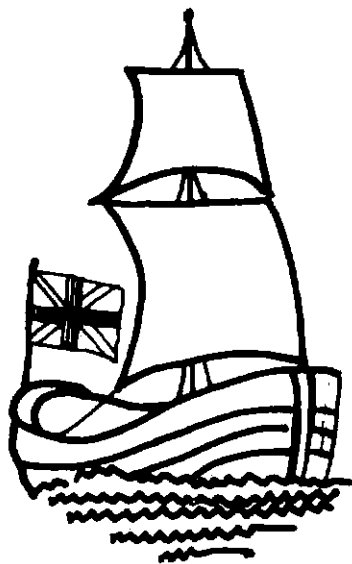


the
trow



NO. 2 MAY 1973



STROUDWATER



CANAL SOCIETY

EDITORIAL

Ever since plans and ideas have been formulated, and the Society formed, the Committee have been aware that the County Council had been preparing plans for a new road which crossed the route of the Canal, and at one stretch the road may follow the route of the Thames and Severn Canal. In fact at the Public Meeting last December, when the Society was formed, Mr Ashley (A committee member who is on the staff of the County Planning Department) told the meeting in response to a question that where there was a conflict of interest the Council's requirements would be paramount.

The Canal - both Stroudwater and the Thames and Severn have been disused as a navigable waterway for many years and the Highway Engineers cannot be blamed for preparing plans for using what appeared on present day face value to be a waste piece of weed infested water. However in the last year a report on the feasibility of restoring the canal has been prepared by the Committee, accepted with public acclaim, and a restoration work has been commenced on a stretch which shows what can be done. The County Council therefore must be persuaded to change its plans so as not to prevent the canal being restored in the future for navigation.

Two Committees of the County Council have considered the Societies scheme and whilst accepting the benefit of the canal as an amenity stretch of water, have decided that the Council highway interest must come first.

The present highway proposals are to construct a new road linking the M5 junction at Stroudwater with Dudbridge. The new road does not run on the route of the canal but crosses it and this is where the threat to the canal scheme arises.

The main crossing is just beyond the Horse trough junction at Stonehouse. Here a large roundabout is proposed. This roundabout will cater for the junction of the existing roads with the new main road and a new access road and here the canal will be filled in for a distance of about 200 yards. The estimate by the Highways Authority to accomodate a bridge to preserve the canal is £250,000. This must include the raising up of lengths of the road each side to give the elevation. The Society hope that the Council will accept a proposal to use a tube contruction involving a reduced canal width and headroom, which would reduce the cost by a very large amount and safeguard the future of the canal.

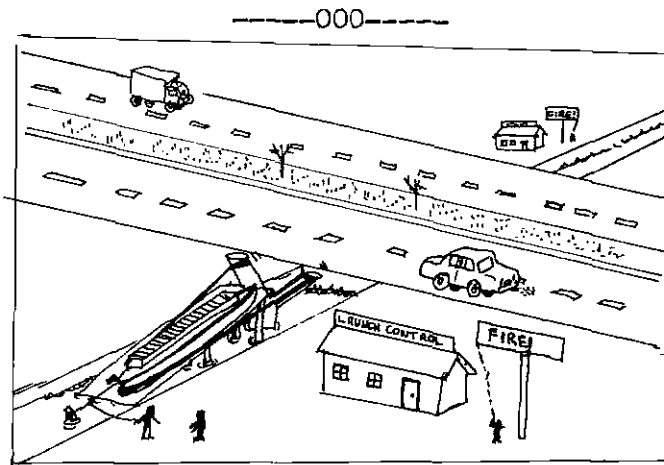
Part of the canal between Blunder lock and Roving bridge may be effected by road widening in connection with the link road scheme. At the junction of the Thames and Severn and the Stroudwater canal at Wallbridge a roundabout is proposed which if not modified to include a bridge or "tube" to allow passage of craft will reclude the relinking of the two canals.

