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# CONTENTS

## AGENDA
The column of the National Chairman

## NEWS
A round-up of the main stories from within IWA and beyond

## WATERWAYS OF THE NORTH WEST
Exploring the Northern Shropshire Union, Trent & Mersey, Bridgewater and Manchester Ship canals

## THE INTERVIEW
We talk to Gren Messham who is hard at work dealing with the HS2 threat to inland waterways

## EVENTS DIARY
A full round-up of what’s on and where this summer

## IWA AT WORK
What’s been happening around the branches

## VOLUNTEER WITH WRG
It’s not too late to enrol on a summer Canal Camp

## INBOX
Readers' letters

## DIRECTORY
Who does what at IWA

### TEN GOOD REASONS

**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

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**IWA ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

- Adult/single £31.50
- Joint/Family £39.00

Details of all other rates are available from IWA Head Office.
With the weather starting to improve and with the days drawing out, thoughts inevitably turn to enjoying the waterways in the coming months. As ever, there are a series of events for you to enjoy. Examples include the Canalway Cavalcade at the beginning of May, the Trailboat Festival in late May, the Campaign Festival in early June, the Stratford River Festival in early July and the Saul Waterways Pageant at the end of August – and there are many others. Turn to page 32 for a full round-up.

The Stratford River Festival will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the reopening of the Southern Stratford Canal in 1964, the reopening of the Upper Avon in 1974 and will also mark the centenary of Robert Aickman’s birth. These are very significant anniversaries and it is right that we celebrate with great enthusiasm. However, IWA must also look to the future and work to ensure that the waterways remain a wonderful asset.

One of the things I have always liked about our inland waterways is the way that they are capable of bringing people together for the common good. How many people say hello when they pass in the street? But boaters generally do when passing on the cut. We come together to restore waterways, to maintain existing ones and help each other at locks etc. I recall just how much I appreciated the help I got from other boaters at my first lock when the theoretical explanation which I had received at the boatyard suddenly didn’t seem to make much sense!

People say that the spirit of the waterways has changed over the years and at times I think that is true. That spirit comes from all users and it is up to us to ensure it remains as strong as ever. So can we all do something positive to help? A few thoughts: help when people want it but don’t interfere; educate very gently when necessary but on the basis of showing why something is good and that people may be breaking the rules through simply knowing no better; respect all users of the waterways; don’t forget we all make mistakes irrespective of how much experience we have; obey the rules and show a good example.

Perhaps this is all common sense and obvious, but do we always follow these maxims? And if we don’t, what does that encourage others to do?

Les Etheridge
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**IWA Honour for Tony Baldry**

Sir Tony Baldry MP received the “Parliamentarian of the Year Award” at IWA’s Award Dinner held at the House of Commons on Monday 10th March. Sir Tony Baldry, a former Waterways Minister, was presented with the award for his long history of support for IWA and the inland waterways. Whilst Waterways Minister, he attended and opened IWA’s 1991 National Festival at Windmill End as well as attending one of IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group digs on the Wilts & Berks Canal. Sir Tony has been a member of IWA for over 20 years and his influence on the inland waterways continues as co-chair of the All Party Parliamentary Waterways Group.

The dinner saw lively discussion take place on various waterway issues. Amongst the guests were over 20 MPs including the Waterways Minister, Dan Rogerson MP, and four former Waterway Ministers, demonstrating a high level of ongoing support for the waterways. Also in attendance was a member of the House of Lords and representatives from Canal & River Trust.

During his address, Les Etheridge, IWA National Chairman, referred to the formation of CRT, which represented a step towards IWA’s vision of a National Waterways Conservancy. The Conservancy is an idea that the Association has promoted since the 1950s and advocates a single body to manage all the nation’s inland waterways. Les Etheridge thanked the previous Waterways Minister, Richard Benyon MP, for his support of the concept and for his help in securing the funding package for CRT.

Les Etheridge went on to say that IWA was encouraged that the transfer of the Environment Agency’s waterways to CRT remains Government policy, but IWA was disappointed that the original timescale of transfer in 2015/16 had not been met. He also commented on the impact of HS2 on the waterways. The merit of HS2 is an issue on which IWA has no view, but IWA is concerned that the inland waterways should be properly protected with any impacts on them mitigated.

Les Etheridge continued: “Our inland waterways are enjoyed by millions of people every year. We are all guardians of them and must act to ensure they can continue to be enjoyed by future generations, but Members of Parliament are in a unique position, and the Association is ever grateful that so many parliamentarians play a keen and active role in support for the Association’s work. Sir Tony Baldry’s support has been regularly demonstrated over a period of more than 20 years and we are pleased to acknowledge him as a true and loyal friend of the waterways.”

Dan Rogerson MP said: “I value the importance of our waterways. They are valuable not only in terms of our historic heritage but are used and enjoyed by countless numbers of people. The work that volunteers do for our inland waterways is invaluable to the upkeep of our waterways. In 2013 there were over 10,000 [IWA] volunteer days spent on the inland waterways, which included many different aspects of the work that The Inland Waterways Association does including lock painting, vegetation clearance, brick laying and litter picking. Their efforts, like the work of many volunteers, is greatly appreciated.”

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**IWA Annual General Meeting**

In accordance with Article 71 of IWA’s Articles of Association, notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held on Saturday 27th September 2014 at 2pm. The venue for the meeting will be at Foxlowe Arts Centre, Market Place, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 6AD (www.foxloweartscentre.org.uk). Full details of the meeting will be provided in the next edition of Waterways.

In accordance with Article 43, nominations to stand as a nationally elected trustee (three places available) are sought. Nominations are also sought for the posts of region chairman for each of Eastern Region, London Region and South East Region (each to serve until 2017 AGM).

Any member can submit a nomination for a nationally elected trustee, which should be accompanied by confirmation from the nominee that they are willing to be elected as a trustee of the Association. Nominations for region chairmen should be made by a member of the relevant region; the nominee should also be a member of that region. All nominations should be accompanied by a brief biography or statement not exceeding 400 words, with a portrait style photo, for publication as part of any ballot paper with the notice convening the AGM to be issued in the next (August) edition of Waterways. All nominations should be received at Head Office (for attention the Company Secretary or Chief Executive) by no later than 2pm on Friday 4th July (i.e. 85 days before the AGM).

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**Funding for Waterway Restoration**

IWA has recently updated the Funding for Waterway Restoration document on the website. This document provides information on how to raise funds for Waterway Restorations from a wide range of sources. Those concerned with the financial and promotional side of Waterway Restoration may find the document, which can be viewed on the IWA website, of considerable benefit.

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**IWA Calendar Competition Results**

The results for the IWA calendar competition are in! Congratulations go to the following winning photographers whose photographs will be used in IWA’s 2015 Calendar: Jim Jewell, Kathryn Dodington, Philip Braude, Emma Lambourne, Wendy Jones, Elaine Scott, Bill Perry, Adam Porter, Peter Critchley, Angela Marks, Colin Grundy, Bill and Mark Welton.

The competition aims to promote waterways, activities and wildlife from all over the UK waterway network. Over 600 photographs were entered, which were then short-listed into categories and voted for by the public. The winning photographers will receive three IWA 2015 calendars each. IWA would like to thank everyone who took the time to submit photographs or vote in the competition. Visit IWA’s website to view the winning photographs.
IWA National Committee Vacancies

IWA's Finance Committee is looking to recruit one or two new members over the coming year and would welcome expressions of interest from IWA members who would be interested in serving on the committee. Ideally candidates should have a financial or corporate governance background and the time to contribute to oversight and strategy development for the Association’s finances. The committee meets six times per year, usually on Saturdays in the Warwickshire area. For further details, please contact Gordon Harrower (committee chairman – gordon.harrower@waterways.org.uk) or Neil Edwards (chief executive) at Head Office.

IWA’s new Marketing Committee is looking to recruit two or three new members over the coming year and would welcome expressions of interest from IWA members who would be interested in serving on the committee. Ideally candidates should have a marketing or commercial background and the time to contribute towards marketing strategy and development for the Association. Some expertise amongst the media or waterways trade would be a particular advantage. The committee meets about six times per year, usually in the southern Midlands. For further details, please contact Frank Wilson (committee chairman – frank.wilson@waterways.org.uk) or Neil Edwards (chief executive) at Head Office.

IWA’s Restoration Committee is looking for a minutes secretary to assist at its meetings, which take place at different waterway restoration projects around the country, usually on Saturdays, about six times per year. Duties would consist of taking minutes at meetings and preparation for meetings in liaison with the chairman. For further details, please contact Vaughan Welch (committee chairman – vaughan.welch@waterways.org.uk).

New Report on HS2

The report HS2 Plus, which reports on the strategy, proposals and budget of the HS2 project was published on 17th March. The report was requested by the Prime Minister in November 2013 and written by Sir David Higgins, Chief Executive of HS2.

In summary, Sir David’s report discussed the potential of the new HS2 infrastructure to rebalance the current and growing north-south disparity and give local business the confidence to invest, creating economic activity, jobs and wealth. He highlighted the need to integrate HS2 better with existing infrastructure to improve east-west connectivity, which he believes is probably also inhibiting growth across the country. He confirmed the budget for HS2 Phase 1 as adequate, and made the point that the contingency should not be reduced until the likely level and duration of Parliamentary scrutiny was clear, as a longer time would increase uncertainty and cost.

The report made the following specific points: a more comprehensive redevelopment of Euston Station was needed as the current proposal was not ambitious enough; the Phase 2 route should be accelerated to reach Crewe by 2027, six years ahead of schedule, and serve a new integrated road & rail hub there; the rest of Phase 2 could be accelerated to complete three years ahead of current plans; Phase 2 needed to be better integrated with Network Rail’s classic network plans, especially due to the uncertainty of the east-west connectivity, which he believes is probably also inhibiting growth across the country. He confirmed the budget for HS2 Phase 1 as adequate, and made the point that the contingency should not be reduced until the likely level and duration of Parliamentary scrutiny was clear, as a longer time would increase uncertainty and cost.

IWA Pageant Event at Saul

IWA’s Events Team (formerly IWA Festivals) is pleased to announce its new summer event. The Saul Waterways Pageant will be held over the August Bank Holiday weekend, Saturday 23rd to Monday 25th August 2014, at the junction of the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal and Stroudwater Navigation.

The event will focus on waterway activities with a programme of competitions including boat handling, canoeing, Best Boat in Bloom, illuminated boat display, best kept engine and room, as well as three cruising awards kindly sponsored by River Canal Rescue. Holding the event on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal will also allow inland waterways access for sailing ships and other much larger vessels to attend and celebrate the Pageant.

The event will showcase the diversity of interests on and around the waterways. As well as the water-based competitions, activities will include walking, fishing, cycling and Geocaching.

The Saul Waterways Pageant will celebrate the restoration work taking place on the Cotswold Canals, and promote the forthcoming Heritage Lottery bid the Cotswold Canals Trust is making. During the pageant, IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group will be working with the Trust, to restore the canal at Ham Mill and Bowbridge locks near Stroud. Members of the public are invited to come along and see ‘WRG in action’. WRG will also be holding Canal Camp restoration holidays in other locations on the Cotswold Canals over the summer.

Refreshments will be available from the real ale bar alongside artisan food stalls. An evening social programme is also being planned for IWA members, boaters and campers. On the Bank Holiday Monday a Boat Jumble will be open from 10.30am-3.30pm. The event will promote the use of the waterways locally and nationally as well as the campaigning work carried out by IWA.

There will be no admission charge, although there will be a suggested minimum donation of £2 per person. On the Saturday and Sunday there will be a market and the Events Team would like to hear from boaters, charities and local groups who are interested in having a stall and fundraising for their chosen cause and IWA. Boat, camping and trade booking forms are available to download from IWA’s website.
Titford Canal 40th Anniversary

On Saturday 22nd March, Birmingham Canal Navigations Society celebrated 40 years since the reopening of the Titford Canal. BCNS held the celebration at the historic Titford Pump House, now the Society’s headquarters, which originally back pumped water up the six Oldbury Locks to maintain water levels in Titford Pools. Guests included those who had been involved with the reopening in 1974 as well as the Mayor of Sandwell and CRT Chief Executive Richard Parry, who were all able to view photographs of the canal from the 1970s.

WRG Reunion Site Wanted

Every year in November, WRG holds its annual get-together for over 100 volunteers in order to undertake some major canal restoration work. WRG is still looking for a canal restoration site and group to host the event in 2014 over the 8th-9th November. The site would need to provide appropriate winter work for around 100 volunteers; this could be vegetation clearance/scrub bashing/towpath maintenance/clean-up work. If other work is available WRG would be willing to consider different activities. Last year the Reunion Weekend was located on the Cotswold Canals and work included landscaping, reinstating of coping stones and vegetation clearance.

The first stage of the process invites canal societies, trusts and waterways groups to express their interest in hosting the Reunion Weekend. WRG appreciates that many of the details depend on funding and other variables and, therefore, understand if a definite proposal cannot be made yet. However, WRG would still like to hear from those who want to be considered at this stage. Anyone interested should contact Jenny Black directly (details below) as soon as possible so that she can further discuss any possibilities and arrange a site visit.

