

Committee of Inquiry into Inland Waterways, 1956

Record of visits made by Mr. H. Leslie Bowes to the various canals

Monday, 30th July 1956.

Left Liverpool at 2.30 p.m. by car, accompanied by Mr. Marsh, for Northwich, where joined by Sir Reginald and Lady Kerr, on board KINGFISHER. This trip was more or less in the nature of a social function, but did serve as a first introduction to the practical side of Canal operation.

We went some way down the river Weaver, seeing several craft of I.C.I. loading alongside (OSWALD, POLYTHENE, ANDERTON, MARBURY and one Dutch vessel HERTA of Groningen). We then turned about and ascended the Anderton Lift to the Trent & Mersey Canal, which we traversed as far as Middlewich, ascended a flight of three narrow locks as well as one broad one. During this stretch of the Canal we saw many instances of mining subsidence, and also the need for piling on the banks. I was greatly impressed by the Anderton lift, which although so old works extremely smoothly. It is geared down from 1800 to 1, and is quite silent in operation. At the foot of the lift I noticed some barges of Henry Seddon & Co. (narrow boats with salt), being a subsidiary of Cerebos Ltd.

Dinner aboard KINGFISHER - an excellent meal - and left craft at about 9.30 at Middlewich, arriving home about 11 p.m.

Tuesday, 31st July 1956

Left Liverpool 5 p.m. by car for Runcorn where arrived 6 p.m. Joined here the following members of the Committee who had been visiting various Canals in the North Western Division that day:- Messrs. Godber, Ritchie, Hopthrow, Muddell, Hill.

We were met by Mr. Norman Bird, Manager of the Bridgewater Canal and his colleagues, and after an inspection of the Runcorn docks, we proceeded to Alderley Edge where we spent the night. We left Alderley Edge at 8.45 a.m. the following morning.

Wednesday 1st August.

Proceeded direct to Astley Bridge on the Brlidgewater Canal, where we joined a narrow boat, and traversed the Canal crossing Barton Aqueduct and proceeding as far as Hulme Locks in Manchester. On the way we landed near Worsley and visited the opening to the underground canals built by the Duke of Bridgewater for extracting coal direct from the mine face.

During the journey we saw many instances of mining subsidence and also of the efficacy of steel piling. We had lunch on board the narrow boat and then in Manchester we were handed over to Messrs. Wilkinson and Blake, General Manager and Engineer respectively of the Rochdale Canal, which we visited in several sections. This Canal has been "processed", and is closed to navigation, the locks having been turned into weirs. It lives a profitable life by the sale of water and the renting of warehouses. We visited some of the bridges, and noted a flat bridge totally open below, as opposed to a culvert bridge which only has a narrow pipe to allow the passage of water.

Tuesday, 7th August 1956

Left Caldby 8 a.m., arrived Wigan 9 a.m. Met Mr. Marsh and Mr. Arnold (of B.T.C. Head Office staff, specialising in 'disposals') at 10 a.m., and started off on visit to Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

Brief view of Wigan Locks.

Saw Johnson Hillock Locks (7) and Walton Summit Canal which is a spur from the main line at the foot of Johnsons Hillock Locks and which Marsh states is now quite useless and should be disposed of.

Went through Blackburn and then to Church Kirk, near Accrington, where we saw a very fine new warehouse, built since nationalisation, at a cost of £12,000. The warehouse contained some very fine cases of cotton-spinning machinery, and I understand that it was to house these and ship them by Canal that the warehouse was primarily built. The Church Kirk establishment is run with Blackburn as one

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depot.

We then visited the repair depot at Burnley, where a pile-making plant is being installed. Also saw a barge being loaded with coal at Burnley by mechanical tipper.

Visiting several flights of locks on the way, saw Foulridge Reservoirs, upper and lower, and the mouth of Foulridge Tunnel. Then to Greenberfield locks where there is a control station governing the supply of water to the Canal from Winterburn. Then to Skipton and then to Bolton Abbey for lunch at the Devonshire Arms, where we were joined by Mr. G.G.D.Hill.

After lunch visited the Springs Canal, which is a privately-owned arm, about three-quarters of a mile long, serving some quarries which belong to the Earl of Thanet. This small Canal (not in very good shape) is leased by British Waterways for 25 years, but instead of paying for it they receive £600 per annum for operating it,

Then proceeded to Winterburn Reservoir, which is a truly beautiful stretch of water with a wonderful masonry spillway like a majestic stairway. The Reservoir was almost full and really quite lovely.

