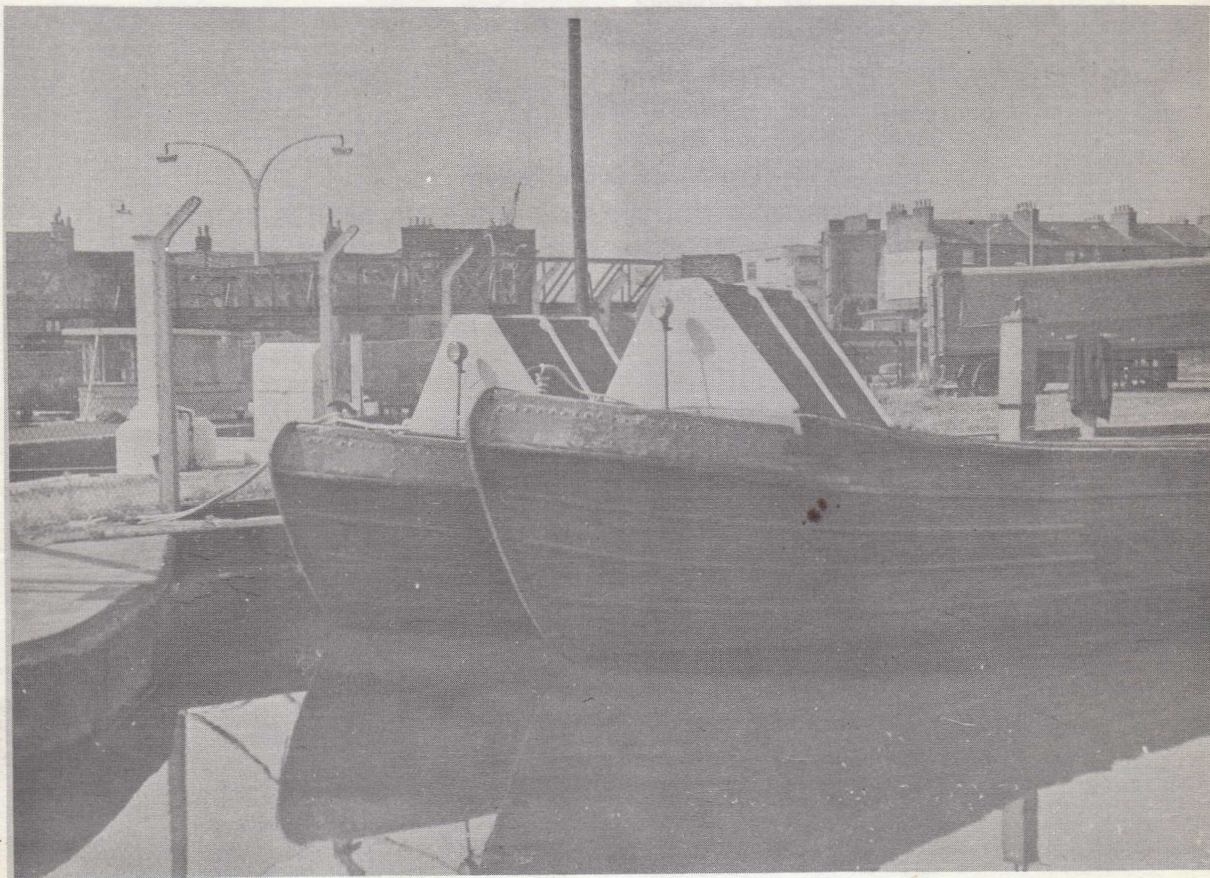


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London and South East Branch

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Treasurer:

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Editors:

Colin and Hilary Isaacson, 29 Gloucester Road, Whitton, Middlesex.

OPINION COLUMN

I promised last time to write about anglers and other water users, being concerned to compare our respective plights in the face of those nasty RWA's. And you may remember the Editor once asking for the views of any angling member of IWA, to which request I gather there was an almighty silence. Which surprises me little, but perturbs me greatly, given our pressing need for allies in current battles.

