THE THREAT TO ANGLIAN WATERWAYS
IWA’s campaign to stop further closures

BOAT FOR RENT?
Advice for prospective floating tenants

LOVE YOUR WATERWAYS
Reasons to celebrate our canals and rivers

PLUS
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SEVEN REASONS WHY YOUR
MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTION IS VITAL
1. IWA Canal Cleanups led by our branches keep
many waterways clear of debris
2. Restoration is kept high priority through funding
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3. Over 10,000 days of volunteering each year will
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materials
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5. We can pass on traditional skills and work-
based experience for volunteering young people
6. We can lobby the Government and work with
other organisations to repair, improve and
protect our waterways heritage
7. Your voice is counted when IWA speaks up for all
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IWA’s worries over the future of the Environment Agency’s navigations have increased further over the last three months. The lack of funding for EA navigations generally and the Anglian region in particular is something we have been addressing with national and local politicians. Thank you to everybody who has written to their MP highlighting our concerns.

In addition to the many letters sent by members, IWA has sent personalised letters to all the MPs in the Anglian region highlighting the waterways in their constituency, and similarly nearly a hundred letters have been sent to local authority politicians. Questions have been asked in both Houses of Parliament and Dr Thérèse Coffey, the Waterways Minister, is fully aware of our concerns as MPs of all parties have drawn them to her attention.

I have asked for a meeting with Dr Coffey and we hope this will take place in May when I will be accompanied by Chris White, MP for Warwick and Leamington and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Waterways Group. The meeting will give us the opportunity both to ensure the Minister understands the issues and to praise the sterling efforts of EA staff who battle to keep the navigations open with inadequate resources.

Where IWA members are highlighting the campaign by using waterways that are in a poor condition, such as the Old Bedford River, EA staff have been trying hard to make the journeys possible. Their efforts are frequently frustrated by a failing system, but this just serves to make the issues clear. Equally we will explain that this isn’t a new problem and that too many waterways have already been closed for far too long.

I understand that the Government will receive a report on the transfer of EA navigations to CRT in the very near future. Our hope remains that funding will be found to allow this to happen and that this will address the issues that concern us. However, if the Government says ‘no’ to the transfer then IWA will continue to campaign very strongly for proper funding of the waterways. Politicians claim to understand the many benefits that waterways provide the nation, and the Government must demonstrate its understanding by investing in the waterways appropriately.

Another area of concern for us is the Falkirk Wheel and the Lowland Canals of Scotland, where we are encouraging Scottish Canals to develop a strategy that promotes boating. News that there may be no hire-boats on the Lowland Canals from 2018 onwards, and that the boating capacity of the Falkirk Wheel might be reduced, is most disappointing. We hope more positive stories will emerge in the coming months.

IWA has worked to promote and encourage waterways restoration for many years. We cannot accept previously restored navigations closing again. Good progress is being made in our work to enhance restoration support, including the production of a national vision that all restoration schemes can sign up to. IWA will use this to convince influential bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund of the benefits of waterways restoration and we hope to persuade them to sign up to the vision. This will benefit the whole movement and the concept has been very well received at recent meetings.

Les Etheridge
Boats Wanted! Here’s another successful sale from Overwater, one of our partner marinas!

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**AGM**

Notice is hereby given that the Association’s Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 30th September 2017 at 11.30am. The venue for the meeting will be Aldercar High School, Daltons Close, Langley Mill, Nottingham, NG16 4HL. Full details will be provided in the next issue of Waterways.

Nominations to stand as an elected trustee (three places available) are sought. Nominations are also sought for the posts of region chairman for Eastern, London and South East regions (to serve until the 2020 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 7th July (i.e. 85 days before the AGM).

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**10k Challenge on the Chelmer towpath**

Runners and get fit fans in Essex will have the opportunity to take on a new challenge this autumn.

On Sunday 17th September, IWA will host a 10k run on the scenic Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation in Essex (the navigation IWA manages), to raise funds to improve the local towpaths.

The ‘Essex 10k’ will be a circular, cross-country route, starting and finishing at Hoe Mill Lock in Ulting, taking in the scenery of Maldon and the surrounding area along the way. A large stretch of the route will be along the towpath, where runners can enjoy the unique landscape and relatively flat running conditions.

Sarah Frayne, fundraising officer for IWA, said: “The event will be open to people of all abilities and we hope lots of local runners will be keen to take on this interesting and varied off-road route.”

Entry will be £15, with concessions for affiliated runners and Early Bird entries. More information is available on IWA’s website at waterways.org.uk/essex10k and the event Facebook page: facebook.com/events/103535953516593/.

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**Crick focus on budget boating**

How to get afloat for less will be among the major themes of this year’s Crick Boat Show & Waterways Festival, to be held at Crick Marina between 27th and 29th May.

Expected to attract over 25,000 visitors, the show will feature displays of GRP cruisers, advice on low-cost ways to boat our inland waterways and a seminar dedicated to the subject.

Around 40 new boats will also be exhibited, including narrowboats and wide-beams, as well as a chance to book onto one-hour introductory boat-handling courses led by Watercraft.

As always, IWA will have a major presence at Crick – the foremost trade event of the year. The association’s campaigning activities will be showcased on the IWA stand and new members will be sought.

For full details visit crickboatshow.com.
IWA is saddened to report the death of Mike Carter on 22nd February. Mike was North West Region chairman from 2015 and northern deputy chairman of IWA’s Navigation Committee until he retired in November last year due to ill health.

Mike joined IWA in 1984/5, attending many national festivals. In 1998 he was part of the River Mersey and Weaver convoys, leading up to the National Festival at Salford Quays.

After organising various River Mersey convoys in 2009 and 2010, he was invited to join Chester & District Branch committee and in 2014 he was elected as deputy branch chairman.

Becoming more active in the region as CRT emerged, he established regular CRT waterways managers’ liaison meetings, bringing together all the regional CRT waterway managers to encourage good partnership working. During his time as North West Region chairman Mike led the team that organised IWA’s festival at Eldonian Village in 2016, which was a great campaigning success. He also challenged Peel Holdings over its management of the Bridgewater Canal Company, particularly in connection with licensing charges and stoppages on the canal.

IWA sends its condolences to his widow, Christine, and their daughters. Mike will be greatly missed throughout the organisation.

£200,000 for Lichfield Tunnel Appeal

The Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust says £200,000 has so far been donated towards its ‘David Suchet Tunnel Vision’ appeal, formally launched by the actor at the London Boat Show in January.

A target of £1m is needed by 2019 to ensure a canal tunnel is built under the main Lichfield-Birmingham railway line at the same time as an adjacent tunnel for the Lichfield southern bypass.

LHCRT chairman David Dixon said: “The tunnel is a vital part of the restoration as there is no alternative route. Leaving it to some future time would be a missed opportunity, and would undoubtedly be far more expensive. While the canal may not be fully connected at this stage, the tunnel will serve as a safe off-road community link between two proposed new housing estates bordering the canal.”

Book now for the Festival of Water at Ilkeston

It’s now easier to book a place at IWA’s Festival of Water on the Erewash Canal this August, thanks to a new online booking system.

The event, taking place at Gallows Inn Playing Field, Ilkeston between 26th and 28th August, is filling up fast, but there’s still space to book your boat (with or without a butty) or tent over the Bank Holiday weekend. Visit waterways.org.uk/festivalofwater to reserve a spot, with payment by PayPal, debit or credit card.

Old Bedford River conquered

Congratulations to John Revell who, after a string of previous attempts, successfully led a convoy of three narrowboats onto the Old Bedford River at the start of April.

Non-tidal access to this historic navigation was lost in 2006 when the Environment Agency closed Welches Dam Lock. Currently it can only be entered at low water from the tidal Great Ouse. An additional complication is the silt build-up at the mouth of the river, leaving only a few inches of water.

The latest navigation attempt saw John’s 41ft narrowboat Olive Emily assemble alongside a 45- and 50-footer at Salter’s Lode Lock. After much writhing in the mud, and over an hour of trying, all three boats scraped through.

EA had sufficiently raised the water level in the river for comfortable passage to be made, and previous problems of ‘bottoming out’ were avoided. EA also lifted the guillotine gate at Welney – usually an obstacle to navigation.

The flotilla enjoyed glorious Fenland views all the way to Welches Dam Lock where, being unable to progress through it, they returned to Welney overnight.

The next morning saw the intrepid boaters retrace their steps to Salter’s Lode. Again, there were difficulties getting through the sluice gates onto the Great Ouse, but after two hours of trying the happy trio and their mud-splattered craft finally made it.

An emotional John Revell said: “I was one of the last boaters to use Welches Dam Lock from Horseway Channel before EA suddenly piled across the lock entrance in 2006. I never thought it would take another 11 years to reach it from Salter’s Lode. I’d like to give a big ‘thank you’ to EA for their support this time, without which the trip would have failed.”

You can read more about IWA’s attempts to keep Anglian waterways open in our Campaign Focus feature on page 13 of this issue.
CAMPAIGNING WITH YOU

HS2, the transfer of EA navigations, restoration and over-crowded moorings are among the issues we’re campaigning on with your help. Here’s how we’ve been doing on these and other affairs...

HS2 feedback
IWA has responded to HS2’s consultation on design refinements to the preferred route for Phase 2b.

The Association, which has serious concerns over the rail project’s impact on inland waterways, has objected to a number of proposed changes to the previous (2013) route, in particular proposals to move a rolling stock depot at Golborne to a site at Wimboldsley, north of Crewe. Here it would impact the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal with a wider crossing, bringing noise and visual disturbance for a 1km stretch alongside popular moorings.