After this we proceeded to Keighley stopping to see several more locks on the way. At Keighley we saw some very large warehouses on both sides of the road; these contained large quantities of goods being stored by English Electric and Nos.7 and 8 contained wool shipped from Chile by the Sociedad Explotadora de Tierra del Fuego I noticed bales from Oazy Harbour and Caleta Josefina. There were some quantities of plywood and other materials, but I was informed that practically nothing had been waterborne.

We then stopped at the Bingley Five Rise and had a demonstration of how side paddles and gate paddles are worked.

We next stopped at Shipley, where we saw and visited very large warehouses under the management of Mr. Mayman. These warehouses were heavily stored with hemp, wool, plywood etc.

Thence to Leeds, Queen's Hotel, where we were joined by Messrs. Ives, Thomson and Mountford, the last two Traffic Manager and Engineer respectively of the North Eastern Division. Mr. Corbett joined us after dinner, and Mr. Marsh left the party early the following morning.

Wednesday 8th August 1956

Aire & Calder Navigation. Left Leeds at 9 a.m., visited Leeds Depot where joined by Mr. Craig, District Inspector (Engineer). Saw heterogeneous collection of warehouses in some considerable state of disrepair, both as regards buildings and floorings. The north side warehouse was built in 1820. Visited the New Dock Basin, Motor Garage Clarence Road, Goodman Street Wharf, Hunslet Wharf, and then paid an extended visit to Knostrop, the site for the construction of the new Depot which is designed to concentrate the activities carried out in the different places to which I have just referred. The new programme is estimated to cost £250,000, but part of this cost will be off-set by the sale of the old buildings etc. which it is calculated will realise at least £100,000.

Leeds Depot. Saw craft under repair, some iron craft being 75 years old. From Leeds we proceeded to Wakefield. Here new coal staithes are being built on the Calder to load compartment boats which will go there for the first time.

At Stanley Ferry (Mechanical Inspector Norman Steel) saw boats under repair and many ingenious devices in the repair shop.

On the opposite side of the Canal at this juncture, there are the remains of a tramway line which was formerly used for taking compartment boats on carriages up to the colliery to be loaded, over a mile away, and of course to bring them back.

Castleford. Here is the junction of the rivers Aire and Calder. We saw a compartment-boat train empty, which had been brought down for our special benefit. After a visit to the Allerton quay, we saw the same train again proceeding upstream to be loaded.

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After lunch at Monk Fryston Hall, passed Ferrybridge Power Station and then visited Messrs. J. Harker Ltd., at Knottingley. These people are very big builders of Canal craft, and they also operate a large fleet - it is said in fact that they are operating over 100 craft, many of them powered tankers. We were attended to by a Mr. Arnold, who was said to be the Managing Director. They had nearing completion one 220 ton tanker, and two more building, with an order book for a long time ahead. The vessels are launched sideways on to the Canal, and the one nearing completion was intended for service on the Severn, which it will reach by going up north and traversing the Caledonian Canal.

At Knottingley there are two staithes which load 1,000,000 tons of coal per annum.

Kellingley. Site of a new colliery designed to produce 1,000,000 tons of coal per annum.

Southfield Reservoir. We saw this Reservoir from Beavers Bridge; then proceeded to Sykehouse Lock, where we saw a loaded compartment-boat train transit the Lock - the only one on the new junction section. The transit was done in two sections, seven and the tow first and then eight. The second section was drawn in by leaving one of the gate paddles open at the forward end of the lock, so creating a "draw". I was informed, however, that this is against the rules.

Our party, on the spur of the moment, joined a barge at Sykehouse Lock and rode down to Goole, where we arrived at 7.15.

Saw Goole repair yard, very antiquated, also an old boat being fitted with an engine for the first time, the craft being 75 years old. Also saw their drydock which has a very awkward right-angled turn in order to effect entry.

Thursday 9th August 1956.

At 7.30 a.m. I visited the docks alone and saw the following ships:-

BIRMINGHAM, WILHELM FORTUIN, LONDON BROOK, BEVERLEY GATE, CORBANK, SPRING WEIR, FOCH ROSE.

Then left Goole at 8.30 a.m. for Thorne, where met Mr. Hanby, Engineer Superintendent. British Waterways have a small Depot here.

Then called upon Mr. Richard Dunston, of the shipbuilding firm of the same name, whom I had known in Valparaiso when he was there as a member of the Shipbuilding Mission under the chairmanship of Sir Wilfred Ayre. Mr. Dunston mentioned to me a Mr. Price who was a former Manager of Inland Waterways in this area, who was stated to have driven much traffic away due to his overbearing manner.

Mr. Dunston suggested the desirability of making a short branch to enable Markham Main Colliery to become water-connected.

