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AGENDA
The Column of the National Chairman

The future of the Environment Agency navigations is becoming an area of ever greater concern to us. We now regularly hear stories of major problems including indefinite suspension of navigation. These problems have now spread to the River Thames where the river above Oxford is becoming less accessible and there are reports elsewhere on the river of boats regularly going aground. Whilst recognising that we are in a period of austerity, and that the reduced number of EA staff on the ground are doing the best they can with inadequate funds, the idea that our waterways can be closed through lack of basic maintenance is totally unacceptable to IWA.

Action needs to be taken, so we will be asking members living in constituencies where EA navigations are suffering from poor maintenance or closure to write to their MP and demand that the decline is dealt with so that this valuable national asset does not suffer long term damage. The new Waterways Minister Rory Stewart has promised to meet IWA and our campaign to get the EA navigations transferred to Canal & River Trust will be enhanced if MPs can send your letters on to him to highlight the issues. So your help and support can make a real difference.

It is good news that the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways has been reformed under the chairmanship of Richard Benyon. Richard was the Waterways Minister who set up CRT and he understands the rationale and need for the transfer of the EA navigations. IWA continues to lobby hard at Westminster to help build the case for quick action. The last thing we need is to have to restore these navigations in years to come, so we must ensure that they stay operational.

Since CRT introduced its new procedures for boats without a home mooring there is evidence of increased movement around the system. Some boaters are only being allowed to renew their Continuous Cruising licences on a short term basis and those who don’t move are finding that their licence will not be renewed unless they get a home mooring. The ultimate penalty for those who don’t move is that their boat can be removed from CRT’s waters. IWA wants to see people enjoying our inland waterways and has no desire to see boats removed. However, everybody needs to have a fair chance to moor in popular areas, so IWA supports CRT in taking this action when necessary.

The IWA Northampton Festival of Water produced a good result and provided a good spectacle of boats on the River Nene despite suffering from poor weather over the August Bank Holiday weekend. It achieved television coverage and I congratulate and thank all those involved.

This is the last edition of Waterways that will be edited by Keith Goss. Thank you Keith for all your work on behalf of IWA. I hope you enjoy your retirement and find plenty of time to go boating.

Les Etheridge
Robert Aickman Plaque Unveiled

A pivotal figure in the struggle to save Britain’s inland waterways from decades of institutionalised neglect and destruction has finally secured public recognition for his efforts, 101 years after his birth. On 10th September IWA unveiled a blue plaque commemorating the life and work of its co-founder and first chairman, Robert Aickman, at his home and workplace at 11 Gower Street, London.

Leading actor and TV presenter David Suchet CBE, much loved for his portrayal of Agatha Christie’s iconic detective Hercule Poirot, revealed the plaque in a ceremony at the central London location. Mr Suchet, himself an avid waterways campaigner, said: “Without Robert Aickman we wouldn’t have the waterways we so enjoy today. His efforts, and those of the organisation he founded, are an inspiration to us all and demonstrate what can be achieved through ingenuity, commitment and tenacity.”

Commenting on his predecessor’s achievements, IWA national chairman Les Etheridge said: “Aickman’s IWA, driven by his ability to write, orate, organise and lead, revitalised the waterways agenda.

“IWA continues his work with as much urgency today,” he added, “we are determined to make the waterways better by maintaining political support at Westminster, working closely with navigation authorities to protect and improve our navigable waterways and continuing to drive the now thriving restoration movement to extend them further.”

In the decades following World War II successive governments pursued a policy condemning the country’s historic canal and river navigations – the “motorway network” of the Industrial Revolution – to decline and decay, abandoning the waterways and selling off tracts of the system for housing, retail and industrial development. Robert Aickman and his colleagues, who founded IWA in protest in 1946, fought a determined battle to reverse this policy and win over political and public opinion with an assertive campaign to recover and restore the waterways network.

The success of Aickman and IWA is evidenced by today’s 3,600 miles of navigable canals and rivers, now rightly recognised as one of the country’s richest heritage and leisure resources.
A campaign by IWA to control an invasive plant which causes damage along many canals and rivers, has won the Natural Environment category at the Living Waterways Awards in London on 8th October.

Himalayan Balsam is a non-native plant which has spread across the waterway network, crowding out native plants and reducing biodiversity. IWA’s campaign, which has increased in strength in the four years since it began, saw volunteers undertake a record 25 work parties on 14 different waterways in 2015, bringing together over 250 volunteers who cleared 17 miles of towpath and banks.

To promote and support the campaign this year IWA held a Himalayan Balsam Awareness Week in May, before the main growth season, featuring a range of educational awareness resources and a step-by-step guide for organising work parties, all available online at IWA’s website. This resulted in many other organisations, some not directly involved with the waterways, being inspired to join the campaign.

IWA already has plans to expand the approach for next year’s Himalayan Balsam pulling season, by re-seeding with locally appropriate native plants, as well as increasing the number of locations where Himalayan Balsam work parties are held.

HS2 consultation response

Despite the Government setting a tight timescale, IWA members have studied the huge quantity of information provided in the latest HS2 Supplementary Environmental Statement on Additional Provision 2, and the Association is to submit views on issues of waterway interest.

The main comments relate to the realignment of a road alongside the canal at Fradley, which whilst better than the three canal crossings successfully removed by IWA’s original ‘Alternative Route’, will still unnecessarily blight the canal there. Moreover, IWA maintains that noise nuisance has not been reduced at all in these additional provisions, specifically, at the proposed new Heathrow Express Maintenance Depot close to the Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal. IWA objects that it affects public recreational users of this tranquil area of canal, as well as leisure and residential boaters around the Boatyard at Mansion Lane in Iver, Bucks.

IWA’s consultation response is being developed to describe the impacts of the new proposals and sets out what the Association would like to see altered to improve them. Full documents are available on www.waterways.org.uk/hs2.

IWA has also submitted a petition on unresolved issues within the latest iteration of the High Speed Rail (London to West Midlands) Bill. The Petition includes amendments for some of the points above as well as replacement mooring and maintenance facilities for the Lichfield Cruising Club at Cappers Lane.

IWA wins Himalayan Balsam Award

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VACANCIES

National Awards Officer

Jim Shead has retired as National Awards Officer, and the Association is looking for a successor. The post holder (a voluntary position, appointed by trustees) receives nominations for IWA’s national awards and liaises with the Awards Panel who make recommendations to trustees. The Awards Officers makes arrangements for presentation of the awards at the Association’s AGM, retrieving, arranging engraving and delivery of trophies, as well as liaison with awards nominators and recipients, etc. If you would be interested to take on this post, please contact Jenny Black, Volunteers Co-ordinator at Head Office, for a discussion and/or further details.

Region Chairmen

There were no nominations for the posts of region chairmen for Eastern and West Midlands regions for election at the recent AGM. Under IWA’s rules for the appointment of region chairmen (see www.waterways.org.uk/information/governing_documents/governing_documents), nominations for these posts are invited to serve the remaining terms of office, (until the 2017 AGM for Eastern Region and until the 2018 AGM for West Midlands Region), and should be submitted to the chief executive at Head Office by no later than Monday 4th January 2016 along with a brief biography, autobiography or statement not exceeding 400 words, for publication as part of any ballot paper (which would be included in the February 2016 edition of Waterways).

Information for potential new trustees (including region chairmen) is available at www.waterways.org.uk/information/governing_documents/national_constitution. If you would like to discuss the possibility of standing as chairman of either IWA’s Eastern or West Midlands regions, please contact either Neil Edwards, chief executive (01494 783453), the national chairman, or any other region chairman for an informal conversation.
The winners of IWA’s National Annual Awards for 2015 were presented at the AGM.

THE CYRIL STYRING TROPHY, the Association’s premier award which is awarded to an IWA member who has made an outstanding contribution to the Association’s campaign, has been awarded to Phil Sharpe for his campaigning work for IWA over 30 years, and particularly for his work on the current HS2 Campaign. Phil has spent many hours on the HS2 Campaign, working with others in IWA, and attending and negotiating with local authorities at County Council, District Council and Parish Council level. Phil originally identified the route which would avoid the proposed multiple canal crossings in the Fradley area which has now been adopted by the House of Commons Select Committee.

