

WINDLASS

No. 54 JUNE 1966

1/6



NARROW BOAT ON THE MEDWAY
The William at Chatham Pier.

(Hugh Mcknight Photography)

Journal of THE LONDON and HOME COUNTIES BRANCH of
The Inland Waterways Association Ltd., Published alternate months

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WINDLASS

JUNE - - - - 1966

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57 Oxberry Avenue, S.W.6.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

IT IS MY pleasant duty to report upon the events of the last twelve months, months which have seen considerable activity in the affairs of the Branch. Membership continues to climb steadily and has now nearly reached fifteen hundred which, in view of the increased Branch subscription is particularly satisfactory and indicative of the fact that members who were not present at last year's A.G.M. were in agreement with the decision to raise the subscription. This was something I was delighted to see, for whilst it was necessary that it be increased to enable the Branch to play its full part in the work of the Association, one obviously did not want an increase to cause a reduction in membership.

The principal event in the Branch's year is probably the Annual Boat Rally, which this time was held at Harlow during the Whitsun week-end, and attracted crowds estimated at over 15,000. It was, I think a most successful event and thoroughly enjoyed by all those who attended, though the response of members to the many requests for assistance were somewhat disappointing. I hope this will improve in the future. One important result of the Rally was that Harlow Council have now agreed to incorporate all our suggestions for the improvement of boating amenities into their plans for the town park, though the present curb on expenditure prevents work commencing in the immediate future. The Rally attracted immense publicity, which included an excellent three page report in *Motor Boat and Yachting*, and there is no doubt that the Branch has established a fine reputation for organising Boat Rallies, and one that will doubtless be increased at Uxbridge. The importance of the Lee was fully acknowledged in the final report issued by British Waterways, and with the recent increase of pleasure craft on its waters and those of the more beautiful Stort it would seem that the doldrum years for these navigations are now over.

The general situation on the Grand Union however is not so secure, for the lower part of it loses money every year, as does the Regents Canal, though again the British Waterways Report stressed the importance of the latter as a means of relieving London's growing traffic congestion, though no effort as yet has been made to take advantage of it. The Association of Waterway Cruising Clubs has done much to persuade people to use the canals around London, and several cruises have been organised which have attracted useful publicity. We are most grateful for all their efforts. Indicative of the growing interest in canals is the fact that some months ago a Regents Canal Group was formed on which we are represented by Oliver Turner who has done so much for the Grand Union, not least among which has been his success in helping to negotiate week-end lock openings with British Waterways. This hard gained privilege has unfortunately not been used to any great extent, and if it is to continue after this year it is of vital importance that as many as possible use the locks this summer.

The situation on the Basingstoke Canal is still somewhat cloudy and no firm information as to the future is yet available. Several suggestions and reports furnished by the Branch Committee are under serious consideration by certain authorities and perhaps a decision will be made during this year.

(continued overleaf)

The Wey Navigation is steadily becoming more popular and we have given considerable assistance to the National Trust in the form of advice and practical help, with members of the Branch working locks at week-ends and attending a most successful working party at Pyrford during February. In addition to this Bryan Nicoll is in constant touch with the Canal Manager who has on many occasions expressed his appreciation for the help the Branch is giving in assisting to maintain and improve the Navigation.

On the Medway the lock pass scheme is proving immensely popular and Derek Salmon has once again succeeded in getting the authorities to increase the number of passes allowed. The Branch moorings in Townbridge are regularly in use and more boats are now seen on the river.

The doubtful privilege of being the most legally complicated river in the Branch must surely be the Stour, and we are very lucky in having John Marriage whose legal knowledge and efforts with the River Stour Action Committee have turned local indifference to keen interest, and at present your Committee are investigating the possibility of setting up a special Trust to be responsible for the river. Discussions have taken place with the Company of Proprietors of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation in an attempt to persuade them to permit pleasure craft to use their navigations. However the shortage of water and fear of misuse of paddle gear have so far prevented any satisfactory conclusion being reached.

Much work has been done on the Kennet and Avon and restoration is progressing well at the Bath end, whilst nearer home Sulhampstead Lock is now complete, though the value of this achievement has been considerably lessened by the fact that Burghfield Lock is now unusable and requires re-building, a task which it is hoped to commence in the near future.

