

ALERT

A W C C NEWSLETTER

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NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL AGM



The Association's 48th Annual General meeting was held at Stafford Boat Club on the 16th of March. The meeting was well attended with delegates traveling from all over the country. There were reports from around the six regions as well as from the various specialist Officers. National Chairman, Paul le Blique, commented on the unique time the waterways were going through with the establishment of the C&RT and that AWCC would continue to play an important role in the shaping the future during this time of change. He said "we must ensure that navigation, legal mooring and the rights of the boater are fully protected throughout". Paul's report is printed in full on the following page. The AGM saw the departure of some of the personalities that have formed the backbone of the organisation at a national level for many years.

Geoff Ashton, our former National Treasurer has retired from boating and is standing down and handing his Presidents hat over to former Chairman, David Pearce. North East Region stalwart, Alan Hodgkinson was also stepping down after decades of commitment to AWCC and was presented with the Bluebell Trophy by Geoff (pic below). Awards were presented to Byfleet BC, Boaters Christian Fellowship, Thrupp CC and Wheelton BC for their club magazines. Ken Bromley from Bridgewater Motor Boat Club was awarded the Harry Sykes Trophy for his actions which saved the life of a man who had been trapped in the canal for some considerable time after attempting to rescue his dog. *(more details bottom of page 5)*

A model of the historic buildings at the junction of the Peak Forest and the Macclesfield canal at Marple which are under threat of development, was displayed by John Suggit from North Cheshire CC.

After the re-election of officers the meeting enjoyed a splendid dinner supplied by the ladies of the Stafford BC after which we were given an excellent and up beat presentation from Vince Moran, Operations Director with the C&RT.

ALAN HODGKINSON

Alan joined Strawberry Island Boat Club in 1979 and became involved from the outset as a committee member and holding several Flag Officer appointments. He has held positions as Vice President and President and remains a trustee of the club. A long time supporter of AWCC he has held positions of National Vice President and Region President.

A long time colleague said of Alan:

"He is a man of great integrity and strong opinions that he is not afraid to voice. He has always fought the corner of the ordinary boater" P le B



GEOFF ASHTON

Geoff has been boating since 1979, serving as AWCC Midland Region Secretary before holding the post of National Treasurer for twelve years. He was appointed as National President in 2011 before retiring at this AGM.

Geoff has held several posts in the boating trade including Vice-Chair of

APCO, Chair of the British Hire Cruiser Federation and as a serving member of the BMF. Geoff has always provided a balancing input to debates and discussions and is much respected as a colleague whose judgment is reliable and sound.

P le B

NATIONAL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

AGM REPORT

I wrote this report on an evening with wind and snow battering the windows giving a sharp reminder of how the weather has influenced the year since last we met at Stafford for the National AGM in 2012. Following two years of draught conditions that threatened to shut much of the waterway system, we were treated to a summer when unprecedented rainfall presented huge challenges for boaters and Navigation Authorities alike. In the midst of this came the change that offered the best opportunity for the future of our waterways since nationalisation occurred all those years ago. I refer, of course, to the launch of CRT and the stated wish by government to transfer, in the fullness of time, the EA Navigations to CRT. It is a unique time moulding the future and one in which AWCC will continue to play its part, representing the interests of the club boater and navigation in we must ensure that navigation, legal mooring and the rights the boater is fully protected throughout..

We can expect changes under CRT and We will soon have a new CEO at the helm of CRT who will be responsible for continuing the work that Robin Evans completed during his tenure. I have said previously that whilst Robin's management style did not suite everyone his legacy will go down as the person who led the transfer from BW to CRT and as having secured an unprecedented funding and benefit package for our waterways. He is a friend to AWCC and has instilled the view in CRT Directors that our clubs are special and must be protected for the future. BW is no more; what of it's time as guardian of our waterways? It is easy to criticise of course and it certainly received often unfair comments in that direction but those of us of the "bus pass" generation might remember the dreadful state of the track and facilities in the sixties and seventies and how it has improved immeasurably during the BW Era. On balance, I believe we should thank all at BW and we will support them as they work under the banner of CRT to secure the long future of our waterways.

AWCC has secured places on all the national CRT Forums and the Navigation Advisory Group, allowing our voice to be heard.

Those AWCC clubs based on EA Navigations will experience an uncertainty in their future as that authority begins the process that could result in the transfer to CRT. Those clubs should be assured that no matter what the outcome, the association will respond to their wishes and support any decisions regarding their future.

Moving on to more matters closer to home: this AGM will be the event where we say goodbye to two long-standing members of AWCC; Geoff Ashton and Alan Hodgkinson are both standing down after many year service to the association. I know you will join me in thanking Geoff and Alan for their support and wisdom over the years and wishing them the best for the future.

I expect you have noticed from the agenda that the National Committee has recommended that David Pearce be our next president as Geoff stands out at this meeting. There can surely be no one better than David to represent and champion the association through a wealth of experience and work on our behalf.

Next year is *the year* for AWCC as it celebrates the Fiftieth Anniversary of its foundation. Ann Banks is heading the organizing committee for that event which promises to be the highlight of 2014. Ann will give details later.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the time and effort of AWCC officers at National, Regional and club level, as they continue to give support to the association. AWCC has a very special place in the Waterway Community enabled by these volunteers. I would also like to thank the Commodore and members of Stafford Boat Club for their hospitality in hosting this meeting.

FROM NEC MEETING (FEB)

Traditionally a quiet period in the life of waterways meetings, the last three months have been no exception with a couple of postponements including the proposed meeting with Sir Neil Cousins Head of CRT Heritage Panel.

You may recall that following the demise of BWAf along with the Heritage subgroup and it's replacement by a group of heritage experts, several past members myself included, felt there was a distinct possibility that much canal heritage might be overlooked and lost. This is not to

doubt the expertise of the new panel rather its slightly remote nature and perhaps limited knowledge of those small artefacts so essential to our canal heritage.

The Navigation Advisory Group have met and high on the agenda was the SE Mooring Consultation and the legal situation regarding CRT's ability to impose excess charges for overstaying. My request for feedback from clubs on the consultation was well supported, thank you all. I aim to pass a consolidated AWCC view to Jeff Wyatt, SE Waterways Manager, by the end of the month. The over-riding concern is that of enforcement, a fact that has not lost on CRT of course where the intention is to bolster the enforcement teams in a drive to reduce the problem of habitual overstaying and license evasion. Boating Support Staff who aim to be the friendly face, will be the first contact with offenders prior to enforcement and CRT will concentrate enforcement procedures on 600 boats that move the least. There are currently 15 boats in SE Region entering the enforcement process. I will attempt to obtain figures for other regions.

The other area of concern is the legal aspect of charging with several groups challenging the right of CRT to impose financial penalties. NAG asked for clarification on this point resulting in the following statement "The Trust is the legal owner of the waterways, holding them in trust for the nation. Section 43 (3) of the 1962 Transport Act gave BW, and subsequently the Trust, power to demand, take and recover such charges for their services and facilities, and to make the use of those services and facilities subject to such terms and conditions as they think fit"

This is the basis that CRT is able to set time limits and overstay charges, it is the legal statement and may be quoted.

A full report on the NAG Meeting will be available when the final minutes are completed in the next couple of weeks.

Best wishes,
PAUL

REGIONAL CHAIRMEN'S REPORTS

LONDON

In my November Report of the User Group Meeting I wrote about the proposed in-fill to the canal to create a wider towpath, this would have made navigation through the bridge very difficult. However after lobbying by AWCC and IWA the scheme has been abandoned.

Basingstoke Canal Society.

Better news from the Basingstoke, which will open the entire 32 miles to the Greywell tunnel this Easter. The Basingstoke Canal Society have elected Tim and Lis Dodwell as joint presidents after the demise of the Earl of Onslow. London

Moorings Problems.

London mooring problems are in a state of crisis especially on the Melrose moorings adjacent to the Islington Tunnel. Boats are moored three abreast in this cutting and the Smoke from their chimneys has only one way to go and the local residents in their expensive properties do not like it.

The noise from boat generators has been regulated to acceptable hours. However there is unacceptable amount of waste with often human waste found in the litter-bins, which are emptied daily.

Islington Council the local authority have explained the bylaws to the moored boaters but they will not enforce their removal because they may be liable to re home them. Canal & River Trust have three licence enforcement officers and several data checkers to patrol the whole region.

B.W. now C.R.T. have lost a grip on the moorings situation to such an extent that it is now very difficult for cruising boats to stop and shop or go to the pub in our region.

London Waterways Commission.

Crossrail tunnel sections are mostly being transported by road instead of utilising the canal. Crossrail have failed to use this method of transport which would have had significant environmental benefits on such a large project.

