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Spring 2014
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TEN GOOD REASONS
To be an IWA member
Your support is vital in helping IWA to:

1. Campaign for properly funded waterways
2. Provide a voice for you
3. Help improve your local waterways
4. Defend the waterways from unwelcome development
5. Give practical financial and political support for waterways restoration
6. Provide expert advice for waterway managers and restoration groups
7. Organise restoration holidays for young people
8. Provide over 5,000 days of volunteer labour each year
9. Arrange affordable insurance for waterway organisations
10. Enable greater appreciation of the waterways
Looking back on 2013 we can be proud of over 10,000 IWA volunteer days spent on the inland waterways, covering many different aspects of our work. That’s over 10,000 days actually spent doing physical work to improve, develop and maintain the waterways for the benefit of boaters and everyone else who enjoys the country’s canals and river navigations. And that’s in addition to all the work from our paid employees on the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation, and takes no account of the tens of thousands of days and hours spent by hundreds of people at national and local level, lobbying, campaigning, fund-raising, researching and organising improvements to the waterways. Even at the most conservative of estimates, that’s a very large amount of benefit for the waterways. IWA is truly an active, ‘doing’ organisation that makes a real difference.

Branch work parties have been increasing significantly over the last couple of years. In 2011 there were 22 work parties, in 2012 there were 53 and in 2013 this had grown to 167. This is a great achievement, and all those involved can be very proud of their efforts. However, we can clearly still do much more, so let’s continue the growth in 2014. Thank you everybody who has participated.

IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) has run Canal Camps all over the country. In recent times funding for restoration schemes has become much more difficult to obtain than the ‘golden years’ around the millennium. The support that WRG is able to provide across the country helps to keep restoration dreams alive through highly professional practical support so that schemes can continue to progress. I see this as one of the most important areas that IWA funds from its charitable income and I really cannot praise the work WRG does highly enough. Well done all you WRGies. With plans for 2014 including 25 Canal Camps, two clean up weekends and a Big Dig, WRG will again be very busy in 2014 (see page 38).

Volunteering within IWA also includes essential work being done by branch, region and national committees. Whilst it may be less obvious and perhaps seem less glamorous than some of the physical ‘on the waterside’ work described above, it is equally important, and is the solid base on which the Association’s practical achievements and campaigning reputation rests.

The end of 2013 has seen high winds and much rainfall. In early December the east coast of England faced a serious flooding risk and the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation was at threat of major flood damage. Our staff worked throughout the night with local police, fire brigade, Maldon District Council and the Environment Agency as large parts of Heybridge at the eastern end of the Navigation were evacuated. I would like to thank them on behalf of all IWA members for their dedication and commitment.

Our work on HS2 continues, particularly the important engineering study commissioned for Fradley. It is too early to say what the outcome of this work will be but I am encouraged by what we have heard so far and remain hopeful that we will see a better outcome than the currently proposed four crossings. IWA is committed to keeping the pressure on and ensuring that we do our utmost to protect the inland waterways.

We can all look forward to a productive and enjoyable 2014 and resolve to do our bit to ensure the future of the inland waterways network that we are so lucky to possess. The more volunteers IWA has, the more we can achieve; so if you can help in anyway please feel free to contact me (either at les.etheridge@waterways.org.uk or through Head Office) giving an indication of what you would like to be involved in and we will sort it.

Les Etheridge
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IWA Trustees – time for change?

At their December meeting trustees agreed to recommend some significant revisions to the procedure for the election of trustees. This includes the resolution of some existing procedures that have proven to be ambiguous, in time for the 2014 elections. However, the main impact will be to limit trustees term of office to a maximum of 12 years within any 15 year period.

The future success of IWA as a campaigning body depends on its ability to evolve and develop to meet changing times and circumstances. With this in mind, IWA is acutely aware of the need to involve different people at trustee level, to inject fresh ideas and skills into the Association. An influx of younger people is also deemed to be highly desirable. It is believed that both these aims will be furthered by the adoption of the changes outlined above.

There is also a need to improve clarity in the rules in where they have proved to be ambiguous before the next elections are held.

Company law, allied to IWA’s existing Articles of Association, requires that the resolution to make the changes at an Extraordinary General Meeting needs to be a Special Resolution gaining a 75% majority (of those who vote). The resolution of these issues needs to be effected at a time when no trustee elections are being held and thus an EGM will be held in April (rather than wait until the next AGM in September) with the sole agenda item to make changes to IWA’s Articles of Association.

Consequent to the above, members are strongly urged to carefully consider the issues outlined on these pages and to vote on the proposed changes to IWA’s Articles of Association. Members may either complete the Proxy form on the reverse side of the address sheet accompanying this issue of Waterways, or cast their vote by printing off and/or submitting from/via the IWA website.

AGENDA

1. To receive, and approve the minutes of the fifty-fourth Annual General Meeting held on 28th September 2013.

2. To consider a Special Resolution from the trustees of the Association to amend the following Articles of Association.

   The introductory paragraph to read:

   Insert a new definition:
   Region Chairman The chairman of one of the Association’s Regions

   Article 44 to read:
   44. No candidate shall be eligible for election unless a nomination paper signed by a Member as proposer and by the candidate stating his willingness if elected to be a Trustee along with a statement detailing such information about the candidate, as the Board of Trustees may from time to time determine, shall have been received by the Secretary not less than 85 clear days prior to the meeting. No person shall be eligible for election if at the date of the Annual General Meeting at which it is proposed he be elected he (i) is an employee of the Association; or (ii) has been an employee of the Association at any time in the preceding 12 months, or (iii) has served as a Trustee, or previously been elected to serve as a Trustee, for a total period of 12 or more years in the preceding 15 years. A ‘nomination paper signed by a Member as proposer and by the candidate’ shall include such paper sent by e-mail. No member shall be elected both a Directly Elected Trustee and a Region Chairman at the same time, and if appointed a Region Chairman a Directly Elected Trustee shall cease to be such.
Article 49 to read:
49. Properly completed ballot papers received at Head Office or such other place as may be determined by the Board of Trustees not later than ninety-six hours before the time fixed for the General Meeting at which the result is to be declared shall alone be taken into account. In the event of a ballot failing to determine the number of candidates because of an equality of votes, the candidate or candidates to be elected from those having an equal number of votes shall be chosen by lot. If a candidate stands as both as a Region Chairman and a Directly Elected Trustee at the same time, then the appointment as a Region Chairman takes precedence and the candidate is then excluded from the result of any Ballot for Directly Elected Trustees held at the same time.

Article 50 to read:
50. The Board of Trustees shall be composed of:
(a) not less than five nor more than twelve Members of the Association elected pursuant to Articles 42 to 49 hereof; and
(b) The Chairman of each Region of the Association as defined in the Association’s byelaws from time to time together with the Association’s Treasurer, subject to the provisions of Article 64.

The number of the Directly Elected Trustees, (plus the Association’s Treasurer if appointed ex-officio and not elected) together with any vacancies for Directly Elected Trustees, shall always exceed the number of Region Chairmen (including any vacancy for a Region Chairman) by not less than one.

Article 53 to read:
53. The appointment of an Elected Trustee shall take effect and the term of office of an Elected Trustee shall commence at the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting following the ballot or at which the appointment takes place, and the appointment shall cease and the term of office shall conclude at the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting at which he is due to retire, unless otherwise stipulated in these Articles.

Article 63 to read:
64. The Board of Trustees may from time to time appoint a Treasurer or Honorary Treasurer for such time as the Trustees think fit, determine his powers and duties, fix his salary if any, and at their discretion remove or suspend him from office. The Treasurer or Honorary Treasurer if not a Trustee and if not in receipt of remuneration shall be an Ex-officio Trustee. No person shall be eligible to be Treasurer if he has served as a Trustee, or previously been elected to serve as a Trustee, for a total period of 12 or more years in the preceding 15 years.

Article 70 to read:
70. At the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting to be held in every year, such Elected Trustees for the time being who shall have held office since their election at the Annual General Meeting held three years previously shall retire from office together with any Trustees co-opted by the Board of Trustees since the preceding Annual General Meeting. A retiring Trustee shall be eligible for re-election if proposed in accordance with Articles 42 to 49 and has not served as a Trustee, or previously been elected to serve as a Trustee, for a total period of 12 or more years in the preceding 15 years.

Article 71 to read:
71. The Association shall give notice to all Members at least 120 days before the proposed date for the next Annual General Meeting of the Association of such meeting. The notice shall state the date on which the next Annual General Meeting of the Association shall be held and the notice shall state that nominations for the Board of Trustees shall be receieved at least eighty-five days before that date.

All other Articles to remain unchanged.

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

NOTES TO THE AGENDA

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

Minutes of the 2013 AGM: Copies of the minutes of the 2013 Annual General Meeting are available on request from Head Office (Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA – Tel: 01494 783453 – e-mail: iwa@waterways.org.uk) and on the Association’s web site at www.waterways.org.uk/information/minutes_of_meetings/minutes_of_meetings

Proxies: Any person being a member of the Association is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote on his behalf at the Extraordinary General Meeting. A proxy need not be a member of the Association. A form for nominating a proxy is included as an insert with the February 2014 edition of Waterways magazine or may be obtained from Head Office, as above, to which they should be returned, either by post or by e-mail, by 2.00pm on Thursday 10th April 2014, in order to be valid.

Special Resolution: In accordance with Company Law, a Special Resolution requires a 75% majority of those voting, either in person or by proxy, in order to be approved. The resolution is by order of the Trustees of the Association and is intended to (a) bring clarity to certain procedural issues regarding the election or appointment of trustees, and (b) limit the term of trustees to a maximum period of service of four consecutive terms of three years without a break of at least three years. The resolution is to be decided on a single vote; either all the proposed changes to the Articles will be approved, or they will be rejected. It is not permissible to amend the resolution at the meeting.
The storms and flooding that hit the UK over the Christmas and New Year holidays have had a significant impact on some waterways, particularly in the South East. Waterways affected include the Wey & GodalmingNavigations (Surrey), Basingstoke Canal (Surrey and Hampshire), River Medway (Kent), the Thames and even IWA’s own Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation. Many river navigations further north have also been impassable at times, including the Severn, Nene, Great Ouse, Aire & Calder, Trent, Calder & Hebble and Yorkshire Ouse.

The Environment Agency issued Strong Stream Advice warnings along the whole Thames between Cricklade and Teddington for much of the time. A Strong Stream Advice warning is issued to advise users of all boats not to navigate because the strong flows make it difficult and dangerous.

There have been fallen trees blocking rivers, canals and towpaths around the network. For example, 45 fallen trees fell along the Basingstoke Canal over the Christmas holidays and the Canal Authority has held water levels low to try to manage the water as safely as possible.

Probably worst hit has been the River Wey, where boats were sunk and the towpath was closed in many areas including Guildford where there is some concern the whole bank and towpath could collapse into this deep section of the river.

IWA’s Essex Waterways Ltd, which manages the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation, has been working hard to keep the navigation and towpath open and safe, by clearing fallen trees, removing debris from the river and keeping property and access secure. Earlier in December, the flood tide saw the Navigation Manager and Heybridge Caretakers evacuating residential boats and visitors at Heybridge Basin overnight as part of a major evacuation around the Heybridge area.

Environment Agency Restructuring

The Environment Agency is to restructure its operation from a three tier business (National, Region and Area) to a two tier business (National and Area), a course of action resulting from its reduced Grant in Aid from Government. Consequently, the Agency has been looking at other ways to raise income for funding maintenance work on the Thames.

Recent improvements to licence enforcement have brought some additional income, but the Agency recognises that more could be done. One aspect is the status of boats within marinas alongside the river, where the recent Transport & Works Order clarified the requirement for a licence.