The Thames increases in popularity year by year and pleasure craft on the lower reaches cause considerable congestion at week-ends, though this has been partially solved by the Thames Conservancy's lock mechanisation programme. It is an unfortunate, but I suppose inevitable, consequence that this has resulted in loss of contact with the Lock Keepers, friendship with whom has given myself and many others enormous pleasure over the years; however I suppose one has to accept "progress" as part payment for this modern world in which we live. The T.C. are introducing in 1967 a combined lock and licence pass which should ease their administrative problems and increase efficiency accordingly. Our relations with the River Thames Society continue to our mutual benefit, and I again had the privilege of attending their annual week-end conference at Reading University which was instructive, valuable and entertaining.

A new and important feature of the Branch's activities this year have been the working parties

organised by Tim Dodwell; these have achieved a considerable amount during the past few months and I am most grateful to all members who have been able to assist. Much of course remains to be done for the task is practically endless, but in the short time available much has been achieved and we have earned the grateful thanks of all those we have helped.

The events organised for the summer months proved extremely popular and I was particularly pleased that a most successful circumnavigation was made of Canvey Island.

Our winter meetings were again very well attended and on all occasions latecomers were forced to stand, and whilst I regret the lack of sufficient space it says much for the popularity of our meetings that a certain discomfort does not deter our members from coming. The winter season opened with a most enjoyable waterways quiz organised by Capt. Munk which certainly tested one's knowledge, and then continued with exceptionally interesting and entertaining illustrated lectures by Dr. Roger Pilkington, Mr. E. W. H. Peterson and finally Mr. John Parton, Secretary of the R.T.S. Our Annual Dinner was held in late April and this year after many disappointments we were able to arrange for it to be held at the London Zoo Restaurant, which unusual venue attracted many to attend, all of whom enjoyed a most excellent evening.

The past year has been an extremely successful one for your Publications Sub-committee under Derek Salmon, who have now published illustrated booklets on the Wey, Medway, and Stour, the latter one being virtually the result of a great deal of work by John Marriage. They have also assisted the Lee and Stour Development Committee to publish their first-class booklet on the Lee and Stort, in the production of which our member Mr. G. Ollis played an important part. These publications do enormous good, and I am most grateful for the efforts of the many people who have done so much to ensure their success. It is interesting to note that already the booklets on the Wey and Medway are in their second print, whilst the other two which appeared at the Boat Show are going very strongly.

Windlass continues to flourish and provides a most valuable link with all our members. To Claire Johnstone, David Cooper and Hugh McKnight we owe sincere thanks for its very high standard of quality and interest, and I am grateful to all members who have submitted articles for inclusion. The Christmas Draw again organised by David Harman broke all previous records and thus gave considerable financial help to offset the cost of producing *Windlass*, and I am most grateful to all our members and friends who so generously gave their support.

I have already reported at great length in the February *Windlass* on the final report issued by

British Waterways, and whilst paying tribute to the factual coverage it gives to our canal system I cannot but deplore the lack of ideas and confidence it gives for the future. Let us hope that the government will take notice of our own *Future of the Waterways* and give serious consideration to our recommendations.

Your Committee have met eleven times during the past year and the average monthly attendance was 13. I would like to give my sincere and very grateful thanks to all its members for their magnificent unceasing efforts, both at committee meetings and outside where much of the work in running the Branch is done. Such work takes many forms and includes representing the Branch on other committees, producing survey reports on canals and rivers for submission to local and county councils, giving lectures, (the previous year's total for this being approximately 22), conducting lengthy and time-consuming correspondence with waterway and council authorities, local societies, and sundry organisations. I know that my own total of letters written during the past twelve months exceeds two hundred, though this included many letters concerning the Harlow Rally. The only retirement from your Committee during the last year has been that of Dr. Ray Glaister, who after many year's service both on your Committee and the Council, in both of which he had taken particular interest in the affairs of the Lee and Stort and of canoeing in which he was an authority, has decided that the claims of family and work could no longer be denied, but we are very grateful for all the help and advice he has given over the years. His place on the Committee has been taken by Capt. Quick, who for some years has been a most active member of the Lee and Stort Cruising Club where he holds the important position of Commodore. He is also a member of the Uxbridge Cruising Club and the Lee and Stort Development Committee. In February Major Logan Brown accepted an invitation to join the Committee and being a past member of the North East Branch Committee and a present member of the Council his presence should prove most valuable. We welcome both these gentlemen to our Committee.

