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How IWA is tackling invasive species

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AGENDA

The Column of the National Chairman

I was delighted to see the announcement at the end of February of a joint Environment Agency (EA) and Canal & River Trust (CRT) working group to explore different options for running the 620 miles of EA-managed river navigations. Particularly reassuring was the comment within it that EA, CRT and Defra are committed to finding a sustainable future for the EA's river navigations and to working with the communities who use them.

IWA's campaign for the EA navigations has always been focused on ensuring their sustainable future, and that includes recognition of the need for sufficient long-term funding. We fully understand the amount of work that will be needed to achieve this and resolve the many difficult questions involved. An appropriate split of responsibilities between EA and CRT regarding flood control, water management and maintenance of the navigation may well turn out to be one of the thorniest problems that will need to be addressed.

However, I think we can already point to working examples of CRT's management of river navigations on the Trent and Severn that could serve as the basis for a wider agreement for the other rivers currently managed by EA. But whatever form the discussion takes, you can be assured that IWA will support the working group in any way we can to make sure that the outcome protects the inland waterways.

In the previous issue of Waterways I commented on the major flooding in the north of England over the winter, but it was only later that the full extent of the damage and suffering of both boaters and local communities became clear. It has been heartening to see how people have rallied round since to restore their towns and villages and the waterways that are such a valued feature. Residents and other volunteers have worked together and what they have achieved is quite amazing. I am very proud that IWA volunteers have played their part and I thank all those involved.

The power of volunteers has become more widely recognised in recent years although, of course, it has been integral to IWA's achievements ever since our foundation. The volunteers of our Waterway Recovery Group will be working hard again in 2016 to support restoration efforts around the country. We have expanded the number of WRG Canal Camps this year so we can tackle even more projects, and any help that our members can give, whether by attending a camp or donating to the Van Appeal, will be a huge benefit to the restoration movement.

I was privileged to attend the official opening in March of Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust's new visitor centre 'The Portal' – yet another example of the power of volunteers. As DCTT founder campaigner Vic Smallshire said: "Dudley Canal Tunnel: Closed by the Government on behalf of the people, Re-opened by the people on behalf of themselves." What a shame he wasn’t able to see the Princess Royal attend the opening ceremony. The visitor centre is a most impressive building and I can thoroughly recommend a visit.

We can be very proud of the fact that volunteers saved the inland waterways, but IWA's work to protect and restore them is far from complete. Please help us in any way you can so that future generations may continue to enjoy all the benefits they bring to communities throughout the country. There is much still to do.

Les Etheridge
Triathlon to return for 2016

Following a successful launch last year, IWA’s Waterways Triathlon will make a return to Essex in September.

More than 60 participants took part in the 2015 event, which raises money for Essex Waterways, who manage and maintain the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation.

This year’s race will take place on Sunday 25th September at Hoe Mill Lock near Maldon, with Essex Waterways hoping to use funds to carry out vital towpath restoration work along the canal.

The triathlon comprises two routes of either 50km or 30km, each containing canoeing, cycling and running elements. Last year several participants competed alongside their dogs, and organisers are keen to stress that athletic canines will be welcome this September too.

Discounted places at just £25 are available for early bird registration (before 31st May). After this date entry will be £35 per participant. To sign up for the event visit www.waterways.org.uk/triathlon. Alternatively, you can register interest in helping out as a volunteer by contacting Sarah Frayne at sarah.frayne@waterways.org.uk.

Date set for AGM

In accordance with Article 71 of IWA’s Articles of Association, notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held on Saturday 24th September 2016 at 2pm. The venue for the meeting will be South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy, Prosser Street, Bilston, Wolverhampton, WV14 0LN (www.swbacademy.org.uk/index.php/contact-us/). Full details of the meeting will be provided in the next issue of Waterways.

In accordance with Article 43, nominations to stand as an elected trustee (four places available) are sought. Nominations are also sought for the posts of region chairman for North East & Yorkshire Region (to serve until 2019 AGM), East Midlands Region (to serve until 2019 AGM), West Midlands Region (to serve until 2018 AGM) and Eastern Region (currently vacant, to serve until 2017 AGM).

Any member can submit a nomination for a nationally elected trustee, which should be accompanied by confirmation from the nominee that they are willing to be elected as a trustee of the Association. Nominations for region chairmen should be made by a member of the relevant region; the nominee should also be a member of that region. All nominations should be accompanied by a brief biography or statement not exceeding 400 words, with a portrait style photo, for publication as part of any ballot paper with the notice convening the AGM to be issued in the next (August) issue of Waterways. All nominations should be received at Head Office (for attention of the company secretary or chief executive) by no later than 2pm on Friday 1st July (i.e. 85 days before the AGM).

Consultation begins on Middle Levels boating

The Middle Level Commissioners have begun a consultation on big changes to boating on the 100 miles of navigable Fenland waterways under their control.

For some time IWA has supported the MLC in working to update the legal framework which currently governs their navigation function.

Proposed changes include (for the first time) licensing boats, imposing charges on overstaying on moorings, requiring insurance, and giving the Commissioners the power to remove sunken or abandoned vessels and charge the owners.

The changes would also enable them to provide extra facilities in connection with navigation.

The consultation runs until 30th June and can be read at www.middlelevel.gov.uk/Navigationconsultation.aspx.
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Preparations in full swing for **Liverpool Campaign Festival**

Historic Leeds & Liverpool shortboats are among 80 craft already booked in to IWA’s National Campaign Festival in Liverpool this summer.

Taking place on 11th-12th June, the event will celebrate 200 years of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and the entertainment programme already promises to be better than ever with dance and choir performances by schoolchildren, live bands, craft and food stalls and a variety of waterway activities for kids. There will also be opportunity for visitors to get afloat on a free trip-boat or canoes.

As part of preparations to host the festival, IWA Chester & Merseyside Branch volunteers are working with local schools to share the history of the canal and what life was like for working boaters. Regular work parties are also improving the canalside environment, and aim to leave a legacy of improved access and additional mooring rings, as well as a fully refurbished facilities block enabling boaters to stay in the area for longer to explore Liverpool’s many attractions.

The event takes place in the basin at Eldonian, at the top of the historic locks leading down to Liverpool’s Stanley Dock. For more information visit [www.waterways.org.uk/campaignfestival](http://www.waterways.org.uk/campaignfestival), where members can also find boat and trade booking forms.

In related news, a booking system trialled last autumn for boats visiting the Liverpool Link has been confirmed as a permanent arrangement for the coming season, starting on 21st March.

Up to six boats can now travel each way along the Pier Head Canal Link every day except Tuesdays. This gives boaters more flexibility over arrival and departure days into Salthouse Dock, compared with the old system which had designated ‘in’ and ‘out’ days.

The most immediate advantage is that boaters can come and go as they wish from outside Liverpool direct to Eldonian Village at the end of the canal. They now only have to book the final stage.

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**Hough exhibition among Braunston highlights**

The works of legendary canal painter and signwriter Ron Hough, who died earlier this year aged 81, will feature in a special exhibition at this summer’s Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally & Canal Festival.

The event, which takes place at Braunston Marina from 25th to 26th June, will also showcase surviving working examples of Hough’s boat painting in the livery of both the *Nutfield* and *Raymond* pair of historic working narrowboats.

Officially opening the weekend’s festivities will be IWA national chairman Les Etheridge who, with a little help from the Friends of Raymond, will steer the *Nutfield*, with *Raymond* in tow, into the marina from the Grand Union, declaring the rally open beneath the marina’s historic Horsley Ironworks entrance bridge.

Other attractions will include the Braunston beer tent, a variety of food stalls and live music. Admission is £10 per car, with all profits donated to canal and local causes.

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**Braunston beer tent**

**A pair of hotel-boats on the Liverpool Link.**

**Ron Hough painting *Raymond* in the wet dock at Braunston Marina in 2007.**

**The *Nutfield* towing *Raymond*. This year sees the 80th anniversary of the former’s launch, on 22nd July 1936.**
IWA scores HS2 gains

A Second Special Report by the HS2 Select Committee, which includes improved protection for canals along the route of the new high speed rail line, has been welcomed by IWA.

The report follows representations from many petitioners over the last few months, including a co-ordinated response from IWA, the Canal & River Trust and canal societies to protect the use, attractiveness and historic character of the waterways.

As a consequence there will be further work by HS2 to improve the design and alignment of bridge crossings along the route and “a presumption that the perspective of canal users will be strongly taken into account in the design of infrastructure”, says IWA Navigation Committee chairman, Gren Messham, who represented the Association at the Select Committee hearing.

He added: “While the report’s findings do not give the level of assurance on noise mitigation that IWA was looking for, we are pleased to note that low-level noise mitigation will apply on all canal crossings. We are also pleased to see assurances that canals and boaters are to be protected at several locations specifically from the impacts of HS2, whether during construction or operation.

Standout decisions of the Select Committee include:

• Trent & Mersey Canal – HS2 to review the alignment of Wood End Lane to move it away from the canal
• Wyrley & Essington Canal - HS2 to fund replacement accommodation for Lichfield Cruising Club
• Birmingham & Fazeley Canal – the Committee calls for a “positive architectural legacy” from the viaduct crossing the canal at Curdworth
• Grand Union Canal, Wendover Arm - expectation that HS2 will prioritise early investigation into the impact of the proposed railway on water supplies to the Arm and nearby Weston Turville Reservoir
• Grand Union Canal, Slough Arm – a commitment that HS2 will, if necessary, provide temporary accommodation for moorers affected by construction and will avoid any non-essential intrusion into the character of the canal area
• Grand Union Canal, Colne Valley Viaduct – needs of boat owners and other residents along the canal to be accommodated, and HS2 challenged to improve the design of the viaduct

The next stage will be for any changes to be incorporated into the Bill before it moves into the House of Lords, with Royal Assent anticipated at the end of 2016. Works are due to start some time during 2017.

There’s more about IWA’s HS2 campaign on the website: www.waterways.org.uk/hs2.