The Agency is checking that licences are in place for all accommodation structures. Any construction in or over the Thames is described as an ‘accommodation’, for which an annual fee is usually payable to the Agency from the owner. Investigations are underway to identify all non-paying ‘accommodations’, but progress to identify them has been slow.

New facilities along the river, such as lock-side tea houses, are being looked at as another means of income.
IWA National Award Nominations

IWA is looking for nominations for its annual National Awards. Nominations are invited from members, branches and regions and should be emailed to awards@waterways.org.uk by 31st March. Nominations should state which award is appropriate and how the nominee’s contribution relates to the award criteria. The names and contact details of the nominator and nominee should also be provided.

The award categories are as follows:

**CYRIL STYRING TROPHY** – for an IWA member who has, in the opinion of trustees, made an outstanding contribution to further the Association’s campaign. This is the Association’s premier award.

**JOHN HEAP SALVER** – for an IWA member who, in the opinion of the trustees, has made an outstanding contribution to raising funds for the Association.

**RICHARD BIRD MEDAL** – for members of the Association whose efforts and support are considered to have brought significant benefit to the Association over a sustained period.

**CHRISTOPHER POWER PRIZE** – for a person, society or trust who has made the most significant contribution to the restoration of an inland waterway.

**VIVIAN BULKELEY-JOHNSON SALT** – for the person or organisation who, in the opinion of trustees, upon a recommendation from IWA’s Inland Waterways Freight Group, has made an outstanding contribution to the furtherance of commercial waterways transport in the United Kingdom.

Award nominations will be considered by an Awards Panel nominated by trustees, and recommendations made to trustees for final approval.

Private boat licences on Canal & River Trust waters are to rise by 2.8% from April 2014, in keeping with a promise to keep them in line with inflation until 2015. The rise is comparable with changes announced by the Broads Authority, but less than the 4.8% announced by the Environment Agency for the Thames and other EA waters.

However, CRT has backed down on proposals to radically alter the licence structure for boating businesses, after widespread complaints when the changes were first suggested in the autumn. Holiday hire boat licences will now be limited to the same percentage increases as private boats.

Proposed skippered passenger boat licence changes will be phased in over a number of years and the increases for day hire boat licences will be set at a rate just above that for a private boat.

Originally, CRT proposed charging boats based on the number of seats or berths, instead of length as at present. This would have made many day boats and skippered boats, especially, far more expensive to hire. Voluntary societies had protested that this would price them out of business, especially because many such boats were simply fundraisers for the societies and run on shoestring budgets, operated entirely by volunteers and with few passengers.

CRT said it would delay the new community boat scheme for a year while there was more consultation, and in the interim raise rates by the same 2.8%. In the meantime, the 75% ‘without locks’ and the 25% ‘disconnected waterway discount’ will both be phased out in yearly steps by 2018.

Meanwhile, IWA, which had called upon CRT to reconsider its business boat licensing fees, will continue to press for the disconnected waterway discount for waterways that are still under restoration, such as the Montgomery and Cotswold canals.
HS2 Update

A
fter the flurry of news and information on HS2 issued late in November, IWA subsequently had the chance to sort out the critical pieces and begin work on them.

The Hybrid Bill itself proposes to grant very wide powers to the Secretary of State for Transport to construct Phase 1. These include powers to obtain land and rights over land, gain planning permission, move and place apparatus, stop up and divert roads and footpaths, close temporarily or permanently navigations and many others for the purpose of constructing Phase 1. In compensation for the deregulation of normal controls on these issues, the bill does provide constraints on the unreasonable use of these powers. It is also clear that, provided it goes ahead in this broad form, the Secretary of State will certainly be able to get moving with the scheme.

Schedules to the Bill include protections for and involvement by specific statutory bodies, amongst which, in Schedule 31 Part 4 paragraphs 40-50, is Canal & River Trust. Here the task of CRT in operating and maintaining its waterways is recognised, and the schedule states that this must be recognised. Prior notice of works affecting their waterways must be provided, and approval sought – however that approval may not be unreasonably withheld. The part begins by stating that ‘unless otherwise agreed between CRT and the Secretary of State in writing...’, covering the possibility that CRT will agree an undertaking with the Secretary of State to more specifically protect its waterways. Such an undertaking will be a key part of protection against activity by contractors when designing and constructing HS2 if the bill is enacted. It will also ensure that any changes in route that occur as the bill goes through Parliament still meet minimum waterway requirements. IWA will be looking to, and if appropriate working with, CRT to ensure it has a comprehensive undertaking in place, and where necessary similar undertakings are in place for other waterways.

The bill is accompanied by a final Environmental Statement. A consultation has taken place on this, closing on 24th January 2014. This statement consists of most of the 50,000 pages making up the bill which was mentioned in the press. IWA has analysed this document, to see what changes have been made in response to our (and others) responses to the July draft.

In all the activity over the Hybrid bill for the Phase 1 route, London to Birmingham, it’s easy to forget the consultation that is also running on the two phase 2 routes, from Lichfield to Manchester, and Curdworth to Leeds. IWA is already working with canal societies, CRT and others in identifying waterway issues with phase 2, and potential solutions. The problems have been highlighted in our draft consultation response, which was available on the website until 13th December. This document has now been withdrawn and input we have received will be incorporated to ensure HS2 has a complete picture of IWA’s concerns. Wherever possible these will be aligned with other responses to present a single ‘waterways’ response, along with any proposals to address these concerns which HS2 can take forward.

As always, IWA is grateful to those who have taken the time and effort to get in touch on these issues. Thanks are also due to the many volunteers who are working their way through the legislation to ensure IWA makes the best possible response to the various documents, so as to get the best deal for waterways everywhere.

Busy barges on the Thames

T
wo barges likely to be known to some IWA members are now busily employed on the Thames. Some will certainly remember the 1964 Dutch built Transient brought to Gloucester from the continent by Graham Thompson for employment on the Severn sand and gravel movement. At 47m and 550dwt, Transient was much larger than the 180dwt barges already employed and intended to provide economies of scale and link with a concrete batching plant south of Gloucester. This came to nothing and after a lengthy lay up in Gloucester Transient was in 2008 acquired by the Green Barge Company for use on the Thames and especially for Olympic Park traffic. Green Barge ceased trading in 2011 and Green Transient was bought by S. Walsh & Sons (IWA 2013 Vivian Bulkeley-Johnson award winner) and as SWS Thurrock is very busy on the Thames in Crossrail and aggregates movement.

Built as the Dolfijn in Belgium in 1971 for inland and coastal use, the 55m vessel had summer and winter load lines (inland 730dwt, summer seagoing 530dwt) and after a number of name changes was bought in 2003 by Heather Chaplin, an Inland Waterway Freight Group member, and operated as Gemini in the Manchester Ship Canal grain trade. In 2008 Gemini was acquired by Thames Shipping Ltd/ Euromix Concrete and became Polla Rose moving aggregates from Fingringhoe to Dock Entrance Wharf and Battersea. With two crews working one week on/ one week off, it is 24/7 for the ship.
Host of major festivals and events are scheduled to take place in May and June. These include: St Richards Festival 2nd-5th May, Droitwich; IWA Canalway Cavalcade 3rd-5th May, Little Venice; Rickmansworth Festival 17th-18th May; Tiffin Pumphouse Boat Rally 17th-18th May; IWA National Trailboat Festival, Grand Western Canal 24th May-26th May (see page 23); Braunston Boat Gathering 28th-29th June.

The major trade show of the year is the Crick Boat Show, organised by Waterways World. It takes place on the Leicester Section of the Grand Union Canal over the weekend of 24th-26th May.

The IWA Marquee
IWA will have a much bigger presence at the Crick Boat Show in 2014. In addition to the usual “sales stand” in the Kingfisher Marquee, the Association is working with the organisers to establish a new “Campaigning Marquee”. This will provide space for IWA to mount a display of campaigning achievements and objectives, and provide an opportunity for smaller canal societies and IWA branches to have a presence at the show.

The Association is pleased to be able to work with the organisers to help develop the show to fully represent and champion the work that the IWA and waterway societies do in promoting the use and restoration of the waterway network. The Marquee will also host a VIP lounge where teas, coffees and light refreshments can be taken in a peaceful setting. It is expected that IWA members will have free access to this lounge on production of proof of membership.

For further details visit IWA’s website and follow the links to Events. A full preview of shows and festivals will be published in the summer issue of Waterways.

WW Waterways Awards

Waterways World and the Canal & River Trust have announced the launch of the inaugural Annual Waterways Awards, recognising and promoting excellence in the inland boating industry and the waterways community.

Commenting on the launch of the Awards scheme, Peter Johns, Publisher of Waterways World said: “Many industries have well-established annual award schemes and, whilst some schemes have existed covering small parts of the inland waterways sector, there has been no comprehensive annual awards. We are delighted to launch this, the first such scheme for the inland waterways and look forward to the opportunities it offers to recognise the excellent standards of workmanship and service that can be found on our canals and rivers.”

The first Annual Awards will be presented at an awards ceremony and dinner in April 2014. The award categories will be in two broad groups of ‘industry’ and ‘waterways’, and are as follows:

INDUSTRY AWARDS
- Boatbuilder of the Year (Small)
- Boatbuilder of the Year (Large – must build five boats per year and have built at least 20 boats in the previous six years)
- Holiday Hire Firm of the Year
- Marina/Moorings of the Year
- Boatyard Services/Boat Services of the Year
- Chandlery of the Year

WATERWAYS AWARDS
- Waterways World Readers’ Award
- Waterway Society of the Year
- Restoration Project of the Year
- Community Project of the Year (integration of waterways with the wider community)
- Heritage Award (for greatest contribution to waterways history/heritage)

Each category will have a winner plus up to two highly commended awards subject to suitable standards being reached.

Nominations are encouraged from relevant businesses and organisations, and the widest number of submissions will be sought. The Awards are open to all organisations operating on non-tidal, inland waterways within England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Organisations are asked to submit their own nominations but third parties are also encouraged to nominate deserving cases.

Nomination forms are available from the Awards website and can also be obtained by emailing admin@wwonline.co.uk or calling Sue Steffox on 01283 742960. The Awards judging panel will comprise: Mark Langley, WW Technical Editor; Bobby Cowling, WW Editor; Les Etheridge, IWA national chairman; David Fuller, independent marine surveyor; Sarah Dhanda, Senior Federation Director BMF.

A sixth ‘panel member’ will be provided by means of a public vote. A shortlist of candidates in each category will be announced on the Awards website and the public will be encouraged to vote in each category from among the nominees. The results of that voting process will form the sixth panel member.
The London Assembly has published a new report, *Mooring on London’s Waterways*, recommending that any local problems, including noise, pollution and overcrowding, should have local solutions worked out, rather than relying on the imposition of national rules.

However, it also has some more strategic recommendations, including a suggestion that planning authorities should consider if new waterside developments should have moorings.

There is also a recommendation that the issues of canal boating, mooring and living afloat are added to the London Plan, the official development strategy for the city. Surprisingly, the London Plan – which has been in operation since 2004 and has been revised twice – has never included this.

Meanwhile, Canal & River Trust says it will try new measures to defuse increasing tensions between local residents and the growing number of liveaboard boaters on the London’s Regent’s Canal. Some visitor moorings are likely to become ‘Quiet Zones’, limiting engine and generator noise, and encouraging the burning of smokeless fuels. CRT is looking to ban two-abreast moorings in winter months, and to recruit ‘caretaker boaters’ who will advise other boaters, report local incidents, and liaise with residents.

CRT says it may recruit two part-time mooring rangers to raise awareness among boaters of the new rules, and an environmental health worker to provide boaters with general environmental advice.

New towpath signs would reinforce awareness of the new zone and mooring rules. CRT’s enforcement team will also increase its patrols, with prompt warning letters when boaters are seen over-staying or behaving in an anti-social manner.