Future Events

Spring Social to Bristol Bath Area

Our spring trip to the Museum of Docklands was very interesting we all met later at the water point, which S.P.C.C. are using as a clubhouse at present.

The annual gathering of boats was again held at Willowtree Park we had more boats from Hillingdon Canal Club, which is a good sign.

Our autumn social was held at Rammey Marsh Cruising Club and as usual they made it a very enjoyable evening.

Lastly, My thanks to Terry Aris my vice chairman who now serves on the Canal & River Trust London Region Panel.

My thanks also go my committee and the regional representatives for their hard work and loyal support.

TREVOR GILLAM

SOUTH & WEST

The Region has moved on since my report at the last National AGM when we had only just been reinstated.

We have had the funds of the old region reinstated to us as they had been held over by the National Treasurer in the hope the Region would get up and running again. We have opened a bank account – not without some difficulty and are operating ourselves without having to go through the National Treasurer. We are on quite a steep learning curve.

We have had several meetings over the year and last Saturday held an informal AGM. The Secretary and Treasurer agreed to continue in their positions for at least the coming year. David, our President asked for somebody to volunteer for the position of Development Officer and explained what that would entail. There were no volunteers on the day but we will continue to discuss the position at our meetings. Our six clubs gave a short update on what was happening at their club and also on their stretch of the waterways. It was interesting to hear from Thrupp regarding their relationship with CRT and the mooring strategy. Our Treasurer has been on the Sub Committee of the Local Waterways Partnership regarding a Local Mooring Strategy; their suggestions have been put forward to CRT and we wait to hear what will be happening in the future.

I was particularly pleased that I had asked Brian Rich to come and give us a short overview of AWCC communications as I have been concerned about my own Club members not reading Alert and I asked at our meeting who had seen the last edition. I was confronted by blank looks. Hopefully

there will be a few more readers and contributors to future editions.

I must take this opportunity to thank both Paul Le Blique and Ann Banks for travelling to our Region last month and attending a meeting of one of our Clubs at Bradford on Avon. Unfortunately, Paul was bombarded with complaints about the non movement of boats but the Club was pleased to hear that AWCC will give their full support when talking to CRT. In addition to their (Paul and Ann's) support I would like to thank David Butcher, Dick Elder and Brian Rich for their personal support to me regarding the reinstatement of the Region.

With regard to liveaboards at the western end of the canal I understand that one of the councils, whose area covers part of the Kennet and Avon Canal, has sent a message to the liveaboard community saying:

They want to hear from liveaboard boaters on the Kennet and Avon Canal and the River Avon. If you live on your boat without a home mooring, and spend some of your time between Dundas and Hanham, or if you live on a mooring in this area, the Council wants you to tell them about your needs and requirements. Please email scrutiny@bathnes.gov.uk by March 28th 2013.

For example, does your home need protection from the unlawful enforcement by CRT/BW that is threatening you with homelessness? Is there a need for more sanitary or rubbish disposal facilities? Do you have specific needs because of a disability or illness that are not being met? Or do you need planning permission for residential use of your mooring?

PAULINE KING

NORTHWEST

The principle matter of concern to NW boaters is the ongoing breach of the T&M at Dutton Hollow at the far north end of the canal. Latest estimates put the cost to be in the region of £2m, much of which is the cost of providing the access road to the site across open fields with up to 70 lorry loads of stone arriving on some days. Completion is expected in May but as always is dependent on weather conditions.

We have been monitoring the re-development of the riverside in the centre of Northwich on the River Weaver and attended various meetings. Sadly C&RT are not able to provide any additional much needed visitor moorings in the town. The proposed 40 berth commercial mooring

REGIONAL CHAIRMEN'S REPORTS

places have as not yet had takers from marina operators. Following last year's floods in Northwich dredging is now taking place below Town Bridge. After lobbying from us, the Weaver lock opening times have been realigned to times more suited to boaters rather than long gone commercial craft.

We continue our support for the Runcorn Locks Restoration Society in its work to see the restoration of the lock link between the Bridgewater and the MSC which would create a second 'Cheshire Ring'. We are looking to see what we can do to support the campaign to see a new lock built in the weir at Chester on the River Dee which (once the Dee Branch of the SUC is re-opened) would provide a new cruising opportunity on the upper navigable reaches of the Dee. It is mystifying to say the least that despite us raising the matter with BW and now C&RT, the Waterscape Web Site still advertises passage through the link from the main line in Chester to the Dee when the bottom gates of the tidal lock remain leaning against the lock walls where they were put when new in 2006, there are stop planks in place and the lock and pound above remain silted! Provided 7 days notice is given they offer passage through the locks!

We will be talking to C&RT about continuing the extension of the free cruising range for Bridgewater based boats along the L&L into Liverpool, something we achieved 5 years ago. We are also concerned at the plans for a commercial redevelopment of the site at the junction of the Macclesfield and Peak Forrester canals in Marple. There will be more about this later. We have also been involved with various other issues representing the interests of our member clubs with C&RT and the Bridgewater Canal Company.

It is a concern to us and no doubt other clubs that some clubs, even those with large membership struggle to find people to give up their time to represent their clubs at AWCC meetings. This is something we need to address.

All 21 Clubs in the NW receive Regional Minutes and Alert via email thus substantially reducing the cost to both Regional and National funds. Previously just distributing the Minutes was taking well over half the total Regional income. NCCC celebrates its' 70th anniversary this year.

Iain Weston, C&RT North West Acting Manager attended as the guest speaker at our Regional AGM on the 14th March. The

delegates were saddened that he was soon to be replaced and hoped that C&RT would find a good use for his talent and enthusiasm.

North West Region will be commemorating its 40th year anniversary, and the 40 years that the Watch House Club has hosted the NW Region meetings 5 times a year, with a 'BIT OF A DO' on Saturday 1st June, 2013 at the Watch House. Honoured Guests will be folk who have given valued service to the AWCC over many years. Further details from the National Secretary (also NW President) nearer the time

NICK CULLIFORD
(Region Secretary)

MIDLANDS

They say you never know what's round the corner, and this was never more true than last March when I went to Stafford Boat Club as the Rep for Black Buoy Cruising Club, and came home as Midlands Chairman. When I raised my hand, I had not realised that I would also be a member of the National Executive Council. However, everyone has made me welcome, and it is good to meet members of other clubs through the NEC. It gives a good insight into what the AWCC does. Far more than I ever envisaged. Four Midlands meetings were held during the year in different locations, with an average of around 17 clubs represented, of a total of 28 [27 from January after the transfer of BCF to South East]. My job was made easier with the active support of Club Reps and my fellow Midlands Officers, all of whom work hard.

During the year, Midlands lost two stalwarts of the Region, Tom Griffin of Hinckley BC, and Keith Broughton of Soar Boating Club. Some long-serving Reps stood down, Roger and Pam McLellan representing Lichfield CC and BCF, also Derek Beardsmore of Longwood BC.

Most Clubs have been very good in notifying changes for the online database – in one case, Erica received amendments before 9 am the following morning. Another club, which I shall not name, advised Erica the very day that the new handbooks were handed over to the Regions, that there were no changes to their club details. Just as well!

Midlands AGM took place a fortnight ago, when the serving committee were all returned unopposed, and by unanimous vote. A vote of confidence I think.

IAN WOOD

NORTH EAST

Jean & I were elected Regional Secretary and Chair at our June meeting at Thorne Cruising Club following the resignation at the February 2012 A.G.M. for health reasons, of our Chairman Bob Mennell, and Secretary Ken Bearpark.

Terry Brown, Regional Vice-chairman, had nobly held the reins and taken on both positions, during the inter-regnum. Thanks Terry!

During the year we held 5 meetings, at South Pennine Boat Club, Thorne Cruising Club, Ripon Motor Boat Club, Tinsley Boat Club, and finally our A.G.M. last Wednesday, at South Yorkshire Boat Club.

Of our 16 member clubs, attendance has averaged only 8 clubs, with apologies received from a further 3 clubs. We are trying to address the absence of club representatives and encourage more people to attend our meetings. In particular, 2 clubs are a little "out on a limb" at Hull Bridge and Bethells Bridge, so we are scheduling our June meeting at Hull Bridge so as to involve these 2 clubs more directly. A decision was taken at our A.G.M. to hold future Regional Meetings shortly after the National Meetings so that we can report directly on matters of wider interest to boaters.

The North East Region Vice-President Alan Hodgkinson is hanging up his gloves after more than 30 years' loyal service the A.W.C.C. Our grateful thanks go to Alan, who has certainly been a "fixture" at A.W.C.C. since Jean & I became involved in inland waterways in 2000. Many of you know Alan and his contribution to the Association far better than we do. He has held most positions of influence both at National and Regional levels.

