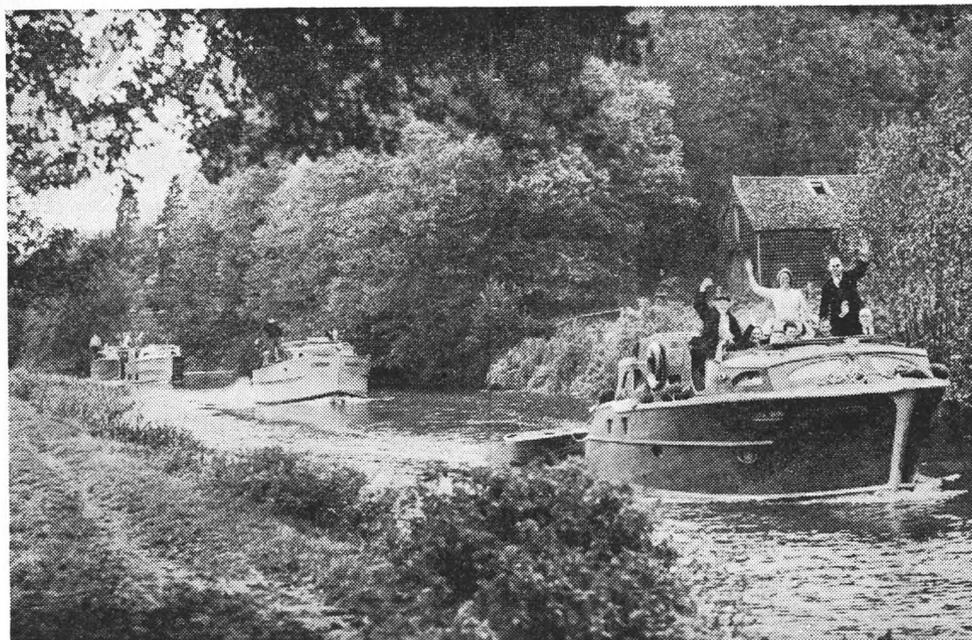


THE WINDLASS

Vol. 1 No. 2. DECEMBER 1956



"LEE & STORT CRUISE, Oct., 1956." Photo by courtesy of The Hertfordshire Mercury.

"THE WINDLASS" is the bi-monthly journal of
THE LONDON and HOME COUNTIES BRANCH of
The Inland Waterways Association.

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The Chairman's Column

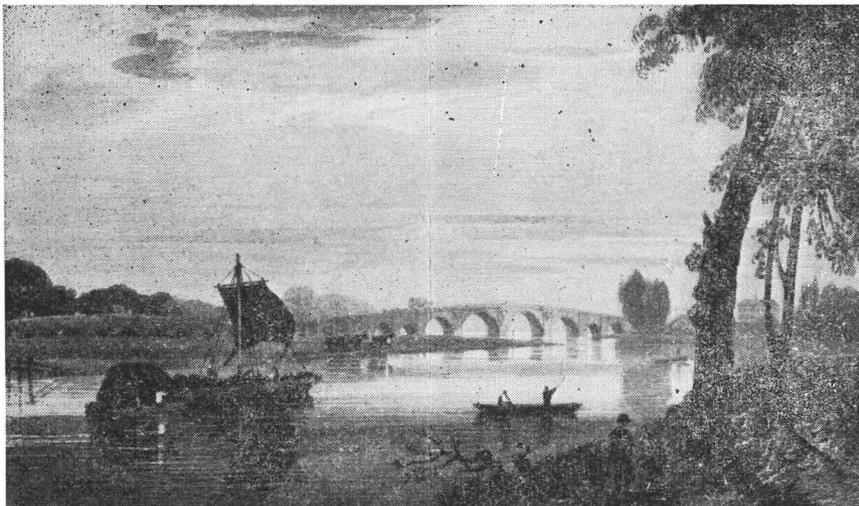
Since publication of the first issue of "The Windlass," the Branch has held its first three functions and I think we can safely say that all three proved to be highly successful.