The proposals highway and canal are in conflict. The County Council have had to make their position clear. What can the Society do? - Persuade the Council and other bodies of the need for action to keep open the option for navigation. What can individual members of the Society and friends do? Broadcast and spread around the aims of the Society, discuss them with your friends, workmates and in the "pub", and Councillor if you know any! Details of the road proposals can be displayed in the Council Office at John St, Stroud.

I have given serious thoughts regarding advertisements in the Trow and for the time being at least decided against it. Firstly the extra printing cost almost equals the income obtained. Secondly I feel we would be losing our independence. However, on the back cover are listed the names of firms and individuals that given assistance in one way or another to the Society.

On page 6 is the first part of an article by Robert B. Sims, of Gloucester. Space did not allow me to include this in full, the second part will be in the August edition. Mr Sims gives series of lectures on The Waterways of Gloucestershire. They cover a broad spectrum and are well worth attending.

Compared with issue No.1 this issue has taken on a rather more serious note, - regrettable, but if those distant members are to be kept informed - necessary. Due to holidays the press date for the August edition is June 29th.



Well, they wouldn't let us put a tube in, so....

NATURE NOTES

When I told a friend of mine I was going to write an article for "The Trow" on this subject he said, "I've rather mixed feelings about the whole Canal Project. I'm all for the idea of opening up the Thames - Severn Link again, but what about all the interesting water plants which have come in since the canals became derelict? They'll all be cleared away."

I don't see why he necessarily has to be torn like this. In the old days of trading on the canals I daresay all aquatics were weeds and a nuisance. Nowadays things are different. The new Stroudwater will be of amenity value. Interesting, rare or handsome plants along the banks or in the associated water storage ponds will add to the pleasure of people walking or boating. The waterway will have to be dredged and the banks kept reasonably clear, but this is not incompatible with stands of these plants being left here and there. First of all, though, their presences and whereabouts have to be recognised, especially since some of them are not at all easy to find at certain times of the year, and may only show up really well when they are in flower.

On my visits to the canals I have come across a number of outstanding plants which are not at all common elsewhere in the surrounding part of the county, and it is no good my pretending I have had the chance to search at all comprehensively. Moreover, something new could come in at any time.

In the next issue of "The Trow" I will mention a few of my experiences. Meanwhile - the summer is coming on. I am interested in gathering all I can not only about the plants, but also about the animals (and this includes insects) along the Stroudwater and Thames - Severn canals. So if you come across anything you think is unusual, I should be glad to know about it. Robert B. Sims. 12 Argyll Rd., Gloucester.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Since the last edition of "The Trow" Stonehouse Road Scheme has exploded. When the County Council released plans for the road they asked for recommendations from interested parties. We were advised the road was to pass over the canal along the track bed of the old Nailsworth Branch line some 12' over the water and we wrote to the G.C.C. asking that a section be put in the canal to allow craft with 7' headroom to pass beneath the road. We heard nothing further until the press revealed the County Highways Committee had stated the canal must go to make way for the road as if our demands were to be met the road would have to be raised a further 5' (Making it 17 feet above the water!) at a cost of £250,000. Just whose eyes are they trying to pull the wool over. The sad part about this is the G.C.C. have flown directly in the face of all public opinion and the recommendations of the local councils to keep the canal open. Alternative proposals have been submitted very realistically by local residents giving to my mind a better site for the roundabout, but the novice cannot tell grandmother to suck eggs and I believe for this reason and this alone the plans will not be considered by the councils.

Secondly which is to be regretted even more they have not corresponded or consulted with us at any stage or even made a copy of the plans available to the Society. As they do not fully understand our requirements how can they reach a decision of merit let alone give an estimate of cost? The G.C.C. have inserted a tube under the main Cirencester - Tetbury road which means the canal is unimpeded, so why the change of heart at Stonehouse? Where it is justifiable for engineering reasons it can be done without question. Where a canal scheme can be assisted it will cost £250,000.