To help WRG get a better picture of the proposed work please include (if possible): a description of the work; any photos of the site; details of potential accommodation for WRG volunteers.

Further questions should be addressed to Jenny Black: telephone 01494 783 453, extension 604.

Boats Pass Through Dudbridge Lock for First Time in 70 years

Four boats have navigated through Dudbridge Lock on the Stroudwater Navigation for the first time in 70 years. The Dudbridge Locks were restored by Stroud District Council and volunteers from Cotswold Canals Trust and Stroud Community Land Trust. Work included fitting paddle gear to the locks, laying new towpath and concreting the area to make it ready for the opening.

The celebration also marked the completion of a project by Stroud Community Land Trust to restore the derelict pleasure gardens of The Lawn, the Victorian mansion that adjoined the canal prior to its demolition many years ago.
The Grand Western Canal and towpath was officially re-opened on 19th March after the completion of structural repairs to a breached embankment at Halberton, caused by severe weather in November 2012. A group gathered at Swing Bridge for the official re-opening of the canal by the chairman of Devon County Council, Councillor Bernard Hughes, who is both a long-standing IWA member and Waterway Recovery Group supporter.

The Grand Western Canal suffered a serious breach of its northern bank in November 2012, which closed a half-mile stretch of the canal between Greenway Bridge and Rock Bridge. After the incident, Devon County Council and its partners developed a programme of works to repair the breach and introduce new measures to reduce the likelihood of a breach in the future. These new measures included inspections of all infrastructure along the canal, the installation of a water level monitoring and alarm system, additional and improved stop boards and an increase in the height of the embankment.

There is to be a second phase of works that will be informed by the results of a detailed hydrological survey of the canal and the surrounding catchments. The plan is to construct new sluices and weirs to further improve the canal’s resistance to breaches through a greater ability to control water levels.

The works were carried out by contractor South West Highways Ltd and were finished in plenty of time for the canal’s 200th anniversary celebrations, which includes the IWA 2014 National Trailboat Festival (see page 32).

The Coastal Communities Fund has announced that a £654,000 grant is to be awarded jointly to Warrington Borough Council and Halton Borough Councils, after these local authorities’ and Sankey Canal Restoration Society’s partnership funding bid was successful.

The councils plan to use the grant to finance a new Marsh House Bridge for the Riverside Trading Estate, create 12 apprenticeships and improve marketing, signage and branding in order to protect and grow existing businesses and help create new ones along the Sankey Canal. Warrington Borough Council has said it will contribute a further £225,000 so that a high quality lift bridge can be installed with the potential to open for waterways traffic if and when the canal to the west of the bridge is restored.
IWA Team Completes Acheman Challenge

On Saturday 5th April four members of staff from The Inland Waterways Association Head Office completed a 50-mile quadrathlon along the Grand Union Canal. The team has successfully raised £12,718 towards the cost of a new excavator for IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group, although there is still time to donate.

Toby Gomm, Stephanie Pay, Jenny Black and Gemma Bolton cycled, worked a boat through Marsworth locks with the kind support of Chiltern Branch, ran and then canoed the 50-mile stretch from Harefield to Wolverton. Despite some chain problems and running pains, the team successfully completed the 50 miles in under 11 hours and enjoyed a warm welcome from Milton Keynes Branch at the finish line, along with a free meal and a drink in the Galleon pub.

Gemma Bolton said: “The support along the route from our team, staff, IWA members and committees was amazing and really helped us along. Recent improvements to the towpaths definitely made things easier and we were lucky that none of us had a flat tyre!”

Mike Palmer, WRG Chairman said: “Raising over £12,000 for our new excavator is a fantastic achievement and the whole organisation sends its thanks. It’s a truly inspiring result that makes us all the more determined to make the most of this summer and get some great work done. To ‘overachieve’ by such a huge margin shows just how much your team is appreciated and from the photos it is pretty clear that a lot of fun was had as well. Hard work, fun and achievement sums it all up really. Once again many thanks.”

Wendy Evans from IWA Milton Keynes Branch said: “Congratulations to you Toby, and your team, for all your exertions today. It is a great pleasure to us oldies to see young people doing something for our waterways.”

The challenge took 10 hours and 45 minutes to complete and consisted of:
- 22 miles cycling from Harefield to Marsworth.
- Locking a boat through seven locks over a mile at Marsworth.
- 17.5 miles cycling from Marsworth to Tinkers Bridge, Milton Keynes.
- 6 miles running from Tinkers Bridge to Great Linford, Milton Keynes.
- 3.5 miles canoeing from Great Linford to Wolverton, Milton Keynes.

The total included a generous donation of £1,000 from Ipswich Branch, £250 from Tim Lewis on behalf of Chelmsford Branch and £200 each from Lichfield and Middlesex branches. Additionally, Chiltern Branch donated £1,000 and Lancashire & Cumbria Branch donated £500 directly to the excavator appeal.

The team would like to thank everyone who sponsored them and assisted with the logistics and planning along the route. In particular they would like to thank David King, Chris and Judy Clegg for the use of their boat and refreshments, Peter Caswell, Milton Keynes Branch, Chiltern Branch, Canal & River Trust, The Coy Carp in Harefield, The Three Horseshoes in Hemel Hempstead, The Grove Lock in Leighton Buzzard, The Black Horse, Camphill Café and The New Inn in Milton Keynes, the Galleon in Wolverton, and Paddlesport Racers Association.

The team would also like to thank their support crew for the day, especially Stefanie Preston for being the event coordinator on the day; David Padfield for cycling alongside the team; Norman Gomm; Lorna Gomm; Rebecca Emerton; Adam Morris; Katharine Thivessen; Rita Pay and Geoffrey Pay.

It is not too late to support the team and contribute to the purchase of a new excavator for WRG as donations can be made until the end of May:
- Online via Virgin Money Giving
- By text, text ROLT46 followed by the amount in £s e.g. “ROLT46 £10” to 70070
- By phone: call Toby Gomm at IWA’s Head Office on 01494 783 453 extension 611
- By cheque, payable to The Inland Waterways Association and sent to Acheman Challenge, IWA, Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA.
CRT Response to K&A Mooring Plan

CRT has published its response to the consultation on the towpath mooring plan, proposed by the Kennet & Avon Waterway Partnership, to encourage fair use of the busy stretch of the Kennet & Avon Canal between Devizes and Bath.

CRT supported the development of a local plan to deal with the problems on this part of the network in response to complaints received and concerns aired about the large and continuously growing numbers of moored boats and the presence of boats moored in one area for long periods of time. Over the past 12 months CRT’s K&A Waterway Partnership, made up of a group of local stakeholders, has developed and consulted on a towpath mooring plan for the area, the bulk of which will be implemented by 1st May.

CRT has stated that boaters without a home mooring on the western end of the canal between Bath and the bottom of the Caen Hill flight, who adopt the range of movement and mooring described in CRT’s response, will not face enforcement action by the Trust for a 12-month interim period. CRT believes that this is the best way to achieve the long-sought improvements to the canal that will benefit all users and will work with the K&A Waterway Partnership to monitor the impact of this plan over the 12-month period.

CRT’s full response to the K&A Towpath Mooring Plan is available on the CRT website.

Basingstoke Canal Visitor Centre

Following good visitor numbers in 2013, the Basingstoke Canal Centre is to extend its opening hours for 2014. The visitor centre at Mytchett is a good place to start any visit to the canal, with a large car park and tearoom set in a pretty woodland environment. As well as learning about the history and restoration of the Basingstoke Canal, this is also the place to purchase boating licences. Alternatively, day, week or annual licences for kayaks, canoes and rowing boats on the waterway can now be purchased online at www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk.
Thames Training Alliance

Boat handlers of all sorts can be only too conscious of the need for suitable training and the busier the waterway the more important this becomes. While the number of craft plying the Thames must now be small compared with the past, there was mounting concern that there had been a decline in the training and skills so long the responsibility of London’s Company of Watermen and Lightermen; now the issuing of Boatmaster Licences is the responsibility the Port of London Authority and latterly the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

In 2013 an increasing number of passenger craft, often much larger and with speeds up to 28 knots, carried six million passengers and this is predicted to rise to twelve million by 2020. Freight on the Thames is now some 3.5 million tonnes a year often in barges of larger size. With growth in the number of craft and increasing need for well trained crews, a number of passenger and freight boat operators and other interested parties have joined together as the Thames Training Alliance and this came on stream during the course of last year.

A group of 20 trainees who qualify as apprentices are undertaking a two-year enhanced Boatmaster Licence course with built in career progression. This must be seen as a welcome practical approach to a growing problem of safety on the river, especially as development projects such as the Tideway Tunnel and the Battersea Power Station site both plan to make considerable use of waterborne freight.

Freight Traffic

Freight movement by water is very much dependent on the fluctuating demand of the construction industry and on the strategic policies of a few companies. Healthy, growing demand on the Thames brings new craft into use, an example being the Brabant Hopper, a 2000-built barge of 63 x 7.0 x 2.8m and 850dwt, formerly of the Dutch Mercurius Group fleet. The barge is now being operated by S Walsh & Sons, last year’s IWA Bulkeley-Johnson award winner. With her bow-located wheel house, the barge produces something of a new look on the Thames and is operating mainly on Walsh’s Beckton Outfall to East Tilbury land restoration contract.

A rather different story comes from the Trent where the 2013 creation of Lafarge Tarmac led in the middle of the year to a company decision to stop the Besthorpe-Whitwood aggregates traffic and serve the Whitwood concrete plant by road from near Ripon. The Branford barge company has over the years provided a best-practice example of the potential of waterborne freight and the loss of an annual traffic of over 100,000 tonnes is critical for this company and others, and is bad news for waterways freight in general. There were rumours that Lafarge’s own barge operating on this same route, the Battlestone, might find a home on the Thames.

So much for the Government Freight Facilities grants which provided support for the Besthorpe-Whitwood traffic and green thinking on the part of Lafarge Tarmac.

Better News from the Trent

There is, however, better news to report from the Trent. Nottingham & Derbyshire Branch of IWA campaigned for Nottinghamshire county and Nottingham city councils to include water transport on the Trent as part of their long-term strategy for disposing of waste. Now the two councils, in publishing their latest strategy report, have agreed to: “encourage alternatives to road transport such as water and rail where practical.”

The report added: “All waste management proposals should seek to maximise the use of alternatives to road transport such as rail, water pipeline or conveyor in order to minimise the impacts of the use of less sustainable forms of transport.”
New Fuel Marker for Off-road Diesel

On 13th February, the Government announced that the UK and Irish Governments are to introduce a new product to mark rebated fuels, including off-road diesel that is often used by the boating industry and commonly known in the UK as red diesel.

The new fuel marker, to be produced by Dow Chemical Company, should help HM Revenue & Custom’s (HMRC) and the Irish Revenue Commissioner’s work to tackle the criminal market in off-road diesel, marked with a red dye in the UK, and kerosene, primarily used as heating oil. HMRC says that the new product is more resilient to filtering techniques that launderers use to remove the red dye from off-road diesel and should, therefore, make it more difficult for this fuel to be laundered.

HMRC has stated that the new product is to be implemented in consultation with the oil industry and other affected sectors and as an additional marker rather than a replacement for existing markers. It is anticipated that the new marker will be introduced within 12 to 18 months and the relevant legislation will be amended during this period. HMRC has recommended that businesses in the boating and marine sector give consideration to ensuring that they will be able to continue to operate machinery and boats without any problem after the introduction of the new fuel marker.

People’s Millions Programme Reopens

The Big Lottery Fund in partnership with ITV has announced that The People’s Millions programme has re-opened for applications. This lottery stream has funded a number of waterway restoration and development projects in recent years. A total of £3.8m is available through the programme and four awards of £20,000-£50,000 will be made in each ITV region for projects that improve the local community.

The programme has benefitted a number of waterway projects over recent year and is open for applications from voluntary and community groups.

The closing date for applications is 16th May 2014. More information is available at www.peoplesmillions.org.uk.

Whitchurch Bridge Restriction

The width of the navigation arch at Whitchurch Toll Bridge on the River Thames, between Whitchurch and Mapledurham locks, will be restricted until September. The restriction is in place whilst the bridge is reconstructed.

The main works, which were scheduled to take place during the five-month river closure from November 2013 to March 2014, have been significantly delayed by the extreme river conditions experienced this winter. From 1st April the navigation channel has been open to river traffic but the width of navigation will be restricted to varying degrees throughout the on-going works. The minimum navigation width will be 7 metres. When this is in operation, one-way river traffic will be managed by the contractors during lock-keeper hours of duty. To permit safe navigation, a buoyed channel will be in place and this will be lit between sunset and sunrise. Some overnight and two full-day navigation closures will also be required over the revised programme.

Waterway Restoration Workshop

On 10th May, IWA and CRT plan to host a Waterway Restoration Workshop at the Bond in Birmingham. The workshop is intended to become an annual event aimed at addressing some of the big restoration challenges of the time. It hopes to bring members of waterway restoration groups, local authorities and other interested bodies together in one room to discuss a range of issues.

