

Excalibur

**THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION—LONDON BRANCH
NUMBER 8, AUTUMN 1992**

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Two boats on the Branch's London Ring Cruise in July waiting in Limehouse Lock for the right state of the tide to lock through en route to Brentford. Story on page 10.

Photo: Mike Stevens

From the Editor

THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE?

In a recent Sunday newspaper I read an article about the privatisation of British Rail. The author argued that BR freight services currently get a hidden subsidy by their operating division being charged considerably less for use of the track than are the passenger service operating divisions. With the Government's proposed new arrangements, the argument went, all would be charged the same, thus making freight services much less economical and driving more and more freight off the railways and onto the roads.

I don't know enough about railways to know whether the writer's claimed facts were right or wrong, but it made me think. If the theory is true, why should it be assumed that the only alternative to rail transport is the already-overloaded road system?

Very few people now think there is any future in genuine commercial carrying on the narrow waterways of most of the UK except for some special cases like the River Soar gravel run, which, I read, is re-starting any time now. Incidentally for purposes of this argument I use the term 'narrow' less tightly than usual: even the GU is a narrow canal when one comes to look at the prospects for commercial carrying. But there are parts of the country where there are waterways which are capable of carrying genuine commercial traffic.

Some of them, mainly in the North East, already do so, but have the potential for much more. The Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation was modernised too late to develop its potential before the last depression (or was it the one-before-last?). Might a decrease in the competitive nature of rail transport prove its salvation after all?

The Severn is sitting there crying out for more trade. And what about the Thames? Think of it as the Felixstowe, Tilbury and West London Navigation and you begin to see its freight potential.

I've also seen a lot of articles in the Press recently pointing out how regional the present water shortage is, and the need for a national grid for moving water around. I've also read about BW's suggestion that the canal system could be up-graded to form an integral part of such a system. Putting this alongside the argument about rail freight, my mind turns to J F Pownall's 1942 proposal for a Grand Contour Canal circling the country on the 310ft contour, large enough to take coastal vessels and linked to major estuaries by vertical lifts.

None of this, of course, was mentioned in the Sunday paper article that started my musing. Clearly the journalist had no thought but that freight that comes off the rail can only go on the roads. To him or her, there was no other alternative. This is a measure of just how big a job we in IWA and similar bodies have still to do in creating public awareness of the potential of the waterways. I've often seen the ISG's excellent travelling display, which contains some hard-hitting facts about the advantages of water transport. Perhaps the rest of us should make this aspect more central to our thoughts about the waterways.

After all, profit from a thriving waterborne carrying industry would be a much more acceptable source of revenue for BW than some of the deals with waterside developers which are becoming more common and leading many of us to feel that BW is trying to exploit a view of the cut rather than a view from it.

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FUTURE ISSUES

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The Editor reserves the right to edit any article or letter submitted for publication.

From the Branch Chairman: Eric Garland

The Association's membership is falling, from a high of nearly 25,000 a couple of years ago to less than 22,000 now. The reasons may well have something to do with the recession, but it is significant that membership increased in parallel with the activities of the now-defunct Publicity Committee, who produced high-quality posters and other material for distribution to Branches. I objected at the time to the disbanding of such an important committee, and it has taken some time to re-establish publicity as an important element in the campaign, but the emphasis now is to produce cheaper and more simple (though well-designed and well-presented) material and spread it wide.

In support of this aim, a copy of the *Waterways Alive* leaflet is being enclosed with this issue of *Excalibur*. The leaflet includes a membership form, and I would urge you each to use it to recruit a new member as suggested by our Region Chairman in the last *Excalibur*. A significantly increased membership will greatly increase the funds at the disposal of the Association.

A few years ago, the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) had a similar number of members to the IWA, but now they have a far greater membership in excess of 35,000. They produce a monthly newspaper for their members, perhaps helped by the fact that there are no commercial magazines in their field as competition. Some would say that our interests are similar, although the canals are not always as wet as they ought to be, but we should take heart that such growth is still possible even in these times.

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From the Region Chairman: David Allison-Beer

'There are no restoration projects in the South East', I was told last year. For once I decided not to disillusion the person. They probably didn't realise I was the Region Chairman and a member of IWA's Restoration Committee. Although there have been restoration projects in our region for some years, until the past year progress has been slow. It is encouraging that within a year, two projects have moved to a position to host canal camps this summer.

The Bow Back Rivers in East London are the last major remainder waterways in the South East. Neglected and silted up, spurned by boaters and most anglers, it was almost possible to walk on the rubbish floating on the surface. I remember various attempts by London Branch to promote their use and restoration; the 1987 rally at Three Mills, followed by a walk and cruise around the rivers in 1989. As usual the enthusiastic few turned up with little support from the locals. This all changed in 1990 when a local business decided they did not like their office's outlook onto a rubbish filled waterway and so promoted a clearance project. This led to the establishment of the East London Rivers Initiative (ELRI), the Lower Lea Project and the appointment of a project officer by the London Borough of Newham. The IWA, WRG and KESCRG have all been involved with scrub, towpath and lock clearance and resurfacing work. The culmination of this will be a two-week canal camp this Summer. *(See elsewhere in this issue.)* The long-term aim is for the channel to be dredged, the locks restored and ultimately the waterways upgraded to cruiseway status.

Also within the same area, a related project is the restoration of the tide-operated House Mill at Three Mills. The whole area is of great industrial archaeological significance. A visit to the mill, especially if project manager Brian Daubney is present, is not to be missed.

In West London the restoration of the side ponds on the Hanwell lock flight is progressing. Even I have been found clearing them. BW are sceptical of the boaters' ability to use side ponds. I am sure that with clear instructions even the newest boater will soon master them. Water will be saved and the padlocking of the flight at night should be unnecessary.