Elizabeth Jane Howard

Elizabeth Jane Howard, the novelist who died on 2nd January aged 90, was lesser known in public life for her role in the inland waterways, but this was significant during IWA’s formative years.

Elizabeth Jane Howard was the Association’s first employee, commencing duties shortly after the Association was formed in 1946, working in a secretarial role to Robert Aickman, who effectively ran the Association in its early years (see page 14). Initially this was for two mornings a week at a nominal sum, but soon extended to ‘several days’ a week for the grand sum of £2 and 10 shillings.

Elizabeth Jane Howard (she was generally known just as ‘Jane’ within early IWA circles) was introduced to Aickman through Peter Scott. Scott, son of the Antarctic explorer, and later to become the famous naturalist, was a close friend of Aickman, and Peter Scott had met Jane when they were both at drama school during the war, and they swiftly married – Jane aged just 19 and Scott 16 years her senior. Their marriage lasted only three years, until Jane walked out on Scott and their baby daughter.

In the Association’s early years, IWA’s office was Robert Aickman’s home, and Jane soon became a permanent fixture there. Her romantic involvement with Aickman became a cause of tension within the Association, but Scott and Aickman remained on good terms. Aickman’s wife, Ray, accepted the situation as her marriage to Aickman was more a business relationship.

Aickman and Jane produced the Association’s early Bulletins. In 1948, Jane accompanied Aickman on his six-week tour of the northern waterways, on the boat *Ailsa Craig*, including the famous passage of Standedge Tunnel.

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One hundred years after his birth, Robert Aickman remains an iconic figure within IWA.

David Bolton looks back at his strange success

Robert Aickman was the author of many ghostly, strange-tales - and remains internationally renowned for them. Yet, one of the strangest stories is the fact that this man, who devoted nearly 20 years of his life to working for The Inland Waterways Association, had not travelled on a canal boat until after he had taken the initiative to form a campaigning body.

Aickman, the centenary of whose birth is celebrated this year, was an inner city dweller. He lived with his wife, Ray, in Bloomsbury, a quarter of London known for its literary and artistic connections, and his life was circumscribed by a passion for all things cultural, especially theatre and ballet.

It was on one of his rare visits outside the metropolis to Stratford upon Avon to see productions by the then Shakespeare Memorial Theatre company that he decided to take a walk, between plays, along the old canal. He was horrified to find that it was no more than a stagnant, weedy, stinking ditch with no boats in sight and virtually unnavigable.

At around the same time, Aickman had read Narrow Boat, the account by L.T.C. Rolt of his life with his wife, Angela, on the converted boat, Cressy, that ended with an emotional appeal for the revival of the sadly declining waterways. Aickman had responded, in his capacity as a literary agent, by suggesting a meeting to discuss the possibility of founding a body to campaign for the revival of the canals.

Following Tom Rolt’s enthusiastic reply, Robert and Ray Aickman visited Cressy moored at Tredlebigg in August 1945 and so Aickman had his first, thrilling experience of stepping on board a canal boat. It was to change fundamentally the course of his life; his ambition to become a full-time writer was to take second place to the waterways for the next two decades.

About six months later on 15th February 1946, the inaugural meeting was held in the Aickmans’ two-floor apartment at 11 Gower Street of The Inland Waterways Association. Robert was elected chairman and Tom, Hon Secretary. Together, they made a strong combination with Aickman’s newly discovered passion for the cause and his range of London connections, and Rolt’s deep knowledge of the canals.

Moreover, the two couples formed a close friendship which flourished over the initial 24 months or so; the Rolts enjoying visits to London to dine in restaurants and see plays, the Aickmans having their first experience of canal boating on Cressy. They corresponded frequently and their letters were brimming with lively remarks such as Angela’s suggestion that Tom’s “outfit of corduroy and one gold ear-ring might cause a stir”, even at a meeting of the Society of Individualists.

The concept of a campaigning body such as IWA with the aim of changing public perception and opinion was almost unknown in the immediate post-war era and the founder members had to search for ways to develop its strategy in the early years. An immediate need was to grow the membership as fast as possible so that it could be seen to speak on behalf of a large and representative body of people.

Aickman also believed profoundly in raising the Association’s profile and establishing its credibility by attracting well-known and titled people to become involved: so he was delighted when Sir Alan Herbert (a popular MP at the time) agreed to become president, and the Earl of Portsmouth and Algernon Newton, RA, vice presidents.

Another “celebrity” (as we would describe him today) who was to have a far-reaching influence on Aickman himself and the Association’s development was Peter Scott, son of the Antarctic explorer, a painter of hugely popular pictures and founder of the nascent Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust. Peter’s
estranged and beautiful young wife was Elizabeth Jane Howard, then a struggling wish-to-be novelist, who gladly accepted the part-time job of being IWA’s secretary at their Gower Street office.

“The Association had no money in those days; most people regarded the whole enterprise as a non-starter – a few cranks who were only going to make a fuss about something which wasn’t going to lead to anything,” she recalled later. “The combination of Tom and Robert, while they were getting on…was absolutely unbeatable because they were both highly coherent, filled with energy. Robert had the most amazing energy: he could work nearly all day and most of the night.”

Ironically, Jane was to be the catalyst a year later that led to the first serious rupture between the two leaders. Rather unwisely, blinded by her attractions, Robert took Jane – who had little experience of boating – on a cruise up the Thames to Lechlade, leaving Ray behind to look after the office.

On learning of this arrangement, Rolt complained bitterly to Aickman that he felt that he had been misled about Jane’s position. Although Robert tried to smooth over the situation by explaining that he “could hardly refuse to help her with the project,” Rolt still insisted, “I do not think this was right and, as I said before, it damages the feeling of mutual confidence without which a concern like the IWA cannot carry on, at least not happily.”

This was not the only rupture to occur between the two leaders. Aickman was obsessively committed to seizing every chance to promote and publicise the Association, regardless of the impact on individuals, whereas Rolt was more deeply immersed in the actual process of living and working on boats. Consequently Tom was upset when Robert turned his campaigning cruise along the north Stratford Canal into a “photo opportunity” for the media.

While they were still working together, however, they were united in the aim of developing the commercial use of the canals and improving the life of the working boater – originally, there was little or no thought of using the waterways for purely leisure use. Aickman, in particular, was bitterly opposed to the increasing impact of road transport leading to the construction of motorways across the country.

Aickman’s leadership of IWA’s campaign over those vital 20 years has saved the British waterways network almost in its entirety”
FINAL RIFT IN THE RELATIONSHIP

The breakup in their relationship leading to the final rift over the first National Rally at Market Harborough in 1950 has been well documented elsewhere. It was unquestionably a tragic end to a most promising relationship and a setback for a time to the growth of IWA. The important fact, however, is that Tom actually resigned from his post as Hon Secretary about a year earlier on the completely understandable grounds that the task was taking up too much time when he was struggling to establish himself as a writer – and, in particular, to raise sufficient income from his writing to sustain his way of life. Robert – who tended to be paranoid about anyone who seemed to be disagreeing with him – made a mistake in persuading Tom to stay on against his own wishes.

After a year in which the Association was torn apart with internecine rows over policy, Robert Aickman himself resigned as chairman in October 1951 and was only persuaded to return a few months later in the new role of “founder and vice president”. It was understood that he would no longer be responsible for the executive administration of the organisation and would be free to concentrate on directing the campaign.

The remaining 13 years in which Robert carried out this role were very different in character and mood from the initial formative years. As a start, the membership had grown and a number of leaders had emerged. There were some who found Aickman difficult to work with and others who blamed him for the internal conflicts, though he enjoyed support from a majority, including people such as Teddy Edwards, Vivian Bulkeley-Johnson, Michael Macfarlane, and Martin and Crick Grundy.

Moreover, the main action moved from local issues to the national stage. In particular, the Houses of Parliament and Whitehall. Here, Aickman’s personal skills were directed to achieve immense impact on behalf of the Association. He was undoubtedly ahead of his time in being one of the first and most successful lobbyists of political opinion – a role that is today widely and officially recognised in Westminster.

Although it was still imperative for IWA to campaign at a local level over the future of such canals as the Stourbridge, the Ashton and Peak Forest, and the Kennet & Avon, this was largely looked after by the regional branches that by then were being formed. The main debate over the future of Britain’s waterways became a national issue when the British Transport Commission set up a theoretically independent Board of Survey to report on future policy for the waterways.

When its report was published in April 1955, the outcome confirmed what had long been feared: that the British waterways were to be carved up into three categories. Only a small portion of 336 miles, mainly composed of navigable rivers and ship canals, were classified as “waterways to be developed,” whereas the remaining 1,765 miles, comprising the entire cross-country network, were given little or no future.

Confronted with such a shattering proposal, it was timely that Aickman had started already to cultivate a lobby of MPs. He had circulated all MPs with IWA’s leaflet entitled Our Case, proposing the formation of an Inland Waterways Conservancy. While Robert Aickman was the influential player for IWA on the national stage, he remained also actively involved in local issues. As a fluent and persuasive orator, he was often the keynote speaker at public rallies in Manchester, Oxford, Coventry, Derby and other places, up and down the country, held to fight threats to local waterways.

PARLIAMENTARY STRUGGLE

This pronouncement proved to be rather ahead of its time. There was still a long struggle in Parliament and the corridors of Whitehall until the target was achieved of retaining most canals and the setting up of a specifically waterways authority under the 1968 Transport Act. British Waterways Board, however, still fell a long way short of Aickman’s vision of an Inland Waterways Conservancy, a body run entirely by and for waterways enthusiasts.

While Robert Aickman was the influential player for IWA on the national stage, he Board of Survey Report when a newly appointed Minister of Transport announced the setting up of another enquiry “on a broader basis”, the Bowes Committee. A victory was also won by individual MPs for the threatened closure of the Kennet & Avon Canal to be suspended for a period of five years, allowing time for alternative schemes to be considered.

The Bowes Committee was seen to represent a watershed, a change in attitude of the authorities towards the waterways, making it unlikely that any sizeable abandonment would take place. Aickman wrote in the 50th edition of the IWA Bulletin on the IWA’s 10th anniversary: “from the start it has been a race against time, and a continuous battle... All things considered, the return of our efforts has been remarkable... there is no doubt that we have effected a transformation in public opinion.”
Every year, he also made a practice of going on exploratory cruises of different waterways to acquire first-hand experience of local conditions and issues. After the original pioneering cruise of the semi-derelict northern canals in 1948 in the small hire boat, Alisa Craig, he joined Peter Scott on his converted narrowboat, Beatrice, on a lengthy promotional voyage to Liverpool and back. Afterwards, he joined forces with several different IWA members who had their own boats, including Kenneth McConnan on Croxley and Lord Geoffrey Percy on Canada Goose with whom he made an exceptionally daring cruise throughout the East Anglian waterways right out into the Wash.

Finally, in the late 1950s, early ‘60s, when Lionel Munk, who owned and ran the Thames-based Maid Line, was IWA chairman, Robert linked up with him on a series of annual summer cruises. Robert hired his own boat together with his then partner, Felix (Felice) Pearson, and was joined by a variety of other IWA members, following Munk’s carefully planned and detailed itineraries.

If Aickman was regarded as a fluent speaker, he was also much admired for his talents as a writer. From the earliest days of the IWA, he started up a regular Bulletin to keep members informed and for many years continued to edit it and write the majority of each issue. As the Association obtained recognition, so accordingly the Bulletin gained a wider circulation and became an influential means of communication. By the time Robert retired, he estimated that the number of words he had contributed to the Bulletin, then numbering some 70 issues, would have amounted to the equivalent of six or seven full-length novels.