At our A.G.M. last week Alan nominated Dave Dix as his successor! Dave has been involved in A.W.C.C. for many years and is immensely knowledgeable about waterways matters, and he very kindly agreed to stand for election as our new Regional Vice-President.. Not being of a mind to look a gift-horse in the mouth, we had a snap election and he was appointed unanimously!

Dave also agreed to again take on the onerous task of Regional Quartermaster, form Terry Pound.

Unfortunately Dave had existing family commitments this weekend and so has been

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unable to attend this meeting in Stafford, for which he has sent his apologies.

The Regional Officers were also re-elected as a group - Chairman, Treasurer, and Secretary.

I am delighted to be able to report that we were approached by West Stockwith Yacht Club for details of A.W.C.C. membership, and their Chairman Ken Collier and Treasurer John Steggle

Attended the meeting this week at South Yorkshire, and the club has now joined A.W.C.C. to increase our N.E. tally to 17 clubs.

GARTH ROBINSON

SOUTH & EAST

We have 13 clubs in our region 5 of which are River Nene based clubs, 2 clubs with no fixed base and 6 canal based clubs. 8 clubs have regular representatives who sit on our committee. Each rep produces a report of their clubs activities, both past and fore coming. We thank all the reps for there lively inputs to the meeting.

Thrupp Canal Cruising Club and Boaters Christian Fellowship. We lost Thrupp CCC to South and West and gained Boaters Christian Fellowship from Midland Region both for the convenience of the Reps, i.e. distance to travel to the meetings.

Middle Level Watermans Club. Have left the British Legion premises in March and hired premises about 300 yds further along the Middle Level still in March. They can still offer moorings, etc.

Sanitary Stations. 1) At March. Reopened with Elsan and Water facilities free but Pump Outs you have to purchase a token from a nearby News-agent (£12?). 2) At Wellingborough has now opened using a River Nene key to access. It should have been opened last April but did not open until September.

Water Levels. On the rivers it is the opposite of last year. Last year we were restricted due to lack of water, drought conditions, and this year on the rivers we are restricted by "Strong Stream Advice", to much water, which has just came off on the River Nene after about two months.

SE Moorings Consultation. CRT has circulated a moorings consultation document, reviewing their strategy on popular visitor moorings in the region. Responses had to be returned by 1st. March and AWCC have been involved in giving input to this. The feeling has been generally that mooring times are reasonable but the concern is that the overstayers will be carefully monitored with penalties put in place. Also it was felt that more visitors' moorings were required in the region. CRT has asked for volunteers to help with scrutinising the results.

Crick Boat Show. The annual appeal for volunteers to help man the stand at Crick Boat Show, Please. As usual we are asking for volunteers to help man the AWCC stand at Crick Boat Show as the man power is stretched due to our River Nene Clubs attending the Association of Nene River Clubs (A.N.R.C.) Rally over the same week-end. This restricts the man power for help from the South-East Region.

Boat Watch. The River Nene is largely covered by two counties, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. Cambridgeshire has decided to reinstate the Cambridgeshire Boat Watch scheme again but Northamptonshire are not reinstating a scheme. Cambridgeshire only covers up to about Elton the rest is Northamptonshire. We have had number thefts on the lower part of the Nene and part of the canal system. Due to the Smart Water scheme parts have been found on the Continent. A.N.R.C. has decided to operate their own system for their clubs. Forms have gone out to clubs so that club members can fill them in and a record kept of the parts of their boats.

EA. The Environment Agency has set up a project on the Future of Navigation (FON) for the Midland, Anglian and South-East Regions, all aimed at reducing their reliance on Government funding and being more self-sufficient. The project is fundamental to see ways the EA can identify improvement opportunities for the future. Next year will prepare the information needed for the review being carried on the potential transfer of the EA waters to CRT in 2015/16.

South-East Rep. Volunteering is a mixed bag but the number is increasing. In the South-East Region I.W.A. (Northampton Branch) has taken over the responsibility for the Northampton Arm of the G.U. (Lets hope this will get the bottom four pounds dedded, Locks 17 -13). There are no volunteers as yet on E.A. waters but the EA want to develop this.

RALPH SULLIVAN

THE HARRY SYKES AWARD

KEN BROMLEY

Towards the end of last year Ken was returning from a cruise and set away from his overnight mooring at Dunham Massey along this isolated rural area of the Bridgewater Canal at around 8.30 am. Ken noticed a dog on the towpath beside what Ken thought was a plastic 25-litre drum floating at the edge of the canal and slowed with the intention of removing it. However when he got closer he realised that it was not a drum but a man in the water who was clinging to the coping stone edge of the canal.

Ken ascertained that the man had jumped into the canal to rescue his drowning dog and after lifting it onto the towpath was himself unable to climb out and had been in the chest deep water for over two and a half hours. He was completely exhausted and was blue with cold; he had also damaged his knee attempting to extricate himself. Ken and his wife Pat were unable to lift the exhausted man clear of the water so ran back to the nearest bridge to enlist aid. With help the man was pulled out and Ken and his wife Pat supplied towels to help dry and warm him.

The emergency services were called and Ken spent considerable time guiding the ambulance to their remote location. Eventually the man was taken to hospital suffering from severe hypothermia. The paramedic commented to Ken that if the casualty had been in for another half hour or so he would have been unlikely to have survived his ordeal.



COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

AWCC WEBSITE

The website continues to attract a steady stream of visitors, averaging about 330 visitors per month. This is about the same as last year, but the overall the trend is downward, a situation we will try and correct in the coming year with a general make-over of the website. Please give us your ideas, and don't forget that we would like to put much more information about Club events onto the website. If you have anything you would like to appear on the site, please forward it to the Communications Officer.

Our efforts last year to strengthen security on the website has – so far – been successful and this year the site has run 24/7 without interruption.

We have further considered the possibility of allowing Club members direct access to the members only area of the Club website. As we see it, this requires us to hold individual membership information which we have neither the desire nor the resources to do. This project will be held in abeyance pending an affordable solution.

ALERT

ALERT is now being produced regularly by our ALERT Editor, Graeme Bridge. Implementing distribution via the Mailchimp email service (which is free for us to use) has meant that we are only sending paper copies to 35 clubs, which is a significant saving on postage and printing costs. As ALERT is a newsletter we are happy to distribute to anyone interested in the Inland

Waterways, please feel free to encourage them to subscribe via the sign-up link on the AWCC website.

CLUB INFORMATION HANDBOOK

This year we pulled the usual publication date back about six weeks so that the paper copies could be distributed prior to the AGM rather than at the AGM as has been the norm previously.

My special thanks to Club and Regional Secretaries for their efforts in gathering all the relevant information and getting it into the database within the new time scale. I am also pleased to report that we have been able to keep the price of the handbook at £2 per copy, the same as last year.

The handbook will also be available this year as a single PDF file, which will be available by the end of March 2013 after a further update to reflect any changes in Club information, and in National and Regional officers. The file will be available in the members area of the AWCC website as a compressed and password protected archive. To make sure that all Club secretaries receive a copy of this file, it will also be sent to Regional secretaries for direct onward distribution to Clubs in the usual way. More details will be available when the file is published.

Brian Rich

AWCC Communications Officer

16th March 2013

PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR WATERWAYS

All Party Parliamentary Group for Waterways
(Previously known as the Parliamentary Waterways Group)
Meeting held on 29 January 2013 in Committee Room 17

This was the first of three planned sessions to review progress of the Canal & River Trust and that official minutes will be published after the final session.

Joint Chairmen – Sir Tony Baldry MP and Huw Irranca Davies MP.

Note that other Parliamentarians were present for part of the sessions.

The format of the Group has been changed to be more representative of Select Committee procedure in that witnesses are called to the Committee to give evidence and then to be questioned. In this session, the questioning was done by MPs, but that associate members of the Group will have the opportunity to ask questions, the nature of which will need to be submitted in advance, in the later sessions.

AWCC needs to consider if it wishes to submit a question to these sessions.

The session was split into two halves. Tony Hales and Robin Evans reported on the progress to date in the first few months of CRT and Charlotte Atkins, assisted by Mike Maryon, reported on the progress of her Local Partnership.

Tony Hales and Robin Evans both placed emphasis on the increase in local engagement achieved and provided many

examples. They regarded it as a success in a relatively short time, but also emphasised that it was a big cultural change for an organisation that had previously not done it to anything like the current degree. The establishment of a range of new advisors through the Local Partnerships was very much part of the cultural change and they believed that their local managers had accepted and integrated with the partnerships with enthusiasm, but there had been a rapid learning curve. They emphasised the role of the 'enterprise' members of the LPs to look for enterprise potential in their area and, of course, the associated income.

