

THE WINDLASS

No. 34 FEBRUARY, 1963



Lock at the entrance to the River Stort

(Photo by S. J. Tims)

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

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

THE highly successful Rally of Boats held by the Branch at Woking last Easter led to the idea that a similar event should be organised for Easter, 1963. Several sites in the Home Counties area were suggested, and from these Bishop's Stortford was chosen. Several reasons were responsible for the choice, and combine to make this particular Rally unique (though perhaps all the Rallies, whether Branch or National could lay equal claim to uniqueness, could a more surprising display than that at Woking be easily imagined?).

Firstly, the Stort navigation itself, at least the main line, is not in any particular danger at present (we fear for the future); but the published County Plan for Bishop's Stortford does reveal that the remainder of the canal arm is to be filled in and turned into a car park. We are not unused to such suggestions. Another feature of the plan is that the river itself is to be filled in, in the town, an alternative channel being provided which will carry the water past the Castle. From the head of the navigation (the Causeway Bridge), no alteration of the navigation is envisaged, but the Planning Authority has suggested that the tow-path be turned into a riverside walk and treated as one of the amenities of the town. This exceedingly enlightened attitude prompted the Branch to suggest to the U.D.C. that when the new river channel is constructed, consideration be given to making it navigable. This would mean rebuilding the Causeway Bridge, which is to be carried out in any event; but at navigation height. Such a change in the plans would add but little to their cost, for the river channel must be of sufficient width and depth to accommodate craft if the needs of flood prevention are to be served; but it

would add significantly to the amenities of the town by having the castle and its grounds next to a river navigable by sizeable craft. The aquatic events which could result from this should be impressive—almost on the lines envisaged by Nash when his scheme for the Regents Canal was published. I believe his words were that his canal "would provide a Grand and Noble Spectacle for the Metropolis."

In addition the Branch suggested (via a most elegant plan and drawing prepared by Dr. Glaister) that by retaining even only a part of the canal arm, safe and convenient moorings would be available for all craft making the trip to Bishop's Stortford.

Our suggestions were courteously received, both by the County Planning Officer and the Urban District Council, and careful consideration is being given to them. However, to assist that consideration, we felt a Rally of Boats would really demonstrate that a navigation is an agreeable and desirable amenity: hence the current event.

But as we were putting the Rally on for the town, and many townspeople would visit the scene, we felt that not only the navigation should benefit from the assembly of interested and, we hope, good humoured people: so we decided that a charity should be invited to participate by having fund-raising activities at the Rally scene. In Bishop's Stortford, the obvious choice is that of the Cancer Campaign. Well established, vigorously run, and highly successful in its activities, the Campaign Committee has already raised a large sum of money for their cause, and they have most enthusiastically joined in with the Branch. They will be responsible for all the stalls and side-shows (but we are co-operating to give most of

those sideshows a suitably nautical flavour), and several other aspects of the Rally. We of the Branch felt particularly pleased that, at the first meeting in Bishop's Stortford, the Chairman of the U.D.C. appeared, to assist in the preliminary discussions. We feel that with such a start, we

cannot go wrong.

In addition, much assistance is being given by the Lee and Stort Development Committee, and we feel that the whole event is being greeted with pleasure. British Waterways have offered to do dredging at the Rally site. We are truly grateful.

COMING EVENTS RECENT ACTIVITIES

FEBRUARY 28th. Winter Meeting at A.E.I. House, Grosvenor Place, S.W.1. Lord Stonham, O.B.E., will speak on "Civilised Transport Policy." 7 for 7.30 p.m. Refreshments available. Lord Stonham hopes for an audience of at least 100.

MARCH 28th, 1963. At London Bridge House, 7 for 7.30 p.m. Notice to Members is hereby given, that the seventh Annual General Meeting, of the London & Home Counties Branch of the I.W.A., Ltd., will be convened on March 28th, 1963, at the London Bridge House. The Branch Committee for the following year, to consist of 12 Members plus 3 or 4 ex-officio Members. Mr. H. Burgess, Mr. J. Street, and the Branch Treasurer, Dr. R. Saunders, are due to retire. A list of names of Members offering themselves for election to the Committee, will be available from the Hon. Secretary. Any Member wishing to be elected to the Branch Committee, should apply in writing to the Hon. Secretary, before March 14th, this application being duly seconded. It is hoped that after the Meeting films and slides will be shown to Members. Any Motions to be put to the Meeting should be addressed to the Hon. Sec. before March 14th, 1963.