He had an idiosyncratic method of writing: he stood over his secretary and dictated directly onto the typewriter. Barbara Balch, who worked for him as a part-time secretary for some years, explained that he would dictate perfect prose, with immaculate punctuation, for three hours or more, without break or pause of any kind.

A particular admirer of Aickman’s writing in the Bulletin was a John Smith who contacted him in January 1958 and was the person to have the most influence over Robert’s final years with IWA. On receiving a communication from John Smith, Aickman immediately recognised his potential importance so that he did not bother to reply to the letter — instead, he went the same day to meet him at his office in Coutts Bank. He knew Smith to be a wealthy and well-connected member of a banking family who was also the honorary assistant treasurer of the National Trust and had a reputation for taking up environmental causes.

When they met, Robert discovered that Smith already had ambitions for the National Trust’s official role in the restoration of an unused canal. The timing of this was perfect since it coincided with the threat to close the southern Stratford Canal and Smith became involved immediately with the launch of a campaign to save the canal. It was recognised that the Trust’s reputation and status could provide the means for undertaking the restoration of the canal by using volunteers – something that had never been attempted before.

As the situation evolved, it proved more difficult to arrange than originally expected – largely due to the prevarications of politicians and civil servants – though in the end the Trust did take on a short-term lease and, under the inspirational leadership of David Hutchings, the Stratford Canal was restored throughout its length. Aickman was involved in each of the delicate stages in keeping the balance between IWA, who raised most of the volunteers, the National Trust, who channelled the funding, and David Hutchings, who master-minded the operation.

After the grand reopening of the canal by HM Queen Mother in 1964 and Aickman’s retirement from official duties with IWA, Robert was still to play another key role in the restoration and reopening of the adjoining navigation, the Upper Avon, which had been derelict for 100 years. The Lower Avon had been restored under the leadership of Douglas Barwell and reopened in 1962 at which time it was known that a local landowner and boating enthusiast had offered to fund a substantial part of the cost of restoring the upper river on the basis that the work would be undertaken by David Hutchings.

The situation was complex with neither Barwell nor Hutchings keen to become involved again. It was recognised that this would not be a straightforward project since virtually the whole of the navigation structure had been lost and it would probably be necessary to obtain (an extremely difficult task) a new Act of Parliament. Once again, Robert Aickman refused to give up the ambitious plan and persisted in bringing the key people together, eventually resulting in the restoration being undertaken again by Hutchings and the reopening by HM Queen Mother in 1974.

The reopening of the Stratford Canal and the Upper Avon are two achievements for which Robert Aickman, a man of passion and vision, can be given much personal credit. His leadership of IWA’s campaign over those vital 20 years has saved the British waterways network almost in its entirety, thus avoiding the fate that befell the railways with the closure around this same time of many branch lines. Although there have been other IWA volunteers who have made important contributions over the years, Robert Aickman deserves the recognition that he was not given in his lifetime for his dedicated commitment to the waterways campaign, resulting in what is today, on the whole, a flourishing and expanding network in far better shape than it was when he took his walk along the Stratford Canal in 1945.
We look at an immensely varied collection of canal and rivers stretching from the western Kennet & Avon Navigation to the Bude Canal in Cornwall. Among them is the Grand Western Canal, venue for IWA’s National Trailboat Festival in May. So what better time could there be to take a tour...
The western Kennet & Avon probably offers more attractions per mile than any other canal in England. Indeed this route at the far south-western corner of the waterway system conveys the lucky boater, walker or cyclist on a spectacular journey through a swathe of England’s green and pleasant land.

The approach to Devizes from the east is lock-free and relaxing, along the beautiful Long Pound. The hard work starts as soon as the boater leaves Devizes Wharf with its museum, café and canal shop. Twenty-nine locks await in quick succession, including the famous run of 16 at Caen Hill. Splendid views of the Avon valley accompany you as you work through the locks, a task made considerably easier if you can share the toll with another boat crew.

Good moorings are available at Foxhangers Wharf, at the foot of the flight, offering a chance to rest and recuperate. To the south lies Salisbury Plain, clearly visible on bright days, and keen cyclists may well be tempted away from the canal to explore some of this remote upland region. More gentle exercise is available at hand in the shape of a couple of swing-bridges set amidst serene surroundings. A network of paths and quiet lanes criss-cross the canal, facilitating a number of pleasant walks. One such could take you to the Three Magpies at Sels Green.

Seend Cleeve is an immensely popular mooring spot. The premier attraction, peaceful countryside apart, is the Barge Inn. Dating back to the early 19th century, the inn stands on the site of Seend Wharf and was formerly owned by the family of the Duke of Somerset. Its claim to fame is that it was once the home of the famous Wiltshire giant, Fred Kempster, who measured an unlikely 8ft 2in.

Currently a haven of tranquillity, Seend Cleeve was once a hive of industry - literally. In the 19th century, ironstone was discovered nearby and two blast furnaces were constructed, along with two tramways to the canal and a rail line to Devizes. Mining of iron ore continued until the 1920s but little evidence remains of this activity today, aside from the grand house of the ironmaster which is visible on the ridge above the canal.

Several more swing-bridges interrupt the boater’s stately progress across this timeless, unsung landscape. To the uninitiated, Semington would appear to be nothing more than a small, pleasant village, boasting little more than its cosy local, the Somerset Arms. But this was once the site of a busy canal junction, for the Wilts & Berks Canal, opened in 1810, ran from here for 52 miles via Melksham and Swindon to the Thames at Abingdon. A narrow canal connecting wide waterways, it was never much of a commercial success, being abandoned in 1914. Much of the line has been filled in, ploughed over by farmers or infilled in urban areas, yet the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, with support from IWA, continues to slowly make its way towards full restoration. At Semington only the toll collector’s house, in private ownership, serves as a visible reminder of bygone days.

Hilperton Marina is a busy boating centre, with a hire base and all essential services. Hilperton itself is a residential suburb of Trowbridge, which lies a 20-minute walk away along the relatively busy B3106. It surprises many people to learn that Trowbridge is Wiltshire’s county town, but it attracts comparatively little attention from the majority of K&A travellers. Don’t write it off entirely, for it has an interesting little museum and shops and pubs aplenty. You could always catch a bus from near Bridge 166 if the walk doesn’t appeal.
Cruising through Bathampton.

Emerging from Cleveland House Tunnel, Bath.

Main Pic: Cruising through Bathampton.

Inset: Emerging from Cleveland House Tunnel, Bath.
WATERWAYS OF THE SOUTH WEST

Boating through Bath.

Bradford-on-Avon to Bath

The five-mile pound from Semington comes to an end at Bradford-on-Avon, where the lock lowers the canal by 10ft 6in on its continued descent to the Avon at Bath. Above the lock is the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust shop and café. It was at Bradford that construction of the canal began in 1794.

The town lies just a short stroll from Bridge 172 and generously repays exploration. Often thought of as a miniature version of Bath, its mellow stone buildings are a source of constant delight. Savour too its Saxon church, ancient tithe barn and graceful 14th century bridge complete with chapel, rather like St Ives on the Great Ouse. As you would expect, Bradford has a wealth of convivial pubs and a number of genteel tearooms. Shopping is a pleasant experience in Bradford, with numerous quirky shops and some excellent delicatessens.

Avoncliff Aqueduct is appealingly simple in its construction, a three-arched structure of Bath stone carrying the canal high above the River Avon. It forms the focal point of a small hamlet comprising a railway station, several pretty cottages, a tearoom and the Cross Guns Inn.

Here begins what many regard as the loveliest section of the entire K&A, as the canal charts a tortuous course through the heavily wooded Limpley Stoke valley. Dundas Aqueduct is still more impressive than Avoncliff, and draws admirers from far and wide. Named after Charles Dundas, the first chairman of the K&A Canal Co, it is considered to be builder John Rennie’s finest work. At the far end of the aqueduct, the Somerset Coal Canal joined the K&A; the first few hundred yards are still in water.

If you’ve not recently succumbed to an overnight stop, then tie up at Bridge 180. Walk down Ferry Lane to the east of the canal, cross the railway at the level crossing and you can visit Claverton Pumphouse, built to bring water up to the canal from the Avon below. To the west lies the American Museum, housed in Claverton Manor, telling the story of the USA’s foundation and development.

Arcing around Bathampton – notable for its pretty waterside church and charming (but reputedly haunted) George Inn – the canal heads for Bath and before long you are treated to wide-ranging views of the Georgian city, temptingly laid out before you like a lavish picnic in a sun-kissed meadow. But don’t rush the approach, which is memorable in itself. Sydney Gardens, built as a mini-resort in the late 18th century with a stylish hotel and lush bowling green, adjoins the canal which passes under a couple of cast iron footbridges and through two tunnels. The second, Cleveland House Tunnel, is some 57 yards long and above it stands Cleveland House, once the headquarters of the Kennet & Avon Canal Company and now used as offices.

And suddenly there you are, at the top of the Bath (or Widcombe) flight of seven locks, excitedly preparing to descend to the River Avon. Most seasoned boaters have their favourite lock flight, but Bath Locks are right up there with the best of them. Stunning vistas open up in all directions, especially from the aptly named Abbey View Lock, before you reach the cavernous penultimate lock. It has an impressive (or perhaps intimidating) depth of 19ft 5in, the result of two previous chambers being merged on restoration in 1976.

Once through the bottom lock, the main navigable Avon is to the left, but if it’s early enough in the day, turn right for a chance to stop below Pulteney Weir and Bridge, within sight of Bath’s majestic abbey. Curious onlookers notwithstanding, it is one of the finest places to moor in Britain.
**BRISTOL AVON**

The flowing waters of the River Avon come as something of a culture shock to those arriving from the confines of the Kennet & Avon Canal. It is a river to be treated with respect, being lively in the extreme after periods of heavy rainfall.

As soon as Bath is left behind, the countryside is glorious, soft rolling hills being the order of the day. The setting of Salthord Lock is especially attractive, where a broad curve of the river is backed by green hills which invite exploration and the gaunt 18th remains of a brass mill stand by the water.

Keynsham interrupts the rural idyll. If the name Keynsham seems familiar, it was the UK base of Radio Luxembourg in those pre-Radio 1, pre-pirate days of the 1950s and early ‘60s. It was also the home for many years of Fry’s chocolate factory, situated by the river, but production has now moved to Poland.

Beyond Hanham Lock, Bristol begins to encroach upon the river. Netham Lock may be open or closed, according to the state of the tide, beyond which you enter the prosaically named Feeder Canal for the final journey into Bristol’s magnificent Floating Harbour.

The river beyond Bristol is tidal; the non-tidal Floating Harbour is so called because ships could float here at all states of the tide. Created by William Jessop in the 19th century to make it easier for vessels to load and unload their cargoes, it is now a marvellous leisure amenity and focal point of the city, home to, among other historic vessels, SS Great Britain.

(A full account of the Bristol Avon was published in the Winter 2012 issue of *Waterways*.)

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**BRIDGWATER & TAUNTON CANAL**

The Bridgewater & Taunton Canal was envisaged as part of a grandiose trading route between the Bristol and English Channels. Of course, the scheme never came to fruition and today the B&T exists as a peaceful, isolated waterway enjoyed by the owners of a small number of residential cruisers and visiting trailboats.

The focal point of the waterway is the Maunsell Lock Canal Centre, situated halfway between Bridgewater & Taunton at the heart of the picturesque Somerset Levels. Boat trips operate from here in the summer months, there is a visitor centre and a waterside café too, ideal for watching the comings and goings on the water.

Its towpath being in good condition throughout, the canal is extremely popular with both cyclists and walkers. The latter often tackle the 14 miles in a day, with good train links between Bridgewater and Taunton facilitating such one-way walks.

A unique feature of the waterway is the Somerset Space Walk: a series of planet sculptures spaced out along the towpath in exact proportion to their orbit around the sun. This fascinating concept is one which attracts both casual visitors and school parties to the canal: astronomy brought to life in a waterside setting.