For why on earth should an angler join the IWA? I know that the formal statement of IWA aims covers "both commercial and pleasure traffic, anglers, water supply, ramblers and all aspects of multi-functional use", but agree with the lament in the current IWA Bulletin, that we are still seen as being too concerned with boat owning and cruising.

Any relevant facts? Well, it so happens that I was browsing through a volume on Research in Freshwater Biology, and extracted from its back and the information that our inland waters apparently support the following recreational participants:

FULLY WATER-BASED

Angling	2,790,000
Boating	700,000
Water ski-ing	75,000

PARTLY WATER-BASED

Organised Rambling	960,000
Natural History	250,000

This would seem to give pre-eminence to the fishing fraternity. Wait, though, since there are species of game and coarse fishermen, casting over fast and slow rivers, lakes and reservoirs and the sea, as well as canals. Further, of the 14% of coarse anglers who presently fish canals only half prefer so to do, as the sea and its rivers seem more attractive. Bear in mind, too, that the canals and rivers have declined as fisheries, whilst the bounded lakes and reservoirs remain more consistent even if not ideal as sport. Finally, this national picture must hide a lot of local variation - there's not very much canal in the South-East, little else in the West Midlands.

What does this imply for our campaigning coalitions against the RWA's, from which the angling bodies seem to be missing? I suspect that the strength of this particular multi-functional user lies in its local societies, especially where they control local waters. And there are signs that some may see benefits from regional watershed control, and even some improvement in the complex licensing pattern in their area, whilst societies covered by several RWA's share the same fears as the boat owners in terms of differing standards and excessive licence costs.

Thus, in the Midlands, I note that the Ashby anglers work closely with its Canal Association for better banking and dredging, since "we stock our length, and the first boat along a three foot canal drives all our fish up to the Measham anglers". Again, the Coventry anglers could cover three RWA's, and are pressing for a national fishing licence as an alternative to local ones.

What conclusions do I draw from all this? One point is that boat types can reasonably do a little special pleading, on the grounds that they can't easily transfer to a nearby pond or gravel pit. The 2,000,000 who went on an inland waterway by boat last year (covering hirers, trippers and canoeists, I assume) would be unlikely to take a channel crossing or powerboat race as alternatives. Second, though, and more importantly, we must continue to build coalitions with other waterways users, at local, regional and national levels.

I ALSO NOTICED... BWB's Amenity Services Manager is quoted as aiming for a marina every 20 miles along the waterways, with toilet disposal every 5 miles. Reminds me uneasily of lay-bys and motorway service stations...

A trendy Sunday Times reporter (11.6.72) explored the Grand Union by motor scooter, which he admits is illegal and would annoy BWB. Before we end up with motor cycle scrambles along the tow-path, would someone care to report his Editor to the Press Council?

BWB 'Limejuice' boats in Brentford Dock - this traffic will finish this year. (Martin Denney)

WHAT'S ON - WHAT'S GONE

LITTLE VENICE CANAL FESTIVAL - June 10/11

Everyone who went to Little Venice over this weekend will know what an enjoyable event it was. It was also very successful in drawing the attention of the public and local authority members to the possibilities of Paddington Basin.

A number of novel activities lifted this event way above the usual boat rally standard. These included: a fashion show, by Tissavel Fabrics, our generous sponsor; the educational and amusing play about canals "Still Waters" presented by the Mikron Theatre Co (who hope to tour the waterways in their own narrow-boat) a spectacular Handel concert by the Paddington Institute Festival Orchestra in period costume, finishing with Handel's Firework Music and a floating firework display: and children's canoe and sailing races. Our compliments to Mrs Crystal Hale for the organisation and thanks to the Greater London Arts Association for their support.

We were also delighted to see Miss Eleanor Bron and Frank Muir, who presented the prizes, including the splendid Tissavel cups.

Over 5,000 people visited the site and volunteers from the 120 plus boats took 3,000 people down the Paddington Basin. The only disappointment was the lack of publicity this event created.

Outstandingly successful at the Branch Rally were the cruises for members of the local public and members of local authorities. Over 3000 people were shown the Paddington Basin in its 'solitude'. I would like to thank very sincerely the boat owners who provided this service. It illustrated far more interest in the rally than the usual line of moored boats and made a campaigning rally. It was refreshing to have so many boat owners who were prepared to use their boats to help the campaign in such a practical way.