The workshop will also see the launch of a University of Northampton report into the benefits of canal restoration. The report re-examines the economic benefits arising from six specific canal restoration schemes (Kennet & Avon Canal, Liverpool Link, Rochdale Canal, Huddersfield Narrow Canal, Millennium Link and Chesterfield Canal) helping to demonstrate how similar schemes may benefit local communities.

Further information is available on IWA’s website.
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www.crickboatshow.co.uk

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PLUS

SÉAN CANNON FROM THE DUBLINERS will join Murphy’s Marbles for the final showdown on SATURDAY EVENING 10.30PM ONWARDS DON’T MISS IT!
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With IWA’s National Campaign Festival taking place at Chester in June, we explore the northern Shropshire Union, Trent & Mersey and Bridgewater canals – plus a number of waterways under...
NORTHERN SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL

Free of Four Counties Ring travellers, as well as those bound for Llangollen, the Shropshire Union Canal inhabits a more peaceful world north of Barbridge. Not only are the crowds gone, but so are the deep cuttings, lofty embankments and impressive lock flights that characterise the old ‘Birmingham & Liverpool Junction’ – replaced here by the gentle curves of the old Chester Canal, meandering contentedly across the Cheshire Plain. Yes, this is quiet, understated landscape, but one that builds to a classic canal climax at Chester and Ellesmere Port.

Not that it creates a favourable first impression at Barbridge Junction, initially running close by the busy A51 trunk road. It’s a bit of a spoiler. This A51, the same highway that dogs the route of the Trent & Mersey Canal north of Great Haywood. It finally swings away and leaves you in peace at Calveley, once the site of a canal/rail transhipment depot but today offering a full range of facilities for boaters heading north for Chester and Ellesmere Port.

Bunbury has for many years been a boating centre. The wide-beam, two-chamber lock staircase is overlooked by a well-preserved stable block. Here, in times gone by, fresh horses were provided to replace the weary ones on the fly-boats operating between the Mersey and the Black Country. Today this is one of Anglo Welsh’s hire bases, their office being located in an adjoining warehouse: it can be busy here on turnaround days.

Bunbury Mill lies a few hundred yards down the lane in the direction of Bunbury village. A restored watermill standing beside the River Gowy, it demonstrates its working machinery by producing wholemeal flour and oatmeal made from locally grown milling grain. Opening hours are very restricted, however, so it is worth checking before visiting. (01829 261422, www.bunburymill.com).

Unexpectedly pretty, the canal saunters through the well-wooded landscape without a care in the world, accompanied by the lively waters of the River Gowy on its way to the Mersey. An 1830s mill stands beside the river and canal at Tilstone Lock, converted into a highly desirable residence. The two Beeston locks are overlooked by low, shapely hills. The locks are of contrasting construction, one made of stone, the other of iron plates to combat instability.

One of the most idyllic moorings on the entire Shroppie is to be found just below Wharton Lock. A mile to the south, reached via the clearly-marked Sandstone Trail, lie the medieval ruins of Beeston Castle itself, standing on a rocky summit 500 feet above the Cheshire Plain. The fortification dates from 1225 when it was built by Ranulf, the sixth Earl of Chester and contains one of the deepest castle walls in Britain. Used by Henry III and his son Edward I in their campaigns against the Welsh, the castle was finally destroyed at the end of the Civil War. If the history is good, the views are even better, stretching from the Pennines in the east to the mountains of Wales in the west.

Herds of Friesian cattle and the occasional passing train keep boaters and walkers company on the long lonely pound between Wharton and Christleton locks. The Peckforton Hills (to the south) and Delamere Forest (to the northeast) define the horizon. Rowton Moor may look like just another slice of dull suburbia, but it was here that one of the last major battles of the Civil War took place in 1645, with the Parliamentarians routing the Royalists and sending them back to Chester with their tails between their legs.

Christleton, Cheshire’s Best Kept Village in 2011, retains a rural atmosphere despite its proximity to Chester. It has a well-kept green and duck pond, several fine old houses and a couple of pubs, together with a bus service into the centre of Chester.

Middlewich Branch

Opened in 1833, the Middlewich Branch is an integral part of the Four Counties Ring and as such can be frantically busy in the summer months, especially at weekends when its four deep locks can become the scene of lengthy traffic-jams. But visit midweek – or better still, out of season – and you’ll find this a remote and charming waterway, well worth a diversion from the Shroppie’s main line.

Several lofty embankments carry the canal high above the valley of the youthful River Weaver. From one such you can look down on the pretty village of Church Minshull, forever associated with Tom and Angela Rolt who spent several months here in 1939 while Tom was employed by Rolls Royce at Crewe.

Foliage permitting, you may catch a glimpse of the Weaver and Winsford Top Flash from Bridge 22. How tempting it would be to take a walk beside this lovely river, but the closest you can get are the riverside woodlands best reached by a path from Bridge 19.

Descending Stanthorne and Wardle locks, the canal arrives at Middlewich and the Trent & Mersey Canal. The final lock and the last few yards to the junction used to belong to the T&M and the bridge over the entrance to the branch bears the inscription ‘Wardle Canal 1829’. Four Counties Ring boaters will turn right for Kidsgrove and the Potteries via the Cheshire Locks; but if you want to explore the Weaver, turn left towards Northwich and the Anderton Boat Lift.

The National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port.
“So this is Chester?” you may think as you begin the descent through a series of locks to the heart of the historic city. Industry, busy roads and rail lines encroach upon the canal – perhaps not all what you were expecting.

But the good times soon come as you find yourself cruising through a deep, rocky cutting, hard beside the city walls which rise sheer from the towpath. King Charles’ Tower stands above the water, the very spot from where the monarch witnessed his Cavaliers’ defeat by the Parliamentarians. The impressive Northgate staircase – three locks lowering the canal by 32ft – draws the crowds in summertime, so it pays to get your locking procedure spot on in front of a critical audience.

Tower Wharf is probably the best place to moor for an exploration of Chester’s many delights. All the ingredients are here to intrigue and inform: Telford’s handsome canal warehouse, now serving as a plush pub/restaurant; a canopied dry-dock; and Taylor’s historic boatyard, where the Shropshire Union fleet was once built and maintained, and a centre of traditional boat building and repairs ever since. The former North Basin, infilled in the philistine ‘50s, is once again in water following a tasteful redevelopment project.

The Dee Branch exits via an acute hairpin junction, continuing down to the tidal river via three wide locks. Access to the river is only possible at certain states of the tide, with a tricky ‘weir gate’ to shoot before you can gain access to the upper river (officially navigable as far as Farndon). Unsurprisingly, few boaters made the passage – and the result is that the branch is now unofficially closed, subject of one of just two significant ‘until further notice’ stoppages now left on the network. (The other is the Welches Dam route through the Middle Level.) Pressure from IWA and CRT has led to the once silted Williams’ moorings being dredged in 2013 which has revived the whole area but navigation onto the river is still impossible.

Continuing on the main line, Chester’s last suburb of any size is Blacon, greatly expanded in the 1950s and ‘60s but intruding comparatively little on the canals. Before long, suburbia retreats and we emerge into gentle Cheshire pastureland.
Summer 2014

Waterways strategy for Chester which would
Renaissance to develop a waterways
in partnership with the Chester
representatives of the Branch have
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the former mill wheel channel on the far
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Dee from the Shropshire Union Canal
improved access to the non-tidal River
Merseyside Branch, is promoting
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DEE BRANCH CAMPAIGN
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Dee from the Shropshire Union Canal
at Chester. The present gate in the weir
is neither safe nor satisfactory. Repair
and dredging of the entrance to the
flight of three Canal & River Trust locks
between canal and river was completed
last Autumn, and there are plans for
the construction of a new lock in a
former mill wheel channel on the far
side of the weir from the canal.
Looking at the wider issues,
representatives of the Branch have
over the last year been working
in partnership with the Chester
Renaissance to develop a waterways
strategy for Chester which would
enhance both the economic and
recreation potential for the city. A
paper entitled A Vision for Chester’s
Waterways was recently presented
to a gathering at the Chester Town
Hall and was favourably received. It
is believed that, by making the link
between the Shropshire Union Canal
and the upper reaches of the Dee, the
Chester waterfront would be more
vibrant and opportunities would be
created for a variety of regeneration
projects to take place.
Among the many recommendations
are: building a half tide lock in the old
mill race on the Handbridge side of
the river; improving facilities around
the River Lock itself; making the Dee
Branch navigable again.
Above all, Chester’s waterways are not
exploited as an interlinked system. Yet,
with a little imagination, the waterspace
and its surroundings could be the
focus for major regeneration around
water-based activities as has been done
elsewhere in the UK and Europe.

Chester Zoo, widely acknowledged as one of
Europe’s finest, lies just a short walk from
Bridge 134. Set in 110 acres of gardens
divided into separate areas to represent
the world’s different physical regions and
climatic zones, the zoo is home to over
7,000 animals. With play areas for children
and a monorail, it’s a great excursion, not
least if you can stroll back to your boat
afterwards.
Against all odds, Stoak shrugs off the
presence of the M56 and M53 motorways to
exude a defiantly rural air. Its major asset
is the Bunbury Arms, a classic country pub
serving good food and a wide choice of ales.
There’s a pretty church here too, with an
immaculately kept graveyard. Moor between
Bridges 137 and 138 and relish this final rural
interlude to the full... for Ellesmere Port awaits.
An industrial stretch with views of
Stanlow’s oil refineries and the Mersey
estuary heralds the approach to the ‘port’,
terminus of the Shropshire Union Canal and
link with the Manchester Ship Canal. Moor
between the motorway bridge and the Boat
Museum to visit the town, which lies a 15-
minute walk away. It wins no plaudits for
architectural merit, but keen shoppers will
find a full range of chain stores, and there’s
a lively indoor market too.

IWA’s Campaign Festival in Chester,
organised by IWA Chester & Merseyside
Branch and Chester Canal Heritage
Trust, is promising to be a weekend
to remember. With over 125 craft
visiting for the occasion, including the
narrowboats President and Kildare
from the Black Country Museum, they will
make a great spectacle and there are also
several interesting events prior to the
Festival weekend.
On the Wednesday evening there
will be a youth engagement event with
Positive Futures offering free angling
taster sessions next to Telford’s Warehouse
in Chester Basin. On Thursday there is
a guided walk by a Chester Blue Badge
Guide for those visiting boaters who would
like to know more about the area and, in
the evening, a talk by Geoff Taylor and
Ray Buss called “Tales of the River Lock”.
Friday sees more guided walks being
offered, this time by the CCHT who are
offering to take visitors around the historic
Taylor’s Boatyard, down into the old port
area which links the canal with the River
Dee and then on to Chester’s weir.

But Ellesmere Port’s raisin d’être, for canal
enthusiasts anyway, is its award-winning
National Waterways Museum. Established
in the old basins and warehouse buildings
in the 1970s (though sadly Telford’s
transhipment warehouse was destroyed by
fire in 1970), it traces the development of
the canal system from its inception to its 19th
century heyday, through exhibits, models
and photographs. The museum contains
the nation’s most extensive collection of
preserved inland waterway craft, including
narrowboats, tugs and maintenance vessels.
If you arrive by boat you can normally find
a mooring in the Lower Basin, close by some
of the museum’s larger exhibits.
It’s an atmospheric end to the Shropshire
Union, and most boaters will turn around
here and head back to Chester. But this
isn’t a dead-end waterway. The two paired
locks beside the museum (one broad, one
narrow) lead to a little-used broad lock by
the Holiday Inn, crossed by a swing-bridge
which can be moved on application. Two
more 90 degree turns lead the boaters
into the Manchester Ship Canal, a giant
of a waterway. With pre-booking and
appropriate preparations, inland boaters
can navigate it to the River Weaver, or even
across the Mersey to Liverpool.

IWA NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FESTIVAL
On the Saturday there will be free
boat trips, courtesy of the Canal &
River Trust and young people will also
be able to try their hand at angling.
Local community dance groups will
be demonstrating pole dancing and
inviting visitors to try their hand at
the modern version of keep fit whilst brass
bands and country music groups will be
playing throughout the weekend.
The RAF have also promised to join in
with a Hurricane flypast on the Saturday
(operations permitting) and there will
be WOW activities for the children, trade
and refreshments stalls, further walks and
a pet show on the Sunday.
However, this is a campaigning event
to encourage regeneration of the canal
and riverside area in this vicinity and so
VIP guests have been carefully chosen. The
Lord Mayor of Chester will open the event at
2pm, accompanied by Richard Parry, Chief
Executive of CRT and Les Etheridge, National
Chairman of IWA, along with other key
decision makers from the local council.
The Festival is shaping up to be a really
great campaigning weekend, so don’t miss it!
We start our exploration at the former mining town of Kidsgrove, near Bridge 131, which may lack aesthetic appeal but its shopping facilities are useful for boaters. At Hardings Wood the Macclesfield Canal exits, unexpectedly, stage left. (Strictly speaking, this is the T&M’s Hall Green Branch, which becomes the Macc at the stop lock one mile on.) It crosses the T&M on a sturdy aqueduct – an early example of a ‘flyover junction’ subsequently replicated on motorways throughout the land.