On the same waterway, a single crossing has now become a much wider crossing with three lines approaching the New Crofton Rolling Stock depot north of Crewe.

Meanwhile, plans to move the route in the Middlewich - Northwich area in Cheshire up to 800m westwards, impacting the Trent & Mersey Canal where a single crossing now becomes three crossings on very high viaducts and embankment, have also been contested.

Other areas of concern include proposals to increase the vertical height of the preferred route as it passes into Long Eaton and the ‘East Midlands Hub Station’, so increasing noise and visual impact on local residents and the Erewash Canal.

IWA has also recorded reservations about a number of other refinements, which could affect canals and rivers in Leicestershire, Derbyshire and West Yorkshire, including on the Ashby Canal near Measham, and the Chesterfield Canal at Staveley and Norwood.

The Association’s full response to the consultations, which closed on 9th March, can be found at waterways.org.uk/hs2.

HS2, EA transfer and Restoration Hub among 2017 objectives
Bolstering restoration efforts will form a cornerstone of IWA’s objectives for the coming year, including publishing a high-level report on the subject and consolidating the launch of the Association’s ‘Restoration Hub’.

Among other targets over the next 12 months are mitigating the threat posed to the inland waterways by HS2, monitoring progress on the transfer of Environment Agency waterways to the Canal & River Trust, and improving the boating experience.

The latter could be helped by a report, also scheduled for the next year, on how waterways usage has changed over the last five years and users’ visions for the decade ahead.

In total, IWA has set itself nine targets for 2017, with its longer term objectives to be published later this year.

CRT licence fee changes welcomed
A proposed review of CRT’s licensing structure could potentially address the issue of overcrowding in certain stretches of the waterways system and how services can be adequately resourced, believes the Association.

IWA also acknowledges that the present method of charging by length of boat, rather than length x beam, could be seen as unfair to boaters with smaller, narrower vessels.

CRT’s consultation will be run by Involve, an independent charity. As part of a three-stage process, Involve will initially interview representatives from the main boating organisations to discover their views on how the consultation should work and what it should cover. IWA will be taking part and putting forward proposals that have been agreed by its Navigation Committee.

WHY CAMPAIGN WITH IWA? We strive to make the waterways better for all.
**Time trials on the towpath**

IWA has contacted CRT about new signage in London, which displays the number of minutes it would take to reach a destination (by foot and by bicycle) rather than the distance.

There are fears that some cyclists might consider ‘beating’ the timings, which already necessitate pedalling approximately 10-12mph – too fast on a towpath.

IWA’s Navigation Committee said: “The Association considers that all signage giving directional information about nearby locations should state the distance and not the time taken to reach the location.”

**Scottish Canals**

IWA continues to be extremely concerned about the future of the Forth & Clyde and Union canals, despite having received a response to a letter to Scottish Canals from its chairman, Andrew Thin.

While Scottish Canals has given reassurances concerning the future use of the Falkirk Wheel by private boats, IWA’s main concern continues to be the loss of the hire-fleet based at Falkirk. IWA believes it is extremely important that hire-boats continue to be available on the Lowland Canals. Without them, activity on the canals will be dramatically reduced, and the future of these restored waterways will be at stake.

These are among some of the points raised with Scottish Canals in a further letter in which IWA’s national chairman, Les Etheridge, writes: “IWA considers that there is more at stake here than a private company going out of business, and we would ask Scottish Canals to do all that it can to encourage a sustainable hire-boat presence on the Lowland Canals, in order to preserve the future and ongoing use of these waterways.”

**Concerns over Mon & Brec water supplies**

IWA has written to Natural Resources Wales about proposals which may affect water supplies to the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal.

Concerns have arisen after Natural Resources Wales opened a consultation on limiting water extraction from the River Usk by Welsh Water.

Since it opened in 1812 the canal has been largely fed from the Usk, whose course it follows from Brecon to Newport. Because the canal was granted abstraction rights in the original Acts, it has never required separate licences, even when the river acquired its Special Area of Conservation designation.

Since then, the general public demand for local reservoirs has grown massively, such that the canal now accounts for only a small percentage of overall abstraction.

The canal itself has no storage capacity and is very vulnerable to variations in river supply. Now, as restoration on the Monmouthshire Canal quickens, demand for water is likely to return to the higher levels of previous years. As such, plans to preserve target flows in the Usk will have to be met by importing supplies from elsewhere, otherwise canal levels could quickly drop off.

As a result of comments received on the proposed changes, NRW has advised IWA it will be going back to meet others impacted by them to look at their concerns.

Do new signs encourage dangerous cycling?

IWA has been fighting controversial plans that would restrict boat numbers at the Falkirk Wheel.

**Low water levels at Five Locks, the current southerly terminus of the Mon & Brec in Cwmbran.**

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Campaigns Focus

THE BACKGROUND
The Anglian Water Authority Act of 1977 provides a Right of Navigation on most (but not all) of the waterways in EA’s Anglian Region. However, minutes of a meeting last year to discuss the proposed transfer of EA navigations to the Canal & River Trust (obtained by a Freedom of Information request) show that EA could renege on this duty if “unable to fund the repair and maintenance of the assets”.

Three locks in the Anglian region are already closed, with EA maintaining it is unable to reopen them due to current funding restraints. It is only a matter of time before further navigation assets are closed, potentially on waterways that are well used and provide links or through-routes to other waterways, a situation that IWA regards as unacceptable.

WHAT’S HAPPENED SINCE?
Correspondence with EA at the highest level has done nothing to allay IWA’s concerns. Nor have a series of questions posed on our behalf in Parliament. Indeed, in February the Waterway Minister stated: “If there is a safety risk to members of the public then repairs will be undertaken to remove the risk or the asset will be closed.”

Thérèse Coffey went on to say: “The Environment Agency will consider the restoration and re-opening of closed navigable waterways depending on the amount of future funding available and the importance, such as the level of use, of the waterway to be re-opened.”

IWA’s position? This simply isn’t good enough. The “level of use” should not be a significant factor in whether or not a waterway is reopened, particularly on those waterways with a statutory right of navigation. The Association also maintains that level of use is often low only because waterways have been so poorly maintained in the past as to make navigation extremely difficult – or even impossible – for all but the smallest craft.

IWA national chairman Les Etheridge said: “Dr Coffey has expressed a keen interest in our waterways on a number of occasions since taking office, so we can only think that she has been incompletely briefed by EA officials as to the seriousness of the present funding crisis, which we have been warning about for years.

“We know EA’s navigation teams are doing what they can under difficult circumstances. What IWA is doing is making clear to the minister that, regardless of whether EA waterways are transferred to the management of Canal & River Trust, they need to receive increased funding from Government to halt the progressive deterioration that is currently taking place.”

IWA’S CAMPAIGN
IWA has delivered a comprehensive listing to the Waterways Minister of current closures on EA waterways, some of which date back to 2006 and redefine the concept of “temporary closure”. It is also campaigning for the waterways run by the Environment Agency to be transferred to CRT. Subject to a satisfactory funding package, this would enable Anglian waterways to benefit from improved maintenance through long-term asset management plans, third party funding opportunities and the economies of scale to be gained from being part of a larger navigation authority.

IWA’s view is that whether or not this transfer happens, more money must be secured for their upkeep. Anything else is simply unacceptable given the benefits that waterways provide to the nation in terms of health, recreation, tourism and regeneration.

Spotlight on...

THE THREAT TO ANGLIAN WATERWAYS

The Environment Agency recently revealed it’s prepared to close rivers to boaters on ‘health and safety’ grounds, instead of securing proper resources for their maintenance. Help IWA in its campaign to prevent EA ignoring its legal obligation to maintain navigation rights on much of its Anglian network.

The River Nene at Fotheringhay.

IWA Waterways | 13
There are three locks on waterways in the Anglian region which EA has closed in recent years, claiming lack of funds to reopen them. These are Harlam Hill Lock on the River Ancholme, Dedham Lock on the River Stour, and Welches Dam Lock, just off the Old Bedford River linking to the Middle Level. Although these locations are perhaps not on the most popular routes, IWA’s concern is that future closures could affect busier rivers such as the Nene and the Great Ouse.

In addition to the three locks mentioned above, there are a number of other waterways in EA’s Anglian region, and further afield, where access is difficult or impossible. Details of just some of these are given here. IWA acknowledges that not all are included in the Anglian Water Authority Act of 1977, but includes them by way of completeness and to demonstrate what has happened in the past; IWA does not want to see any further closures of currently navigable waterways.

**What has already closed?**

**Harlam Hill Lock, River Ancholme**

Its closure prevents boating on the top 2 miles to the head of navigation. The bottom gates had been replaced in the late 1990s (funded by IWA Lincolnshire Branch) and a previous guillotine top gate was removed around 2010 when EA fitted new mitre gates.

**Welches Dam Lock, Cambridgeshire**

Welches Dam, together with the Old Bedford River and Horseway Channel, forms one of the routes from the Middle Level to the Great Ouse. In 2006 EA piled the lock entrance and made passage by boats impossible. This remains the case despite campaigning by IWA and other local waterways groups. No agreement has been reached with EA either for them to restore the lock or to allow the voluntary sector to carry out the work.