"Jason" and "Hasty" were positively crammed with enthusiastic members for the trip from Rickmansworth to Paddington on Sunday, 7th October and in fact, many members who had left application rather late were unable to get tickets. The sun shone and everyone was happy. A pleasant surprise as the Committee had wondered if members would consider the date a little late for a day cruise.

The film show at the "Princess Louise" on 18th October also resulted in a full house and was a great success. It will doubtless be the first of many.

"Operation Lee & Stort" which took place from the 21st to the 28th October consisted of a cruise up those rivers by a group of 21 members in five of the "Maids." We were again extremely lucky with the weather and our most optimistic expectations were realised by the keen co-operative attitude of the local authorities at Hertford, Bishop's Stortford and Harlow. As a result of this cruise it is hoped to form a Lee & Stort Development Committee at the Public Meeting which we plan to hold at Bishop's Stortford

Operation "Lee & Stort" was very materially facilitated by the very efficient co-operation afforded by British Waterways and I should like to express the Branch's appreciation of this assistance.



The Bridge, Walton-on-Thames, 1819

I am rendering a report on the cruise to Sir Reginald Kerr and I hope that this co-operation will be continued and action be taken concerning the recommendations which we make.

All three of these events are reported in greater detail in this issue.

As will be seen from the Programme of Future Events, we plan to have a very busy year in 1957 and the Committee is united in being determined that no member will be able to say that it is lethargic and unenergetic!

May I thank all members for the most excellent support we have received so far, and may I ask them to continue that support by buying tickets for themselves and their friends for the Carnival Dance which we are holding at the Porchester Hall on *29th November*. The venue is a magnificent ballroom, we shall have a good band and we want to sell 500 tickets. Please do your best. Details of the Dance have already been sent out to Members and are also given separately in this issue.

Rivers Lee and Stort

Thames Ditton was the scene of the start of a most important cruise on 21st October. Five "Maids" left at 1.30 p.m. after a reporter from the "News Chronicle" had interviewed some members of the party and had photographed the boats passing under Kingston Bridge. We were setting out to prove that it was possible to navigate as far as Hertford on the Lee and Stortford on the Stort. At Brentford a slight delay occurred while we waited for the tide to drop sufficiently for us to pass into the Grand Union Canal. At Bulls Bridge which we reached well after dark we moored by British Waterways Depot where the skyline was filled with wierd silhouettes of cranes. Monday morning saw us on the Paddington Arm on our way to Paddington Basin, through the 272 yards of Maida Hill Tunnel fetching up at Tottenham where great activity went on throughout the night in an effort to refloat a sunken barge, which was lying near the entrance to the bridge. This hazard was successfully negotiated the following morning and the boats went on to Hertford on the Lee. The water level had to be lowered at Ware Bridge to enable us to get under and some bad weed was encountered. This, combined with shallow water did not however, deter us and Hertford was reached on Tuesday evening.

On Wednesday the Lady Mayor of Hertford and two Council Members joined us for a trip back to Ware Bridge. They were very impressed with our efforts and promised support in future. A desire for a public meeting at Hertford was expressed. "Motor Boat and Yachting" and the Local Newspaper representatives were present at this juncture.

Back down the Lee to Hoddesdon and then up the Stort with a Contractors Bridge to be raised and a large mud bank to be avoided (some of us didn't). Wednesday afternoon was wet and one lock contained several large logs which were removed with the indifferent lock-keeper looking on. He told us we should never get to Stortford. This, of course, only fired our enthusiasm and we spent the night at Spellbrook where the lock-keeper was most helpful and pleasant. Thursday morning two boats only proceeded as far as possible up the Stort. The last bit proved to be inaccessible as there were several large rocks under one of the bridges. This was a great disappointment to all of us but the condition had been much better than had been anticipated and the people of Stortford came to us. The Chairman of the Angling Society greeted us and said how pleased he was to see us there. "Yachts and Yachting" had sent a reporter to interview us too.