A further camp is taking place in Chelmsford, working on the Springfield Basin, lock and feeder channel. This privately-owned waterway is run by the Company of Proprietors of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation; apparently the second

oldest canal company in the country. In 1985 the local IWA branch published a report *'Springfield and Beyond'*, with a vision of a restored lock and basin providing a focus for part of Chelmsford. As often happens there was little interest until in 1990 the report won an award and in 1991 the IWA managed to persuade the canal company to allow volunteers to work on the navigation. This year NRA were persuaded to dredge the basin and the channel. If IWA branch enthusiasm was the only requisite of canal restoration, it would be finished by now! The project is being funded by a grant of almost £2000 from the IWA's National Waterways Restoration and Development Fund and over £1000 raised this year by the Branch's Barbicruise sponsored walk. The work includes removal of a metre of silt from the feeder channel, repairing the lock walls and eventually re-gating the lock. The branch aims to complete the work for a re-opening at the national trailboat rally next May. A few weeks ago I visited this project whilst a number of senior managers from the Post Office were working on site as part of their fund-raising for the ITV Telethon. Before I knew what had happened, I had been trained to drive a dumper and was moving loads to the tipping area half a mile away. They have threatened me with the barrow hoist next time!

In 1976 the Thames and Medway Canal Association was formed with the aim of protecting and restoring the canal in Kent. This is perhaps the most difficult restoration project in the Region as the railway currently uses the original canal tunnel and another part of the canal has been infilled with asbestos waste. On a historical note, at one time the railway shared the tunnel with the canal; a single-track railway ran on the towpath, cantilevered out over the canal. The basin at Gravesend is still in use for coastal craft moorings and reconnection of this to a stretch of existing canal is possible. If waterway restoration elsewhere in the country can move, amongst other things, a motorway, a supermarket car park and a railway embankment, then a prefabricated building and a few hundred yards of infilled canal through a mainly disused industrial area are no real problem. There is an enthusiastic local society, which has been supported financially by both the local and other IWA branches. They face the usual problem of gaining the interest of the local inhabitants, made more difficult because much of the canal borders marsh areas which are not heavily populated. However it is not beyond hope and the society holds regular working parties.

I hope that this article has shown you that there is restoration work in the region and potential for much more. When these projects are completed there is still the Cumberland Arm, the Whitehouse Farm or Mundon Canal and the Royal Military to keep us all busy well into the next century.

Readers Write

LITTLE VENICE: BW REPLIES

Thank you for the words of welcome in the *'Late News'* section of *Excalibur*. I am delighted to be working for the South East Waterways and I am enthusiastic and indeed optimistic about the task of continuous improvement in the quality of our service and the canal infrastructure. I very much look forward to meeting with you, your Chairman and other committee members. I have no doubt you have a close working relationship with Mark Bensted and I expect that through Mark I will be in touch again soon. Of course, in the meantime I am at your disposal.

There was one other particular reference to British Waterways in *Excalibur*, relating to Browning's Pool at Little Venice. I did not quite understand the thrust of the editorial as it tended to suggest that we were being surreptitious. Is the 'proposal' to which you refer not the Westminster study which was produced as a planning overview purely and not as a detailed proposal and did we not throw this open to consultation? Tim Lewis and David Allison-Beer both made comments broadly supportive of the study (with reservation). Please be assured that if you wish further information on proposals affecting the waterway you need only lift the phone to Mark Bensted. Mark is on holiday at the moment, hence my reference to this issue.

I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Yours sincerely, Peter Coyne
BW Regional Manager (South East)

Our Region Chairman has responded to Mr Coyne:

Before I move to the main purpose of this letter, as Chairman of South East Region of the IWA I must welcome you and hope that we can develop as good a rapport as we had with your predecessor. For your information the BW waterways within my region are the Grand Union south of Batchworth, London's Waterways and the Rivers Lee and Stort. My Region Chairman colleagues Brian Percy and Alan Swaisland cover the other BW waterways within your responsibility.

It is unfortunate that my first letter to you must be to take you to task over your letter to Mike Stevens of London Branch covering the Westminster Corridor study. The IWA only learned of the public consultation through a press release dated 25th February 1992 with a closure date of Friday 6th March; by the time I had received this notice there were barely five days for consultation. I am afraid that I do not consider consultation with the IWA on that study to have been at all satisfactory. However I am aware that the BW

definition of consultation whereby BW tells you what they propose to do, identified by Lord McNair (*Hansard col.968, 4th March 1992*) during the Lords' Third Reading of the BW Bill in March, is somewhat different from the usually accepted one. The only consultation with the IWA was through Tim Lewis and me attending the Toll Office at Little Venice in the short period when the documents were on public display. My viewing time was severely restricted since I had to make the visit during my lunch hour as that was the only period when I could be available whilst the documents were on display. My comments were very much 'off the cuff' and I explained this to your Waterway Manager, Mark Bensted during my visit.

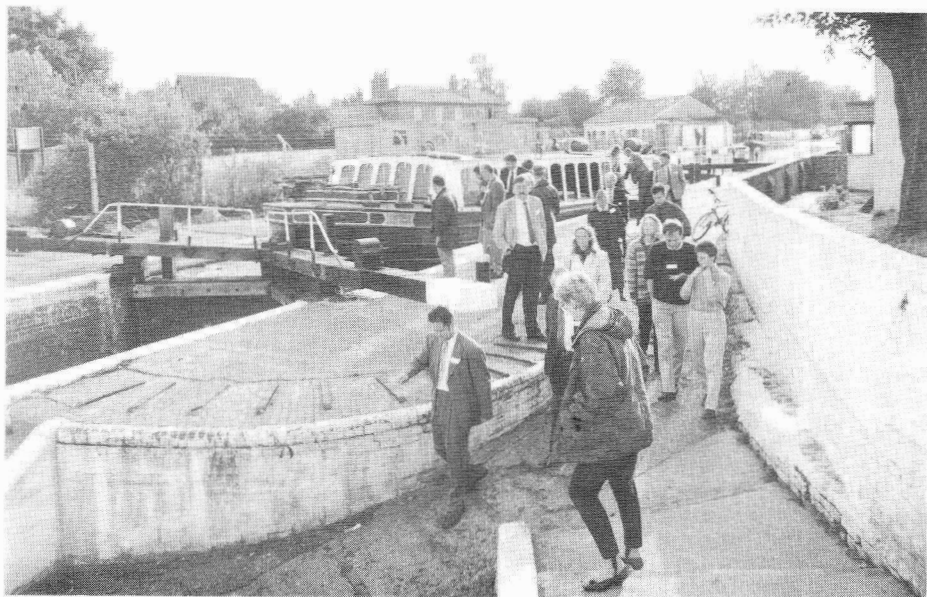
As a member of a local authority planning advisory panel, I am regularly called upon to comment and advise upon planning applications (often before they are finalised for public consultation), as is the IWA by a number of bodies. The period of consultation for these is usually at least three weeks and copies of plans are made freely available, both at meetings with the local authority planning officers and otherwise.