As you can see the Branch has again had an active and successful year and I thank all members for their great support during this period. Looking towards the future it would seem that we possess in abundant quantities the necessary ingredients for success, these being knowledge, enthusiasm and unity armed with which the Branch can look forward to another year of achievement.

MICHAEL APLIN

Branch Chairman

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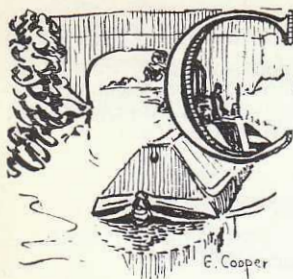
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Coming Events . . .

Recent Activities

JUNE 11th. ASSOCIATION A.G.M. at the Royal Society of Arts, John Adam Street, W.C.2. at 3 p.m.

Sunday 12th JUNE

A SMALL Boat Trip will be held on Sunday June 12th, 1.30 p.m. at Newbury Wharf, London, and Home Counties I.W.A. Members with small trailed boats are invited to join this venture. This trip will be from Newbury Wharf down stream to Bulls Lock, and it is hoped that this will encourage trailer boat owners to visit the Kennet & Avon Canal at Newbury.

All enquiries to:- Mr. R. Miles, 17 Gordon Road, Thatcham, Newbury, Berks.

SATURDAY 18th/SUNDAY 19th JUNE

Working Party on the Sixteen Locks on the Stour-bridge Canal. Plenty of hard work for all—sleeping accommodation or camping facilities available. Details from Tim Dodwell (address on p.3—telephone: Byfleet 43405).

At the Branch A.G.M. we agreed to send a donation to the Staffs and Worcester Canal Society's restoration fund—now is the chance to give some practical help.

SUNDAY 3rd JULY RIVER KENNET MIDSUMMER CRUISE

The Reading Branch of the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust is organising a cruise for craft that can be portaged from Newbury to Theale. Assemble at Newbury 9.00 a.m. on the Sunday to ferry transport to the disembarkation point (camping accommodation for the previous night available by prior arrangement). Arrival in the Theale area is planned for about 6.00 p.m., after which refreshments and drinks will be available at a local hostelry.

People intending to take part are asked to notify John Legh, The Crossways, Shurlock Row, Nr. Twyford, Berks (telephone Shurlock Row 373) by 18th June if possible. He can also supply full details: B. W. licences will be required (special half-rate licences restricted to the Kennet and Avon are obtainable from the B.W. office at Newbury).

SUNDAY 17th JULY

Working Party on the Wey Navigation. Back to Pyrford Lock to carry on with clearing dead and overhanging trees, and, it is hoped, also to construct a landing stage above the lock. Cutting implements

required—assemble on site at 10.00 a.m. Transport from nearest station (West Byfleet) can be arranged—please contact Tim Dodwell as above.

SUNDAY, 31st JULY. RIVER WEY BOAT TRIP

This trip, on the last Sunday of the month please note, may well be the last opportunity for Members and friends to join *Arcturus* for a Cruise on the Wey. As *Arcturus* will be en route to the Grand Union at Watford, this trip will be a ONE-WAY ONLY run from Guildford to New Haw and Weybridge. In view of the time required for this particular trip, Members are asked to be at Mill Mead (about five minutes' walk from Guildford station) for 10.45 a.m. Those coming from London should catch the 9.50 a.m. train from Waterloo—remember single tickets.

With the variation of depth of several sections of the Navigation, the time of arrival at New Haw and at Weybridge (Thames Lock) for those who wish to come all the way cannot be too definite; but a good day's outing can be expected if suitable anti-wet weather gear is brought along! You are asked to bring packed lunch; a stop will be arranged at a hostelry during opening time if humanly possible. Light afternoon refreshments will be available on board.

Tickets: (s.a.e. please) members 12/6d, non-members 15/- from Bryan Nicoll, Guildford Wharf, Friary St., Guildford. Cheques etc. should be made payable to London and Home Counties Branch I.W.A.

AUGUST 5th-9th. NATIONAL RALLY AT MARPLE

WINTER MEETING

THE February Winter Meeting took the form of a River Thames Evening. It was a great success, and enjoyed by a goodly turn-out of members. Unfortunately the Editor of *Windlass* was not among them, and no detailed report was received in time for publication. The speaker was John Watson-Parton of the River Thames Society.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE Branch A.G.M. took place on March 00th at London Bridge, and a good attendance heard our Chairman Michael Aplin give a sparkling summary of our activities of the past twelve months. New Committee members elected were Major Logan Brown and Captain E. A. Quick. A resolution was

proposed by John Dodwell: That a donation of £10 be sent to the Stourbridge Canal Sixteen Locks fund. This was amended to the figure of £16 which was considered most appropriate. The evening ended with films of the Lee and Stort, including the Harlow Rally, shown by Capt. Quick.