APRIL 13-15th. Easter Weekend Branch Rally, at Bishop's Stortford.

APRIL 26th (Friday). Branch Annual Dinner. This will be held at the Casino Hotel, Taggs Island, Hampton, 7.30 for 8 p.m. Tickets, price 25/- for members and 27/6d. for non-members, are available from the Branch Social Secretary, James Street, 52 Moreton Street, S.W.1. Please apply early as accommodation is limited, sending a stamped addressed envelope. Cheques should be made payable to I.W.A. Ltd., London & Home Counties Branch. The nearest station to Tagg's Island is Hampton Wick (Southern Railway) about ten minutes' walk away. There is ample parking space for cars. It is hoped that some members will come by water. It may be possible to arrange an alternative on the menu for those who do not wish to eat meat on a Friday. Please state on your application if you would like this if it can be arranged.

RETIREMENT OF DR. R. J. SAUNDERS

The Branch suffered one of its severest blows just before Christmas when our Hon. Treasurer, Dr. R. J. Saunders, announced his imminent retirement from the Committee.

Dr. Saunders is one of the four remaining founder members of the Committee and the Branch owes a very great deal to his enthusiasm and to his prudent management of the Branch's finances over the last seven years.

When the Branch was first formed in June, 1956, we were in dire financial straits despite a temporary loan from H.Q. It was Dr. Saunders in his usual trusting manner who subsidised the early printing of *The Windlass* from his own pocket and continued to do so until receipts from our first Draw in June, 1957, transformed our account from debit to credit. During the intervening years he has built up a Branch record of members which he has kindly offered to continue to maintain.

In all the activities of the Branch Dr. Saunders has been most active. He has supported most of our outings and has amassed a very impressive collection of coloured slides depicting our waterways and activities upon them. He has shown these slides on many occasions to audiences all over the Home Counties and is widely sought after as a most able and entertaining exponent of I.W.A. aims.

Our sole consolation is that Dr. Saunders will not be lost to the Branch as his interest remains undiminished and we hope to continue enjoying his presence at many of our functions.

Thank you again Dr. Saunders for all you have done, and may both you and Mrs. Saunders enjoy many years of good health and lively companionship.

BRIAN AMBROSE

(Mrs. G. Spratt was co-opted as Dr. Saunders' successor.)

THE LAST OUTING

THE voyage from Little Venice to the Surrey Docks complied with what Major Grundy terms "the best traditions of the I.W.A."—and

was further embellished by the actual presence of this distinguished Council Member, who was opportunely on leave from Berlin.

The two big events were the stop for refreshments at Broadway Market, Haggerstone; and the trip down the Thames.

To voyagers, such as us, from the West, the landfall at Haggerstone was like a landfall at Palermo. The peace of the waters was transformed on the instant into a rowdy nineteenth-century street, congested from end to end with stalls, barrows, and population; tumultuous with the idiom of the music hall and the accents of all Europe; gay with life and democracy: just the kind of thing that the new Plan for Greater London aims at ending. Members were detected buying jellied eels, raffia, and large round pottery objects. Major Grundy was observed eating many stout sandwiches packed with strange meats. The whole experience was an excellent example of *one* reason why one joins the Association: one never knows what is going to happen next.

Jason is believed to be the first narrow boat converted for passengers, to essay the tidal Thames. (Until yesterday, working narrow boats operated constantly to Woolwich, and on occasion to Sheerness.) As when Mr. Peter Scott's *Beatrice* ascended the tidal Mersey, the transit passed off without mishap or even serious stress. Narrow boats are tougher than the antiquarians allege. All the same, the day was decisively Mr. James's: he performed prodigies of navigation, especially when coming alongside a moored barge in a considerable swell and a considerable breeze, and when avoiding other craft, inconveniently placed, to enter the Greenland Lock in a single beautiful arc; he equally set an example of calm to all fussy officialdom. We had a decorative escort of River Police from our entry on to the river at Regent's Canal Dock, and a wait (for the Greenland Lock to be ready for us) of half an hour or more attached to the aforesaid barge, and ascending and descending smartly in a choppy sea. Despite the excesses of the Broadway Market, no one appeared indisposed.