More Events & Festivals

In the Spring issue of Waterways we ran a pull-out round-up of the best shows, rallies and other waterside events taking place across the network in 2016. Since then, a few others have come to our attention, which we think are worth making a note of in your diaries too. Ed.

30th April-2nd May
Norbury Canal Festival
Norbury Junction, Staffs ST20 0PN.
www.snct.co.uk

4th-5th June
Etruria Canals Festival
This year the event will be celebrating the 300th anniversary of canal pioneer James Brindle’s birth and the 250th anniversary of cutting the first sod of the Trent & Mersey Canal.
http://etruiracanalbefestival.org.uk/

5th June
Wendover Arm Restoration Open Day
Drayton Beauchamp Church, Wendover Arm. Guided visits to restoration site, teas, cakes etc. 12.30-4pm.
www.wendoverarmtrust.co.uk

30th-31st July
Annual Gathering of Historic Boats
Audlem, on the Shropshire Union Canal. Boats stretch from the main road bridge past the bottom of the flight of locks.
www.audlemmill.co.uk

20th-21st August
Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Festival
The 2016 H&G Canal Festival – coupled with the Saturday evening Beer, Cider & Perry Festival – is expected to be bigger and better than ever before. Last year’s event saw thousands of visitors make their way to the Wharf House, Over Basin and Vineyard Hill stretch of restored canal, with a host of fun family activities on offer to keep them entertained. Expect heritage boat processions and rides, live music, model boats, local stalls, good food, a fire brigade display and much more.
www.h-g-canal.org.uk

20th-21st August
Whitchurch Gathering of Boats
Whitchurch, Shropshire. Gathering of decorated and trading boats, towpath stalls, free boat trips, refreshments and live music.
www.whitchurchwaterway.uk
BCNS offers pre-Pelsall cruise
Boaters looking to visit this year’s IWA Festival of Water on the Wyrley & Essington Canal can extend their BCN odyssey by joining an explorer cruise prior to the event.

Offered by the Birmingham Canal Navigations Society, the trip will run from Friday 19th August to Friday 26th August to coincide with the start of the Pelsall Common gathering on the 27th. The planned route will take in Titford, Tipton Green, the Walsall Basin, Longwood Junction and Anglesey Basin in a bid to encourage use of less-travelled parts of the network.

The cruise will also include the Bradley workshops along with other guided walks, talks and social evenings. Application forms can be obtained from Stuart and Marie Sherratt by emailing bcns.explorercruise@gmail.com or phoning Marie on 07709 165073 or Stuart on 07510 167288.

Boost for IWA’s EA transfer campaign
IWA national chairman Les Etheridge has praised the timing of a new working group set up to explore different options for running river navigations currently managed by the Environment Agency.

The announcement of the CRT/EA joint working group was made by Defra in February, in the aftermath of the Christmas period flooding that wreaked such damage on northern waterways.

Les Etheridge said: “In the light of recent floods there has never been a better time for CRT and EA to start talking about the practicalities of how the transfer would happen. Transfer of navigation responsibility would also allow EA to concentrate on their regulatory functions of pollution and flooding.”

Defra said the government plans to transfer responsibility for navigation to CRT, “subject to affordability and approval by the trust’s board and the Minister.”

IWA has long campaigned on this issue, which was the subject of an extended feature in the Spring issue of Waterways.
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The Christmas floods were another stark reminder of the devastation nature can wreak on our communities and waterways. However, while measures to alleviate – or prevent altogether – the effects of flooding are obviously welcomed by IWA, the Association also campaigns to ensure these projects are designed and implemented so as to minimise impact on the environment and on navigation.

Nowhere is this work better exemplified than in the cases of two ongoing tidal barrier schemes at opposite ends of the country – near Boston in Lincolnshire and at Bridgwater, Somerset. The Association has been working with navigation authorities, other waterway bodies, and a wide range of national and local authorities, voluntary and private sector organisations to help identify the best sites for the barriers and to mitigate their impact.

We caught up with both schemes to find out what part IWA, both nationally and locally (via IWA West Country Branch and IWA Lincolnshire Branch), has played in proceedings to date...

**BOSTON BARRIER**

In Lincolnshire, campaigning has centred on the proposed £100.7m tidal flood alleviation barrier designed to protect the town from a repeat of the tidal surge of December 2013, which saw 583 homes and businesses flooded.

The proposed Boston Barrier scheme is currently expected to be completed in 2019 and, says the Environment Agency, will provide added flood protection to the town while also facilitating subsequent controlling of water levels in the Haven to make navigation on Boston’s waterways easier.

However, in March IWA responded with concern to EA’s consultation on the Draft Boston Barrier Environmental Statement. If current proposals are included in the Boston Barrier Transport & Works Act Order and were implemented there would be a significant adverse impact to navigation in the Haven, and missed opportunities to improve and extend navigation in the wider area.

Among IWA’s concerns is the missed opportunity to improve navigation through water level management. The building of the flood barrier could help to impound water on the currently tidal section of the Witham through Boston, and would facilitate easier navigation between Grand Sluice Lock on the River Witham and EA’s new Black Sluice Lock, which gives access to the Black Sluice Navigation. Maintaining water levels would bring economic benefits for Boston from a vibrant and thriving waterfront. Yet this aspect of the original project has been dropped, and IWA feels a big chance has been blown to do more than simply prevent a tidal surge.

The Association also has concerns around new constraints on navigation in the Haven, downstream from Boston, that the barrier would create, both during construction and once the barrier was in operation.

Obviously, the Association accepts that the overall economic and social case for the proposed Boston Barrier Traffic Works Act Order is for EA to make and the Secretary of State to determine. However, as things stand IWA fears significant adverse impacts affecting both existing navigations and those under restoration. The Association will be a statutory consultee when the Transport & Works Order is published later this year.

The barrier site at high tide. The new barrier will fit across the channel more or less between the grain elevator on the left on the Port of Boston quay, and on the right (which will be demolished). EA plans one-way working of boats during construction and, later, during barrier operation.
The Thames Barrier: IWA proposes a ‘Flexibly Operated Submerged-gate Barrier’ on the River Parrett, based on the layout of the submerged-gate barrier used for the Thames Barrier. This can be operated as either a ‘Tidal Surge Barrier’, a ‘Tidal Exclusion Barrier’ or (in the summer boating season) a ‘Half-Tide Barrier’.

BRIDG WATER TIDAL BARRIER
This scheme is running some years behind the Boston Barrier. It was originally slated to be built at some point between 2030 and 2050 to protect Bridgwater and its environs from rising sea levels. However, flooding on the Somerset Levels and Moors during the winter of 2014 means a barrier on the River Parrett will now be built much sooner – it is scheduled for completion in 2024.

One of the early issues being addressed is the location. Seven possible sites have been identified downstream of Bridgwater. Choosing the most appropriate will come down to several factors, including maximising the area of protection, capital cost, environmental impact, silt management, amenity value and sustainability. IWA was well represented at a public drop-in information session held in March, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the progress of the barrier and the steps that are being taken to determine how and where it should be constructed.

IWA fully supports the construction of a barrier and the accelerated timeframe. However, the proposals currently envisage that the barrier will only be brought into use to prevent a spring or high tide from surging upstream on the river. IWA believes it could be used to greater effect and benefit to the community if it is operated differently and incorporates a lock.

It has suggested that construction of the Tidal Surge Barrier should be used, for example, to facilitate sea-going craft travelling through to Bridgwater and further inland. It could also be used to impound some water on the River Parrett during the boating season, thus enabling boating to take place in a relatively safe environment for up to 20 miles upstream of the barrier, ultimately including to Langport and Muchelney.

What’s more, IWA sees the tidal barrier project as a means of facilitating the reopening of the link from the River Parrett to the Historic Bridgwater Docks and hence to the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal.

These tweaks could bring enormous benefits to the area, making Bridgwater and its waterways a destination of choice for sea-going craft and enhancing the use of the existing waterway corridors for leisure and recreational activities.

Gren Messham, IWA navigation committee chairman says: “After the 2014 floods, major investment is needed to avoid future tidal floods damaging Bridgwater and surrounding areas. With little additional work Bridgwater’s role as a historic meeting of sea and inland waterways can be reinstated to everyone’s benefit – both economic and recreational.”
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ALIEN INVADERS!

It’s ‘War of the Waterways’ as IWA ramps up its campaign to rid our canals and rivers of invasive species. We look at the threats posed, and how best to tackle them.
Funny how the words ‘Himalayan Balsam’ don’t quite generate the mass hysteria that supposedly swept the United States on the eve of Halloween 1938, the date HG Wells’ The War of the Worlds was infamously dramatised for radio. Invading Martians wielding deadly heat-rays this is not, but the threat posed by invasive plant species is nevertheless a serious one, causing navigation and water control problems, a reduction in habitat availability and water quality and even, in some cases, compromising human health.

When we talk about ‘invasive species’, we’re specifically referring to plants and animals that do not naturally occur in an environment but have been introduced there either accidentally or deliberately. Of course, not all non-native species are detrimental to their new habitat and neighbours. Those that do have a negative affect, however, are known as invasive non-native species.

**WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?**

The damage these plants and animals can cause varies widely. Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed, for example, which grow in dense clusters crowding out native plants, can take over whole areas of river and canal bank over spring and summer before dying back in the winter. When this happens it leaves banks, that it previously dominated, bare having pushed out native species. With no roots left to strengthen the bank, it becomes more susceptible to erosion.

**Wildlife & environment**

This is a problem for local wildlife, as the natural biodiversity of the area is reduced – native plants simply cannot compete with these bigger, bolder newcomers. Biodiversity is further impacted by the way in which bees are drawn to Himalayan Balsam over other plants, reducing the pollination of native species. In addition, the loss of cover on the banks over winter directly impacts animal habitats. Increased bank erosion also inevitably leads to greater sedimentation that can suffocate fish spawning beds.

In the case of Floating Pennywort, the plant can outcompete native species by blocking sunlight, reducing water temperature and preventing air-breathing insects from reaching the water’s surface. It can deoxygenate the water by reducing available light to waterweeds and algae, then causing nutrient overload when it dies back.