I am concerned that you suggest that a corridor study is merely a 'planning overview'. This is not the impression given by BW's Principal Architect Roger Becket at his recent presentation to a meeting of the London Amenity Societies Forum. Your press release stated that the corridor study had 'received approval in principle from Westminster's Planning and Transportation Committee in January' and was '... to feature in the Council's Unitary Development Plan'. Even Judy Grice, BW's Principal Landscape Architect, admitted, when she spoke to IWA's Navigation Technical and Amenity Committee at the end of July, that the study has been published in a hurry so it was available to be adopted alongside Westminster's canal guidelines.

Within SE Region of the IWA we are most concerned that these studies are presented to local authorities before adequate consultation has taken place. The local authorities then incorporate these policies into their unitary development and structure plans; we then object to them and press for changes. If true consultation took place with 'the most important waterway user body with which we deal' (a BW staff member's words) then we would at least be aware of proposals and have the opportunity to influence the final outcome, even if, when published, it still included proposals which we felt would not benefit the waterway environment.

Yours sincerely, David Allison-Beer
Chairman, IWA SE Region

West London Waterway Walks



At the official opening of the West London Waterway Walks Project last year. The author of this article leads the invited guests down the towpath from Norwood Top lock.

The canals of London provide a very valuable recreational and commercial resource that is greatly under-utilised at present. On some stretches of canal other than the Regent's Canal one can walk for miles without seeing a single person, let alone an active canal boat. In an attempt to remedy this and encourage greater use of the waterway path network, five West London Boroughs have joined together with support from other organisations, including the London Canals Committee and British Waterways, to look at the possibilities of developing walks and recreational activities on the canal networks of West London.

The Project area stretches from Wormwood Scrubs in the East to the Colne Valley in the West, with the Thames as the Southern boundary. It includes the rivers Thames, Brent, Crane, Colne, Yeading Brook, Longford River, Duke of Northumberland River and the Grand Union Canal (Main Line and Paddington Arm). It is intended that compatible recreational activities will be developed on each stretch of waterway so that different user-groups can use the waterways without conflict.

The West London Waterway Walks project was the brainchild of the Leisure Services of the London Borough of Ealing, with the support of four other London Boroughs: Hounslow, Richmond, Hillingdon and Brent. The Project has also received financial support from the Countryside Commission, London Canals Committee, Sports Council, British Waterways, National Rivers Authority and Thames Water Utilities. After initial individual Borough-based investigations, it was decided that the scheme required an independent Project Officer to undertake inter-Borough liaison, surveying and rights-of-way improvements to further the aims of the project which are:

- to create a footpath network and improve the environment along the rivers and canals of West London;
- to encourage walking, cycling and fishing, including spaces for the disabled;
- to conserve the waterway wildlife and landscape; and
- to encourage local people and businesses to take part in waterway improvements.

My initial responsibility as Project Officer was to survey the 125 miles of rivers and canals in West London, to look at the possibility of producing walking routes which retain a rural feel, linking the quietness of the waterway, away from the bustle of West London, to the Green Belt and the wider countryside beyond.

This phase is now nearing completion and the survey has shown that an integrated network of public rights-of-way is attainable. The existing paths and rights of way provide a valuable foundation for the Project. However there are a number of natural and man-made blockages that need to be removed before a full interconnected network is produced.

The largest number of obstructions relate to major roads crossing the river corridors, and it is hoped that some of these will be resolved as a result of Borough initiatives in conjunction with highway improvements. At the present time, all but a few obstructions can be by-passed by short, safe alternative routes.

The existing network is well-used by local people who know the immediate area and wish to undertake short walks but who, on the whole, do not realise the full extent of the network. With improved waymarking and formalised repair and maintenance, it is hoped to make local people more aware of the waterway resources and to enable them to use the paths easily all year round.

Having completed the initial survey, an Action Plan is to be produced for the Project. This would outline the key projects, initiatives and capital works that are required to complete the links to the network. It is proposed that the second phase of the project will be the resolution of access problems and capital works required around major obstructions.

Once the network of paths is completed, interpretive guides and educational packs will be produced, with the aim of introducing the local community to the recreational and educational value of the waterways corridors of West London. We also wish to make local people aware of the waterway network by getting the community involved in active projects such as voluntary work, an 'adopt-a-path' scheme, and involvement in the

production of the interpretive material, such as circular and linear walk leaflets, nature trails and teaching packs.

We hope that national voluntary organisations and local industry will become involved in supporting the scheme financially, with material and technical support. To this end a sponsorship package has been circulated to a large number of local and national companies to seek support for the project.

The successful first year of the projects has laid the foundation for the following two years, when the practical works will be undertaken on the ground to produce the path network for West London. The Project has also encouraged a higher degree of co-operation between the participating Boroughs, at both Officer- and Member-level. The project is identified in all the Boroughs' Unitary Development Plans and I am involved in many specific Borough projects relating to the waterways of West London, be they right-of-way issues or projects that affect public access. The support of the London Canals Committee, as a significant financial sponsor of the project, has been invaluable as has also its rôle of promoting the use and awareness of the canal network of Greater London.

RUSSELL ROBSON

The author has been Project Officer of the West London Waterway Walks Project since March 1991. He has a degree in Environmental Studies and a Post-graduate Diploma in Leisure Planning from the Polytechnic of North London. He has previously worked as Assistant Ecologist/Forester for the London Borough of Bromley and as Development Assistant responsible for strategic Leisure Planning for Mid-Sussex District Council. He may be contacted on 081-566 1929.

On the Metreau

News and Gossip of London's Waterways

POLLUTION ALERT!

What do you do when you come across a seriously polluted section of waterway? This question came to your Editor's attention when a recent meeting of the Lower Lee Project got onto the subject of sewage pollution in the River Lee and the Bow Back Rivers. Michael Render (BW Manager for the Lee and Stort) and Craig Woolhouse (NRA's Forward Planning Officer for the Lee) were both at the meeting and had quite a bit to say. It was not clear whether the pollution was caused by sub-standard outflow from a sewage treatment works, or by builders connecting toilets to the nearest available sewer without checking whether it's a 'foul sewer' or a surface drainage sewer that runs into the river. In any case, I gathered that parts of the Lee and Back Rivers can get pretty unpleasant at times.