Thence to Keadby Lock, where I was able to appreciate Mr. Dunston's problem of getting craft out into the river. The fairly large craft which his firm builds can only be unlocked at the very top of high tide, and clearance is very small. The locks are reported to be narrowing slightly, and there is always the danger that a ship might be 'nipped'. I am informed that to build a new lock would cost about £150,000. I also saw Keadby Bridge which was the subject of much controversial debate in the House of Commons recently, and the new power station which has been the subject of some newspaper controversy during the last few days.

We also paid a brief visit to Mr. Muddell's pumping station, and were greatly impressed by the size of the pumps, and their capacity 1900 tons per minute.

We next visited Long Sandall Lock, and had explained to us the new lock and the need for it; this has already been authorised and it will take larger barges and also straighten the Canal in this section. One unfortunate possibility is that the new lock might endanger the lock-keeper's house, which is of the picturesque type. At this point the River Don runs very near to the Canal, and is not an inspiring sight. Visited Doncaster Wharf and the coal staithes at Pasture Bridge, Mexborough. Here coal is loaded from

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lorries to craft for the Doncaster power station. It would be cheaper to deliver by road, but the C.E.A. apparently fear the public outcry which would result from sending so many trucks over A1 and through the main streets of Doncaster, and they apparently prefer to incur the extra cost, said to be about 1/2.5d. per ton.

In respect of this movement, British Waterways receive a toll of 4d. per ton and 2.5d. per ton for the use of the staithe, without having to provide any labour to man them.

We then saw the beginning of the Dearne & Dove Canal; one small section (the first) is still in use for supplying a glassworks; it is stated that these people tried to hold up British Waterways to ransom, but that the Waterways retorted by keeping the section open for navigation. One basin is a graveyard for old craft, and the rest of the Canal is derelict and we saw a part of it almost totally de-watered in front of the Manvers Main Colliery. It is quite evident that there is no future use for this particular Canal as such. Then to Rotherham Wharf (Mr. Roper: Depot Superintendent). Mr. Roper stated that at this Wharf it is possible to load 210 tons in 40 minutes. There is movement both upstream to Sheffield and downstream to Hull.

Thence repaired to the Royal Victoria Hotel, Sheffield, for lunch, where we were joined by Mr. Jespersen, Southern District Engineer, Mr. Welburn, North District Traffic Officer. After lunch visited British Waterways Traffic Depot at Sheffield Wharf, then to new line Chesterfield, where saw the terminus of the Chesterfield Canal. There is a very bad weed growth at this point, and the Canal is difficult to pick out in parts. It starts life as the River Rother, then divides. Visited various lengths of this Canal which found in bad condition; Norwood Tunnel collapsed long ago.

There was a very long stretch before arriving at Worksop. This looked thoroughly pleasant, and was obviously much frequented by anglers.

At Worksop, met Mr. Bagshaw, who is in charge of the wharf here. There are no canal activities, but Mr. Bagshaw says that the Canal is navigable down as far as the junction with the Trent at West Stockwith, and also above in the pleasant reaches to which I have just referred. There is much weed, however. According to Mr. Bagshaw some of this has very special fertilising qualities, and in fact he showed us some plants which he had fertilised by it and which certainly appeared to be very healthy. Mr. Bagshaw, stated to be 76 years of age, is full of energy and information, and is in fact quite a character. He provided me with an interesting description of the Canal, q.v.

From Worksop we proceeded to Retford, where a narrow lock was worked for our benefit. There was a narrow bridge over the lock with several people passing to and fro all the time.

From Retford proceeded to Barnby Moor, where spent the night at Ye Olde Bell Hotel.

Friday 10th August 1956

Left Barnby Moor in good weather at 8.45 a.m. and went direct to West Stockwith, which is where the Chesterfield Canal joins the River Trent. Although there is no traffic on the Chesterfield Canal proper, the first basin just inside the lock giving access to the Canal from the River is used for discharging craft, and also for parking pleasure craft. We witnessed one craft locking out; it was a tight fit, and as the tide was coming up the river very quickly the current caused thereby placed the barge in a very awkward diagonal position, half in the river and half in the lock, and hard up against the corner of the lock. However, she cleared without much difficulty, but made much more contact than I would like to see with a Pacific boat.

Passing West Stockwith, we saw a very interesting movement of craft up the river towards Nottingham. The very swift rising tide gave them an impressive turn of speed, and much skill was displayed in negotiating the hairpin bend just above Stockwith Lock.

From Stockwith we went to Gainsborough, where visited a large warehouse full of Batchelors Peas and other commodities waterborne from Hull.

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While in Gainsborough, an opportunity was taken to visit the old Hall in the centre of the town, which contains many historic relics.