Elvis Presley had his Heartbreak Hotel, Don Gibson got marooned on Heartbreak Avenue, but for T&M boaters it’s all about Heartbreak Hill: 26 locks in seven miles between Hardings Wood and Wheelock. It is a total fall of 250ft, so you’ll need your Shredded Wheat in the morning. When you consider that the Hatton, Wolverhampton or even Tardebigge flights manage a similar fall in one-third of the distance or less, you’ll understand that the heartbreak comes not so much from the windlass work but the trudging between locks. A good tip is to take a folding bike for lock-wheeling.

Staffordshire gives way to Cheshire as the canal continues its descent, and these locks are properly known as the Cheshire Locks. They were duplicated in the 1830s to cope with heavy traffic during the canal’s heyday. Some have since been singled, although many chambers have been brought back into use recently, thanks in part to campaigning by IWA and the Trent & Mersey Canal Society. On a sunny weekday afternoon, with boats passing in both directions, progress can be rapid and efficient.

Lawton Locks are perhaps the most attractive of the 26, set amidst woodlands and overlooked by Mow Cop, brooding on its lofty ridge to the east. There are a couple of handy pubs at Rode Heath and Thurlwood, the latter the site of an unusual steel guillotine lock. Never popular with boaters, it was demolished in 1987 after just 31 years.

The M6 intrudes noisily, but briefly, at Hassall Green, where there is a handy shop. Despite the noise, the pound below can seem beautifully remote at sunset. Malkins Bank, once something of an enclave for working boatmen and their families, is now dominated by modern housing, although its pristine-looking golf course will have budding Rory McIlroys reaching eagerly for their clubs. Wheelock lurks at the foot of Heartbreak Hill. It wouldn’t claim to be the most picturesque of villages, but after all those locks the prime requirement is some relaxation and refreshment, and Wheelock fits the bill with several pubs, restaurants and fish & chip shop.

Skirting the outskirts of Sandbach, the canal joins forces with the A533 for the sporadically locked, dead straight run in to Middlewich. The town’s last remaining saltworks stands here, owned by the British Salt combine and still producing most of Britain’s culinary salt. Salt mining is responsible for the Anglo-Saxon ‘wich’ suffix, for years of canal prosperity, and also for much subsidence hereabouts, as we will see later.

A turning point on one of the most popular cruising rings (the Four Counties) and with two hire-bases of its own, Middlewich can be disconcertingly busy during peak season. Keep an eye out for what’s happening ahead as you work down through King’s Lock, and beware of boats suddenly emerging through Wardle Lock from the Shropshire Union’s Middlewich Branch. The most convenient moorings are below the three narrow locks in the town.

Big Lock, on the outskirts of Middlewich, is just that. It was built to wide-beam dimensions to allow barges from the Mersey port to reach the town. The Big Lock pub stands alongside offering good value meals and, not inappropriately, big-screen entertainment. Half a mile away, Croxton Aqueduct was first constructed to wide-beam dimensions but was later rebuilt narrow, preventing wide-beam boats from reaching Middlewich. The old piers
supporting the original trough are still visible amongst the undergrowth.

The canal journeys happily through the Dane valley, revelling in its new-found isolation. It is a rich, undulating landscape, populated by large herds of plump Friesian cattle and enhanced, here and there, by copses of mixed woodland. Bluebells add a splash of colour in springtime and birdsong fills the air.

A series of subsidence-induced flashes, or shallow lakes, borders the main channel between bridges 179 and 181 – provoking comparison with the dreamy waters of the Norfolk Broads. You half expect a Norfolk wherry to come gliding through the mist. These flashes once contained the submerged wrecks of abandoned narrowboats, brought here and unforgivably sunk by British Waterways in the 1950s. Many of the wrecks have been raised and taken off for restoration, but you will still see planks and cabins looming above the waterline, especially when levels are low. Do not be tempted to explore the flashes in your own boat!
This under-rated and little-visited river deserves to be better known. Normally accessed by the Anderton Lift (a worthwhile experience in itself), a left turn at the bottom takes you upstream through Northwich, clustered around its two Victorian swing-bridges (which canal boats will not need swung), to Winsford flashes where navigation ends, despite several plans to link it through to the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal.

A right turn takes you downstream through very pleasant and remote Cheshire countryside and some massive keeper-operated locks to the Manchester Ship Canal at Weston, near Runcorn. Although the final length is industrial, it offers much of interest to the enthusiast, along with its erstwhile extension, the Runcorn & Weston Canal. It is possible to navigate the Ship Canal to Ellesmere Port and thus create a cruising ‘Ring’, but most boaters prefer to retrace their wake and enjoy a reprise of the river’s attractions.
Broken Cross and Rudheath are nondescript suburbs of Northwich, useful for taking on supplies. Wincham Wharf is a busy boating centre, home of a long-established brokerage firm with lines of moored craft awaiting a new home – proceed with care! The Lion Salt Works, alongside the canal at Marston, were brought to national attention by the BBC’s Restoration series. They produced salt using the traditional ‘open pan’ technique until just 25 years ago.

As the canal nears the River Weaver, itself synonymous with both salt and chemical production, there is an attractive burst of wooded countryside past the Marbury Country Park before arriving at Anderton – a household name in waterway circles courtesy of its iconic boat lift (see below). However tight your schedule, it would be a shame to miss out on a ride in the lift and a brief sortie along the River Weaver, 50ft below the canal. Above the lift are good moorings and a sanitary station if you’re not travelling down. The Stanley Arms offers refreshment, and the Moorings restaurant at Anderton Marina serves good meals.

The steep sides of the Weaver valley forced Brindley to build two tunnels here: Barnton (572 yards) and Saltersford (424 yards). Saltersford is famously crooked, with no view to the other end, and a timetable has recently been introduced to prevent collisions. They are separated by a broad expanse of water, a delightful place to moor with views (and a path) down to the Weaver below.

Barnton village is well endowed with shops and has a good bus service into Northwich. The town itself has some attractive half-timbered architecture, but is surprisingly bereft of good pubs or restaurants.

The final few miles of the T&M are among its finest. Perched high above the Weaver, sadly devoid of commercial vessels these days, the canal drifts languidly through Cheshire’s rich dairylands. Often tree-lined, it nevertheless affords occasional views of the river below. But keep your eyes on the canal ahead: Brindley’s twists and turns are much in evidence, and the channel is occasionally narrow.

Only at Bartington Wharf, home to a large hire-fleet, is the bucolic spell broken by the busy A49 road crossing. Compensation comes in the form of a couple of pubs, for those willing to brave the relentlessly fast traffic.

Dutton Stop Lock has a fall of only six inches. The wide-beam stop lock was built by the T&M Co to prevent loss of water to those rogues at the Bridgewater Canal; inter-canal rivalry was deadly earnest in those days. Nearby stands an impressive dry-dock covered by an ornate canopy. Preston Brook Tunnel beckons: 1,239 yards long and not quite straight, so careful navigation is called for.

It is at the far end of the tunnel that the Trent & Mersey Canal finally calls it a day and hands over the baton to the Bridgewater Canal. This is where the Midlands becomes the North, and the character of the canals changes with it.

**ANDERTON BOAT LIFT**

Which of the Seven Wonders of the Waterways is your favourite? Many enthusiasts will reply “the lift” – not least because we are lucky to still have it today.

Designed by Edward Leader Williams and opened in 1875, the Anderton Lift raises and lowers boats between the Trent & Mersey Canal and the River Weaver 50ft below. Its large iron framework supports two water-filled caissons, each capable of carrying a pair of narrowboats. Initially steam-powered, it was converted to electrical operation early in the 20th century. By then no longer used by commercial vessels, it was closed in 1983 due to corrosion. After a vociferous campaign by IWA and the Trent & Mersey Canal Society, Lottery money funded its repair and reopening in 2002.

An elegantly designed and entertaining visitor centre stands beside the Lift, featuring audiovisual displays, a café, and a chance to see into the control room. Trip boats operate in season.

This March saw the Anderton Boat Lift being awarded a prestigious Engineering Heritage Award by the Institute of Mechanical Engineers. John Wood, Past President & Chairman of the Heritage Committee of the Institute, said that the Lift restoration and ongoing success was a great example of engineering heritage being preserved. However, he also praised the role of volunteers in the campaign to get the lift repaired, as did Richard Parry, Chief Executive of CRT. They then invited Richard Drake (past IWA National Chairman) to speak as he had been Chair of the Anderton Boat Lift Trust, formed from many waterway society volunteers, to campaign for restoration. Richard said he was delighted to see the Award being presented. He also thanked all the voluntary groups that had supported their campaign.

**Richard Drake, Richard Parry and John Wood.**

**BELOW: The Anderton Boat Lift.**

BRIDGEWATER CANAL

Often claimed to be the ‘first’ canal in England, this accolade rightfully goes to the St Helen’s – but the Bridgewater was a seriously important navigation and became a link in the vast network of waterways that developed at the end of the 18th century. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the canal, given the ‘narrow’ nature of many that followed it, is its size. James Brindley built a wide canal, capable of carrying respectably sized vessels, as were subsequent canals that linked to it from the north – but not from the south.

The original route was from the Duke of Bridgewater’s underground mines at Worsley, across the stone arches of Barton Aqueduct over the Mersey & Irwell Navigation, and into Manchester. What we think of today as the main line was the extension to Runcorn.

Being part of the Cheshire Ring, it is often considered a through route rather than a destination in itself, but it has its highlights. Top of the list must be Barton Swing Aqueduct, built in the late 1890s to carry what we now know as the canal’s Leigh Branch across the Manchester Ship Canal. This wonder of Victorian engineering still operates daily.

Further along the Leigh Branch is historic Worsley, origin of the canal and the entrance to the former underground mines at The Delph. Beyond here the canal continues to its end-on junction with the Leeds & Liverpool Canal’s Leigh Branch.

Castlefield in Manchester, where the Bridgewater joins the Rochdale Canal, is now a thriving historic area including the Manchester Museum of Science & Industry and the site of a Roman fort. From here, past Waters Meeting where the Leigh Branch joins, and through the Manchester suburbs, is unexciting urban landscape accompanied by the Metrolink tram line, but things improve at and around the delightful Cheshire village of Lymm.

Until recently Preston Brook was a highlight, with its vast warehousing complex, but sadly following the encroachment of Runcorn New Town, this is now just another huge anonymous housing development. Most boaters will turn south here to almost unknowingly join the Trent & Mersey Canal at Preston Brook Tunnel, but they will miss one last highlight which lies on the lesser travelled arm into Runcorn: the old buildings and ground of Norton Priory are well worth a diversion to visit, even if you do not venture all the way into Runcorn. Here two massive flights of locks once linked the canal with the River Mersey.

RUNCORN LOCKS

The Mersey Gateway crossing at Runcorn, which is now at the early construction phase, offers the possibility of removing the existing bridge slip road, a major obstacle to restoration of the infilled flight of locks. The line is intact but currently landscaped so it will need major funding to remove the road blockage and restore the locks. The Runcorn Locks Restoration Society continues to receive practical support from Halton BC and with their assistance has produced four information boards; these will soon be installed along the line of the locks. To raise funds, the society has available a video of an illustrated talk by former president Bill Leathwood, about a trip from Liverpool to Runcorn Locks taken in the 1930s aboard a Mersey tug.

ST HELEN’S (SANKEY) CANAL

The Sankey Canal Restoration Society (SCARS) was established in 1985 with the major objective of restoring the canal to navigable standards through practical restoration work, raising awareness and promoting co-operation between local authorities and stakeholders. SCARS is currently working with Halton and Warrington borough councils in submitting funding bids for the restoration of the southern section of the canal. Here new swing-bridges have been installed or are planned by these authorities whilst a third fixed bridge has been temporarily fitted pending a permanent, movable replacement. The Society continues restoration and conservation work throughout the canal length and will be monitoring construction work on the new Mersey crossing where it goes over the waterway.
**MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL**

Very much a ‘canal with a difference’, this major commercial waterway is not to be tackled lightly – at least not by private boaters. Opened in the late Victorian era, it made Manchester a seaport, much to the chagrin of Liverpool, and was incredibly successful until the 1960s, since when ship passages have dwindled, particularly in the upper reaches.

But it is still a fully functioning waterway and available for use by pleasure boats, subject (quite rightly) to strict regulations. The most popular section is that linking the Shropshire Union Canal at Ellesmere Port with the Weaver near Runcorn, creating a ‘Ring’ via the Anderton Lift, but the opening of the Liverpool Link may encourage more enterprising boaters to make a circular cruise by crossing the Mersey to enter the Ship Canal at Eastham Locks (best done in convoy or with a pilot).

Shipping is regularly seen in these lower reaches as the canal cuts alongside the Mersey Estuary past Ellesmere Port and through a fascinating landscape where grazing animals alternate with oil refineries. Weston Point Docks mark the junction with the Weaver, then the former link to the Bridgewater Canal via Runcorn Locks, before passing under the Runcorn-Widnes bridge.