**Horseway Channel, Forty Foot Drain/Vermuyden’s Drain**

This 2½ mile-waterway connects Welches Dam Lock, which EA stanked off in 2006 (see above), and Horseway Lock, which is owned and maintained by the Middle Level Commissioners. Horseway Channel is now choked with weeds and silt and unnavigable even by the smallest boat.
GET INVOLVED
Now is the time for boaters to make their voice heard.
1) Find out more about the campaign and follow the latest developments at waterways.org.uk/anglianwaterways.
2) If you live near, or boat on, any of the EA’s Anglian waterways, please write to your local MP and the relevant local authority in order to make them aware of your concerns. You can download letter templates at the website address above. Please copy any letter to Alison Smedley, campaigns officer, via alison.smedley@waterways.org.uk so that IWA is aware of the level of support for the campaign.
3) Share with others. Use Facebook, Twitter or word of mouth to encourage other waterway supporters to back our campaign.

Old Bedford River
The Old Bedford River is a statutory navigation which runs for 12½ miles from Salter’s Lode to Welches Dam. But boaters will have trouble visiting it, not only because of the lack of routine dredging, but also the operation of Welney Sluice. This gate is now understood to be permanently maintained in the down position, preventing navigation. Although EA says it can be opened on request for vessels to pass, only three narrowboats have managed to reach the sluice for a number of years owing to build-up of silt in the navigation.

Flatford Lock, Suffolk/Essex Stour
After EA condemned its gates as unsafe for navigation, the lock was only reopened in 2015 because the River Stour Trust raised the £80,000 needed for new gates, with EA contributing £5,000.

Dedham Lock, Suffolk/Essex Stour
EA has stated that it has no funds to reopen the lock, despite the effect of its closure on River Stour Trust trip-boat operations. The River Stour Trust is in discussions with EA about reaching a resolution.

Swaffham Bulbeck Lode
This lode runs 3 miles to Commercial End (once a busy inland port) although in more recent years it was only navigable as far as Slade Farm, 1½ miles from the junction with the River Cam. In this case EA is not the navigation authority (and the lode wasn’t included in the Anglian Water Authority Act of 1977), but EA owns (and operated) the entrance lock (Swaffham Lode Lock). About ten years ago EA modified the upstream guillotine gate, which restricted headroom for boats and made the lode inaccessible except to smaller craft such as canoes. More recently the bottom (mitre) gates have been removed. On being asked about this, EA stated they could not trace records of actioning the guillotine restriction.

Bottisham Lode
EA is the navigation authority for this lode (although it isn’t included in Schedule 1 of the Anglia Waterways Act), which runs for 2½ miles from the River Cam. Once a busy waterway to the village of Lode, it is now silted up and un navigable by all but the most intrepid (and small) craft. A set of mitred flood doors at the entrance were replaced in 2001 but more recently a “No unauthorised vessels” notice has been put up.

Old Bedford River
The Old Bedford River is a statutory navigation which runs for 12½ miles from Salter’s Lode to Welches Dam. But boaters will have trouble visiting it, not only because of the lack of routine dredging, but also the operation of Welney Sluice. This gate is now understood to be permanently maintained in the down position, preventing navigation. Although EA says it can be opened on request for vessels to pass, only three narrowboats have managed to reach the sluice for a number of years owing to build-up of silt in the navigation.

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A tributary of the Humber estuary and unconnected to the main inland waterways, the River Ancholme is certainly off the beaten track. But with a little effort and careful planning it can offer boaters a unique experience of exploration and isolation.

The most striking feature of the 19-mile long navigation (now, sadly, 2 miles short of this since the closure of Harlam Hill Lock) is its arrow-like course. The original route of the Ancholme was almost entirely straightened during the 19th century and it is now mainly used as a drainage channel for the Wolds, resulting in flows and levels that often change unexpectedly. The lack of meanders and locks should not put off explorers though, as its uncomplicated course provides a chance to sit back, relax and take in the wide open spaces of this sparsely occupied area of Lincolnshire.

Before doing so, however, the Humber’s fast-flowing waters and shifting sands need careful negotiation, and it is vital to ensure your craft is capable of dealing with these conditions. Liaison with the Associated British Ports Humber Estuary Services, as well as the Environment Agency, is required.

As the future of our Anglian waterways hangs in the balance, ALISON ALDERTON reflects on a rewarding cruising experience on one of the most isolated among them – the River Ancholme.
South Ferriby to Brigg

The Ancholme once thrived with commercial craft transporting bulk cargoes of farm produce, bricks, coal, cement and chalk, which traded on the tidal waters, often used South Ferriby as a safe haven, adding to the already bustling atmosphere around the entrance to the river at Ferriby Sluice. When we visited in 2012, two of these traditional vessels, the keel *Comrade* and the sloop *Amy Howson*, could be found here. Belonging to the Humber Keel & Sloop Preservation Society (HKSPS) the craft have been lovingly restored and are regularly open to the public, providing a unique insight into commercial trading on the north-eastern waterways.

South Ferriby Marina can provide a wide range of services including fuel and seasonal moorings, as well as a well-stocked chandlery. The village of Ferriby itself, with its pub, general store and post office, is a short walk away. This is the first of Lincolnshire’s five ‘low villages’, so called as they nestle at the foot of the Wolds which rise unexpectedly out of an otherwise entirely flat landscape.

The seven wonders of the Ancholme are the beautifully crafted and now listed iron bridges that cross the navigation. Of Ferraby itself, with its pub, general store and post office, is a short walk away. This is the first of Lincolnshire’s five ‘low villages’, so called as they nestle at the foot of the Wolds which rise unexpectedly out of an otherwise entirely flat landscape.

The seven wonders of the Ancholme are the beautifully crafted and now listed iron bridges that cross the navigation; the first and most impressive of these being Horkstow, which is the only suspension bridge to have been designed by the famous civil engineer John Rennie. Why such an impressive structure was built here remains a mystery; some believe that Rennie just wanted to experiment with bridge design. However, there were once brick kilns here which would have been served by both the bridge and the waterway. As the principal landowner was the Earl of Yarborough, it is possible that the elaborate design was to signify his prominence in the area.

It is possible to moor on the grassy banks along much of the Ancholme so having stakes and a way of accessing land is essential in these rural locations. Once ashore, the village of Horkstow is a pleasant walk away along a farm track, through rich agricultural countryside. Sprawled out along the B2104 road, Horkstow is a pretty place with several interesting buildings, including the small parish church of St Maurice and the manor where artist George Stubbs worked on his book of engravings, *Anatomy of the Horse*.
Although there is no constant towpath, walkers and cyclists will find many opportunities to explore the surrounding countryside. For those interested in long distance walking, the Viking Way starts near the Humber Bridge and follows the Ancholme Valley escarpment, affording excellent views of the flat lands of Lincolnshire.

In the past this area has been a favourite spot for birdwatchers to observe Common Cranes and the Environment Agency has also reported sightings of otters close by. You don’t have to be too observant to realise this isolated waterway is a haven for all kinds of flora and fauna, and fishing is also very popular on the Ancholme.

The long straight stretches continue, passing beneath the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway before reaching a water pipe bridge and the beautiful Broughton Bridge, which is open to traffic for Broughton Carrs Farm. The name ‘Carrs’ features prominently in the area and is given to land liable to flooding which, before the extensive drainage works, was a frequent occurrence.

From the iron lattice girder style Castlethorpe Bridge, it is a short distance to the M180 motorway bridge and Brigg, where the water divides between the man-made section of the Ancholme and its old, natural route. The straightened section flows through much of the town’s former industrial areas, while the old Ancholme heads east around the town in a meandering navigable loop. The small island this creates is known as Island Carr and is home to Glanford Boat Club, formed in 1934. Public moorings can be found before the pretty rusticated stone County Bridge, which has public houses standing on both sides: the 200-year-old White Hart and the Nelthorpe Arms. Look out for the display board depicting former toll costs for using the bridge, which makes interesting reading and gives a glimpse into the sort of businesses that operated locally.

The small market town of Brigg, once known as Glanford Brigg, was, before construction of Ferriby Sluice, one of the Humber fishing villages and a vital crossing point on the Ancholme. Ancient forms of dugout craft have been discovered here and one of these, dating from 900BC, forms the centre piece of the Brigg Heritage Centre. Based in a former coaching inn, there are displays relating to the history of the town and the Ancholme Valley, and admission is free.

Brigg is a pleasant market town and is famous for its annual horse fair held on the first Saturday of August, which attracts vast crowds of Romany and Irish travellers to the town.

**Brigg to Brandy Wharf**

Navigation beyond Brigg may be tricky in deeper drafted vessels and weed can also cause problems during summer, so this should be taken into consideration before proceeding.

With the two navigable routes merged back together, the waterway passes close to Newstead Priory, once home to the Gilbertine Monks. Further along is Hibaldstow Bridge, which stands alongside the former RAF Hibaldstow, a satellite airfield for RAF Kirton-in-Lindsey. In 1941 this was home to No 255 Squadron and its Defiant night fighters. A parachute centre took over the base in 1992 and it is not unusual to see small aircraft releasing sky-divers from a great height, their colourful canopies swaying across the vast Lincolnshire skies.
Further south the Ancholme passes the remains of the Caistor Canal. William Jessop carried out a survey for the route in 1792 and Robert Dickenson was the engineer during construction in 1795. Opening in 1800, the route ran for 4 miles towards the town of Caistor passing through six locks; the remains of five can still be seen today. Not long after opening, proposals were sought for an extension to Market Rasen but not executed. The Caistor Canal was finally abandoned in 1936 and is no longer navigable. However, it is maintained by the Environment Agency to aid flood defences around the South Kelsey district.

