Bowbridge Lock to a fully functioning restored lock. New lock gates will also be fitted over the summer. WRG will also be starting work to help restore Wallbridge Lower Lock.

High speed work on the Chesterfield Canal
26th July-7th August
The construction of Staveley Town Lock and surrounding canal landscape is progressing at an incredible speed. WRG volunteers will be supporting the project – aiming to build 35m of new canal wall.

Heritage skills on the Monmouthshire Canal
26th July-7th August
Volunteers will be spending two weeks supporting the Monmouthshire Canal Regeneration Partnership restoration efforts on the Ty Coch Lock Flight. Using heritage construction skills volunteers will repaint sections of the locks and carry out stonework repairs.

Grantham Canal Heritage Initiative
23rd August-11th September
WRG is playing a key role in the restoration of Locks 14 and 15 on the Grantham Canal, part of the Heritage Lottery Funded Grantham Canal Heritage Initiative. This summer volunteers will be stabilising the lock chamber, building dams and creating a new bywash weir to enable lock chamber restoration work to be carried out by other volunteers.

Relining on the Shrewsbury & Newport Canals
23rd-28th August
Volunteers will be working on relining a 100metre section of the canal near Meretown using geotextile lining techniques to make the canal waterproof. It is hoped that by the end of the Canal Trust will be able to re-water this section of the canal.

Building Bridges on the Ashby Canal
9th-21st August
Working in Partnership with CRT and Ashby Canal Association, volunteers will be taking on the challenge of restoring one bridge (Jacksons Bridge 41) and rebuilding another (Bridge 62). Lots of bricklaying to be done!

Stover Canal
23rd August-4th September
Since 1951 the Grade 2 listed Graving Docks have slowly fallen into disrepair, WRG volunteers will play a role in the lock chambers journey of revival – dismantling damaged brickwork and starting the rebuilding process.

OCTOBER AND CHRISTMAS CANAL CAMPS
The shorts might be replaced by trousers but WRG doesn’t stop its canal restoration work once the summer sun has gone. In October WRG will be running a Canal Camp on the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation (24th-31st October), carrying out towpath improvement work; and over the Christmas holidays (26th December-1st January 2016) the annual Christmas Canal Camp, with lots of warming fires and scrub bashing, will take place.

VAN-TASTIC DROITWICH CANALS SPONSORED WALK
Date: Saturday 19th September.

Starting point: Droitwich Spa Marina, Hanbury Road, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire WR9 7DU.
Route: Droitwich Canals, River Severn and Worcester & Birmingham Canal. Distance: 5 miles or 22 miles (the Droitwich Ring).
Cost: £5 per person (tea and cakes provided at finish) and under 12s go free. More details: www.wrg.org.uk/droitwich_sponsored_walk.

WRG is organising a sponsored walk along the Droitwich Canals and Ring to help raise funds for our Van Appeal. We want everyone, WRGies, IWA members, friends & family and members of the public to get involved. So get your boots on for WRG!

The plan is to have two routes. Route 1 will be a 22-mile walk around the Droitwich Canal Ring and Route 2 will be a family friendly 5-mile wander along part of the Droitwich Canals on Saturday 19th September. You can walk as an individual, a family, group of friends; or you can take part in our team event (more details on the WRG website).

Joining us on the walk would be a great opportunity for you to see the Droitwich Canals fully restored, particularly for those of you who were involved in the restoration of the Hanbury flight and the Droitwich Barge Lock, as well as helping us raise money for the WRG Van Appeal. Fancy dress is encouraged and the theme is, of course, the colour red.

Volunteers Wanted
Don’t fancy walking but still want to get involved?

WRG is looking for IWA/WRG members who moor their boats along the route who might like to serve refreshments to walkers to keep them going. We also need a few marshals for the event to ensure people don’t take a wrong turn.

If you are interested in helping please get in touch with the WRG Head Office team.

For more details and to book:
• www.wrg.org.uk/droitwich_sponsored_walk.
• Contact Jenny or Amber at WRG Head Office on 01494 783 453 ext 604.
• email enquiries@wrg.org.uk.
• Or simply send a cheque, made payable to Waterway Recovery Group, to Droitwich Sponsored Walk, Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA.

A full list of Canal Camp Dates for 2015 can be found on the WRG website or to request the 2015 Canal Camps Brochure please email enquiries@wrg.org.uk.

To book on a Canal Camp visit the WRG website www.wrg.org.uk or call the WRG Head office team on 01494 783 453 ext 604.
We publish on these pages a round up of just some of the recent activities carried out by IWA branches around the country. If your event isn’t included here, do let the Branch Campaign Team at Head Office know, ideally in advance so that they can assist with publicity and planning where that would be helpful. Alison Smedley (alison.smedley@waterways.org.uk) covers branches in the four regions in the north of the country, and Stefanie Preston (stefanie.preston@waterways.org.uk) is the contact for branches in the south.