When it comes to Signal Crayfish, problems are mainly the result of the species’ extensive burrows. These can destabilise banks, causing erosion and collapse, increasing flood risk and the silt load in the water. Their burrows also displace threatened riverside species, such as Britain’s water vole.

What’s more, our native crayfish is being driven towards extinction through the spread of crayfish plague and competition for resources. Signal Crayfish are bigger, grow faster, reproduce more quickly and are more tolerant of a wider range of conditions than the native White-Clawed Crayfish. They feed on fish and amphibian eggs, tadpoles, juvenile fish, aquatic invertebrates, detritus and aquatic vegetation and, where present, reduce populations of native species and affect food webs.

**Boating**

Himalayan Balsam can impact boaters in a number of ways. Most obviously its spread along whole sections of river or canal bank can make accessing the bank from the towpath or water difficult during spring and summer. Meanwhile, the increased bank erosion in winter can lead to navigation problems and a greater need for dredging.

Japanese Knotweed also contributes to bankside erosion, as well as increasing the likelihood of flooding. The plant is able to find weak spots (cracks and other defects) in man-made materials and can often be seen growing through asphalt, patios, landscaped areas and even concrete. This can pose a threat to buildings and structures along our waterways, potentially degrading locks, walls and banks.

Floating Pennywort, meanwhile, can grow up to 20cm a day forming dense mats of vegetation that quickly dominate waterways making navigation difficult and impeding water flow, also increasing flood risk.

**Angling**

The negative impact that erosion, linked to Himalayan Balsam, has on fish spawning beds can reduce the number of fish in a waterway. Anglers can also find it difficult to access angling spots due to dense Himalayan Balsam stands that then leave banks unstable when it dies back in the winter.

**Public health**

Giant Hogweed poses a threat to human health as it has phytotoxic sap. If it comes into contact with skin it can cause severe blisters and blistering as it makes the skin extremely sensitive to sunlight. This usually happens within 48 hours of skin coming into contact with the sap. Native Hogweed can also cause rashes but these are generally less severe.

**Economic impact**

The annual cost of invasive species to the British economy is £1.7 billion.

We only have to look to the Signal Crayfish for an example of how costs can mount up. With some burrows up to 2m deep and featuring many inter-connecting chambers, river banks are quickly weakened. This can contribute to problems with flooding, livestock safety and stability of structures built on the banks. Crayfish also take refuges from salmonid fish and predate fish eggs, which could threaten commercial fisheries.

Himalayan Balsam can impact boaters in a number of ways.
Giant Hogweed
Giant Hogweed is prevalent from spring to autumn and favours damp and partially shaded environments.

Plants can grow up to 5m tall, with umbrella-shaped flower heads that are up to 80cm in diameter with white or occasionally pinkish flowers facing upwards. Leaves are up to 3m long, sharply serrated and have bristles on the undersides. The stems also have sharp bristles, are 5-10cm in diameter and green with purple blotches.

Giant Hogweed is found across the lowlands of the UK and continues to spread rapidly. Each plant produces between 10,000 and 50,000 seeds, and this abundance leads to its quick spread, although plants only seed once. Seeds like moist, fertile soils in partial shade, such as river and canal banks, and are highly germinable.

Japanese Knotweed
Japanese Knotweed can be seen throughout the year and is commonly found in urban areas, especially on railways, roadsides, wasteland and river banks. If spotted it should be left undisturbed as this species can propagate from pieces of root or the stem.

The hollow stems can grow up to 4m in each growing season, although they are usually much shorter than this where they have colonised in urban areas. The leaves are green, shield shaped and have a flat base, typically ranging in size from 7 to 14cm long and 5 to 12cm broad. The leaves, which are divided into leaflets, are alternate, meaning they are not directly opposite each other on the stem. In late summer spiky stems with creamy white flowers can be seen.

The characteristic zig-zag pattern stems can be seen throughout the year, varying in colour by season. The plant has purple speckled stems in spring/summer, losing its leaves and dying back in autumn/winter. Japanese Knotweed roots are dark and knotty in appearance, having a bright orange inside.

Himalayan Balsam
Floating Pennywort
Floating Pennywort usually flowers between July and August although rarely in the UK. Instead, it can be identified by its leaves, which can be floating or emergent. Shiny green and kidney-shaped, with a crinkled edge, they measure up to 7cm and are frequently broader than long.

Winter foliage varies little but mats of vegetation may reduce in size and be found nearer the water’s edge.

A similar plant is the Marsh Pennywort, a native species that has smaller leaves (1.5cm diameter), which are round and complete.

Floating Pennywort spreads easily via plant segments that break off and move through the waterways in currents or attached to boats. Roots form at the plant nodes, allowing it to quickly regenerate. During the summer it can double its biomass between four to seven days.

Signal Crayfish
The Signal Crayfish is lobster-like in appearance and reaches a maximum size of between 16cm and 18cm. You can spot it both in still and slow-flowing freshwater environments, including rivers, streams, lakes, reservoirs and canals. This species is also known to tolerate slightly salty water.

It takes shelter under rocks and boulders, within tree roots or in burrows and cavities within banks. In the winter, adult Signal Crayfish shelter in burrows and enter a state of torpor. These burrows are formed of many interconnecting tunnels, and can be up to 2m deep.

A Signal Crayfish’s claws have red undersides with a small turquoise/white blotch on the upper surface at the claw hinge. The upper shell of this species is usually brown to greenish-brown, while underneath you’ll notice a contrasting bright orange or red. This crayfish also has a distinctly smooth ridge running along the middle of the rostrum (the foremost projection of the carapace).
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HOW CAN MEMBERS HELP?

• **Record them...**
You should record the presence of invasive species on a national database. This is easily done via the PlantTracker app. Alternatively you can record it online at the Non-native Species Secretariat (NNSS) website. You should also alert the appropriate land owner, council and or management body to the presence and location of these species.

• **Pull them...**
Himalayan Balsam pulls up fairly easily and is completely non-toxic. So if you have some on a waterway near you, why not organise a Himalayan Balsam work party? There’s a step-by-step guide on IWA’s website, with full details of other Balsam bashing events coming soon. This year IWA aims to re-seed areas with locally appropriate native plants, as well as increasing the number of locations where Himalayan Balsam work parties are held.

• **Eat them...**
TV chef Mary Berry recently showed a tasty use for the Signal Crayfish in her Foolproof Cooking series, where she served it Vietnamese-style with a noodle salad. But did you know that Himalayan Balsam is edible too? While the whole plant is non-toxic, the seeds and petals can actually be quite useful in the kitchen. They can be eaten raw, and the seeds are good if added to a curry (apparently they have been eaten in India for hundreds of years). Seeds can also be toasted and ground up to form a peanut butter substitute (handy if you’re allergic to peanuts). And the best use we have found for the petals is making homemade wine!

• **...but DON'T spread them!**
Waterways users have a key role in reducing the spread of these species by following the NNSS’s Check, Clean, Dry Policy:

  **Check** your boat, equipment and clothing for live organisms – particularly in areas that are damp or hard to inspect.

  **Clean** and wash all equipment, footwear and clothing thoroughly. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.

  **Dry** all equipment and clothing – some species can live for many days in moist conditions.

In a recent IWA survey, two-thirds of respondents confessed they don’t ‘check, clean, dry’ their boating, canoeing or angling equipment before moving from one waterway to another.

CASE STUDY: HIMALAYAN BALSAM AT MARSWORTH

An appeal in the June 2012 IWA Bulletin for sightings of the plant alerted Chiltern branch to its presence in one of the side ponds at Lock 44 on the Marsworth flight on the Grand Union. A site visit took place and it was agreed to eliminate the plant before it spread further down the canal and into the reservoirs. British Waterways (as they still were then, just!) co-operated fully in the planning of a work party.

This took place in August 2012. Volunteers from Chiltern branch spent a day pulling up every single bit of Himalayan Balsam they could find. By now some of the plants were 2 metres tall. Plants were then removed from site by wheelbarrow along the towpath, before being loaded onto a Canal & River Trust (as they had just become!) flat bed truck for removal.

The following summer a further work party was scheduled (it was anticipated Balsam may take up to three years to eradicate). On the appointed day in July 2013 volunteers turned up – only to discover no Himalayan Balsam! There was, however, some Orange Balsam (another invasive non-native plant, though not quite so vigorous or large as the Himalayan variety) and so another productive day of pulling ensued.

By summer 2014 there was no Balsam at all, and the planned work party had to be cancelled for all the best reasons! Chiltern Branch is keeping an eye on the situation each year but so far the Marsworth flight has remained free of Himalayan Balsam.
Can you tell us how the project began?
It was something that came out of Navigation Committee. One of the targets we’d set was for branches to keep in touch with their local navigation authorities and the discussion led to the question: ‘Well, do we know who those navigation authorities are?’ In a lot of cases it’s actually quite uncertain. Some are disputed and there are others that don’t have any navigation authorities at all, like the Derwent in Yorkshire.

So it all arose from the simple need to compile a list of navigation authorities, basically. And I was the one who volunteered, because I’ve long been trying to extend people’s view beyond the narrow canals and remind them we do have lots of other waterways where narrowboats are not the norm, and we have lots of waterways that are not part of CRT or EA. I suppose, in part, it appealed to my inner anorak too!

How did you approach such a mammoth task?
I started with the waterways that are open. But even that was more complicated than you might think – a lot of them are in multiple ownership, and some are harbour authorities that might have power over pilotage and shipping etc, but don’t necessarily have any powers to require boats to pay licences.

Then I came to waterways that are being restored. I wasn’t going to include restoration schemes originally, and then thought to include just the navigable bits. The problem with that is that the directory would become out of date very quickly. So I ended up just including all waterways, both navigable and disused, which makes the directory fairly comprehensive.
One of the things we wanted the spreadsheet to be was easily sortable. So you can apply a filter to find out exactly what stretches of waterways are in a certain branch without having to trawl through 800-odd rows to find the applicable ones. Other filters can show you, for example, which waterways are managed by EA or CRT, and so on. Even then it’s complicated, however, because EA has interests on some waterways where it’s not necessarily the navigation authority. And in some cases it’s difficult to find out if a navigation authority still exists because not all of them have been formally abandoned, so successors of historic bodies may still exist. The Chichester Canal, for example, although it was effectively closed and became pretty unnavigable for a while, was never formally abandoned by an Act of Parliament. So trying to sort out who has an interest in the waterways and what their status is ended up taking a long time.

