

THE WINDLASS

Vol. I No. 6. SEPTEMBER 1957



Basingstoke Canal Lock No. 4

*Photo by courtesy of
Mrs. H. Weeks*

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

THE LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES BRANCH OF THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

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The Chairman's Column

Chairman's Report for the 9 month period to 31st. 1957.

I am appending below a brief account of the Branch's activities for the period to 31st March, 1957, following my having had the honour to be appointed Chairman at the inaugural general meeting of the Branch.

Our Honorary Patrons. Mr. John Betjeman has been Patron of our Branch since its inception and early this year he was joined by Dame Margot Fonteyn, who, following her christening of "Maid Margot" at Olympia, also agreed to become a Patron of the Branch.

We are honoured to have two such distinguished names amongst us.

Campaign Activities. The Branch has been active throughout the period in regard to our major aim of furthering the cause of The Inland Waterways Association.

Sub-Committees have been formed as follows:—

Basingstoke Canal Sub-Committee.
River Medway Sub-Committee.
River Stour Action Committee.

In addition, as a result of our Lee and Stort Demonstration Cruise last October and successful public meetings held at Bishop's Stortford and Hertford, the Lee and Stort Development Committee has been formed, with four representatives from the I.W.A. and representations by many other local interests including the various local authorities.

The Basingstoke Canal Sub-Committee have made contact with the owners of the navigation and have taken steps to organise working parties to improve the condition of the waterway.

The River Medway Sub-Committee are negotiating with the Medway authorities in regard to the issuing of season tickets for river users and also the possibility of users themselves being allowed to operate the locks of the upper navigation.

The River Stour action committee are investigating the legal situation in regard to the navigation authorities and will plan their campaign accordingly.

Lee and Stort Demonstration Cruise. An enjoyable and very useful cruise over virtually the whole of the navigable lengths of the Rivers Lee and Stort took place last October, by about 20 members of the Branch in 5 motor cruisers. Most useful contacts were made with the various local authorities and other local interests and following two subsequent public meetings the Rivers Lee and Stort Development Committee was formed.

Petition for National Waterway Conservancy. This was organised by the Branch to take place during the Boat Show at Olympia and resulted in the collection of 7191 names.

Finances. We have had very many financial problems in the first 9 months of the Branch's existence. Many of these arise from the fact that all I.W.A. members are allowed a period of free membership of the Branch before being asked to pay the 5/- annual subscription. Income from subscriptions has therefore been exceedingly low. We have endeavoured to make small profits on the various social functions we have organised.

Our financial situation would have been precarious indeed at the end of March if we had not had the benefit of the proceeds from the collection on board "Maid Margot" at Olympia and I would like to thank the various members who made this satisfactory result possible, by spending a day at the Show, looking after the collection boxes.

On the expense side, we have had to print sufficient copies of "The Windlass" for all I.W.A. area members, whether they wished to join the Branch or not. This has resulted in our printing

and distributing costs being exceptionally high. From July, 1957, onwards however this situation will have been rectified and copies will only be sent to Bona Fide members of the Branch.

With the increased subscription reserve likely, the reduced printing costs and the most successful result of our Derby Draw, which was most efficiently organised by Mr. Brian Ambrose, I consider our financial prospects for 1957/8 to be promising.

Windlass. During the period of 9 months, three issues of the "Windlass" have been published and it is hoped to continue to produce our publication about every 2 or 3 months.

Mr. Peter Chaplin has most ably carried out the duties of Editor and has put the "Windlass" really on its feet. In addition, he has been very successful in obtaining advertisement revenue which very materially reduces the cost of producing the journal.

Regular features have included full details of Forthcoming Events of the Branch, a series of articles on Waterways of the Home Counties and other specialised articles.

Social Events

River Stour tour. On 29th September, 1956, the majority of the Committee members made a day tour in a number of cars of the whole erst-while navigable lengths of the River Stour from Sudbury down to the Stour Estuary.

Grand Union Trip—Rickmansworth to Paddington. This trip took place early in October and was highly successful over 100 members and friends taking part.

Film Shows. These took place at the Princess Louise, High Holborn, as follows:—
18th October, 1956—Mr. Slack's film "Northern Waterways," Mr. Lee's film and the B.T.C. "Inland Waterways" film.

7th February, 1957—Films on the Norfolk Broads. Commentary by Mr. H. F. Brooker, General Manager of Blakes. Also the British Transport Commission film "Inland Waterways" with commentary by Mr. Robert Aickman.