The weather throughout was far better than during most of this year's summer, with enchanting effects of light and air on both the canal and the tideway. It was a great day, and significantly enlarged the potential of the converted narrow boat. In fact, it was a day in the best traditions of the I.W.A.

THE FIRST WINTER MEETING

IT has now become customary for Capt. Munk to open our Winter Programme with an account of a cruise that he and his friends have undertaken earlier in the year. These talks, illustrated with many colour slides, have taken us around the major parts of our river and canal system. We

have come to expect the familiar sight of a Maid Line cruiser cruising upon some remote and often very unfamiliar waterway. This year proved no exception and the 97 people who were crammed into the room at the Bridge House Hotel, London Bridge, on November 20th, were once again taken on a voyage full of fascination and interest.

In 1962 Capt. Munk cruised on two waterways rather further afield—the River Marne in Northern France, and the River Shannon in Eire. Hire cruising in France is only just beginning and in the whole of the cruise on the Marne only two other pleasure craft were seen. A steady stream of large barges, the beautiful scenery and attractive hostelries made up for this lack. M. Zivy, who operates this cruiser fleet, apparently has a love of English things. His hire cruiser base is complete with a red G.P.O. telephone box and a London taxi!

The River Shannon is navigable for over 120 miles, from Lough Allen in the north to Limerick in the south. For the major part of this distance the river falls only 40 feet and is thus an ideal pleasure cruising river, being placid and slow running for most of its course. Nevertheless the navigation of the two large loughs—Ree and Derg—does call for some skill in picking out the navigation channel, and we were told of a Grand Canal boat that had sunk in one of the squally seas that can quickly blow up. Capt. Munk did not sink, but a failure of the steering gear at one point did add to the interest. Marvellous scenery, some very attractive crew members and a clear and informed commentary made this a most worthwhile evening for our large audience.

Our very grateful thanks must go to Capt. Munk and his projectionist for a delightful evening. We all look forward to his next cruise in 1963.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

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THE INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW

1963

THE overall impression of the 1963 International Boat Show was that the "rubbish" was on the way OUT. And, quite frankly, about time too! This opinion seemed to be shared by the majority of people to whom I spoke. Gone were the rough-hewn scows sheltering under the description "traditionally built"; absent were the flimsy plywood unintentionally collapsible runabouts and day cruisers; scarcely evident were the experimental and sometimes untried utensil shaped products of the plastics industry. The Ship and Boat Builders National Federation, under whose aegis the show is run, have drawn up a list of minimum requirements with which all boats exhibited must comply, and it is to be hoped that the general standard of the show will now improve yearly.

The central feature this year was a group of Tahitian huts which housed several exhibits not usually associated with the tropics. However, there were a few genuine South Sea "dark and dusky maidens" in evidence which lent a certain authenticity to the scene. The huts were flanked on either side by a lagoon on which, of course, there were boats—almost too many boats, in fact, as it was difficult to get a clear view of some of them. Among those afloat was "Tramontana", winner of the 1962 Power boat race. Resplendent in turquoise and white, she is reputed to have been the biggest, most powerful and most expensive in the race. Nestling in one corner was the famous "Wanderer 3" in which Eric and Susan Hiscock made their three-year journey round the world, the film of which was recently shown on TV. With a length of only 30 ft. she was dwarfed by some of the other sailing cruisers present, but despite the fact that she had a "used" look about her (as is to be expected), it says much for her construction and maintenance that she could still put a few of the new boats to shame. Looking at "Wanderer 3" led one to wonder what adventurous voyages would be undertaken in the next 12 months by some of the other sea going boats on display.