This is a clear case of the official not taking the slightest notice of the needs of those in the area he is dealing with. The decision for them is easy it will solve many problems which might arise in the future. The aim for them is not to stop the canal at Ryeford but to ensure it is stopped at Wallbridge, Blunder Lock and as many other places as they may choose at any date in the future.

The early sixties saw the wave of massive road building schemes being promoted they are just now ten years later coming into fruition. The early seventies has seen the environment at last being cared for and considered priority, it is a pity we have to wait a decade for authorities to catch on.

Every society needs large sums of money and in this respect I welcome the addition of Ann and Dave Elliott who join us as fund raisers. We have told them how much we think we will need and they are still with us which takes a lot of courage.

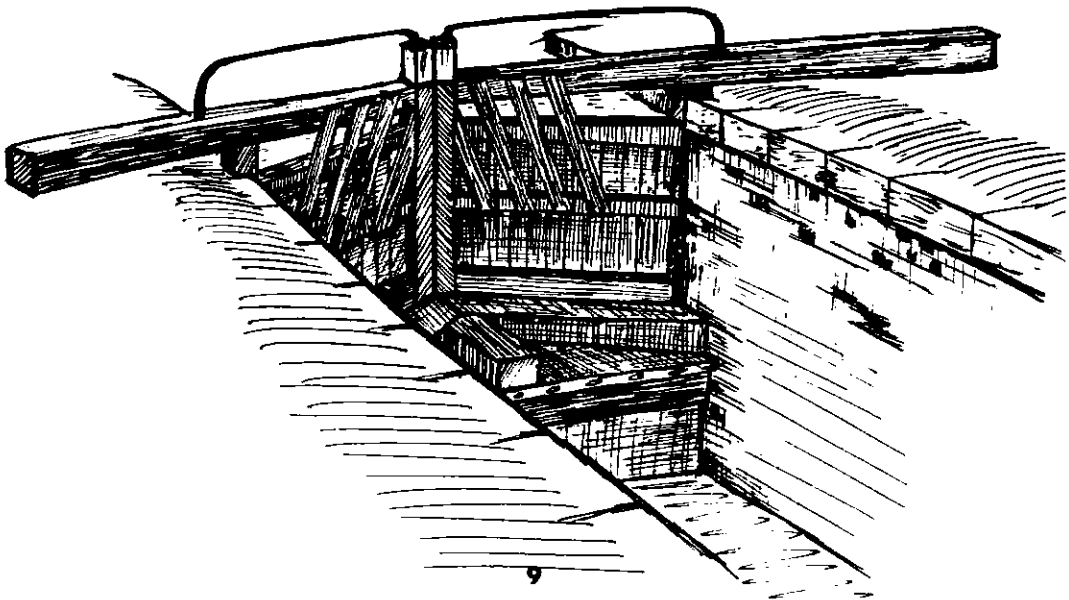
Committee work is not all talking once a month, digging once a week and auditing accounts once a year there is a host of behind the scenes negotiations with, councils, water authorities, the I.W.A., land owners and many other interested parties.

Lectures have been given on the canals to the Stroud Conservation Group, The Midlands I.W.A., The Fire Service Photographic Club, Nailsworth Ladies Circle and Oxford University Canal Society. We also attended the I.W.A. South West annual general meeting in Bristol to hear John Heap the I.W.A. general chairman. An excellent meeting so many missed, we want to see far more Stroudwater I.W.A. members here next time. They, like us, cannot operate without your support.

Hyeford is back with the County Surveyors Dept., and we hope to have permission to start and a decision over the construction of the dam in order to put work in hand during May. Other parts of the canal are in the melting pot and I hope to report some important developments by the next edition of "The Trow".

The river Frome development for flood prevention is now completed and is looking very attractive as the grass begins to seed and I would recommend you to have a look at the section of the Frome above Whitminster Lock. Great praise to the Severn River Authority even if a couple of the bends look a bit tight for the 70' boys they did not design it with boats in mind.

The Trow has been an immediate success and great praise must go to Mike and Judy on the first edition.