**Milton Keynes Branch**

Milton Keynes Branch volunteers returned to Fenny Stratford on the Grand Union Canal in spring after their winter break. First on their list of jobs was planting, staking, collaring and watering 50 whips, which filled the last gaps in the hedge up to Bridge 96. The group also did some maintenance work to the whips planted last year, tended the pump house garden, cleaned the swing-bridge and rubbed down and repainted the white balance beam ends.

This was followed by the branch’s bi-annual Canal Clean up in April. Volunteers from Milton Keynes Branch, Milton Keynes Sub-Aqua Club, Buckingham Canal Society, Parks Trust and the local area, supported by CRT and Wyvern Shipping Company, came together for the event. They travelled over 10 miles of the Grand Union Canal from Fenny Stratford Lock to Galleon Bridge at Wolverton, litter picking, wrestling heavy materials from hedges and using grappling hooks from boats, to remove several tons of rubbish from the canal and its surroundings. The collected rubbish included an encouragingly smaller haul of bicycles and shopping trolleys than in previous years, motorbikes, double mattresses and assorted furniture.

The next Milton Keynes Canal Clean up will be planned to pass along the same route in October, so keep an eye out for details later in the year.

**West Country Branch**

West Country Branch recently adopted three sections of the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal, from Bridgwater Docks to Bridge 6 Taunton Road Bridge; Old Taunton Road Bridge 7 to Huntworth Bridge 12; and Bridge 29 near Bathpool to Firepool Lock Taunton, under CRT’s adoption scheme. The volunteers have since put even more effort into looking after these stretches and over a series of work parties filled several commercial wheelie bins with rubbish from their litter picks, weeded around the docks, installed two new picnic benches and a bin at Bathpool, tackled himalayan balsam and painted the railings at the docks.
Is your branch doing something that demonstrates the great work that our members do? If so let us know - send your story and pictures to stefanie.preston@waterways.org.uk.

NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE & SOUTH CHESHIRE BRANCH

North Staffordshire & South Cheshire Branch and Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust work parties on the Uttoxeter Canal have proven so popular they now take place twice a month. Volunteers have been working round Bridge 70 and the weir-keeper’s cottage and recently removed a tree; cleared shrubs, hawthorn, self-set saplings and brambles; revealed buried parts of the weir; and cut back dangerously over-hanging trees. This has started to open up the area that is now looking more as it would have done at the start of the 19th century, when the weir-keeper would have needed views of the weir and flood lock from his windows.

The Branch volunteers that meet monthly at the Trent & Mersey Canal’s Cheshire Locks have been at Red Bull recently working on locks 44 to 46. Locks 44 and 45 have been painted and Lock 46 prepared for its fresh coat. In the first half of 2015, the Branch volunteers contributed 288 hours at the Cheshire Locks.

The Branch has also been busy on the Macclesfield Canal in Congleton where volunteers have made an interesting discovery – the old ramp leading to the former canal lengthman’s cottage. The group has uncovered a length of the ramp, replaced missing stones from the walls that formed the sides of the ramp and laid a base layer of hard core in preparation for the installation of wooden edging and fine gravel in the coming months.

In addition to the regular work parties, the Branch also returned to Hazelhurst Bridge on the Caldon Canal to complete the painting of the bridge, which was started in 2014 but never finished due to adverse weather. The Branch dedicated a whole week to the project in June and arranged for a workboat to be present so that they could reach the underside of the Bridge. This time they were able to complete the work, which involved removing old flaking paint, applying a zinc rich primer and painting with black and white Hammerite, within seven days. The existing colour scheme was used, although it was interesting to note historic photographs show the bridge painted all white, all black and numerous variations of black and white, over the years. The tricky bit of repainting the 1842 date on the bridge was undertaken by one of the volunteers who is a professional artist.

EAST YORKSHIRE BRANCH

In April, East Yorkshire Branch volunteers once again assisted members of the Beverley Beck Boating Association (BBBA) at what has become their traditional annual clean up along Beverley Beck. IWA took the south side and worked from the town end down to the lock at the junction with the River Hull, whilst BBBA took the north side. Between the two groups, the whole length of the Beck was covered.

LICHFIELD BRANCH

In June, IWA Lichfield Branch got involved with IWA’s Himalayan balsam campaign and held a work party to tackle the invasive species along the river section of the Trent & Mersey Canal between Wychnor and Alrewas weir. The group worked along the towpath and from a small boat, which enabled access to the plants on the water’s edge and on the offside.
BIRMINGHAM, BLACK COUNTRY & WORCESTERSHIRE BRANCH

In May, Birmingham, Black Country & Worcestershire Branch was at Wolverley Court Lock on the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal, painting the balance beams and lock furniture. Due to the Listed status of Wolverley Court Lock, due consideration and liaison with CRT took place over paint type and colours, with the traditional black and white being replicated like for like.