A new volunteer group, the Bridgewater & Taunton Canal Association (BATCA), was recently formed to support the canal. The Association is appealing for like-minded people to volunteer on the waterway, with a number of roles available, including administrator and fundraiser. For further information contact mrmike.slade@gmail.com.

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**Bridgewater & Taunton Canal Association (BATCA)**

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GRAND WESTERN CANAL

Like the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal, the Grand Western Canal was intended to form an integral part of the Bristol-English Channel link. But it too has ended up as an isolated waterway serving purely as a leisure amenity. Entirely rural, the 11-mile canal is owned by Devon County Council and is referred to as the Grand Western Canal Country Park.

Rich in wildlife, the canal is enjoyed by nature lovers, walkers and cyclists. The latter are especially abundant, the towpath forming an essential link in the Bristol-Land’s End long distance cycle route. Angling is especially rewarding, with the canal having good stocks of bream, perch, roach and tench.

Boating is justifiably popular too, the Grand Western being utilised by trailboats, canoes and rowing boats. Arguably, however, it is best known for its traditional horse-drawn boat which has for many become the iconic image of the canal. It is operated in the summer months by Tiverton Canal Company from the wharf at Tiverton, where other attractions include a waterside café and gift shop.

Disaster struck the canal in November 2012 with a major breach of an embankment near Halberton, following a period of exceptionally heavy rainfall. However, repairs progressed well through the summer and autumn of 2013 and the embankment is now rebuilt. Work to reline the canal channel is currently being undertaken and the schedule provides for this section of canal to be refilled during February, with the towpath being reopened in March – in plenty of time for IWA’s National Trailboat Festival over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend (see right).

River Parrett

The River Parrett has a long history of navigation, being used as a transport route back in medieval times. Improvements were carried out under Acts passed in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, and for many years this was the main route to the sea from the intricate system of Somerset canals.

Today there is no link between the Bridgewater & Taunton Canal (see opposite) and the Parrett, and the river is rarely navigated, although a right of navigation exists as far as Oath Tidal Lock. Its main navigation role is to provide drainage across the Somerset Levels. Walkers can, however, enjoy this attractive river by way of the River Parrett Trail, a 50-mile walk from source to sea developed a few years back by a partnership comprising the Environment Agency, Somerset County Council and British Waterways. For more information visit www.somerset.gov.uk and follow the links.

IWA National Trailboat Festival

The 2014 IWA National Trailboat Festival is to be held at the Grand Western Canal Country Park over the late May Bank Holiday weekend, 24th-26th May.

There will be a big public festival day held at the Mid-Devon Showground on Saturday 24th May, with a range of live music, performers and entertainments, all with a birthday party theme. There will also be a number of smaller satellite events happening at locations along the canal on the other two days, including an illuminated night time parade in Tiverton and a ‘Navvies Fair’ in Sampford Peverell, featuring period costume.

The event will form the main celebration of the Canal’s bicentenary year. Construction work began in 1810 and was completed in 1814. The event will also provide an opportunity to celebrate completion of repairs to the breached embankment at Halberton (see left), and will enable the message to be spread nationally that the canal is once again fully operational.

The festival will attract dozens of colourful trailboats from all around the UK. Thousands of visitors enjoyed live music and entertainment at IWA’s 2008 National Trailboat Festival, which was also held on the Grand Western Canal, and the 2014 festival aims to be even better. This year’s event is being organised and run by Devon County Council’s Grand Western Canal Ranger Service on behalf of IWA, under the direction of an organising committee which includes local canal enthusiasts and councillors.

Applications for trailboat entries and camping pitches may be downloaded from the IWA website.
The Torrington Canal was built and financed by Lord Rolle without parliamentary authority, the engineer being James Green. In common with a number of other West Country waterways, notably the Bude Canal (see right), it was a tub-boat canal, used by these distinctive 20ft x 5ft 6in craft. It ran from the River Torridge near Weare Gifford, North Devon, following the course of the river for six miles to New Mills just beyond Torrington, and featured both an inclined plane and the splendid Beam Aqueduct, which ‘starred’ in Henry Williamson’s classic tale Tarka the Otter.

Opened in 1827, the Torrington Canal carried limestone, coal and agricultural produce and was successful for a number of years, until opposition arrived in the form of a railway from Bideford to Torrington. The canal closed in the early 1870s.

The waterway lay derelict for over a century, before local man Adrian Wills kick-started the restoration project in the late 1980s. A local canal society was formed some years later, and Waterway Recovery Group became involved in 2006, holding a summer camp at the sea lock into the Torridge. Two more such camps followed and the lock is now fully restored. A viewing platform has been built overlooking the sea lock and a replica tub boat completed.

For further information visit www.therollecanal.co.uk.

EXETER SHIP CANAL

The original Exeter Ship Canal was opened in 1566 and ran from the city of Exeter – an important trading centre since Roman times – to the estuary of the River Exe just below Countess Weir. It had three-pound locks with guillotine gates, the first in Britain. Only able to accommodate 16-ton vessels, the canal was enlarged and extended to a point opposite Topsham in the late 1600s. Some 220 years later, the Exeter Canal was extended further down the Exe estuary to Turf, a distance of 5.2 miles from Exeter.

Commercially successful in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, it began to decline with the arrival of rail transport in the 1840s. Regular shipping activity – albeit declining – continued through the 20th century until finally ceasing in the 1990s.

Today the Exeter Canal is a popular attraction for residents and visitors to Exeter, and there are boat trips in season. The towpath is well-used by cyclists and walkers, and the Turf Hotel at Turf Lock is a local institution, its virtues extolled by real ale enthusiasts, boaters and tourists alike.
BUDE CANAL
The Bude Canal was opened in 1823. A two-mile broad section, incorporating a sea lock and two further locks, accommodated boats of 40-50 tons and ran to a wharf at Helebridge. Here cargo was transhipped into tub boats which traded on the branches that served Holsworthy and Launceston. No less than six inclined planes were built, at Marhamchurch, Hobbacott Down, Vealand, Merrifield, Taverton and Werrington.

The railway reached Launceston in 1865, Holsworthy in 1879 and Bude in 1898, spelling the end for the Bude Canal as a thriving commercial enterprise. The tub boat section closed in 1891, with the Barge Canal to Marhamchurch following in the 1920s.

Extensive repairs to the sea lock – damaged by a storm – were carried out in 1997 and again in 2008. Meanwhile the Bude Canal Regeneration Project, begun in 1998, has achieved much in safeguarding and promoting the canal, including reinstating the two locks on the Barge Canal and upgrading the towpath.

The Bude Canal Trust owns over five miles of the canal and aims to achieve a well-maintained canal with historic features in good order, a range of wildlife habitats and a towpath that is a public right of way. For more details visit www.bude-canal.co.uk.

RIVER TAMAR
Not readily thought of as inland waterway in the conventional sense, the tidal River Tamar nevertheless sees a measure of leisure boating, even including some narrowboating on occasions. Forming the border between Devon and Cornwall, this is a beautiful river, effectively navigable from Gunnislake to Plymouth Sound, a distance of some 19 miles. Perhaps its primary feature of interest is Morwelham Quay, which once served as a port for nearby Tavistock. The fascinating museum here is well worth a visit, telling the story of the network of canals which once existed in this far corner of the southwest of England.
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We publish on these pages a round up of some of the branch work parties that have taken place recently. If your branch event isn’t included here, do let Alison Smedley, Branch Campaign Officer, know next time you are organising one, so that it can be included in the overall publicity for work parties that Alison is now promoting for the Association.

GUILDFORD & READING BRANCH

Guildford & Reading Branch has commenced what is hoped to be a regular programme of work parties, with two sessions on the eastern end of the Kennet & Avon Canal. The first work party was held on 25th September at Southcote Lock on the outskirts of Reading. An extremely good turn out of 28 people allowed the lock to be painted, overgrown vegetation to be cut and litter to be picked, leaving the area around the lock looking far more pleasant for all users. Everyone had a productive and enjoyable day thanks to the Puddephatt family who helped with parking and provision of tea and coffee and CRT who provided a huge amount of equipment.

The second work party was held on Wednesday 20th November, when despite cold and wet weather, eight volunteers met at the next lock downstream towards Reading, Fobney Lock. As the weather was not suitable for painting, the volunteers litter picked the area around Fobney Lock, before litter picking all the way along the towpath to County Lock in Reading town centre.

SHREWSBURY DISTRICT & NORTH WALES BRANCH

Shrewsbury District & North Wales Branch has supported CRT’s proposals to address the width issue at Hurleston bottom lock on the Llangollen Canal. Hurleston bottom lock has long been a pinch point which prevents some (historic and modern) narrowboats from accessing the Llangollen Canal. IWA branch members had attended several meetings with CRT to consider the problem, as a result of which CRT has announced that it intends to carry out a survey on the lock, in particular to see whether it would be possible to remove a bulge on the towpath side wall.

WEST COUNTRY BRANCH

West Country Branch’s Bridgwater Docks work party held on Tuesday 26th November, supported by CRT, was a great success, with 14 volunteers collecting over 50 bags of rubbish from the dock area on the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal. The group also dragged, fished and grabbed one motorbike, tyres, cones, and other items from the water over an enjoyable four and a half hours. The event was supported by local boating organisations and businesses, Bridgwater & Taunton Canal Association, CRT and the Environment Agency. West Country Branch will be holding a second work party on Saturday 1st March at Firepool Lock in Taunton where volunteers will be concentrating on clearing and cutting back trees, brambles, and general debris.
LICHFIELD BRANCH

Lichfield Branch held three work parties during the autumn, contributing to an impressive total of 700 volunteer hours spent on work parties in Rugeley during 2013.

Friday 18th October saw volunteers make a start in re-laying the path at the bottom of the ‘Bloody Steps’ at Brindley Bank, and starting to rebuild the canal wall by the historic tramway, with training in the use of lime mortar from Tom Woodcock, Canal & River Trust’s Heritage Adviser. Vegetation clearance and mowing was also carried out.

On Sunday 27th October volunteers turned out for vegetation clearance at St Augustine’s Field, where some of the volunteers were trained and assessed in strimmer handling by Terry Drake from CRT. The main job was to clear the decking area again, which had become badly overgrown during the summer, and to start clearing the canal bank.

Friday 8th November saw volunteers working back in the Brindley Bank area, where the footpath from the bottom of the ‘Bloody Steps’ to the aqueduct was finished in quick time, so the team started to fill in behind the piling at the far end of the moorings. The grass had the last cut of the year and some vegetation was cleared along the footpath from Wolseley Road. The steps were cleared of leaves and accumulated moss to make them safer during the winter months. Meanwhile work to rebuild the wharf wall continued, although hampered by the persistent rain. The team was joined by a Police Community Support Officers, who advised that reported incidents of anti social behaviour are well down since IWA started the renovation work, and that some offenders had been caught.

The branch committee has been in discussions with CRT over planned work for 2014, and as well as continuing work at St Augustine’s Field and Brindley Bank, they also hope to carry out improvements to the access at Leathermill Lane and also to assist CRT in the replacing of any remaining old British Waterways signs with the new Canal & River Trust logo.

CHESTER & MERSEYSIDE BRANCH

After a long campaign by the local branch, the River Dee Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal in Chester was dredged the week before the second of Chester & Merseyside Branch’s work parties in the area. These monthly work parties have seen a wide variety of tasks being carried out on the Dee Branch and the Tower Wharf area, including painting the river lock railings, painting lock-gates at the top and bottom of the Dee Branch, clearing the site of the old stable block, preparing flower beds and planting spring bulbs, clearing the slipway of vegetation and picking up many bags of litter. These work parties will continue in the lead up to the IWA National Campaign Rally which will be held over the weekend of 6th to 8th June.