We then visited Cromwell Weir and Lock. We examined the scheme for building the new weir below the present one to go straight across the river instead of the existing right-angled weir. Thence to Newark, where saw the Newark Town Lock, traffic depot and engineers' repair yard.

A new drydock is being constructed to take two craft; the old gate which obliges craft to enter the dock at right angles to the river will be abolished, and a new gate at a suitable angle is already in position. Modern and up-to-date repair shops exist and they are being enlarged.

Lunch at Clinton Arms, Newark, where joined by Mr. Muddell. (Clinton Arms was an old coaching house, and the place where we foregathered, now covered in by glass roofing, used to be the courtyard and stables.)

In the afternoon we visited Hazelford Weir (completely right-angled) and Hazelford Lock, which is on an island. Then to Stoke Lock, which had had a blow-out which might have cost several men their lives, as they were just about to start installing new gates (which we saw) when the blow-out occurred. By 'blow-out' is meant the pressure water from outside coming up through the bottom of the lock, and of course it gives no warning.

We then visited Holme Sluices, which is Mr. Muddell's masterpiece of flood control; a large bend has been taken out of the river by a straight cut, and large sluices erected which are automatically controlled and rise and lower themselves according to the level of the water. We also visited Holme Lock and saw a pleasure boat go through it. Likewise visited the lock-keeper's house, which had recently been vacated owing to the lock-keeper having been found out in pilferage. Incidentally, his wife, in a spirit of revenge, had done considerable damage to the building. Then proceeded to Trent Lane, Nottingham, British Waterways Wharf and Traffic Sub-Depot, where there is a very fine new warehouse which cost £15,000. Also saw several Nissen huts which Mr. Thomson stated he had purchased for £30. Then proceeded to Meadow Lane, where British Waterways have reclaimed a considerable quantity of land and are building a new warehouse. Pile-driving was going on on the river front, and steel piles were being used, and it is quite important development that is going on here.

Meadow Lane adjoins the Nottingham Canal entrance; the use of this Canal is essential to vessels going upstream to Leicester, as they cannot go through Nottingham by the Trent owing to an outcrop of rock in the City area. They therefore take this section of the Nottingham Canal as a "via obligata" bypassing the unnavigable part of the river and re-joining the River Trent higher up.

The entrance to the Grantham Canal is almost immediately opposite.

Stayed at Victoria Station Hotel, Nottingham.

Saturday, 11th August 1956

Went straight to Torksey and saw the tidal lock, the junction between the River Trent and the Fossdyke Navigation. Walked from the Lock down to the junction itself, the lock being about half a mile upstream. People were fishing here.

Then to Lincoln via Saxilby; stopped at Lincoln Depot just before Brayford Mere. (I 'phoned Liverpool from this office, and heard about Leicester's accident in Cape Town). Was greatly impressed by the very large number of swans on Brayford Mere, which is a much larger body of water than I had expected to find in Lincoln. There were also a large number of craft there, and preparations were being made for the reception of small craft taking part in the Waterways Association Rally.

Visited the High Bridge in Lincoln and then returned for a further look at Brayford Mere, which is where the Witham Navigation commences. Saw the Stamp End Lock, which was operated for our benefit; this has a guillotine gate at the upper end, electrically operated, and curved gates at the other end.

Lunch at the White Hart Hotel, Lincoln. Then visit to Boston, where saw the Grand Sluice and also visited

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the docks, and wondered why no traffic moves from there up the Navigation. There were a large number of pleasure boats on the Navigation. Then proceeded to Grantham, where saw the terminus of the Grantham Canal, which is closed to navigation. I saw many overgrown reaches of this Canal, which appears to serve no useful purpose, although quite a number of people were fishing.

Thence to Nottingham again, sighting on the way many sections of the Canal and the Denton & Knipton Reservoirs. On the way we had good views of Belvoir Castle and the Vale of Belvoir and the River Devon. We went through Bottesford (which is characterised by a striking crocheted spire) and Cotgrave Bridge to Gamston, where saw the old road going over the bridge, and the new road cut alongside it at a much lower level, traversing a low-level culverted bridge, which allowed of a dual carriageway in this particular area. Nottingham would like to take a portion of the Canal between here and the Trent to continue the dual carriageway.

Sunday 12th August 1956

Visited Nottingham Canal, which is dewatered from the lock above the bridge; higher up Nottingham Corporation have taken over about 4 miles of canal which they have in part filled in, and which is already built over, the Raleigh Works being on part (I saw this point later on today when returning to Leicester via Nottingham). This Canal is definitely of no use from one end to the other, with the exception of the section to which I have already referred as being a 'via obligata' to get through Nottingham; this particular section is properly known as the Beeston Canal.