FUND RAISING

Perhaps the only comforting thought about raising money for the Stroudwater Canal project is that all the money is not needed this year. In fact this years project - clearing from Bowbridge to Griffin Lock - may appear deceptively cheap on the books mainly because no major construction work is involved. However no one will deny that a lot of money will be needed to complete the project although at this point in time the amount remains undefined.

One of the short term aims of the Society is to be in a position to financially support schemes which will prevent damage to the Canal. These schemes will probably be discussed in the future issues of The Trow and it is sufficient to confine comments on these pages to various ways of raising the money.

Whilst the Society will accept contributions from almost any legal source, as a general principle the aims are to provide entertainment and enjoyment for the whole family which we hope will show a financial return.

This year sees a fairly quiet start since we have to get ourselves organised but some progress has been made towards establishing a framework of annual events, although some of these may not emerge this year.

Our calendar for 1973 to date includes two major events, a sponsored walk on May 6th and a balloon race at Stroud Show. Other events being considered include dances, discos, skittles, and the usual money making activities.

To date no one has suggested a money making scheme to turn Mr Barber green with envy, but the Society are always prepared to consider ideas from Members. The Society will also give active support to those who are prepared to organise fund raising activities at home - such as coffee mornings, cheese and wine parties, raffles, green shield stamps, ticket selling, etc. Activities of this nature are, we feel ideal for those Members who would like to make a positive contribution to the Canal project but do not wish to become involved in the problems of moving mud.

In mentioning activities which can be carried on at home, we must add that we would like to hear from any capable person who would be interested in making (for sale) wood carvings from the timbers of the old lock gates. Timber cut to size and supplied free issue of course.

Preparations are also in hand to print our own Christmas Cards. These will be available by the summer, we hope, at competitive prices.

Briefly then - The May Walk on May 6th - A booklet/entry form is enclosed with this issue of The Trow, which we hope is self explanatory. Further copies of the booklet are available, if you know others who would like to walk. This is our first big event and we are obviously looking to Members of the Society and their friends for support.

Stroud Show. In addition to the benefits of publicity we hope to make a pound or two on a Balloon Race. Tickets will be 5p each. We would like to hear from Members who would be interested in selling tickets and also from anyone who would like to donate a bottle - or part of a bottle - of hydrogen. One bottle has been promised already, but our target for the day is £100 so that we can use some more hydrogen.

Dave Elliott

MEMBERSHIP

In the first edition of "The Trow" I promised to give you details of a "Boost the Membership Scheme" based on an idea sent to me by Mike Lloyd of Pitchcombe.

The committee have approved the following scheme in which it is hoped to encourage members to enroll ten new members in three months. For each member that achieves this goal a suitably marked, hand made tankard will given. These tankards are pottery and I hope that you will want to try to earn one as a unique keepsake.

What you have to do:-

Obtain from me 10 membership forms.

Each time you attain a new member mark on the bottom of the form "introduced by Mr Your Name".

That is all you have to do. When I receive the first new member introduced by you I will make a notation on your membership record card and your three months will commence from then. No special forms needed!

Its easy! You may count 5 family members as 10 members. Adult, Youth and Pensioner Members count as one.

This scheme will commence from the issue of this Trow and in fairness to others I cannot backdate the scheme. If you think you will never get 10 members, still carry on as if you were entering the scheme because it may be that during the summer months, on holiday etc., you may find more interest.