The Chairman, Vice Chairman and Clerk of Bishop's Stortford Council joined us on Friday morning and again expressed great interest in us, the Association and our efforts and plans for the future. The Vice-Chairman of Harlow Council arrived after lunch. He was most interested in the suggestion that a Lee and Stort Development Committee be formed with representatives from Hertford, Harlow and Bishops Stortford serving on same. Friday night saw us at Broxbourne, a delightful spot.

On Saturday we had a short stop at Waltham Abbey and then on to Old Ford Junction where we spent the night with instructions from the Lock-keeper to watch the rising tide early next morning. The only means of reaching civilisation from this point was by way of an iron ladder and a narrow footbridge.

Sunday morning and on our way again down to Limehouse where we said goodbye to the Lee and entered the Thames in a thick mist. The river was strangely quiet and there were few onlookers on Tower, London and Westminster Bridges. At the last lock on the Thames one of our party decided to forsake his boat and cling to a bollard! His sympathetic shipmates took photographs of him but did eventually rescue him.

4.30 p.m. saw us back at Thames Ditton after a most successful trip of approximately 143 miles. We had expected bad conditions but apart from low water in some places on the Lee and some troublesome weed, conditions were good. Even the weather was kind to us and I think everyone who took part enjoyed the cruise. It certainly received plenty of publicity and no doubt several newspapers have had to procure new cameras after all the photographs that were taken!

The Rivers Lee and Stort are delightful Rivers and more people should make their acquaintance in order to stimulate the interest shown by the local people in this pioneer cruise.

EILEEN D. LOVERIDGE.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER 29th (Thursday). Carnival dance at the Porchester Hall, Queensway, London, W.2. Tickets 12/6, non-members 15/-. If you have mislaid the application form already sent to you please apply for tickets to Mrs. Talbot, Canal Toll Office, Delamere Terrace, W.2., without delay. (Phone: Sunbury-on-Thames 3371).
PLEASE NOTE THIS EVENT IS IN PLACE OF THE CHRISTMAS PARTY.

JANUARY 4th (Friday). Annual dinner at The National Boat Show. 7.30 p.m. Empire Restaurant. There will be several distinguished guests and eloquent speakers. Tickets 32/6 members, 37/6 non-members. Seating is severely limited so please make early application to Mrs. Talbot.

JANUARY 20th (Sunday). Treasure Hunt by motor car. This is based entirely on waterways.
Cancelled due to Petrol ration.

BISHOPS STORTFORD public meeting, this has had to be postponed and it is hoped that details will be available in time for "Stop press news."

From THE WATERWAY AUTHORITIES:—

BRITISH TRANSPORT WATERWAYS (S.E. Division).

"Section from Watford Bottom Lock to Leicester is now open to pleasure traffic."

"Locking up times, as from October 29th the following flights of locks will be open from 6 a.m.—8 p.m. weekdays and 6 a.m.—6 p.m. Sundays: Marsworth, Stoke Bruerne, Buckby, Braunston, Hatton, Hillmorton, Knowle, Saltley, Cudworth, Atherstone."

THAMES CONSERVANCY. Clifton lock will be closed January 7th to 20th inclusive. Days Lock will be closed January 28th to February 10th, inclusive and Osney Lock from December 10th to 23rd (1956) inclusive.



THE STOUR AT BURES.

Illustration by courtesy of East Anglian Magazine

Waterways of the Home Counties

2. The River Stour Navigation

On the borders of Essex and Suffolk, amidst scenery immortalised by Gainsborough and Constable lies the beautiful River Stour rising where the counties of Essex, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire meet and threading its way through the lovely Dedham vale to the estuary at Harwich where it flows into the North Sea. The paintings and sketches of John Constable, the son of a local mill-owner, will need no introduction to the reader and the Dedham Vale where he obtained much of his inspiration is known as Constable's country to this day.