THE BRANCH DINNER

A RECORD number of members and their guests attended the Annual Dinner, held at the London Zoo Restaurant, a most attractive venue. After an excellent meal, the assembly listened to a series of interesting speeches. Before introducing the other speakers, Chairman Michael Aplin gave a lucid and witty summary of our activities over the previous year, and introduced a well known member of the music world Stanford Robinson who proposed the toast of the Branch. Mr. Robinson, quoted "The Gondoliers" to some effect in his speech.

Mr. Leslie Morton, replying on behalf of the Branch, enthralled the listeners with an account of his carrying activities, and spoke of the cargoes being carried, notably grain to Wellingborough on the Nene, and consignments from Cadbury's at Bournville to the Regents Canal Dock, via the Northern Stratford. Mr. Morton mentioned that six pairs were carrying these cargoes, but after a while the amount of 200 tons could be carried by four pairs as the constant passage of boats dredged the canal.

Mr. Morton was awarded the Cyril Styring Trophy for his services to the cause of the waterways, and the presentation was made by Capt. Lionel Munk, Chairman of the Association to the accompaniment of the warmest applause.

In proposing the toast of The Guests, Capt. Munk announced that the central pool display at next year's Boat Show would be British Canals, and it was hoped to have a traditional narrow boat afloat there. He stressed the need for an equal interest in both commercial and pleasure traffic on the waterways, and mentioned that several public meetings would take place this summer to put our case for the waterways. Although we must press hard and not hesitate to criticise British Waterways where necessary, at all times it was important that criticism should be accurate.

Dr. Gwynne Vevers, M.B.E., D.PHIL., Curator of the Zoo Aquarium replied to the toast, and made an apt reference in a brief amusing speech, to canal fauna, not forgetting the Willow Wren. This concluded the evening, and members dispersed well content.



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ROUND THE WATERWAYS

RIVER THAMES

THE Evening News is sponsoring a River Thames Pageant on September 9th, the nearest date to the Tercentenary of the Great Fire of London.

The Pageant will take the form of a fleet of decorated and illuminated craft moving through a shining route, to the music of orchestras and massed bands. The fleet will cruise between floodlit banks, and beneath a firey sky, from near Tower Bridge to Lambeth Bridge, and back to the Upper Pool, time taken to be about two hours. Bridges, banks and adjacent buildings will be floodlit. It is planned that aircraft will strew the sky with red vapour, lit by artificial moonlight.

The river procession will be assembled in daylight, to move off at dusk, and the procession will start at 8 p.m. It is a neap tide, and High Water at London Bridge is 8.49 p.m. Some 40-50 power driven craft fully decorated and representative of Thames and Port of London interests will be marshalled according to a processional plan directed by the P.L.A. Riverside illuminations will switch on at dusk, and the river itself will be lit by multi-coloured beams in floodlights sighted above the water level.

A giant rocket set off from the Monument will signal the beginning of the Pageant. The fleet of boats, many with coloured tableaux or orchestras aboard, will be led by the River Police, followed by Firefloats with hoses playing; then will follow the Lord Mayor's Barge. Orchestras and massed bands will play where the public assemble to watch, and special water- and fire-work music will be played. All bridges from the Tower to Lambeth will be floodlit, and there will be the biggest display of fireworks seen in London.

Details of the organising committee will be announced in due course. All those who wish to take part in the procession or any event connected with the pageant should contact The Organiser, Evening News Thames Pageant, Harmsworth House, Bouverie Street, E.C.4. Press enquiries to Henry Clapp, Press & Public Relations Division, Tallis House, Tallis Street, E.C.4. Phone: FLEet Street 6000.

STRATFORD CANAL WORKING PARTY

Six of us turned up at the Lapworth Yard around noon on Saturday, March 19th, and we were quickly driven off by David Hutchings, the Canal Manager then (he has now been succeeded by Major "Crick" Grundy), to Lowsonford, about two miles down the canal, where the towpath needed widening to enable maintenance vehicles to pass, especially the dragline, a "grab-cum-scoop" dredger.