A series of hydraulically powered swing-bridges around Warrington and two more massive sets of locks are passed before the highlight of Barton Swing Aqueduct is reached. Mode Wheel Locks see little commercial use but bring the canal up to its final level, at the end of which are the impressively redeveloped docks, now called Salford Quays, with the Lowry Centre standing opposite Libeskind’s iconic Imperial War Museum building.

On the south bank, Manchester’s smaller docks offer a route through Pomona Lock to the Bridgewater Canal. Further upstream the canal seamlessly becomes the River Irwell and there is the exciting new opportunity to take your boat onto the recently restored Middlewood Locks section of the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal. But if it all sounds too daunting, or you do not have your own boat, there are excellent one-way cruises between Manchester and Liverpool offered throughout the year by Mersey Ferries. With a full commentary, a high viewpoint, and no hassle, this is the ideal way to see this still impressive canal.

**MANCHESTER, BOLTON & BURY CANAL**

The Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal Society aims to help restore the canal to navigation; the first length in Salford was reopened in 2008. It also maintains the rest of the canal and its towpath. It continues to meet quarterly with CRT and the three local authorities in a Joint Steering Group and has monthly weekend working parties. Substantial lengths of canal and towpath have been cleared and improved.

A book about the canal has been published by Amberley Press in their ‘Through Time’ series. In 2012-13 the Society, acting as principal contractor for Bolton Council, built a Meccano bridge over the top lock at Nob End in Little Lever. This unique bridge was designed by artist Liam Curtin, and has attracted national and international attention. Plans have been agreed with CRT to continue to enhance the whole lock flight.

**THE LIVERPOOL LINK**

The Liverpool Link, 1.4 miles long and built at a cost of just over £20m, opened in 2009. Comprising two new locks and three short tunnels, it takes boaters from Stanley Docks at the western terminus of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, down through the old docks to pass in front of the city’s world famous Three Graces. Special moorings are provided in the splendidly located Salthouse Dock, close to the famous Albert Dock, the new shopping city of Liverpool One and many more of the city’s well-known tourist attractions. Exploration of the Liverpool Link is one of the inland waterways’ great experiences. Boaters have to book passage in advance with the Canal & River Trust.
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How did you first get to know the inland waterways – did you start off with a hire boat holiday?

It's a bit of a shaggy dog story. We used to go camping, and our 'Sunday Treat' was to go to a camping exhibition at Stenson Lock on the Trent & Mersey Canal to look for new camping gear. Whilst there we would gongoozle, as you do. However, one Easter when camping at Over Haddon in Derbyshire it was a little cold. When the drinking water stayed frozen for the third day, we were surrounded by snow and were the only people left on the site, I was advised we would be leaving. A boating holiday that autumn seemed a good idea, and we went with Barrington Boats who had a small fleet of Springers. We had a great time and were hooked!

Where did you go on your first trip?

Our first trip (myself, wife and at the time two children) was in 1980 and we went along the beautiful and autumnal T&M to Great Haywood, then down the Staffs & Worcester to Penkridge where we turned round and came back!

What were your first impressions of the canals?

Amazingly restful, colourful and quiet yet with plenty to occupy the children.

Where did you go on subsequent holidays?

This all gets a bit hazy, however I think our next trip was with Club Line from Coventry up the Northern Oxford to Braunston, then down the Grand Union to the north portal of Blisworth Tunnel which had recently closed for repairs. We walked over the tunnel to Stoke Bruerne to the museum, then had to get the boat hire company out as the boat would not start!

Next time out was around the BCN – very exciting including a trip down the Engine Arm to what I expected to be a winding hole at the end. As it got darker I broke the news to my wife that we'd be reversing to the junction, and she needed to be on the bank with the bowline to help keep it straight. After some muttering about the risks of falling in I tactfully explained that as she was probably bigger than me (about 5 months pregnant with our third child) and couldn't easily steer it was only fair – and off we went!

So when did you first acquire a boat of your own?

We were by now considering canal holidays every spring and autumn, when hiring was a bit cheaper. With the usual optimistic accounting I suggested if we bought a boat for ourselves and I fitted it out, we could holiday for about the same cost. Dave Clarke at R&D Narrowboats, New Ollerton did the necessary, and our boat was launched at Shardlow a couple of months after our third child was born. The boat came as a ‘sailaway’ with engine, windows and doors, and we fitted a tap and a water pump, and set off with sleeping bags on the floor on our first holiday that summer.

When did you first join IWA?

So long ago I struggle to remember...and all the little pasteboard membership cards we used to get have gone in a filing clearout. As far as I can work out, around 1980 when we first became interested in canals and canal holidays.

What prompted you to join?

I think it was after our first holiday, when we had picked up something about IWA in the base shop. We’d had a great time, and wanted to support the canals and find out more – IWA seemed a good way to do it.
What activities have you been involved in over the years? I believe you’ve done a few stints with WRG.

Before we had our own boat, going on the occasional work party weekend seemed a great way to do something towards restoration, and have a bit of a break – we usually managed to get grandparents to babysit if we both went. This was the case at Frankton on the IWA Frankton Locks with John Baylis’ WRG East Midlands and Mick and Carole Gold’s Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association team. We usually operated the mixer!

Through Mark Tiddy we also got to know about Ian Edgar and the Bugsworth Basin work, and had some joint and some myself-only work parties there. I also did some work on the southern Stratford Canal one year. However, as the children grew up and we had the boat it got more difficult to make the time, and our last restoration work was on the Aston locks of the Montgomery Canal.

And now you’re a trustee – what does that involve?

I’ve only recently become a Trustee, so still have my ‘L’ plate! Trustees act as ‘stewards’ of IWA as an organisation on behalf of the members. As a group we work to steer the Association along the route set out by our Aims and Objectives – to educate and raise awareness of the inland waterways, work to protect, preserve and maintain existing waterways, and to support restoration of un navigable canals and waterways. This requires lots of behind the scenes work by many individuals – many more than just the Trustees – and our role is to pull everything together and give guidance and leadership. As you might expect, sometimes this is easier and more successful than others, however it is very rewarding and for anyone out there who is up for the challenge and thinks they have the sort of skills we need, please drop Neil Edwards a note!

You also serve on the Finance Committee – does that take up much of your time?

Finance Committee is a sub-committee of the Trustee Board, led by the National Treasurer with the specific role of overseeing IWA finances and business procedures to ensure they are kept in order. As this is the sort of thing I have spent much of my working life doing, it is a task I’m fairly familiar with. Meetings take half a day every couple of months, and each member has in addition a specific role as ‘lead’ on a topic which they do in between meetings, and keep in touch with other committee members and IWA’s staff of experts who do the real work. This ensures the Trustee Board only has to get involved in the financial detail when key decisions need to be made, and Finance Committee can prepare reports making recommendations on what to do.

Perhaps it’s your work on formulating IWA’s response to HS2 that keeps you busiest at the moment. How did this come about – were you a willing volunteer for the role?

Well my arm doesn’t hurt as much now…

Seriously, in May 2013 after a lot of skirmishing nationally in the media, courts and Parliament, it became apparent that HS2 was becoming increasingly likely to be built from London to Birmingham, and on its way impact several canals significantly. Local IWA branches were doing great work, however we wanted to provide a secure national response and use our national status to protect waterways.

In my previous work I had some experience of large projects and investment programmes and was asked to help communicate within IWA and between us and other stakeholders on HS2. This quickly developed further, as HS2 Ltd issued formal consultations on the London-Birmingham route, and the associated Environmental Statement needed to quantify the environmental consequences of the project, and what mitigation HS2 Ltd proposed. With a great deal of help from lots of people, we have responded to all the public consultations after publicising our proposals and getting feedback from members, so HS2 knows what we believe is needed to protect inland waterways.

We have tried to keep members informed both of what is going on, and what IWA is doing about it – with varying degrees of success. At times there has been so much to get through with the result that there has been too little time to tell anyone – partly due to the very tight political timetable (which has now been loosened). However, I do believe the inland waterways are being better protected by the work, and by the very good coordination between the key players.

I believe that IWA’s position is that it is neither for nor against the project in principle. So what is your brief?

Our brief is that, whatever the rights and wrongs of a high speed railway, we need to ensure that on balance it does more good than harm to inland waterways and their users. Moreover, where there is adverse impact the project uses the best available means to mitigate that impact.

To achieve this, we have used all avenues to inform and influence decisions on the route, and detailed designs of crossings and close encounters with waterways, and will continue to do so as the designs are developed and political approvals sought. Much of the work is done ‘below the radar’, or may be relatively minor and unremarkable – but all contributes to our reputation of knowing what we are about, and being pragmatic in our approach.

“whatever the rights and wrongs of a high speed railway, we need to ensure that on balance it does more good than harm to inland waterways.”
Have you received, in general, a sympathetic hearing from HS2 Ltd and/or Government ministers?
This is a real Curate’s Egg. In several cases there are clear examples where we have raised an issue, and seen it acted on. In other cases we have done the same, engaged in dialogue and then hit a brick wall. Current signs are that we are recognised as a key stakeholder and are getting serious engagement, however previous decisions where impact on a waterway has been significant have been stuck to despite lengthy attempts.
Fradley is a good example and we continue to lobby to get the route changed at this point.

What has been achieved so far – and what remains to be fought for? Which are the canals most threatened by HS2?
The three highest priority impacts are at Fradley in the London-Birmingham Phase 1, and on the Chesterfield Canal Restoration (Staveley and Killamarsh/Renishaw sections) and Aire & Calder Navigation at Woodlesford.

At Fradley, HS2 Ltd propose to build four separate viaducts over the Trent & Mersey Canal in a 1,000m stretch above Shade House Lock. The first crossing about 350m up from the lock will be the ‘main line’ heading for Manchester – which initially will just go a short way over the canal about 8m high, and stop. The second and third are the ‘link lines’ running from the main line over to the existing West Coast Main Line. The second crosses about 560m up from Shade House Lock and about 15m up in the air (because it has crossed over the main line) before dropping down, and the third crosses 30m further on and about 8m up. These two lines then run near to the canal on an embankment before crossing back again 100m above Wood End Lock and about 12m up. All together, this pretty much destroys the current setting between Shade House and Wood End. IWA has worked with CRT to develop an alternative alignment, and this is what we are pushing to get built instead of the current proposal – the alternative is both feasible and lower cost so it is hard to see why it has taken so long to get HS2 Ltd to take our proposals on board.

The impacts on the Chesterfield and Aire & Calder arise from the proposed route for Phase 2 Birmingham-Leeds, and are at an earlier stage. Nevertheless, as proposed the route runs right over and along much of the already restored Chesterfield Canal, and effectively severs it. Likewise, at Woodlesford the clearance under HS2 Ltd’s proposed crossings of the navigation will prevent barges getting through.

These are the major issues – however there are many others like the design of waterway interfaces, the levels of noise created by operating trains, and visual impact of track, structures, maintenance depots and stations on waterways at many locations where we want to see a better deal for the waterways.

Turning away from this threat to our waterways, do you still enjoy the canals as much as you did when you first discovered them?
Very much so – however well you think you know a stretch, there always seems another aspect to discover. And of course things are always changing to add to the experience.

With your various IWA duties to perform, do you still get the chance to get out boating from time to time?
It certainly takes more planning, and there is a bit of a backlog of jobs I would like to do on the boat, but once you are on it and able to get going everything slots neatly into place (well, almost always!) and you can relax and enjoy the waterways directly along with everyone else.

Which is your favourite waterway on the system?
I would have to duck out of this one, not least because I haven’t visited everywhere yet. The T&M and Staffs & Worcester were our first trip, and the first experience is often the sharpest. Boating on a waterway which you have helped – in however minor a way – to restore, like the Montgomery or Bugsworth Basin, is also a special treat. However, cruising around the BCN and seeing how well adapted the canals were for their first purpose – as the major transport innovation of their day – is also fantastic.

Finally, what have you enjoyed most about being a member of IWA?
Without doubt, meeting and getting to know a wide bunch of people who are not just massively enthusiastic about their inland waterways, but also prepared to use their experience, time and expertise to ensure they will still be there, better than ever, for others to enjoy and look after in their turn.