THE JOHN HEAP SALVER, the Association’s major fund raising award, has been awarded to Waterway Recovery Group North West for their fund raising activities over the last 30 years. As well as providing volunteers to work on restoration projects on their regular weekend digs, WRG North West also carry out two fund raising activities which support their restoration activities. Anyone who has attended a waterway festival will recognise the WRG North West stall with its bric-a-brac and second-hand books. They also run a paper recycling scheme known as the Paper Chase, which involves driving around Greater Manchester once a month collecting vast quantities of newspaper to be sold to the recycling industry.

THE CHRISTOPHER POWER PRIZE is awarded to a person, society or trust that has made a significant contribution to the restoration of an amenity waterway, and has been awarded to Michael Limbrey of the Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust. Michael was instrumental in setting up the Trust, whose role is to act as a lead coordinating bridge between waterway organisations, local authorities and other public agencies in the campaigning for and restoration of the Montgomery Canal. Michael also set up a membership organisation within MWRT – the Friends of the Montgomery Canal – which is specifically aimed at locally-based supporters.

RICHARD BIRD MEDALS are awarded to members whose efforts and support are considered to have brought significant benefit to the Association over a sustained period of time. This year, Richard Bird medals were awarded to:

• Madeline Dean of Lancashire & Cumbria Branch, for the work she has done for IWA nationally and for the branch since she joined IWA in 1980. For 17 years she was Sales Officer for the branch and has also served as chairman, vice chairman, and contributed significantly to the Trailboat and Campaign festivals held on the Lancaster Canal.
• Derek Bradley, for his work during his time as Cambridge Branch chairman, and later as Eastern Region chairman. Derek was Chairman of Cambridge (now Great Ouse) Branch for eight years, and continues as an active committee member. During his time as Eastern Region Chairman he supported all the branches in the region, which covers a wide geographical area, and built good relationships with the navigation authorities in the area. Derek has also been an enthusiastic volunteer at many of IWA’s festivals.
• Roger Evans, for his volunteering activities with WRG and IWA over many years. As well as editing North Staffordshire & South Cheshire Branch’s magazine, Roger is also actively involved in the branch’s Cheshire Locks Project, which is a joint project with the Trent & Mersey Canal Society, of which he is also currently Chairman.
• David Lowe, for his many years of campaigning as an IWA member for the retention and promotion of the northern waterway network. David has operated many commercial boats over the years, including passenger boats, restaurant boats, hire boats and freight carrying craft. David currently advises the industry and navigation authorities about freight carriage, and has been secretary and is currently chairman of the Commercial Boat Operators Association.

THE BRANCH ACHIEVEMENT AWARD, awarded annually to an IWA branch that has made the greatest progress and achievement in promoting the Association’s aims and objectives during the past year, was awarded to Lichfield Branch. This recognises the wide range and excellent quality of the activities carried out by the branch, including: the exceptional proactive work at Rugeley, a good newsletter, well attended branch meetings, a programme of walks, good fundraising activities, regular donations to waterways groups, consistently good work on planning and for their work on the HS2 campaign, especially at Fradley.

Readers of Waterways are reminded that nominations for national awards can be made by individual members and branch and region committees, and full details of the awards and how to nominate an individual or waterway organisation can be found at www.waterways.org.uk/information/national_awards/national_awards. Nominations should be submitted by 31st March each year.
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Winter 2015
IWA has welcomed the appointment of Richard Benyon MP as Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Waterways. Mr Benyon was elected by MPs and Lords at the inaugural meeting of the Group for the new Parliament in September.

Mr Benyon, MP for Newbury, was the Waterways Minister at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs between 2010 and 2013, when he introduced the pioneering changes that established the Canal & River Trust. Afterwards, he expressed his delight at having been elected as Chairman. “I look forward to working with my colleagues from all Parties to promote the interests of the waterways.” In further comments, he went on to confirm that: “the APPG will focus our collective efforts on enhancing and promoting navigation on our inland waterways in Parliament.”

IWA National Chairman, Les Etheridge, commented: “The APPG for the Waterways has benefited from having previous Waterways Ministers as Chair and I am delighted that once again the APPG will have such a knowledgeable and highly regarded Chairman in Richard Benyon MP; we look forward to contributing to the work of the Group.”

IWA supports Destination Newport

IWA is playing a major role in supporting the Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust (SNCT) and its canal restoration plan from Norbury Junction to Newport. The “Destination Newport” project also has the support of the Norbury to Newport CIC and Newport Town Council. Most of the work is being paid for by a restoration grant of £3,000 from IWA’s Restoration Grant Fund.

Over the week of 22nd-29th August, a group from IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) got the project started with the first restoration of a length of the canal at Forton, just east of Newport, Shropshire. In six days, with the help of heavy plant, 19 WRGies plus volunteers from the SNCT re-profiled a section of the canal and laid a Bentonite waterproof lining in preparation for the re-watering.

SNCT will continue this work over the winter and WRG is scheduling further weekend work camps to support this. It is planned to re-water the 100m length between Forton Skew Bridge and Forton Aqueduct by summer 2016. Both the aqueduct and bridge are listed structures.

Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Branch Raise £500 for WRG

IWA Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Branch held its second annual Lock Wind at Derwent Mouth Lock on the Trent & Mersey Canal on 8th August. Eleven volunteers devoted their whole day to what proved to be a busy and successful fund raising event, with 40 boats being locked through. In addition, a sizeable contribution from the branches ‘on-site catering’ meant that £250 was raised over the day, which will be given to the WRG Van Appeal. This was all possible thanks to the volunteers involved, as well as the boaters and their families who donated so generously.

The branch is grateful to Derby & Sandiacre Canal Society who agreed to match fund the donations received at the Lock Wind. This means the Canal Society will now also contribute £250 towards the WRG Van Appeal.

Double Celebration for Aylesbury Canal Society

On 19th September, Aylesbury Canal Society organised a special event to mark the 200th Anniversary of the Grand Union Canal’s Aylesbury Arm, as well as the society’s move from the Town Basin to Circus Fields. An official opening celebration of the society’s new facility marked the occasion. Hundreds of visitors enjoyed the double celebration including IWA’s National Chairman, Les Etheridge, who received a special invitation to attend the event.

IWA’s Chiltern Branch was represented by Chris Clegg, who manned the Branch’s stand and also the ACS’s stand, which featured an excellent display of archive photos of the Town Basin, including some of IWA’s National Rally held there in 1961.

IWA’s Chair, Announced

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Brain of Monty Quiz

The Brain of Monty Quiz is a bi-annual quiz organised by IWA’s Shrewsbury District & North Wales Branch in support of the Maesbury Festival on the Montgomery Canal. Over the years the quiz has attracted a good number of followers, and not just for the £25 prize.

In keeping with its name, all profits will go to supporting the Maesbury Festival, previous profits having paid for picnic benches and canoe launching pads on the canal. To get a copy of the latest quiz please send an SAE and £1 to: Brain of Monty Quiz 2016, Pen-y-Garreg Lane, Pant, Oswestry, Shropshire SY10 8JS.
IWA Calendar Competition

IWA's annual photography competition closes on 31st January 2016. First prize will be a complete set of Nicholson Guides to the Waterways, worth over £130, kindly donated by Harper Collins. Shortlisted entries will each receive three IWA wall calendars.

Images will be shortlisted to feature a range of seasons, craft and activities from all over the UK waterway network. IWA members will then be invited to vote for their favourite and the overall winner will receive a set of Nicholsons Guides. Winning images will feature in IWA’s 2017 calendar or be printed as an IWA Christmas card.

As well as featuring in the calendar and as Christmas cards, photos may also be used in IWA’s campaign, marketing and promotional material. Photos are always credited where possible.

To be in with a chance of being shortlisted, entries need to be of a print resolution 1800 pixels x 1200 pixels (300dpi) or at least 1MB and should be emailed to (up to 10MB per email) stephanie.pay@waterways.org.uk. Or send via Dropbox or WeTransfer.

IWA Christmas Gift Membership

This is a rewarding gift for friends and family who love the UK’s waterways. You can choose whether to have your gift sent directly to the recipient or the new membership pack can be sent to you for you to offer your gift in person.

If you choose to pay by Direct Debit then you will benefit from a 25% discount off the cost of your gift membership.

There are three easy ways to buy your gift – call IWA on 01494 783453, fill in the form enclosed with this magazine, or email membership@waterways.org.uk.

TOP RIGHT: September – punting along the Backs, Cambridge, River Cam by Gillie Rhodes.