A genuine Dutch boat is always interesting because of its rather unusual and unorthodox shape. Unfortunately one could not examine the 28 ft. Tholense Schouw closely as it was moored outside "Tradewind," a 34 ft. hire cruiser from the Norfolk Broads. The unusual feature of this boat is that she is built of "Seacrete"—a newly developed mixture of concrete and other materials. Available reports would suggest that this new amalgam is proving satisfactory, though

whether any of these boats have yet been involved in a collision with the business end of a Broads sailing boat has not been stated. I never visualised the day when a boat-builder would need to carry half a yard of sharp sand in his repair kit! Incidentally, Windboats Ltd., whose brain-child this is, also had on show their "Mini-wind"—a 20 ft. centre wheelhouse four-berth cruiser in fibre glass, with a beam of 7 ft. She is powered by a Ford 105E driving through a Sutton transom unit—very useful on the shallower or weedier stretches of the canal system. The price is £1,495, and a speed of 15 knots is claimed.

One of the most remarkable exhibits was "Vega," a 15 ft. motor dinghy built by a Cornish mining engineer. It took six years to complete, the workmanship in it is flawless and the paint and varnish work has a mirror finish. Obviously one couldn't produce boats of this standard commercially, but for an example of skill, patience and attention to detail it must surely be unsurpassed in the marine world. It should be given a place of honour in the National Maritime Museum, and although this may be considered sheer waste of effort, it would certainly seem an act of sacrilege to put this boat in the water—even the inlaid variety.

There was the usual display of the "latest and greatest" from the two main Broads hire agencies. For sheer luxury and ingenious design and use of space these boats have to be seen to be believed. Anybody who is still under the impression that to holiday afloat entails "pigging it" should look over one or two of these craft at the earliest opportunity. Undoubtedly large windows and modern plastic finish have proved invaluable when trying to overcome the gloomy, though "boaty" appearance of varnished teak and mahogany throughout.

The Thames, which after all is our premier river, had rather meagre representation in quantity if not in quality. J. G. Meakes, of Marlow, were showing a large, expensive but well finished 42 ft. cruiser based on one of the famous Akkerboom hulls from Holland. This is essentially for down-river use as a boat of this size would tend to bring navigational embarrassment on the upper reaches. W. Bates and Son, of Chertsey, exhibited two of their standard "Star" cruisers, 33 ft. and 40 ft. respectively, impeccably finished as always but otherwise little changed in the last decade.

Neither did canal cruising get adequate coverage at this show. Apart from Loftus Bennett with their somewhat distinctive styling, and Orme of

Leicester, who on this occasion exhibited a wide beam version of their 24 ft. inland cruiser, it was left, as usual, to "Maid" Line to demonstrate what could be done with a beam of 6 ft. 10 in. Although primarily a Thames yard, this firm has, during recent years, concentrated on its canal activities and one might state that "if it's damp, then sooner or later a 'Maid' will get there!" This year's offering was a 46 ft. 8-berth boat. Appropriately named "Robert Aickman" (I think added dignity would be obtained by the prefix "Ye") this boat is the first of a new luxury class bearing the names of Waterways personalities. Priced at under £5,000, the boat is quite competitive as it is of robust construction and the workmanship is of a high standard. I write this, incidentally, as a member of the trade and not merely as a loyal member of the I.W.A.

For those whose taste runs towards sail rather than motor, there was a magnificent 26 tonner by A. H. Moody, of Swanwich, a teak built 25 ft. Vertue class imported from Hong Kong by Denis T. Hoolahan, of Chichester, and several versions of the ever popular Folkboat. Sturdy little vessels these, but rather cramped inside. For purely day use Saro of Anglesey produce a new 20 ft. one-design of fibreglass construction. The workmanship and equipment appear to be extremely good and at £755 it was definitely one of the better buys of this year's exhibition. The number of different classes of sailing dinghy are now legion, and all were represented by various builders and factors.

There was an abundance of accessory and yacht chandlery exhibits, all marketing the same, or similar ranges of items, and most of them appeared to be doing good business. What a lot of different ranges of fittings there are these days; many of them of a design more ornamental than functional.