“boating on a waterway which you have helped to restore, like the Montgomery or Bugsworth Basin, is also a special treat”
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May

2nd-5th
Northampton IWA Branch Boat Gathering
Nurser’s Dock, Braunston Marina.
Attractions include live music, boaters’
games and auction, quizzes, guided walks,
barbeque, fish & chip supper and real ale
bar. 07939 977859,
tony.clarke@waterways.org.uk,
www.waterways.org.uk

2nd-5th
St Richards Festival
Droitwich Spa. The event takes place in the
town centre and Vines Park. Live music,
entertainment, medieval re-enactment,
Italian market, farmers and craft market on
Saturday, classic and vintage cars, real ale
bar, art exhibition, stalls and activities.
www.strichardsfestival.co.uk

3rd-5th
Norbury Canal Festival
Norbury Junction. Children’s activities,
WoW, boat trips, fairground and bouncy
castle, boat traders, restored working boats.
Burton Borough Brass Band and traditional
canalside church service on Sunday.
Entertainment on Saturday and Sunday
evening includes a variety of musical acts.
www.sncanal.org.uk

3rd-5th
Skipton Waterway Festival
The theme this year is Le Tour De France
Grand Depart. Craft stalls, painted ware
stalls, food and drink, children’s activities,
rides and much more. On Sunday there will
be a raft race and illuminated cruise.
01756 799478, info@penninecruisers.com

3rd-5th
Tug Boat Event
Black Country Living Museum. Tug boats
from near and far will make a rare
appearance as they manoeuvre their way
along the canal arm. Visitors can chat to
boat owners and join in with ‘Hands on
Heritage’ canal crafts. On the Monday there
will be Maypole dancing, with professional
dancers demonstrating the age-old tradition
accompanied by live music. Entry forms:
01384 422379, ste.bingham@talktalk.net,
www.bclm.co.uk

9th-11th
Les Allen Register Boat Gathering
Titford Pump House, Oldbury. For anyone
that has a boat built by Les Allen & Sons, or
who are interested in the make.
07952 792676, jennier971@btinternet.com

9th-16th
BCN Explorer Cruise A
Starting at Curdworth and finishing at
Tipton. Designed to explore the lesser-
known parts of the BCN.
www.bcninternational.co.uk

17th-18th
BCNS Summer Rally
Centred around the historic Titford Pump
House, Engine Street, Oldbury.
www.bcninternational.co.uk

17th-18th
Moira Canal Festival
Moira Furnace, Ashby Canal. Live music,
Morris dancers, the first unicycle ride over
the Ashby Canal, historic re-enactment, TV
series Tugs, Mr Juggler, Emma’s Crafty Kids,
boats, classic vehicles and live steam.
www.moiracanalfestival.co.uk

17th-18th
Rickmansworth Festival
Music and performing arts, displays,
presentations, traders, boats and catering.
www.rwt.org.uk/festival

18th-26th
BCN Explorer Cruise B
Starting at Titford Pump House and finishing
at Tipton Green. Designed to explore the
lesser-known parts of the BCN.
www.bcninternational.co.uk

24th-26th
Crick Boat Show
Crick Marina, GU Leicester Section.
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waterways heritage and wildlife, boat trips,
marquees full of interesting stands, craft
and food sellers and loads for the children
to do both on land and on the water.
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£8, concessions £11, family £35. Save up
to 26% when tickets purchased in advance.
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www.crickboatshow.com

31st May-1st June
Etruria Canals Festival
Etruria Junction, Stoke-on-Trent. Historic
boat parade, beer tent, music and dance,
children’s activities, historic beam engine in
steam, vintage cars, boat trips, railway and
pottery displays.
www.etruriacanalsfestival.org.uk

June

6th-8th
Beale Park Boat & Outdoor Show
Lower Basildon, River Thames.
www.bealeparkboatandoutdoorshow.co.uk
### IWA National Campaign Festival

**6th-8th**

Tower Wharf area, Chester. Organised by Chester & Merseyside Branch, the IWA National Campaign Festival will be a very colourful event with over a hundred decorated visiting craft, live music, entertainment and children's activities – indeed something for everyone.

The main aim of the festival will be to promote the use of the neglected Dee Branch Arm of the Shropshire Union Canal with a future vision of a lock in the old mill race at the end of the weir, thus giving visiting boats access to the River Dee up to Farndon. The local branch is also pushing for regeneration of the riverside and canal corridor to create a vibrant area that will be good for business and the local community.

**www.waterways.org.uk**

### IWA National Trailboat Festival

**24th-26th May**

IWA National Trailboat Festival

The 2014 IWA National Trailboat Festival is to be held at the Grand Western Canal Country Park. 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 'Nanvies Fair' in Sampford Peverell, featuring lots of period costume.

The event will form the main celebration of the canal’s bicentenary. Construction work began in 1810 and was completed in 1814. It will also provide an opportunity to celebrate completion of repairs to the breached embankment at Halberton, 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 around the UK. Thousands of visitors enjoyed live music and entertainment at IWA’s 2008 National Trailboat Festival, which was also held by the Grand Western Canal, and the 2014 festival aims to be even better. The 2014 event will be organised and run by Devon County Council’s Grand Western Canal Ranger Service, under the direction of an organising committee which includes local canal enthusiasts and councillors, on behalf of IWA.

**www.waterways.org.uk**

### IWA Ware Boat Festival

**12th-15th**

**Russell Newbery Register Rally**

National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port. There will be a comprehensive programme of workshops and events.

**www.nrnregister.org.uk/rally**

### Middlewich Folk & Boat Festival

**13th-15th**

Selection of Main stage and Fringe music in various venues around the town, Morris dancing displays, Céilidh nights, stalls, workshops and a colourful array of narrowboats.

**www.midfest.org.uk**

### Stoke Bruerne’s Family Festival

**14th-15th**

Canal Museum. Historic and working boats, craft demonstrations, live music, theatre and dance, beer festival, boaters’ auction, blacksmith demonstrations, children’s activities, boat trips, guided heritage walks, trade shows and stalls.

**www.friendsofcanalmuseum.org.uk**

### Lymm Festival

**19th-29th**

Street fun and food fest, Blues, 60s and Jazz nights, children’s theatre, historic transport day and much more.

**www.lymmfestival.org.uk**

### Foxton Locks Festival

**21st-22nd**

**GU Leicester Section.**

**www.foxtonlocksfestival.co.uk**

### Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally & Canal Festival

**28th-29th**

Braunston Marina. Rally of surviving Braunston and Grand Union boats, with twice daily parade, trade exhibitors, canal societies, music, fast food, bar. Entrance £10 per car.

**www.braunstonmarina.co.uk**

### Chesterfield Canal Festival

**28th-29th**

Staveley Town Basin. Trip boats, canoeing and zorbing, kids off road, workshops, climbing tower and lots more.

**www.chesterfield-canal-trust.org.uk**

### Leeds Waterfront Festival

**28th-29th**

A weekend of fun and entertainment.

**www.leedswaterfrontfestival.com**

### Foxton Locks Festival

**21st-22nd**

**Burscough Heritage Group Boat Gathering**

All boats welcome, especially historic and trading boats, for which a mooring will be reserved. No charge to attend but to ensure a mooring contact Tom Spencer, 01704 893463, 07966 436238

**28th-29th**

**Gathering**

Bancroft Basin in an exhibition put on by IWA to reminisce and celebrate these major achievements in waterway history.

**Burscough Heritage Group**

**www.rnregister.org.uk/rally**

### Foxton Locks Festival

**21st-22nd**

**Stratford River Festival**

The 6th annual river festival of music, drinks, entertainment, fireworks and great food will be celebrating 50 years of the Stratford Canal and 40 years of the Upper Avon with the Friday afternoon dedicated to a re-enactment in Bancroft Basin of the opening of the canal by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque.

Historic photographs from the 1964 and 1974 periods will be displayed beside the Bancroft Basin in an exhibition put on by IWA, The Stratford upon Avon Canal Society and Canal & River Trust. Those present at either event are especially encouraged to join IWA to reminisce and celebrate these major achievements in waterway history.

**www.stratfordriverfestival.co.uk**

### Leeds Waterfront Festival

**28th-29th**

A weekend of fun and entertainment.

**www.leedswaterfrontfestival.com**

### Foxton Locks Festival

**21st-22nd**

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**www.chesterfield-canal-trust.org.uk**

### Leeds Waterfront Festival

**28th-29th**

A weekend of fun and entertainment.

**www.leedswaterfrontfestival.com**
6th
IWA Rochdale Canal Boat Gathering for Le Tour de France
IWA West Riding Branch is organising a boat gathering to mark Le Tour de France
The Grand Départ 2014.
www.waterways.org.uk/westriding

11th-13th
Preston Riversway Festival
The weekend boasts over 60 guest boaters who sail to Preston from around the country to join in the fun, boat trips around the dock, dragon boat competition and family entertainment.
www.prestonriverswayfestival.co.uk

11th-13th
Evesham River Festival
www.eveshamriverfestival.co.uk

19th-20th
Thames Traditional Boat Rally
Fawley Meadows, Henley-on-Thames. The largest event of its kind held in Europe. Vintage vehicles, boat jumbles, displays, traditional boats, children’s entertainment.
www.tradboatrally.com

20th
Aqueduct Marina Open Day
Church Minshull, Nantwich. Circus skills, crafts, children’s entertainment, dog show, Shroppie fly boat Saturn, boat trips, cafe, licensed bar, rag rug making presentation, painted wares display, model boats.
www.aqueductmarina.co.uk

25th-27th
Newbury Waterways Festival
Victoria Park. The main public event will take place on the 27th. Flotilla of boats, trip boat Jubilee, stalls, entertainment, food outlets, duck race. www.katrust.org

26th-27th
Audlem Festival of Transport
Old cars, motorcycles, lorries, buses and historic narrowboats. www.audlemmill.co.uk

September
5th-7th
Withymoor Island Boat Gathering
www.waterways.org.uk

6th-7th
Maesbury Canal Festival
Canal Central. Decorated and trading boats, canal Carrs, demonstrations, music, food, children’s activities. 01691 830403, www.maesburycanalfestival.co.uk

7th
Angel Canal Festival
www.angelcanalfestival.org

13th-14th
Village at War
Canal Museum, Stoke Bruerne. 1940s re-enactment with Battle of Britain Memorial Flight fly-past, living history groups, tanks and vintage vehicles, black market traders, live music and much more.
www.friendsofcanaalmuseum.org.uk

13th-14th
Black Country Boating Festival
www.bcbf.com

23rd-25th August
IWA Saul Waterways Pageant
Saul Waterways Pageant will be held over the August Bank Holiday weekend at the junction of the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal and Stroudwater Navigation. The event will focus on waterway activities with a programme of competitions including boat handling, canoeing, tug of war, best boat in bloom, illuminated boat display, best kept engine room etc. Holding the event on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal will also allow inland waterways access for sailing ships and other much larger vessels to attend and celebrate the pageant.

The Saul Waterways Pageant will celebrate the restoration work that is taking place on the Cotswold Canals, and promote the forthcoming Heritage Lottery bid which the Cotswold Canals Trust is making. During the pageant, IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) will be working with the Trust to restore the canal at Ham Mill and Bowbridge Locks near Stroud. Members of the public are invited to come along and see ‘WRG in action’.
www.waterways.org.uk

20th-21st
Withichurch Waterway Trust Gathering of Boats
Withichurch Arm. Entry £12.50 per boat which includes mooring, plaque and competitions. Boaters’s social evening at Chemistry Farm on 20th. Entry forms: Hon. Secretary, Chemistry Farm, Whitchurch SY13 1BZ, 01948 662779.
www.withchurchnationalwaterwaysassociation.com

20th-21st
Tipton Canal Festival
Children’s entertainment, trade and charity stalls, boat trips, Sunday church service, art and craft demonstrations, and lots more.
www.tiptoncommunityassociation.com

26th-28th
Park Head Rally
Dudley. Celebrating 50 years of the Dudley Canal Trust. Entry forms: 01384 422379, ste.bingham@talktalk.net

27th
IWA National AGM Weekend
IWA’s 2014 Annual General Meeting will be held in the historic market town of Leek, Staffordshire, on Saturday 27th September. In addition to the morning open meeting and AGM itself on the Saturday, the weekend (26th-28th September) will include social events on the Friday and Saturday evenings plus a waterway community event on the Sunday focussing on the Caldon Canal.
www.waterways.org.uk

October
31st Oct-1st Nov
Bonfire Rally
Engine Arm Junction, top of Smethwick Locks. www.bcnsociety.co.uk
Heron Maps
£5.99 each (unless otherwise stated)
Has navigation and historical information, visitor moorings, marinas and boatyards, boat hire shops and distance markers, tourist information centres, pubs, nature reserves, parks, long distance paths, public toilets and caravan and camp sites.

The Broads Code HM11
Avon Ring and Droitwich Ring Code HM09 – £6.50
Birmingham Canal Navigations Code HM16
Grand Union: Braunston to Kings Langley Code HM17
GU Canal: Stoke Bruerne to Leiceste Code HM19
Kennet & Avon Canal and River Avon Code HM20
Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Code HM15
Oxford Canal Code HM14
Stourport Ring & Droitwich Ring Code HM20 – £6.50
River Thames and The Thames Path Code HM12

Imray Maps and Guides
The River Thames Code IM06 – £9.95
River Thames map Code IM55 – £6.95
Fenland Waterways Code IM69 – £7.95
River Great Ouse Code IM68 – £9.50
The River Nene Code IM03 – £7.95
Waterways of GB Map Code IM57 – £8.95

Towpath Guides – Nick Corble
Reduced from £4.95 £5.00 each
Grand Union North Code TG03
Grand Union South Code TG02
South Oxford Canal Code TG01

Chris Clegg’s Time Map Code CC01 – £4.00*
Calculate the time to cruise between places, just count the dots and multiply by 2 hours. Smaller maps also included. Laminated.