The Stour was made navigable from Sudbury for a distance of twenty-six miles to Mistley, where quays were built for the transshipment of goods between the barges using the navigation and the coastal shipping. At that time Sudbury was an isolated township served only by wagons and pack beasts using the indifferent roads and tracks of the period. The provision of a direct link with the sea made possible the cheap and convenient transport of goods to and from the many mills which had been built along the river, and which were using the power of the water wheel to drive their machinery.

The first act of Parliament authorising the construction of works to make the river navigable was passed in 1705 naming approximately 100 Commissioners and also appointing certain persons as undertakers. A provision of the Act prohibited the use of the navigation by pleasure traffic as it was considered the water supply to the mills would be jeopardised if the locks were operated for other than commercial craft. In 1781 another Act was passed, this was made necessary because most of the original Commissioners had died without the power to appoint their successors.

The navigation works were of an extremely crude type there being thirteen locks between Sudbury and Branham and a further thirteen staunches which were a very primitive type of flash-lock. The locks were wholly constructed of timber and the gates themselves were swung like farm gates on posts joined together by the sill at the bottom and by a heavy beam called a "galley beam" at the top, necessary to prevent the posts and gates falling inwards. The floors of the locks chambers were made of wood and the earth banks were retained by barks of timber. The staunches were built into the stream with posts and galley beams similar to the locks, but swinging on one post was a horizontal beam spanning the width of the staunch. When a boat wished to pass vertical boards were placed against the beam and the bottom sill thus forming a weir enabling the height of the stream above the staunch to be raised approximately 5ft. The boards were then rapidly withdrawn, the beam swung back and the boat was carried by the flash over the shallows below. The numerous shoals and shallow reaches of the river made navigation extremely tricky, and the boats worked in pairs to obtain full advantage of the head of water built up at the staunches. All the mills on the river were provided with cuts where barges could lay against the wharves to load and unload their goods, and at Sudbury a basin was dug with considerable wharfage and warehouse facilities.

Barges used on the Stour were built in a basin at Flatford and a picture painted by Constable showing a boat in construction with Flatford Lock in the background can be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum today. The barges were built wholly of wood and were 27ft long with a beam of 9ft and could carry a load of 26 tons. A small cabin was provided aft with accommodation for the crew of the boat. Horses were used for towing two barges at a time between Sudbury and Branham Locks and from here the boats were floated downstream by the tide to the quays at Mistley. An interesting feature of the Navigation was that where the towpath changed sides the horses were trained to jump on to the barge, the boat was steered to the other bank and the beast would jump back on to the land to continue its haul.

The Navigation proved to be extremely prosperous and by 1824 the Commissioners were paying a dividend of £14 per share. Cargoes of coal, wheat, stone and timber were carried upstream to Sudbury and the mills, whilst loads of flour, malt, bricks and slates were conveyed on the return journey to the coastal shipping at Mistley. Progress was painfully slow however, and it took a pair of boats three days to work to Sudbury although the downstream run was a little quicker.

In February of 1835 a surveyor was instructed to carry out an inspection of the Navigation bearing in mind that railway tracks were to be laid through Colchester to Great Yarmouth and Norwich. His report criticised the Proprietors of the Navigation Company for leasing the river to a private company who had neglected maintenance with the result that boats were finding it increasingly difficult to make the passage and income from tolls was falling. As a result of this report and the cancellation of the lease, considerable work was put in hand to improve the river to counteract the greatly feared railway competition. All the crude staunches were abolished, six new locks were constructed and considerable dredging was carried out whilst tolls were cut on many cargoes. To finance these improvements further shares were offered, and by 1840 the Navigation was again flourishing with income from tolls at its highest figure and a yearly dividend of £20 per share being paid. At this time thought was given to extending the Navigation to Clare, but presumably the cost of the project was prohibitive to the proprietors as nothing came of the scheme.