Next visited Beeston Lock and Weir, to gain access to which we went through a very lovely garden belonging to one Bradshaw, a former Manager of the Trent Navigation, and saw the effects of a 'blow' on the Weir which resulted in Colonel Clifton collecting £7,000 indemnities from British Waterways. Thence to Trent Lock and entrance to the Erewash Canal.

At Trent Lock there is a workshop where lock gates are made for the whole of the Southern section; I saw one which was practically completed - a very fine job in oak.

There were some interesting machines, and one mortising machine was made to function for my benefit. This place has a small drydock, uncovered, which contained one craft about to be broken up. The Fisherman's Rest Inn is at this point, and on the opposite side of the river, a little lower down, is the entrance to the River Soar. The Erewash Canal has a good flow of water and the Stanton Ironworks take considerable quantities of water from the Erewash Canal. We drove through the Stanton Ironworks and saw their slag works; in these works they use the slag resulting from their smelting operations for making pipes. Some of the slag has been used for filling in their own Canal branch, which we saw partly filled in and piped to carry water. Thence to Barker's Lock, Ilkeston. This is a lovely lock, like a swimming pool. We also saw another lock (Stenson's) in which the lockkeeper's cottage is much lower than the lock itself, although the reverse used to be the case. Mining subsidence is the answer, it having been necessary to raise the level of the lock as the subsidence took place. Then saw the Nottingham Canal from Newton's Bridge. This bridge has been piped and appears to be quite efficient.

Langley Mill. This is the top end of the Erewash Canal, which receives its water from the River Erewash by a feeder which passes under the road. It has recently been made to follow a modified course in consequence of some development scheme of the local Water Board, which cut across the former supply line. We saw the pipes corresponding to this development scheme.

Begarlee Wharf, Cromford Canal. This is the extent of navigation of the Cromford Canal. We saw some derelict coal loading gear. The rest of the Canal is legally abandoned for navigation, but British Waterways have the obligation to keep it open for water supply to Butterley.

We saw the mouth of Butterley Tunnel, the tunnel itself having collapsed some time ago. The Canal is almost dry, and this is clearly a case of letting Nature take its course, or of filling it in to help Nature. It is suggested that this [Butterley] Reservoir is no longer necessary to supply water to Butterley, and

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that Codnor Park suffices. What is the position about fishing rights?

This beautiful aqueduct [Old Bridge Aqueduct] crosses road, rail and river; we approached it through some rather lovely cottages and saw a derelict boat in the water. We also walked across the aqueduct, which is fully watered in this part, and the surrounding country is truly lovely.

Whitstanwell. Walked along reaches of the Cromford, the Derwent River flowing rapidly down below; we saw the consequences of a "blow-out" in the Robin Hood section, near a house which is stated to have a certain reputation; this particular section of the Canal is without water.

Next to Lea Wood aqueduct, which is also very lovely, and the Nightingale Arm, or Lea Wood arm.

Visited the pumping station there, where a beam engine still works.

The Pinxton Arm (Pye Bridge), no longer navigable.

Moorgreen Reservoir. This is a very lovely Reservoir, with large numbers of coots. It supplies water for the Nottingham Canal - or rather, British Waterways have the right to impound water on this privately owned property. Then proceeded to Leicester, where spent the night at the Grand Hotel.

Monday 13th August 1956

Then Leicester. Met Mr. Tillotson, Depot Superintendent; visited Belgrave Wharf, which is on an arm of the Canal. There is a large warehouse, three storeys, containing both road-borne and water-borne traffic. The warehouse can receive and load either to/from water and land vehicles.

There is also a basin which used to belong to Fellows Morton, where canned tomatoes, etc. are now handled by water.

There was a lot of scrap iron in this yard belonging to a tenant of pre-Nationalisation days, of whom British Waterways cannot get rid. The iron is a nuisance, apart from being very unsightly.

Saw a supply of ivory button discs in store; these have come up from London by British Road Services; they used to come from London by canal, but now there is no service.

This year in May they handled 250 tons of steel from Leicester to London; they also took 60 tons of tomato paste from Leicester to London, but these two items have been the only traffic in two and a half years.

It is stated that the Foxton Locks constitute the bottleneck; water at Foxton Summit is also a snag as the tendency has been for the Southern Division to starve the North Eastern Division of water whenever there has been a shortage, obliging them to suspend navigation from time to time. Then proceeded to Barrow Lock. There is a pleasure park here between the Canal and the River, a sort of "seaside by the river". There were many caravans and a miniature railway. Then to Loughborough, where visited the wharf, but no waterborne traffic is handled here. Caught sight of the Loughborough Bell Tower.