Tony Baldry asked very pointedly if the money was tight and if any "black holes" had been discovered. Robin Evans said that he remained confident and that there were none, given that this was the "worst" year of the 15-year funding deal. However, he emphasised that all local enterprise had to be self-funding, i.e. there was no central funding.

Sir Tony noted that as usual, it was boating organisations that were represented at the meeting and a discussion took place about wider relationships and the possible tensions. Robin stated unequivocally that the biggest problem was the increasing numbers of non-conforming continuous cruisers. He added that two recent court cases had gone their way, hence confirming the legal status, and said that there would be a structured programme to deal with it, with enforcement at its core. Sir Tony felt that changes to housing benefit would not help and that government had to look at wider issues. Robin said that there was not a problem with people living on the cut as long as they were

PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR WATERWAYS

compliant. The courts had now reduced the greyness in the rules.

Many other point of interest were raised, but overall, there seemed to be agreement that given days were still early, CRT appeared to be off to a good start. A full transcript will be issued after the third meeting.

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The former MP, Charlotte Atkins and Mike Maryon, (Staffordshire County Councillor with responsibility for transport) were then called to give evidence. Charlotte gave a brief summary of what she had done since being appointed Chairman of the Mid-Shire Local Partnership.

Sir Tony Baldry quizzed her as to how she was appointed and how she went about selecting a team. To the first she expressed a bit of arm-twisting and to the second, much variety in selecting appropriate professional skills. Some members have a detailed knowledge of the local waterways, but all have a great enthusiasm and a desire that the waterways become better known by the local populace. As an example, she said that the Leek Waterways Festival was a splendid affair, but too few local people knew about it.

She was then questioned on new funding streams and replied that she had tried wherever possible to ride on the back of local groups and existing experience. To questions on potential development projects, Charlotte gave the example of the Atherstone Project to encourage more boats to stop and use the town, through the expedient of providing moorings. Mike Maryon answered questions on support and buy-in from local authorities indicating that Stafford CC was behind the local partnership. HS2 was mentioned together with its crossing of the Trent and Mersey Canal at Lichfield. Robin Evans added that CRT had no special protection from compulsory purchase, as did apply to the National Trust and that this aspect should be noted by Parliament – duly done.

Charlotte Atkins, agreeing with Robin Evans about the top waterways problem, adding that moorings was an issue and that CRT would need to do much better than BW did on the matter. She promised that her Local Partnership had their Strategic Plan well advanced. It would make their priorities clear and would hopefully stimulate the many and diverse canal related activities that would be of long term benefit to CRT.

The meeting was a good humoured one, with general agreement on both sides. However, there was a general feeling in informal discussions afterwards that Charlotte had been selected, as the first LP Chairman to be quizzed, as she knew precisely what was expected of her in a very familiar surrounding. It remains to be seen how other chairmen will acquit themselves in the next two sessions. *(This report given to Feb NEC Meeting Ed)*

## AWCC AGM Report

The format of the Group has been changed to be more representative of Select Committee procedure in that witnesses are called to the Committee to give evidence and then submitted to questions.

The Joint Chairmen are Sir Tony Baldry MP and Huw Irranca Davies MP.

Two of three planned sessions have taken place to review progress of the Canal & River Trust. An official report will be published after the last session.

Tony Hales and Robin Evans were initially asked to provide a summary of progress in the first few months of CRT, but the emphasis was then on questioning a sample of CRT Local Partnership Chairmen and Local Authority representatives to assess the effectiveness of the new local arrangements.

Charlotte Atkins, assisted by Mike Maryon of Stafford Council, reported on the progress of her Local Partnership in the first session. The second session questioned five Local Partnership Chairmen. They were Peter Matthews (West Midlands), John Best (South East), Mark Lang (All Wales), Walter Menzies (Manchester & Pennine) and Tamsin Phipps (acting chair Kennet and Avon). The Local Authority representative was Karen Creavin from Birmingham City Council.

Many aspects were examined and a full digest will be made to members via ALERT when the report is published. Five general points emerged as follows:

- There is no 'black hole' in the funding! Particular mention was made of the importance and uniqueness of the 15 year funding contract with Government, the evolution of which AWCC was very much a part.
- The Chairmen questions were all very different in the character and approach to the to their task, but all had started with a will and were determined to both make a difference and to learn from each other. All showed good progress, with the possible exception of All Wales, which was a bit tenuous.
- All reported that volunteering had increased beyond all expectation.
- The small sample of LA reps showed a very co-operative attitude to CRT, but Mike Maryon is an AWCC member and Birmingham has greatly supported the inland waterways in the past.
- The greatest problem within the embryo CRT was acknowledged to be that of the growing numbers non-compliant continuous cruisers. Robin Evans promised a large increase in the compliance budget. Charlotte Atkins commented that that part of the solution had to include the creation of more affordable moorings and that CRT had to do much better on this matter than BW had done in the past. AWCC has submitted a question on the matter and offered to help any legally constituted community group. Community moorings will of necessity be a fact of future life and all our members need to understand and support the approach!

David Pearce  
AWCC Parliamentary Representative.

# CLUB NEWS REPORTS

## PEWSEY WHARFE 40th ANNIVERSARY

In 1972 the long pound on the Kennet and Avon canal was an isolated length of waterway, navigable only by enthusiastic owners of small boats, who had a dream that one day the full length would open up. The boat club was formed to support the canal restoration movement and their early efforts went towards saving Pewsey Wharf from being sold off into private ownership. Members helped to restore the wharf buildings, where the club had their first club room, and they were instrumental in getting the slipway restored.



Forty years on the canal has cruise-way status and Pewsey Wharf still provides services for boaters, with the slipway being one of the few remaining on the canal. The club now operates from the other side of the bridge to the wharf, where it has moorings, land and a small club room. The time had come to celebrate all the effort, enthusiasm and, most of all, the fun that has been enjoyed over the years. The date was set!

It was an indifferent weekend in early August, on the Saturday evening and throughout the night the rain had poured, from every tree and branch water dripped dolefully on to the small band of club stalwarts who gathered that Sunday morning, all eyes on the heavens, hoping for a small chink of blue to give them encouragement.

The marquee was due soon, the band had been booked and numerous members were busy organising the many various food and drink items that were planned. The unspoken thought (worry) of all being "How many guests would bother to come?" As well as existing and new club members, all former members, who we could track down and find an address for, were invited.

The marquee arrived on time and, despite the rain sodden ground, was soon erected. Thank goodness the club had agreed to this extra, was the general consensus of opinion, but.....my goodness, it had now stopped raining!! Hope was in the air and the club site was a hive of activity, tables were laid out, bunting going up and a gazebo for the musicians was erected. Food was beginning to arrive and the water boiler turned on to cope with the many cups of tea and coffee that we hoped would be served.

Then that small patch of blue gave way to brilliant sunshine and guests began to arrive. The worries now shifted to "Can we accommodate all the cars?", "Will we have enough seats/food etc?" Some members dressed in traditional boaters gear and waited at table, the band played in the background. The marquee was full of conversation, old friends re-connecting and

good memories being relived. The canal running quietly alongside us was the connecting theme between the existing and former members who had all played a part in the development of the club, with the children and grandchildren there, hopefully, being the future.

The photographic display of club activities over the years was poured over by all trying to identify people and locations. There were light hearted games to be played and, of course, a raffle. There was ample food and drink, with very little left over at the end of the afternoon. Mind you, just one of the scones on offer with jam and cream was a meal in itself!

As the summer afternoon tea party drew to a close, guests reluctantly made the move to leave. It was a very happy occasion, with a request from many to do it more often, and certainly not to wait another 40 years to do it. KAY WARDLE



*EDITOR'S NOTE. This item was written for the Autumn/Winter issue and was unfortunately lost within the depths of my computer. I apologise to Kay Wardle and PWBC members for the lateness of publication and wish them many congratulations on their 40th anniversary.*

## CHESTERFIELD CANAL FESTIVAL

Will be held at Staveley Town Basin on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June. Lots of attractions have been lined up. There will be Music and Dance all day both in the huge Entertainment Marquee and outside. You can expect dozens of stalls of every type, food and drink and a Real Ale bar. There will be a major concert featuring the Swing Commanders on the Saturday night. The Festival is combining with Open Days at Barrow Hill Roundhouse where you can have a ride behind a steam train.

However, more boats are needed at the Festival. We will have lots of canoes and the Wheelyboat Trust. The problem is that the basin is on the isolated Derbyshire stretch of the Chesterfield Canal. There is a superb slipway, so it is easy for trail-boats. A few have booked, but there will be space for lots more.

The Chesterfield Canal Trust will have all three of its trip-boats in operation. Two of these boats will be brought by truck from the Nottinghamshire end of the canal and lowered in by crane. Enterprising narrowboat owners are welcome to use this crane to put their own boat on the canal. For further information, ring 01246 477569 or email [festival@chesterfield-canal-trust.org.uk](mailto:festival@chesterfield-canal-trust.org.uk).