RIGHT: November – Macclesfield Canal by Chris Hill.
IWA’s fundraising efforts broke new ground in the planning and running of a Waterways Triathlon which took place on the beautiful Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation in Essex on Sunday 20th September.

Some 68 participants signed up to challenge their fitness and skills on a course which stretched from Hoe Mill Lock to Maldon for the running section, from Hoe Mill Lock to Beeleigh Lock for the canoe section and along local roads for the cycling section. Participants had the choice of either a 50km or a 30km course through beautiful countryside with all contestants raising money for two local waterways causes – Essex Waterways and The Susan Trust, a historic Chelmer lighter boat restoration project.

The triathlon attracted singles, couples and families as well as six runners who brought their dogs. The Mayor of Chelmsford, Councillor Paul Hutchinson, launched proceedings and ensured that all the canoe groups set off together and on time.

Many supporters enjoyed the sunshine, with several of the well-wishers having walked down to the start from Paper Mill Lock. The first of the 30km course triathletes, twins Jordan and Liam Case, completed all three events in a very impressive 2 hours and 41 minutes. The fastest time on the 50km section was 3 hours 15 minutes.

For more information about IWA’s Waterways Triathlon contact Jenny Black, Volunteers Coordinator, jenny.black@waterways.org.uk or 01494 783453 ext. 604.
Retailers in England are being urged by IWA to help improve local communities by allocating substantial amounts from a windfall levy on plastic shopping bags towards cleaning up canal and river amenities, which are blighted by plastic and other waste.

Thousands of volunteer hours are spent each year removing tonnes of waste from the country’s inland waterways, and the charity that undertakes much of this work is calling on retailers, who from early October introduced a new 5 pence charge for disposable plastic shopping bags, to help the environment where many of these bags end up. In 2014 IWA volunteers dedicated 7,000 hours to canal cleanup work parties across the country, up 45% on 2013.
Festival News

Hugely Successful Northampton Festival of Water

All manner of craft gathered in Northampton over the August Bank Holiday Weekend, where the bank of the River Nene was packed for a celebrity opening of IWA’s Festival of Water in Becket’s Park. Celebrated actors and waterway ambassadors Timothy West and Prunella Scales opened the event and enjoyed a special river cruise with waterways enthusiasts and volunteers.

The party atmosphere was maintained throughout the weekend with highlights including youngsters trying their skills at bricklaying and digger driving with Waterway Recovery Group volunteers, demonstrations of boat handling skills by the Northampton Sea Cadets and a series of excellent and informative talks from renowned waterway personalities such as Tim Coghlan, David Blagrove and Liz Payne. The marquee in the park was packed all weekend as visitors to the show enjoyed local ales and musical entertainment.

IWA and WRG volunteers ensured everything ran smoothly and festival supporters, Northampton Borough Council, the Environment Agency and the Canal & River Trust, as well as commercial sponsors, contributed to the organisation of the festival and helped make the weekend a great success.

During the festival Councillor Penny Flavell, Mayor of Northampton, handed over a ceremonial Tiller Pin to her counterpart Councillor Angela Underhill, Mayor of Walsall, on board the Crusader Community Boat which was offering public boat trips on the river. The Tiller Pin is the trophy awarded to the next town or city hosting the IWA’s annual water-based festival, with next year’s event set to be held in Pelsall on the Wyrley & Essington Canal over the August Bank Holiday Weekend (see opposite).

IWA’s Festival of Water 2015 showcased Northampton’s waterside at its very best. The event received excellent coverage from BBC Radio Northampton and BBC Three Counties (Beds, Herts & Bucks) Radio, ITV and local press.

Below: Tiller pin handover – left to right: Angela Underhill, Mayor of Walsall, John Butler, IWA Events Committee Chairman, John Underhill, Penelope Flavell, Mayor of Northampton.
Pelsall to Host 2016 Festival

IWA’s annual Festival of Water is to be staged at Pelsall in 2016. The Festival opens on the Saturday of the August Bank Holiday weekend and will be located at Pelsall Junction on the Wyrley & Essington Canal near Walsall.

Each year the Festival attends a different waterways location to bring focus to the local canals and rivers. It is hoped that the celebrations in Pelsall will encourage greater activity on and around the under-used northern section of the Birmingham Canal Navigations and there will be lots of activities in the lead up to the festival to ensure this objective is met.

The IWA Festival of Water will have an array of attractions on and off the water providing a fun day out for all the family. Up to 200 boats, including leisure, trade, heritage and working narrowboats, are expected to attend as well as a wealth of smaller craft such as canoes, rowing boats, and stand up paddleboarders. There will also be opportunities for visitors to get afloat on board trip boats and as well as land-based craft stalls there will be plenty of artisans trading from their boats.

There will be no admission charge although visitors will be encouraged to make a donation. The Events Team would like to hear from boaters, charities and local groups who are interested in having a stall and fundraising for their chosen cause, and for IWA. More information is available at www.waterways.org.uk/festivalofwater.

Event Volunteers Sought

IWA Canalway Cavalcade, now in its 34th year, is held annually over the three days of the May Day Bank Holiday in the heart of London at Little Venice. IWA is looking for volunteers in the following areas: Work Camp Organiser, Entertainments Manager & Assistant, Site Services Manager & Assistant, Trade Show Manager & Assistant.

For more information and to apply please contact Jerry Sanders: jerry.sanders@waterways.org.uk.

IWA Festival of Water team is also seeking volunteers. If you are interested in the roles of Publicity Manager or Administrative Support please contact IWA Events Chairman John Butler: john.butler@waterways.org.uk.

Read Bulletin

Would you like your IWA Waterways news on a more regular basis? If you do not currently receive Bulletin, IWA’s fortnightly email newsletter, then let us know and we will add you to the list. You will be the first to hear both our national and local branch news as well as receive the latest updates from across the waterways network. Sign up by giving IWA a call or by visiting www.waterways.org.uk/newsletter.
Restoration Raffle Exceeds £5,000

Since its launch on 1st August, IWA’s Waterways Restoration Raffle has raised in excess of £5,000 and hopes to raise at least £15,000 in total. A book of tickets can be found inside this issue.

IWA is again donating the profits from the raffle to waterways restoration causes across the country but this year each restoration society must receive at least 25 nominations to be eligible to receive money. Ticket purchasers choose which project or society to support and the more nominations each society receives, the more money they secure as a percentage of the total.

11 societies have received more than 25 nominations and will be definite beneficiaries of the raffle. The WRG Van Appeal and Friends of the Cromford are in the lead with 364 and 277 nominations each so far and it can all change depending on who you choose to support.

Ticket purchasers have the chance of winning one of 10 prizes which include a week boating holiday, four other boating holiday prizes as well as Festival tickets or a subscription to Canal Boat magazine. The raffle will be drawn on 31st December so you have until then to enter and be in with a chance of winning whilst supporting your choice of waterways causes.

Tickets cost £2 each, in books of 5 tickets. A book of tickets has again been included in this issue of Waterways.

If you wish to purchase more than one book you can do so online at www.waterways.org.uk/raffle or by telephone on 01494 783453 ext. 611.

For more information on raffle prizes, restoration projects and the terms and conditions see www.waterways.org.uk/raffle or contact Jenny Black, Volunteers Coordinator, jenny.black@waterways.org.uk or alternatively telephone the number above.

Paddle Pawl Update

IWA is pleased that the Canal & River Trust has reversed the introduction of paddle pawl stops on lock gear. IWA objected to the proposals to add stops to the winding mechanism on lock gates, principally on the basis of the danger to safety where a crew needs to drop paddles quickly. CRT has stopped rolling out changes to pawls, taking into account the views of IWA, along with those from around 100 boaters and CRT’s Navigation Advisory Group. The Trust will work together with IWA and NAG on any future proposals to gain valuable insight from experienced boaters.

ILLTYD HARRINGTON

Many years before the role of Mayor of London was created, the top person to speak for London was the Leader of Greater London Council and in 1974 a certain Ken Livingstone was elected to this position. The Deputy Leader was Illtyd Harrington, who passed away on 1st October, aged 84, an admired IWA Vice President, who devoted much of his time in local government to seeking improvements to the canals.