GEOprojects Maps
£3.00 each (reduced from £4.95 unless otherwise stated)
Fold out maps that include useful contact numbers, camping facilities, long and short term mooring sites, and local services.

Lancaster Canal Code GP34
River Nene Code GP37
Shropshire Union Canal Code GP20
Basingstoke Canal & Way Code GP35
Chesterfield Canal Code GP36
Coventry & Ashby Canal Code GP05
Forth & Clyde Canal Code GP06
GU Part 4 Leicester, Soar & Erewash Code GP10
South Pennine Ring Code GP30
Staffs & wercester Canal & River Severn Code GP21
Trent & Mersey 1: West of Burton-on-Trent Code GP23
Trent & Mersey 2: East of Great Haywood Code GP24
Worcs & B’ham Canal (2nd ed.) Code GP39

Nicholsons Guides

Pearson’s Canal Companions
£9.95 each
Large scale maps, waterside towns and villages’ listings of eating and drinking, shopping and boating facilities.

Cheshire Ring Code PE18
Four Counties Ring Code PE03
Kennet & Avon Code PE15
Penneine Waters Code PE08
River Severn & Avon Ring Code PE01
Stourport Ring Code PE07
Welsh Waters Code PE04
South Midlands/ Warwickshire Ring Code PE05
Grand Union and Oxford Canals Code PE09 New Edition

Laundrette List Code CC02 – £4.50*
Shows towns and villages with laundrettes, directions from the waterway. Size A4. 24 pages. Softback.

Complete Guide to the Lancaster Canal Code LC02 -£6.50

Waterway Routes DVDs
All at reduced prices – see website
With maps and commentary, an information booklet and a fold out map.

DVDS by VideoActive
£12.99 each (unless otherwise stated)
Guide to the waterways (approx 1 hour)
Cheshire Ring Code VA50
Four Counties Ring Code VA55
Llangollen Canal Code VA93
London Ring Code VA117
Shropshire Union Cruise Code VA90
River Trent Code VA96
Trent and Mersey Canal Code VA77
Kennet & Avon Canal Parts 1 & 2 Code VA101 – £18.98
Leeds & L’pool Canal, Parts 1 & 2 Code VA100 – £18.98
Llangollen & Montgomery Canals Code VA98 – £18.98
Full selection on website - Some at reduced prices

Books for Boaters
Narrowboat Planning Code WW18 – £14.99
Inland Boat Owner’s Book Code WW31 - £17.50
Narrowboat Builder’s Book Code WW05 - £14.99
Going It Alone – Colin Edmondson Code ED01 - £4.00* The Fender Book – Colin R Jones Code CJ01 – £12.95
Living Afloat – Residential Boat Owners Association Code RB02 – £9.95
Sell Up and Cruise the Inland Waterways – Bill & Laurel Cooper Code AC88 – £16.99
Living Aboard Towpath Guide – Nick Corble Code TG06 – £9.99 £6.95
Narrowboat’s Log Book (Imray) Code IM31 – £10.95
RYA Inland Waterways Handbook Code RY26 – £11.99
Historic Working Narrow Boats Today – David Williams & Peter Silvester Code AU09 – £19.95
Knots for the Cut – Ben Selfe Code AU10 – £21.95 New

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*Free postage on these items
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.

**LICHFIELD BRANCH**

Friday 14th February proved a very wet day for the Lichfield Branch work party on the Trent & Mersey Canal. Nevertheless, a small but intrepid band of volunteers duly arrived at St Augustine’s Field and worked hard all morning, no doubt spurred on by the promise of cake. Throughout the morning volunteers cleaned the canal-side decking and laid chicken wire to make the surface safe to walk on. This was followed by a good clean-up of the vegetation and litter in the area. This was all accomplished by lunchtime when work was adjourned due to poor weather.

On 22nd February, the weather was better and this encouraged a larger group of 17 volunteers to venture out. The task was to replace British Waterways badges with up-to-date CRT labels. All the relevant signs and notice boards in Rugeley were cleaned and as many as possible re-badged before the labels ran out! However, the work did not stop here as volunteers cleaned round all the town mooring rings and painted out the graffiti at the Breereton end of the Rugeley towpath.

**CHILTERN BRANCH**

Chiltern Branch is currently working on a project to improve the area around Marsworth Locks. This has begun with the planned replacement of the two benches beside Lock 39. To date the benches have been removed and volunteers are working on the replacements that should be in place for the summer boating season. In addition to this, on 26th March the branch teamed up with head office to repaint Lock 43 at Marsworth on the Grand Union Canal. Head office staff were keen to get involved with the project to support the local branch and help improve a stretch of canal that was to feature in the 50-mile Acheman Challenge a few were to undertake on 5th April.

Volunteers used wire brushes to remove damaged and cracked paint on the lock gates and bollards at Lock 43. By early afternoon, paint had been carefully applied to the majority of the lock gates and bollards. Unfortunately, little painting was completed past this point as it began to rain.

**Hard at work improving Marsworth Locks.**
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.

North Staffordshire & South Cheshire Branch volunteers continue their work with the Caldon & Uttoxeter Canal Trust and Trent & Mersey Canal Society.

On the Caldon Canal, volunteers have continued hedge planting and laying. On 9th January, the volunteers met at Basford Bridge and loaded wheelbarrows with spades, stakes, protective sleeves and hedging plants; later in the day a return trip to base was necessary as it became apparent the group had underestimated just how much they would get done. Over 300 trees were planted during the work party as volunteers filled hedgerow gaps that required anything from one to thirty plants.

Hedge planting on the Caldon Canal continued at Froghall Basin on the 13th March after eight volunteers began the day clearing vegetation along the towpath and around the basin. Throughout the remainder of the day volunteers again managed to plant around 300 hedging plants along the towpath from the tunnel entrance back towards the basin.

The branch’s work on the Cheshire Locks on the Trent & Mersey Canal was slightly hindered by rain on 18th January so painting was postponed and volunteers cleared the cobbles at Locks 63 and 64 instead. On 18th February, volunteers set to work cleaning and repainting the metal work around Locks 63 and 64 and were helped by CRT’s National Volunteering Manager, Ed Moss. On 15th March, the weather had finally been dry for long enough to enable the volunteers to paint the wooden gates at Locks 63 and 64.

Aside from the branch’s regular work parties usually on either the Caldon or Trent & Mersey canals, the branch also organised a work party on 9th February to clean-up the canals of Stoke-on-Trent and worked on both canals at the same time.

Twenty volunteers, several of them new to canal work parties, turned out at Etruria Junction to pull rubbish out of the navigations and litter pick along the towpaths of the two canals. The volunteers included boaters and local residents as well as volunteers from the branch, Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust, Etruria Industrial Museum and CRT’s Towpath Taskforce.

The skip was full by the end of the day, with all metal items put aside to be recycled. Approximately forty bags of rubbish were collected in total, as well as a selection of larger objects pulled out of the canal, which included four bicycles, two shopping trolleys, tyres, carpets and some plastic fence panels.

BIRMINGHAM, BLACK COUNTRY & WORCESTERSHIRE BRANCH

Birmingham, Black Country & Worcestershire Branch hold the first of a series of monthly work parties on the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal on Wednesday 12th March. Seven branch volunteers gathered at Falling Sands Lock, south of Kidderminster, where they were met by CRT Volunteer Leader, Steve Lambert. Work carried out included painting the lock gates and metal work at Falling Sands Lock, painting a nearby sluice that lets water in to the adjacent River Stour, and planting grass seed to finish a raised bank put in place as a flood precaution.
On Saturday 1st March, IWA West Country Branch held its first canal clean-up of the spring. Throughout the day, around 30 volunteers visited Firepool Lock on the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal, to lend a hand and improve the area for cyclists, walkers and boaters.

A group of volunteers cleared rubbish from the car park adjacent to the lock, before cutting back the overgrown vegetation. A second group gave the lock gates some much needed attention and prepared and re-painted the gates, handrails, metal work and mooring bollards.

Finally, a third group litter picked the towpath in both directions and collected over 30 bags of rubbish. The group also removed a large pile of debris from the far side of the lock, a difficult task as it involved moving many heavy barrow loads of wet vegetation along the lock, over the bridge and back to the car park.

CHESTER & MERSEYSIDE BRANCH

Chester & Merseyside Branch continues in its preparations for the IWA National Campaign Festival, to be held on the Dee Branch of the Shropshire Union from 6th-8th June. Volunteers gave 20 more hours of their time on 1st February and completed works to unearth buried mooring rings at Tower Wharf and cut back overgrown vegetation to improve access to towpath moorings close to Bridge 126. The group undertook a successful litter pick and brought in ten bags of rubbish. It would seem that the routine litter picks have had a positive affect in the long term as well as the short, as on 1st March when volunteers repeated the task there was a noticeable reduction in litter. With good weather at this work party, four volunteers undertook the task of re-painting the railings at Williams Moorings whilst others cleaned up the basin edging stones by Telford’s Wharf pub.

MANCHESTER BRANCH

On 22nd February, Manchester Branch and the local CRT Towpath Taskforce were not at their usual location of Hyde but at Bridge 15 on the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal. The towpath here is well used and this coupled with the recent prolonged rainfall had left the path very muddy and pootholed. The work party planned to repair the towpath with some six tons of stone. CRT’s Hazel Mayow had managed to source a stone with high grit content, which should help bond the surface and make the path more durable. The volunteers from IWA and CRT, with the help of 12 students from the University of Manchester’s Student Development & Community Engagement Division, managed to lay five tons of stone.

Students from the University of Manchester help to lay the towpath.
Warwickshire Branch continues to be very active as it supports the local CRT Towpath Taskforce at Hatton and Lapworth four times a month and also organises additional work parties.

On Sunday 2nd February, 12 IWA Warwickshire Branch volunteers worked on the offside of Hatton flight on the Grand Union Canal to clear vegetation on the lock approaches to Locks 32 and 29 and below Lock 30. This was part of the plan to re-instate the path on the offside to allow boaters’ crews passage on either side of the middle section of the flight. When clearing the offside towpath at Hatton locks, it was noted that one stretch had badly subsided. So when IWA Warwickshire Branch members took part in a CRT project with CRT volunteer lock-keepers and towpath taskforce volunteers, on Lock 40 on the Wilmcote flight of the South Stratford Canal, it became obvious that the large quantity of rubble accumulated from the dismantling of the side wall could be used to raise the level of the path. Participants on the Wilmcote project helped move the hopper containing the rubble through 16 miles and 34 locks to above Lock 30 on the Grand Union Canal.

On Sunday 23rd March, a dozen Warwickshire Branch volunteers met near the Ugly bridge. The hopper, containing the rubble, was positioned alongside the towpath being repaired. A barrow hoist, supplied by CRT, was erected to aid in raising the rubble from the hold. In addition to the hoist, rubble was also shovelled over the gunnels into big bags and dragged to where it was needed.

Away from Hatton, on Sunday 9th February, Warwickshire Branch led another successful large scale clean-up on the Grand Union Canal, which was attended by over 80 volunteers. The group worked up the stretch of canal between Clements Street, Leamington Spa, and the aqueduct over the River Avon in Warwick.

The day had not started well as the tug and hopper had been cast adrift from its moorings by thieves who had stolen the securing ropes. This did not deter the volunteers as once the craft had been retrieved everyone got to work with grappling hooks and litter pickers and collected enough rubbish from the canal and towpath to fill a hopper and car trailer. This was the biggest haul of rubbish IWA Warwickshire Branch has secured from a large clean-up event, which was largely due to the hard work of IWA members, Leamington Spa Army Cadets, students from the University of Warwick, a Warwick youth group and local residents.

Around 50 shopping trollies, a selection of over 20 bicycles, a ladder, a Heras fencing panel, traffic cones, a supermarket advertising banner, a gas bottle and mattresses were all dragged from the navigation. These items, along with the 30 bags of rubbish collected by the litter pickers, quickly filled the hopper to its full capacity. As the hopper was taken back to Hatton, walkers on the towpath stopped to photograph the unusual sight and struggled to believe all the rubbish had come from the canal in one morning.

Chelmsford Branch and Essex WRG have continued their regular weekend work parties in 2014. Over the weekend of 1st-2nd March, 18 volunteers completed concreting the path at the south quay at Heybridge Basin, a job that had been started by London WRG in February. Paving slabs were also relayed on the existing pathways around the toilet block as they had subsided over the years.
Himalayan Balsam (botanical name Impatiens glandulifera) is an invasive plant introduced to Britain in the mid 19th Century by Victorian gardeners. It is the tallest annual plant in the UK, growing to a height of over three metres. Himalayan Balsam crowds out native plants and can take over whole areas of river and canal bank leading to erosion when the plant dies back in the winter. The seeds, up to 800 per plant, are released explosively from the seedpods and can travel for up to seven metres from the plant. If the seeds land in a stream, river or canal they can be taken downstream where they could start a new colony, one of the reasons this plant is so difficult to control.