The National Rivers Authority has responsibility for protecting the water environment and powers to prosecute polluters. They need the help of waterway users to alert them to bad spots. The numbers to ring in NRA Thames Region are:

Amersham (0494) 722361

Crossness 081-310 5500

Guildford (0483) 577655

Oxford (0865) 749400

Reading (0734) 311422

Waltham Cross (0992) 35566

or, outside office hours, Linkline 0800-252768.

200 CLUB NEWS

June winners

£60 no.246 Mr M J Evans, Hertford

£30 no. 47 Mr I N M MacDonald, London W14

£15 no. 13 Mr E A G Lewis, London N21

£15 no. 93 Mr B G Rutter, New Malden

CALL A SPADE . . . ?

London WRG needs more tools and catering equipment. In particular they need to replenish their stocks of mattocks, shovels and brick-laying gear. Anyone who can help please contact Tim Lewis (phone number on page 3).

BOAT STANDARDS

Owners of boats licensed with BW should have received a letter (dated 9 July) from BW's Commercial Administration Manager explaining the current state of BW's thinking. BW have revised their plans, partly in response to representations made to them by user groups (including IWA) and partly in order to satisfy

Euro-regulations. There will be uniform standards for BW, NRA and the Broads Authority and BW have also scrapped their proposed time-scale for making the standards compulsory and propose training and licensing people other than qualified surveyors to issue Certificates of Compliance, which should, hopefully, cut down at least part of the cost. This sounds as if it might be an improvement, but let's wait and see how it turns out before we put the flags out!

END-OF-GARDEN MOORINGS

Readers will be aware that BW has been attempting to charge boat-owners for mooring to the end of gardens. From what we hear, if a person carries out repair-work to their garden which overhangs a river, they may be charged an annual fee by the NRA. We have also heard from one of our members that the NRA is considering charging for mooring-bollards in the garden itself. When will they start charging for putting plants in the garden?

'THE WORKING THAMES'

The London River Association launched its report *'The Working Thames: An Agenda for Action'* at a Press Conference held at Convoys Wharf on the Thames at Deptford on 22 July. The report contains 12 papers by leading experts on the Thames, including David Hilling, a member of IWA SE Region Inland Shipping Committee. It makes the case for full development of the Thames for transport use and proposes an agenda to achieve this, in particular identifying the need for co-ordinated initiatives for the river. Although at first sight the subject may appear dry and academic, the report is clearly presented and contains many illustrations and photographs. Although it costs £10, with a £5 concession for voluntary groups, it is well worth a study by anybody concerned with the future of the Thames.

CARBUNCLES AND WHOOPEE CUSHIONS

The Branch was recently invited to a meeting of the London Forum of Amenity Societies, of which the Branch Committee has subsequently decided that we should become an associate member. The meeting was about the management of London's waterways, but a later discussion centred on the quality of new buildings and the merits of annual awards for the best new buildings. There was more support for the idea of an award for the worst building, dubbed by one way as the 'Golden Carbuncle'.

Your IWA representative felt an immediate rapport with the idea and so throws it open to your good selves. Nominations are invited for the worst building on London's waterways, also an appropriate name for the award (The Sinking Duck Salver? Rotting Hulk Rosebowl? BBC Whoopee Cushion?), and if you're feeling generous, nominations will also be accepted for London's best waterway building.

PS. BBC in the above stands for Better Buildings Committee.

IWA/WRG STAMP BANK

This is a way of turning all your old stamps into restored waterways. Please send in any of the following stamps to the address below:

- * Green Shield (old & new), Co-op, Blue Chip, Pink, Look, Cash, Premier Gold, Supersave, Nationwide and all other trading stamps
- * Texaco, Gulf, Mobil, Shell, BP, Esso, Fina, Elf, Heron, Total, Burmah and all types of petrol vouchers
- * Air Miles, cigarette coupons, silver foil, aluminium can and ring pulls, cigarette cards
- * all denominations of used postage stamps.

The scheme then turns these into money, all of which is given to support canal restoration schemes throughout the UK. The Bank has raised over £6,500 in the last four years. In 1991 they set a target of £2,250 and actually raised £3,000. For 1992 their target is £4,000. The address for your contributions is:

IWA/WRG Charity Bank
6 Spa Lane, Hinckley, Leics LE10 1JB

PLAN/NAV PROGRESS

(For those of you who aren't native speakers of Branch-Committee-speak, 'Plan/Nav' is shorthand for the Branch's Planning and Navigation Subcommittee).

The various bits of this issue contributed by Eric Garland were mostly written while attending the Public Inquiry into the proposed unsympathetic development at Empire Wharf on the Hertford Union Canal. Representations are also being made against a proposal by the North Circular Road contractors to increase, yet again, the time of the stoppage this Winter for the reconstruction of the aqueduct.

The Sub-committee was invited to view the restoration progress on the House Mill at Three Mills. Brian Daubeny spell-bound the assembled company with the history of the Mills and the fascinating Industrial Archaeology of the area, as well as the plans for this museum complex, which may well contain museums dedicated to fairgrounds, the RNLI, gunpowder, bone china and a safe destination-point for visiting and Museum boats. Brian has offered to show other

groups around the Mill; anyone interested can contact Eric Garland or Marion Waters (phone numbers on page 3). Your Editor also hopes to persuade Brian to write an article for a future issue of *Excalibur*. Some good news is that Newham Council has won Government funding via the Inner City Initiative to progress these ideas further.

PRESIDENT'S BIG FOOD RUN

We told you in our last issue that narrowboat *President* would be at Little Venice on 12 July at the end of her charity run in aid of Romanian Children's Aid. Her 18-day journey from Ellesmere Port covered 257 miles and 301 locks. The main activity was collecting donations of canned food: some 650 boxes in all, holding an average of 15 cans each. With cash donations as well, they raised over £10,000. On the way they also delivered 230 stretchers to various Red Cross and St John Ambulance Branches, and carried a token half-ton of salt from British Salt at Middlewich to Wanders at Kings Langley (makers of Ovaltine and former operators of a fleet of narrowboats). At Little Venice, *President* was welcomed by, among others, Libby Bradshaw representing IWA London Branch.