A regular exhibition at the show is Gilmore's Village Weave who deal entirely in beautiful woven rugs, bedspreads, blankets etc. Any boat enthusiast returning home late from the show must surely be forgiven if accompanied by one of these!

Many of the boats exhibited fell into one of two classes:—

1. Open runabouts designed to transport a large thirsty outboard motor from A to B very quickly at great cost, and
2. Inexplicably expensive over-powered cabin boats designed to take one and sometimes two even thirstier inboard engines from A to B more quickly and at greater cost.

Personally, I have very little time for this aspect of boating, and never cease to be amazed at the money asked, and paid, for these glorified speed-boats. For that matter, there seems to be a great inconsistency with regard to prices generally. For example, there was a 27 ft. centre cockpit fibreglass cruiser with a curvaceous exterior and an

adequate but not particularly imaginative layout, priced at £3,350. On the other hand there was a Broads boat, 34 ft. x 10 ft., beautifully finished, complete with shower bath, two cockpits, diesel engine, formica lined galley etc., for about £300 more. It doesn't really make sense, does it?

Undoubtedly many people visiting the show are contemplating buying their first boat and here a word of warning may not be out of place. Remember that "all that glitters is not gold"—and sometimes it isn't seaworthy either! Flashy furnishings and smart alloy fittings look fine in the glamorous setting of Earls Court, but before choosing your boat, decide on the purpose for which you require it, draw up a list of the essential points such as headroom, full length hanging space, storage space, adequacy of galley and toilet facilities, weather protection (sooner or later you will have a cold, wet, windy week-end afloat) and stability when walking round the deck.

With these points in mind, and ignoring the lavish lighting, the artificial flowers on the cabin table, and the artificial blonde languishing in the cockpit, examine carefully as many boats as you can, in your particular price range. Then having made a short list of "possibles," endeavour to see some of these models which have already had a year's use, and, even better, try and get the comments and opinions of their owners.

Unfortunately, exhibitions of this type are a mixed blessing. Whilst undoubtedly fostering the present boating boom, it also provides a shop window for the unscrupulous and the "band-waggoners"—those who have rushed into boating on the crest of the wave, and rely on high pressure advertising and salesmanship to sell their products. In many cases they have no waterside premises, and as they market their wares through motor dealers and other un-nautical organisations, very few of them can, or want to, give any after sales service. There are many genuine boat yards that do not exhibit, either because they do not mass produce, or they sell on reputation alone, or because they are busy putting right some of last year's show models.

Another criticism that I for one have levelled at every Boat Show so far is the preponderance of "extrovert" motor craft. Sailing types are catered for right through the range from the 7½ ft. Gremlin sailing dinghy to the big off-shore racers at £7,000 and up. But Mr. Everyman, who wants a roomy, medium sized, medium priced three or four berth motor cruiser to chug up the Thames or Avon, or maybe the Soar, has very little to choose from. Many are the adverts that proclaim "New luxury cruising for all the family—galley, toilet, four berths etc. in 18 ft. 6 in. x 7 ft. Believe me, unless you are accustomed to living in a shoe box, it cannot be done.

(Continued on page 10)

Summer Holiday Cruise of Reedling

by JOHN BLAKESLEY

THIS year we decided to make our Summer Cruise to the Nene. The route planned was as follows: down the Thames to Brentford, along the Grand Union Canal to Northampton, down the Nene to Peterborough and return to Northampton, then to Oxford via the Grand Union and Oxford Canals, and then down the Thames to our base at Bourne End. It was intended to take three weeks to do the trip, but, owing to circumstances beyond our control, the cruise had to be chopped into two parts.

On Saturday, July 28th, the crew arrived at our Bourne End mooring with a dog and two cats. We managed to leave without unreasonable delay, proceeding downstream at 11.30 a.m. On this day, we went through Maidenhead, Windsor and Staines where a regatta was in progress. We had hoped to moor in the Staines area, but so difficult is it to find a quiet mooring in the lower reaches of the Thames that a satisfactory place was not found until we reached Chertsey. During the night, we were constantly being awakened by our cats who, finding the night more interesting than the day, kept leaping on us.