## FEATURE ARTICLE

## ESCAPING THE BREACH

Aboard our boat, Nb Minimum Momentum, in 2012, after Llangollen, we'd intended cruising to Liverpool and doing the South Pennine Ring. Floods and a 'bost' gate on the Rochdale 9 had us doing the North Pennine Ring instead! I wrote what follows not long after our return from our year's cruising.

Last year, we eventually got back to our home berth on Thursday afternoon 25th October 2012. We had 'escaped' the then newly isolated section of the Trent & Mersey and rejoined the network. (Even though we'd be off a few days later back

Northwich, where we were sitting out the dreadful weather for a second day, and knocked on our boat in the pitch dark, sideways wind and pouring rain to tell us we were to stay put and not to move. The efforts of those on the night, I'm sure, must have been Herculean to mitigate as much as they did.

**Gary and Orchard Marina**, who took us under their wing at our lowest. Planned fuelling and servicing of our boat at Kings Lock, Middlewich, a 'hop, skip and a jump' away, was now just a dream! Pretty soon, the only tank that wasn't empty was the only one

**Jimmy and the Kings Lock yard.** He took two old dead leisure batteries I forgot had been sitting in the car boot awaiting the next civic amenity site visit and lent us pucker jerry cans to put 'red' in. We returned for a refill, and, having filled Minimo to the brim, once again to return the cans and fetch a bag of coal. Thank you, Jimmy, for your help and unwavering positive outlook.

**Anderton Marina.** They did us the fastest pump-out we've ever had (just love that remote gizmo they got)! We'd cruised down to Anderton, as summoned by 'HQ', Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2012. Our 'holding' tank red light had been on constantly for days, so the first thing we did was head to the Anderton Service Block to pump-out our 'black' tank. When we got there, however, the card reader promptly 'ate' our pristine new card (I know, it never rains....)! Anderton Marina was shut on a Monday and, as we were timed to descend the lift at 10:45 hrs on the Tuesday morning, we decided we'd grab an early pump-out there first thing Tuesday.

Early Tuesday morning, just as we were getting Anderton Marina to do the pump-out, 'HQ' contacted us and said the timings had been abandoned and would we come to the boat lift as soon as we could! We could not abandon the pump-out and suffer the laboured handling of the boat in what was to come! That prompted one of the fastest pump-outs we've seen. We are most grateful to the staff there for their speedy help and cheerful assistance in getting us 'done and away' so quickly.

**The Anderton Boat Lift.** On prompting from 'HQ', following our 'breakdown' call about the Service Block eating our card, they swiftly gave us a replacement. At the lift, they were confident and re-assuring as crews descended the boat lift in near gale force winds and faced the turn into the River Weaver 'chop' on that Tuesday morning.

**Canal and River Trust, Red Bull, et al.** So far as I could tell, Red Bull were as considerate to everyone as they could be, and most certainly to us, at any rate.

Never mind the history and chronology, the situation had to be confused at the outset, given the exceptional circumstances, in my humble opinion, of two separate collapses at almost the exact same time.

After a time, boaters (including us) were invited to make contact and notify 'HQ' of individual circumstances. Eventually, once



The GREAT ESCAPE. Awaiting entry to the locks at Ellesmere Port after the Manchester Ship Canal Voyage to escape the Dutton Hollow canal breach.

north for hull protection work...)

While I've no doubt at some point there will be some investigation/recrimination, if it's not already well underway, at this point, I just want to heap great praise on a number of folk. So, in chronological order, may I applaud and thank:-

**Whoever it was that noticed and reported the occurrences at Dutton and Croxton.** Certainly at Dutton, if not at both locations, you might well have saved lives given only a slight variation of the circumstances.

**The poor bedraggled** (despite being fully 'booted and spurred') **CRT operative at the Old Broken Cross PH.** On the night of the breach, he came to our boat at the Old Broken Cross Public House, Rudheath,

we did want empty and thoughts turned to abandoning the boat and heading back to our Stoke 'hovel'!

Gary, the manager, fresh from the dentist, and his colleague, could not have been more helpful. They did not 'do' diesel or pump-outs any more, but after a warming cuppa, we were bundled into Gary's Landrover and taken to the nearest petrol station for a drop of 'white'. He then drove us back to The Old Broken Cross pub, got our 'lump' going again and invited us to pootle to Orchard Marina to moor. There, we were offered a mooring with a shoreline and water at the boat-side. No question of payment was ever uttered, apart from an electricity card. Thank you, Gary, you could not have been more kind to us and we will never, ever forget your generosity.

confident enough for the flood gates at Wyncham and at Marbury to be opened, navigation centred on the services at Anderton and a route out became viable via the Boat Lift, the River Weaver (which, I understand, also overflowed at one point), Marsh Lock, Weston and the Manchester Ship Canal westbound.

Notice of circumstances was taken and the germ of a plan hatched to 'get us out and away'. We, ourselves, were invited onto the first flotilla and called to Anderton on the 15th October for 'Seaworthy Certification' ready for descent down the Boat Lift on Tuesday 16th.

**Mike Carter.** (He of IWA Chester Branch and organiser of R. Mersey flotilla crossings and MSC travel fame!)

He, after I e-mailed him for any advice he might have about the turn westward across the mouth of the Weaver, volunteered himself to the Canal and River Trust (CRT) to lead boats out and down the MSC. Having got to Acton Bridge on the R. Weaver, a meeting was held, under Mike's leadership, where the flotilla was put together and re-assurance given (though the

forecast was just awful). At that meeting, the flotilla was put together just exactly right!

**John from CRT.** He led the flotilla safely and did not go racing off into the distance. It is all too easy to 'put the hammer down' and give a craft 'its head', dashing away into the distance. Knowing the route and the line to take is invaluable.

**Ellesmere Port and the people that helped lock us up from the MSC basin.**

We had what must count as a really fortunate transit. The lower basin that you enter when you leave the MSC and enter Ellesmere Port can be a bit of a wind trap. Having just left the lock and entered that basin to journey to the Marsh Lock, Weston, earlier, in June 2012, we were caught by circulating winds that would not 'let' us make any side! Luckily that day, a boater whose craft was moored in the pound above, out walking his dog, saw our difficulty and immediately volunteered to close the lock gates behind us and that we could not now reach.

This was not a problem for us on the 17<sup>th</sup> October, in the end, due to the amazingly calm (if cool) weather we got. Nevertheless, there were people there to help us lock up and we didn't even have to wait long for the Council to swing the bridge over the lock!

Once on the Shropshire Union Canal, however, everyone was off and away. Including us.

We've had the coldest winter in 20 years, then the coldest winter in 30 years, then the coldest December ever and now the wettest Summer in 100 years and it was the wettest year in England on record, we're told. I think a lie down in a darkened room is justifiable, don't you?

However, before we sneak off, we would just like to applaud the various boat yards, marinas and others who have all 'mucked in' together, co-operated and got through what circumstance presented them with there.

Did the heart good to see it!

Geoff Smith.

## FEATURE ARTICLE

## GOLDSBOROUGH BOAT OWNERS CLUB

GBOC is a club without a marina base or clubhouse. Its member 's boats are spread over the system but many are in the midlands. However, it does have a strong tradition of comradeship & social contact. That is aided by a quarterly magazine plus a well supported Annual Dinner that is held in the midlands.

The most ambitious club activity is our three yearly cruise & mini-rallys. Up to 30 boats spend a long weekend, in July, at a organised waterside venue. Members who cannot attend by boat are catered for by a "block reservation" in a nearby hotel. Since I became a Club Member the gathering has been at Bristol, St Catherine Dock London, York & Chester. The one I recount is at York in 2005.

I live at Stockton on Tees only one hour from York. I also had connections with the local BW & the York Council through my Office of IWA Region Chairman. Therefore I undertook the local organisation of moorings & the passage on the tide-ways. York maybe only one hour from my home but, from my mooring on the Northern Stratford, it is about 200 miles by canal & river.

At that time there were about 6 club boats moored, with me, at Warings

Green. Unfortunately the most direct routes was not available. Plank Lane Bridge, linking the Bridgewater with the L & L was closed to canal traffic. Also there had been a breach on the Rochdale Canal. That left the Huddersfield Narrow or the River Trent Routes. My family crew chose the Huddersfield.

The first leg was easy. We cruised into Birmingham & down the Brindley Main Line to Wolverhampton. A nights stopover rested us for the 20 plus locks, passing the Race Course, on the Staffs & Worcester at Aldersley Junction. Then it was on to Stafford where we enjoyed the hospitality in the Clubhouse. From there it was a short run to the Trent & Mersey at Gt Haywood. Turning north we headed to Stoke on Trent via Stone. On this stretch the locks were deep but well spaced. I remember we provisioned in Stoke as the next section avoided shops.