His interest in waterways started in 1960 when, aged 29, he came from South Wales to London and found that access to the Regent’s Canal, near where he lived, was barred. Illtyd broke through the barriers so that he could walk along the canal, then almost devoid of boats and people. In 1964, on being elected a member of the Greater London Council, he took the lead in bringing London’s 15 riparian councils together to form the London Canals Consultative Council which had its own qualified staff of planners, architects and financial experts.

Illtyd Harrington was chairman of LCCC for two further spells over the 1970/80s and during the course of this period the whole 22 miles of towpath from Bulls Bridge to Limehouse was opened to public access.

The Transport Act of 1968 which set up British Waterways Board – to take over the entire nationalised canal network – also established a consumer protection body called the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (IWAAC). Illtyd Harrington was appointed chairman of IWAAC and, in the initial 18 months under Illtyd’s dynamic leadership, it tackled this task in a manner not envisaged by the politicians and civil servants. Around 35 visits were made to remainder canals, including the Grand Western, Kennet & Avon, Ashton, Pocklington, Cromford and Erewash canals, the Slough Arm, and parts of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

Illtyd’s two year tenure as IWAAC chairman was only extended by six months and then terminated along with his BWB directorship. He was succeeded by Hugh Stockwell who continued to maintain a high profile of the council’s work and Illtyd remained closely in touch with him.

When in 1974 Illtyd Harrington was elected as Deputy Leader of Greater London Council, he was also reappointed as a director of BWB. Illtyd became involved in two pioneering projects to develop the carriage of freight from the estuary ports to inland distribution centres: the encouragement of freight traffic from the Port of London onto the Grand Union; and the introduction of BACAT roll-on roll-off container barges between Hull and the Continental ports, with further carriage along the Trent. Sadly, neither came about.

Illtyd Harrington devoted much of his time and energy in London local government to pressing for the recognition and improvement of waterways transport. It would be a fitting tribute to his enthusiasm and conviction if other protagonists could bring his ideas to fruition in the future.

David Bolton
FREIGHT NEWS

Big Loads Afloat

A normal indivisible loads on the roads can cause problems of engineering (bridges, street furniture etc), policing, congestion and delay for other road users, with associated costs. Inland Waterways Freight Group has always argued that the fullest consideration should be given to the use of water transport for such loads. For many years Serck Baker in Gloucester did just this but it came to an end with changing market conditions and a declining number of the small ships able to undertake such work.

Most commendably, Robert Wynn & Sons has been filling this gap with their Inland Navigator, a self-propelled barge able to carry indivisible loads of up to 300 tonnes and able to navigate many of our waterways. Recently they carried a 270-tonne transformer from the import port of Hull to the Staythorpe electricity generating station near Newark on the Trent. Had it been moved by road one would have been behind it for 85 miles!

The moving of partially dismantled cranes from the former coal wharves at Battersea Power Station to Tilbury for refurbishment was carried out by flat-deck, towed barges. It is not too difficult to imagine the chaos on South London’s roads that would have accompanied the number of journeys needed had lorries been used.

It has been said that water transport for freight is ‘too good for its own good’. Few are disturbed, the quantities may be very great, the individual loads very large and the external, social costs are slight. It just happens without us knowing, a claim that can never be made for road transport.

Modal shift has far to go.

Bits and Pieces

It would seem that at Ellesmere Port’s Manistry Wharf, what had been a fairly regular coal traffic from Hunterston has come to an end but down in London the now rarely used King George V dock saw aggregates being unloaded for movement to Battersea by Thames Shipping’s Yasam Rose. Their Pola Rose keeps busy on the Gravesend-Battersea aggregates run but one could not count on many of our MPs knowing that she passes Westminster with about 700 tonnes every 36 hours.

Also on the Thames the Livett’s Group, in partnership with Belgian interests, has introduced a self-propelled ‘work platform’, Scheldemond I with a linking dumb barge, Scheldemond II, which will greatly expand engineering and specialised (e.g. ro/ro) transport capacity on the Thames. The firm was greatly involved in work on the Blackfriars bridge and station extension.

Builders and Barges

It has been shown that a sunken Roman barge off Blackfriars on the Thames was loaded with Kentish rag stone from the Maidstone area and destined for Londinium’s wall then under construction. Not only were the Romans excellent civil engineers but they also appreciated the value of waterborne freight!

The redevelopment of former dock systems and numerous other riverside sites also provides scope for the planned use of water transport and in the face of mounting concern for the environment and rhetoric regarding modal shift, this is a mode which could in many places be considered far more seriously than it is. There are in fact many examples of good practice.

From the start early in the 1980s work at Canary Wharf made great use of water transport, as has the more recent work on Crossrail’s Canary Wharf station and retail facilities. Both in the first and now second phase of work at the eastern end of West India Dock on Wood Wharf, there has also been impressive use of floating concrete batching plant served by large barges for aggregates. Use of water transport by Thames Water for their Lee Tunnel and by Crossrail for the removal of tunnel spoil and import of concrete tunnel lining segments has provided many millions of tonnes of barge cargo and a dramatic revival of traffic on the Thames. Work at Battersea and Nine Elms is now adding to this (see Autumn 2015 Waterways) and work on the Thames Tideway Tunnel is about to start.

However, there are certainly examples, developments north of London’s King’s Cross station being the most obvious, where water transport has not been used as it could, indeed should; this despite previous examples at King’s Place where it was used to good effect. Mounting piles of waste at a waterside Camden site would also seem to be an obvious traffic.

There are many much smaller schemes at which transport by barge, even narrowboat, make sense and where pressure from IWA water-freight enthusiasts may help local authorities in their decision making. Recent improvement works at the Leeds central station was in part served by short-distance barge transport of relatively modest quantities of construction materials (see Spring 2015 Waterways). On an even smaller scale was the use on the Grand Union at Berkhamsted of narrowboats to remove demolition material and deliver construction materials including ready assembled roof timbers. This avoided difficult road access in a residential area.
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Our last issue featured the GU's southern section from Gayton Junction down to London. Here we complete our coverage of the nation's mightiest canal, travelling south from Birmingham, via Braunston and Norton Junction, to Gayton...

Our journey begins in Central Birmingham: Aston Junction, to be precise, at the bottom of the Farmer's Bridge locks. From Aston, the Digbeth Branch of the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal descends for half a mile through six locks and a tunnel to arrive at Warwick Bar. Here, at the former stop lock, is where the Grand Union and the Digbeth Branch meet at Digbeth (or Proof House) Junction. Digbeth Basin is overlooked by the Gun Barrel Proof House.

The one time stop-lock has been re-gated for aesthetic effect and sits beside a canopied loading bay once owned by Pickfords. The Grand Union's ownership of the canal is prominently asserted on the parapet of an aqueduct over the River Rea. Birmingham's rivers are much less celebrated than its canals, but happily the Rea's water quality and environs have been greatly improved following the campaigning efforts of local enthusiasts.

To the offside, the former New Warwick Wharf and substantial warehouse, built in 1935 by Fellows, Morton & Clayton, remain as testimony to the importance of this great carrying company. On the towpath side is a roving bridge over one of the once numerous canal arms. Such bridges feature prominently on the canals of Birmingham: this one once led to Birmingham Corporation Refuge & Salvage Department wharves.

At Bordesley Junction, another canal heads off to the left. This is the Birmingham & Warwick Junction Canal or Saltley Cut. Working boatmen referred to it as the 'Bottom Road'. (See page 21.)

Meanwhile, the ascent of the six Camp Hill Locks begins at Bordesley Junction, raising the canal by almost 42ft to the Olton summit pound, which stretches from here for some 10 miles to the next locks at Knowle. Like Garrison Locks to the left, the Camp Hill Locks are narrow gauge; all the efforts of the new Grand Union Canal Company in the 1930s, to widen their locks and deepen their canal between London and Birmingham, floundered just here.

Each lock is numbered (1-6 respectively) and has the identifying letters CH cast at the tail and/or the head of each lock, except for Lock 5. This is of modern construction, having been moved when, relatively recently, the canal was realigned for road improvements.

On the way up, you can look back for a distant view of Birmingham City's St Andrews stadium. Ahead you'll see Holy Trinity Church, the impressive railway bridge carrying the Birmingham to London line, and on a smaller scale, the attractively arched run off beside Lock 4.

Boaters can relax on the top pound through to Catherine-de-Barnes, some 7 miles away. But the heritage interest of this still urban waterway is not quite over yet. With Sparkbrook and Acocks Green to the right and Small Heath to the left, there are more of those towpath roving bridges, most prominent of which is that over the arm into Ackers Basin. This was once the location of the Birmingham Small Arms Company – more widely known as BSA, the famous home of motorbikes, but now a skiing and canoeing centre.