Volunteers at Wolverley Court Lock beam at Birmingham, Black Country & Worcestershire Branch work party.

WARWICKSHIRE BRANCH

In April, Warwickshire Branch volunteers were at Marlcliff Lock on the River Avon, painting the metalwork, which was in need of some attention. Loose paint was removed and the metalwork repainted in the colour scheme used at Harvington Lock, which Branch members had repainted in 2014.

Warwickshire Branch work party at Marlcliff Lock.

NORTHAMPTON BRANCH

Northampton Branch now holds between two and four work parties a month on the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal. Earlier in the year, efforts focused on litter picking; in March alone volunteers collected over 60 bags of rubbish, with the aim to collect as much rubbish before it became hidden in spring and summer vegetation growth. As spring arrived and the weather improved, volunteers turned to painting, starting with the top gates of Lock 2 and the garage by Lock 1.

Northampton Branch volunteers paint Lock 2, Northampton Arm.

CHESTER & MERSEYSIDE BRANCH

Chester & Merseyside Branch work party volunteers enjoyed a change of location in April and headed over to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal at Eldonian Village. The group cleared lots of litter from in and around the canal between Eldonian Village Hall and Stanley Locks and tidied up the towpath. Following this successful pilot event at Eldonian Village, the Branch now plans to start regular work parties in the Litherland area from September.

The Branch also had a successful weekend at the H&R Ainscough Barge Restoration Group Centre and was invited to get involved in this area more regularly. This is being progressed and plans to work in partnership with Lancashire & Cumbria Branch and CRT to start regular work parties there are in development.

The Branch also continued to work along the Shropshire Union Canal in Chester, teaming up with CRT and volunteers from the local Labour constituency party in May to work at Hoole Lane and Chemistry locks. The force of over 30 volunteers managed to complete painting at both sites. In June, the group were again on the Shropshire Union Canal, this time litter picking from Cow Lane Bridge to Deva Aqueduct, including the North Basin and the Dee Branch.

Volunteers at Wolverley Court Lock beam at Birmingham, Black Country & Worcestershire Branch work party.

ABOVE: Volunteers at Chester & Merseyside work party.
LEFT: Volunteer litter pick at Chester & Merseyside Branch work party.

Details of all IWA branch events can be found on the IWA website events calendar. If you would like to get involved or have any suggestions for future work parties, please contact the IWA Branch Campaign Team: Alison Smedley, Branch Campaign Officer 07779 090915; alison.smedley@waterways.org.uk; Stefanie Preston, Branch Campaign Assistant 01494 783453; stefanie.preston@waterways.org.uk

Warwickshire Branch work party at Marlcliff Lock.
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Historic Narrowboats on the Cut

The article Historic Narrowboats on the Cut (Summer issue) is probably the most informative article I have ever seen in your Waterways magazine.

I have been around canals and boats from the early 1950s, at that time haunting the Lancaster Canal, yet this article provided many facts that I never knew – and it was written in a pleasant, logical and interesting way.

Please pass my compliments to the author Graham Booth for giving me immense joy and a much clearer understanding of the boats and their history.

I remember in the early ’70s, whilst living at Rickmansworth, being fascinated watching a narrowboat and barge going through Batchworth Lock, from memory carrying drums of lime juice.

Happy memories!

J.D. Knight,
Boston

I thoroughly enjoyed Graham Booth’s article on Historic Narrowboats in the Summer edition of Waterways. Well laid out, with lots of detail and a host of good pictures, it made fascinating reading. Well done Graham – how about doing some more articles for IWA in the future?

Richard Potts,
Belper

I own the replica steam tunnel tug Hasty and operate her on the canals between the Midlands and London attending many canal shows from the Cavalcade to the ‘Fuller Do’ in Stone. Last year we clocked up 630 hours in steam and covered over 500 miles of canals and rivers which regularly included the Braunston, Blisworth and Regent’s Canal tunnels. I have operated Hasty since 2011 and before that spent eight years as crew on the steam tug Adamant.

I read to my horror the incorrect and misleading information contained within the article on Historic Narrowboats in the summer edition of Waterways. At the bottom of page 28 on the subject of ‘The Steam Age’ it reads “if the boiler was coal-fired, it produced a great deal of smoke and there are accounts of fatalities due to asphyxiation”.

True there was one occasion where the crew of a tunnel tug were asphyxiated but this was due to exceptional circumstances and was by no means the norm as this paragraph strongly suggests. In 1861 the early tunnel tug Bee was being worked too hard through Blisworth Tunnel with a defective boiler and poor coal coupled with weather conditions that brought the fumes into the tunnel and travelled through at the same speed as the boat causing a build up of fumes. Following this accident additional ventilation shafts were added and no further asphyxiations occurred. There were collisions of boats in this tunnel, however these had nothing to do with the fuel or method of propulsion.