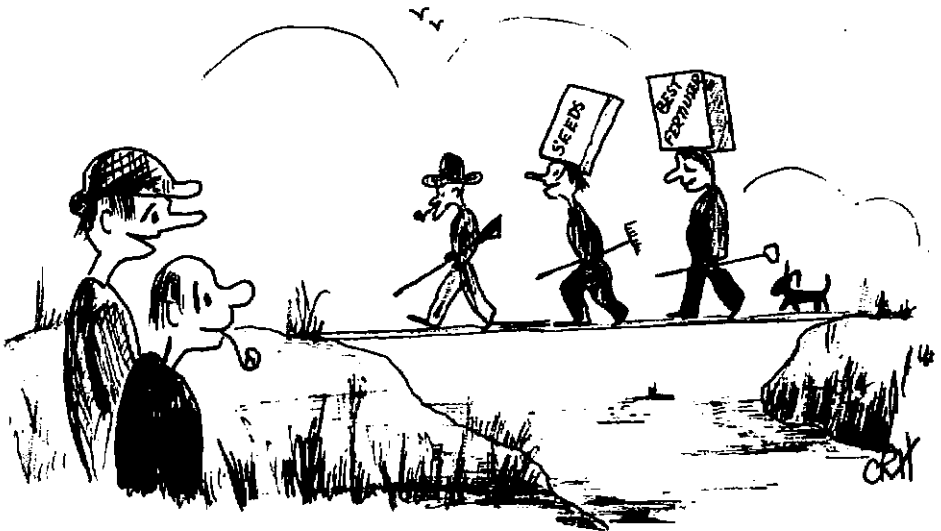
My thanks to all those that have already worked hard to enroll new members.

As we have attained so many members so quickly I cannot possibly print all of their names and addresses.

Members hail from all the local Stroud districts as one would expect also from the Saul and Berkeley areas. Some other places include:- Bath, Bristol, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cirencester, Cheltenham, Cornwall, Essex, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, London, Lancashire, Glamorganshire, Shetland and Surrey. These are but a few place names, when I tried typing out all the place names I found it impossible to fit in the space allowed.

We have many local and national dignitaries as members and of course many of you are Inland Waterways Association members too.

To finalize to see all of your names in the society and on record is a boost to the morale and the future success of the Stroudwater Canal Society.



I wish you wouldn't read those Safari books!

OLD & NEW

My dictionary defines Navvy as 'a labourer - originally a labourer on a navigation or canal'. The term 'navigator' applied to the skilled workmen who dug canal navigations - professionally called cutters - seems to have appeared in the 1790s. However by 1830, according to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary, the term had been shortened to 'navvy'.

Over the years the term lost it's precise meaning and was used indiscriminately to describe any class of common labourer associated with building and civil engineering works as canal cutting as a trade disappeared.

That is until 1965 when a new breed of navvies was born with the formation of the first regular volunteer team recruited from the London Branch of the Inland Waterways Association to work on the restoration of the Stourbridge and Kennet and Avon Canals.

Following the formation of the London Working Party Group 'Navvies Notebook' (later just plain 'Navvies') was launched in 1966 to promote interest in and create awareness of the need to restore and maintain the country's waterways. So effective has this been that today some forty different groups of volunteers exist up and down the country.

In 1970 the Waterway Recovery Group was founded to co-ordinate the activities of the various groups and to assist with financing work and equipment as well as giving advice on restoration techniques.

The success of W.R.G. can be judged by the following statistics of W.R.G. co-ordinated work in March 1972 on the Ashton and Peak Forest Canal near Manchester.

A two mile stretch of canal was cleared of over 3000 tons of accumulated rubbish by 1000 volunteers in a weekend onslaught using an array of hired, begged and borrowed plant that would have done credit to Wimpeys. The net result was a £20,000 job done for a fraction of the cost in considerably less time than a commercial undertaking could have done it.

Who are these volunteers? Starvanite Super-beings? The answer is ordinary men and women from all classes, trades and professions united by a common ideal of caring about the future of the country's waterways.

Contrary to our normal editorial policy not to carry adverts (and thus remain independant of commercial interest) we feel we must have an exception of

NAVVIES (bi monthly magazine)

for those who really care about the future of the country's waterways.

Minimum Subscription 25p (per annum)
from

WATERWAY RECOVERY GROUP,
4 Wentworth Court,
Wentworth Avenue,
Finchley, London NW3.

Support Navvies they support us!

Pete Swallow

WORKING PARTY REPORT

Work is continuing steadily at Bowbridge and Stanton's Bridge is now within reach. Progress is not as rapid as was at first anticipated but is never the less still very creditable.