Thank you all very much for the time, energy and money you put into the trips. I hope none of you suffered damage as a result.

My thanks to everyone who helped with the Rally.

If you would like a programme, extra copies can be obtained from Harvey Cooke, 75 Westbury Avenue, N22.

Plaques can be obtained for 30p from me (please quote your mooring number). Helpers can also obtain plaques.

David Gibson.

Well at last the enquiry in to Paddington Basin is to be held. It will be at Westminster Council House, Marylebone Road, NW1 on Thursday July 11th at 10.30 am. Your Branch Committee realise the immense responsibility of presenting a strong case. I would like to see as many of you as possible there. The first day of the motorway box enquiry was before a large gathering - it pays to show interest. We are in a position to win a major case. There is something for everyone to do. Our professional case is ready, our public views must now be put to work to demonstrate our feelings.

Our rally at Little Venice showed what we could do by taking over 3,000 people in to Paddington Basin by boat. Please continue this interest by attending the enquiry for at least part of the day.

Illytd Harrington.

AUGUST 4/7. IWA National Rally - Lyonn, Bridgewater Canal.

BRANCH OUTING September 24th. A day's cruise on the Regent's Canal and the tideway, cost about £1. We must know soon how many will be going - please write to the Secretary if you are interested.

WORKING PARTIES

July 8/9 The annual trip "out west" to the WIDCOMBE FLIGHT. Contact Nigel Stevens (01-573 7234) for arrangements, transport and accommodation.

AUGUST 13. Local working parties start again, so let's have a good turn out. Hedging on the River Wey at Cox's Mill, Weybridge. (O.S. Sheet 170; 062 642). Further details from Nigel Stevens.

AUGUST 19/20. Caldon on Avon. Contact Nigel Stevens.

SEPTEMBER 16/17. Another big attack on the Ashton Canal, at Marple.

June 18; July 2, 16, 30; August 6, 20 - Wey and Arun Canal, Southern Section. 'phone Bognor Regis 24378 for details. Every Sunday - Wey and Arun Canal Northern Section. Phone Reigate 46324 for details.

REGENT'S CANAL

Camden Town Towpath Opened

With the rain lashing down, Stage I of the towpath was finally opened to the public, from Hampstead Road Locks to the Cumberland Basin. A large crowd of local residents awaited the arrival of the Leader of Camden Council, Mrs Millie Miller, on board the steam pinnacle, Victoria. At the same time, Mr Ivor Walker, Chairman of Camden's Planning and Communications Committee led a walk along the towpath to the Zoo.

To commemorate the occasion Camden's planning department had produced and distributed free an excellent 12-page booklet on the Walk, complete with historical notes, maps, old prints and current photographs. The booklet ends by saying "There are those who.....anticipate the day when huge commercial barges, will pass through Camden Town on their way to Europe". Let us hope they are right.

Two new access points have been constructed, the roving bridge strengthened (new steel tension cables have replaced the original wrought iron) and the surface of the towpath itself has been intelligently re-made with gravel hoggin - unsightly concrete has been avoided except where it is needed under bridges. Simple seats and unobtrusive and informative cast iron plaques on the main canal features, add to the enjoyment of the walk itself.

The opening was also planned to coincide with an environmental no-traffic scheme in the area, designed to link Primrose Hill, recently designated a Conservation Area, with Camden Town itself. Stage 2 will continue on from Hampstead Road Locks to the Borough boundary at York Way, just north of Kings Cross, where it will link with a similar opening planned by Islington. Ultimately, the whole length to the old Regent's Canal Dock (now sadly renamed Limehouse Basin by BWB) will be opened to the public.

With these objectives in mind Camden's Leisure Committee held a successful meeting, as guests of the St Pancras Cruising Club, at which Councillors and their families were able to meet other interested bodies, including representatives of the Regent's Canal Group, the Greater London Archaeological Society, boat owners and ourselves. Problems of vandalism, hours of opening and necessary patrolling of the towpath were discussed. Much can be gained from such meetings. It is hoped that this example can be followed elsewhere.