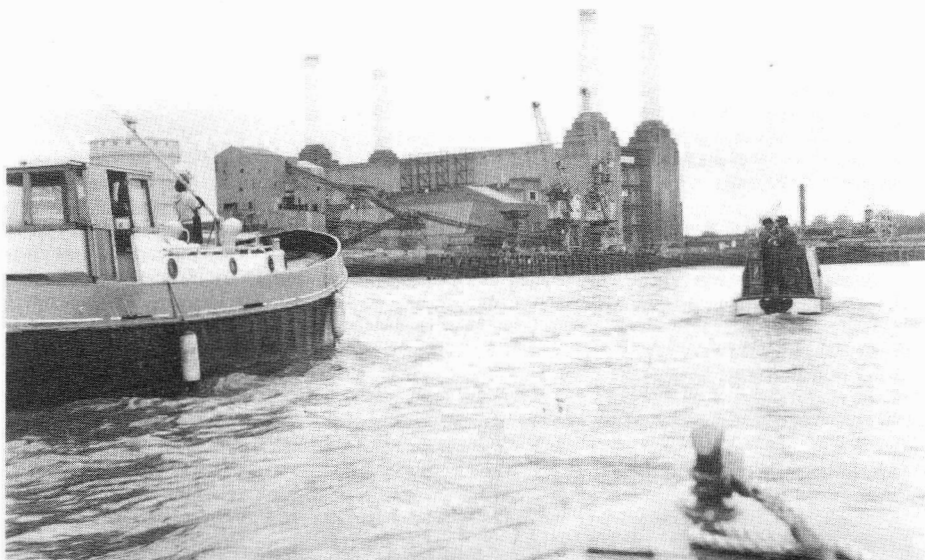
THE SALES STAND GOES FORTH

I hope some of you will have taken the opportunity to help out on the Branch Stand. Alas, this issue is probably too late for Eric Garland to warn you not to volunteer for the sweet counter. At a recent event in Newham, he was rushed off his feet counting out black-jacks and fruit salads for our younger customers while Rosie Limming at the other end was finding time to sit and sew up a few more cuddly toys for the tombola. Just as well, really, because the rain at the BBC Club Sports Day the next weekend brought crowds into our marquee to deplete the tombola quite seriously and to cause a quick sell-out of our line in home-made jam.

At an Islington event, members running the stand trod very carefully on the grass area at the back of the stand, the organisers having warned them of the recently-planted trees, our people being more aware of earlier doggy visitors. Rammey Marsh provided liquidity problems: Eric proved he couldn't quite finish a yard of ale, while Rosie had trouble with a very large bottle of sticky soft drink and a quantity of 5p pieces.

The increased selling-space recently has been occasioned by our loan of the display panels to a local authority and their very slow return. A pity, because the display was going to be re-furnished with new panels and will be graced by leaflet dispensers to be manufactured and donated by Branch member David Llewellyn.

Tideway Cruise and Brentford Rally



*The view from the editorial battle-wagon as we pass Battersea power station.
The tug Silverlit is alongside and nb Anker no.5 ahead.*

Photo: Mike Stevens.

The weekends of 4/5 and 11/12 July both saw Branch activities. Our Brentford Rally had long been planned for the second of these, and the Branch Committee decided to take the opportunity to organise a London Ring Cruise the previous weekend. Then, when we realised how late the last *Excalibur* was, we cancelled it. Even though *Excalibur* only reached members a few days before the cruise, there were some expressions of interest, so we un-cancelled it again! Our apologies for the confusion caused. What follows is very much my personal log of the two weekends.

Friday 3 July

Up to *Felis Catus II* at Cowley Peachey, to welcome our guests for the weekend.

Saturday 4 July

0715: Set off.

1002: Moored at Sainsbury's at Alperston, for shopping, breakfast and to pick up one of the guests who'd been doing a car-shuffle.

1137: Off again

1410: At Hampstead Road lock, crossed with old friends on *Auntie Barb*, also heading to Brentford but in the opposite direction.

1515: Waited before Islington tunnel for unidentifiable boat movement in the tunnel. Then a covey of police arrived, responding to a report of 'a person in the tunnel'. We took two of them through the tunnel to check. Nothing there, but at the other end we discovered that David and Elizabeth Wood on *Anker no. 5* had found a body. After a short while we were off again, now locking with *Anker no. 5*. Passed through an event at City Road with the Branch Stand very much in evidence.

1654: Moored by Victoria Park with *Anker no. 5* and *Maid of Morven*. *Anker* went for a run down Duckett's and came back overnight.

Sunday 5 July

Unpromising weather forecast led us to work out alternative plans if conditions on the tideway weren't what we wanted. All on *FCII* a bit apprehensive about the tideway as none of us had done it before.

1015: Set off after breakfast, once again locking with *Anker*. Several locks only have one top paddle in use.

1206: Arrived at Limehouse lock. The threatened wind hadn't arrived, although

there had been some rain. Tied up in the lock with *Anker*, later joined by *Maid of Morven* and *Meridian*, both bound for Teddington. Mike Adams' tug *Silverlit* was waiting below the lock to act as escort boat. Having talked to David and Elizabeth, *Silverlit* went to wait on the barge roads. Not totally certain whether we should be expecting Libby Bradshaw, either on her boat *Panacea* or on foot. She had planned for us to lock out at 1430, but *Meridian* was keen to get away earlier.

1400: The weir by Commercial Road lock indicated that a boat was on its way.

1410: Two narrow-boats appeared and the lock-keeper decided that since they would not fit into the lock with the rest of us, he would lock us through.

1416: Locked out into the tideway: a bit 'lumpy' to start with, but nothing like as bad as our worst imaginings. Running in convoy with the other boats at fairly normal canal-type engine revs. We gave *FCII* a bit of a speed trial at one point, but soon throttled back as we realised we'd run ahead of the tide and would have to wait at Brentford.

1643: Arrived at the mouth of Brentford Creek, and tied up below Thames Lock waiting for opening time. *Silverlit* couldn't get right up the creek for lack of water. While waiting, we were joined by Adrian Steinkamp on nb *Chyna-Too*, who'd missed us at Limehouse because of slow boats ahead of him on the Regent's. To our surprise, Libby was with him: she'd not had time to get *Panacea* down to the Regent's from her Cowley mooring and had scrounged a lift with Adrian.