Special thanks to the following groups for providing working parties

The Blue School Wells
Kingswood School Bath
1st Dursley Scouts

and to the volunteer who travelled from Essex!

Talking of travelling I'm starting to fix up away working parties on other peoples canals to stimulate cross fertilization of ideas and prevent parochialism.

Our first away was at Totterdown Basin at the Eastern entrance to Bristol's Floating Harbour on Saturday 3rd March when we managed to field a team of 9.

The next away is at Mildenhall Mill on the Droitwich Canal the day after the Trow goes to press. Future aways are expected on the following canals - Wey & Arun, Kennet & Avon and the Upper Avon Project (when David Hutchins can cut his way out of the red tape which has snarled up the last 600 yards of the project). As yet no firm dates are available but notices will be posted on W.P.s at Bowbridge when information is available.

Aways will normally be on Saturdays and Bob Coles will be able to arrange transport for limited numbers in his newly acquired and strengthened 'paddy wagon'.

Bob's contraption leads me naturally to the question of mechanical aids to digging and I don't mean clockwork spades! The length of canal we are currently restoring is inaccessible to heavy plant and in any case the towpath is too narrow to manoeuvre even a small dumper. However when we get onto a more open stretch we have generous offers of both a J.C.B. (Peter Gillott) and a dumper (Dave Elliott) which we mean to follow up vigorously.

We are endeavouring to obtain second hand plant of our own and as a first step in this direction we tendered for a Priestman excavator/dragline in a G.C.C. plant sale. Unfortunately our limited finances did not enable us to put in a tender of much more than a nominal offer and we were not successful, even so it was worth the gamble. If we do acquire or borrow plant we shall need somewhere near the canal to store it safely - any suggestions or offers?

Until we do get plant we shall be dependant on pure muscle power which must be efficiently directed to the task in hand in order to derive the maximum benefit. Small groups working independantly from the main working party may unwittingly be hindering future progress. Therefore to assist myself and my colleagues will volunteers please sign the W.P. register and then report to me or a committee member (identified by a blue dymo badge) who will deploy you where you can be of the most use. Thanks.

Pete Swallow

Working Parties

Every Sunday at Bowbridge on the T. & S. (O.S. Sheet 156 - 858/044) just outside Stroud on the A419 Cirencester road turn right at the British Oak coming from Stroud. Start 10.00a.m.

LETTERS

Dear Sir,

As Assistant Treasurer of the Hockley Youth Port Trust, a member of the B.C.N. Society, I offer a warm welcome to any Society Member who may be cruising on the B.C.N. this year - to visit the Port - off the Eastern approach of the Winson Green Loop. The Western entrance is still blocked. Here, in almost the City Centre, we offer an over-night mooring among friends, a bus to the City Centre - or van etc., - knowledge of the best places to visit to meet your needs etc., etc. The Warden is:-
Tom, Hodgson, Hockley Port, All Saints St., B'ham 18.

John Knight-Barnard,
106, City Road,
Birmingham 16.

-----000-----

Dear Sir,

My late Mother, who was a Miss Wyn Ford was born at the old Mill Cottage at Mill Bottom, Horsley, where her father, Samuel Ford was the Miller. He was of the Ford family who owned the Grove and built Ryeford Hall (now Wycliffe College) in order to be near their Mill beside the Stroudwater Canal. You will see, therefore, that I have a strong interest in Gloucestershire waterways and infact my narrow boat is named "Gloster Rose".

I am fully very actively involved in both the Lower & Upper Avon Navigation Trusts but normally find a week in the year to go down the Severn into the "Berkeley Canal" and Sharpness to see the friends we have made on the Waterway.

Dudley Matthews,
32, Foxhills Road,
Penn, Wolverhampton.

THE OTHER PEOPLE

The Montgomery Canal.

The Montgomery Canal as we know it consists of three separately planned waterways built nearly 200 years ago. Joining the Llangollen Arm of the Shropshire Union Canal at Francton (near Ellsmer in Shropshire) running to Newtown some thirty miles and 26 locks.