CHELMSFORD BRANCH

Chelmsford Branch and Essex WRG held a joint work party at Heybridge on the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation over the weekend of 7th and 8th December. Volunteers cleared and levelled an area alongside the towpath downstream of Wave Bridge to enable vegetation to be more easily managed in the future. This was a task that took all weekend and was aided by the use of a digger and a trained operator. On the Saturday afternoon some of the volunteers moved on to lay a woodchip path on the opposite bank. All the woodchip had been locally sourced, from trees that had fallen on the Chelmer & Blackwater during bad weather in previous months.

On the Sunday the volunteers finished clearing and levelling the area of bank before locating and clearing a new spot for bonfires, to allow staff and volunteers to responsibly burn vegetation without negatively affecting nearby residents or the environment.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE & DUKERIES BRANCH

The dates of the clocks going forwards and back by one hour heralds the biannual canal clean up on the Sheffield & Tinsley Canal, organised by South Yorkshire & Dukeries Branch. On 27th October they again had the invaluable help of the Abbeydale Rotary Club and Adsets Canal Project. Over 20 volunteers worked in two directions with one group heading down the Tinsley Lock flight and the other heading towards Sheffield, working on both sides of the canal on the lock flight. Approximately 45 bags of rubbish was collected, and other items included canvas chairs, yards of fishing line, a television, a fridge and a fishing rod.
Milton Keynes Branch’s adoption of the Grand Union Canal between Bridges 94 and 96 at Fenny Stratford is now well into its second year. During 2013 work has focussed on the area around the lock itself, including the pump house, bollards, sanitary station, fencing, seats and signs.

More recently attention has switched to the badly neglected towpath hedge north of the lock, and the broadwalk behind it. After meetings involving Milton Keynes Council, a local supermarket and CRT, a combined approach was agreed. The supermarket’s contractors initially cleared the majority of the brambles and scrub that had choked the broadwalk. A band of about 3 metres of scrub and dead alders remains behind the hedge for some 300 metres and a start was made on clearing this during the December work party and this will continue over the winter.

Milton Keynes Branch, working in partnership with CRT and sponsored by Wyvern Shipping Co Ltd, carried out their autumn canal clean up of 10 miles of the Grand Union Canal through Milton Keynes on 18th, 19th and 20th October. Some 10 tons of rubbish were removed from the canal, including a telephone answering machine, a wheel clamp, golf bag, a fridge freezer, two baby buggies, some chocolate bars, car parts, road furniture, assorted metal and plastic objects and 24 bicycles. Many, many black bags were filled with litter collected along the towpath. Only five supermarket trolleys were recovered this time, the lowest number that anyone can remember.

IWA members’ boats towed a 70ft hopper and a 40ft pan, supplied by CRT. The dredged rubbish was obtained by operating eight strong grappling hooks from the hopper; the pan was worked along the offside bank. Other members in their boats disembarked to dredge from the bank and litter pick along the whole length of the towpath. A total of 35 IWA volunteers were involved over the weekend contributing 298 volunteer person hours. Six CRT staff gave additional valuable support. All those involved in the clean up were generously provided with a hot lunch by Lionhearts Cruising Club in their clubhouse on the Saturday and J & M Canal Carrying Co supported the clean up with a donation in thanks for easing the passage of their fuel boat Towcester through Milton Keynes, where rubbish dumped in the canal can cause serious problems.

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IWA Milton Keynes Branch volunteers planting up the Pump House garden at Fenny Stratford.
NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE & SOUTH Cheshire

North Staffordshire & South Cheshire Branch has been continuing their monthly work parties in the two geographical parts of their branch area. In South Cheshire, the Cheshire Locks Work Parties have been working steadily up the lock flight, painting lock gates and surrounding hardware as well as carrying out vegetation clearance to bridges and cobble sets. Having completed work at Rode Heath and Church Lawton, they have recently moved down the flight to Malkins Bank near Sandbach following interest by local residents.

Meanwhile, the monthly branch work parties in North Staffordshire have been continuing on the Caldon Canal. Two sessions were held at Hazelhurst junction, preparing the iconic cast iron bridge for painting, laying a new surface on the bridge and making a start on a new coat of paint. Painting will continue when better weather returns in the spring, and so the December work party saw a group of volunteers returning to the Caldon Canal near Cheddleton to continue hedge planting started during last winter. Over 250 hedging plants were planted, and this completes the planting required between Basford Bridge and Oakmeadowford Lift Bridge.

WARWICKSHIRE BRANCH

Sunday 6th October saw 19 volunteers turn out for vegetation clearance on the offside of the Hatton flight on a glorious day. Using hedge trimmers and strimmers supplied by CRT, volunteers restored the vegetation line to that obtained earlier in the year. A bollard found in the vegetation will be used to replace one which has been ‘enclosed’ by a tree on the lower lock landing of Lock 31. A further session was held on Sunday 1st December, when 15 volunteers continued the work to clear vegetation on the offside of this flight.

On Sunday 20th October, Warwickshire Branch held another of their successful clean ups on the Grand Union Canal in Warwick, where branch volunteers were joined by 30 members of the community including young people (with their youth leaders and parents), to use grappling hooks and pull rubbish out of the canal. The event was supported by CRT with a tug and hopper. In addition to the trolleys and bikes, including one lost by a postman, the haul included a motorbike, road work signs, and a substantial addition to the trolleys and bikes, including one lost by a postman.

Over the weekend of 19th-20th October, Warwickshire Branch held another of their successful clean ups on the Grand Union Canal in Warwick, where branch volunteers were joined by 30 members of the community including young people (with their youth leaders and parents), to use grappling hooks and pull rubbish out of the canal. The event was supported by CRT with a tug and hopper. In addition to the trolleys and bikes, including one lost by a postman, the haul included a motorbike, road work signs, and a substantial addition to the trolleys and bikes, including one lost by a postman.

Oxfordshire Branch held a work party at Banbury Lock on 24th September. The aim was to tidy up the area around the Oxford Canal in Banbury Town Centre so that a good impression could be made to all visitors at the Banbury Canal Day a fortnight later. With a good size group the lock gates were repainted, as were the 100 or so mooring bollards, and the towpath was tidied with vegetation cut back and litter cleared away.

Banbury Canal Day on Sunday 6th October proved to be a very successful event once again. The branch ran boat trips from Sovereign Wharf to the old arm of the canal and back, as well as between the basin and Sovereign Wharf. It also operated four boats which allowed over 800 people to experience a trip on a narrowboat – a great way to promote the use of the waterways. This was all made possible thanks to the hard work of the volunteer skippers, crew, waterside helpers and lift bridge operators.

An example of other work that is routinely carried out by IWA branch committees, is Oxfordshire Branch’s recent response to a planning application to develop the canal area in Banbury. The application outlines proposals to develop Banbury Town Centre, which includes the covering part of the Oxford Canal with a glazed canopy, new high rise buildings beside the canal and service areas backed onto the canal. Oxfordshire Branch has objected to the plans as the proposed development would have a detrimental affect on the waterway through the town, which is currently a popular mooring spot for boaters. The Branch feels that such a development would result in fewer boaters choosing to stop in Banbury and this in turn would have a negative impact on local businesses.

Is your branch doing something that demonstrates the great work that our members do? If so let us know - send your story and pictures to alison.smedley@waterways.org.uk.
IWA at Work

MANCHESTER BRANCH - OPERATION STARBURST
- Cleaning up the Canals of Manchester

Over the weekend of 19th and 20th October, over 100 volunteers took part in a large multi-site canal clean up on the canals of Greater Manchester. The event was organised jointly by IWA Manchester Branch and Canal & River Trust Manchester & Pennines. Waterway Recovery Group North West supported the event by supplying a minibus and driver and arranging accommodation for those people travelling from further afield.

The event followed on from last year’s successful “Ashtac Reunion” event, when exactly 100 people turned out over two days. The name for this year’s event, Operation Starburst, was chosen to reflect the concept of working on different canals around a central meeting point, as well as continuing the theme from the even larger scale events that took place over forty years ago. Operation Ashton took place in 1968, and this was followed by Ashton Attack (“Ashtac”) in 1972, which saw 1,000 people working on the canals in this area. Those events contributed to the reopening of the Cheshire Ring in 1974.

The “Starburst” effect was created through volunteers working in five different locations based on a central meeting point of Portland Basin, at Dukinfield junction, the junction of the Lower Peak Forest and the Ashton Canals. Volunteers were ferried out from there to the five locations nearby. Local volunteers were able to join in direct at the site they wished to work at.

The southernmost point of the “star” was Bridge 6 at Hyde on the Lower Peak Forest Canal, where Floating Pennywort (an invasive weed) was removed from the channel. Rubbish was also grappled out of the canal including bicycles, tyres, mangled shopping trolleys, a crutch, fence panels and road signs. The roving bridge was cleared of vegetation, weeds and litter, and towpath repairs were also carried out.

At Failsworth the activity was centred on Lock 65, where vegetation was cleared, litter picked, rubbish pulled out of the canal and balance beams and lock furniture was painted. Meanwhile just further down the Rochdale Canal at Newton Heath the main task was litter picking and pulling rubbish out of the canal, along with a bit of vegetation clearance, all around Lock 69.

On the Huddersfield Narrow Canal at Stalybridge, Lock 6W had its balance beams, lock furniture and lock tail bridge all painted and the tunnel taking the towpath under the road had a new coat of white paint (which covered up the graffiti). Meanwhile at Lock 7W, the base of the historic crane was given a coat of black paint, a bench completely buried in the undergrowth was revealed, balance beams were painted, and vegetation was cut back on the towpath and access paths. On the Sunday grappling was carried out and in excess of 30 shopping trolleys were removed from the channel, along with 6 bicycles, numerous road cones and fencing panels, scaffold poles and a motorbike.

At Clayton on the Ashton flight of 18 locks, work was centred on Yew Tree Swing Bridge, where vegetation was cleared and litter picked, as well as a substantial amount of towpath repairs being carried out in both directions from the swing bridge.

Whilst many of the volunteers were local (including several who were new to volunteering on the canals), others came from all over the country, with the farthest journeys being from Brighton and Bognor Regis on the south coast.

The total number of black bags filled with rubbish from the five sites was 69, which along with two work boats full of rubbish demonstrate the amazing amount of activity which had taken place over the weekend.

MANCHESTER BRANCH - Other News

Manchester Branch committee has responded to a proposal from CRT and Manchester City Council that would see gates installed between locks 84 and 86 on the Rochdale Canal. The gates would be locked at night to prevent criminals or potential victims from accessing the towpath as the dark and unfrequented nature of this area during the hours of darkness attracts criminal activity. Manchester Branch has written a response to the proposal based on local and national experience where similar security measures have been proposed to reduce crime in the vicinity of canals and rivers in the UK. Whilst supporting any measures that will reduce crime and protect the public in this area, including restricting access during the hours of darkness, the Branch has suggested some additional provisions to ensure the safety of boaters.

Manchester Branch volunteers returned to Bridge 6 on the Lower Peak Forest Canal at Hyde (one of the five “Operation Starburst” sites) for their November work party. The over-bridge ramp and up-stream ramp cobbles were cleared of grass and weed whilst the once-planted soil areas were further pruned and habitats formed. A section of under bridge railing was painted whilst some ten bags of rubbish were litter picked. One ambitious volunteer was determined to uncover the off-side stone work adjacent to the spiral ramp and his efforts were rewarded with the discovery of a further cobbled landing quadrant at the water’s edge. Every one of the many passers-by voiced their thanks and Manchester Branch looks forward to further improvements during future visits.