There were two obstructions. The bigger one was where a railway line once crossed the canal (I believe it closed about 50 years ago); the bridge had been taken down, but the brick abutments remained on one side narrowing the towpath and on the other sticking out into the canal, leaving a channel of water of about 10-12 feet wide. This second abutment has, or had, some old railway lines around it to guide boats into the channel. Our job was to dismantle these old rails and bring them over to the towpath; there they were to be cut up at a later date and driven upright into the canal bed to form the supports for a platform which would jut out 2 feet into the canal and so widen the towpath.

This was far, far easier said than done, as the rails must have been there, bolted together, for a hundred years or more and looked a trifle rusty, to put it mildly. However, a drop, or rather many drops, of Plusgas (a de-rusting solution), together with a Stillson wrench with a 2 feet long arm, undid most of the bolts, helped by a hammer and muscles. We tackled a short 6 feet section first, tied a rope to it before unscrewing the last bolt and let the rail fall into the water with the idea of pulling it across the canal along the bottom. It was then that we found it was made of cast iron and all frantic heaving and pleading failed to pull it across to the towpath! So, after a great deal of effort, we pulled it up out of the water onto the nearer bank and left it there until the next day.

Those not engaged in this work were attacking the other obstacle, further down the canal. Here a small bridge carries the towpath over a flood weir. A retaining wall on the side away from the towpath,

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had to be knocked down prior to the bridge being widened.

The work on the abutment rails continued, aided by oil drums to float the heavy rails across the canal; two lengths of about 30 feet were got across the canal—a very good effort in the circumstances. At the weir bridge, brick supporting pillars were built up preparatory to the widening of the towpath. The rest of us did a lot of varied jobs under the leadership of David Hutchings. Paddle gear was checked for ease of movement, red arrows were stuck onto top paddle posts to show where the top of the rack should rest when the paddle is down, and signs showing where facilities such as water-points, safe mooring places, etc., are, were placed in the ground with concrete blocks around them, a good anti-hooligan device. Help at locks was given to a boat passing down to Stratford, the first of the season. Altogether, a pleasant, useful weekend with a number of small jobs done as well as two big ones started.

J. DODWELL

RIVER WEY

PYRFORD LOCK—close by the Anchor—requires special operation. Hence the request now and in past issues and for volunteers for week-end lock manning this Summer. The Branch has a fair number of good strong regulars for Working Parties and a back-bone of faithful supporters for Branch Summer Outings, and there are surely a large number of Members without boats of their own who could do their part in helping in a useful and practical way. My thanks both to those Members and friends who helped last year and those who have already offered their services for this Summer, but the response so far is a sorry reflection on the Branch Membership. Make this an excuse to leave the garden or the week-end traffic jams to enjoy the countryside and to do a much appreciated job on one of our Branch Waterways. Please write as soon as you can giving me your name and an idea of the frequency of your assistance at Pyrford Lock.

A ramp for trailed craft is being built at New Haw Lock.

BRYAN NICOLL

KENNET AND AVON

CANAL WORKING PARTY 17.4.66

IN all 20 volunteers lurched their way over water-logged fields to the site of Sulhampstead Lock and were soon put to work. Some were engaged in filling wheelbarrows with soil from a nearby field, which was then transported to the lockside up an improvised ramp of steel piling, the wheelbarrows powered on the push-pull principle, i.e. one person pushing on the shafts and the other heaving on a line attached to the front of the barrow! This arrangement was made necessary by the soggy and slippery state of the ground. The soil was then tipped into excavations made at one side of the lock during re-building.

Another party loaded the work-punt with shovel-clogging puddle clay from a tip at Sheffield swing bridge, and proceeded laboriously to bow-haul the

punt to the lock against a very fierce current; an operation which required expending as much energy in keeping the punt's bow facing the right way as it did to keep it moving. The clay was then unloaded into the base of the piling on one side of the tail of the lock, and energetically pounded into place, prior to soil being tipped in to make up the level. Finally every one retired to the blockhouse which had been converted into a shelter for volunteers and tea was made using an ancient stove with a very suspect heat-to-smoke ratio.

The K & A Trust representatives expressed their satisfaction at the amount of work done, and hoped the Branch would attend again in the very near future. Special mention must be made of the party of seven Finchley Senior Scouts who, despite less than pleasant conditions and their inexperience of waterway matters, soon made their presence felt and did an enormous amount of donkey work.