The suburbs of Olton and Elmdon Heath follow, through which the canal slips almost unnoticed in deep, steep-sided, wooded cuttings with high bridges steadily descending numerically on the way to Napton Junction.

Passage along this summit pound, is largely uneventful, with little to do now except wave to the passing towpath walkers and runners. The pleasant moorings of Catherine de Barnes are to come – and perhaps the reward of an evening in the Boat Inn.

The open countryside south of Catherine de Barnes gives an indication as to the rural delights to come. The peace is interrupted only briefly at Copt Heath Wharf where the thundering traffic on the M42 motorway crosses the canal.

Warwick Bar.
“Knowle Locks are the first wide ones to be encountered and they provide a sharp contrast to the more usual narrow-beam locks of the Midlands.”
“The GU continues through rolling Northamptonshire countryside, past the interesting village of Weedon Bec, best known for its antique shops and its vast former military barracks.”
THE SALTLEY CUT

We have approached the Grand Union Canal from central Birmingham, but it can also be reached from the north of the city. This is accomplished by means of a handy little link – the Birmingham & Warwick Junction Canal, or Saltley Cut.

This short, late canal leaves the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal at Salford Junction, beneath the original iron junction bridge and crossing the Tame on an aqueduct – all of which are dwarfed by Spaghetti Junction overhead. Nechell’s Stop Lock here was once the first of six locks on this section. Still functional in the ‘70s, it is now without gates but the quoins, gate recesses and evidence of a side run-off paddle remain.

The Saltley & Nechell’s Gas Works and the huge Nechell’s Power Station, which boasted its own canal loop and dominated the scene until the late ‘50s, have long gone. In their place stands Star City Casino, complete with secure but rather unlikely pontoon moorings.

An aqueduct over ‘Birmingham’s river’, the River Rea, is followed by the reedy remains of Saltley Reservoir, once used for back-pumping to the top of Camp Hill Locks.

The five narrow Garrison Locks raise the canal by a little over 34ft. Each betrays Grand Union as opposed to BCN heritage, with pairs of mitre gates rather than a single leaf at the lock tail, and numbers cast with the letter ‘G’ (for Garrison) near the heel post of the top gates. Beside the second lock was the site of Fellows, Morton & Clayton’s Saltley boat dock, once home to the famous steamer President.

Above the locks, a series of bridges cross the waterway, connecting the urban village of Heartlands – a generation which has gone a long way towards improving the reputation of this stretch of canal. As you pop out onto the main line at Bordesley Junction, just over 2 miles from Nechell’s Stop Lock, you can admire the graceful arch of the Lloyds & Fosters Junction Bridge which, together with the factory buildings, creates a series of wonderful reflections. Look beyond the graffiti to see the living history of the heavily grooved abutments and handrail of the Junction Bridge. These were etched by the gritted ropes of hundreds of horse-drawn ‘Joey’ boats – endeavouring to satisfy Nechells Power Station’s insatiable appetite for coal.
KNOWLE TO LEAMINGTON SPA

The sprawl of Birmingham is finally retreating – but some heavy lock-work is still to come. Half a mile before the top of the Knowle Locks, though, comes the attractive village of Knowle itself, with timber-framed buildings, an interesting church and an opportunity for boaters to take on provisions.

The locks are the first wide ones to be encountered and they provide a sharp contrast to the more usual narrow-beam locks of the Midlands. The advantages of travelling with a companion boat are immediately apparent. If you're without that luxury, however, then the large efficient paddles of these GU locks empty them so quickly that some find it easier to lift only one. A long throw windlass will also be beneficial, for these big paddles are frequently quite stiff to get started.

The five locks lower the canal by nearly 42ft and are accompanied by run-off weirs, made from the original six narrow locks that were replaced as part of the upgrading carried out by the Grand Union Canal Company in the 1930s. Take a walk over and you can see numbers, dates and initial 'K' cast at the old locks, continuing the theme established at Camp Hill (CH) and Garrison (G). The side ponds and their paddle gear remain and, although unfortunately no longer in use, add to the completeness of the scene.

Some 3 miles below Knowle Locks the Grand Union Canal is joined, from the right, by a short arm from the Stratford-on-Avon Canal at Kingswood (or Lapworth) Junction. This connection was made as early as 1802, even before the rest of the line from here down to the River Avon in Stratford had been built (1816). This is a good place to stop before tackling the locks at Hatton, with welcoming pubs and village shops.

Onwards along the broad Grand Union past Turner’s Green and Rowington, there is more green rolling countryside before the canal dives into the short cutting which leads to Shrewley Tunnel. Built in 1799, at 433 yards (396m) it is not one of the longest on the system but it can be wet; a horsepath leads over the hill for walkers.

The Hatton Flight comprises 21 locks in just 2 miles, and lowers the canal by just over 166ft. To have a companion boat now is even more helpful and such is the number of boat movements here that there is every possibility of teaming up with another crew – it’s even worth waiting for a short while until the opportunity presents itself. The buildings of British Waterways’ former maintenance depot below Bridge 54 are aesthetically very pleasing. The buildings are now used as Canal & River Trust offices.

Generally there are few opportunities to moor comfortably in lock flights such as this, although the locks in the Hatton...
Flight do tend to be spaced further apart towards the bottom. In the wonderful middle section, however, the locks are tight together, marching impressively down the hill with Warwick spread out below – as spectacular perhaps as the Caen Hill flight on the Kennet & Avon Canal. The pattern established at Knowle is repeated – big side ponds with their paddle gear and the old locks converted to ‘weir over’. The old locks here bear a cast of the letter ‘H’.

Around four hours are generally enough to work through the Hatton Locks, which are often popular with walkers and cyclists. A secure and friendly mooring awaits in the Saltisford Arm, directly ahead at Budbrooke Junction, admirably administered by the Saltisford Trust.

A short half-mile run takes boaters to the pair of Cape Locks with the much-lauded Cape of Good Hope pub alongside. The foot of the locks marks the start of the 5-mile ‘Leamington Pound’ through the locks at Radford Semele, the lowest section of the Grand Union between Birmingham and Braunston.

The valley of the River Avon, with its tributary the Leam, divides Warwick from Leamington. The canal crosses the Avon on a three arched stone aqueduct here, closely followed by another over the railway.

The canal corridor through Leamington has improved significantly over the recent years, but the canal only skirts the Royal Spa. It is only briefly, near Bridge 40, that you can enjoy a brief sight of the elegant architecture which characterises much of the rest of the town. It is from the moorings here that the town centre is most conveniently reached.
RADFORD TO BRAUNSTON

Leamington Spa is the last town that we’ll encounter on the way to Braunston – the last town on the Grand Union until far-off Milton Keynes, in fact.

Quiet countryside moorings are available on the length between Bridges 35 and 36, above the lock at Radford Semele. Radford Bottom Lock marks the ‘gentle’ start of the ascent up the 23 locks onto the level pound through to Braunston. Gentle, that is, in the sense that at first the locks are generously spaced, before the more energetic, steeper rise which follows. The lock at Radford is in an attractive wooded setting overlooked by the handsome Offchurch Viaduct, which once carried the Rugby & Leamington Railway. The letter ‘R’ is cast in the old lock alongside.

Here begins a delicious length of canal. An overriding sense of remoteness takes over as the three Fosse Locks lift the canal up by 21ft and are crossed at Fosse Wharf by the Fosse Way. On through Wood Lock and Welsh Road, the steady climb continues to the foot of the four Bascote Locks, where the first two locks are followed by an impressive staircase pair – the only one on the GU main line.

The village of Long Itchington lies just half a mile north of the canal, while the lock bearing the village name heralds the start of some serious exercise for boaters as the ten locks of the Stockton Flight raise the canal by 54ft through a pleasantly wooded landscape. Kaye’s Arm off to the right above Lock 12 once led to a Portland Cement Company works. Today it houses a small collection of former working boats, and is home to the Warwickshire Fly Boat Company.

The three remaining locks at Calcutt are the last before Braunston, and the last of the 1930s designs to be encountered. They stand amidst fine countryside with

Radford Lock.
wide-ranging views enjoyed by those moored in the two large marinas below the locks. The locks raise the canal by a relatively modest 16ft, and perhaps just two might have done. At the top is the long-established chandlery, office and shop of Calcutt Boats.