Over the last ten years, this plant has become more established on many of our waterways; however, Himalayan Balsam can be controlled by pulling it up before the seeds develop. IWA plans to follow up a successful 2013 Himalayan Balsam Campaign in 2014 with the return of work parties to known Himalayan Balsam sites as well as work parties at new locations. IWA is working in conjunction with CRT in order to coordinate efforts and remove more Himalayan Balsam than ever before. IWA branches plan to hold work parties throughout the Himalayan Balsam pulling season (June-August) with a particular focus of combined efforts from CRT and IWA in a Himalayan Balsam week from 19th-27th July. During Himalayan Balsam week, a number of work parties will take place and IWA and CRT hope to further raise awareness of the problem. A list of Himalayan Balsam work parties can be viewed at www.waterways.org.uk/himalayanbalsamdates.

If Himalayan Balsam is not a problem in your area why not organise a branch trip or day out with friends and family and attend one of the many IWA branch Himalayan Balsam work parties planned across the country in 2014. Extra help is always welcome and Himalayan Balsam pulling is a great day out with friends and family as it is a child friendly activity, a way to get outside and active and also benefits the environment and waterways.

Identification Guide

If you know of an area affected by Himalayan Balsam, IWA’s Branch Campaign Team would like to hear about it. In the spring, Himalayan Balsam has pinky-red hollow stems and shiny green lance shaped leaves. The plant has flowers that range from purplish-pink to almost white in colour and are slipper shaped, they appear between June and October.

Himalayan Balsam.

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IPSWICH BRANCH

Work parties on the River Gipping happen on a weekly basis, organised by the River Gipping Trust (RGT) and supported by Ipswich Branch. Towards the end of last year much of the work slowed right down because of poor weather. One area that did not, however, was the production of the new bridge for Pippins Ford, which could continue undercover at White House Farm. The timber for the bridge was milled at the end of October last year and, thanks to the hard work of the volunteers involved in the project, the construction of the bridge was finished by mid-March having taken around four and a half months to complete.

Volunteers have been just as busy away from the farm and the regular work party has completed the replacement of the earth fill behind the new bridge abutments at Pippins Ford. It was important this was done in time for the fill to settle before the new bridge is put into place.

NORTHAMPTON BRANCH

Since Northampton Branch adopted and began work on the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal, it has run seven work parties, attracted twenty-seven different volunteers and amassed 386 volunteer hours. To help in its work the branch has purchased two strimmers for vegetation clearance and seven volunteers have been trained by CRT to operate them. CRT has also allocated a secure storage area at Gayton yard for the branch’s equipment.

With these resources the branch has managed to litter pick about two-thirds of the Arm, which has yielded around 100 bags of rubbish plus larger items such as a boat toilet, vehicle tyres, cable insulation and wood pallets. Vegetation has been cleared from around the sanitation station at Gayton Junction and from around Lock 17, including from the lock landing on the river side and back to the narrows. Finally Locks 14 and 17 have been painted and Lock 1 has been prepared ready to paint later this year.

MILTON KEYNES BRANCH

At Fenny Stratford, Milton Keynes Branch has continued to clear the three-metre wide strip of brambles that was left behind the towpath hedge by contractors, as the heavy plant could not clear it away without damaging the hedge and trees. The volunteers finished clearing the head-high brambles and other brash whilst CRT topped some 100 metres of the hedge. The branch is now able to tackle the ground growth in the bottom of the hedge and to fill any gaps in the hedge with whips.

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Alison Smedley
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.

WALKS

Lichfield Branch was lucky enough to have good weather for their 4½ mile walk on 4th March, led by Clive Wakler. Some 19 members and friends met at Alvecote Marina to take a figure-of-eight route that incorporated countryside, mining history in the form of woodland pools formed by subsidence from the old Alvecote Colliery, the modern Gold Leaf: Buried Sunlight sculpture atop the reclaimed pit mound, medieval monuments and the Coventry Canal. Guided walks are an excellent opportunity to learn more about the local area – the next Lichfield Branch walk is planned for June.

Warwickshire Branch continues to have plenty of walks planned for the year featuring the Wreake Navigation, River Anker, Grand Union Canal, Coventry Canal and River Avon. The branch’s most recent walk was around Earlswood Lakes on the morning of 18th March. Ten members of the branch met at the Craft Centre, Earlswood Lakes, for a 4-mile figure-of-eight walk around the lakes and surrounding area. The route took the group past the poems located by the lakes, which describe the natural history of the locality using a mixture of rhyme and prose.

Chester & Merseyside Branch celebrate ten years of riverside walks this year, during which it has led almost 70 walks. This year the branch continues these events and in January walked by the River Dee estuary.

OTHER NEWS

Lichfield Branch held another successful jumble sale with the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust at the Peace Memorial Hall in Penkridge on 15th March. The jumble took nearly £400, which was shared between the two groups. The event also saw Lichfield Branch deliver a donation of £500 to L&HCRT from the proceeds of its other fundraising activities. The money is to go towards the Trust’s Feet of Clay Appeal, which is raising funds to clay line and re-water another section of the Lichfield Canal.

Several branches have given donations to WRG for the purchasing of a new excavator. Chiltern Branch gave £1,000 and Lancashire & Cumbria Branch gave £500 directly to the WRG appeal. Other branches have given to the appeal through sponsorship of the four members of staff who undertook the Acheman Challenge to raise funds for the excavator. This included £1,000 from Ipswich Branch, and £200 from Lichfield Branch, whilst Chelmsford Branch had a collection jar at its AGM.

North Staffordshire & South Cheshire Branch has joined the partnership board of the Churnet Valley Living Landscape (CVLLP). CVLLP is a Heritage Lottery funded project, which plans to deliver a wide range of projects in the Churnet Valley in North Staffordshire. This includes several canal projects on both the Caldon and Uttoxeter Canals. IWA branch members have already supported various projects and this formalisation of the relationship with CVLLP will enable the branch to increase its involvement with the work that is already under way.

IWA CLOTHING

Want to make sure IWA volunteers are recognised at waterways events? Then contact Helen Whitehouse to order your IWA clothing and help promote the work of IWA volunteers and the Association at boat gatherings and other waterway events this summer.

From high visibility vests, ideal for work party volunteers and event stewards, to polo shirts for those manning sales stalls at festivals, there is something for every occasion. There are also hoodies and sweatshirts that are great for when it becomes colder but also ideal for every day use.

For more information or to place an order contact Helen Whitehouse on 01543 491161 or at iwaclothing@waterways.org.uk. Items can also be ordered from the IWA Online Shop at www.iwashop.co.uk.

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

IWA Lichfield Branch walkers at the Gold Leaf sculpture.

IWA Lichfield Branch Treasurer, Barbara Hodgson presents Brian Kingshott, chairman of the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust with a £500 cheque.

IWA North Staffordshire & South Cheshire committee members wearing IWA branch clothing.
Why not lend a hand in 2014 and help restore Britain’s derelict canals? IWA’s Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) runs 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.

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+). WRG offers 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 and accommodation.

WRG Working Holidays, Weekend digs and Canal Clean-ups give you the chance to get involved in various activities (no experience necessary) including:

Building a new towpath on the Pocklington Canal (East Yorkshire)
The Pocklington Canal is a charming rural waterway in East Yorkshire which acts as an important wildlife sanctuary. The canal towpath is in desperate need of attention and over the week (16th-23rd August) WRG volunteers will be carrying out towpath improvement work. It is hoped that the towpath works will create an amenity for the local community and improve access along the line of the canal. Volunteers will be involved in vegetation clearance, towpath construction and there will also be the chance to operate small excavators and other machinery.

Restoring a lock in the Cotswolds
Throughout the summer (from 19th July to 30th August) WRG volunteers will be working on three lock restoration projects on the Cotswold Canals – Inglesham Lock at the eastern end near Lechlade, and Ham Mill Lock and Bowbridge Locks at the western end near Stroud. Volunteers will undertake a wide variety of activities, including removal of damaged brickwork and bricklaying to reconstruct the lock chamber wall. These will be busy, fun-filled camps which will keep both experienced WRGies and newcomers entertained.

Constructing a canal channel on the Lancaster Canal
Why not get involved in a major bit of restoration work this summer and help the Lancaster Canal Trust reline a 225 metre section of the canal at Stainton. WRG will be running two canal camps in 2014: 26th July-2nd August and 2nd-9th August. Once complete, this new section will be re-wathered and reconnected to a part of the canal that the Trust uses for its trip boats. Volunteers will also be involved in towpath improvement work and vegetation clearance along the next section of the canal. Book now and join us in the beautiful setting of the Lancaster Canal this summer.

Helping clean-up a canal
As well as restoring derelict canals WRG volunteers spend some of their time working on navigable waterways. They do this by organising annual clean-up events which help transform a section of the canal in just a weekend. In April volunteers spent a weekend cleaning up the Birmingham Canal Navigations and in the autumn (4th-5th October) WRG and IWA volunteers are heading to Manchester to carry out similar work.

Becoming a weekend volunteer
Not everyone can give up a full week – and that’s where WRG’s Regional Groups come in. A lot of voluntary work has to be done at the weekend, and between them WRG’s regional groups ensure that almost every weekend there will be volunteers at work somewhere in the country restoring the waterways. Find out more at www.waterways.org.uk/wrg/regional_groups/find_your_local_group

**Volunteer with WRG – this year!**

We have lots more volunteering activities planned for 2014 – to find out more go to the WRG website. www.wrg.org.uk or call Jenny Black on 01494 783 453 ext 604 to request a 2014 Canal Camps Brochure.
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Waterways of the South West

I greatly enjoyed your article and photographs of Waterways of the South West in the spring edition. Readers interested in the history of the engineers who built these canals may not realise that apart from the Stover Canal, John Rennie, the builder of the Plymouth Breakwater, had a profound influence on each of the others.

He was, of course, the engineer for the Kennet & Avon Canal (1794-1810) and the Grand Western Canal (1810-1814). It was his assistant James Hollingsworth, who had just finished the construction of Rennie’s Waterloo Bridge, London, who was the engineer for the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal from 1822 to 1827.

When Rennie came to Plymouth to decide on the construction of the breakwater, he brought with him an assistant, James Green. Green left Rennie’s staff in 1808 to become the County Bridge Surveyor of Devon, but he was allowed to do other work and from 1820 to 1830 he lengthened the canal from upstream of Topsham to the present outlet at Turf, constructed the Exeter Basin and enlarged the canal to make it suitable for ships of 400 tonnes. For this he was made a Freeman of the City of Exeter.

In 1819 James Green began the construction of the 35-mile length of his Bude Tub Boat Canal, together with the Tamar Lake to supply the water. He built six inclined planes, but as you note only the short section and the sea lock at Bude remain. In 1823 he began the construction of the Torrington Canal to the Town mills, but unfortunately it was superseded by the railway and only the site of the entrance lock downstream of Weare Gifford and the Beam Aqueduct, now a road entrance to Beam House, remains.

Both of these canals, together with the Grand Western Canal, were required to bring either calcareous off-shore sand (Bude) or limestone inland to provide lime for the acid soils of North Cornwall and Devon.

Brian George,
Exeter

Robert Aickman Tribute

The well-written article about Robert Aickman in the Spring issue of Waterways was both timely and informative. It is only too easy for those of us of more modern ‘vintage’ to forget the tireless campaigning that went on to save the waterways in the 1940s and ‘50s. Robert Aickman was an inspirational figure without whose vision and hard work we would not be able to enjoy the network as it exists today.

Thanks too for publishing the excellent selection of nostalgic photographs that accompanied the article. Black and white pictures can be so evocative and I was able to imagine the sense of excitement, purpose and camaraderie that must have existed at the very first Inland Waterways Association National Rally at Market Harborough in 1950. It must have been quite an occasion.

To everyone at IWA and Waterways magazine, keep up the good work!

George Radford,
Gloucester

Democracy at Work

As one of the so-called ‘rabble rousers’ referred to in the lead letter (Democracy at Work?) on the Inbox page of the February edition of Waterways, I feel that I must write in response – not least in order to put the writer (and therefore many readers of his letter who were also not present at the AGM) right about what happened at last September’s meeting.

What happened was that the majority of those who attended the AGM were not happy with what they were presented with, and therefore felt unable to vote for a motion to accept a membership fee increase – that sounds fairly democratic to me.

Members who attend an AGM are invariably the most interested, responsible and loyal members of that organisation, and in this respect IWA is no exception. When the majority of such members reject a proposal they do it knowingly, they do not do it lightly, and certainly do not do it in a ‘rabble-rousing’ manner.

On the other hand, a policy of ‘shoot first and ask questions later’ has never seemed to me to be a particularly democratic approach to life. In his February letter, the writer – who was not even in attendance at the AGM – fired off his bullet. Among the questions that he should have previously asked the majority of those who did attend was: “Had I been there, what difference would my single vote have made?”

The answer would have been: “none.” That’s democracy at work!

Ian Fletcher,
Warwickshire Branch

This letter was not the only one received on this subject, and the comments made at the 2013 AGM have been taken on board and are being addressed. This correspondence is now closed. Ed.
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