NORTHAMPTON BRANCH

At their October social evening Bernard Morton, Chairman of Northampton Branch, was presented with the Certificate of Adoption from CRT officially confirming the branch’s adoption of the Northampton Arm. Two CRT representatives – Jeff Whyatt (SE Waterways Manager) and John Highmore (Volunteer Coordinator SE Waterways) – were in attendance and Jeff confirmed that the Northampton Arm adoption is to date the largest and, arguably, the most ambitious canal adoption venture in the country.

Monthly work parties have been taking place on the arm under the enthusiastic leadership of David Higgins, the Branch’s Canal Adoption Officer. Several work parties have concentrated on the area around Lock 17 (bottom lock) at Far Cotton where much unsightly rubbish and undergrowth has been cleared, especially at the river approach to the lock where a third mooring bollard has emerged from the weeds and grass which means a 70 foot boat can now lay alongside rather than stick out across the canal with better access for all concerned.
GUIDED WALKS

Many IWA Branches organise guided walks along the waterways, and recent walks led by Lichfield Branch have seen groups of walkers (IWA members and friends) walking around Curbworth and Kingsbury on the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal, in the vicinity of Hopwas (also on what was historically the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal, but is generally thought of as the Coventry Canal), and around Alrewas and Fradley on the Trent & Mersey Canal. The lengths of these walks vary between 3 and 6 miles and everyone is welcome.

A recent guided walk led by Warwickshire Branch saw branch members and friends walk to Marcliff Lock on the River Avon on a dry but chilly Sunday morning in November. The walkers set off from Bidford-on-Avon along the River Avon via the beautiful hamlet of Marcliff before returning via the mouth of the River Arrow and a new path created to avoid a landslip and along the marl ridge which shepherds the river towards Evesham. At Marcliff Lock there is a plaque recording the donation from IWA and the efforts of the Royal Engineers, men from Gloucester Gaol and other volunteers who built this lock in the most difficult of rock surrounds.

Chester & Mersey’side’s recent guided walks have included the Manchester Ship Canal taking in the disused Runcorn & Latchford Canal and the Moore Nature Reserve, and the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal taking in a section of the River Weaver. These walks take place on the 4th Thursday of each month.

IWA branches in the London area have benefitted from donations from London Towpath Walks as a result of branch members leading some of these regular walks along the towpaths of the capital city. These walks take place regularly and include locations such as Three Mills and the Bow Back Rivers, the Regent’s Canal around Camden and the New River. These guided walks take place twice a month on the first and third Sundays.

Shrewsury District & North Wales Branch started 2014 with a guided walk of the canals around Nantwich on Saturday 4th January. The walk, of about four miles, took in canals built by four different canal companies. Starting at Thomas Telford’s Nantwich Aqueduct, they walked along the towpath of the Birmingham & Liverpool Junction Canal, (now known as the Shropshire Union main line). The walkers then joined the Chester Canal & Nantwich Basin, with the walk ending at Barbridge Junction, where the branch to Middlewich leaves the Main Line, and then finished with a sociable lunch at the Olde Barbridge Inn.

DONATIONS BY IWA BRANCHES

An important function of IWA branches is to raise funds to support local canal projects. Recent donations given by IWA branches include:

- £300 donated by IWA Lichfield Branch to Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust. This was presented by Barbara Hodgson, Treasurer of IWA Lichfield Branch, to Brian Kingshott, Chair of Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust, at the Huddlesford Heritage Gathering held over the weekend of 21st and 22nd September.

- Chester & Mersey’side Branch has donated £800 towards the repair of working boat Ferret. Ferret is one of the principal features at the National Waterways Museum and interests young visitors with the concept of the boat’s back cabin being a family living space. Ferret was built at Yarwoods in 1926 for Fellows, Morton & Clayton, initially running cargo to Runcorn and Ellesmere Port, before later going into private ownership. Ferret was later one of the first boats to be included in the national collection at Ellesmere Port. The boat now needs major refurbishment and has been taken out of the water in order for the work to be carried out by apprentices at the Heritage Boatyard at the Museum.

- Chester & Mersey’side Branch has also made a donation towards the refurbishment of windows in The Forge at Taylor’s Yard. The refurbishment of the historic Taylors Boatyard at Chester Tower Wharf is progressing well with J.P. Marine working alongside Chester Canal Heritage Trust and Canal & River Trust. This unique site is now a working boatyard and J.P. Marine have been progressing the restoration works alongside a busy customer schedule. Chester & Mersey’side continue to support this restoration by donating £1,000 towards the replacement of metal window frames in the old blacksmiths forge, which will be mounted in the original openings following restoration of the building frontage and lintels.

- Kent & East Sussex Branch has donated £700 to support local restoration projects. On Thursday 14th November, cheques were presented by Les Etheridge, IWA National Chairman to Brian Macknish of the Thames & Medway Canal Association and Bob Draper of the Sussex Ouse Restoration Trust. The donations were made from the profits generated at the 2013 National Trailboat Festival at Bodiam Castle over the May Bank Holiday. The event, organised by Kent & East Sussex Branch, attracted over 20 boats which cruised up the river from Scots Float near Rye to Bodiam.

- North & East London Branch was the first group to donate to the newly established Thames Ironworks Heritage Trust, which was launched on 27th November. The Trust’s goal is to revive the shipbuilding and wider manufacturing heritage of East London, primarily through the restoration of a number of Thames Ironworks lifeboats. This restoration work will not only develop public awareness of Thames Ironworks but should also create new jobs in the area as well as helping apprentices to develop various skills. The restored boats will be used to conduct heritage tours in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and surrounding East London waterways.

Mike Carter of IWA Chester & Mersey’side Branch presents the donation towards the restoration of Ferret to Dave Linney and John Inch of the Waterways Museum and Mike Turpin of the Boat Museum Society.

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

Stefanie Preston, Branch Campaign Assistant 01494 783453; stefanie.preston@waterways.org.uk

Spring 2014
Tell us about your very earliest inland waterway experiences.
Mum and dad’s first boat was called Muffin – it was a 22ft fibreglass Teal. It was launched Easter 1966 at Ainsworth’s boatyard just above Bingley Five Rise. I had been born in February 1966 so boating was in the blood from a very early age. I don’t really remember anything about Muffin but remember lots about Muffin Too (our second boat). She was fitted out beside the family house and I clearly remember the crane coming to take her away to be launched. We ran all the way back from Sunday school to make sure that we didn’t miss anything.

My earliest memories of waterway experiences revolve around work parties on the Yorkshire Derwent. There was tree and scrub clearance with amazing bonfires at Howsesham Lock. We used to take our little tent so that we had a base and somewhere to hide and play in. In fact one weekend a tree was brought down near the tent where Jonathan (my little brother) was playing. Mum insists that she had checked the tent first but...

I also remember being in charge of the tea urn at Ashtac. We went for the day as a family. Whilst dad and the boys got dirty, mum and I were obviously helping out with refreshments.

Specifically, which canals did you visit as a youngster?
Muffin Too (a 32ft Creighton Inlander) was launched in 1971 and we spent many weekends and most of the summer holidays cruising the inland waterways network. Life on board was a great adventure, especially as we cruised Remainder waterways and ends of waterways so that we could collect the IWA Silver Swords. One of our most memorable trips was along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. We cruised all the way into Liverpool, stopping frequently to remove weed and other debris from the propeller and once to rescue Jonathan from the water as he had fallen in! The one thing that I really remember about that trip was the fact that the canal water outside the old Tate & Lyle sugar works was warm.

Boating was a family affair and we also took our two cages of hamsters with us on our three-week summer holiday cruise. At one point we must have had about nine hamsters with us as they had just given birth. On one trip, as we cruised through a rather damp Blisworth tunnel, the hamsters moved all of the babies and the bedding to a different corner of the cage which was dry and not getting dripped on. Once we had moored up for the day we filled our time collecting dry grass for the hamster cages, messing about in the dinghy on the canal and even sometimes going for a swim. Archive family slides show all three of us swimming more or less outside the house where mum and dad live now.

I remember cruising down the Grand Union to London and then going out onto the River Thames and sailing past the Houses of Parliament. We still laugh at mum thinking we were going to be swamped by a tidal wave from one of the Thames hydrofoils. She stood in the galley with her knees jammed against the cupboard doors to prevent everything from flying out and her hand on the kettle with a look of utter terror! As the hydrofoil passed there was a gentle ripple and the boat bobbed slightly...

We talk to IWA Trustee and Finance Committee member Gillian Smith

The Interview

Tell us about your very earliest inland waterway experiences.
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Which ones made the greatest impression on you?
I think the Leeds & Liverpool Canal has always made the greatest impression. It was our home canal. *Muffin Too* was moored at Craven Cruising Club in Skipton for many years. I loved the majesty and mystery of Bingley five rise. The sheer size and engineering feat always intrigued me and I loved imagining my Gran living in the lock-keeper’s house at the top of the locks as my Dad’s grandfather had been the lock-keeper there. I loved the remote splendour of the canal as you travelled westwards over the Pennines and the beautiful idyllic places we found to moor up for the night. Nobody around for miles, no noise and places to explore and have adventures. The scenery would then change as you cruised into the Lancashire mill towns of Burnley and Blackburn – the wharves and brooding mills each telling their own tales of Victorian industrial life.

In the late 1970s we moved to Lancashire and as a family became heavily involved in the North Lancs & Cumbria Branch of IWA. The branch was very active at the time and organised small canal festivals and rallies and campaigns (like Backdoor Blackburn) to promote the canal. I remember getting the chance to clear out one of the drained pounds in the Blackburn Flight and being knee deep in mud and grime – it was great fun! In fact I seem to remember there being some photos in *Waterways World*.

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal has changed since the construction of the M65 and those ruined farmhouses and barns and remote locations don’t seem as magical and forlorn as they used to. However, the L&L still offers that wonderful diversity and is still our home canal. I suppose even more so now since I live about a mile away from the canal in Parbold and mum and dad are canal-side at Johnson’s Hillock.

Last May we cruised down the new section of canal into Liverpool in *Muffin No 3*. It brought a different dimension to my knowledge of the L&L. The weather was amazing. It was the weekend of the Battle of the Atlantic celebrations, there was a flypast from some of the veteran war planes, there were crowds of hundreds of thousands of people, new architecture sat alongside the historic architecture of the Three Graces. Traditional mixed with new, experienced people mixed with novices, canal boats cruised past naval minesweepers and patrol boats and we sailed into the pound outside the Liverpool Museum just as Land of Hope and Glory was being sung. It was all the contrasts that made that trip so memorable but at the same time there were the same constants – the Smith clan (three generations) exploring and experiencing something new on the inland waterways network and adding more memories and laughs to the family archive.

When did you first join IWA?
Mum says that I was probably a family member from birth! I assume that I probably became a member in my own right when I started work in 1989.

What prompted you to become a member of the Association?
I think it was in the blood – it was just expected!

Which roles have you performed over the years?
I was a member of the North Lancs & Cumbria Branch Committee of IWA for several years and was also secretary for some time. I was also their Waterways for Youth representative. I was involved with Waterways for Youth at a national level for several years and continued to be involved as it moved and became WoW. I have also been an elected Trustee (twice), NW Region Chair, member of Finance Committee, Chair of Promotions and Communication Committee and, on the odd occasion, cook on a WRG camp.

Which were the most rewarding/demanding?
Work with Waterways for Youth was certainly very rewarding. The development of the passport scheme at festivals and events was hard work. However, I think it showcased the diversity of the inland waterways and was a unique way in which to bring together the many different organisations and societies associated with the inland waterways family. Being able to incorporate leisure, heritage, conservation, restoration, traditional arts and crafts, safety and waterways-related education into one scheme whilst building on the knowledge and expertise of a range of people and organisations was very satisfying. It brought together two of my great passions – my professional passion for children, young people and education and my personal passion for the waterways.
From a management perspective the transformation from WfY to WoW was a challenge but also very rewarding. I think that we have successfully developed a strong brand in WoW and one of which IWA should be very proud.