The Engineers who were responsible for the construction were Jessop, Telford, John Williams and Thomas Dadford, and subsequently ownership passed to the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company. This canal did not suffer as much as others did with arrival of the railways and this was probably due to the fact that with its unusual geographical position, served rural areas which were of little use to the railways. The motto of the company was "Collect today, deliver tomorrow"

It was around the First World War when the canal began to lose money, but fleets of boats operated on a regular basis until the middle of the 1930's. Again, it was the sad story of the lamentable lack of maintenance which brought about this state of affairs and enabled road transport to win from the canals, the carriage of the goods of the day.

In the early hours of the 6th February, 1936 there occurred what should have been a minor tragedy but which turned out to have major significance in the history of this waterway. Within a mile of the junction at Welsh Francton a breach in the canal occurred some forty yards of the embankment was washed away and a section of the canal ran dry. At this time estimates for the repair of the breach were in the region of £400 to £600, but just as work was about to start to repair the damage it was decided that nothing should be done for the time

being at least. It is generally accepted that the breach was used as an excuse to close the canal and in due course the L.M.S. Railway Co. quoted a figure of £16,000 for repairs and putting the pound in order. The breach has still not been repaired. The canal was legally closed and abandoned by the 1944 L.M.S. (Canals) Act of Parliament.

During 1967 the Shropshire Union Canal Society began investigations as to the feasibility of restoration of the Montgomery and in June of 1969 published their report "A Case for Restoration". About this time it became obvious that plans were afoot to use the canal at Welshpool as the route for a road bypass for the town. Very quickly plans were made by the Inland Waterways Association and the Shropshire Union Canal Society to vigorously oppose these plans and during the weekend of October 18/19 led by Graham Palmer and the Waterways Recovery Group, some 200 volunteers descended on Welshpool to "dig out" as a major clearance operation a one and a half mile length of the canal. This was achieved with the approval of, and the assistance by the British Waterways Board who had subsequently accepted responsibility for the waterway.

In due course a Public Enquiry was held which lasted several days and was attended by many objectors, and subsequently the result was announced that the Inspector recommended and was confirmed by the Minister, that the bypass would ^{NOT} be allowed to follow the canal. This was a major victory for all who had fought for the Canal, but no sooner had the cheers died down when it was again discovered that plans were being made to cross the canal at Abermule and that a two metre culvert was planned to carry the canal beneath the road. Again, the objections were registered with the Welsh Office and after much correspondence, not only with the I.W.A. and the S.U.C.S. and many private individuals, the Welsh Office announced that the road crossing at Abermule would be of sufficient dimensions which were acceptable

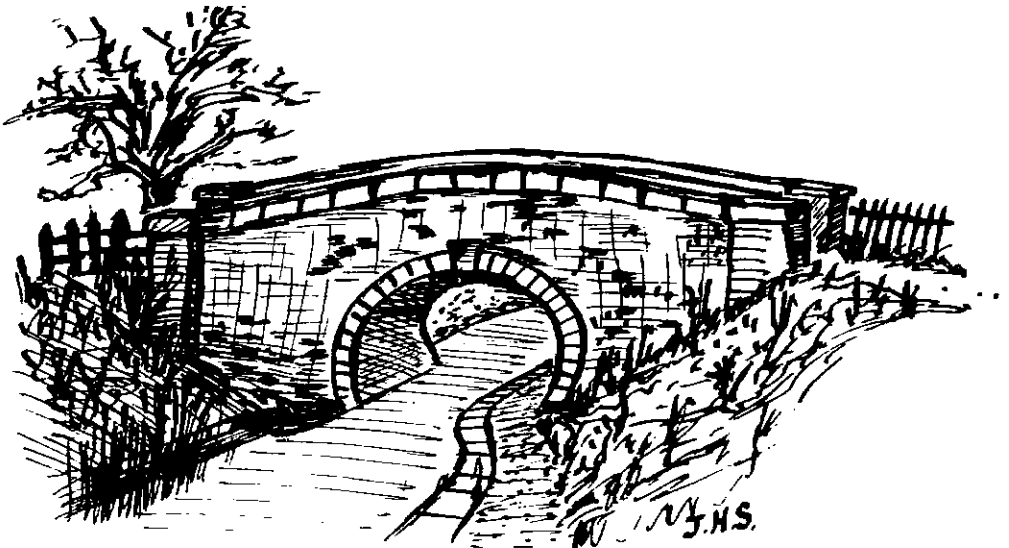
to the people who wished to navigate this beautiful waterway.