Brandy Wharf is often a hive of activity along this otherwise quiet waterway. A public slipway allowing launch and recovery of small craft can be found within the grounds of the Brandy Wharf Leisure Park. A small charge is made for its use, along with a modern facilities block. As well as good camping facilities, the leisure park also provides limited moorings and, during the summer, operates a trip-boat.

Brandy Wharf to Bishopbridge

The last of Rennie’s impressive iron bridges is at Snitterby, though unfortunately this cannot be used by the general public as it allows private access to a farm. However, there is a towpath on this section offering good views of the structure. A short distance upstream is Harlam Hill Lock and the by-pass weir, constructed to allow the fast flowing flood waters from the River Rase, which join the Ancholme at this point, to disperse.

In 2004 Harlam Hill Lock, formally known as Snitterby Carr Lock, was reopened to navigation following 25 years of dereliction. Sadly, the lock was closed again, on safety grounds, in 2012. As such, boating the top 2 miles to the head of navigation at Bishopbridge is now impossible. The name of this small hamlet derives from a former medieval bridge constructed for the Bishop of Lincoln. Previously, 48-hour visitor moorings were available on a quay with grassy banks and interpretation boards, making this a pleasant spot.

Beyond here the Old Ancholme resembles no more than a ditch winding its way through the countryside towards Spridlington. There were once grand plans to connect it with the River Witham by way of a 14-mile long navigation but, despite the route being authorised, it was never constructed.

The River Ancholme’s waters may be limited, the flood banks high and, in parts, the depth shallow, but if you give this out-on-a-limb waterway a chance you will discover one of rural Lincolnshire’s hidden gems. The joys are not so much in navigating the straight waters but in the surroundings and, to quote the famous phrase, “it is not the destination but how you get there that counts”.

Navigation Authorities

Associated British Ports
www.humber.com, 01482 327 171

The Environment Agency
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Further Reading

- Cruising Guide to the North East Waterways, The Ripon Motor Boat Club
- Northeast Waterways, Derek Boweskill
- Tidal Havens of The Wash & The Humber, Henry Irving
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IWA waterways | 21
You joined Essex Waterways in April 2016. How have you settled into the job over the past year?

It was very strange to start with as I’d been in my previous career with Essex Wildlife Trust for 19 years. A lot of people worked for EWT and I was in a really busy office. So to go from that to having my own office at Paper Mill Lock was a bit of a culture shock, to be honest. But I really love it. I was ready for a change and the year has simply flown by.

What skills and experience did you bring from your previous job?

Project management skills have come in handy as there’s so much different work going on all the time here. People management experience has also been useful. I manage a team of three other permanent staff, including a senior lengthsman, lengthsman and full-time lock-keeper at Heybridge Basin. They’re a really hardworking, multi-skilled group, so I’m very fortunate to be able to draw on that. But it’s not just employees – there’s a team of volunteers to coordinate too and that takes a different set of skills.

Do volunteers still have an important role to play on the navigation?

Absolutely. We have a regular group who come once or twice a week and they do all kinds of bits and pieces, from grass-cutting to painting lock furniture to recycling old lock gates. But I’m also trying to build up a new volunteer team – there are so many different jobs that need to be done regularly that there’s a lot of scope to bring even more people in.

What other responsibilities does your role include?

The job’s all-encompassing really, overseeing the general management of the waterway and looking at ways to boost future long-term income. We’re hoping to introduce some new residential moorings with the redevelopment of the area in Heybridge and around Springfield Basin. We need this money to keep up with all the long-term repairs. It’s a bit like painting the Forth Bridge – you do one job and next year another one needs doing. We’ve got 12 sets of lock gates on a 14-mile waterway and they all need regular upkeep. This year, for example, we’ve replaced the set of gates at Barnes Lock, and we’ve just installed new lower gates at Hoe Mill Lock too. That was particularly challenging as it coincided with a spell of heavy and prolonged rain. We’d damned off the lock but got flooded out a few times. It took a total of seven attempts to re-set the dams, which was really frustrating.

Over warmer months I’m looking at ways to keep the navigation in top condition for boating, including grass-cutting on the towpaths, landing stage maintenance and, at the moment, a bank repair project at Little Baddow Lock. This is something that, as a team, we haven’t been in a position to do by ourselves before. In the past it would have been work we contracted out to a specialist engineering firm. However, over the last couple of years we’ve managed to get equipped with a dredger barge with crane, so we can do jobs like this in-house now at a fraction of the cost.
You mentioned the potential to add more moorings on the waterway. Are you reaching capacity?

When I started the job there were still a few places free, which we’ve managed to fill. There are still some spaces for recreational boaters, but now the weather’s improving the phone has started to ring again with people interested in taking these too. We don’t levy a boat licence as such on the Chelmer & Blackwater – instead we generate funds by charging a fee for our customers to moor. This is essentially the lion’s share of our income, which all goes back into the running of the navigation as we’re a not-for-profit organisation.

Aside from mooring revenue, how else does the waterway generate funds for itself?

One interesting ongoing project is the cultivation of willow trees along the navigation. We plant new sets each winter and they take 20-odd years to mature. Once they’re felled they’re used to make cricket bats and worth about £300 a piece. That’s core income and there are other landowners adjacent to the navigation who are doing the same thing. We need to tap into all these things where we can. We look after 200-year-old structures on the navigation and they can be expensive to maintain.

As well as with boaters, the navigation seems to be increasingly popular with canoeists and paddleboarders too...

Yes, stand-up paddleboarding especially seems to have become more popular, and we now have one or two companies set up to teach people how to do it. We do charge a licence for canoeists and paddleboarders, with the choice of a daily or annual fee. Just after I started we introduced an online option for people to buy their annual licences and it’s been really quite successful.

Essex Waterways celebrated ten years in operation at the end of 2015. What are your hopes for the waterway over the next decade?

Mainly to ensure another successful ten years by securing long-term income to make sure we’re in a good financial position, and to keep improving facilities for boaters. Drawing on my previous experience, I’d also like to work with stakeholders to enhance certain areas of the navigation for wildlife. I think that’s an untapped resource at present.

You’ve already added wildlife sightings to the boaters’ newsletter. How important is this stretch for local wildlife?

It’s incredibly important. The Chelmer & Blackwater is a fantastic 14-mile wildlife corridor/nature reserve winding its way through Essex. It boasts some really lovely bits of habitat which not only accommodate pockets of Essex-representative wildlife, but scarcer populations too. That’s the sort of thing I’d like to highlight so that more people know about it. In the process, we can raise the profile of Essex Waterways too. There are people who live just around the corner from the navigation who don’t know, for example, that one stretch of the water is joined up to another they’ve maybe visited further along. And there are plenty of other people we need to entice away from their screens and out into the countryside, breathing fresh air, listening to birdsong...

Or running in this year’s 10k race?

Exactly! Traditionally this event was a triathlon but we decided a 10k run in 2017 might have broader appeal. It’s a circular route and still takes in a large part of the navigation. Will I take part? I’m definitely considering it and have been working on my fitness over the past year. I’m up to 6.5km at the moment, so watch this space! Maybe I’ll offer to be the sweep person, running last to round up all the other stragglers!

Can you sum up why readers should make an effort to visit this waterway over the next year?

It’s one of the best places for people to escape mad, modern life. On a weekly basis people will turn up at Paper Mill Lock and say: “Oh, this is lovely, I never knew it was here.” To work somewhere where people have that response is incredibly rewarding. I love to watch visitors arrive and set up their paints and easel, or enjoy a walk and take in a slower pace of life. It’s genuinely good for people’s souls.

A lot of people say that not only saving the Chelmer & Blackwater from abandonment, but also radically reversing its fortunes, is one of the IWA’s finest achievements in recent times. Would you obviously agree?

I absolutely agree. I didn’t fully realise, until the job was advertised, the extent of IWA’s involvement in this waterway and the full backstory. This came as really great news to me because I first started going to the navigation when I was about ten years old. I used to bother and bother my parents to take us there, mainly to go fishing, and I used to love it. It’s an amazing feeling, really, to come back to this place I adored as a child and now, thanks to IWA, have a hand in managing it 40 years later.

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SNOW SCENE STORMS TO PHOTOGRAPHY VICTORY

As the boating season gets into full swing, the winner of this year’s IWA photography competition gives a stunning reminder that our inland waterways aren’t just summer playgrounds but year-round attractions.

Dean Barnes’ beautiful winterscape of Whittington on the Coventry Canal beat off a strong field of over 450 submissions to clinch top spot, and he wins £150 to spend on Imray books and charts (courtesy of Imray) for his efforts.

However, the prize-winning photo almost never came to be – Dean admits it was “mostly chance” that he caught the magical moment on film. He explains: “This image is from March 2013, which pre-dates my interest in canals and boating. I live in Whittington with my wife and greyhounds so I was probably out walking the dog. I am a keen hobby photographer so would usually have a camera with me. This was shot on a Panasonic TZ18, which I still have.”

Producing a shortlist was no easy task for our panel of judges, so we were relieved that the final choice was made by IWA members themselves. While we’ve reproduced a selection of other finalists’ snaps here, readers can view all the shortlisted photographs in IWA’s 2017 Christmas card collection and 2018 calendar.

Thank you to everyone who entered this competition. Entries are now open for next year’s – please visit waterways.org.uk/photocomp to submit your photos of our inland waterways and their surroundings for a chance to win.
Photography competition winners

Top (clockwise): These serene swans on the Bridgewater Canal earned Rachel Gibson runner-up spot in the competition.

London’s calling in this attractive shot of Paddington Basin by Nigel Essery.