**Now you’re on IWA’s Board of Trustees, what does that entail?**
The role of a trustee is to develop the strategic direction and focus for the Association. As a membership organisation, and in the current economic and political climate, this is a real challenge.

**Is this a time-consuming role?**
The trustees meet bi-monthly in the Midlands so the minimum commitment would be one Saturday every couple of months. However, there is plenty of correspondence and emails to keep up to speed with. Some Trustees are able to offer a lot more time to the role and attend more daytime meetings and events. However, with a full time job this just isn’t possible for me at the moment. I have to admit that weekend meetings make it possible for someone like me to become actively involved in the charity sector at a strategic, as well as practical, level.

**And wearing one of your other hats, you also serve on the Finance Committee. Is that primarily an accountancy/auditing role?**
I really enjoy being on the Finance Committee. I am neither an accountant nor an auditor but still feel that I can play a valuable role. I am the non-expert on the committee asking what I call my “blonde questions” (and luckily I am). I ask what often look like the simple questions, or those which an ordinary member might ask. I bring a grass-roots experience and understanding of how the Association works at all levels and I think that this is really important. The Finance Committee is a good team with some very knowledgeable people and I enjoy learning more and finding out about financial systems and procedures, charity law and how the Association works.

**Are you confident that enough young people are being attracted to the waterways to become the enthusiasts of the future?**
I think the WoW brand is strong and a clever, informative and enjoyable way in which young children and families can be introduced to the waterways. Waterway Recovery Group is also highly effective in introducing and engaging young people in waterways restoration. Their passion, enthusiasm and knowledge is infectious. WRG has developed, over the years, a group of young people (some of whom are becoming more middle-aged!) who are perhaps the most skilled, experienced and passionate advocates of our inland waterways, their retention and restoration.

**Turning to IWA itself, it’s probably fair to say that women are under-represented on the major committees. Why do you think that is?**
To be honest I think that women are really only under represented on the Board of Trustees and this certainly isn’t the history of the IWA. We need to break with the perception of IWA being all men – this certainly isn’t the case for WRG, Promotions and Communications Committee or Festivals.

**How could we get even more women involved at this level?**
I don’t think the real issue is getting more women involved. The challenge is to get a broad range of people involved at the Trustee level - people with different professional and life skills, people with different interests, experiences and passions and a range of ages and genders. The underlying principal must be people who are passionate about our inland waterways system, its heritage and its future and who believe that they can support and develop The Inland Waterways Association and the vital role it plays.

**From a personal point of view, what have you enjoyed most about being a member of IWA?**
Being a member of IWA has been an integral part of my life. Thinking about this interview has caused the whole family to reflect and remember treasured moments. We have sat round the dining room table and laughed at events and incidents that have taken place whilst boating and at IWA events. We have even looked at family photos and slides from the early 1970’s onwards. The inland waterways and IWA have been part of my childhood, have shaped my formative years and provided me with opportunities to make lifelong friends with a shared interest and passion.
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IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group launches its Canal Camps programme for the year ahead

Waterway Recovery Group continues to run a programme of unique week-long residential volunteering opportunities, known as ‘Canal Camps’ designed to restore the derelict canals of England and Wales to their former glory. Canal Camps give you the chance to do your bit for the environment whilst having a fun holiday.

We have 25 Canal Camps, 2 Clean-up weekends and a Big Dig already planned for 2014 giving volunteers the chance to get involved in various activities such as rebuilding towpaths on the Driffield Navigation and Pocklington Canal in East Yorkshire, lining a section of the Lancaster Canal at Stainton lock clearance work on the Cromford Canal in Derbyshire and bricklaying at Ham Mill Lock on the Cotswold Canals.

Volunteering with WRG is a great experience for anyone who loves being outdoors and enjoys meeting people from different backgrounds and of different ages (18 plus). WRG offer volunteers a fantastic chance to learn new skills such as bricklaying, stone walling, machine operation and restoration techniques. Each week costs £56 which includes food, accommodation and travel from the nearest station if you arrive by train.
NEW SITES FOR 2014

LAPAL CANAL
Dates: 5th-12th July
Location: West Midlands
Activities: Canal clearance and machine operation

The Dudley No 2 Canal was authorised in 1793 and opened to traffic in 1798 and was built as a bypass canal to avoid the original Birmingham Canal (known as the Old Main Line). The western end of the canal is still in a good condition, but the eastern half, known as the Lapal Canal, has been abandoned and slowly filled in since the mid 1950s. The long term aim of the restoration project is to restore the entire length of the canal, creating a valuable cruising ring on the Birmingham Canal Navigations.

Thanks to a major campaign by local canal supporters, developers have recently been persuaded to restore the first section of canal at Battery Park – and in 2014 WRG volunteers will keep the momentum going by helping to dig out the next 100-metre section of canal leading through Harborne Lane Bridge and into Selly Oak Park. Work will include exposing and repairing the old wharf wall, installing a dam to allow the next section of the canal to be cleared out and re-routing a path which currently crosses the waterway.

Driffield Navigation and Pocklington Canal
Dates: 16th-23rd August
Location: East Yorkshire
Activities: Towpath construction and vegetation clearance

This year WRG will be holding a joint Canal Camp on the Driffield Navigation and Pocklington Canal. The Pocklington Canal is a charming rural waterway in East Yorkshire which acts as an important wildlife sanctuary. About 18 miles east of Pocklington is the tranquil Driffield Navigation. Much of the navigation has been restored and is enjoyed by boaters, cyclists and ramblers alike.

Volunteers will spend the week working on two sites constructing a new trail for pedestrians and cyclists on the Driffield Navigation, and carrying out towpath improvement work on the Pocklington Canal. It is hoped that the towpath works will create an amenity for the local community and improve access along the line of the two canals. Volunteers will be involved in vegetation clearance, towpath construction and there will also be the chance to operate small excavators and other machinery.

Shrewsbury and Newport Canals
Dates: 16th-23rd August
Location: Shropshire
Activities: Lock chamber and vegetation clearance, stone work

The Shrewsbury Canal was opened in 1797, but remained isolated from the rest of the canal network until 1835, when the Newport Branch was built linking Norbury Junction to the Shrewsbury Canal at Wappenshall. The Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust is actively campaigning to preserve the remnants of the canal and to restore it to full navigation.

This camp will offer volunteers a variety of tasks working at Meretown Lock at Islington. Volunteers will undertake lock clearance work, removing soil from the chamber, as well as...
profiling around 200m of canal bed and creating a temporary dam. Volunteers will also have the chance to carry out stonework, lime mortaring and scrub clearance work in and around the lock.

**SOMERSET WATERWAYS**

**Dates:** 30th August-6th September  
**Location:** Somerset  
**Activities:** Creation of landing stages

In Somerset there is a wealth of waterways and canals ready to be rediscovered as an important local asset. In 1697 34 ‘conservators’ from the Taunton region banded together to force improvements to the River Tone and enable small river barges to reach Taunton from the Bridgwater Dock, a difficult task even in good conditions. It was 1824 before the complete Bridgewater to Taunton Canal came into being and although open to boats, it needs volunteer support to keep it in good condition.

Working with IWA’s West Country Branch, WRG volunteers will be helping to rebuild landing stages by Firepool Lock on the recently dredged River Tone. This will allow boats to use the landing stages safely when mooring up before the lock in order to navigate into Taunton town centre.

**ASHBY CANAL**

**Dates:** 25th October-1st November  
**Location:** Leicestershire  
**Activities:** Bridge construction work

The Ashby Canal is 22 miles long with no locks and runs from the Coventry Canal at Marston Junction to Snarestone. It was originally 30 miles long to a terminus at Moira but the northern eight miles have progressively closed due to coal mining subsidence. A short length has been restored, extending the current terminus by around 150m, to incorporate a chamber and a slipway. Now, involving a local developer, plans are in place to restore a further 400m. This includes the rebuilding of Bridge 62.

In 2014 WRG volunteers will be involved in the initial bridge construction works which will include formation of the concrete foundations, installation of formwork and bricklaying. Volunteers will then return in 2015 to continue with the bridge building project.

We are also starting work at Inglesham Lock, Cotswold Canals to allow for safe access into the lock chamber!

**INGLESHAM LOCK, COTSWOLD CANALS**

**Dates:** 16th-26th July, 26th July-2nd August, 9th-16th August  
**Location:** Lechlade, Cotswolds  
**Activities:** Heritage brickwork, lock clearance, scaffolding and vegetation clearance

Inglesham Lock is at the eastern end of the Cotswold Canals, in a picturesque spot where the canal meets the Thames. We’ve been aiming to restore this for a while, but the Project Team has had to do a lot of behind-the-scenes planning first. They’ve now sorted out how we can safely dam it off and pump it out so we can get ‘down’n’dirty’ in the bottom of the chamber!

Once it’s dry(ish), we’ll put up scaffolding so every inch of the lock walls can be surveyed, so we’ll know what’s needed when we come to restore it in 2015. In the meantime, we’ll be repairing the wing-walls (at the top end, where the lock leads into the canal proper) and clearing vegetation from around the lock.

These camps offer volunteers a fantastic opportunity to be involved in a technical stage of a lock restoration.
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Do you have something to say about IWA or Waterways?
It's your magazine so please write and tell us your views. We will aim to publish responses to letters that ask questions about any aspect of IWA policy or decision-making. Please write to The Editor, Waterways, c/o IWA, Island House, Moor Road, Chesham HP5 1WA or e-mail k.goss@wwonline.co.uk.

Democracy at work?

Les Etheridge said (Winter 2013 Waterways) that the decision not to increase subscription rates will be “seen as a very positive reaction to the financial pressures facing many people” and that the IWA is a “genuinely democratic organisation”.

If that decision was democracy in action then God help us all in this democratic island. The decision not to increase fees was made by 31 disgruntled members (0.2% of the total membership) who clearly had no idea about the financial pressures faced by the Association. Did they not notice that the last three national festivals have all made huge losses with this year’s record being a staggering £40,000? Did they really believe that keeping the rates the same as last year would actually increase membership? What utter nonsense! If someone is paying £38 now, increasing it to £40 will have no effect whatsoever on the membership levels, and neither would reducing it to £25 a year.

People join an institution because they believe in its ideals and wish to support them. They also have to believe that the institution is relevant to their needs and is doing a good job. The cost of that support is an entirely secondary consideration.

That a small group of rabble-rousers is able to rock the entire financial foundation of the association beggars belief. Does that mean that at the next AGM all I have to do is to gather a few like minded individuals and I could get an agreement to reduce all the subscriptions to a tenner a year?

If the Memorandum and Articles of Association are written in such a way that this could happen again they need to be changed straight away so that the Trustees make such decisions based on good financial data, not at the whim of the few people who bother to turn up at the AGM. If you don’t like what the Trustees have done in your name, you can always vote them out.

Photographic Treats

I must compliment you on the excellent standard of photography in the most recent issue of Waterways. Three pictures in particular stood out for me: ‘Cruising at Derwentmouth’ in the East Midlands article; the late Robin Smithett’s wonderful view of Foxton in the same piece; and, perhaps best of all, Alison Smedley’s lovely photograph of the steam train crossing the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal on page 37.

I continue to enjoy Waterways magazine – keep up the good work everyone!

Daniel Prior, Via email

Thanks Waterways!

I just wanted to thank Waterways magazine very much for mentioning us so prominently in the article on “our” bit of canal (“Waterways to Leicester”, Winter 2013 issue. The trustees of the Peter le Marchant Trust and I are very appreciative as it is all helpful in getting our name around, especially in such a prestigious magazine. We carried getting on for 4,000 passengers this year but there is always room for more!

Charles Grace, CEO, Peter le Marchant Trust
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