1720: Locked up through Thames Lock

1751: Tied up just above Brentford Gauging Lock, where *Auntie Barb* had already arrived. Some of us headed for the Six Bells to find Jim Mason and Marion Scott for some Rally business (or that was the excuse!).

Friday 10 July

Up from home, bringing with us a load of stuff I'd got printed for the *Waterways for Youth* activities at the Rally.

1715: Needed to use the water-point and found it's below the lock. A helpful relief lock-keeper didn't mind locking us down and back again as long as we were back up before she was due off duty.

1800: Tied up at our rally mooring, near the footbridge to the main site. Various socialising with other boaters, W/Y bods, WRGLies, Civil War Society etc., some of it on the towpath and some in the beer-tent.

Saturday 11 July

Busy all day at the rally, working on W/Y events, so neither of us managed to see the Carnival procession, although I did see part of the re-enactment of the Battle of Brentford during my lunch-break. Not the most encouraging weather, so the public weren't in the numbers we had hoped. Probably my fault, as I'd cleaned the boat's brass that morning, which usually brings on the rain. The band who had been due to play next to the beer-tent that evening had cancelled at the last moment, but fortunately Kevin Saint had his disco equipment in the van and was able to fill in at short notice.

Sunday 12 July

Tempted fate by cleaning the brass again, but this time without unfortunate meteorological consequences. My brother's family arrived at around 10.30 and we spent the next few hours on the Rally site, the kids doing the W/Y passport.

1442: Off up the locks to give family a ride.

1900: Back at our mooring for supper on board before the family left. Wendy and I decided to sleep on board and go home on a very early train the next day.

MIKE STEVENS



Felis Catus II passing the Houses of Parliament
Photo: Mike Stevens

London's First Restoration Work-Camp

Excalibur's regular readers will have seen lots of advance mentions of London's first-ever waterway restoration work-camp. This is due to take place on the Bow Back Rivers, starting just about as I write this article. David Allison-Beer's article on page 4 gives you some of the background.

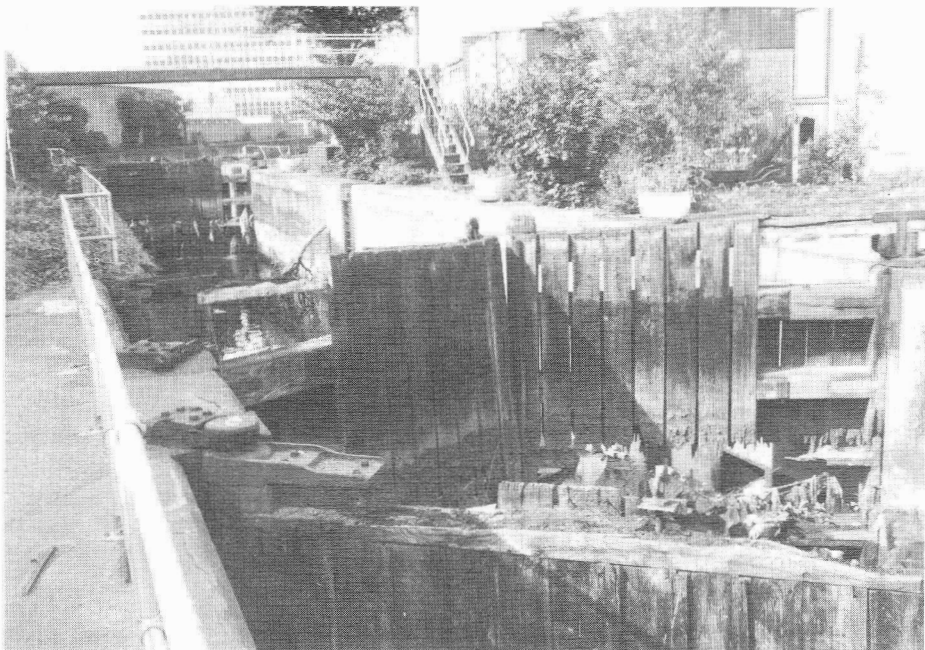
The dig has been organised by the Kent and East Sussex Canal Restoration Group (KESCRG) in conjunction with the East London Rivers Initiative (ELRI). A few days before the camp was due to start, I was told that the number of volunteers expected varied through the two weeks of the camp, from 13 up to 40, although the arrival of extra volunteers was not ruled out. As well as KESCRG volunteers (one of whom was expected from Paris), people were expected from the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (including 13 from Barbados) and 25 from the National Agricultural College.

The work to be done includes cleaning out and preparing the two locks for future full restoration. City Mill Lock divides the fully- and semi-tidal sections of the Back Rivers and has three sets of gates to cover various possible states of levels

either side. These gates are in a terminal state of collapse (see picture below) and will be removed during the work-camp ready for later replacement. Carpenters Road lock is also an interesting one with radial gates at both ends (reminiscent of some bottom gates on the River Nene). It was also hoped that the work-camp would build a ramp for disabled access to the towpath of the City Mill River, but I hear that this may not be possible since not all the necessary permissions have come through.

The dredger is coming back, and is due to go into the water at 6am on Monday 27 July in order to use the tide to be in place for HRH Prince Edward to see it in action at City Mill Lock later the same day.

By the time you read this, the work-camp will be over. I hope to have some photos for a future edition of *Excalibur*. But that won't mean the Back Rivers restoration will have been completed; there's lots more yet to be done, and weekend working-parties are expected to be needed for some time to come. Anybody interested should contact Marion Waters (Telephone number on page 3).



Lock-gates at City Mill Lock in an advanced stage of decay last April. During the work-camp these will be removed ready for the installation of new gates at some future date.

Photo: Mike Stevens.