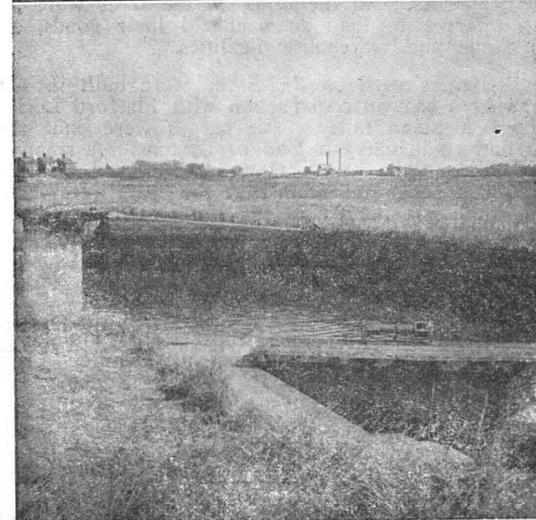
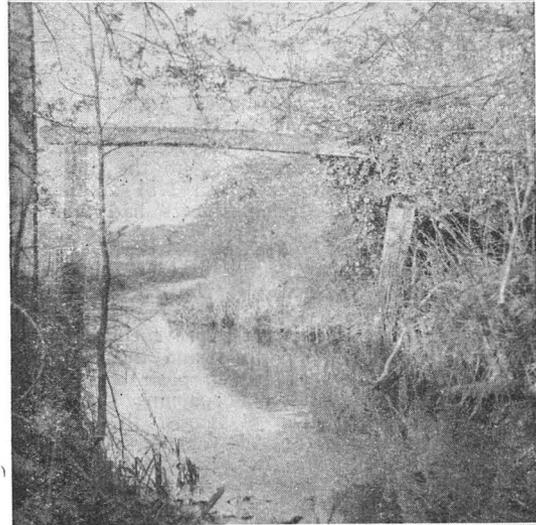
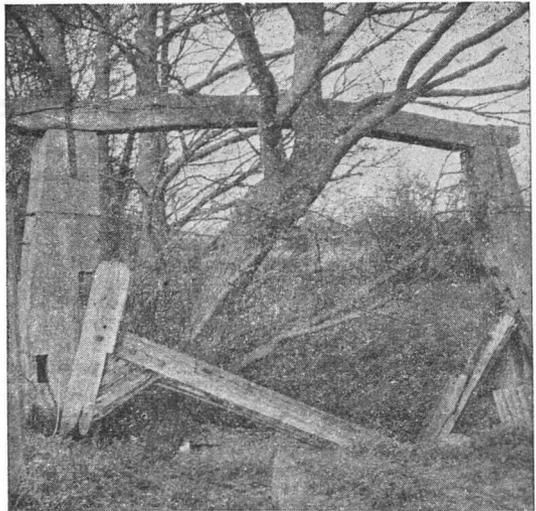
In 1845 the Railway Company building the new Stour Valley Line offered to buy the Navigation and the Proprietors agreed to offer the shares at £1,000 per share. This was rejected by the Railway Company and there then began a long and bitter struggle with the new form of transport. Tolls were again reduced but although this immediately yielded a larger tonnage carried, income was cut by more than a third. A further means of competing with the Railway proved a costly failure when in 1864, after 4 years discussion, a steam barge was introduced. This craft operated for a further nine years and in 1873 was sold at considerable loss and replaced with a self-acting crane dredger.

In the years that followed traffic steadily decreased although in 1888 hope was raised when a private individual in the City offered to buy the Navigation, when there was a vague talk of linking the Stour with the Rivers Ouse and Cam. Negotiations however fell through and four years later with income tolls at a very low figure the Proprietors decided to apply to the Board of Trade for a warrant of Abandonment under the Railway and Canal Traffic Act of 1888. The Board of Trade refused to grant such a warrant however as the Navigation had not been derelict for three years.