On Sunday morning, we decided to go a little way up the River Wey. Below Shepperton Lock we turned off into the backwater, and proceeded up the narrow waterway leading to the first lock on the Wey. This Thames Lock seemed most complicated, but, once past this obstacle, navigation was easy enough until just past Woodham Junction—with the Basingstoke Canal—when we found the river began to get too shallow for our three foot draft. After lunch, we winded *Reedling* round, and proceeded downstream back to the crowded Thames. For the night we moored at East Molesey.

Next morning we had trouble in two forms: one lost cat which had to be left behind; and one new battery to replace an old worn-out one. We stopped en route at Maid Line boat yard where our engine fan-belt was tightened. At Brentford Junction, many huge barges were coming out of the Grand Union Canal, and it was impossible to gain entry into the canal. More barges started to collect below the first lock, but the bargemen were quite willing for us to get in ahead of them. In the afternoon, we travelled as far as Uxbridge through the most depressing scenery on the cruise.

On Tuesday, we travelled 16 miles and passed 24 locks to Hemel Hempstead—a fairly hard day. The countryside grew progressively more pleasant as we came further away from Greater London,

but difficulty was experienced in finding both a quiet and a deep mooring for the night. In the end we stopped at Hemel Hempstead. We had a nasty moment here when the dog was suddenly discovered to be missing. After an hour's worried searching, she was found in the bar of a nearby Public House.

Next day, we only travelled as far as Cowroast Summit, a short distance, but tiring as far as locks are concerned. We were considerably held up by having to wait for a pair of working narrow-boats to overhaul us. Also, we came across about three pleasure boats taking a shockingly long time to go down one lock. Above Cowroast Top Lock, some dozen pairs of empty narrow boats were moored up. We feared a stoppage, but learnt that they were having an enforced rest during the annual holidays of the paper mills they normally serve. We moored for the night in the summit section near Tring Station.

On Thursday, we left comparatively early—at 8.20 a.m. Shopping proved to be something of a difficulty on this day. It had been decided to shop in a village marked on the map called Grove. When we reached it, the village turned out to be only a lock cottage, farm and a few cottages. Although it was early closing day, we managed to get essential supplies in the afternoon at Leighton Buzzard. We moored for the night at an interesting little village, Simpson, having covered 20½ miles and passed 24 locks on that day.

On the following morning, milk was bought from the "Plough" in Simpson. On this day, we found considerable trouble in obtaining methylated spirits for our Primus stove. After passing through Wolverton, we stopped at Cosgrove only to be turned away by an extremely excitable and offensive workman. At Stoke Bruerne Top Lock, we spoke to the lock-keeper. After passing safely through the tunnel, we moored near Blisworth Village where a phone call was made—as previously arranged—to the Nene Toll collector at Northampton.

The night was extremely wet, blustery and stormy. It was decided not to move on Saturday if the weather did not improve. To our surprise the morning started with a cloudless, blue sky, and so we left for Northampton and the River Nene. The Northampton Arm presented no difficulties, especially with the assistance of the lock-keeper who prepared the locks for us. After running aground in the Nene within the first five minutes, we moored outside the Toll collector's house.

Once our shopping had been done, the toll collector handed over the special keys needed to unlock all the locks on the river.

He then showed us how to operate the locks. This was found to be extremely easy and almost foolproof. After mooring the night a few miles downstream of Northampton—at Clifford Hill—we all thought that both the locks and general condition of the navigation would present no difficulty, but this was before we had met weeds or had worked more than a few of the very tiring Nene locks.

The next day was very eventful. It was discovered with alarm that our steering cable was almost completely frayed in one place. We returned upstream about a mile to the moorings of the Northampton Boat Club at Weston Favell where the very helpful club members assisted in fixing us up temporarily. We then left downstream for the Nene River Board Yard at Wellingborough. Between here and Wollaston we encountered much difficulty with weeds. We managed to struggle as far as Wollaston Lock—a distance of only 8 miles—at half speed in four hours, where a member of the crew had to brave the cold and polluted waters of the Nene to clear the screw of weeds. We moored here for the night.