GRAHAM PALMER

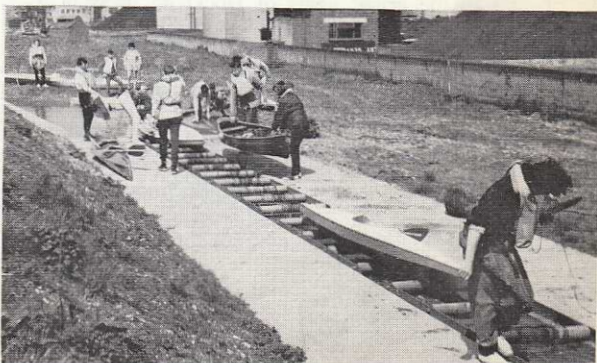
RIVER CHELMER

SUNDAY, April 24th saw some 24 canoes and dinghies take part in the cruise to mark the inauguration of the new boat rollers connecting the River Chelmer with the Chelmer and Blackwater Canal. The rollers, which were built by Chelmsford Corporation at the suggestion of the London and Home Counties Branch and Chelmsford Boating Club, go round the new flood control sluices in Kings Head Meadow.

The small armada set off from the headquarters of the Boating Club at 11 o'clock, and proceeded downstream, cruising slowly through the town centre. The craft passed one by one over the new rollers onto the canal, and down to Little Baddow. Heavy rain the week before had caused almost flood conditions, making it possible to use all the locks. The fleet were the first pleasure boats to do so for five years, and this unique experience was much enjoyed by the party, and certainly brought the waterway to life.

The only difficulty encountered was the fact that the sloping banks made it a little difficult to get out of the boats. At the rollers this was made worse by slippery conditions. This has already been pointed out to the Corporation, who are to provide landing stages above and below the rollers. Altogether a most enjoyable and successful event, to celebrate an excellent facility.

Below: The rollers in use. Photo and report by J. E. Marriage.



Narrow Boat to the Medway

by HUGH MCKNIGHT

WHEN our Members, the Beauchamp Lodge Settlement of Paddington, decided to take their widely travelled converted narrow boat *William* from Little Venice to the navigable limit of the Medway at Tonbridge, they were hoping to fulfill a long standing ambition to be the first such vessel to complete the journey under her own power. Another excuse for the exercise was to obtain publicity for the Lodge's 25th Anniversary Appeal. When, at a later stage, *William* suffered engine trouble off Faversham Creek, and the press made much of a minor occurrence, it became apparent that a complete and accurate account of this unique trip was required. The following notes make an attempt to get the record straight.

Dennis Jewiss, skipper of *William*, and more commonly known as "Bo'sun" on the Cut, invited me to join his party for the first part of the journey. Accordingly, I arrived at Regent's Canal Dock late on Maundy Thursday afternoon, to where the boat had been brought during the day. There had been an enthusiastic send-off from Paddington, with full press and television coverage, mingled with an atmosphere of amused doubt that *William* would complete her scheduled course. Bo'sun had taken all reasonable precautions, such as carrying life jackets for crew members, flares (only in case of extreme darkness, of course), and compass, while the previous month had been spent in examining charts, until he could reel off the entire route from buoy to buoy. The boat's diesel had been entirely overhauled, but as an added safety measure, the manufacturers sent a representative along for the more tricky passage down to the Estuary.

The crew—we were ten altogether—was a democratically selected bunch, ranging from an apprentice electrician to a student of interior design. Ron, a black-bearded student child care officer, Bo'sun and myself shared chart reading duties and steering. All were assembled in the Dock by midnight where navigation lights were checked and all made ready for locking out into the Thames at 3.30 a.m. on Good Friday.

Once out into the dark river, *William* moved as she can rarely have moved before, revelling in the deep water and strong, favourable stream. Down as far as Greenwich, we could easily see our way from the bright lights of Dockland on each bank. But dawn brought with it a really dense sea mist, reducing visibility to less than 100 yards in places, providing an unexpected opportunity for testing our proficiency with the compass. Fortunately, the river was completely calm with little traffic, so that our circular (at times) progress hindered no one. We moored for breakfast—and an improvement in

visibility—to a gigantic dredger upstream of Tilbury, setting off again at 8.00 a.m., as the sun broke through to enable us to see how little there is to see on each bank. For mile after mile we cruised past broad expanses of marshland, following one buoy after another, making their bells ring out in our wash. The wind was light, the sun amazingly warm for Easter, and we were able to settle down to a little quiet ship spotting—tankers, coasters, passenger vessels, and, greatest thrill of all, a fully rigged Thames sailing barge, beating along on the light breeze.