The effect of all the efforts in Welshpool appears now to be bearing fruit and at the moment the Local Council is applying for a grant of £10,000 which with their own share will make available to the restoration a total of nearly £12,000 which will be spent within the local council area. I sincerely hope that the example of this local authority who see in the waterway the obvious amenity will encourage others to follow in their footsteps.

Elsewhere gangs of navvies have been working particularly at Francton and down the canal towards the breach near the River Perry. This length of the canal from Francton towards Queenshead is very much overgrown with trees in the 'dry' section as I found out when I spent a full weekend towards the end of last year exploring this most attractive waterway.

Ken Goodwin

Chairman of the North West
Branch of the I.W.A.



SALES

The following items are available from the Society:-

BOOKS:

The Thames & Severn Canal by Humphrey Household. price £2.50.

Enquiries for other books welcomed.

MILESTONE PLATES:

Replica Thames & Severn milestone plates - full size made of fibreglass, black on gold or black on white. Would make ideal wall plaques. price £2.00.

BALL-POINT PENS:

Retractable ball-point pens marked Stroudwater Canal Society. 5p or 3 for 10p.

TOILET KEYS:

British Waterways Board toilet keys for use on waterways sanitary stations. All boat users will require these - Only on sale to current licence holders. (Name of boat and licence number with order) price 25p.

TIDE TABLES:

Bristol Channel Tide Tables price 22p.

All orders to:-

Graham Pegler, Bourne Nurseries, Brimscombe, Stroud, Glos. Tel: Brimscombe 2397.

EVENTS

- April 29th - COACH TRIP - Crofton Pumps
(in steam) on the Kennet & Avon
Canal. Still some seats left.
Seats 50p from Social Secretary.
- May 1st - NOGGIN AND NATTER - SHIP INN,
June 5th Brimscombe, Stroud. 8.00 pm.
July 3rd (Ideal chance for members to
meet committee members.)
- May 6th - SPONSORED WALK - please give
your support by WALKING or sponsor
a child - details in Walk booklet.
- May 12th - MEMBERS EVENING - Talk by
F. Rowbottom on The River Severn.
(Author of the book The Severn Bore)
SUBSCRIPTION ROOMS, Stroud 8.00pm.
- June 23 - 24th - BRISTOL WATER FESTIVAL - Floating
Harbour, Bristol. Society's stand
will be on show. BOAT CONVOY -
details for boats wishing to leave
Sharpness for the Festival from:-
R.Oakley, Half Acre, Bishop Sutton,
Bristol. - 5p in stamps for costs.
- June 30th - MEMBERS EVENING - Talk by Sir
Hugh Stockwell, chairman of the
Kennet & Avon Trust. Photographs
displayed from Sponsored Walk
photographic competition. 7.30pm.
SUBSCRIPTION ROOMS, Stroud.
- July 21st - STROUD SHOW - Society Stand -
Fund Raising BALLOON RACE.
See page 11

THANKS

ORCHARD & PEER - Stroud

Loan of scaffold planks.

MIKE CARWITHEN CAMERAS - Stroud

Loan of projector and screen.

MR D.H. PARROTT - Chalford Hill.

Donation of pulley blocks.

MERRYLEES & PUGH - Gloucester.

Donation of spade to one of our senior members.

To the very many people that have sent donations to the Society. - THANKS.

Published by Stroudwater Canal Society.

Printed by O & I Instant Print, Northgate St, Glos.