How important was it to include lesser known waterways?
There is a body of thought that says we shouldn’t be bothering with waterways like the Tamar, but my feeling is the more we can show the importance of inland waterways generally, the stronger IWA’s position is. If we miss out half of them, we’re not doing ourselves any favours. Although you may need different sorts of boats, most of these waterways are available if you can trail a boat down there, while some offer opportunities to hire boats or go on trip-boats. But people tend to forget about them.

Some members might argue the RYA looks after these waterways, but the RYA isn’t too focused on inland boating. Yes, they’ll represent boaters going up the Fal to Truro or along the Stour to Canterbury, but their main focus is people out at sea really. So there’s a whole area that’s probably under-exploited and that nobody’s looking after.

Of course, it’s all a balance. You don’t want to encourage people who’ve not bothered to learn anything about boating to launch out onto some tidal waterway without training, but equally there are lots of people I know with narrowboats who are actually very familiar with other types of craft as well, who do sailing and all sorts of other boaty things.

How did you become involved in the waterways?
I approached it from the industrial history side. At university, at Durham, I was secretary of the industrial archaeology society and a lot of activity was centred around the local coal industry. Obviously local rivers like the Tyne and the lower end of the Wear were all intimately involved in the coal trade so I suppose that’s possibly where my interest in the waterways started.

I did go on a canal holiday with my parents before that, when I was 16. Then I had a crowd at university who were similarly minded and we hired boats from Braunston, from Union Canal Carriers. They ran a fleet of camping boats – basically unconverted working boats. One year we hired four weeks’ worth of boats with largely different crews of students and a hard core of three or four of us who stayed for the entire duration. That got me interested in historic boats and the canals as they were in the late ’60s/early ’70s. They were in a pretty poor state really, so it was a bit of an adventure holiday. We used to pick routes that people didn’t use very much so would inevitably get stuck under bridge holes and have people pull us through in Land Rovers. One time we nearly pulled the boat in half. There were road works in Stoke on Trent – they had been working on a new road by the canal. We got stuck under a bridge in all the rubble that had been left there. Some of us at the front started shouting to the guys on the bank to help and they attached a JCB to the bow. On the other side of the
Primus stoves between our legs in the canoes!

the dark on the Staffs & Worcs making coffee on some of the things we got up to, like rafting up in cost, although I wouldn’t necessarily recommend getting young people involved in the canals at low cost, although I wouldn’t necessarily recommend some of the things we got up to, like rafting up in the dark on the Staffs & Worcs making coffee on Primus stoves between our legs in the canoes!

That got you interested in the narrow canal system, but what was your introduction to bigger waterways?

Living in the North East I was familiar with waterways like the Tyne. I was working for the water authority up there after university and started doing a lot of survey work. Our employer let us buy a survey boat, which was great. It was seagoing to up to 20 miles from the coast and I got to steer it some of the time. Once I even managed to get permission to take it to an IWA rally on the Tees, just after the Tees Barrage had been built. We dressed it up in flags and took it there as a bit of a publicity stunt for the company. It was great fun.

What inspired you to buy your own boat?

It was Janusz Rokicki of Union Canal Carriers who persuaded me to buy my first narrowboat. I bought a little tug called Speedwell and ended up hiring it out through Union Canal Carriers. I used to come down at weekends to do the turnaround if I could. That just about paid for the cost of having the boat and going on holiday with it. We went around an awful lot of the network on it, mainly on the narrow canal system, but up as far as the North West, down to London, across to Sharpness in the South West. I sold that boat in 1984, partly because if it was on hire we had to take it back to Braunston, which was a bit constraining. I bought my second, The Black Pig, in 1997 and have done over 9,000 miles and 5,000 locks in it, including bits that people don’t go up very often, like the Wharfe, the Idle and the Derwent.

If you could recommend a less obvious waterway for members to try this year, what would it be?

I quite like the Great Ouse, the lower bits through Ely and then up to Cambridge, and the Ure from Boroughbridge up to Ripon. I think that might be one of my favourite stretches of waterway. There’s a bit called Cherry Island where there are some really sharp bends and if the river’s running quite fast it’s great fun.

“...I bought my second boat in 1997 and have done over 9,000 miles and 5,000 locks in it, including bits that people don’t go up very often, like the Wharfe, the Idle and the Derwent.”

When did you get involved with IWA?

I joined in 1969 as a student. I was on the Northumbria branch committee. Since moving down to Braunston I’ve been involved with the Northampton branch and am chair of IWA’s Inland Waterway Freight Group. I’m also on the board of Essex Waterways Ltd, which is really quite interesting.

Considering all your existing waterways knowledge, did the directory present any surprises?

Yes, I suppose the number of small canals, particularly in the middle of south Wales. There were dozens of them – little canals all serving individual collieries. That was quite fascinating – especially trying to find out how they all related to each other.

And, of course, another surprise was quite how complicated it all got. Take the river navigations in the North East and the North West, and the way they’ve evolved over the years. The Calder Navigation, for example, originally followed the natural course of the river in huge loops. Then gradually bits were cut off and a later canal would sever another whole section and so on. But some of the old bits were kept in use because they already had wharves on them, or they were serving collieries, so trying to work out mileages was difficult. I think I probably knew the waterways of those areas fairly well, but I certainly know them even better now!

Has there been anything like the Waterways Directory before?

There are books like Edwards and Bradshaw, as well as the Charles Hadfield histories, so all this information is around, but I think it’s probably the first time data on so many waterways has been pulled together in any sortable form. In making it available on the website, IWA significantly adds to the amount of information about our waterways that is readily available for all to access as a public resource.
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Buying or selling a boat should be a pleasure not a chore, and at the New & Used Boat Co that’s exactly what we aim to deliver. We’re both a distributor/agent of new boats and a brokerage for used ones, so the choice is vast. And to assist you through the whole process, we’ve put together a team of people who simply live and breathe boats.

Right from the outset, you’ll find it’s more like talking to a boating enthusiast than a sales person. We’re a company with over twenty years’ experience in the business and hire people who match our know-how and love of boats. Whether you’re a buyer or a seller, they’re keen to help you achieve the right result.

For example, when it comes to buying a new boat you’ll be amazed at the incredible choice at your disposal. We are agents for some of the best manufacturers around and can offer you a selection of narrowbeam and widebeam boats that are simply second to none, with well-established names and ranges like Aqualine, Hanbury, Brigantine and Abode. You can even buy a Sailaway to fit and furnish yourself if you have the time and the skills.

In fact, it’s like having a whole department store to choose from. That’s because our selection covers everything from residential to continental cruising and there are just so many options, from the length of the boat to the appliances in the galley, from the fabrics to the floor plans.

Or maybe you want to buy or sell a used boat? If so, you’ll find our brokerage is simply more modern and better organised. Our website is like a bustling marketplace and our primary brokerage location at Mercia Marina is a fantastic showcase for used boats. Full-colour printed particulars, targeted emailings, social media activity and press advertising make sure that vendors and buyers are brought together in a way that’s mutually beneficial.

For peace of mind, our membership of the Boat Retailers and Brokers Association (BRBA) offers a host of customer protection facilities, and the support continues once you are the proud owner of one of our boats. We offer on-going advice and no-Quibble warranties which mean you’ll receive prompt service whenever you need it from our fully-trained, on-the-road engineers.

All in all, our team work hard to bring you everything you could possibly want when buying or selling a boat. We’re so much more than just your average retailer — we’re the complete service. So why not give us a call, or pay us a visit at one of our convenient centres at Derby or Droitwich where you can experience the boats for yourself?
BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

In the first of a new series exploring IWA branch walks, we join Lichfield members for an easy stroll along the Trent & Mersey from ALREWAS TO BARTON TURN. As Clive Walker and John Parry explain, it’s a stretch that offers a fascinating mix of both river and canal navigation, as well as some surprising historical tidbits.

Start at the William IV pub in Alrewas and follow the street away from the centre of the village to its junction with Park Road. A left turn here will eventually take you onto the Trent & Mersey at Gaskell’s Bridge. The weeping willows over the water make for an irresistible photo opportunity from the centre of the bridge. Cross to the other side to pick up the towpath on your right.

Alrewas Lock, ahead, marks the meeting of the canal with the River Trent. When we walked here in January, the water level gauge was just below the red marker and it was clear there was a strong flow. The lock provides a fine viewing platform across the meadows of the Trent to St Leonard’s Church with its square tower, and Wychnor’s other scattered buildings.

The lock drops the canal down into the Alrewas mill arm of the Trent before joining the main course of the river. The towpath is on your left, led across the two arms of the river and intervening marshy ground on a pedestrian viaduct, with two passing places set into the sides at appropriate intervals. It’s an intriguing structure, which uses large hot riveted fastenings as well as bolts to hold the ironwork together – certainly not contemporary with James Brindley, the T&M’s famous engineer.

Some 200 yards later the main arm of the Trent falls over a weir while the canal turns left and is effectively a managed branch of the river up to Wychnor Lock. The towpath follows the north bank of the canal and crosses so many marshy hollows that six more bridges are required to keep it level up to the vicinity of the church, where it meets the far bank of the valley and becomes a continuous path again.
Wychnor

From the first bridge look ahead and left, where the tallest trees up on the bank mark the site of the current Wychnor Hall, obscured behind them. Now look right, across the canal, and you will see many curious earthworks, denoting fish ponds, enclosures and other long-forgotten structures, all connected with the original village of Wychnor. When on the third bridge, look right again to see three trees facing you in a row, with a long depression running along the foot of the bank on which they stand, sometimes filled with water. This is the long SE section of an ancient moat about 150yds long. Within the rectangle of the moat is the site of the original Wychnor Hall, but you need a good imagination to make anything of it now as by 1465 it had burnt down. The manor house there was a Norman establishment, very possibly on an earlier Anglo-Saxon site, and was granted to the de Somerville family who, certainly from at least the time of Henry II (1154), lived there for several centuries in great splendour.