Mr. Adams, who has just started a boating business at the lock-side mill, kindly drove to the N.R.B.'s yard at Wellingborough for some more steering cable, but to no avail. In the end, we obtained enough cable from the River Board's divisional engineer who—luckily for us—lived at the nearby village of Great Doddington. On the following morning—August Bank Holiday it should be noted—Mr. Warboys of the N.R.B. obligingly fixed our steering cable at the Wellingborough Depot. During the whole period of our cruise on the river we were all impressed by the kindness and helpfulness of the people we met, especially when in difficulty.

After our successful repairs at Wellingborough, we continued cruising downstream. Between here and Higham Ferrers we met even worse weeds than the day before, but de-weeding was fairly easy. As the day was becoming more rainy and windy, we stopped for a very stormy night just above Upper Ringstead Lock.

The next day, the unpleasant weather continued, and we only covered five miles to Thrapston. It was on this day that we first came across really considerable amounts of foam in lock chambers. From now on we frequently had to shut all the windows and doors to exclude this unpleasant and odious substance from the cabin of the boat. At Thrapston, we moored at the Middle Nene Cruising Club, did some rainy shopping, and decided to stay the night here.

After hot baths at nearby Islip Guest House,

Please mention The Windlass when replying to advertisements.

where petrol was also obtained, we left our mooring on Wednesday morning. This was to be yet another very eventful day. We left our windlass behind at locks twice; in the end, we gave it up and borrowed a replacement from another boat. The engine also started to cause trouble by suddenly fading out. We moored for the afternoon above Upper Barnwell Lock—within sight of Oundle—while we put the engine right with the invaluable assistance of a fellow cruising family. In the evening, we moored for the night near Fotheringhay, a little village steeped in antiquity.

On Thursday morning, we travelled to “Wansford in England” where we did some shopping and sightseeing. We also came across our second weed boom stretched over the River. We found the workmen rather unwilling to help us in negotiating these obstacles. In the afternoon, we again had engine trouble which was fairly easily rectified. We moored for the night about a mile below Alwalton Lock.

The next day we reached the objective of our whole cruise—Peterborough.

(To be continued)

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CHRISTMAS DRAW, 1962

In response to requests here are the prizewinners in our 1962 Christmas Draw:

- 1746 H. Page, 17 Woodcommon Road, Hatfield, Herts.
10547 J. Pritchard, 202 Hampden Way, Southgate, N.14.
13534 Chestnuts Service Garage (Crays Hill) Ltd., Nr. Billericay, Essex.
11856 J. C. Street, 52 Moreton St., S.W.1.
14131 Mrs. Farrington, 72 Spa Hill, Upper Norwood, S.E.19.
4399 A. E. Tull, M.P.S., 25 Fletcher Road, Acton Lane, W.4.
8088 G. L. Leamouth, 4 Rochester Terrace, Edinburgh, 10.
4645 Mrs. H. Worthington, 29 Shackstead Lane, Godalming, Surrey.
5549 R. Hiller, 3 Lyndhurst Gardens, Newbury Park, Ilford, Essex.
1656 C. F. Rumsey, 18 Little Queen Road, Teddington, Middx.
6863 Mr. Penstone, Beeway, Gt. Missenden, Bucks.
1067 J. R. Bird, 966 Hertford Road, Waltham Cross, Herts.
160 M. P. Field, 46 London Road, Welwyn, Herts.
10675 M. Plummer, 107 Wimbledon Park Road, Southfields, S.W.18.
1102 A. Black, 22 Half Moon Street, W.1.
11788 J. Marsden, c/o WASIM (London) Ltd., 9 Hertford St., W.1.
8910 Miss J. Howe, Room 107, St. Giles Court, W.C.2.
13815 L. P. Giles, 5 Kilsbury Terrace, Berkhamsted, Herts.
7371 A. C. MacDonald, 8 King Street, Emsworth, Hants.
13105 Dr. P. Wallis, Gowers, Gt. Baddow, Chelmsford, Essex.

(Continued from page 7)

Well, there you have a few sketchy impressions and thoughts about this year's show; plenty of glitter and glamour, and on the whole quite a lot of pure unadulterated boat.