Another winter snap – this time depicting the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal at Saul Junction – was submitted by Peter Llewellyn.

A lovely scene from Lowsonford by Mark Chamberlain.

The Grand Union Canal at Bulbourne by Tim Lewis.

‘Steam train meets working narrowboat at Consall Forge, Caldon Canal’ was another runner-up in the competition, and was submitted by Jo Lodge.
Last summer we invited waterway projects across the network to bid for all, or part of, the £200,000 bequest left by former IWA consultant engineer and trustee Tony Harrison. Tony, who was an expert in hydraulics and hydrology in his professional life, served on IWA’s Restoration Committee for 20 years and chaired it for five years.

After a lengthy judging process, we can now reveal the money will be split between four separate projects, all of which the Association feels best reflect the wide range of Tony’s interests including restoration, engineering standards, boating, hydraulics, and economics.

1) RIVER STOUR TRUST
MATCHED FUNDING FOR NEW LOCK GATES AT STRATFORD ST MARY LOCK

Stratford St Mary Lock is the last remaining lock on the navigation that is capable of being restored. At the moment, the Trust’s trip-boat cannot pass through it due to its advanced state of decay.

The Trust has consequently been awarded £8,600 to help replace the lock gates and allow the public to enjoy a further 1.75 miles of this stunning waterway and its flora, fauna and wildlife.

2) CROMFORD CANAL (FRIENDS OF THE CROMFORD CANAL)
INSTALLATION OF A WATER GATE FOR WATER SUPPLY

Varying water levels in the canal at Cromford Wharf are creating considerable difficulties for the operation of its passenger trip-boat.

Examination of the canal feeder intake at Cromford Mill suggests there was formerly a control device at the feeder mouth, which is now missing.

A grant of £15,000 will allow Friends of Cromford Canal to install a replacement water gate, improving the reliability in operation of the trip-boat and hence bringing in more income to fund further restoration work.
3) MONTGOMERY CANAL PARTNERSHIP

REBUILDING OF SCHOOL HOUSE BRIDGE

Over the years all other lowered bridges in Shropshire have been raised. School House Bridge is the last engineering obstacle on a 2-mile section (between Pant and Crickheath Basin) currently being restored by volunteers. The original bridge was demolished in the 1950s/60s and replaced by a causeway.

Work on the new structure will be carried out by volunteers and contractors – with contractors installing the main bridge arch. The cost to complete the project is around £200,000, but £70,000 given by the Tony Harrison Legacy should unlock/match other money in order to finish the project. This will ultimately play a vital part in helping MCP succeed in its 2020 vision to restore the canal back to the Welsh border at Llanymynech.

4) POCKLINGTON CANAL AMENITY SOCIETY

BICENTENARY PROJECT – RESTORATION OF THORNTON & WALBUT LOCKS

To mark the bicentenary of the opening of the Pocklington Canal, an appeal was launched by the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society to raise £250,000 to restore two locks and carry out dredging, thereby extending the navigable canal by 2 miles by 2018.

So far the appeal has raised £130,000 and work has started to restore Thornton Lock, supported by local volunteers, H4H veterans and CRT. PCAS wants to repeat the same process at Walbut Lock – installing ladders, replacing the gates, building a lock landing and dredging.

A grant of £106,400 will contribute money towards this aim, with a formal reopening planned for next year.
1) MONEY WHERE IT’S NEEDED IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Northamptonshire’s inland waterways formed the focus of John James Faulkner’s 2016 legacy, which gifted a total of £125,610 to IWA. A third of this was reserved solely for Waterway Recovery Group activities, but the rest has been channelled towards a number of local projects that look set to bring varied and meaningful benefits to the area.

Take, for instance, the £10,000 which has gone towards the replacement of Islip footbridge, the lowest bridge on the River Nene and an occasional hazard to navigation. Or the Northampton Sea Cadets, who will also receive £10,000 towards the extension of their current HQ. The building will help this already-thriving group expand its offering to young people and provide better winter training facilities.

And it doesn’t end there. Buckingham Canal Society has benefitted from funding to rebuild Bridge 1 at Cosgrove, with the bulk of the money purchasing materials (the labour will come from BCS volunteers). Meanwhile, £3,000 of the legacy went towards installing a power supply to the Quarry Field at Stoke Bruerne, which will allow community groups to operate lighting, PA and cooking equipment etc, at events held on site.

A fifth project, currently in development, is to install a mosaic paving slab at each lock, which will form a trail on the length of the Northampton Arm. The mosaics will be crafted by local schoolchildren and the slabs laid by a volunteer work party.

2) WENDOVER’S ‘HAPPY EVER AFTER’ IS THANKS TO WATERWAYS AUTHOR

Back in 2000, it was the Wendover Arm Trust which benefitted from a £92,127 cash injection from the will of well-known waterways author Tim Wilkinson, who also bequeathed the royalties of his book, Hold on a Minute.

The Wendover Arm links the picturesque village of Wendover in Buckinghamshire with the main Grand Union Canal at the Tring Summit in Hertfordshire. Nestled in the Chiltern Hills, the canal follows the 390ft contour around the hills and has no locks. Although it is possible to walk the entire arm along the towpath, boats are currently restricted to the first 1½ miles from Bulbourne to a newly constructed winding hole at Little Tring.

Tim Wilkinson’s gift was used to finance some of this restoration work, allowing the Trust to complete the lining of a 260-metre length under Little Tring Bridge. The work was done largely by the Trust’s own volunteer force, which has been active on the canal since the 1980s.

The creation of a turning point at the end of the restored section now enables full-length narrow and wide-beam boats to cruise the whole length of the navigable arm and turn at the end. Through raising the profile of the canal, the Trust hopes that additional funding agencies will be encouraged to contribute to the cost of restoring the remainder of the arm.
3) MAKE IT SNAPPY

Of course, a legacy doesn’t necessarily have to be monetary to make a difference. The family of John Gagg, author and IWA supporter, recently gave his photo collection to the Association. John started taking waterways photos in 1967, during the last days of commercial carrying. Boat traffic was still running on the Yorkshire canals and rivers, and he took many photos of canal boats and tankers. He was very interested in the heritage of the waterways, and photographed buildings, lock furniture and also ex-commercial craft, then being used as maintenance boats.

His gift comprised approximately 18,000 photos in total, dating up to 1990. The images have since all been scanned and are now used by IWA in many different ways. They show scenes from pretty much every waterway and were displayed as part of a collection of historic photos at IWA’s Festival of Water in Pelsall last year.

4) THROWN IN AT THE DEEP END

Under 2 miles long, the Droitwich Junction is one of Britain’s shortest canals. Into this space it crams a river navigation, a partly diverted line, seven locks (including a two-rise staircase), and a tiny motorway culvert.

Even before restoration (only completed as recently as 2011), it was one of Britain’s newest waterways. Admittedly, “newest” in this context is 1854, making it the last narrow canal to open (other than extensions to the Birmingham system). Now, this Johnny-come-lately has some truly new locks; all but the top three are new-build structures in bright concrete.

The three Hanbury Locks mark a return to restoration, however. Rebuilt by the Waterway Recovery Group in one of its biggest projects ever, and aided by the £100,000 legacy of the late Neil Pitts, an IWA member from the West Midlands, they were completed in 2002. They are a dramatic contrast to the lower Junction locks: dark brick, not bright concrete, with stairs by the bottom gates – and very, very deep.

The money helped cover the cost of those enormous lock gates, accompanying lock gear, construction work, and improvements to the adjacent towing path and boundary hedging. Upon their opening, David Martin, a cousin of Neil Pitts, unveiled a cast-iron plaque erected at Lock 1 to acknowledge the legacy’s massive contribution.

It helped bring the Droitwich to a point where British Waterways began giving serious backing, and a £10m completion package was subsequently assembled to get cracking on other stretches. The rest, as they say, is history.

Leaving a legacy

As a charity, IWA depends on legacies and donations to keep up its vital work. Gifts from wills make up a fifth of our annual income and range from lump sums to be spent on a specific project of the benefactor’s choosing, to IWA life membership for a partner, child or grandchild.

Rest assured IWA will spend every penny of designated gifts on protecting or restoring the waterways you care so much about. For more information about how to set up a legacy in your will, or to discuss ideas for where you’d like the money to go to, contact Andrew Overy, finance manager, on andrew.overy@waterways.org.uk or by calling 01494 783453.
This year’s Red Nose Day telethon saw the hugely anticipated return of Richard Curtis’s feelgood film classic *Love Actually*. For all the hype and Hollywood star-power, however, most reviewers agreed that Hugh Grant-as-PM’s scene-stealing final speech at No.10 couldn’t have been more timely. Reflecting on love’s place in today’s society he was, he said, “optimistic” that good will prevail. “Most people still, every day, every where, have enough love in their heart to help,” he assured the assembled media.

Here at IWA we’re confident that the love he was talking about extends to our inland waterways too. That’s why 2017 sees the launch of a new campaign to refocus attention on the great things our canals and rivers bring to the country, and encourage more people to get out there and enjoy them.

However, the waterways need our care, as well as our custom. Graffiti, litter and crime continue to make some stretches feel like no-go areas in their local communities. Unloved, they soon become under-used and unwelcoming instead of being championed as the great amenities they have the potential to be.

We need communities to recognise the importance of waterways for boosting health, wellbeing, leisure activity and the local economy. But as part of the campaign we’ll also be recognising the fantastic work that local branches and groups already do to look after their waterways. In many areas there is a thriving community spirit, and lots of people who give up their time and energy to improve the local environment.