A new hall was erected on a different site (about half a mile from the original) towards the end of the 16th century. Here James I held court and went hunting in 1621 and 1624, but another disastrous fire ravaged it so that a survey of 1724 shows only ruins. A few years after the survey the current hall was built on the same site. Wychnor Park is now a country house and club owned by Diamond Resorts International.

As the towpath gets back onto terra firma after the sixth footbridge, you’ll spy a stile to the path leading up to Wychnor church, St. Leonard’s. In the graveyard the war memorial includes Harry Dooling, a local lad killed when HMS Barham was torpedoed in November 1941 with the loss of 841 men.

The Darwin link

Continuing back down the towpath you’ll pass under Cow Bridge and opposite Wychnor boat moorings. As you pass under the footbridge you are now on the wholly artificial canal cut, and walking towards Wychnor Lock. From here the canal’s course runs parallel with the roaring A38 dual carriageway, formerly the Lichfield to Burton-on-Trent highway established by the Lichfield Turnpike Trust. By the 1760s that great man of Lichfield, Dr Erasmus Darwin, had become one of its trustees. He was also an enthusiastic promoter of the T&M Canal scheme, and wrote most of its promotional literature, although he liked to stay in the background. As a friend of James Brindley, he was present in the final days of the engineer’s life and was the first to diagnose that he was suffering from advanced diabetes.

Darwin’s own health is inextricably linked to this canal and, more specifically, the long straight between Wychnor and Barton, the final stage of your walk. It was during the building of it that a pile of gravel left by navvies caused Darwin’s horse to shy as he travelled to Burton. The resulting accident left him with a permanent limp. Watch your step and you’ll arrive at Barton Turn without similar injury.

The large building below the lock is Wharf House, part of which used to be the Three Crowns inn and, before that, the Three Tuns. Today, you can treat yourself to a restorative pint at the Barton Turns instead. Alternatively, try the Waterfront pub, tea rooms, Apple Tree deli/coffee shop, Red Carpet Cinema café or Thai restaurant at Barton Marina.

Find out more...

IWA Lichfield organises towpath walks every two months. For more information, please contact Clive Walker on 07866 201873 or by email at clive.walker@waterways.org.uk. The next one – Calke Park and the Ticknall Tramway – takes place on Tuesday 10th May. Meet in the car park of the Staff Of Life pub, 7 High Street, Ticknall, Derbyshire at 10am for a 10.15am start. It promises to be a pleasant 6-mile walk through a landscaped estate with eight dog-friendly stiles.
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HARD AS NAILS

For most people, the canals and rivers of this country offer a unique chance to unwind and relax. Yet for a small group of hardcore enthusiasts, our system also offers some of the best extreme and endurance sports in the land. We take a look at eight events designed to test your stamina in, on or along our waterways.

1) A TRIO OF TRIATHLONS

IWA is leading the way when it comes to canalside calorie-burning competitions, kicking off with the IWA Waterways Triathlon on the Chelmer & Blackwater. After a fantastic inaugural event in 2015, the race returns to Essex on Sunday 25th September, with full details available in our news round-up on p6.

IWA’s Shrewsbury and North Wales branch, in partnership with the Friends of the Montgomery Canal, also organises the Montgomery Canal Triathlon, which this year is scheduled for Saturday 7th May. So there’s not long to dust off your trainers, pump up your tyres and plug any holes on your canoe or other portable craft!

The event challenges participants to cycle, canoe and hike the 35-mile length of the canal in one day. Starting in Newtown, the original destination of the canal, entrants will cycle 17 miles to Welshpool along resurfaced towpath. After this it’s an 11-mile walk to Morton, followed by a 7-mile canoe to the Weston Arm, Lower Frankton.

All entrants who complete a section will receive a commemorative medallion made from local slate. The medallions will be printed in gold for entrants who complete all three sections, silver for those that complete two, and bronze when only one section is completed.

Finally onto the IWA-supported Monmouthshire & Brecon Canalathon on Saturday 10th September, in which teams of four are challenged to complete the 35-mile route along the waterway by canoe, bike and on foot. The Canalathon celebrates over 200 years of one of the most scenic canals in Britain, with the route taking participants on a historic journey through the heart of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Organisers stress the Canalathon is not a race but a challenge! It’s very much a team event too, and as such participants will not be allowed to leave transition areas or cross the finish line until all four team members are present.

Find out more:
www.waterways.org.uk/triathlon
www.montgomerycanal.me.uk/triath2016info.html
www.mbact.org.uk/canalathon.php
2) BCNS 24-HOUR CHALLENGE

Canal cruising gets competitive in May as boat crews from across the country converge on the West Midlands in a bid to be crowned the Birmingham Canal Navigations Society’s endurance champions. The coveted shield is awarded to the team that accrues the most points over a 24-hour period, with extra marks given for navigating heavily locked and lesser-used parts of the system. Full-length boats, butties, and smaller crews will also be judged more favourably.

The aim, for boaters, is to see as much of the 100-mile BCN as possible. For organisers it’s a clever exercise in increasing traffic on these urban waterways, which are often overlooked in favour of more picturesque, rural routes.

This year the challenge kicks off at 8am on Saturday 28th May at a departure point of participants’ choosing, finishing 30 hours later (allowing for six hours of rest) at 2pm in Hawne Basin.

Find out more: bcnsociety.com/bcns-marathon-challenge/

3) DEVIZES TO WESTMINSTER CANOE RACE

The Telegraph memorably described this gruelling 125-mile paddle from Wiltshire to the Houses of Parliament as “hell on high water”, adding: “The Devizes to Westminster canoe race is just about the toughest thing you can do on two paddles.”

Every Easter it sees some 300 boats attempt to complete the K&A and Thames course in under 24 hours and, testament to its enduring appeal, has been running for close to 70 years now.

IWA members interested in taking part themselves have just under a year to train for the next event, which runs from Friday 14th to Monday 17th April 2017. Be warned, however, that training is a long and arduous affair, necessitating winter excursions in wetsuits with a torch attached to your head. Then there’s the small matter of 77 locks en route to factor into your portage practise. Not for the faint-hearted!

Find out more: www.dwrace.org.uk

4) WORLD BARGE PULLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

For a real test of boating brawn, there’s no beating the World Barge Pulling Championships at Beverley Beck on Sunday 25th September. It’s organised by the Beverley Barge Preservation Society, a registered charity set up in 2000 which owns MV Syntan, an ex-working barge previously operated by Richard Hodgson’s Tannery to carry hides and other tanning materials from Hull docks to the Beverley Beck, and then by road to the tannery which was situated in Flemingate.

Syntan now acts as a museum, heritage centre and community resource. Once a year, however, it also doubles as a dead weight for teams of four to pull from a standing start at the head of the beck for a distance of 220 yards.

All competitors are rewarded with a specially designed medallion, while members of the winning team take home championships cups.

Find out more: www.syntanbarge.org.uk/barge-pull
5) GRAND UNION CANAL RACE

Hailed as Britain’s longest, toughest, non-stop running race, the Grand Union Canal Race starts in the centre of Birmingham and sees participants complete a 145-mile towpath slog all the way into the centre of London hugging the waterway the entire time. If that’s not challenging enough, there’s added time pressure to complete it all within just 45 hours – and not fall in the drink.

Last year two competitors, Dan Lawson and Mark Perkins, both smashed this limit by completing the race in under 24 hours – something that had never been achieved in the 20 GUCR races leading up to it. Lawson, who won it, managed a mind-blowing 22:16. As a reporter for the Independent calculated: “That’s a mile every nine minutes, 13 seconds or just over five-and-a-half marathons, all run in about four-hour pace.”

This year’s race starts at 6am on Saturday 28th May.

Find out more: www.gucr.co.uk

6) RED BULL NEPTUNE STEPS

As if open-water swimming – in Scotland – isn’t hard enough, try factoring in an 18m climb up eight lock gates too and you’ll get some idea of just how crazy competitors in Red Bull’s Neptune Steps challenge have to be. Yet this year the event attracted some 200 athletes all battling it out over the 420m cold-water course at Maryhill Locks in Glasgow.

Launched last year (and won by local man Mark Deans, who triumphed again this year), the event was the first ever fully supervised swimming race to take place in a Scottish canal, with only the toughest and most experienced swimmers granted entry.

Scottish Canals chief executive, Steve Dunlop, said at the time: “I’d actually joked with colleagues that I might surprise them by taking part myself but having enjoyed the spectacle safely from the bank, I’m happy with my decision to come as a spectator – swimming in the canal is definitely best left to the professionals!”

“Together with Red Bull I think we’ve shown the flexibility of our waterways and how much they offer as unique venues and outdoor spaces that everyone can enjoy in many different ways; from traditional activities like boating and fishing to running, canoeing and cycling.”

Find out more: www.redbull.co.uk/neptunesteps
7) BRIDGE TO BRIDGE SWIM

Dip your toe into the Royal River with a Henley to Marlow endurance swim spanning some 14km. Starting at The Leander club, entrants have an option to complete it in a wetsuit or without, although the latter category is necessarily restricted for safety reasons.

It’s an occupational hazard of Thames swimming that there may be the occasional tummy bug to go with the aching limbs the next day. In the 2014 event there were more incidences than normal, something organisers attributed to issues with old sewer pipes and a very heavy rainfall the night before the race. “The good news,” they say, “is that Thames Water has replaced the old ‘problem’ pipes, and no instances of illness have been recorded since from swimmers.”

This year’s event takes place on Sunday 7th August.
Find out more: henleyswim.com/events/bridge-to-bridge/

8) WORLD POOH STICKS CHAMPIONSHIPS

If the other races we’ve profiled sound like too much hard work, fear not. For every lycra-clad canal racer, there’s a river rambler who favours a more sedate sport. And they don’t come staider than the World Pooh Sticks Championships, a past-time immortalised in AA Milne’s charming childhood tales of a honey-guzzling bear.