City Road Basin

The future of this 3 acre Basin is now being considered by a group of local

organisations, including Residents' Associations, a branch of the RIBA, the Regent's Canal Group, Islington Boat Club and the IWA. Representatives of the Islington Borough Council were met; they explained that to make the best use of the area for development, it was necessary to relocate the London Electricity Board and the Central Electricity Generating Board installations and, as a result, it would be necessary, they said, to fill in part of the Basin; over one third appeared on some plans.

The urgent need for housing in Islington is recognised, but in a Borough notoriously short of open space, the Group believed that an imaginative housing scheme on land flanking the Basin should be considered, without any loss of the water area. This might involve some relocation of the electricity undertakings, but this should not be impossible. A local petition is circulating, formal and informal meetings are taking place, support is growing - but much remains to be done to ensure that this unique open space can be protected as an amenity.

BWB, as the owners of the Basin and of part of the land surrounding it are legally entitled to fill it in and dispose of it without any special permission. One solution would be to upgrade the Basin from a Remainder Waterway to a Cruiseway in order to give it statutory protection; this we advocated in a letter published in the Times. The GLC Canals Consultative Committee and IWAAC have also been contacted and are giving their active support.

Boat Afloat Show, Little Venice

BWB held their now annual trade show with a fair range of craft on display, boating products and a daily programme of entertainment events. There is inclined to be too much emphasis on such activities as water skiing, and large powered cruisers, unsuitable for the canals and too little attention given to the general amenity and commercial future of the Inland Waterways. With BWB itself under sentence of death, one would have welcomed a little more space devoted to their plans for widening the Grand Union from the Thames to the M1, or the development of Yorkshire Waterways, both designed to relieve our cities of some of the thousands of lorries causing increasing road congestion.

The hours at which it was considered necessary to close the canal because of the show, although a little more sensible than last year, should again be reviewed. To prevent boats moving on the canal during the long light evenings of May and June is not the best way to popularise the canal. BWB please think again for next year.

Oliver Turner.

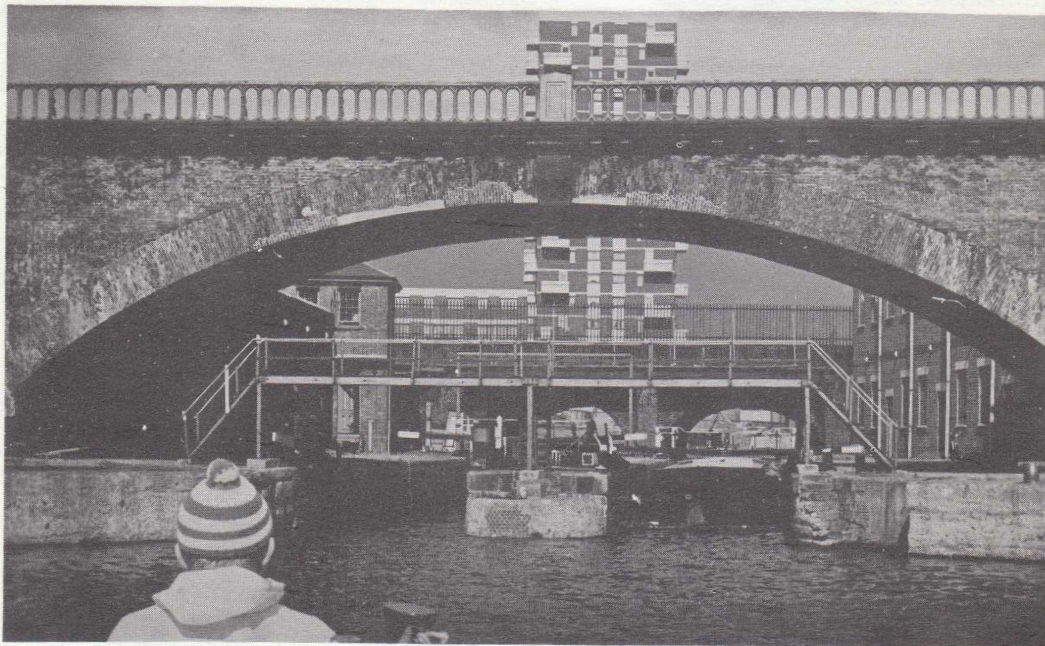
Have You Tried The Regent's?