At Napton Junction, or "Wigrams Turn", it’s a left turn for the Grand Union. As you pass under the Junction Bridge you may care to ponder why this, apparently the last bridge on the former Warwick & Napton Canal, should be numbered 17. The clue lies in the knowledge that there are 15 numbered bridges and a numbered aqueduct (96) between here and Braunston. While the Grand Union Canal Company never actually took over this stretch of the Oxford Canal, it did effectively assume control of it, widening and dredging it at its own expense as part of the upgrading in the 1930s.

Daventry District Council has promoted the construction of an £11.7 million new canal from near the town centre to the Grand Union Canal, just east of Braunston Tunnel, passing alongside Daventry Reservoir. There would be seven locks over the 2-mile length of the arm to accommodate a level difference of 67ft 3in. It has been suggested that one flight of four locks could be replaced by a boatlift presenting an opportunity to create a tourist attraction of regional and perhaps national importance.

Although only just over a mile away from the Grand Union Canal at its closest point, Daventry completely misses out on the benefits of the waterway. The Council sees the new canal as a potential catalyst for regeneration in Daventry town centre and for raising the town’s profile as a tourist destination. Daventry District Council received grants of £275,000 from East Midlands Development Agency and Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd during 2009 to help fund feasibility and design work into the project.

A second round of public consultation took place in October 2010 on revised proposals for sites 3 and 6 which included the canal basins.

The Daventry Canal Association was formed to give support to the proposals in 2011. If you would like to learn more about the Daventry Canal Arm project visit www.daventrycanal.org.uk.
Today it has all the appearance of belonging to the GUC, even if the waymarked walking route along the towpath continues to respect its ownership by the Oxford Canal Company. The 5 miles between Napton Junction and Braunston have become increasingly busy, but this is a most pleasant length of canal.

After passing the abutments of the dismantled Great Central Railway bearing a tribute to the rock band Pink Floyd, the canal approaches Braunston on the embankment known as Braunston Puddlebanks and crosses an aqueduct over the River Leam to arrive at Braunston Turn. The triangular junction island with its two handsome Horseley Ironworks bridges resulted from early revisions and shortening of the Oxford Canal which took place in the early 1830s. A turn to the right takes you to the ‘true’ junction of the Oxford Canal at the Stop House, and another handsome Horseley roving bridge at what is now the entrance to Braunston Marina. There are moorings on the Braunston Puddlebank and other spots between the Turn and the Stop House.

Full boating facilities are available at Braunston Turn, Braunston Marina and a number of other local boatyards. Access to the attractive hilltop village is best made via the footpath up from Butcher’s Bridge.

**BRAUNSTON TO GAYTON JUNCTION**

East of Braunston the canal dives into Braunston Tunnel, 2,042yd long and without a towpath. Narrowboats can, with care, pass each other inside; walkers must proceed by way of the horsepath across the top.

At Norton Junction, the Leicester Section of the Grand Union Canal heads north to Crick, Foxton and onto the River Soar at Leicester. Our route, meanwhile, takes us south, down the seven locks of the Buckby flight which lower the canal by 62ft 10in. This is a noisy interlude, the waterway here being closely accompanied by the M1 motorway and the West Coast Mainline railway.

Lock free now, the GU continues through rolling Northamptonshire countryside, past the interesting village of Weedon Bec, best known for its antique shops and its vast former military barracks. Beyond Bugbrooke – a stone built village of much charm – our exploration of the mighty Grand Union Canal comes to an end at Gayton Junction, gateway to the incomparable River Nene.

Grateful thanks go to Roger Butler for much original material including photographs.
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It is ten years since IWA subsidiary Essex Waterways Ltd took over the running of this rural East Anglian waterway. We look at the transformation of a once run down navigation...

The Company of Proprietors of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation was taken into administration in August 2003 after running into acute financial difficulties. After various options were explored and rejected – including that of British Waterways taking over the navigation – IWA formed a new subsidiary company Essex Waterways Ltd to take over the management of the navigation, which it did on 14th November 2005, specifically the day-to-day responsibilities of the waterway as well as income and expenditure relating to it. Freehold ownership of the waterway was to remain, however, with the Company.

Prior to IWA’s intervention, it appeared almost inevitable that the Company of Proprietors of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation would go into liquidation; the abandonment of the navigation would have been a likely consequence. IWA has since run the waterway exclusively for public benefit.

The navigation was very successful for 50 years or so, but trade steadily declined once the Eastern Counties Railway arrived in Chelmsford in 1843. During the final years of commercial carrying the only trade was timber to Brown’s of Chelmsford; this ended in 1972.
The owners of the waterway were initially resistant to use of the waterway by pleasure craft but a hard-fought campaign by IWA’s Chelmsford Branch eventually led to its acceptance. There followed a steady and sustained growth in pleasure craft numbers. Chelmsford Branch has supported the waterway ever since, organising the restoration of Springfield Basin in 1993 and raising over £400,000 to repair locks and weirs at Hoe Mill, Stonham’s, Barnes Mill and Sandford Mill locks. The Chelmsford-based Chelmer Canal Trust was formed in 1995 to add further support.

**WIDESPREAD IMPROVEMENTS**

Virtually from day one, Essex Waterways began a rolling programme of works to the navigation. Within the first four years, major improvements had been made at five locks: Springfield, Sandford, Cuton, Stonham’s and Heybridge Basin Sea Lock. Footbridge re-decking was carried out at Barnes Mill, a new footbridge was provided at Paper Mill Lock and sluices overhauled at Little Baddow. Moorings and facilities were improved all along the navigation, notably at Heybridge Basin, Paper Mill, Sandford and Springfield Basin.

Over the last few years the major works have continued apace. Between November 2009 and March 2010, contractors working for Essex & Suffolk Water undertook bank repairs to provide new landing facilities at Beeleigh Lock, where a new lock ladder was also installed and repairs made to the lower cill. 2010 also saw the replacement of the Elms Farm Chunker, the largest culvert on the navigation, which goes under a man-made embankment where the waterway bypasses Maldon. The original elm box culvert, dating from the 1790s, was on the verge of failing, with the consequent risk of embankment collapse and serious local flooding. The new culvert was installed by contractors working for the Environment Agency and has since been maintained by Essex Waterways.

In the same year work began on the rebuilding of Hall Bridge, Heybridge, with IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group playing a major role in the project. The brand new bridge was formally opened in March 2011. Heybridge Basin North Quay was the site of extensive improvements during 2011-12, whilst 2013 was largely given over to rectifying storm damage resulting from the prolonged torrential rain and high winds of the previous winter.

The past year has seen Essex Waterways upgrading its plant and tools, such that the navigation now benefits from more efficient and reliable equipment. Acquisitions include a new Avant multi-purpose mower/hedge cutter/excavator, weed cutting vessel and weed lifting boat. An upgrade of the dredger barge has also been recently completed, whilst IWA’s Chelmsford Branch has funded a trailer to transport the new plant to various locations along the waterway. The last two years have also seen brand new boaters’ facility blocks installed at the Paper Mill and Sandford moorings.

General maintenance works have included brickwork repairs to the Bothy (Moorings Manager’s Office) at Paper Mill and roof repairs at Heybridge Basin Lock House. Meanwhile, the boaters’ car parks...
at Paper Mill Lock and at Sandford moorings have been resurfaced. All lockgate platform boards along the waterway have been replaced with oak boards with an anti-slip system. Volunteer groups have played a big part in maintaining and improving the Chelmer & Blackwater over the past ten years, not least in the last 12 months. Enthusiastic volunteers from Waterway Recovery Group, IWA Chelmsford Branch and Sandford Boating Club have been busy cutting back vegetation all along the navigation, whilst towpath clearance and surfacing has taken place between Barnes Lock and Sandford Lock. Willow trees – a continuing source of income for Essex Waterways – on this section have been cropped and replanted.

Meanwhile, lockgates have been painted and two new information boards, funded by IWA Chelmsford Branch and local residents, have been installed at Heybridge Basin. Wharf walls have been rebuilt at Springfield Basin and in September this year, new lower lockgates were installed at Rickett’s Lock.

Lifeboat at Heybridge Basin.

Kayaking near Paper Mill.