28th March, 1957—Films on the Lower Avon. Commentary by Mr. Robert Aickman.

Attendance at all these film shows was excellent, the room being full on each occasion.

Carnival Dance. This took place at the Porchester Hall on 29th November, 1956. The event was most enjoyable but attendance was disappointing owing to the Suez crisis and petrol rationing.

Annual Dinner Postponed. It was proposed to hold an Annual Dinner at Olympia during the Boat Show, but after long discussion, in view of the shaky financial situation of the Branch, and the uncertainty as to attendance caused by petrol rationing, it was felt that the risk of appreciable financial loss was not justified and it was decided to leave the matter over until more favourable times.

Prospects. The first year of an organisation is usually a difficult one. I have mentioned the financial difficulties, the immediate ones of which I think will gradually disappear in the future. On the other hand it is essential for us to gradually build up a reserve of funds in readiness for any legal or parliamentary expenses which we may wish to incur.

As regards membership, I think this is likely to steadily increase and your Committee will do its utmost to arrange as interesting a programme as possible. Please let us have your ideas.

Conclusion. In conclusion, I should like to thank the Officers and Committee members for the most able and enthusiastic assistance they have given me during this initial period of the Branch's existence.

Particular mention should, I feel, be made of our Hon. Secretary, Mrs. E. D. Loveridge, and Hon. Treasurer, Dr. R. J. Saunders. They have performed their duties right nobly.

Hon. Secretary's Notes

The First Annual General Meeting of the Branch was held on the 5th July, 1957, at the "Princess Louise."

Committee members, Mrs. Talbot and Mr. Redston have resigned and Mrs. Talbot has now gone to Kenya. We all hope that she is happy in her new life. Dr. Saunders, our Hon. Treasurer, was re-elected to that position, and two more Committee Members were appointed, Mr. Burgess and Mr. Street.

The Accounts for the year were adopted. The Chairman gave a report on the work of the Branch during the first nine months of its existence and this is reproduced elsewhere in the Magazine.

Our Founder, Mr. Robert Aickman, said a few words and announced that the Annual Dinner and A.G.M. of the Association will this year be held on 26th October.

The Association now has its own tie. A very attractive one in navy terylene with the hand and sword motif. This costs 17/6d. and every male member should have one. Our lady members may care to buy them as Christmas presents for their menfolk.

I am compiling a list of lecturers on I.W.A. matters. Will those members who usually undertake this work kindly contact me.

Membership queries should now be addressed to our Hon. Treasurer, who has undertaken the onerous task of looking after the records for me.

EILEEN D. LOVERIDGE

Waterways of the Home Counties

6.—BASINGSTOKE CANAL

The Basingstoke Canal is 161 years old and survives miraculously intact (except for the last six miles to Basingstoke, cut off by the collapse of Greywell Tunnel in 1932), despite the loss of most of its traffic at the opening, in 1840, of the London-Southampton railway, and despite the winding-up of the original canal company in 1866.

It differs in many ways from the other waterways of the Home Counties: it does not follow a river valley, and it is a private navigation; it climbs 200ft. from the Wey Navigation through sandy commons and amid pine trees, in a terrain where one would least expect to find a canal; it serves only two towns in its 30 miles—Woking and Aldershot. Like the other waterways, it provides a welcome refuge from Suburbia.

The most important event in the recent history of the canal was its sale in 1949, when it came under the control of the New Basingstoke Canal Company.* Unlike the previous owners, the new Company is prepared to admit pleasure craft, and in 1950 boats of the Wey Cruising Club were probably the first motor cruisers to use the canal: one of the boats (skipped by our member, Mr. Charles Poulter) reached the limit of navigation at Odiham. Since then the canal has been used once or twice a year by cruisers, and much oftener by smaller craft. I.W.A. member, Mr. Jack Howard, reached Odiham in a converted ex-army pontoon in March of this year, despite a bridge at Fleet which has been reconstructed to give only about 5ft. 6in. headroom.

The Canal Company has many problems, of which the most serious are the maintenance of the 29 locks and the shortage of water during the summer. All the water has to come from springs at Odiham. In the summer there is no water to spare for lockage, and the water level in the shorter pounds becomes very low. The locks lift the canal 200 feet from the Wey Navigation to the 15-mile summit level, and 28 of them occupy the first ten miles. They are arranged in four flights:—Woodham Locks (Nos. 1-6); Goldsworth Locks (Nos. 7-11); Brookwood Locks (12-14); Frimley Locks (Nos. 15-28). There is also one lock (No. 29) at Ash Vale, six miles above Frimley Top Lock.