Waterways Events in and around London

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 1st 11am-2pm	Lee Valley Park and Broxbourne Leisure services	Afloat in a Boat: river activities for children aged 2 to 10. Meet at Lee Valley Boat Centre car park, Old Nazeing Road., Broxbourne. For bookings telephone 0992-713838
Saturday 5th	Small Boat Club	Single-handed Competition at Teddington
Sunday 6th 2.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Guided walk (about 2 hours) along the Regent's Canal from Camden to Paddington. (Meet at Camden Town tube station) Contact, Dr Michael Essex-Lopresti (081-882 1337)
Sunday 6th 2pm	Lee Valley Park and Passmore Edwards Trust	Guided tour (2 ½ hours) of Three Mills and the Bow Back Rivers. Meet Three Mills car park (near Tesco), Bromley-by-Bow.
Thursday 10th 8pm	IWA CHELMSFORD BRANCH	AEU House, Primrose Hill, Chelmsford. SPEAKER, John McCormack: <i>'Living aboard'</i> . Contact, Mrs Molly Beard (0702-554492)
Weekend 12th/13th	LONDON WRG	Dig on the Wilts and Berks Canal. Contact, Tim Lewis (081-530 7926)
Saturday 12th	Dittons Skiff and Punting Club Regatta at Teddington	
Sunday 13th	IWA/Colne Valley Groundwork Trust	Slough Arm Day at Bloom Park, Slough. Contact, John Elliott (0895-832662)
Sunday 13th	Walton Bridge Cruiser Club	Boat-handling competition at Molesey
Sunday 13th	T.M.Y.C.	Family Watermanship Competition at Teddington
Tuesday 15th 8pm	IWA HERTS BRANCH	Hatfield Cricket Club, Welwyn Garden City. SPEAKER, Mike Stevens: <i>'What is Parliament doing to the Waterways?'</i> . Contact, Greta Wright (0727-860137)
Thursday 17th 7 for 7.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	CENTRAL SOCIAL MEETING at Abbey Community Centre, 34 Great Smith Street, SW1P 3BU. SPEAKER, Dr Guy Johnson: <i>'The Panama Canal'</i> . Contact, Tim Lewis (081-530 7926)
Weekend 26th/27th	LONDON WRG	Participating in National WRG Dig on the Wey and Arun Canal. Contact, Tim Lewis (081-530 7926)
Sunday 27th	Dittons Skiff and Punting Club	Championship Regatta at Teddington.
Tuesday 29th 7.30 for 8pm	IWA KENT and EAST SUSSEX BRANCH	The Fountain Inn, Barming, Maidstone. Members' slides evening. Contact, Angela Madle (0634-722661)

OCTOBER

Weekend 3rd/4th	KESCRG	Working Party on the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation. Contact, Ken Parish (0622-858329)
Weekend 3rd/4th	LONDON WRG	Dig on the Basingstoke Canal. Contact, Allan Scott (081-642 8104)
Sunday 4th 2.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Guided walk (about 2 hours) along the Regent's Canal from Camden to Islington. (Meet at Camden Town tube station) Contact, Dr Michael Essex-Lopresti (081-882 1337)

Tuesday 6th 8pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	N.E. LONDON SOCIAL MEETING at Barking Central Library. SPEAKER: Bob Aspinall: <i>The Museum of London in Docklands</i> (subject to confirmation). Contact, Sue Blake (081-882 8471)
Thursday 8th 8pm	IWA CHELMSFORD BRANCH	AEU House, Primrose Hill, Chelmsford. SPEAKER, Tim Woodbridge: <i>'The Ovaltine Boat'</i> . Contact, Mrs Molly Beard (0702-554492)
Tuesday 13th 8pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	UXBRIDGE SOCIAL MEETING at Hillingdon Canal Cruising Club, Waterloo Road, Uxbridge. SPEAKER, Michael Shearsby, MP. Contact, Mike Stimpson (0923-770425)
Thursday 15th 7 for 7.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	CENTRAL SOCIAL MEETING at Abbey Community Centre, 34 Great Smith Street, SW1P 3BU. SPEAKER, Alan Jervis: <i>'Montgomery Canal restoration'</i> . Contact, Tim Lewis (081-530 7926)
Tuesday 20th 8pm	IWA HERTS BRANCH	Hatfield Cricket Club, Welwyn Garden City. SPEAKER, Mr C R Penny: <i>'The Hereford and Gloucester Canal'</i> . Contact, Greta Wright (0727-860137)
Wednesday 21st 8pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	CROYDON SOCIAL MEETING at 'The Railway Bell', North End, Croydon (almost opposite West Croydon BR and bus stations). SPEAKER: Eric Garland: <i>'The Croydon Canal'</i> . Contact, Mike Stevens (081-674 9387)
Weekend 24th/25th	LONDON WRG	Dig on the Wilts and Berks Canal. Contact, Kevin Saint (081-521 6399)
Tuesday 27th 7.30 for 8pm	IWA KENT and EAST SUSSEX BRANCH	The Fountain Inn, Barming, Maidstone. SPEAKER, David Laing: <i>'The Irish Waterways'</i> . Contact, Angela Madle (0634-722661)

NOVEMBER

Sunday 1st 2.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Guided walk (about 2 hours) along the Regent's Canal from Camden to Paddington. (At Meet at Camden Town tube station) Contact, Dr Michael Essex-Lopresti (081-882 1337)
Weekend 7th/8th	IWA LONDON BRANCH	OUTING TO YORKSHIRE Contact, Tim Lewis (081-530 7926)
Weekend 7th/8th	KESCRG	Working Party on the Wey and Arun Canal. Contact, Ken Parish (0622-858329)
Tuesday 10th 8pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	UXBRIDGE SOCIAL MEETING at Hillingdon Canal Cruising Club, Waterloo Road, Uxbridge). SPEAKER, Colin Eastman: <i>'The Rickmansworth Waterways Trust'</i> . Contact, Mike Stimpson (0923-770425)
Thursday 12th 8pm	IWA CHELMSFORD BRANCH	AEU House, Primrose Hill, Chelmsford. SPEAKER, Jim Norfolk: <i>'Oliver Twist goes to London'</i> and other films. Contact, Mrs Molly Beard (0702-554492)
Weekend 14th/15th	LONDON WRG	Dig on the Wey and Arun Canal. Contact, Lesley McFadyen (081-693 3266)
Tuesday 17th 8pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	S.E. LONDON SOCIAL MEETING. Details to be arranged. Contact, Eric Garland (0322-34229)