Chris Cove-Smith

I have always been more than a little annoyed when someone starts shouting about the desecration of the waterways by the 'planners' who want to fill in this basin or that arm, to find, on closer inspection that little, or no use has been made of such waters for years or is ever likely to be.

Cruising from Limehouse Basin to Hampstead Road recently, we passed ~~two~~ narrow boats and met nothing over a 48 hour period. Our boat? A sea-going water-cooled diesel cruiser of 9'6" beam and 2'6" draft. Trouble? One plastic tarpaulin round the prop. which we got rid of (ashore) in five minutes. (Do you make sure those plastic bags don't get picked up by the next chap?)

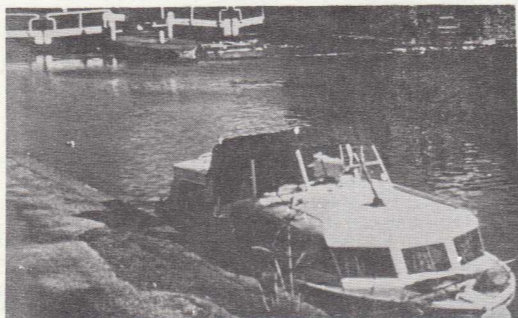
Kingsland, Wenlock, City Road and Horsfall Basins were deserted - empty. But the B.W.B. lock staff were more than delighted to see us. They had been advised of our coming by Mr. Kelly, who had been given a copy of our timetable. Mr. Kelly is the ubiquitous Traffic Superintendent at Delamere Terrace and well worth winning over. It definitely pays to let the B.W.B. know what you want to do. Don't just try and crash through unannounced - you'll get V.I.P. treatment if you consult them first. As the St. Pancras lock-keeper put it: "They can't say I'm not earnin' me money, this mornin'," and another remarked: "Thank goodness, you come along! I were gettin' bored."



(photo: C.C.S.)

Approaching Commercial Road Locks from the Limehouse Basin.

Our crew, who were brought up on the Upper Thames and the English countryside views from canal, broad and fen were enthralled. All have voted to do it again next year but what about the rest of you this year? Unless our waterways are used, we don't have much of a case for their maintenance in a navigable state. The Regent's Canal is becoming a fascinating backwater of London's historical past. Why not help to turn it into a thriving highway through the heart of the city which it really should be and so give us a case when we say to those 'planners': "Hands off!"?



A quiet mooring, not a stone's throw from the Angel, Islington, above City Road Locks.(CCS)

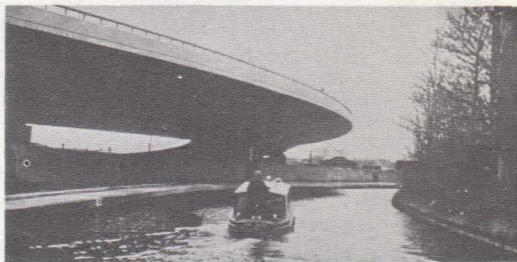
From the Upper Thames we cleared Teddington on the Monday and slept aboard, moored to Tower Pier, entering Limehouse Basin on the Tuesday. We passed the night just above City Road Locks and on Wednesday, moved through the Islington Tunnel up to Little Venice, only being delayed by Viscount St. Davids at the Regent's Boat Club, when he shouted an invitation to us to inspect his little hive of activity above Hampstead Road Locks. His Lordship certainly knows how to make use of that bit of the canal!

We took advantage of the 24 hours free mooring at Little Venice and then, on the Thursday, left the Regent's Canal proper to travel along the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union to Southall. On the Friday we descended the Hanwell Flight to Brentford and just caught the last of the flood back up to Teddington, stopping for the night at Kingston to make our way back to base at Maidenhead on the Saturday.