A bridge over the River Windrush in Langel Common, Witney, hosts this year’s event on Sunday 5th June. It’s organised by the Rotary Club of Oxford Spires with support from other local rotary clubs and groups.

Lest you need reminding of the rules, participants must drop (not throw) a stick simultaneously on the upstream side of a bridge and run to the other side. The winner is the player whose stick is first to appear. Obviously, players should drop their sticks simultaneously (usually after a referee shouts “drop”, “twitch” or any other keyword) and it’s generally agreed that the stick must be made of an organic material, preferably willow.

Find out more: pooh-sticks.com
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* Booking with the boat builders may be required to internally view some of the show boats.
+ Booking required at www.crickboatshow.com
§ Advance tickets end at midnight on Sunday 22nd May 2016.
** Fairground tickets can be purchased at the show.
Crick Boat Show is organised by Waterways World magazine, Canal and River Trust and Crick Marina.
Eyeing a more adventurous cruise this summer? 

Martin Turner thinks a river run from Stourport to Bristol could be just the ticket.

Undoubtedly one of the most exciting inland waterway cruises in the UK takes in the rivers Severn and Avon from Stourport to Bristol. It’s a trip where you’ll experience everything from narrow canals and tidal rivers to an amazing estuary crossing. Top it all off with a trip down the Avon Gorge to finish in Bristol Harbour, one of the finest boating destinations in the land. If that doesn’t whet your appetite, how about the added bonus of no locks to manually operate for 90 miles?

Do your homework
Preparation is everything for a journey of this scale. Do your homework before starting out, including researching the opening times of locks and ensuring no river warnings are in place. It’s possible that water levels at Stourport are fine, whereas down in Gloucester the river is closed to navigation.

Moorings on some parts of the Severn are limited, especially at the Gloucester end, so before embarking on any section of the journey check that you can get to where you want to go. It may be stating the obvious but it really isn’t a good idea to be tied to a tree stump overnight because you couldn’t find moorings. The speed limit going downstream is 8mph – perfectly achievable in a narrowboat as the current at certain times will be running at around 2mph. Nevertheless, plan journey times with a maximum of 6mph in mind.

My suggestion for the first day would be to head for Worcester. The trip will take around three hours from Stourport on the river, but don’t hurry as this is the best stretch for scenery.
If you have VHF radio aboard use Channel 74 to speak to lock-keepers. It’s important to obey light signals at each lock. Flashing red means the lock-keeper has seen you. On green you may proceed into the chamber. You may have to wait or moor up for a few minutes if the lock is busy. Follow the instructions given by lock-keepers, who will tell you exactly where to moor.

The locks themselves have vertical mooring rods. Attach your ropes loosely fore and aft to allow the boat to rise or fall. The locks are not violent but keeping your position is essential. You may well find yourselves sharing the lock with a complete mixture of craft, from narrowboats to large, expensive cruisers. The locks get bigger as you cruise downstream, reflecting the commercial traffic that used to ply the river. On the Upton, Gloucester and Tewkesbury stretch you may well meet larger vessels - always give way to them.

### Worcester-bound

My suggestion for the first day would be to head for Worcester. The trip will take around three hours from Stourport on the river, but don’t hurry as this is the best stretch for scenery. You enter the River Severn via two sets of narrow staircase locks, emerging on a wide, tree-lined waterway with a magnificent bridge to the right. This is the start of the Severn navigation. Follow the stream south for a mile before arriving at the first lock, Lincombe.

After the lock are some good pubs, so late departure from Stourport with a stop at a pub halfway and arriving in Worcester at around 3pm seems to make sense. If you have not been on the river before, this short hop will also help you get used to some of the differences between canal and river cruising.

It’s worth phoning Upper Lode Lock to check the tides after Tewkesbury to make sure you won’t be held up.

In total, you’ll go through three locks: Lincombe, Holt and Bevere, passing the entrance to the Droitwich Canal at Hawford Junction. IWA was heavily involved with the restoration of the Droitwich – a real success story. You might like a diversion to see what has been achieved.

There are plenty of moorings in Worcester. If you opt for the racecourse you may have to pay a small fee, but access to the town, attractions and transport from here is ideal. Spend some time soaking up the stunning riverscape or touring the city’s world-class cathedral. Worcester Pottery Museum is also well worth a visit and, if you have time, wander up to Diglis Basin on the Worcester & Birmingham Canal.

If you need it, there’s a sanitary station here - the last until Gloucester. Moorings are just before the entrance to the canal.

### Onwards to Gloucester

Depending on time, it’s possible to cruise the stretch to Gloucester in one day if you leave Worcester early. Set aside six to eight hours for the trip, which is 30 miles and has three locks. It’s worth phoning Upper Lode Lock to check the tides after Tewkesbury to make sure you won’t be held up.

Leaving Worcester, take the centre arch of the road bridge, enjoy the view, mind the swans, and pass the entrance to the Worcester & Birmingham Canal on the left. The locks at Diglis are doubled up – lights will indicate which to use. You then have approximately 15 miles of cruising before Tewkesbury. Many people plan a pub stop at Upton for a couple of hours. There’s an excellent fish and chip shop here too and the best map shop in the UK. Moorings are limited so be prepared to breast up. It was here a few years ago that IWA successfully campaigned to keep these moorings after a commercial company threatened to take them over for boat trips.

The river along this stretch is a little bleak but there is plenty of wildlife to see. If you’ve time on your hands, Tewkesbury is a popular overnight stop. Turn left off the Severn, taking a wide centre channel – if you cut the corner you might be there for a...
while! Moor on the Severn moorings past Avon Lock. This is a lovely half-timbered town, with a wonderful abbey and a pleasant walk along the Avon to Abbey Mill for one of the most picturesque views in the country. Plus, of course, it has excellent pubs and a very good Indian restaurant on the high street.

Tewkesbury to Gloucester is 13 miles with few moorings. Allow around four hours for the cruise and phone or radio ahead to Gloucester Lock between Ashlehurst and the Parting to inform them of your arrival. You may be asked to wait at the Parting if a commercial or large boat is coming up. On entering Gloucester Lock keep up speed just in case the current at the entrance is fast. You’ll be asked to moor at the front of the lock and to tie up fore and aft.

Many people complain that this stretch is boring and hurry through. Having cruised it many times, however, I say keep your eyes open. On one trip I saw kingfishers, leaping salmon and a seal (feeding off the salmon). Birds include cormorants, swans, grebes and sand martins. While the low banks may restrict views, the wildlife can be spectacular.

Once moored in Gloucester, enjoy the shopping in the Quays. If you’re lucky, Tommy Nielsen’s yard may have tall ships in for repair so it’s worth taking a look. Most people stay here overnight and sample the excellent range of restaurants in the vicinity. If you like Indian food try Aroma at the bottom of Southgate Street, adjacent to the Docks. For a beautifully restored pub, walk another 200m up Southgate Street to Robert Raikes’s House. Alternatively, stroll across the meadows adjacent to the Docks to Over and the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust’s HQ. They have a wonderful restaurant and rooms, the Wharf House, and a section of restored canal. Set above the River Severn, it’s well worth the 1-mile walk. IWA has helped here too.

Martin’s top tips for tackling the Severn

* The Gloucester Harbour Trustees website has excellent information, including a link to an information sheet produced by IWA’s Gloucestershire & Herefordshire Branch to help boaters new to the Severn below Upper Lode Lock and to the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal: www.gloucesterharbourtrustees.org.uk.
* Pilots can be booked on 07774226143 or by emailing sharpnesspilots@gmail.com. Their website, www.gloucesterpilots.co.uk, is also useful.
* Book a mooring at Portishead Marina by phoning 01275 841941.
* Arrange with CRT Sharpness for the opening of the low level bridge into Sharpness Docks two hours before high tide. Phone 01453 511968.
* Clean your fuel and filters. Other boat preparation should include sealing external low level outlets with duct tape and, if you have one, keeping your cratch cover closed.
* Be prepared to pay people! The pilots, Portishead Marina, the fuel cleaning people and Bristol Harbour...
* Check your insurance policy before you set off to make sure you’re covered for tidal crossings.
Estuary to Avon
Next day it’s off to Sharpness on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal for that long-awaited cruise down the Severn Estuary, one of the most exciting trips of any boating career. Enjoy this unique canal which, when built, was 16 miles long, had 16 bridges and was 16ft deep. Swing bridges (at present all manned) regularly cross the canal and there are lovely views across the Severn.

Stop at Saul Junction to admire the newly restored lock and to find out about the Cotswold Canals restoration, one of the most dynamic in the country. IWA fully supports this project and is a core partner. Within a few years boating to Stroud and beyond is likely.

Once through Sandfield Bridge you’ll need to fill you fuel tank for the estuary. The pump is on the left halfway down (closed Saturdays and Sundays) or you can fill up at the marina. At Frampton on Severn enjoy walking through the biggest village green in the country, complete with three ponds, two pubs and a cricket field. The Wetlands Wildlife Trust at Slimbridge is also a great place to spend an afternoon.

The estuary crossing is safe but you must follow the rules. Boasting the second highest tide in the world at around 50ft, it’s easy to understand why most narrowboaters feel more comfortable using a pilot to navigate the 22-mile stretch from Sharpness to Portishead. A pilot will tell you when you can travel (be prepared to wait depending on weather and traffic), steer the boat and will provide radio equipment. Bear in mind they’ll want evidence that your fuel tank is clean and full – and require feeding with bacon baps and cups of tea! Expect the trip to take two to three hours on a spring tide and closer to four hours on a neap. You’ll be taken into the lock at Portishead, which rises around 30ft-35ft, and then instructed to moor for a few hours in the marina or overnight there depending on the time of year and state of tides. The marina itself is well served with a large Waitrose and good restaurants close by.