Then proceeded to Kegworth flood lock, where joined motorboat "BARANNE" for the journey down the Soar to Trent Lock. The scenery on this section was very lovely. Swans, cygnets, herons, lovely houses and rolling meadows, in fact everything wholly unspoilt.

Through Ratcliffe Lock (saw Castle Donnington Power Station and Redhill Lock) and then disembarked at Trent Lock, and proceeded via Sawley Cut and Lock to Shardlow, which is the head of the Trent Navigation. Met Depot Superintendent Mr. Tacey. There are large warehouses here which handle 12/15,000 tons per annum in and out by land and water. Steel and wood pulp are imported from Hull, but no shipments originate here.

The warehouse is a very old one, and should be replaced by a new one of the same type as Trent Lane.

This is the distribution point for Leicester, Birmingham and Nottingham. A beam in the warehouse bears the following carving: "This place was built in 1815". One shed is let to the Rolls Royce people. Mr.

Thomson is anxious to make an extension to Tamworth.

Here we saw the beginning of the Trent and Mersey Canal. Thence proceeded to Midland Hotel, Derby, for lunch, after which visited the Derby Canal. We were piloted on this visit by Mr. Grimwood Taylor, the

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Canal being a private one. The Canal is very derelict in most parts. There is a large weir which holds up water making a sort of pleasure pond, and there seems to be some doubt as to who is responsible for its upkeep. The abandonment of the Canal is practically complete, but Mr. Grimwood Taylor says that there are still a few interests which have to be conciliated. He stated, incidentally, that he had offered to hand over the Canal to the Corporation, plus £10,000, but that the offer was refused. Proceeded from here to Caldy.

Monday 20th August 1956

Left Caldy at 8 a.m., called at office, then to Manchester where joined Mr. Marsh and Mr. G.G.D.Hill. Ashton Canal, Stockport Branch. We saw the terminal basin of this Canal, which is in a state of dereliction. Stockport Council will ultimately take over, but there is a small branch leading from the Basin which will be retained by the Mill there for fire-fighting. The keystone of the old warehouse carries the inscription "A.C.C. 1823".

Visited further sections of this Canal open for delivery of water only; bridges in some parts have been culverted. In one of these sections saw a Lilliput dredger (portable) which is used to ensure the free flow of water.

Then visited the main Repair Depot at Gorton, where there is also a drydock. Buildings are in a very poor state of repair; the main warehouse has a large watertank on top, and this is a most valuable asset to the Canal as it is let to the Railway at a high rental. Marsh explained that the Board of Survey is misleading in reporting the financial results of this particular section, since it ascribes to the Hollinwood branch the revenue derived from this section, whereas the two should be considered jointly. Also saw Farmore Bridge and locks.

Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal. Saw the beginning of this at Bury, where the River Irwell is in spate, running alongside. There was a large stock pile of coal on land between the two branches of the Canal which is moved across to the factory in barges - only a few yards. Saw coal containers being discharged from trucks straight into warehouse. This Canal draws water from the Irwell, when the level is sufficient, but is otherwise fed from the Elton Reservoir, which has a statutory right to sell water.

Pleasure boats use this Canal.

Ratcliffe. Saw the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal from a bridge in the town, then visited the section from Ladyshore to Nob End; a considerable portion of the Canal above Nob End has been filled in and actually built over by Fletchers, the paper people. Water has been piped in the bed of the filled-in part by means of a 9-inch pipe.

The Prestolee Locks at the end of the Bury arm were being demolished and large blocks of beautiful masonry were being removed by contractors prior to filling in the locks, which British Waterways are under obligation to do. The part below the demolished locks still had water in it, and some swans were disporting themselves there.

At Nob End is the junction with the Bolton Canal, and a very long arched aqueduct was visible. In Marsh's view, and as is evidently the case, the whole of this Canal should be disposed of.

Returned to Manchester for lunch, then to Leeds & Liverpool Canal, Leigh Branch.

The warehouse at Leigh is let for £750 per annum. No traffic passes over this section.

The mining subsidence on this section is very impressive, and goes anything up to 30 feet. We saw men puddling and punning clay.

We also walked along the bank for a considerable length where bulldozing work was being done, and saw the loading point where 600 tons of coal are shipped daily from the Bickershaw Colliery to Westwood Power Station.

Two locks were eliminated at Plank Lane in consequence of mining subsidence.

At Wigan, saw some of the 23 locks, also the Westwood Power Station, where craft were being

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discharged of coal by grab.

The repair depot here is to be replaced and enlarged, with a view to concentrating all work here, including carpentry from Burnley, although the pile-making plant there will continue to operate. There were several craft in drydock here. Thence to the Hill Cliff Hydro, Stockton Heath, near Warrington, where spent the night. Mr. Corbett joined the party here.