The remains of some of the Stour Locks.

Opposite: Constable's "View of the Stour."

Illustrations by courtesy of East Anglian Magazine.



Income from tolls continued to fall at an alarming rate, aggravated at this stage by the closing of the larger mill at Nayland. The Company also had to contribute towards the upkeep of bridges now taken over by the newly formed County Councils who insisted upon higher standards of bridge maintenance. The income to keep the Navigation in good working order was thus not available from the carriage of goods and the Company was forced to sell its lands and property to pay off overdrafts. In spite of this a mortgage was raised soon after the turn of the century to pay for the construction of two new locks, but even then a further sum had to be borrowed to complete the work. The plight of the Company was now such that a further application for a warrant of abandonment was made to the Board of Trade, but once again this was refused. All was not lost however, as the Board told the Proprietors that a grant could be obtained upon Application to the Development Commissioners of the Board if the Company transferred its powers, duties, rights and obligations to a non-profit making body which had the support of the local population.

The public support was not however immediately forthcoming in spite of considerable efforts by the Navigation Company, and in 1913 it was decided to wind up the Company. This step appears to have awakened public opinion as the liquidation reported an influential movement in favour of the undertaking being transferred to a public body and a year later the Company agreed to end the voluntary liquidation and vest all its powers, in Trustees to be appointed by a representative body of riparian owners and influential persons in the district. Meanwhile traffic had dwindled to almost nothing and in 1916 the last barge made the journey to Sudbury with income in tolls for that year amounting to a mere £30.

The name of the Company was changed to the River Stour Navigation (Trust) Co. Ltd., and this body supervised the running of the Navigation for a further year when there is a report of an agreement reached between the newly formed River Stour (Essex & Suffolk) Drainage Board for the transfer of the whole undertaking to the Board. Soon after this and in spite of the river being a Statutory Navigation the locks in the upper reaches were replaced by fixed weirs and staunches. The position of the Trustee Company now becomes rather obscure as in 1928 the Minister of Agriculture decreed that the Undertakers appointed in the original Acts of 1705 and 1781 had no power to hand over their obligations to a Trust Company and it appears therefore that the Trustees had no legal standing. By now traffic had ceased on the river completely the last horse drawn barge working is Dedham Mill in that year.

Nevertheless the Trust Company entered into an agreement with the South Essex Waterworks Company whereby the latter rebuilt the four locks at Stratford St. Mary, Dedham, Flatford and Brantham, and these proved to be a considerable improvement on the old structures. With concrete chambers, stout wooden gates, sheet iron paddles and gang-planks across the tops of the gates they made an interesting contrast to the old wooden structures. After this the Trustees Company disappeared, being finally struck off the Roll in 1935. There is no record of any craft using the new locks until 1938 when a motorised sailing dinghy ventured to Stratford St. Mary. Today the river above Stratford presents a sorry sight, with the old wooden locks in ruins and in some cases disappeared altogether, horseshoe weirs having been erected on their sites. The basin at Sudbury stands neglected and overgrown with weeds and many of the once prosperous Mills have been demolished. Of the former barge building basin at Flatford only an overgrown backwater remains but to this day the sternpost and ribs of an old boat can be identified amongst the undergrowth.



The formation of the Inland Waterways Association reawakened interest in the Navigation and there is now encouraging evidence of local interest to put the four rebuilt locks in working order so that navigation for pleasure craft at least can be restored to Langham. Offers to do this have been made by private individuals as the River Board and the Waterworks Company both disclaim responsibility for the upkeep of the locks. It is estimated that for approximately £100 per lock the new locks could be put in working order and unless this work is started soon the gates, already leaking badly, will collapse altogether.

A further danger can be seen below Flatford where the dead trees and shrubs are tragic evidence of the toll taken by salt water sweeping in and out of Brantham Locks at high tides. The height of fresh water already depleted by the waterworks at Langham and Stratford is not sufficient to hold back the sea and the river at Flatford is now semi-tidal with all its painful consequences.