It needs to be pointed out that steam tunnel tugs were employed at the Braunston and Blisworth tunnels continuously between 1871 and 1936, well into the diesel era, for a very legitimate reason. This reason is, contrary to common misconceptions and ill informed expertise, a well managed coal fired steam boat can actually produce far less smoke and soot than its diesel contemporaries even in a tunnel. My experience of both steam and diesel powered vessels operated in long tunnels, backs this up to this day.

Keith Ward,
Via email
Netherton Branch Clarification
I really enjoyed the article on BCN Byways in the Summer issue of Waterways.
But there’s an error on page 22, where it says that the Netherton Tunnel Branch was the last canal to be built in Britain, in 1858. In fact the Slough Arm of the Grand Junction opened in 1882, and the Manchester Ship Canal many years later. Perhaps it should have read “the last canal tunnel to be built in Britain” in which case it’s right in terms of tunnels built concurrently with the canal. But since then, several bridges in various places have been extended and are arguably tunnels now.

Peter Silvester,
Audlem Mill

More on the Sonia Rolt Story
Although I too greatly enjoyed the Sonia Rolt article in Spring Waterways, I feel I must honour her memory and point out some of the inconsistencies contained therein.
As Rita Currie did not take up her post with the Ministry of War Transport until January 1944 it would have been impossible for Sonia and her friends to have been interviewed by her before that date. Rita married the Duke of Grafton on 18th July 1944, long before the end of the war and left MoWT at the beginning of July ‘44 which gives a limited time span for them to have joined the training scheme.
In fact although Sonia started on the first training trip with Meriol Trevor on 1st May 1944 – Chattie Salaman may also have been on that trip but is not named by Eily (Kit) Gayford and I have no details at all of her training – she did not complete it as Hoover would not release her from the Air Inspection Department at Perivale and, like several other would be trainees, she needed a doctor to recommend her change in employment. This resulted in Sonia rejoining Kit in the middle of July and she completed her training on 1st August 1944, presumably joining Meriol and co soon afterwards. Two return trips were the norm before anyone was allowed out ‘on their own’.
Margaret Cornish was working on the Oxford Canal at the time of Sonia’s wedding, so may have been out of touch with happenings nearer London. Certainly most of the other trainees knew about the forthcoming marriage by mid July ’45 when Meriol was about to give up boating.

Sonia told me herself that she moved onto Sunny Valley immediately after her marriage to George Smith, renting a condemned cottage at Buckby Wharf to store her few belongings, and the couple worked that boat with Halifax (ex GUCCC Aldebaran). She was on board SV in 1945 when Barbara Jones painted the picture that Tom Rolt later used as the dust wrapper for his book, The Inland Waterways of England. Unfortunately the motor there is not identifiable – the pot plant is! SV was used as a ‘change boat’ after the film.
George Smith hated it as it was a small boat with a fore cabin and he was used to the larger GUCCC craft. Thus, once Barlows purchased the Ethiopia, renamed Warwick in November ‘45, it became the Smith’s butty, being recorded on 17th December 1945 working with Halifax at Coventry in the Health Register as “infested with bugs – disinfected with Bombay Fluid”. Cairo ex GUCCC Phoenix, came later as the Smith’s motor for which they later became well known doing trips for IWA.
The preview of Painted Boats in Birmingham was also early in September 1945, when Frank Nurser took the Smiths to see it.
I find it hard to believe that only one edition of the GUCCC Quarterly Reports on ‘Manning’ survives from the wartime period (September 1944). If any reader of Waterways can point me to any others I would be very grateful as they would add significantly to the greater understanding of the Canal Boatwomen’s Training Scheme.

Mike Constable,
Via email

What’s in a name?
I was interested to note, on page 43 of the Summer issue of Waterways, that two correspondents refer to the “Black Sluice Navigation”. My great-grandfather was the lock-keeper at the Black Sluice Locks – in fact, he drowned in them – and I have lived within five miles of them for about half of my lifetime. Never have I heard the South Forty Foot Drain called the Black Sluice Navigation, even though this drain is one of a number that come under the jurisdiction of the Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board. My Ordnance Survey maps, dating back to 1954, also confirm the correct name for this waterway.

Since when did this new name come into use and why?

Richard Hackford,
Boston

The waterway is referred to as ‘The Black Sluice Drainage and Navigation’ in the 1950 and 1962 editions of ‘The Inland Waterways of Great Britain’ by LA Edwards, and also in Bradshaws inland waterways guides (1904-28), with the suffix “aka South Forty Foot Drain”.

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