Over the next few months we’ll be highlighting some of the amazing projects already being undertaken around the system, as well as asking members to identify new locations in need of transformation, and organising events to make sure their vision becomes a reality. As Hugh Grant insisted: “Good’s going to win. I’m actually sure of it.”

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**LOVE YOUR WATERWAYS**

Don’t let our canals and rivers become dumping grounds.
Here are just some of the reasons our waterways deserve to be celebrated...

**ECONOMIC BENEFITS**
It’s clear that canals and rivers deliver on strengthening the economy by encouraging more visitors to the area and increased leisure activity. Well-loved canals can also stimulate regeneration and development projects.

**SOCIAL BENEFITS**
Improvements in wellbeing, in terms of physical and mental health, should not be underestimated as a benefit of being by the water. The fact that many canals are level means they can be especially useful to those getting back into exercise.

Consider, too, how volunteers can become engaged with caring for their local waterways. Canals can be an excellent focus for community activity and help develop civic pride.

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND HERITAGE BENEFITS**
Well-maintained waterways have been found to improve bio-diversity of whole areas, bringing wildlife into the heart of our communities and acting as green lungs within towns and cities. Meanwhile, the use of towpaths by commuters has been shown in evaluations to have led to decreases in traffic fumes, pollution and congestion.

Championing canals also frequently secures the conservation and new uses of important heritage buildings and structures. These developments offer economic benefits but also engender a sense of local pride and a connection with local history.

As part of the campaign, IWA is keen to hear the countless reasons our canals and rivers hold such a special place in people’s hearts. We’ve been out on the towpath to record just some of the ways the waterways are bringing benefits to the people who use them, and there’s more feedback still in the short video we compiled. View it at [youtube.com/watch?v=xHd6kvU1s1M](https://youtube.com/watch?v=xHd6kvU1s1M).

We’d love to discover further examples of what makes the system so special; share your waterways fan mail with us on social media using the hashtag #LoveYourWaterways.
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With one call your personal package can be organised just for you.
While IWA and CRT may have chosen 1st April as the date for the 2017 annual waterways restoration workshop, there were no tricks or jokes played on assembled representatives from the many different groups, trusts and societies that together make up the nation’s waterways restoration movement.

Talks were provided by experts from across both IWA and CRT with a keynote presentation from Nick Ralls, general manager of Severn Valley Railway, who offered those present plenty of advice on how to build a sustainable volunteer workforce. With over 1,700 volunteers and an annual turnover of £7m, this heritage railway has considerable credibility and offers an interesting model for how a large-scale restoration project can be managed successfully.

Meanwhile, IWA used the workshop to bring lots more colour and detail to the workings of the Restoration Hub – a unit designed to support, enable and champion restoration on a national, independent basis. The Hub will mean restoration groups have a single point of contact for enquiries with IWA. In addition, the Hub’s High Level Panel will make the most of opportunities to influence politicians and decision-makers locally and nationally to support the value of waterways and restoration. Meanwhile, a new structure of regular communication will disseminate knowledge and information across the network of restoration groups.

Find out more
For more information about IWA’s Restoration Hub go to waterways.org.uk/restorationhub.
Bridge 70 on the Uttoxeter Canal
- IWA’s honorary engineers worked with Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust (CUCT) to draw up the specification of work needed for the bridge restoration.
- IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group ran four canal camps to manage the encroaching woodland around the bridge, repoint stonework, install drains and a waterproof membrane, and relay the top surface.
- Towards the end of the four-year project, CUCT hit a temporary cashflow problem until IWA stepped in with short-term aid.
- To fund the final stage of the restoration, IWA worked with CUCT to devise a short-term finance package, enabling CUCT to complete the work and unlock a retrospective grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which paid for the project as part of the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership scheme.

Geldeston Lock on the River Waveney
- The River Waveney Trust made an initial enquiry to the Hub looking for help to refurbish the lock chamber.
- A site visit by IWA’s volunteers coordinator to discuss the project quickly followed (December 2015).
- The expertise of one of IWA’s honorary consultant engineers, Howard Worth, was needed and he carried out a visual inspection and produced a report on the condition of the lock chamber.
- The Trust asked for advice from IWA’s fundraising officer regarding local funding opportunities.
- A second visit from IWA’s volunteers coordinator (November 2016) was arranged to discuss project management, site set-up and scaffolding.
- The Trust will be hosting a Waterway Recovery Group Canal Camp in August 2017.

Lock 15 on the Grantham Canal
In the case of the Grantham Canal, the Hub has actively tried to support the project and celebrate its successes:
- IWA is a member of the Grantham Canal Partnership and arranges insurance cover for Grantham Canal Society’s requirements, such as equipment and buildings.
- Mike Palmer, WRG’s chairman, is a member of GCHI Project Team and the engineering sub-team.
- Restoration progress is covered extensively via IWA’s social media accounts, Bulletin newsletter, and Navvies and Waterways magazines.
- WRG’s Forestry Team has spent several weekends clearing vegetation from locks 14 and 15.
- WRG volunteers contributed £100,000 in volunteer hours for Heritage Lottery Fund match funding in 2016.
Renting boats for either holiday accommodation or on a longer-term basis is on the rise. However, as KATE SAFFIN explains, floating tenants may not enjoy the same protection as their land-based counterparts.

In London, I see regular requests for boats to rent from those who want to try living on the water before buying a craft. However, be warned – this isn’t a guide on how to find one. Rather, it’s a summary of why you’ll see so few advertised, what is realistic and what to be cautious of if someone offers you something that looks too good to be true.

**OFFICIAL RENTING**

First, and most important, letting a boat on Canal & River Trust waters is only permitted if the boat has a permanent residential mooring, a commercial licence, insurance and boat safety checks (just like all the holiday hire-boats you see around the system). CRT’s website has some great advice on the duty of care you’re bound to if you enter into the arrangement as a landlord, as well as the red tape you’ll need to negotiate first. For example, your home mooring will require planning consent for residential use. As these moorings are scarce, the Trust recommends waiting until you’ve secured a place before applying for a residential letting licence.

Precisely because residential moorings are few and far between, you won’t find many boats advertised for rent. Those that are will usually be managed by estate agents, whose knowledge of boating may be limited. If you do find one, take someone with expertise with you during your viewing and don’t be fooled by nice decor. However, at least you will have some recourse to law if you later find something doesn’t work as you expected.

If you’re a prospective tenant, the Canal & River Trust also has relevant information. It advises, among other things, to look for the telltale ‘RL’ in a boat’s navigation licence to prove it meets CRT requirements. If in doubt, ring the Trust on 03030 404040 to check it out first.

**UNOFFICIAL RENTING**

If you look at unofficial renting – a boat without a home mooring, or one on a leisure mooring – then you are not renting a home, you are simply paying for the use of a ‘chattel’, a possession. This means that none of the legislation designed to protect tenants applies.

Some boaters who want to let their boats aren’t on a residential mooring and don’t have the appropriate licence, insurance and boat safety certificate. These generally fall into two categories:

1) Those who know they are doing something under the radar. Perhaps the owner is going away and wants to let the boat so that it is looked after and covers costs. They rarely advertise because CRT monitors these things and could refuse to renew the boat’s licence if it becomes aware the craft is being rented. These ‘landlords’ will tend only to let by word of mouth to trusted friends of friends.

B&B-style holiday accommodation afloat is becoming increasingly popular.
Then there are the few exploitative individuals who own several boats and run illegal letting businesses. They, too, invariably have networks they operate through to side-step traditional advertising.

2) Those hoping for someone to look after their boat because they need to be away – perhaps working abroad for a few months. It is permissible to have a ‘boat sitter’ as long as the owner doesn’t charge. Again, these boats are rarely advertised. The owners are unlikely to let someone they don’t know live in their home in their absence. They do not want to return to damaged batteries or letters from CRT because the boat hasn’t moved far enough. They will tend to look for a suitable sitter by word of mouth. Again it will be to trusted friends or friends of friends.

IF YOU STILL WANT TO PURSUE THE IDEA...

- Don’t do it because you think it will be cheaper – generally it isn’t, or not much, especially if you are renting legally.
- For most of us, living on a boat is a lifestyle choice, not primarily a financial one. You need to want to empty a toilet regularly (and worry about whether the facilities will be in working order to do so), manage a temperamental solid fuel stove, live with running out of gas at midnight, wonder what that strange noise from the engine/water pump/bilge is, worry about security on the towpath and whether your bike is still on the roof...
- You can try a long-term commercial rental if you want to be on the move or can’t find a boat on a mooring. The rent (£940-£1400/month) will be similar to a flat and reflect the level of maintenance, insurance and support that is needed.
- Note that an internet search on terms like ‘boat’, ‘rent’, ‘London’ will bring up a number of old adverts that contain very out-of-date information – ‘When I lived aboard I generally lived in the East London area...’ Try that now and you’ll be in trouble very quickly!
- Learn how to handle a boat. There are numerous centres across the system that offer the RYA Inland Helmsman training.
- Walk the towpath and get to know boaters. Look for opportunities to volunteer and meet people who are already living aboard. There are regular clean-ups around the waterways, some organised by boaters, others by local groups or IWA.
- Check with any marinas in the area as to whether they allow their residents to rent and, if so, keep an eye out for opportunities.
- You might also find the occasional room in a share advertised. These are usually on bigger, static houseboats, such as those found on the Thames.
- Consider buying...