Hoe Mill work party using the Avant machine.
ENJOYING THE CHELMER & BLACKWATER

The Chelmer & Blackwater is an unsung gem of a waterway – relished by the people of Essex but comparatively little known among the wider canal fraternity. Greater public use has followed the improvement programme carried out recently, especially where towpaths have been cleared and surfaced.

Paper Mill Lock and Heybridge Basin continue to receive the lion’s share of visitors to the navigation. The former is home to the popular Old Stables Tearooms, offering morning coffee, light lunches and afternoon tea and cakes. Boat trips operate from here throughout the summer season (01245 225520, www.papermilllock.co.uk).

Heybridge Basin – like Glasson Basin in Lancashire – is one of those magical locations where the two worlds of saltwater and freshwater boating collide. There is always lots to see, as boats arrive from and depart for the Blackwater estuary, and several fine pubs in which to relax and enjoy the maritime atmosphere. Boat trips are available too, operated by Basin Pleasure Boats (07835 657462, www.basinpleasureboats.co.uk). Rowing boat hire is also available from the same operator.

Further trips are on offer from Blackwater Boats at Sandford, using the traditionally-styled wide-beam vessel Blackwater Dawn (07802 514400, www.blackwater-boats.co.uk).

The navigation is becoming increasingly popular with canoeists and day licences are available on line at www.waterways.org.uk/essex_waterways/canoeing.

Passing through the under-stated but always endearing Essex countryside, the navigation is popular with walkers of all ages and levels of fitness. At just over 13 miles in length, it is ideal for a challenging all-day walk, with return public transport links between Heybridge Basin and Chelmsford via Maldon. And should you be a keen runner preparing for a half marathon, well it’s just perfect for a long training run or time trial...

PROUD ACHIEVEMENT

Such is the nature of running a navigation that the work is never finished – there is always something to be done, repairs to be effected here, facilities to be improved there; in that respect it is rather like painting the Forth Bridge. Nevertheless, there is widespread acceptance of the fact that Essex Waterways not only saved the Chelmer & Blackwater from likely abandonment in 2005, but has since radically transformed its fortunes for the benefit of boaters, casual visitors and local residents. And that may well be regarded as one of IWA’s finest achievements of recent times.
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IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group and its volunteers have an excellent reputation in the field of canal restoration which has been earned over 40 years and is still growing. One of WRG’s major funding sources comes from IWA with around a third of subscription income being spent supporting it’s work. WRG’s Canal Camps often act as a catalyst to a project making significant progress in just one week and this summer WRG volunteers spent nearly 2,400 volunteer days or over 19,000 volunteer hours restoring the canals of England and Wales. This total doesn’t include all our regular volunteers who dedicate their weekends to canal restoration and the hours of planning and paperwork that our canal camp leaders undertake to ensure each camp is a safe, fun, well planned experience. WRG attracts a wide range of volunteers from different backgrounds and of different ages and this year was no different. Our friendship with REMPART and other European volunteers continues to grow with 33 international volunteers from Spain, Italy, Germany and France attending a canal camp this summer. Some 91 Duke of Edinburgh Award students also completed their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award residential on a WRG canal camp this summer.

In recent months WRG volunteers have been involved in many interesting projects, as detailed on these pages.

LOCK GATES INSTALLATION ON THE COTSWOLD CANALS

Since the summer of 2014 WRG volunteers have focused much of their efforts on supporting the Cotswold Canals Trust’s big push to return Bowbridge Lock to a fully functioning restored lock. This summer WRG held six week-long canal camps at Bowbridge and Wallbridge Lower Locks. At Bowbridge Lock volunteers refitted the coping stones and lock ladders, completed the ground paddles sluices, cleared debris and silt and removed the scaffolding to allow for the brand new lock gates to be fitted on 18th August.

WRG then carried out restoration work at Wallbridge Lower Lock, after Land & Water had cleared the chamber of debris. Volunteers installed scaffolding in the chamber providing access to remove the coping stones and damaged brickwork. The main brickwork of the lock chamber was found to be in a relatively good condition so rebuilding work has started already.
OVERFLOW WEIR UNCOVERED ON THE STOVER CANAL
Since 1951 the Grade 2 listed Graving Docks on the Stover Canal have slowly fallen into disrepair. This summer WRG volunteers played a role in the lock chamber’s journey of revival – dismantling damaged brickwork and starting the rebuilding process. Whilst working on the project volunteers discovered the overflow weir and archaeologists on site uncovered coins placed under stones, presumably left there by the navvies that built the canal.

“VAN-TASTIC SPONSORED WALK
On 19th September 36 people took part in WRG’s sponsored walk around the Droitwich Ring to raise funds for IWA’s Van Appeal. The walk raised an amazing £6,000 and a special mention must go to WRG Chairman, Mike Palmer MBE, who dressed as Snow White for the day. He even shaved his legs for the event as a result of his team’s amazing fundraising efforts, which now totals over £3,000.

The walk was a great opportunity for volunteers to see the Droitwich Canals fully restored, particularly for those of them who were involved in the restoration of the Hanbury Flight and the Droitwich Barge Lock. The Droitwich Canals are a perfect example of what volunteer effort can achieve.

It would not have been such a great day without a number of people. In particular WRG would like to say a big thank you to: Jason Day of Northern Lights Training who was our first aider throughout the day; Nick Lake from Droitwich Spa Marina who allowed us to park, set up and use the marinas facilities; Alan & Rosemary Wilffen for going above and beyond, looking after us at the 11-mile point with homemade delicious cakes and sausage rolls; Maria Hearnden and Anne Lilliman who cooked us a much needed post-walk meal and to everyone else who helped with logistics on the day.

This summer WRG volunteers spent nearly 2,400 volunteer days or over 19,000 volunteer hours restoring the canals of England and Wales.”
MUD, GLORIOUS MUD AT INGLESHAM LOCK

At the end of the summer WRG turned its attentions to the eastern end of the Cotswold Canals. Over 10 days a group of 15 hardy volunteers (with a serious love of mud!) spent over 660 hours clearing the lock chamber of silt, glass, rubbish and vegetation that has accumulated since the canal closed in the 1930s. The work enabled IWA’s Honorary Consultant Engineer, Roy Sutton, to carry out a survey of the lock chamber. Now armed with more information WRG hopes to spend the winter months putting together a restoration plan for the forthcoming years.

STILL TO COME IN 2015

In October WRG has two canal camps running: on the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation in Essex, with volunteers undertaking towpath repairs; and another camp, run by WRG’s Forestry Team, on the Lancaster Canal carrying out tree clearance work along the line of the canal. Both camps are now full but everyone is welcome to visit our sites and see what is going on.

In November WRG has its annual Bonfire Bash. This year we are on the Uttoxeter Canal on the 7th-8th November. Volunteers will be travelling across the country to attend the Bonfire Bash, helping give this project a big push. George Rogers, Bonfire Bash Co-leader said: “Big trees, small trees and scrub – this site has it all and more! There’s technical bits, easy bits, wet bits and dry bits – and all with the chance of encountering big yellow shiny toys. Nestled behind the JCB factory, we’ll be clearing over a mile of the Uttoxeter Canal so there is plenty of work for everyone. It promises to be a great weekend.”

Although our main canal camps programme ends in October, we don’t stop our restoration work. WRG works all year round and this year we are running a Christmas camp on the Cotswold Canals from 26th December-1st January. This camp is the perfect way to work off your Christmas dinner with plenty of vegetation clearance, bonfires and other winter activities. Book online at www.wrg.org.uk.

STONE REMAINS DISCOVERED ON CHESTERFIELD CANAL

In early August, WRG volunteers working alongside the Chesterfield Canal Trust at Staveley discovered the stone remains of Eckington Road Bridge. Whilst digging out the canal channel, they uncovered the remains of the walls and invert of the original road bridge over the canal, built in about 1776. The Chesterfield Canal Trust then hosted an archaeological dig to uncover the bridge and record what was found.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2016

With the summer over the WRG Board is already thinking about 2016. Canal societies, trusts and waterway groups have been invited to express an interest in hosting a Canal Camp and WRG are now arranging site visits to see what projects would benefit from a Camp in 2016. It already looks like 2016 is shaping up to be a busy year with many big restoration projects getting underway.

Canal Camp dates and brochure for 2016 will be available mid-December. If you would like to receive a brochure please email enquiries@wrg.org.uk with your name and address.