We had to wait for while to join the south north convoy through Harcastle Tunnel. Passage is to a timetable & entry controlled by Tunnel Keepers. Once all the boats are in the tunnel, a door seals the entrance & ventilation fans are started. These pull air from north to south. It is a strange

sensation to hear the wail of the fan & have a breeze in your face. The tunnel is the latest of three. Originally this tunnel had a towpath suspended from the wall. Due to geological movement the path was removed in the 1970's. Harcastle has a gristly modern history. It was in one of the shafts, into an earlier tunnel, that Lesley Whittle, ransom victim of Donald Neilson alias The Black Panther, was found hanging.

Once clear of the tunnel we were in Kids Grove. That is the start of the 26 locks, known locally as "Heartbreak Hill". However we turned left at the junction onto the Macclesfield Canal. The canal runs alongside the lock flight before a tight turn onto a bridge over the T & M.

The Macclesfield starts in a urban landscape but soon enters an area with splendid views over hilly countryside. It crosses wide valleys on embankments with breath taking views to left & right. Between Congleton & Macclesfield there is a steep flight of 12 locks. From the top the canal runs along a ridge high on the side of the valley. Once at Macclesfield, a steep road, running under the canal, takes you several hundred feet down onto the valley

floor. Then you have to climb up to the shops. By the time we returned, with full bags, we were exhausted.

The cruise from Macclesfield to Marple is virtually flat with only one lock. Time to get ready for the long steep decent of Marple Locks. There are 16 locks winding down a tree lined course. Half way down is the noted Samuel Oldknow's Warehouse. It sits at the tail of a lock part over the water & part fronting onto a yard. It is the subject of many paintings & one of my "cross stitch kits". The flight leads onto Marple Aqueduct & then over a river to Dunkensfield Junction. We stopped there to visit the canal-side museum & the basin that is the HQ of the Wooden Boat Society. There were many wooden craft on display, some are complete, some in the course of restoration.

We made an early start onto the Huddersfield Canal at Ashton under Lyne. The first locks had hydraulic paddles & a hydraulic upper gate. The lock leads into a basin, now just a green space, but formally surrounded by warehouses. Beyond that point the paddles revert to traditional "rack & pinion". The canal through Staylybridge has been completely reconstructed. It is approached by a new cut & locks & opens into a large open public square. There is adequate mooring, a nearby supermarket & full boating sanitary facilities.

The section through Mossley & on to Uppermill has about 11 well spaced locks. We stopped at Uppermill to visit the Museum & then moored for the evening at Dobcross, at the foot of the Diggle locks. It was there that we were to await the BW team who would supervise the passage up the flight & though Standedge Tunnel. We had booked a place in the convoy for that day. The BW gang were a bit late as a England match in the Football World Cup was on the TV. However we did reach the top in good time to prepare for the passage of the tunnel.

Preparation includes being measured to see if your boat will fit the tunnel & then the superstructure protected with thick rubber sheets. Next the convoy was assembled & coupled bow to stern. A rubber Jebus separated each of the 6 boats. At about mid day the south bound convoy emerged from the tunnel. While the tunnel crew had lunch our boats were attached to the electric tug & passenger module. We were

summoned to board the module at about 1pm.

The passage of boats through Standedge Tunnel used to be very labour intensive. It used a tug steerer, a motor man in the power unit & a guide/ safety person in the module. Add to them a "pusher off" on every boat & a van man in the adjacent old rail tunnel. His duty was to monitor the convoy's progress as it passed the side passages. (In 2012 the electric tug has been abandoned. Boats are now allowed transit on their own power with a BW/CRT pilot on board.) The passage of the tunnel by train takes about 4 minutes but it took us about two & a half hours.

We emerged from the Marsden portal & soon had the sheeting removed & the boats uncoupled. Some rather sooty boatmen bid us farewell as we moved down to the top of the Marsden Flight. We had strict instruction not to attempt to decent the locks until the following morning. That was to allow the water levels to recover.

On my previous passage of the Huddersfield, one boater had ignored that instruction. The result was long delays for the convoy. To get through the shallow ponds he had left the lower paddles raised & one upper paddle up. He was bleeding the whole of the canal to Huddersfield. Even worse, it caused an ascending boat to be sunk in a lock. That resulted in our convoy being delayed for 3 days while BW raised the boat.

In 2008 we managed to clear Slaithwaite without any problems. Then as we approached the outskirts of Huddersfield we were faced with 2 miles of empty canal. The evening before, vandals had lifted all the paddles on several locks. A visit by the BW supervisor advised us that it could take several days to refill the section. However, the "Good Lord" was on our side. There was a long & torrential rain storm over the whole area. Within about a day & a half the levels had risen to a point where our convoy could be coaxed down into Apsley Basin & the Broad Canal.

It was with great relief that we joined the other convoy crews in the local Pub. The journey down the Broad Canal to the Calder & Hebble Navigation was straight forward. We had plenty of time to call at the canal-side supermarket. We were then "behind time" & so could not call at the several AWCC boat clubs on our route. It became a rush onto the River Aire at Castleford & then down to

the Selby Canal. On arrival at Selby we booked a following morning exit onto the Ouse tideway. Once clear of the Selby bridges & the BOCM wharves the cruise to Naburn was without trauma. On that occasion I did have to avoid patches of floating debris. That was mostly leaves & bits of tree. Naburn lock was prepared for us & so leaving the tideway was swift. We had a short stop to take on water & fuel. Then we cruised into the City Of York to join the assembled club boats above Lendal Bridge.

We had been concerned that we did not take up to many of the visitor moorings. The original plan had been to moor above The Rail Bridge. However York City Engineers found the bank to be unstable. We therefore moored 28 boats 3 abreast as far upstream as was possible. I should have been there earlier to supervise mooring. I need not have worried. One of our Skippers was, for a time, a Queen's Harbourmaster.

The social part of the trip now commenced. I had arrange to book the nearby St Olave's Hall during Friday Evening. We had wine cheese & light refreshments. Saturday was a free day to tour York or join a cruise through Castlemills Lock into the river Foss. During the evening it was the main event. We had a Gala Dinner in the "Station Hall" in the National Railway Museum. Again it was minutes walk from the moorings. Our guests included the Lord Mayor & Mayoress. The High Sheriff & his wife, BW Managers & city people who had assisted us. Members recounted Trent Falls. Some boats were to long for the leg from Huddersfield to Selby.

On Sunday we boarded a bus for the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. We had booked full day tickets on the Steam Trains. The boys, of all ages, had a good time. Then it was back to our boats to party on board or join friends for a meal in the City.

On Monday we all went our separate ways. A few went up stream to visit Ripon but most back to their home mooring. In my case it was to a short stay at Nayburn & home to pay the bills etc.

After a week it was back to the boat. My next assignment was as a 3 Week Worker at the IWA National at Beal Park on the Thames. How we got the boat there is another story.

John Reeve GBOC.

## FEATURE ARTICLE

## LIBERTY SHIPS

*This item from your National Secretary, Roland Dotchin, though not having a direct connection with inland waterways still shares the desire of all those who set foot on a displacement craft of any sort, that everything will hold together until we get back to terra fir-ma. Ed*

**THE FACTS.** In the 2nd World War the United States built 2751 of these ships, to replace the many merchant ships lost due to enemy action. These ships would have been a major factor in the allies winning that war. Named Liberty Ships by American President Roosevelt, he said that they would bring liberty to Europe

Liberty Ships were amongst the first to be built using welded construction, instead of riveted plating as in previous years of ship building. All ships are now built with welded construction. Good ships, around carrying about 1000 tons cargo vessel with American luxuries for the crew that most British sailors had not seen such as fridges, ice water taps, etc. (indeed very few British homes at that time had a fridge). However, the ships did have one minor fault, they had a tendency to break in half in heavy seas and most sailors of that era were aware of this slight fault.

**MY STORY.** Around 1951/1952 I served on Ex Liberty ship **OREGON STAR** for two voyages, UK to Caribbean - unload cargo then transit Panama Canal. Then northbound Pacific passage to Canada to load with timber for UK. All the holds were full with timber piled high on deck.

Then south to transit Panama Canal again and the Eastward Atlantic passage to UK.

1st voyage was great, an enjoyable sailor's life, but glad to be home.