Tides and lock-opening times are difficult to equate every week of the season, but it can be done as a circular tour if you care to spend a night or two in London in some very quiet moorings. Both City Road and Little Venice are ideal.

If any reader would like fuller details of the route, the writer would be pleased to help. His address is 18, Lambourne Drive, Cox Green, Maidenhead, Berkshire.

Craft dimensions should be: max length 72'0", max beam 14'0", max draft (say) 3'6", max headroom 7'11". There is usually plenty of water in the summit pound, traffic is fairly heavy between Little Venice and Hampstead Road Locks and care should be taken at heads of locks where driftwood tends to collect. It pays to keep a look-out for driftwood over the whole route, including the Thames.



Westway and the Paddington Arm converge near Westbourne Park. (photo: Roy Manning)

IRA and Waterways

Many people still remember the IRA's attempts to force the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland in 1939. Then as now, the attack took the form of bombing incidents: tube stations, cinemas, pillar boxes, public conveniences and railroad stations were only a few of the places chosen and these of course received the most publicity. But the inland waterways also came in for their share of attention and it was only due to the IRA's singular ineptness when it came to blowing up bridges that serious damage was not done... which only goes to show how far technology has advanced in the last thirty years.

Perhaps the most potentially damaging attack occurred early in the morning of March 2nd when an attempt was made to blow up the aqueduct which carries the Grand Union over the North Circular Road near Stonebridge Park. Had the aqueduct been seriously damaged millions of tons of water from the long lock-less stretch between Paddington and Uxbridge would have crashed down on to the North Circular, flooding a vast residential area. Several other factors added to its strategic position: it was quite near what was soon to become an important munitions centre, was also close to the Admiralty Records Office which at the time was stuffed with files from Whitehall, and for some months had been used to move raw materials vital to rearmament up to Birmingham.

On this occasion as on so many others the operation seems to have been executed so badly as to make one wonder whether the IRA really intended to blow the bridge up at all. Throughout the night mysterious men in mackintoshes lurked ostentatiously in the area; one, described as "about 25, with fuzzy hair" enquired the way to the aqueduct in a nearby cafe and was later seen standing underneath it looking anxiously towards Western Avenue. Four other men waited in a conspicuous black car in a disused road nearby, and a large wooden box was left standing by the bridge for some hours. When the bomb was finally planted it was placed, not on the towpath where it might very well have destroyed the side of the aqueduct, but just above the waterline. As a result the explosion, which awakened residents as far away as Hatfield, Herts, caused little actual damage; part of the stonework was cracked, some masonry fell on the roadway narrowly missing a passing motorist returning home from a dance, and there was a bit of leakage. A coffer dam was erected in the form of a semi-circle to be swung from a radius at the point of the explosion, and the area was pumped dry and repaired with little difficulty.

An attempt against the Birmingham Canal about midnight that same evening met with still less success and in fact was not even discovered until the next morning when a man cycling to work along the towpath noticed some debris lying about. In this case the bomb, which had been placed in a culvert under the main Walsall to Stone cross section at Wednesbury, blew out the bridgework at each end of the culvert, but did not damage the canal or interfere with traffic at all.

The bombing which had perhaps the most spectacular results was not directed against the canal system, but against the Thames (horror of horrors) the Wednesday before the Boat Race. At about 1 a.m. on March 29th a London hairdresser, Mr M C Childs, was walking across Hammersmith Bridge on his way home when he spied a small leather suitcase lying on the pavement. Naturally he opened it, saw that it was smoking, and quickly climbed through the structure of the bridge and threw the whole thing into the River. The explosion which followed threw up a sixty-foot column of water; a second blast which occurred soon afterwards dislodged two girders in the suspension work on the west side and threw another girder across the roadway, demolishing lamp standards and leaving the middle of the bridge in darkness. Whole blocks of flats were shaken, hundreds of windows were broken and residents were awakened over a wide area; when they looked out they could see clouds of smoke rising from the bridge, but fortunately the damage looked worse than it really was. Although the footpath subsided about a foot there was little damage to the pylon beneath the road surface; vehicular traffic was banned for several days but pedestrians continued to use the bridge and the Boat Race went on as usual. Cambridge won by four lengths.