That the popularity of the Dedham Vale continues unabated is shown by the tremendous tourist traffic attracted to Dedham and Flatford and the flourishing boat hiring businesses conducted there. These boatyards have co-operated with the River Board in keeping the river clear of weeds and obstructions and have removed several fallen trees from the water.

With the inauguration of the London and Home Counties Branch of the I.W.A. it is hoped that a new and enthusiastic approach to the problems of restoring through navigation can be made and to acquaint themselves with the river and its characteristics the Committee recently visited the district and are now considering the best way to tackle the matter. The support of everyone interested in the Dedham Vale is required to restore the river to its former glory, and open up the charm of Constable's Country to the immense pleasure boating fraternity that is a feature of the rivers and estuaries of the East Coast.

P. SCRUTTON.

From the Editor's Cabin

A fellow member showed me a copy of an excellent little publication the other day: it is entitled "Leisure on the Medway," unfortunately this was a private edition and it appears that it will be some while before it is generally available. Whilst on the subject of publications I would mention that I have received a letter from the Editor of "Middlesex Quarterly" informing me that The Middlesex Touring Club are organising a canal trip from Brentford to Harefield next spring; he suggests that we might arrange reciprocal publicity.

Cookham Lock presents a fine sight to those interested in civil engineering, on the 3rd of November a pair of massive and magnificent lock gates arrived by water from the Thames Conservancy's depot at Sunbury. I have heard that work is already a week ahead of schedule,—most encouraging news for these days.

Down at Shepperton-on-Thames, Messrs. Kenneth M. Gibbs and Co. Ltd., have recently built a specially designed canal cruiser with a length of 18ft 9ins and a beam of 6ft 10ins. She is of well proved Gibbs plywood construction and is powered by a pair of 7½ h.p. Johnson outboard motors with remote controls, the equipment is of a comprehensive nature and the complete craft only weighs 8cwt. A Pratt trailer was supplied with the craft. However, when the owner took delivery he navigated his boat under her own power from Shepperton to North Wales.

Up at Benson-on-Thames some interesting remains have been found of what may well have been an early "Flash" lock, but perhaps more details of this in another issue.

As Christmas is drawing near I would like to remind readers of a most deserving charity—The Canal Boatmen's Institute, Brentford. Mr. Chapman, the missioner, organizes Christmas parties and festivities for the boater's children and to accomplish his task he has to rely on donations, as well as gifts of toys and fruit, from his voluntary helpers. Please help by sending something to him at The Butts, Brentford.

Members of the committee of this branch made a very enjoyable and most successful visit to the River Stour last September with the idea of bringing into being a protection or development committee to seek the opening up of the river. The East Anglian Daily Times for October 1st, gave a very full report of our views.

I would mention that some of Constable's views of the Stour are on view in the Bethnal Green Museum until December.

It is hoped to make the next issue of The Windlass a special boat show number, if funds allow there will be a further increase in pages. Distribution will, if possible, be brought forward.

PETER H. CHAPLIN.

Hon. Secretary's Notes

Boat Trip from Rickmansworth.

Over 100 people took part in the first Branch Meeting on 7th October—a trip on “Jason” and “Hasty” from Rickmansworth to Paddington. Mr. Harvey of the “Daily Telegraph” was with us and was greatly impressed. Mr. John James, the owner of the two boats, gave us some information on the points which were passed and incidentally steered most of the latter part of the journey without a head lamp his dynamo being out of order. Tea was taken at Cowley and we arrived back at Paddington at about 9.0 p.m. A most successful first Branch Meeting. Several applications had to be returned and it would appear that next time we must cater for a much larger number of members.