2nd voyage same, until after we loaded with timber and were southbound in the Pacific encountering **heavy seas**, a **crack** appeared in the deck from under the deck



housing. (*All brave sailors to the toilet*) **Oregon Star** berthed in Balboa at Pacific end of the Panama Canal, where a large plate was welded over the crack in the deck, and off she went again to transit the Panama Canal, around Xmas 1951. (Merry Xmas) The Oregon Star headed eastwards into the Atlantic weather encountering **huge seas and force 10 winds**. (Are you worried? the crew were, and it hadn't started yet.)

Around the same time Liberty Ship **Flying Enterprise** sailed from Hamburg loaded

with cargo for America, heading westwards into the Atlantic, encountering the same bad weather the Oregon Star was enduring.

In December the **Oregon Star** was battling her way eastwards towards the UK, and by then about 300 miles into the Atlantic. Radio communications at that time were sent in morse code, and able were to be read over long distances so on the 28th December into the radio shack and bridge came the automatic SOS ship in distress signal, di-di-di - dah-dah-dah - di-di-di, sent by Flying Enterprise, "ship is sinking, crew rescue needed." **Oregon Star** was many hundreds of miles away, unable to help. Other ships saved all of the crew except for 1 who died, Captain Neilson and the first Mate stayed on board. Tugs attempted to tow the Flying Enterprise back to UK, but the ship sank around the 15th January 1951. Thus for many days the crew of the **Oregon Star** listened to the radio messages of the attempted rescue, and **that crack** once

again began to appear from under the plate welded in Balboa. However she reached the UK safely with very weary sailors heading for home with a tale to tell.

The saga of the **Flying Enterprise** attracted world wide attention, unusual in those days, no satellites to spread news, but the Captain became a hero for refusing to leave his sinking ship until the last minute. (*Internet links, lots of information about Liberty ships and the Flying Enterprise events.*)

Roland Dotchin

### BOAT RALLY

24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> May 2013

To celebrate 45 years of the Association & The 40th Anniversary of the re-opening of The Great Northern Basin

Boat / Caravan Entry: £ 15 for 2 adults  
(Additional Crew members £5 per person)  
Further enquires to Mrs Christine Baylis  
Tel: 01623 201208 Mob: 07889 444190

Application forms for the event can be obtained from the website  
<http://crewashcanalpreservationanddevelopmentassoc.org.uk/>  
or by emailing: [subscribe.crewash@btinternet.com](mailto:subscribe.crewash@btinternet.com)

### Federation Of Bridgewater Cruising Clubs

#### Annual Boat Rally

Hosted By Worsley Cruising Club  
to be held at the

#### RED ROSE STEAM MUSEUM

Astley Green Nr Leigh.

(on the Leigh Branch of the Bridgewater Canal)

**24th/27th May 2013.**

(Late Spring Bank Holiday) Entry £20

## HIGH SPEED 2. CONCERNS FOR THE WATERWAYS

*This report was prepared by a colleague on another committee with which I am involved. I have the author's permission to use it.* ERICA MARTIN

There is potential for impact in Midlands areas as follows:  
Trent & Mersey at Wood End Lock near Lichfield. The current plans already show two crossings over the canal at or near the lock, indeed the lock-side cottage has a compulsory purchase order on it which given the attractiveness of the spot is regrettable. In addition the line extension to Manchester will now result in a third crossing, slightly north of Wood End Lock.

Trent & Mersey at Great Haywood. The line will swing from east to west crossing the T&M just north of Great Haywood marina on a 570 metre viaduct over the canal and River Trent at a height of approx 10 metres above canal. The actual crossing would appear to be approximately 100m north of the marina so will clearly impact the marina during both construction and use.

Shropshire Union Canal. The route crosses the Shroppie just south of Coalpit Lane Bridge (and south of Stanthorne Lock) just to the west of Middlewich at a height of approx 6.0 metres

Trent & Mersey north of Middlewich. This alongside the Great Haywood marina crossing is the crossing of most concern. It crosses the T&M from west to east approx 0.87 miles north of the winding hole and 0.33 miles north of Bridge 176. According to the plans, after crossing the Dane Flood plain and the canal, it immediately enters a cutting. The issue is that whilst the height of the viaduct above the flood plain is between 6-8 metres, this height differential falls to just 2.5 metres immediately after the canal. It is difficult from the plans to measure exact height above the canal but it might be worth the area concerned raising a question over this. (In addition, the crossing is very close to the off side 'Bramble Cuttings' moorings located here.)

Finally the route twice crosses the Bridgewater canal but at a reasonable height and so should pose little concern.  
Regarding the route from Lichfield to Leeds, this is a summary of the potential issues with regard to that route which as you will see has far more potential issues with regards to inland waterways: This is because in the main the HS2 route planners have only taken into consideration existing features and not planned or potential restoration projects particularly those on the Chesterfield Canal

After crossing the Coventry Canal immediately beside the M42 crossing at Polesworth, the route heads towards Measham. There is no provision on the maps for the potential Ashby Canal restoration as currently this is not a live canal. The route then crosses the River Soar and River Trent in quick succession adding to the complexity at Trent Lock. It then bridges the Erewash canal twice at Sandiacre. It also crosses the Nottingham canal at Trowell which is currently un-navigable and will effectively sever this canal.

The route encroaches on the newly opened Staveley Town Basin crossing the canal in about 7 or 8 places.

The route then proceeds to Killamarsh where there will be a HS2 maintenance depot with three aqueducts over the River Rother but no provision for the Chesterfield Canal restoration.

After crossing the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation at Meadowhall, a large embankment at Swaithe will block the un-navigable Dearne and Dove Canal. The route crosses the Aire and Calder Navigation Wakefield Branch on a new viaduct between the Kings Road and Woodnock Locks.

Finally works are planned besides the Aire and Calder's Leeds line at Woodlesford with a new viaduct and a long section running alongside the navigation towards Knostrop.

## ALERT INTER-CLUB COMPETITION



Kathryn Dodington, Editor of Byfleet Boat Club magazine "By The Wey" being presented with the new Inter-Club trophy by London Region President Trevor Gillam.

Announced at the recent AGM at Stafford this years Inter-Club award went to Byfleet Boat Club with the "runner up" being Boaters Christian Fellowship and Thrupp B.C. being "Highly Commended" The best "on line" version was Wheelton Boat Club.

The competition continues this year and a reminder that there are two classes of entry, HARD COPY and ON LINE. The "on line" entry simply means that your members can download their own copy from the internet. If you continue to send hard copies to me at the address on the last page I will ensure they are passed on to this years judge. Likewise on line issues will be forwarded.

Thanks go to all those clubs who entered last years competition, I was most impressed by the quality of your publications, also thanks to Ian Bruce and John Suggit from the North Cheshire Cruising Club who were the judges for the competition.

I have produced a guide for for judging criteria so if any editor would like a copy please mail me at the address on the back page and I will be happy to send a copy.

Graeme Bridge, ALERT Editor

# SNIPPETS

The **EREWASH CANAL PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION** are at it again.

We have progressed to the next stage of the Renaissance Awards.

Just to give a brief potted history of the cottages. They were built alongside the Erewash Canal at Sandiacre in 1779 with a Toll Office and a blacksmith shop. The whole canal was built in less than eighteen months along with fourteen large locks. One cottage was for the lock keeper and the other for the lengthman who also had a horse.

We lease the cottages from C&RT but as part of the agreement we have to keep them in good repair. Since we started we have re-roofed the whole lot, installed new electrics and central heating and last autumn we put up new guttering before painting all windows and doors in the original colour of green

What category we will be in will be up to the judges but we have already had the first visit from them.

Keep your fingers crossed

HOWARD SMITH.

**CANAL & RIVER TRUST** bank staff have given a resounding vote in favour of new flexible working hours. 88% of union members supported the introduction of 'annualised hours' which will see customer services teams working longer hours in the Summer, when the waterways are busiest, and construction teams working longer in the Winter, when the majority of repairs are carried out.

Operations director Vince Moran welcomed the vote saying: "This is an important move for the Trust and I have been really pleased by the positive way our workforce and the unions have embraced the changes. The strength of support they have shown underlines their deep commitment to the historic waterways in our care. Annualised hours will mean a better service for our customers and visitors, and greater efficiencies in how we care for the waterways."