IRA activity on the inland waterways ended on a high note however; on July 27th they had their only complete success when a wooden swing bridge across the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Green Lane, Maghull (about five miles from Liverpool) was demolished and the canal blocked.

On the whole then, canals got off very lightly, both in 1939 and later during the war itself. Canal users today can consider themselves very lucky indeed that the IRA confines itself to Northern Ireland; the more professional methods they have adopted over the last thirty-three years would certainly not allow for any "half-bombings" today.

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To the Editor,

Sometime last year I had walked along the Lea Navigation and arriving at Bow Bridge saw 3 barge loads of timber tied up at the small wharf there.

About 150 to 200 tons were being carried and, naturally, it was being transferred to a road vehicle - just one! So I asked the lone-driver where he was bound for with his 10-ton lorry load of timber and when he told me and I had mentally assimilated the fact I asked him why he couldn't carry the load to Slough and take it from there? You see, the Lea Navigation (as we are aware!) is in East London and it does seem strange that just one 10-ton lorry was being allowed to shuttle some 200 tons of timber from there to High Wycombe.

Maybe the more astute Members can enlighten me on this point but what (in all seriousness) really disturbs me is that such a bad situation is allowed to exist by everyone who can actually remedy it.

Further mysteries exist which Members ought to be aware of if they feel disposed to join the Commercial Group that I would like to form. For instance: up to 1941 it was possible to enter the Millwall Inner Dock direct from the river instead of circling the major portion of the Isle of Dogs.

Since that time - after the barge lock had received a direct hit - it has lain derelict and it is now proposed to fill in the 'crater' that still remains. A mere £4m would see it completely renewed.

The R. Victoria barge lock is a further instance of the way the PLA conduct their affairs. This lock was completely restored for barge traffic some 5 or 6 years ago at a cost of £2m approximately, much to the elation of the lighter-men. It is now closed "except for emergencies" thus (to quote the Union representative of the lighter-men) "the lighterage trade has received a further kick in the teeth".

Both Leamouth and Limehouse Dock are well-placed to take advantage of the dock trade if these barge locks were available to them but as things stand every possible obstacle is being placed before the river traders and it is to be reckoned that only by gathering everyone concerned together and forming a united front (a proposal of this nature was made by the River Thames Society just after the Board's Grand Union Canal Scheme was announced) can we hope to even halt the downward trend of the River trade, let alone positively reverse it.

I think we can do it, because behind the lightermen is the Transport Development Group who, with Vokins, Hay's Wharf and Cory & Sons Groups, are the major owners of the lighterage trade. Maybe a visit to France (Dunkerque) or even Yugoslavia would help us to realise the possibilities but ideas of that nature can be 'kept on the boil' until we know how many of the Branch Members are ready to support the Group 'in perpetuity' or on a part-time basis.

We do possess some advantages (more than we realise) and the sooner we can put these to work the sooner will our aims be met.

P. Stevenson.

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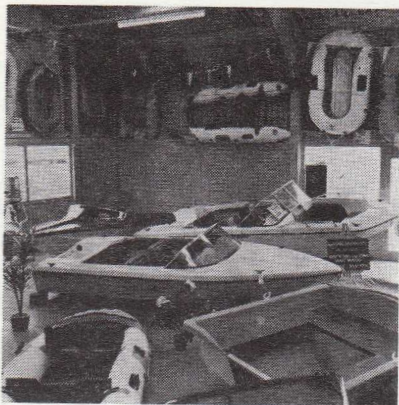
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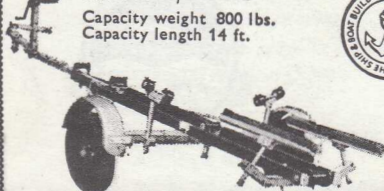
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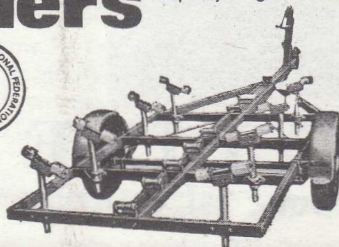
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