The first flight, which take one up to Woking, are in relatively good condition, and passage through them take two or three hours. The worst gates are the lower gates of Scotland Lock (No. 2), and new ones are under construction at Frimley. New bottom gates were fitted to Lock No. 4 a year or two ago. The five locks at Goldsworth (near St. John's, Woking) are not in very good order, and tarpaulins have to be hung over the lower gates before the locks will fill. There are new top gates, installed June 1957, for the bottom lock (No. 7), but the lock is not yet usable because it is full of mud, washed down when the old gates collapsed. The three locks at Brookwood are in fair condition, although tarpaulins are required for the lower gates of the top and bottom locks. Out of the 14 locks in the two-mile Frimley flight, eight of them (Nos. 17-20 and 22-25) are in remarkably good order; the absence of one or both balance beams from the top gates of four of them does not seriously interfere with their working. The remaining locks of this flight need tarpaulins over the lower gates. An appalling act of vandalism was the blowing-up by persons unknown of Lock No. 27 in May of this year. New top gates are required, and this is a large burden on the Company's limited resources. Until the gates are replaced, only a small volume of water can be passed through the lock to supply the first ten miles of canal.

Maximum dimensions of craft which may use the canal are roughly 72ft. length, 14ft. beam, 7ft. 6in. height above water; maximum draught is 3ft. 6in. from the junction with the Wey to Chertsey Road Bridge in Woking, 2ft. 6in. from there to Frimley Top Lock, and probably 2ft. for the rest of the canal (accurate soundings not taken recently). With relatively little dredging, draught could be increased to 4ft. 6in. to Woking and 3ft. 6in. to Frimley Top Lock. Boats under 30ft. can turn in the width of the canal; boats 70ft. long can turn at Woking Gasworks (just above Monument bridge) and at Brookwood about half mile below Frimley bottom lock, and at several places above this point.

There has been no commercial traffic on the canal since 1949, and the barges which were built at Ash Vale and formerly carried the canal's traffic to Woking, left the waterway at the time of its sale (except for "Glendower," now at Woking and unfit for trading). The barges "Greywell" and "Aldershot" are still in service between London and Thames Lock, Weybridge, while "Madeline" is now a houseboat on the Wey Navigation. There is a possibility of recommencing timber traffic to one of the two timber yards in Woking, providing carriers can be found. There is no possibility of commercial traffic above Woking.

* The address of the General Manager (Mrs. M. Marshall) is Greenways Farm, Winchfield, Basingstoke, Hants. Telephone: Odiham 292.

The London & Home Counties Branch is endeavouring, through its Basingstoke Canal Subcommittee, to ensure the preservation and maintenance of the canal as a navigation, and for this purpose working parties are held at roughly monthly intervals. The first two working parties have concentrated on removing enough silt and rubbish at the two shallowest points in Woking to provide a channel at least 2ft. 6in. deep (at Arthur's Bridge and Wheatsheaf Bridge). These efforts have been handicapped by lack of numbers, and more members are required to assist in this work.* The biggest obstacle to navigation at the moment is silting in and below Goldsworth Bottom Lock. This is really too big a job for manual dredging, and it remains to be seen how much the next working party (11th August) can achieve.

It may be concluded that, whilst the canal provides perfect recreation for the walker and canoeist, it is only the intrepid canal enthusiast who will want to navigate a cruiser through the 29 locks for pleasure, particularly in view of the fact that normally this can only be done between October and June, owing to water shortage and weed in summer. The state of the canal does, however, greatly benefit from the occasional passage of a boat, and the London & Home Counties Branch will do all it can to assist any member who wishes to make the journey.

R.M.

* Further particulars from R. Mack, N.B. "Hawke," Common Lane, New Haw, Weybridge, Surrey.



*Chertsey Road Bridge and Spanton's Timber Yard,
Basingstoke Canal*

From the Editor's Cabin

Our member, Mr. Seymour Walker, informs me that he has kept his boat on the Wendover arm of the G.U. Canal for the past nine months, and furthermore, he says that a stretch of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles at Drayton Beauchamp apparently lost water through the chalk. The water is now piped over that part, and the arm is kept open as it acts as a feeder from Hatton reservoir to the summit level of the main line. For small craft about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles are navigable, but anything as large as a narrow boat would hardly get beyond Gammel Bridge at New Mill. Much silting has occurred and there is no winding hole, although boats of 40ft. (if of shallow draught) might wind at Mead's Flour Mill. This mill used to be supplied by canal but apparently the owners found it inconvenient to buy quantities as large as a boat load.