David Harman, our Branch Secretary, had arranged to join us at Chatham, some fifteen miles up the Medway from its junction with the Thames, at 1 p.m. Laughingly, Bo'sun had told him that we would be there on time with a margin of five minutes either side. Imagine our surprise when we pulled into the Pier at exactly 12.59 p.m.! A photographer from *The Times* came aboard—the entire picture page was devoted to the *William* next day—and the majority of the crew poured off into the town to catch up on lost drinking time.

By evening, we were alongside the quay at Maidstone, having savoured the delights of the lower Medway at an ideal time of the year. Apple blossom and lambs, a continuous vista of oast houses and old castles: this was my first cruise along a surprisingly delightful waterway. After the exertions of sixteen hours cruising, we made a late start on Saturday morning, finally arriving at Tonbridge just half an hour before closing time. Although the original intention had been to stay immobile at Tonbridge for a day, the weather on Easter Sunday was so warm and pleasant that we decided to retrace our course to Chatham, from where I regretfully returned to London by train.

On the Monday, Bo'sun sailed *William* round to Whitstable Harbour via the Swale, where the sea was sufficiently choppy to add excitement to navigation. On learning that there was no available berth here for the night, he left the greater part of his crew to find their way back to Town—where they were due to start work the next day—and steered *William* out to sea once more, intending to reach Chatham, where a party of junior boys was to be collected next morning. Shortly after the entrance to Faversham Creek, unpleasant noises were heard in the engine room, so as a precaution, although she was certainly capable of travelling under her own power, *William* was towed up the Creek to Hollow Shore by a friendly tug. When they came to examine the diesel, the manufacturers eventually diagnosed a faulty big end, necessitating removal of the engine to their works for overhaul. How the lubrication system came to

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The 'Linda' is a narrow boat and can hold 40 passengers maximum, and a minimum of 20 accepted, smaller parties must pay for twenty seats.

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The 'Linda' was the boat that was used to open the Stratford-on-Avon canal by H.M. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in 1964.

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break down, in view of it's complete examination only a few days previously, remains a mystery.

At the time of writing, *William* lies safely in a mud berth up the Creek, waiting for the repairs to be finished, prior to the return trip to London. A group of young residents and members of Beauchamp Lodge are planning to raise funds for the work by walking the fifty miles from Paddington to Faversham during the weekend of May 14th and 15th. For every mile covered by each youngster, a sponsor will give 6d. towards the Fund. We hope that *William* will soon be operational once more, giving pleasure and enjoyment to hundreds of young people during the summer months.

While it would be unwise to suggest that anyone could take a narrow boat down to the Thames Estuary, *William's* latest jaunt proves that provided that all reasonable precautions are made, there is no undue difficulty. As for the engine trouble no one could have foreseen that, and in spite of it the boat was powered right up to the moment she reached her berth at Hollow Shore. The popular press made much of a small and comparatively insignificant incident making no mention of the care and enterprise which characterised this remarkable achievement. One question remains: where will *William* choose to go next?

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's better—ready now? In, out; in . . .

At least one solution to this curious exposition is to be found in the new Midland Railway timetable, which reveals Berkhamsted as 36 minutes from Euston. Equally interesting is a brochure revealing motor cruisers for hire from Oxford, Rugby and, of course, Berkhamsted. The brochure (but not the timetable) can be had for the asking from RED ROSE CRUISERS LTD., Towpath, Berkhamsted, Herts. the 'phone bill is paid and the number is 1998.

Stanford's Map of the Thames from Richmond to Lechlade 1/5" to 1 mile 5/- (earlier edition) post free. Maps and guides in great variety, please write for what you want to