The Portishead lock-keeper will make arrangements to exit, as well as communicating with Avon Docks and Bristol to inform them of your presence. You’ll not be allowed out of the lock until the 1-mile crossing to the River Avon is clear. Follow the signs and enter the Avon mid-channel; the entrance is south of the wall. Keep to the middle of the channel all the way to Bristol and ring the harbour there when you enter the Avon so they can prepare the lock. When entering the locks after the suspension bridge keep to the left (very important). On arrival, there are excellent moorings at Bristol Harbour either opposite the SS Great Britain or at the Arnolfini arts centre.

And there ends your adventure of a lifetime – certainly an experience you’re unlikely to forget in a hurry.
How did you become a historian of technology?
I’m a social historian by background; I didn’t start out specialising in technology, mechanical history and engineering. Yet, you can’t separate technology and the industrial revolution from social context because you can’t separate machines from people. The reason machines exist is because people built them. It doesn’t make sense to study one on its own.

What prompted your interest in canals?
I’ve always been interested in canals, even as a child because my father was keen on them. We used to walk on the Peak Forest Canal, around the Marple area. Later, I saw the links between the canals, railways, factories, roads, transport and urban growth. It has to start from something and the canals are the first major step towards man changing the nature of the place where he lives in order to get something big done. That’s the key lynchpin in the Industrial Revolution: what is it that makes a local market town producing something for centuries turn into a big metropolis that sends its goods out to the whole world? It all starts with canals.

Canals indeed changed the nature of towns and cities, and they also became an intrinsic part of their new identity. Would you agree?
Yes, and they are a part of understanding what people think their home is. They provide context both for the countryside and for cities. They link places together in people’s minds. People really enjoy canals for leisure purposes now but the majority
are not boat owners, nor are they necessarily canal enthusiasts. They’re people who live near a stretch of water and use it for walking, for example. I think we need to deepen their understanding of canals, so more people feel ownership of them.

Do you take canal boat holidays yourself? I do from time to time, but I don’t own a boat. The reason why is the upkeep – the time and money you need to devote to a boat. I have two small children and it’s just not realistic. However, I do take the occasional short trip and it has been mostly local: we’ve done Cheshire Ring as well as North Wales.

Do your children enjoy boating as well? Do they share your passion for canals? When I came back from filming in the Midlands I brought home a little model given to me at the Canal Museum in Stoke Bruerne and actually used in the series to point out which end of the boat is which. My son had requested something ‘canal’ as a souvenir and he’s since developed a bit of an interest in models like that. He also has a very nice poster from the Birmingham Canal Navigations of otters around the water. The poster reads: ‘Canals Need Friends.’ That’s a good message because they do: the wildlife needs support, the people who live on the waterways need support, and the organisations that support them need our general support – they need our money, and our time.

Talking about waterway organisations, what do you think of the work done by IWA and CRT? IWA was obviously very influential in getting major restoration projects off the ground in the first place. This is all grassroots and community-based: all locals, all volunteers. Without them and their input, we would have no CRT today, to be honest. I think it’s fantastic that the communication between IWA, individual societies, waterway communities and CRT is getting much better now. CRT is what I suppose to be a more accessible version of what was British Waterways. Openness and communication can only be a good thing, and I would like to see it developed further.

Have you got a favourite canal? It’s hard to choose because I live very close to the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal, which is not a fully navigable waterway, but I’m very fond of it because I go there a lot. Nevertheless, I think it has to come back to the Peak Forest Canal, which is where it all started for me.

What would be your dream canal holiday if you had enough time? I’d love to explore the Crinan Canal. I’ve always fancied doing the Low Countries as well, the Netherlands. It would also be very interesting to visit the canals in China and America. I’d like to go to the Connecticut and New York area to see what has been done there, how the canals are used and how much people know about them.

To read the full interview go to www.waterways.org.uk/lizmcivor.
It celebrated its 40th birthday last year, but this sprawling branch shows no sign of putting its feet up. With active restoration projects and iconic World Heritage Sites, we discover how the Shrewsbury & North Wales members are keeping the IWA flag flying.

With both the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and the world’s first cast iron bridge at Ironbridge Gorge, near Telford, on their patch, it would be surprising if Shrewsbury & North Wales branch members didn’t feel proud of their area’s waterways. And it’s not just world heritage on their doorstep, but three of the most popular canals on the system too, with the Llangollen, Montgomery and Shropshire Union all wending their picturesque way through the region.

Then there’s the unique network of canals of East Shropshire, built to a completely different specification than the other Midlands canals to accommodate 20’ long tub boats that serviced the local cargoes of iron, coal and limestone.

An embarrassment of riches? Not quite, says vice chairman Michael Haig. Away from the healthy pile of postcard images there’s another picture he’s keen to paint. “Although we’re quite spoilt in some respects,” he explains, “our geographical breadth, from Staffordshire to Anglesey and Telford to North Wales, throws up a fair number of challenges when it comes to actually managing the branch. There are no big urban centres in it either, so no big concentration of members. This can cause problems when, for example, you’re trying to encourage members to join in with volunteer activities, or to organise socials. Our way is to be quite selective about these, and focus more on a few annual events such as a talk, a quiz night, a visit to a waterway attraction and so on, rather than monthly meet-ups. We have to work with what we’ve got.”

Much of this IWA branch’s work goes, directly or indirectly, into support for the restoration projects in its area – on the Llangollen Canal at Whitchurch and Plas Kynaston (near Trevor), and of course on the Montgomery and Shrewsbury & Newport, both of which enjoy a national profile. The Montgomery, which has been running the longest, was the focus of last year’s popular ‘Making Waves’ programme – a series of events that ran across the summer with the aim of bringing the canal in Wales to life by showcasing its history, culture and opportunities.

The waterway itself runs 35 miles from the Llangollen Canal (at Frankton Junction) to Newtown, via Llanymynech and Welshpool. It fell into disuse following a breach in 1936, and was officially abandoned in 1944. However, ongoing restoration work continues to expand its navigable sections, comprising 7 miles from Frankton Junction to Gronwen Wharf and, separately, a short stretch at Llanymynech and a central 11-mile section of the canal through Welshpool which, though navigable, are isolated from the network.

The success of the ‘Making Waves’ programme, coupled with the enthusiasm of the mayor of Welshpool and a fresh approach by trip-boat charity Heulwen Trust to raise its profile with public trips on top of its core activities for disabled passengers, could see restoration efforts take a serious step forward in the near future.

Branch chairman Michael Limbrey relates: “After last year’s events, Welshpool Town Council met the Deputy Minister in Cardiff and local MP Glyn Davies to look at what could be done for Welshpool. The obvious conclusion was to complete the restoration of the canal from Redwith to re-connect Welshpool to the national canal system.”

A small steering group was set up to identify key work required and, just as importantly, “to pull together an outline budget to show policy-makers the sort of cash numbers needed,” Michael Limbrey continues. “It’s around £30m, including almost £9m for the provision of nature reserves that would create the largest area of its type in Wales and enhance tourism.”

The plan has already been circulated among interested groups and the next stage will be to present it to...
BRANCH AT A GLANCE

**Formed:** 1975  
**Local waterways:** Llangollen, Montgomery, Shropshire Union, Shrewsbury & Newport (not presently navigable)  
**Membership:** Over 450 members, the ninth-largest within IWA's 33 branches  
**Claim to fame:** Branch area includes two World Heritage Sites – Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Ironbridge Gorge  
**Find out more:** [www.waterways.org.uk/shrewsbury](http://www.waterways.org.uk/shrewsbury)

Governments in Westminster and Cardiff. And therein lies another of the challenges Michael Haig was referring to earlier because, although direct responsibility for waterways is not devolved, the Welsh Assembly does deal with many of the issues associated with them – tourism, regeneration, health and well-being – and so any proposals must meet approval from two administrations, rather than just one.

The other big restoration project supported by the branch is centred around the Shrewsbury & Newport Canals. It is currently backing the canal trust’s efforts to raise £350,000 to access over £1m of grants to turn to derelict buildings at Wappenshall Wharf (where the Shrewsbury Canal meets the Newport Branch) into a vibrant visitor/heritage centre. WRG has also been lending the restoration a hand – volunteers recently re-profiled and relined a length of channel near Newport. The branch provided flexible liner material as well as financial assistance.

In fact, fundraising for projects like this is one of the branch’s strengths, thinks Michael Haig. It’s the only IWA branch to produce its own pictorial calendar, for example, which acts as the main revenue earner. An annual lock wind at Hurleston Locks is another successful way of generating funds and the branch stand is regularly seen at rallies in its area.

For the last twelve years the branch committee has been fortunate to have had the knowledge and expertise of well-known canal historian Peter Brown, who has ensured that the branch has stayed on top of the planning applications and heritage issues in this scenic and historic part of the country. Peter is shortly to retire from his role and the branch is actively seeking a successor to take forward this important function.

Despite all these activities, the branch remains engagingly modest about its achievements over the last 40-odd years. When asked how he assesses its contribution to IWA, Michael Limbrey simply smiles: “I hope we’ve pulled our weight.”

**BRANCH AT A GLANCE**

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**DATES FOR THE DIARY**

Shrewsbury & North Wales Branch will be participating in the following events this summer:

- **30th April-2nd May**  
  **NORBURY CANAL FESTIVAL**  
  The branch stall will be operating from nb Tamarind.

- **5th June**  
  **SHREWSBURY RIVER FESTIVAL**  
  Quarry Park, Shrewsbury.

- **2nd July**  
  **WELSHPOOL FOOD & CANAL FESTIVAL**  
  The branch stand and WoW activities.

- **24th July**  
  **CHURCH MINSHULL AQUEDUCT MARINA OPEN DAY**

- **6th-7th August**  
  **ANNUAL LOCK WIND AT HURLESTON LOCKS**  
  One of the main fund-raising events in the branch’s calendar.

- **20th-21st August**  
  **WHITCHURCH GATHERING OF BOATS**

- **4th September**  
  **AUDLEM RNLI FESTIVAL AT OVERWATER MARINA**
Round-up of IWA branch activity

Here are 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 (contact details below), ideally in advance so that they can assist with publicity and planning.