The Thames Barge Sailing Match was held on June 19th over the usual course and was won by "Sirdar" of The London & Rochester Trading Co., Messrs. Everard's "Sara" coming second. Their respective times over the 50 mile course were 6 hours 26 minutes, and 6 hours 46 minutes respectively. In the staysail class Eastwood's "Westmoreland" broke her sprit and I.C.I.'s "Revival" broke her topmast. The Medway barge match was held on June 21st and was won by "Veronica" who broke a leeboard in the Thames match.

British Waterways are vying with well known boat-hire firms by producing an excellent little eight page brochure on pleasure cruising: it is well illustrated and a clear map occupies a two-page spread.

A most worthy book for members of the younger generation is "The Thames Flows Down." The descriptive illustrations are superb and the context most lucid: although written for children it will surely be much appreciated by many adults in search of information rarely, if ever, given in popular and well known books upon the Thames. The writer is Laurie Osmond whilst the illustrations are by Edward Osmond whose book "A Valley Grows Up" won the Carnegie medal for 1953.

The Institution of Civil Engineers has arranged an exhibition to commemorate the bi-centenary of the great civil engineer Thomas Telford. The exhibition is being held at the Institution in Westminster and should prove of great interest to many of our members in view of Telford's canal engineering genius, of which the Pont y Cysyllte aqueduct is possibly the most famous.

The "Cutty Sark" was officially opened by Her Majesty The Queen on June 25th. Situated in her permanent berth at Greenwich the "Cutty Sark" is now open to the public.

The historic Doggett's Coat and Badge race had sufficient entries this year to necessitate the rowing of heats and the finals on July 29th were very exciting. (Dogget's race is the oldest aquatic contest and also the oldest annual sporting event in the world).

Our member, Mr. D. D. Hutchings, who is also the indefatigable Secretary of the Reading Branch of The Kennet & Avon Canal Association organised a most enterprising trip up the Kennet from Reading to Lower Sulhampstead Lock last Whit-Saturday. Five craft took part and as none of them had more than 3ft. headroom no difficulty was experienced in passing under Bridge Street Bridge. At County Lock it was observed that the lower gates are getting into poor shape, but they are adequate for the small rise (1ft. 2in.). From County Lock to Fobney Lock the conditions are quite good, it is of course a river section: Fobney Lock is in first class condition whilst the next section up to Southcote Lock is in good order (turbines at Fobney Waterworks keep the water flowing, consequently neither silt or weeds collect).

Southcote Lock is also in first class condition, but the next lock, Burghfield, is disgraceful in view of the amount of money spent upon it in 1952. The cut above Burghfield Lock is in bad shape, bamboos grow rather thickly and the channel (?) is very narrow. Garston Lock is in quite good order, whilst from there to Sheffield Lock weeds abound in profusion throughout the summer. Sheffield Lock is in poor condition, but is not dangerous owing to the small rise. Below Sulhampstead Lock there is much silt whilst the lock itself is "dodgey."

Messrs. Salters' have added a new craft—the "Mary Stuart"—to their large fleet of Thames "Steamers." "Mary Stuart" commenced life in Holland and was brought from that country to Oxford under her own power where she was re-fitted and re-engined.

Construction of the London Marina at Surbiton is well under way and the breach in the river wall, which will give access to the Thames is, I notice, shaping up most favourably.

On September 28th the Reading Branch of the K. & A. Canal Association are organising a canoe and light craft trip from Reading to Newbury.

My apologies for slight typographical error in setting "Boats & Boat Equipment" advertisement in the last issue.

PETER CHAPLIN

DERBY DRAW 1957

I am very pleased to inform you that our net profit from the Derby Draw was £175-17-6, duly certified by our accountant, and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you for the great efforts you made in selling the tickets. I also wish to thank those members who, whilst not participating in the draw, saw fit to send donations to Branch Funds amounting to £10-7-0.

Copies of the prizewinners' list were sent out when requested, but for the benefit of all other members, particulars are given below:—

Winners—Messrs. Merrett, Helm, Waters, Raisin, Healey, Tims, Bunton, Ferris, Silver, Weeden, Field, Barrett, Mr. & Mrs. Stanfield, The Misses Lewis, Blackburne, Wells, Finch, Mrs. Gunther, W/Cdr. Brain, Dr. Hancock, Mrs. Richards, Dr. Gaskell.