Jane Ellis from Unison and Phil Allman from Unite, jointly commented: "The trade unions recognise that both parties have moved barriers to allow the workforce to achieve a yes vote on this ground breaking agreement, and especially supported by senior officials from both the trade unions and the



**St PANCRAS CRUISING CLUB** held their first club cruise of the year while we were all sat around doing our virtual boating at the NEC. (I joined them in the Warwick Castle as soon as I got back from Stoke.) It is just a short shake-down cruise to Little Venice, but there is a campaigning point. Rembrandt Gardens has always been 'mooring with special permission only' and traditionally, SPCC has always been given that permission. However, over the winter, the mooring had acquired continuous moorers several deep. Andrew asked that SPCC be allowed to use the space for their cruise and CRT (Stacy Fiddis, local Enforcement Officer) duly moved along all the CMs! A small success in a much bigger picture and worth a diplomatic mention. The picture shows club members, with Jenny Jones and Denise Keir holding some of the new "no mooring" signs. DAVID PEARCE

Some years back, **STOKE on TRENT BOAT CLUB** began a Christmas charity collection instead of spending money on cards for members we see regularly. Twelve charities' name went into the draw, and each year one is drawn at the AGM in November, then withdrawn. This year the lucky recipient was the Brown Edge and Endon First Responders, and the amount collected was £200. A cheque for this amount was handed over to Julie Bayley of the First Responders, who attended the club's Valentine's Night bash. Julie judged a Valentine's card competition [won by mag Ed Theresa Jollands], and even helped with the washing up! ERICA MARTIN

**READERS** may recall the letter from a club boater and the C&RT response printed in the last issue of ALERT. His concern as to the actions of the Canal and River Trust when arranging a release from the Dutton Breach was taken through the official complaints procedure without any settlement. This matter has now been taken to the Waterways Ombudsman, Andrew Walker, who has decided to open an investigation into Mr Wildman's complaint. There were apparently 9 boats which escaped the breach via Manchester so I have no doubt the other boaters will be watching with some interest, how this matter is resolved. Ed

**CAR & BOAT STICKERS**



The Association is determined to raise the profile of our organisation and to that end we have produced some self adhesive stickers for both boat and car. These have been distributed to the regions so please ask you rep to supply you with them, they are very reasonably priced, and don't forget to keep your burgee flying while out and about cruising. For further information contact Terry Aris our Development Officer. (contact details in the handbook)

# OBITUARY KEITH BROUGHTON

Keith Broughton completed his education at Eastwood school at the age of 18. After leaving school he started work at John Player and was subjected to the normal rigours of a young man working in a female dominated environment. He often told stories about his "education" in this school of hard knocks. He decided to look for more challenging work and left to go "down the pit". The coal board recognised his talents and initiated his management training. Keith later completed a degree "the hard way" and became an assistant manager. He and his first wife Phillipa shared a passion for boats and boating, which was to mould both of their lives. This was actively encouraged by his father-in-law, Jack Lynam, who helped Keith to restore "Gambler" his first boat.

I first met Keith in this period when we, as young men, were the "kids" on the Committee of the Soar Boating Club and I well remember him being at the National Rally of boats in Marple in 1966 and working on Lime Kiln lock in 1967.

Phillipa and Keith separated after 10 years together and afterwards Keith stayed in Melbourne. As an only child he was attracted to the "rough and tumble" of family life within the Argent household and he developed from frequent visitor to son-in-law. He married Pat Argent in 1980 and gained another exceptional mentor, his new father-in-law Ike Argent.

Keith's employers recognised his potential and he was promoted to work at the coal board's research unit at Bretby. He soon became an "expert" in noise and vibration control and pursued further study in this specialist area. This was to prove pivotal in his future career as, when the coal industry contracted, he found a natural home with the Health and Safety Executive. 1989 saw the start of two years of commuting whilst Keith further developed the skills required for his new position and in 1991 Keith, Pat and Keith relocated to Southport

It would be fair to say that this was where Keith's career "took off". He became an expert in his field and was able to travel the world lecturing and offering consultation. He visited India, New Zealand, Korea, Canada, the U.S.A. and many other places. Pat was often able to accompany him. Ultimately Keith became treasurer of his professional body, the Institute of Acoustics and made friends with colleagues all over the world. During their travels Pat even managed to get him to the top of the Eiffel Tower, even though he was afraid of heights, he was much happier below ground.

Throughout this time Pat and Keith remained keen members of the Soar Boating Club and rarely if ever missed the social and boating events. Family ties required frequent trips back to the midlands, so many friendships were retained and when we boated in the north they were welcome, frequent and easy visitors to Water Lily.

Keith retired at 60 and, fortunately for many of us, they decided to return to Melbourne to their old house, taking a more

active role in the running of the boat club. Keith became treasurer and subsequently Commodore. For all of this time they were working hard restoring their house.

They boated on hire boats with their family and with John and Phyll Saxon and ourselves. When we started boating in France they were keen to join us and we had further adventures in Burgundy and on the Canal du Midi, culminating in an epic trip down the Rhone in 2009.

After many years talking about it we, the Saxons and the Broughtons finally booked a hire boat in May on the Irish waterways, an experience enjoyed by all. They decided to join us as part-owners of Bon Viveur in France. Shortly afterwards Keith was diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus and knew that his life expectation was very limited. Fortunately he was able to fulfil his ambition to cruise the Canal du Midi to Carcassonne. He also was able to carry on with his duties as Commodore. Keith loved to plan his holidays and travels and claimed to get as much pleasure from that as from the holiday itself.



Keith knew that he could not beat his illness but strove manfully to minimise its' effect on friends, family or the boat club. Just 3 weeks before his death he insisted on attending the Bon Viveur annual meeting in the morning and presenting the Commodore's quiz the same evening. Keith was a polymath, defined as a clever, versatile man, a title often miss-applied, but in Keith's case it was true, he was a respected practitioner in his field, decent plumber and electrician but an excellent carpenter thanks, in part, to his choice of fathers-in-law, and a lot of patience, determination and willingness to learn.

Pat and Keith made a great team, they enjoyed the same things and had complementary skills, their family although far flung were always their over ruling priority. In different circumstances they could have reasonably expected a long and satisfying retirement. Keith did not have anything as commonplace as a "bucket list" he had a "box of dreams". His major remaining dream was to take Pat round the world. Sadly this was not to be.

Keith died on December 16<sup>th</sup> and his funeral service took place at St. James Church, Normanton-on-Soar on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. The celebration of Keith's life followed at the Clubhouse, needless to say it was extremely well attended. I can't remember the room ever being so full.

We will all miss Keith in our own ways but most will remember him as a loyal friend who could always be relied upon to "tell it as it is". I will miss him for his sense of humour and the knowledge that he was always on hand to offer help where and when it was needed.

JOHN WILKINSON

# SPACE TO LET

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## SAVE MONEY WITH YOUR OWN PUMP OUT SYSTEM

In these financially "challenging" times, perhaps it's time to consider owning your own on-board pump out system!

LeeSan, the Warwickshire based Marine Sanitation Specialists, offer a simple hand operated portable unit which costs just £316.58 (about the price of 21 pump outs). This system includes a robust and reliable single action diaphragm pump with detachable pump handle, mounted on a strong storage panel. Also included are 2 metres of LeeSan pump out hose with a screw in sight glass connection which meets ISO standards to fit all European ISO Standard deck fittings and 10 metres of strong "layflat" discharge hose stored on a rotating drum, complete with end fittings. When in the "stowed" position the complete system is extremely light and simple to carry. An electric version is available for £366.36.

As well as not having to pay for a pump out, owning your own system means that emptying your waste tanks can be carried out in many more locations, not just where there is a pump out station. It also means that this can be done at almost any time, even when yards, marinas or pump stations are closed or unmanned.

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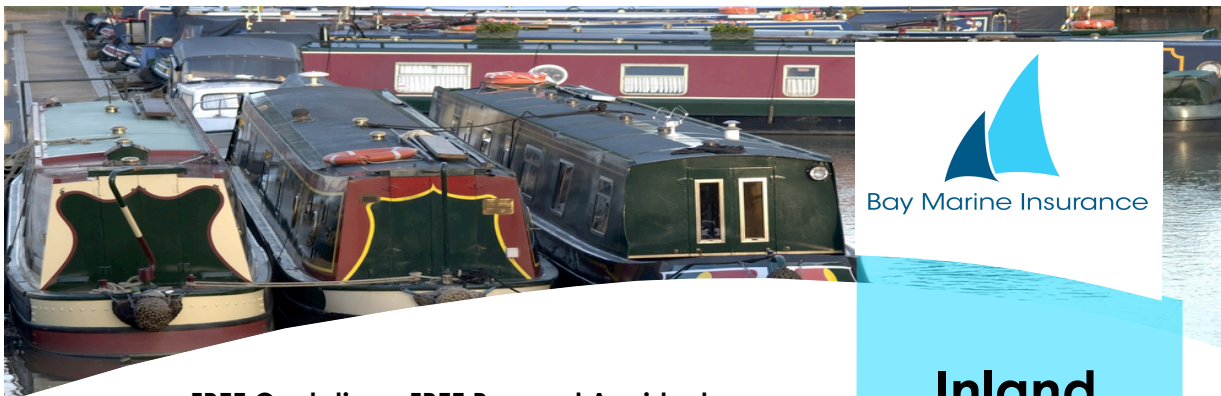


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