Renting a boat which doesn’t comply is the same as someone driving a car without tax, MOT, and insurance. If a non-compliant rented boat explodes or catches fire, it is unlikely to be covered by the owner’s insurance, which will have been declared null and void. Any third party damage or injury will similarly be uncovered.

I would be happy with a continuous cruiser licence – but CRT would not. It is therefore technically not legal, which is fine until something goes wrong... or until CRT decides to take an interest, remove the boat’s license for breaking T&Cs, and you lose your home.

You have no recourse to letting law. I witnessed a girl in London bolt down the towpath screaming, ‘That’s my boat. What’s it doing here? What have you done with my dog?’ only last summer. It was a landlord dispute – they took the boat (apparently abandoning the dog and either stealing all the girl and her partner’s belongings, or dumping them on towpath).

If you do a share boat or rent to buy, please make sure you get a proper contract drawn up, preferably by a solicitor. Without going into detail, I’ve heard some very odd stories indeed, including one where the tenant was made homeless and evicted from the boat he was two months away from owning, and another where the tenant sold the boat with no legal comeback.
AND IF YOU DO FIND SOMETHING...

- Check whether you are being offered a legal rental – if so, make sure it meets the CRT requirements detailed earlier. Check that the licence, boat safety and insurance are legal for renting (because if they’re not, you may be the one to suffer).
- If it doesn’t and you still want to take the risk, get an agreement drawn up by a solicitor that is specific to the boat and your circumstances – an off-the-shelf shorthold tenancy agreement will have no standing in UK tenancy law.
- If you are boat sitting check:
  - that the owner has cleared it with their insurers,
  - when the last boat safety inspection was done, and that any work recommended has been completed,
  - that you know how everything works, particularly the smoke and CO alarms,
  - that you have someone to call on for advice and help – on a day-to-day basis as well as in an emergency.
- If the boat has no home mooring you must make yourself familiar with the current (and changing) rules about movement. If you don’t you could put the owner’s licence at risk (and thus your home). Currently this means covering a range of at least 20 miles in the course of a year and moving every 14 days (or more often).
There’s no denying that, as the main feature points out, demand for floating accommodation is surging. As a result, the number – and types – of rental boats available are growing too. Whether it’s single cabins being advertised to tourists for bed-and-breakfast accommodation, or larger boats with multiple rooms being let out for longer-term residential accommodation, the market is burgeoning – but doesn’t always play by the rules.

IWA seeks proper regulation of the industry by the responsible navigation (and other) authorities to ensure:
• the safety of visitors to our cities and their waterways
• the safety of those already living on and navigating our waterways
• the continued sharing of overstretched boat-support facilities, such as fresh water, sewage disposal, gas and coal supply, and mooring space.

The feature you’ve just read outlines just some of the problems that may occur when unauthorised boats are rented out, including:
• boat-owners in breach of the terms and conditions of their licence, and possibly mooring terms and conditions too if on a long-term mooring
• boats not subject to any landlord and tenant regulation and legislation. Boat tenants may find themselves in danger from badly maintained craft and unscrupulous landlords
• boats rented out (either whole boats or rooms) with only the standard private Boat Safety Scheme certificate rather than the more rigorous requirements which hire-boats have to comply with. They may be unsafe for people who are not as familiar with the craft in question, or with boats/boating generally
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• boat tenants not understanding the specific needs of boat-heating and ventilation systems, which are significantly different from those commonly encountered in hotel or bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Boat fires and carbon monoxide poisoning are potential dangers of a solid fuel stove not being used properly
• exacerbating the problem of uncontrolled mooring in London, especially. There is an incentive to take boats there purely to let out for profit and these boats are unlikely to move regularly.

IWA recognises that the operation and maintenance of boats is more complex than that of houses, making them potentially more hazardous for those using them. It recommends that both those hiring out and those renting boats should consider this before progressing.

It’s the Association’s opinion that no boats licensed as private pleasure boats should be let out for monetary return in any situation. Anyone wishing to hire out their boat, or a room on their boat, should have a business licence/registration and approval from the relevant navigation authority, with the hire-boat level of boat safety examination and appropriate insurance.

IWA also considers that any boat licensed for the purpose of being let out, for either holiday or residential use, should not be declared as “continuously cruising” but should have a permanent mooring as part of their business licence agreement. The mooring agreement needs to allow for subletting of the mooring, and both boat-owner and landowner need to take responsibility for the safety of visitors and neighbouring boats.
2017 has already been a productive year for the Waterway Recovery Group, with our first canal camp taking place over the February half-term holidays on the delightful rural Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation. A group of 17 volunteers came from as far as Devon and Staffordshire to help the Essex Waterways team clear vegetation, tidy the towpath and rebuild a set of wing walls at Papermill Lock. After a successful week WRG looks forward to returning to this waterway in late July and October.

Spring is always a busy time for the WRG team, what with planning upcoming camps, arranging site visits and recruiting volunteers. Behind the scenes we also spend a significant amount of time ensuring WRG’s kit is ready for the summer, planning van logistics and supporting WRG’s volunteer leadership teams for the summer ahead. Mercifully, it’s not all work and no play! WRG’s Barn Dance was held on 18th March and saw 54 people showing off their best moves and raising over £600 for our work in the process.

Regional groups have also had a strong start to 2017, running 13 weekend digs across the country, from the Wey & Arun to the Ashton Canal. Work predominately focused on vegetation management while wildlife activity was still at a minimum.

THE BIG REVEAL
In February WRG Forestry and WRG BITM spent weekends at Hillmorton Locks on the Oxford Canal to clear scrub and large trees to reveal the redundant arm at the bottom lock. This is a new site for WRG and the restoration project, run by the ‘Old Mortonians’, hopes to restore the basin in order to provide moorings for historic boats, ultimately becoming something of a heritage attraction.

Looking ahead, WRG’s annual training weekend is being held on the 24th-25th June on the Cotswold Canals. This summer many of our projects involve bricklaying, so the main focus of the weekend is on running several introductory courses to boost skills. Participants can also expect training sessions on small excavators, dumpers, vans, scaffolding and more!

For further details or to express an interest in attending these events contact the WRG head office team on 01494 783453 ext 604, email enquiries@wrg.org.uk or visit our website: waterways.org.uk/wrgtraining.
Still to come...

Here are just some of the interesting projects that WRG will be working on this year:

**INGLESHAM LOCK**

**Dates:** 1st-8th July / 8th-15th July / 15th-22nd July / 29th July-5th August / 5th-12th August / 12th-19th August.

This summer WRG will be spending six weeks at Inglesham Lock, located a couple of kilometres away from Lechlade, Gloucestershire. The ultimate aim is to restore the lock at the junction of the Thames & Severn Canal. After two years of successful camps in 2015 and 2016, we hope to keep up momentum and make significant progress on the reconstruction. This is a perfect canal camp for both experienced and novice volunteers, with plenty of jobs offering a wide variety of new skills to be learnt. Whether you want to get technical repairing the culvert and paddle arches, or jump straight in by having a go at laying the perfect block, there is plenty to keep an aspiring ‘navvy’ engaged.

**GRANTHAM CANAL**

**Dates:** 5th-12th August / 12th-19th August / 19th-26th August / 26th August-2nd September / 21st-28th October.

WRG is supporting Canal & River Trust’s successful Heritage Lottery Fund-financed project to restore locks 14 and 15, with the intention of one day opening up an additional 20-mile-long pound of the canal. This summer WRG volunteers will help finish rebuilding Lock 15 before moving onto Lock 14. The focus of these camps will be bricklaying, blocklaying and helping with concrete pours, as well as landscaping work. Particular attention will be given to training volunteers in construction-based skills.

**MONMOUTHSHIRE CANAL**

**Dates:** 15th-22nd July / 22nd-29th July

WRG volunteers will be completing two weeks at the Ty-Coch Lock Flight to help restore two lock chambers using traditional heritage techniques. But participants also have a chance to get involved with something a little different during the first week... In 2016 a small excavation dug by volunteers uncovered an abundance of pottery ranging from low-value wares to fine china, alluding to Ty-Coch Locks’ forgotten past. Consequently, we’ll be running an archaeological dig to record the visible historical artefacts, as well as using trial pits to hopefully uncover even more evidence of the canal’s industrial past. The project will result in a detailed record of a previously under-investigated area that will be exhibited locally in schools, community centres and museums.

Each week-long camp costs just £70, including food, transport to the site and accommodation. They are open to anyone over the age of 18. To book on or request a Canal Camps 2017 brochure please visit WRG’s website: wrg.org.uk. Alternatively, you can call or email the WRG head office on 01494 783453 ext 604 or email enquiries@wrg.org.uk.
The four counties of the West Country Branch probably make up one of the largest areas within IWA’s branch structure. Bob Abbott explains how geographical challenges haven’t stopped this dynamic group from making a positive difference on its waterways.

From its northernmost Somerset boundary down to its southern coastal borders in Cornwall, and its westerly edge in Devon to its easterly Dorset extremity, West Country Branch adds up to hundreds of square miles. The area comprises many stretches of unconnected wet and dry waterways, with low boat activity but plenty of walkers, anglers, cyclists and photographers. There are increasing numbers of boats on the short Bude Canal, which connects directly to the sea lock, while the Grand Western Canal, owned by Devon County Council, boasts boating interest of all varieties including a horse-drawn barge at Tiverton. More recently, the Friends of Exeter Ship Canal has been formed to ensure boaters and other users can enjoy its benefits.