Tuesday 21st August 1956

Weaver Navigation. Left Hotel at 9 a.m. for Weston Point, having a view of Preston Brook on the way. At Weston Point inspected the docks and warehouses, and observed large quantities of china clay and stone for the Potteries, pebbles from France also spelter and copper from the Midlands. Some copper was being loaded to a narrow boat from our "SALINAS".

Some of the sheds were built in 1936 and 1938, and the newest in 1949. They are very good, having been specially designed in sections for the stowage of the bulk materials particularly handled by this Depot that is felspar, bulk silica, bagged cement, china clay, etc.etc. Then proceeded to Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge and saw the Bridge in action. The turning column floats in a caisson of water, and is operated by an amazingly small amount of electrical current.

Then to Acton Bridge, where had coffee and embarked on the motor launch "FRANCE HAYHURST" through Saltersford Locks, Winnington Bridge, passing the Anderton Lift to Northwich. Visited the repair depot here and observed that all the stores were very neatly arranged. Lunch at the Smoker Inn, Plumley, near Northwich. After lunch went to the top of the Anderton Lift, and as two narrow boats were about to ascend, we went below and joined them, since my colleagues had not had the experience of going up the Lift.

Thence to Wincham and Marston, where saw again the holes left by pit shafts very near the Canal which I had already seen with Sir Reginald Kerr, and which endanger the Canal to such an extent that a new cut has been projected, and is to be carried into effect in the near future, which would have the result of leaving these danger points well away from the Canal. There is a narrow aqueduct quite near here which I had already seen going down the Canal with the General a few weeks ago, and which appears to be a bottleneck.

At Middlewich, saw junction of the Trent & Mersey Canal with the Shropshire Union (Wheelock Locks). Then to Thurlwood Lock. This has been destroyed so often by subsidence that a new caisson lock is to be installed and isolated from direct contact with the bottom and sides. Mr. Ives joined us here; we were supposed to have met him at Barnton Tunnel but we missed him there owing to our having gone up the Anderton Lift, so losing a considerable amount of time. Then saw the junction with the Macclesfield Canal, and afterwards the entrance to the two Harecastle Tunnels; the old one was built by Brindley; it is not known now whether it is still passable or not. The new one is in use and was built by Telford. It is stated that there is some subsidence which is being dealt with, and the intention is to remove the towing path, giving extra width and so extra height at the sides. Later on, I saw the other end of the two tunnels, and the ventilating fans which ventilate the new tunnel were made to operate for our benefit. Then to the North Stafford Hotel, Stoke-on-Trent, where Mr. Muddell joined the party.

Wednesday 22nd August 1956

Visited the Caldon Canal, i.e. the Caldon Branch of the Trent & Mersey. It was here that a length was cleared at an expense of £5,000 to enable the Willow Wren people to transit, they stating that they could do business but could not navigate owing to there not being sufficient water; in the event, however, no traffic has resulted. This Canal is primarily a feeder for the Trent & Mersey, and Mr. Marsh will be quite happy to have it closed to navigation and weired. The Burslem Arm is let to the Mersey Weaver & Ship Canal Carrying Co. Considerable quantities of china clay are stored here.

Committee of Inquiry into Inland Waterways, 1956

Record of visits made by Mr. H. Leslie Bowes to the various canals

Visited the Mersey Weaver Work Shop, and met Mr. Shirley. Showed us with some pride his workshops, which I thought were extremely untidy, and several craft under repair. While we were there, one narrow boat was raised by electric winches.

Saw the old Newcastle Canal, which was taken over by Stoke County Council and turned into a boulevard with trees, plants, lawns, etc. This is the perfect example of how to dispose of a Canal no longer needed for any other useful purpose.

Paused at Meaford Power Station, which is not using the Canal. Coal supplies are drawn from Hearne Heath Colliery; according to Mr. Marsh the power plant was quite willing to receive the coal by water, but the National Coal Board were not willing to co-operate.

Stone. Visited repair yard, with three drydocks. This is the Depot for Wyatt's pleasure boats, and Rolt's old boat was pointed out to us.

Leahall Colliery, We saw construction work proceeding on this new colliery.

There is said to be no southbound traffic on this section of the Canal, just a little northbound.

Fradley Junction. This is the junction of the Trent & Mersey and the Coventry Canals.

Birmingham Canal, Hatherton Branch. Is closed to navigation, but has not been formally abandoned. We saw a very long flight of locks here.

Great Haywood. Junction of the Trent & Mersey and the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal.

Hatherton Branch of the Staffs. & Worcs. Canal closed to navigation but needed for water. Lunch at the George Hotel, Lichfield.

Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal. Visited the Gailey Reservoirs, Higher and Lower; the lower of these is a bird sanctuary, and the two are very lovely.

Calfheath Reservoir. This is let for boating purposes. From here the Summit Pound of the Canal 8 miles long to the first lock, where we visited pleasure passenger craft belonging to Mr. E. Thomas. We met Mrs. Thomas. Mr. Thomas is stated to be building many pleasure craft for hire; he is reputed to have made a large fortune out of waterborne transport, and is evidently very enterprising.

Atherley Junction. This is the junction of the Staffs. & Worcs. Canal with the Shropshire Union. Here we were joined by Mr. George Hughes, Manager of the South Western Division, and Mr. F.G.B. Clayton, Engineer of the Division.

We met Mr. Lomas, who is in charge of the post, and who was very enthusiastic regarding Canal activities. He told us of the increase in fishing permits, and showed us a large stack of remittances which he had received that very afternoon. Pleasure craft also numerous, and this Canal evidently has a very high amenity value.

We then proceeded to Himley House Hotel, Himley, near Dudley, where an excellent meal was served in a private room.

Thursday 23rd August 1956

We were joined by Mr. Manley, the local Superintendent.

Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal. Greensforge Lock & Bridge. Here we saw a horse-drawn boat transit the Lock, loaded with steel etc. for Stourbridge and Swindon. The upper section of this Canal has very little traffic, but a high amenity value.

Stewponey Lock & Bridge. Here I saw for the first time a circular weir.

Kinver Bridge & Lock. There were some pleasure craft moored here, dominated by a very lovely church perched on high.

Maintenance of this Canal is stated to be just sufficient to keep it going, but it is gradually deteriorating.

Stourbridge Canal. This Canal has now no traffic. It has a flight of 16 locks, and it is recommended that it be closed and re-integrated with the land, up to Parkhead Locks at the junction with the Birmingham Canal.

Committee of Inquiry into Inland Waterways, 1956

Record of visits made by Mr. H. Leslie Bowes to the various canals

Birmingham Canal. Bloomfield Bridge. The length of canal from here to the junction with the Bradley Locks has been abandoned. Part above the Bridge is being de-watered and filled in, and has been sold. (Mr. Muddell noticed some trapped fish here in consequence of the de-watering operation).

Summerhill Bridge. A length here has been sold to Tipton Council, between here and the last bridge - the price is stated to be £67,000.

Walsall Power Station. We saw a large number of narrow boats delivering coal here.

Rushall Branch. Perry Barr Locks. Again saw a horse-drawn boat. This canal takes coal to Neachells Power Station. Lunch at Grosvenor Hotel, Birmingham.

Sherborne Street Depot, Birmingham. There are large quantities of Braden Copper in store here, as well as aluminium, cocoa, tunny fish, Persil etc. There was another small warehouse with plasterboard and synthetic rubber, and yet another small one has been let for three guineas a week.

Worcester & Birmingham Canal. Hopwood Bridge. We saw a pleasure boat in the Canal here, something like a water bus; they stated that 1500 passengers have been carried on short runs this season, showing a profit of £150. The run goes through the West Hill tunnel, 300 yards long. This stretch of canal has a very high amenity value. It carries some commercial traffic originating in other Divisions, and going beyond this one, but apparently has no originating traffic.

Tardebigge Bridge. There is a repair depot here, and we saw several residents' boats at anchor. There are no locks between here and Birmingham, 15 miles away. Down to Worcester, however, there is a very long flight of locks. The entrance to Tardebigge Tunnel is here (we passed an old Georgian house to see this). This section carries a little commercial traffic, but not much.

Worcester. The Worcester & Birmingham Canal joins the Severn here. We visited Diglis Wharf and Docks. Noticed half-ton slabs of copper, and also bars of aluminium, etc. S.S. "SEVERNSIDE" was alongside.

Much land has been reclaimed here, and developed, and more reclaiming is under contemplation. There are two locks, and the smaller of them is to be enlarged in order to speed up the turn-round, It is stated that last year there were handled above Gloucester about 430,000 tons of petroleum, and 153,000 tons of general cargo. From Worcester we repaired to the New Inn, Gloucester, where we were joined by Sir Reginald Kerr.

We visited Gloucester docks extensively; greatly impressed by the organisation. Saw drydocks and pumping station, warehouses, church within the dock, etc. Then embarked for Sharpness where also inspected thoroughly all the dock installations. Trip made on board motor yacht RISGA, and lunch with Sir Reginald on board. Amongst the Vessels at anchor at Sharpness saw S.S.HOP, Norwegian; AUDENTIA, German, and STEFAN, Swedish, discharging lumber and other goods. From here returned to Gloucester by road and so straight back to Caldy.