In conclusion, let us not forget the transport contractors and their lorry crews who had to work against the clock to move the boats from the four corners of Britain in wretched road conditions, and who, as I write, are preparing to return their precious cargoes through some of the bitterest weather we have had in years. Without these worthy gentlemen there would probably have been no 1963 International Boat Show. **S. J. T.**

THE PENSHURST NAVIGATION

by DEREK SALMON

IN 1828 a Mr. Christie of Tonbridge, owner of the Town Mill, planned to extend the Upper Medway Navigation above Tonbridge to Penshurst. Some work was carried out, mainly the straightening of a length of the river about a mile above the town, now called the Long Reach, and the digging of a cut to by-pass the Shallows and many twists and turns near Leigh. This cut, the Straight Mile, is still in existence and is a popular walk near Tonbridge; it is quite dry. One lock was built, the local sandstone being used for its construction. This also can still be seen. Before the scheme could be completed the Medway Company obtained an injunction to stop the work on the grounds that it would affect the water supply to Tonbridge Town Pen. As a result proper navigation to Penshurst has never been possible, though it is possible to reach that village by rowing boat or canoe with some hauling over shallows and round weirs.

Having not made the journey to Penshurst by water myself for nearly twenty years, I recently thought that it was about time that I renewed acquaintance with this part of the river. So one Sunday morning early in October my son Charles and I took our folding dinghy to Penshurst and prepared to row down to Leigh Sluice at Hayesden. We decided to row downstream for two reasons: because the wind that day was blowing downstream and because there was some flow in the river owing to rain the day before.

We embarked at Penshurst Bridge which is about a quarter of a mile from that picturesque village with its famous mansion Penshurst Place. Here the river is about twenty feet wide and flows between high banks. Soon we reached the remains of an old weir, now nothing more than a little brickwork with the water flowing through a restricted opening. Not knowing what obstructions there might be in the gap and as the water was flowing quite strongly, we decided against shooting through and portaged round instead. Further shallows were soon reached but there was enough water flowing to get us over them safely. For about two miles below Penshurst the river makes many sharp turns and the high banks cut off much of the view of the surrounding hop gardens, woods and meadows.

We were now nearing the high ground of Bidborough Ridge. Here we had to negotiate the remains of another weir and as there was a difference of level of about six inches above and below the obstruction we once again portaged round. Another bend brought us to Ashour Wood and the most spectacular scenery on our journey.

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For about half a mile the river flows beneath a sheer, wooded hillside which rises straight from the water and makes a complete contrast to the meadows opposite. It is in fact a miniature Cliveden and one of the finest scenic effects along the whole length of the River Medway. The best view is obtained looking back from downstream.

Below Ashour Wood the river broadens, the banks are lower and there is a good depth of water down to Leigh Sluice. Beyond Ensfield Bridge, the only road bridge across the river between Penshurst and Tonbridge, the countryside is pleasantly pastoral, typical of the upper Medway valley. In this part of the river there are a number of tiny islets. Passing a low concrete wall on the right bank, which divides the top end of the Straight Mile from the river, we paddled down through the viaduct which carries the railway line to Redhill, the original London to Dover main line, and soon reached Leigh Sluice. This sluice holds up a head of water which was formerly used to drive the old Ramhurst Powder Mill on a side stream nearby. This mill made explosives until the second World War. It is now used for light industry. Below the sluice is a large, deep pool known as the Weir Pool. It looks ideal for bathing but is in fact very dangerous; a number of people have been drowned here. Leaving the pool the river flows over a succession of gravel shoals, the

Shallows, which extend nearly to the top of Long Reach about one and a half miles above Tonbridge. It is up to this point that larger boats can get from Tonbridge, though headroom above the Great Bridge, the proper head of navigation, is restricted to under six feet.

At Leigh Sluice our row ended. We packed up the dinghy and carried it across the railway line to Hayesden, where my wife was waiting to pick us up in the car. It is a great pity that the Penshurst Navigation was never completed. If it had been another six or seven miles of pretty river would be available for cruising; miles that are much needed on the River Medway.

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Of Boats — and Locks — and"

. . . . of sending for

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