Over the last three years our branch members and work party volunteers have come into their own along our ‘Little Gem’ – namely the 14 miles of navigable Bridgwater & Taunton Canal which joins the 1 mile of River Tone into the centre of Taunton. At the Bridgwater end the canal terminates in an historic floating dock, now almost surrounded by new apartments, but the Admirals Landing pub and Bowrings Mill buildings remain operational. These docks and the currently disused Barge Lock dropping into the River Parrett are Grade II listed and leased by the Canal & River Trust from Somerset County Council. Many of the craft based in the docks have been craned in and are used as liveaboards, but there remain many vacancies within the total 60 moorings available. Unfortunately, there is no easily accessible slipway at this end, the nearest full-size one being at CRT’s small but attractive Bathpool Marina near Taunton, some 13 miles and 4 locks upstream.

All B&T locks are 54ft long and 13ft wide, some having historically interesting ball and chain counterweight paddle mechanisms. Another curious and unique feature on the canal is its ‘Space Walk’, starting from Maunsell Lock. Here, towpath visitors can follow models of the sun and its planets in both directions, all in proportionally correct sizes and distances apart.

We continue to encourage more boating and towpath activities on this beautiful but under-used waterway and increasingly our work parties are focused on ensuring it stays accessible for all users. During its early post-war years, it had deteriorated to an unnavigable water course. However, just over 23 years ago the lobbying and tenacity of our (then) IWA committee saw members and volunteers succeed in bringing it back to life. That’s how we plan for it to stay into the foreseeable future!

Work parties
West Country Branch started its volunteer work parties in early 2014. From a small beginning with just a handful of people, the number of registered volunteers has now swelled to over 100. They undertake a variety of activities including litter picking, bulb planting, painting of railings and balance beams, hedge laying, foliage trimming, ‘balsam bashing’, removing rubbish from the canal and Bridgwater Docks, painting and upkeep of dockside machinery and the installation of picnic tables, rubbish bins and dog waste bins. The branch encourages participation not only by IWA members but also by non-members, and more recently has started to link up with local community groups, for example Friends of French Weir Park, The Friends of Long Run Meadow and the Taunton Branch of Tesco.

IWA West Country Branch has also been involved in advising Friends of Exeter Ship Canal how to establish...
BRANCH AT A GLANCE

Formed: 1975
Local waterways: Bridgwater Docks, Bridgwater & Taunton Canal, Bude Barge Canal, Exeter Ship Canal, Grand Western Canal, River Tone Navigation, Stover Canal (under restoration), tidal River Parrett and River Tone, ‘Upper’ Parrett above Oath Lock, including parts of the River Yeo and the River Isle.
Claim to fame: Establishment of a significant volunteer work force. Continuous campaigning for the proposed River Parrett Tidal Barrier at Bridgwater.
Find out more: waterways.org.uk/westcountry

volunteer work parties on that waterway. Recently, too, it teamed up with other voluntary organisations to hold successful clean-up operations on the river at Taunton. The level of organisation and involvement with the community, local businesses and associated charitable organisations is viewed as a successful template for other cooperative alliances between users of the waterways.

Volunteers are in the age range of 16 to 82 but are predominately aged over 55. Many of them are available during the week as well as at weekends and for this reason work parties take place between Monday to Friday just as often as they do at weekends. Our volunteers willingly give their time and effort, and enjoy being out in the open, putting something back into the community and the camaraderie that working in a team brings.

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier campaign
The West Country Branch is responsible for the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier Campaign, the principal aim of which is to use construction of the Tidal Barrier to facilitate the penning of water on the River Parrett above the Barrier on certain occasions between April and October each year.

This would enable navigation from the Tidal Barrier to the confluence of the Rivers Parrett and Tone at Burrowbridge, in effect opening up some 8 miles of waterway to navigation. In addition, restoration of the Barge Lock at Bridgwater Docks would enable water-borne access to the docks and hence to the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal and the River Tone at Taunton. This would create a total length of navigable waterway of some 23 miles. Navigation above Burrowbridge would require some infrastructure works and dredging, but add a further 5 miles of navigable waterway and ultimately provide a link to the ‘Upper’ Parrett.

Following the devastating floods in Somerset in 2013/14 and calls to accelerate construction of the Tidal Barrier, the branch recognised that there was an opportunity to use this to enhance navigation on the waterways. Good relationships with the Environment Agency, local authorities and many others are now in place and our vision for regenerating the waterways in order to secure leisure, recreation and tourism benefits are recognised by others. The branch is receiving welcome support from Roy Sutton, IWA’s Hon. Consultant Engineer, who is contributing his engineering expertise to the campaign. We attend EA stakeholder meetings, as well as those of a river user group and an ‘Opportunities and Enhancements’ group, the latter recently established following lobbying for community aspects to be properly included. Progress reports are submitted to meetings of IWA’s Navigation Committee and an annual workshop is held to review progress and plans for the coming year.

Completion of the Tidal Barrier is targeted for 2024 and all signs are that EA is on target to achieve this. In 2016 detailed comments were submitted on the location of the Barrier and the gate type to be adopted and decisions on these have just recently been taken.

In addition to the above, the branch is actively involved in plans to open up nearly 8 miles of the ‘Upper’ Parrett from Oath Sluice through Langport to Thorney Mills Bridge Lock. This includes a mile of the River Yeo and a short section of the River Isle. Langport Town Council has recently acquired a slipway on the Upper Parrett and, once repaired, its intention is to open up these 8 miles to trail boats.
IWA at Work

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.

Riverside role

Congratulations to Leicestershire Branch, which has been asked by Leicester City Council to take on the ‘harbour master’ job for this year’s Riverside Festival, taking place on 3rd and 4th June. The branch will be organising boat entries and moorings for the private, trading and historic boats attending the event. More details can be found in our news pages at the front of this issue.

In the bag

IWA’s West Country Branch has been successful in its application for a grant from the One Stop ‘Carriers for Causes’ scheme. The branch will receive £957, half of which will be used to purchase tools and equipment and the other half to fund RYA helmsman training for volunteers, enabling more people to use the work-boats on clean-ups and task parties. The One Stop fund is one of a number of grants that have been set up since the 5p bag charge was introduced, with all profits from plastic bag purchases going to local causes and community groups.

Squeaky clean

West Country Branch has been busy in other areas too, with its volunteers leading a local community group ‘Litter Pick for Wildlife’ at French Weir Park in Taunton in February. It was the branch’s 100th work party since 1st May 2016, equating to over 3,121 volunteer hours in that period. No mean feat! It’s since been followed up by a work party on the ‘dry’ section of the Grand Western Canal at Jay’s Cutting, Cothay near Wellington.

Meanwhile, Warwickshire Branch hit the jackpot in March while cleaning up the canal and adjoining towpath between Tachbrook Road, Bridge 41, and Myton Road, Bridge 44, on the Grand Union Canal in Leamington Spa. The most unusual item dragged from the water was an entire fruit machine, minus its cash. Other quirky ‘catches’ included a model Buddha, two motor scooters, a vacuum cleaner, a settee and some steps. This was in addition to the usual haul of over 30 bicycles and 28 bags of litter.

A fantastic haul from IWA Warwickshire’s work party on the Grand Union Canal.

Award-winning

Finally, hats off to North Staffordshire & South Cheshire Branch’s deputy chairman, Steve Wood, for winning the West Midlands Region Committee’s Victoria Cup award. A liveaboard boater, Steve has spent much time liaising with CRT staff, alerting them to problems on the navigation and ensuring that the opening hours of the Harecastle Tunnel take account of boaters’ needs.

Steve first joined the branch committee 10 years ago as planning officer. Two years later he joined the committee of the Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust and became involved with the Burslem Port Trust at around the same time. He’s also very active with restoration, serving as chairman of the Uttoxeter Canal Restoration group and the main organiser for several WRG canal camps and weekend visits.

Aside from prize-giving, the branch has been getting its hands dirty on the towpath. In March, six new mooring rings were installed at Congleton Wharf, while the first work party of 2017 took place on the Burslem Branch Canal. Here great progress was made with the ongoing job of uncovering the towpath edge and litter picking.

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 Alison Smedley, Campaigns Officer on 07779 090915 or alison.smedley@waterways.org.uk
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On 18th March 2017 around 60 canoeists recreated a historic paddle which changed the face of the Warwickshire waterways.

Leaving from the Navigation Inn in Wootton Wawen, the flotilla passed over the Edstone Aqueduct on their way to Wilmcote. The journey replicated the one completed by two canoeists in March 1957, which subsequently led to the cancellation of a planned abandonment of the southern section of the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal.

When John Pinder and Michael Fox paddled the same stretch of water 60 years ago, their toll-ticket was enough proof that there was a need for the canals to remain open and this enabled its well-documented restoration in the early 1960s.

It was the first canal restoration in the country and it was officially re-opened in 1964 by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. It ultimately became the template for the restoration of hundreds of miles of further derelict canals in the following decades and halted the abandonment of many others.

Members of the Inland Waterways Association, British Canoeing, the Stratford upon Avon Canal Society and the Canal & River Trust completed the trip, accompanied by Geraldine Dahlke, daughter of the late Michael Fox, who had done parts of the original trip when she was eight years old. Their progress was watched and supported by John Pinder.

Clive Henderson, former IWA chairman and one of the key organisers of the event, said: “The foresight of two of our Stratford Canal Society founder members to plan their canoe trip from Stratford to Lapworth 60 years ago soon proved that the canal was used, thus providing evidence preventing its closure and abandonment. “This trip demonstrates the appreciation of many more than just the 60 paddlers fortunate enough to enjoy this beautiful waterway today.”
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