Our need was desperate and due to the receipts from this draw we are assured of a reasonable credit balance for the next few months. Nevertheless further expenses will arise shortly and we have therefore decided to hold a Christmas draw with a variety of suitable prizes other than cash. I do hope you will support this as vigorously as you did the Derby Draw thereby ensuring a further large contribution to the Branch Funds.

BRIAN AMBROSE.

NEWS of the TRADE

Messrs. Calvert & Sons Ltd. of Heywood, Lancashire, are producing an attractive and inexpensive two-berth cabin cruiser. This should appeal greatly to canal users as well as those who want a craft that can be "trailed" behind any light car.

The well known motor cycle engineers, Vincent's of Stevenage, are making a light-weight marine engine of which the stern-gear assembly is virtually an integral part of the power unit. This method eliminates shaft alignment problems. Both petrol and paraffin models are available and it is interesting to note that the most amateur of mechanics can remove the engine from a boat in less than ten minutes!

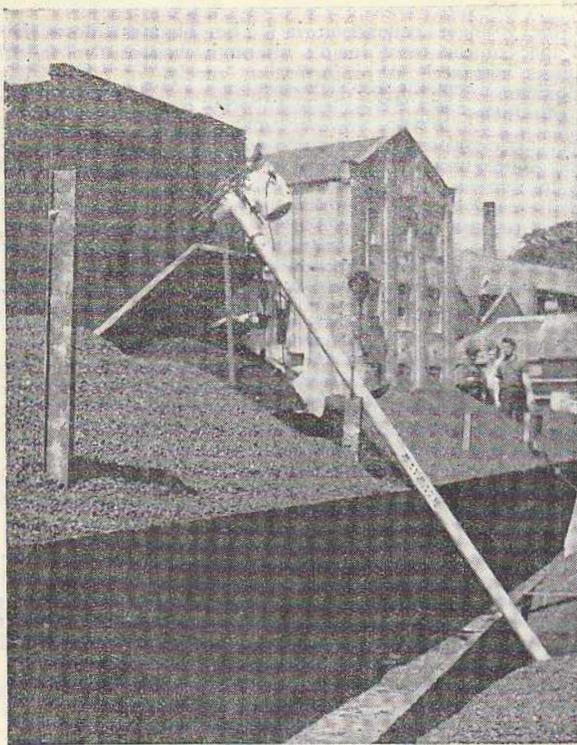
Several more new outboards have appeared; they are air-cooled and thereby have extra appeal for use in weedy waters. One of them is the "Sea-Bee": this is powered by a standard J.A.P. engine and is an entirely British unit. (No connection with the American "See-Bee" marketed by Goodyear Rubber Co. of Akron, Ohio).

Two other air-cooled, J.A.P. powered outboards are the Sea Chief "Captain" and "Cadet" models by E.L.K. Marine of Whitstable.

The water-cooled Kelston "Peto" introduced at the last boat show is already becoming a firm favourite in the higher powered category.

Kenneth Gibb's "Sandrobin" class river and canal cruiser has become so popular that a modified type for use in open waters has been introduced.

Wyvern Boats (Sherborne, Dorset) have brought out two new craft for home construction that should prove most suitable for day cruising and camping on our canals.



"Mayrath" Portable Elevator Unloading Coke from a narrow boat (see Vol. 1, No. 5)

Photo by courtesy of "Nurseryman & Seedsman."

Letter from—WILLOW WREN CANAL CARRING COMPANY LIMITED.

Dear Sir,

11th June, 1957.

The correspondence which has been published in "The Windlass" on the subject of comparisons between the wages costs per ton mile of Trunk lorry drivers and the crews of narrow boats, reached its culmination in your current issue, when the General Manager of British Waterways replied to Mr. Patrick Saunders in support of his Chief Traffic Officer, Mr. Ives.