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We publish on these pages a round up of just some of the recent activities carried out by IWA branches around the country. If your event isn’t included here, do let the Branch Campaign Team at Head Office know, ideally in advance so that they can assist with publicity and planning where that would be helpful. Contact Alison Smedley (alison.smedley@waterways.org.uk)

**CHILTERN BRANCH**

During the summer, Chiltern Branch has replaced a decayed hexagonal bench, circling a tree at Marsworth bottom lock, with a brand new bench. CRT was supportive of the project and offered practical assistance. The bench was commissioned by Chiltern Chairman Dave Chapman and is dedicated to the memory of Geoff Leonard, an IWA volunteer who spent much of his leisure time at Marsworth.

Chiltern Branch was also delighted to be able to present Wendover Arm Trust with a purpose built publicity box trailer at the Trust’s recent open day at Drayton Beauchamp. The trailer, with dynamic and striking graphics, will enable the Trust to operate more efficiently at the many events it attends.

**LANCASHIRE & CUMBRIA BRANCH**

At a Balsam Bash held at Haslam Park in Preston on Saturday 11th July, volunteers from Lancashire & Cumbria Branch were joined by others from Friends of Haslam Park and the Green Party. Also involved were volunteers from the local community and two Park Rangers.

The 14 volunteers and two park staff worked together to clear Himalayan Balsam from an area at Savick Brook in order to help prevent its spread down to the River Ribble, part of the Ribble Link which connects the Lancaster Canal to the rest of the canal network.

**BIRMINGHAM, BLACK COUNTRY & WORCESTERSHIRE BRANCH**

Activities have ranged from lock gate and paddle gear painting, (including lock ladders and bridge rails), through balsam bashing and clearing vegetation, as well as the ever necessary litter picking.

In August the work party met at Caunsall where volunteers removed overgrowth from around the mooring rings, cut back vegetation and overhanging branches and painted posts and fencing.

September found the work party preparing and painting the four narrow locks leading from the River Severn into the basins. Numbers were enhanced by CRT volunteers and with favourable weather, the volunteers managed to complete all four locks.
NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE & SOUTH CHESHIRE BRANCH

The continuing campaign against Himalayan Balsam in the Churnet Valley took place again this summer, with a total of six work parties being held during June and July on the Caldon Canal.

The work parties, which are jointly organised by IWA North Staffordshire & South Cheshire Branch and the Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust, contribute to the Churnet Valley Living Landscape’s ‘Big Pull’ Project, as well as the national IWA Himalayan Balsam campaign.

In all the locations that were being re-visited from previous years, there was a visible improvement in reduced growth and spread of the plant, enabling progress into new areas in an attempt to contain the growth of Himalayan Balsam along the canals in the Churnet Valley.

North Staffordshire & South Cheshire Branch’s work party in mid-August saw volunteers back in the vicinity of Crumpwood flood lock on the Uttoxeter Canal. Volunteers split into two groups, both of which were kept busy once again tackling Himalayan Balsam.

In addition, the branch’s August Cheshire Locks volunteer work party, continued to uplift Lock 46 on the Red Bull Flight. Nine volunteers put in a very productive day’s work and made excellent progress towards completing Lock 46.

The volunteers also uncovered some attractive granite cobbles on the offside landing area and thoroughly cleaned weeds off the brick sets between the pairs of bottom gates.

The branch also runs a regular monthly IWA work party at Congleton. On 24th July, eight volunteers carried out their regular litter pick and although litter around the station area and along the towpath remain an issue, it is good to note that the amount of litter has reduced considerably from the start of the work party’s regular litter picking from some dozen bags to now one or two per month.

The volunteers also spent a good deal of time working on the area of land between the canal and the station where there is a plan to landscape with low maintenance plants during the autumn season.

WEST COUNTRY BRANCH

West Country Branch has had a productive summer. Volunteers have been removing Himalayan Balsam from the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal as part of monthly work parties since May but on 4th July a dedicated work party really tackled the plant, covering over a mile of the canal.

Meanwhile on 1st August, some 17 volunteers from the branch attended a Work Party at Firepool Lock on the same canal, painting the newly replaced lock balance beams and other lock machinery items; others litter picked and tidied the area adjacent to the lock.

Branch members also cut and trimmed back some of the vegetation and brambles which were encroaching across the towpath.

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A work party was held in July by Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust and supported by Shrewsbury & North Wales Branch, to tackle Himalayan Balsam and continue the job volunteers started last year.

The source of Himalayan Balsam on the Newport Canal was traced to Strine Park, so it was decided that this year’s work party would attempt to clear both the canal and the Strine to the east of Town Lock to prevent Himalayan Balsam spreading back on to the canal. They were helped by a path that has recently been created along the Strine, which gave easy access to the stream bank. Volunteers even had time to clear the towpath to the west of Town Lock as far as Tickethouse Lock, to clear the high walled section of the Strine alongside the Town Bridge cross-over bridge and to make a small start on the west side offside.

Hopefully this year’s experience will be repeated next year and the volunteers will be able to fairly quickly remove reduced amounts of Himalayan Balsam from areas covered previously and then move on to make a serious start on the western sections.

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

Following on from Mr Silvester’s comments in Autumn Inbox, I suggest that the Netherton Branch was not even the last canal on the BCN. The second part of the Cannock Extension was not completed until 1863 and the feeder widening at Titford was even later. The long basin at Norton Springs may be considered as the last ‘branch’ to be made.

As to elsewhere in the country, I would put the New Junction Canal in Yorkshire as later than the Slough Arm.

Then there are the canal diversions, which came later; these include works to accommodate new railway and road works. But more recently, with canal restoration, new sections of waterway have been and will continue to be built. These include, in recent times, the Droitwich and Forth & Clyde canals.

Don’t Miss the Slough Arm!

The otherwise interesting article about the Southern Grand Union Canal (Autumn Waterways) included a negative piece about the Slough Arm that seemed designed to put boaters off from using this section of canal. In the past our local IWA Branch (Middlesex) expressed strong disappointment to the Canal & River Trust at the postponement of plans to dredge the Slough Arm. We were always concerned that falling use of the Arm would gradually lead to its demise. Eventually in 2014 CRT reportedly spent over £700,000 in dredging the Arm. It therefore seems odd for the IWA Waterways magazine to then include a rather disparaging description of the canal. Despite its industrial past, the Slough Arm is rural in character and I would urge any boater passing Cowley Peachey Junction to take a short and enjoyable detour to the basin and back.

Ray Gill,
Middlesex Branch Planning & Navigation Officer

How Long to Build a Footbridge?

I couldn’t help raising a smile after reading the news item in the autumn issue of Waterways regarding the provision of a footbridge over the Thames between Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf, with the possible completion date being in five years time.

When you consider that the Midland Railway, in not much more than the same timescale, built the Settle to Carlisle railway line, a length of 73 miles, it puts into perspective just what stupendous feats of engineering the Victorians achieved. The works included the magnificent Ribblehead Viaduct, plus 19 others, some of which are equally impressive, a host of sundry bridges, and 14 tunnels driven through some of the most inhospitable terrain to the found anywhere in Britain.

Construction of the Settle-Carlisle railway began in 1869 and the line was opened throughout in 1876. Fast forward 139 years to 2015 and it takes five years to provide one footbridge.

Today’s planners and engineers pale into insignificance by comparison.

David Lee,
Whitby

Change of Editor

After eight thoroughly enjoyable years, this is my final issue as editor of Waterways. Retirement beckons, and henceforth the magazine will be in the capable hands of Sarah Henshaw, currently assistant editor on Waterways World, and author of The Bookshop That Floated Away, the story of her tour of the waterway network. I have no doubt that under her editorship Waterways will continue to improve and develop.

I am indebted to everyone at IWA Head Office for their unfailing assistance with the production of Waterways, especially Neil Edwards, Jenny Black, Gemma Bolton, Tracy Higgin and Alison Smedley, along with national chairman Les Etheridge. You all combined to make my life easier and to enhance the quality of the magazine.

Equally, my thanks go to IWA members for your enthusiasm and valued editorial contributions; not least for pointing out the error of our ways when we got something wrong!

As I am moving to the south coast, from now on my boating will be of the saltwater variety. But I shall be keeping a close eye on developments on the inland waterways, and wish IWA every success as it continues its vital work of safeguarding the future of this priceless national asset.

Keith Goss

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Keith Goss

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