ABOVE: Peterborough Branch held its very first work party this winter with considerable success, in partnership with the Middle Level Commissioners (MLC). Overall they completed four full days clearing in excess of 110 metres of the Forty Foot river bank in Cambridgeshire.

BELOW: West Country Branch has had a very busy season, averaging five work parties and over 170 volunteer hours a month. Along with the usual tasks of removing vegetation and rubbish from the towpaths and water, they have also been concentrating on hedglaying at Bathpool Marina. Manchester Branch has also been improving the environmental benefit of towpaths by planting 500 hedgerow plants around Lock 4 on the Ashton Canal.

ABOVE: One focus of work parties has been preparing for summer events. In Liverpool, volunteers from Chester & Merseyside Branch have been working on the area around Stanley Locks at Eldonian Village ready for IWA’s National Campaign Festival in June. They’ve cleared vegetation to allow more mooring spaces for boats, litter picked and made the area as appealing as possible for the influx of visitors.

BELOW: Chiltern Branch volunteers turned out over two days to assist CRT and the Wendover Arm Trust with reed pulling from the Wendover Arm, and also cleared vegetation from around the Tringford Pumphouse in preparation for engineering work this summer.

RIGHT: ‘Clean for the Queen’ in March saw branches joining with local community groups and canal societies to participate in large-scale litter picking. The campaign, organised by Keep Britain Tidy, marks the Queen’s 90th birthday this year. Six IWA branches were involved and over 100 volunteers turned out to help keep the towpaths clear of litter.

In Middleport, Stoke-on-Trent, IWA volunteers, CRT and community group Middleport Matters joined forces. Floating rubbish was collected from a boat along the Trent & Mersey Canal while Burslem Port volunteers picked litter along the line of the Branch Canal. A total of 53 volunteers collected around 70 bags of rubbish in a very busy and successful day.

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 Campaigns Team: Alison Smedley, Branch Campaign Officer 07779 0905915, alison.smedley@waterways.org.uk. Emma Matthars, Assistant Volunteer Coordinator 01494 783453, emma.matthars@waterways.org.uk.
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Waterway Recovery Group has had a busy beginning to 2016 with six canal camps and several weekend digs across the county.

From 14th-19th February, 16 WRG volunteers supported the work of Essex Waterways staff and volunteers by helping to improve a section of (very muddy!) towpath on the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation. Over the week 650 metres of towpath were resurfaced from Papermill Lock towards Little Baddow Lock. This is a popular spot for visitors and the local community, so it is hoped the work will improve access for all. The 150 tonnes of road planings for the resurfacing work were kindly donated by Essex Highways.

Essex Waterways chairman, Roy Chandler, said: "Regularly working in partnership with Waterway Recovery Group and Essex Highways enables us as a not-for-profit company to continue to improve the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation for public benefit. We are very grateful to both for their input to this project."

During the Easter holidays, meanwhile, WRG ran five Canal Camps on three different sites involving over 60 volunteers – Weymoor Bridge on the Cotswold Canals, Bridge 70 on the Uttoxeter Canal and Staveley Town Lock on the Chesterfield

– with each project making significant progress. WRG has also continued to support the Grantham Canal Heritage Initiative. In February WRG’s Forestry Team spent three days felling large trees and clearing vegetation around Lock 14 on the canal to enable further restoration work. WRG will be back again in the summer running four week-long Canal Camps from the 3rd-30th July helping to rebuild Lock 15.

Lastly, WRG volunteers have been working at Inglesham Lock. In March a small team spent a weekend clearing the massive pile of rubble that WRG volunteers had dug out of the lock chamber (by hand!) last summer. This will pave the way for further work planned on the site later this year. Other enabling projects were focused on improving site access and removing a large tree stump from the spill weir. This summer WRG volunteers will clear the remaining silt and start repointing the lower chamber walls. Once this work has been completed, scaffolding will be installed and the demolition work can start, with volunteers removing damaged brickwork, vegetation and some very large tree roots. Inglesham Lock is the gateway to the Cotswold Canals restoration and an iconic structure so, hopefully, will see lots more of progress over the coming months.

During the Easter holidays WRG ran five Canal Camps on three different sites involving over 60 volunteers
Waterways Recovery Group

Staveley Town Lock, Chesterfield Canal

Summer Canal Camps
We still have some spaces left on our summer Canal Camps, offering volunteers the chance to repair a bridge on the Ashby Canal, carry out lock repairs on the Pocklington Canal, or reline a section of canal on the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals.

Volunteering with WRG is a great experience for anyone who loves being outdoors and enjoys meeting people from different backgrounds and of different ages (18+). Each week costs £63, which includes food and accommodation. WRG attracts a wide range of volunteers, from youngsters taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme, to waterway enthusiasts wishing to make a contribution to restoring and preserving the system, to teachers, doctors and office workers. Volunteers need no previous experience; all they require is a willingness to get involved and a good sense of fun.

A full list of Canal Camp dates for 2016 can be found on the WRG website or, to request the 2016 Canal Camps brochure, please email enquiries@wrg.org.uk.

To book on a Canal Camp visit www.wrg.org.uk or call the WRG Head Office Team on 01494 783 453 ext 604.

Full list of dates:

**SUMMER**
- 11th-18th June Inglesham Lock (Cotswolds)
- 18th-25th June Inglesham Lock (Cotswolds)
- 25th June-2nd July Inglesham Lock (Cotswolds)
- 2nd-9th July Monmouthshire Canal
- 2nd-9th July Wey & Arun Canal (NWPG)
- 3rd-9th July – Grantham Canal
- 9th-16th July – Monmouthshire Canal
- 9th-16th July – Wey and Arun Canal
- 9th-16th July – Grantham Canal
- 16th-23rd July – Swansea Canal
- 16th-23rd July – Grantham Canal
- 23rd-30th July – Cotswold Canals
- 23rd-30th July – Buckingham Canal (KESCRG)
- 23rd-30th July – Grantham Canal
- 30th July-6th August – Cotswold Canals
- 30th July-6th August – Buckingham Canal
- 30th July-6th August – Lapal Canal
- 6th-13th August – Stover Canal
- 6th-13th August – Ashby Canal
- 6th-13th August – Lapal Canal
- 13th-20th August – Stover Canal
- 13th-20th August – Pocklington Canal
- 13th-20th August – Shrewsbury and Newport Canals
- 20th-27th August – Shrewsbury and Newport Canals
- 27th August-3rd September – Inglesham Lock (Cotswolds)
- 3rd-10th September – Inglesham Lock (Cotswolds)
- 10th-17th September – Inglesham Lock (Cotswolds)

**AUTUMN/WINTER**
- 22nd-29th October – Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation
- 21st-29th October – WRG Forestry Camp
- 5th-6th November – Bonfire Bash
- 26th December-1st January – Christmas Camp

More camps, more leaders (& cooks)
WRG’s Canal Camps are run entirely by volunteers. This year we have more camps planned than ever... which means we need even more leaders, assistants and cooks to help us lay them on.

WRG’s leadership teams are responsible for making sure each Canal Camp is a fun-filled, enjoyable experience – they run the canal restoration site, arrange social activities in the evenings, and ensure that everyone is still smiling (and well fed!) by the end of the week. Leaders, assistants and cooks are supported through the whole process by the WRG Board, Head Office Team and other volunteers. We also organise a Leaders Training Day (14th May) each year. Want to know more? Email Jenny Black on jenny.black@waterways.org.uk.

Bricklaying, diggers and van-tastic fudge!
An important part of WRG’s role is to promote canals and the restoration network to a wider audience, teaching the next generation of navvies the skills required to rebuild canals. For that reason, WRG will be represented at a number of waterway events across the country. Visit our stand and learn how to lay a brick or drive a digger, for example, while at IWA Canalway Cavalcade we’ll be selling our ‘van-tastic fudge’, raising funds for WRG’s Van Appeal.

- 30th April-2nd May IWA Canalway Cavalcade
  - Van-tastic Fudge Stand
- 21st-22nd May Rickmansworth Waterways Festival
  - Learn to bricklay
- 28th-29th May Trailboat Festival (Chesterfield Canal)
  - Drive a digger
- 2nd-3rd July – Stratford River Festival – Learn to bricklay
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nostalgic charm was the runaway winner of this year’s IWA calendar competition, with an atmospheric snap showcasing horse-drawn trip-boat Tivertonian voted top pic.

In total, the competition attracted over 460 entries, all vying to be featured in the pages of IWA’s 2017 calendar. The brief was for images portraying a range of seasons, craft and activities from across the inland waterways network. After close examination and debates over the merits of various waterway features, 14 images were shortlisted and put to the public vote.

The overall winner, as chosen by recipients of IWA’s fortnightly newsletter, website users and social media members, was Mark Gliddon, whose picture of Tivertonian on the Grand Western Canal received over 32% of votes cast. Mark will receive a complete set of Nicholson Guides to the Waterways, kindly donated by Harper Collins, and three copies of the 2017 IWA calendar. Mark grabbed the winning shot with his second-hand Sony Alpha 450 DSLR, not even having time to set up a tripod.

Other popular photos included Caen Hill Locks by Damien Davis, Sharpness Dock and Marina taken by an authorised drone flown by Jay Clements, and the Grand Union Canal submitted by Myra Stokes. Between them these three photos accounted for a further 34% of votes cast.

Mark Gliddon was delighted to see his photo selected by so many waterways supporters. He said: “I lived besides the Grand Western Canal for most of my life so it is somewhere I love to walk along whenever I get a chance. My interest in photography has only become more serious over the last four years, but when I saw the horse-drawn barge coming under the bridge I just knew I had to grab the shot. I’m still shocked to have won. It’s great to be able to help promote some of the beautiful waterways we have around the country and the good work of the Inland Waterway Association.”

All the shortlisted photos will feature in the calendar, which goes on sale in August, as well as in the Association’s Christmas cards.

Entries are now open for next year’s competition. Please visit www.waterways.org.uk/photocomp to submit your photos of our waterways and their surroundings for a chance to win.
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