Tuesday 17th 8pm	IWA HERTS BRANCH	Hatfield Cricket Club, Welwyn Garden City. SPEAKER, Arthur Dugate: <i>'Wilts and Berks Canal—Big Dig'</i> . Contact, Greta Wright (0727-860137)
Thursday 19th 7 for 7.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	CENTRAL SOCIAL MEETING at Abbey Community Centre, 34 Great Smith Street, SW1P 3BU. SPEAKER, Hugh McKnight: <i>'Strasbourg→Berlin→Brussels'</i> . Contact, Tim Lewis (081-530 7926) The Fountain Inn, Barming, Maidstone. SPEAKER, Rob Wilsher: <i>'Continental Waterways'</i> Contact, Angela Madle (0634-722661)
Tuesday 24th 7.30 for 8pm	IWA KENT and EAST SUSSEX BRANCH	

DECEMBER

Tuesday 1st 8pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	N.E. LONDON SOCIAL MEETING at Rammey Marsh Cruising Club, Lea Road, Waltham Abbey (then down the towpath and across the lock bridge). Members' slides and social evening. Contact, Sue Blake (081-882 8471) Dig on the Hereford and Gloucester Canal. Contact, Tim Lewis (081-530 7926) Working Party: venue to be arranged. Contact, Ken Parish (0622-858329)
Weekend 5th/6th	LONDON WRG	UXBRIDGE SOCIAL MEETING at Hillingdon Canal Cruising Club, Waterloo Road, Uxbridge. Members' slides plus discussion on forming a Section or Branch. Contact, Mike Stimpson (0923-770425)
Weekend 5th/6th	KESCRG	CROYDON SOCIAL MEETING at 'The Railway Bell', North End, Croydon (almost opposite West Croydon BR and bus stations). SPEAKER, Roger Squires: <i>'IWA visit to the USA'</i> . Contact, Mike Stevens (081-674 9387)
Tuesday 8th 8pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	CENTRAL SOCIAL MEETING at Abbey Community Centre, 34 Great Smith Street, SW1P 3BU. Quiz and auction. Contact, Tim Lewis (081-530 7926)
Wednesday 9th 8pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	AEU House, Primrose Hill, Chelmsford. Christmas Social Evening. Contact, Mrs Molly Beard (0702-554492)
Thursday 10th 7 for 7.30pm	IWA LONDON BRANCH	Hatfield Cricket Club, Welwyn Garden City. Christmas Social Evening and Supper. Contact, Greta Wright (0727-860137)
Thursday 10th 8pm	IWA CHELMSFORD BRANCH	The Fountain Inn, Barming, Maidstone. Christmas get-together with the Medway River Users Association. Contact, Angela Madle (0634-722661)
Tuesday 15th 8pm	IWA HERTS BRANCH	
Tuesday 15th 7.30 for 8pm	IWA KENT and EAST SUSSEX BRANCH	

ADVANCE NOTICE

INAUGURAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE NEW LONDON REGION

This will take place in conjunction with the January Central London Social at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 21 January 1993 at Abbey Community Centre, 34 Great Smith Street, SW1P 3BU. Formal notification in our next issue.

Late News ...

AREA SOCIALS : LATEST PLANS

Since the *Waterways Events* pages went to press, the following have been arranged :

N.E.LONDON SOCIAL MEETING, 6 OCTOBER
Bob Aspinall is confirmed as the speaker.

S.E. LONDON NOVEMBER SOCIAL MEETING
The date has been changed to Friday 20 November at 8.00 pm and the venue will be the Royal Tavern, Mottingham. This is on the corner of Court Road and Sidcup Road, very close to Mottingham BR Station. The speaker is to be arranged : at the time of writing it is hoped that it might be Ron Martin on the subject of *Trail-Boat Rallies*. For further details contact Dorothy Robbie (081-857 6367).

CONDOLENCES to Branch Chairman Eric Garland on the recent death of his father.

N. CIRCULAR AQUEDUCT

Excalibur readers will be aware of the long-running story of the plans to rebuild the aqueduct over the North Circular Road in order to widen the road. The latest development is that the contractors have asked for an additional stoppage, of up to six weeks' duration, before Christmas this year. At the time of writing, IWA representatives are negotiating with them.

ANOTHER ROYAL VISIT

The Princess Royal is to pay another visit to the London Canals Museum on 3 November for the opening of an art exhibition on canal themes. This will consist of work of art - in any medium - on subjects associated with the canals, including work by school children. The Museum is inviting submission of any work of art, including paintings and drawings, models, embroidery and work in other media on a canal-related topic. For details contact Nigel Sadler, Curator, London Canals Museum, 12/13 New Wharf Road, Kings Cross, N1 9RT. The Princess Royal's visit will be the fourth Royal visit to London's Canals this year. The first was her previous visit to open the Museum in March. This was followed by the Duke of Gloucester's visit to Canalway Cavalcade in May and most recently by Prince Edward's visit to the Bow Back Rivers Work Camp in July, in conjunction with the launch of the Lower Lee Project.

ANY GOOD BOOKS?

Still on the subject of the London Canals Museum, Curator Nigel Sadler tells me that he would like to build up a collection there of historical and other factual books about the canals. Anyone who has anything they might wish to donate should contact Nigel at the address in the previous item ('phone 071-713 0836).

SLOUGH ARM DAY, SUNDAY 13 SEPTEMBER

Volunteers are needed to help with many aspects of this event (including running the Branch Sales Stand). Anyone willing and able to help is invited to contact Rosie Limming on Uxbridge (0895) 252011.

BW DRAFT CUSTOMERS' CHARTER

BW have opened a consultation exercise on a draft of their Customers' Charter. IWA comments at local and national level are in course of preparation (we hope to tell you more of these in our next issue), but there is no reason why individuals should not participate by sending for a copy of the draft (from BW's new HQ at Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford, Herts, WD2 4JR, 'phone Watford (0923) 226422) and sending their comments to the same address. BW's deadline for responses is 30 September, so if you're reading this soon after our publication date in early September, you've still got time.

CONGRATULATIONS to our neighbouring IWA Branch in Chelmsford and to John Gale, Editor of its newsletter for winning Category A of the *Canal & Riverboat Tom Rolt Awards*. Category A is for magazines of IWA Branches and Regions. You may have beaten us this year, John, but look to your laurels for the future.

CONGRATULATIONS also to Dave Dent, known to many Branch members for his work as Pageant Master at Canalway Cavalcade for the last two years, on his appointment as IWA's National Awards Officer. Always ahead of the news, this issue of *Excalibur* has the new Awards Officer's photo on page 11.