Film Show

Thursday the 18th October saw the second Branch Meeting. A Film Show was held at the “Princess Louise” in High Holborn and every seat was taken. Mr. Lee's film including shots of the Coronation was shown, together with Mr. Slack's “Northern Waterways” and “River Highway” by the Bedford Film Society.

Future Events. Members are advised to book early for all future events when announced as the demand is high and unfortunately some of our 900 odd members have to be disappointed. Suggestions are welcomed for future Branch Meetings. Let us know what you want and we will do our best to see that you get it.

EILEEN D. LOVERIDGE.

STOP PRESS

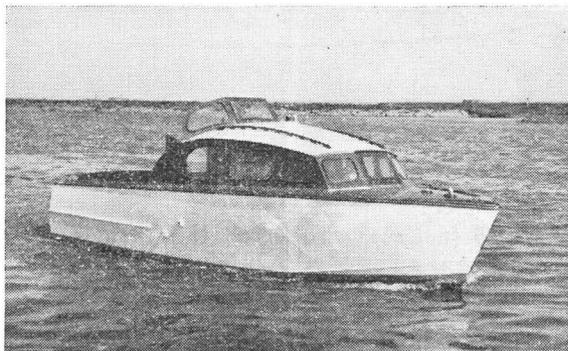
A Public Meeting will be held at the Water Lane Institute, BISHOPS STORTFORD, on January 18th, at 8 p.m. Chairman: Capt. L. R. Munk, A.I.N.A. It is hoped that speakers will include Mr. Eastal (Harlow Council), Mr. Hurst-Greaves (Chairman Bishops Stortford Council), Mr. Robert Aickman (Founder and Vice-President I.W.A.), Mr. L. Morton (Managing Director, Willow Wren Carrying Co. Ltd.), on commercial use of the waterways; Capt. L. R. Munk (Man. Director Maid Line Crisiers Ltd.), on pleasure boating.

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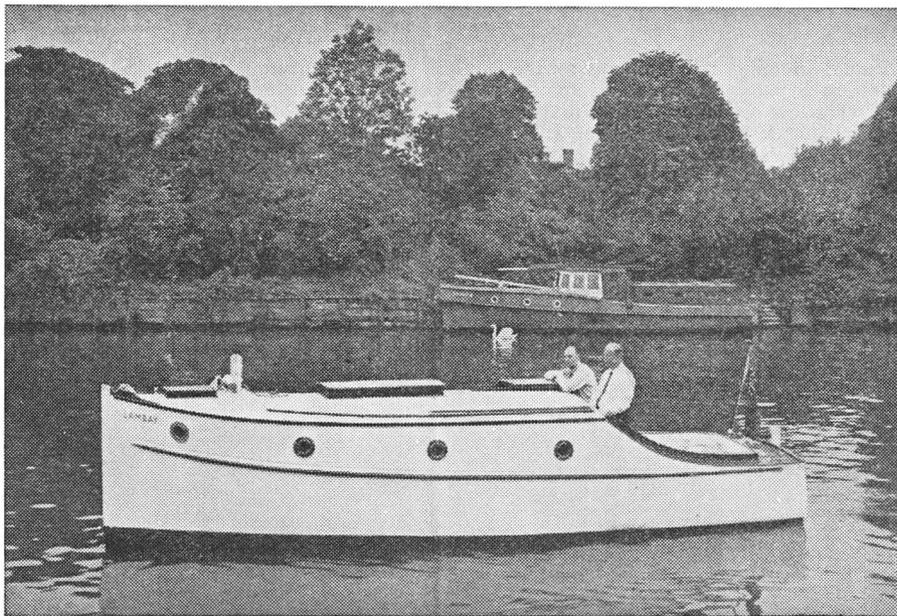


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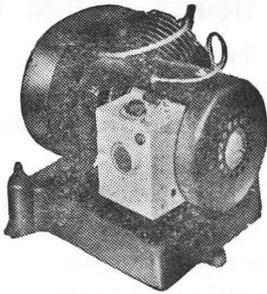
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