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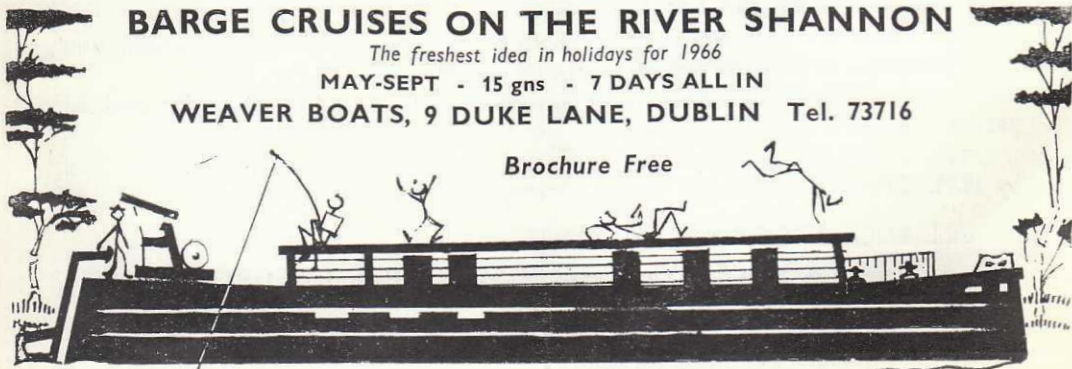
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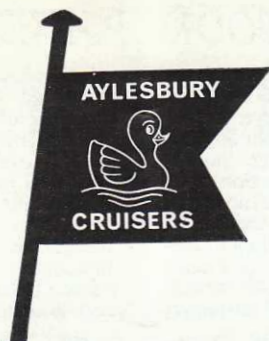
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BOOK PAGE

Small Boat on the Thames; Small Boat in Southern France. Roger Pilkington. Macmillan. 30/- each.

Not the same small boat however. Ten years ago we read in 'Thames Waters' how Roger Pilkington and his wife converted an admiral's barge into a cabin cruiser. How successful this conversion was we all know. 'Small Boat in Southern France' is the ninth volume of his European series and, alas, is the last for the *Commodore*. After travelling down the tumultuous Rhone she travels along the Canal du Midi to finish her voyaging at Bordeaux. A sad moment for Dr. Pilkington, his wife and all his many friends who had travelled with her.

'Small Boat on the Thames' describes the birth pangs of the new *Thames Commodore* and includes in the introduction an account of how her predecessor was instrumental in saving the Stromsholm Canal in Sweden. After his trip along this closed waterway so much interest was created that the canal is now to be restored at a cost of £110,000. The book unlike its companion volumes does not describe one voyage but is based on the author's seventeen years of exploration of the Thames. Slightly disappointing is the amount of material repeated from 'Thames Waters' but otherwise Roger Pilkington succeeds, as usual, in overcoming the hazards met with in his cruising. Those of us who know of the threat to the Regents Canal will appreciate his description of this waterway in the final chapter but they may be disappointed in his account of how he gets stuck in Islington Tunnel and how he subsequently gets the better of a working narrow boat pair who objected at the delay so caused.

One feels that *Thames Commodore* is designed for European cruising and we look forward with interest to the next volume. Russia perhaps?

Waterways Atlas of the British Isles. 54 pages. J. Cranfield and M. Bonfiel. 16/-. Cranfield and Bonfiel Books, 2 Lombardy Place, London W.C.2.

John Cranfield needs no introduction to readers

of *Windlass* as his series 'Railways from Canals' has been followed with interest. In conjunction with Michael Bonfiel he has produced a conveniently sized spiral bound waterway atlas and gazetteer in colour covering the whole of the British Isles. The scale is 8 miles to one inch with enlargements of the BCN and Middle Level Navigations. All rivers are shown together with abandoned river and canal navigations. It is particularly valuable in showing a newcomer the waterways situated in a strange area of the countryside. Larger scale maps would of course be necessary for a detailed investigation.

Hire cruiser firms were invited to contribute facts about themselves for inclusion but only a few did so. In consequence the references to hire cruiser bases are sparse and it is questionable whether this type of data (requiring constant revision if it is to be up to date) should be included. Otherwise good value.

D.C.



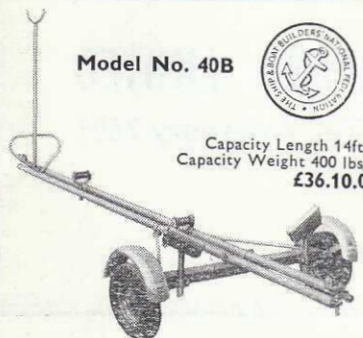
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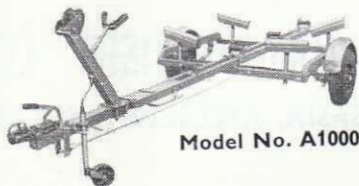
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