The complete futility of debating such an infinitesimal proportion of a total haulage rate must be apparent to any experienced transport executive but for the benefit of the officials of British Waterways who have engaged in this debate, may I stress one or two salient points:—

- (a) No useful purpose is to be gained by discussing competition as between Road, Rail and Canal transport, insofar as ninety per cent. of traffics are concerned, each medium has a hard core of traffic which is natural, physical and economical to itself, and there is an adequate percentage of all traffics to enable each medium to provide its full contribution to the National economy, providing it is maintained and equipped so to do.
- (b) The natural traffics for our waterways, consist of goods and materials consigned from and to water-side points, this of course includes import and export ships at our Ports. Speaking from nearly 25 years experience, it can be stated that subject to the waterways being maintained and operated by the "Authority" up to their full statutory obligations, no other form of transport can compete with Water. A proviso must be added, i.e. also providing that vastly inflated Tolls are not operated by the said Authority.
- (c) As the bulk of Industry in the Midlands and the Coal fields were originally sited for water transport, coupled with the facility and economy of cutting new waterways with modern machines and practice, as against the astronomical costs of building new roads and railways, surely it is an economic "must" that our waterways be restored and new ones built, if we as a Nation are to cope with transport problems which are rapidly becoming chaotic, this is indeed a case where "Cinderella" can be of most use.

In conclusion one can only hope that those officials who are responsible for our Waterways, will turn their abilities and power, to the work with which they have been entrusted, and cease from putting up entirely fallacious arguments tending to prove that another department in their organisation can do their job more economically and efficiently.

Yours faithfully,

LESLIE N. MORTON.

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Moored in Wey Navigation canal and available for inspection by arrangement. Reasonable offers considered. Apply Chancton Harb, Dartnell Park, West Byfleet, Surrey.

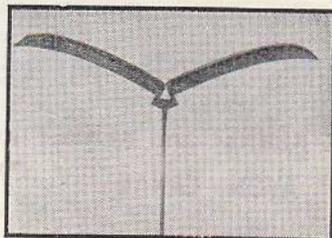


Illustration shows "swept-back" version fitted with a left-hand blade and Y cleat.

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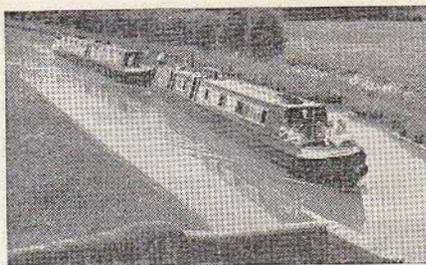
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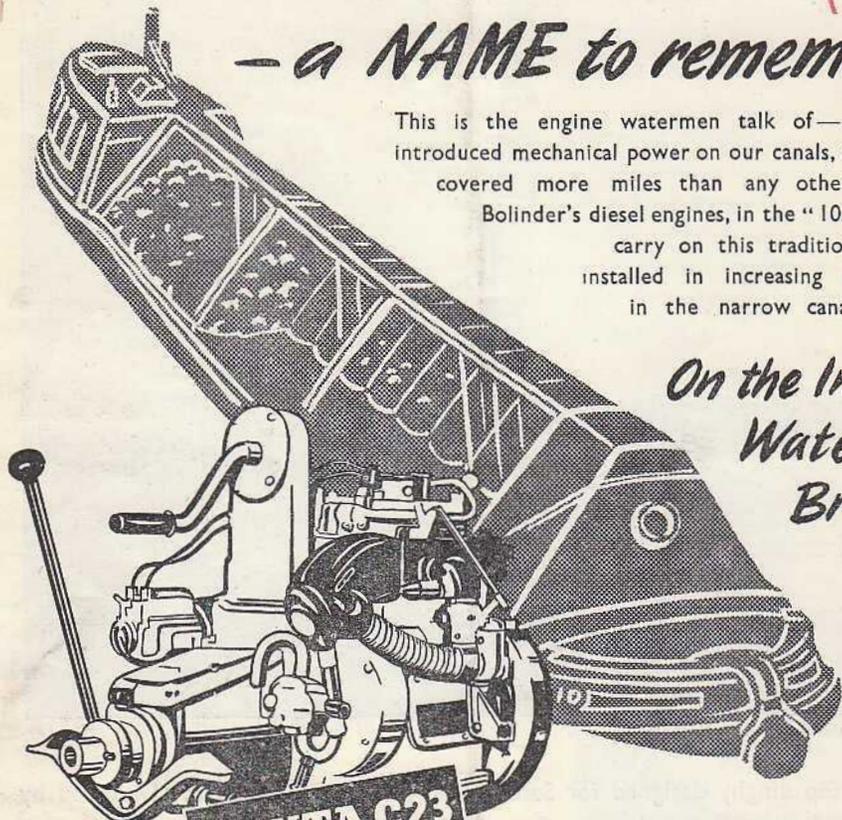
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