

# IWAKES NEWS

Spring 2008

Issue No 23



*Charlie Dimmock - On the Thames & Medway Canal*

**Kent & East Sussex Branch**

# Forthcoming Events

## **Thur 28th February 2008: 8:00pm: Branch and Region AGMs**

St Nicholas' Church Hall, Poplar Grove, Maidstone.

(A revised Branch AGM Agenda is on page 4)

Plus **Roy Sutton's** slides from around the branch (& KESCRG).

## **Sat 15th March 2008: 9:30am: Waterway Clean Up**

Organised jointly with Thames & Medway Canal Association.

Meet at Mark Lane, Gravesend. Please wear working clothes, with boots and gloves. Any other gear needed will be provided.

Please bring a lunch and flask. Nearest loos at the Promenade.

## **Sat 26th April 2008: Royal Gunpowder Works**

Meet 11:00am at the Works car-park at Waltham Abbey.

Please contact Sue Schweiso (see back page) for group booking and to request or offer a lift (with suggested fuel cost of £4 pp).

## **Sun 18th May 2008: Thames & Medway Canal Open Day**

Mark Lane, Gravesend.

Organised by Thames & Medway Canal Association as part of Gravesham Heritage Festival (17th May to 1st June).

## **Sat 24th May 2008: Model Boats Display**

St George's Church, Gravesend.

TMCA have been asked to participate but do not have a boat.

If you are, or know, a model boat enthusiast who could help then please contact Bernard Snell (see back page).

## **Sat 6th & Sun 7th June 2008: KESCRG visit Isfield Lock**

If you would like to join in for a day (or two) of heavy restoration work please contact Roy Sutton (see back page).

## **Sat 26th & Sun 27th July 2008: Maidstone River Festival**

A stand run jointly with Medway River Users Association.

The festival is held along the river downstream of the Palace.

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## **Inland Waterways of Kent, Tenterden, Tues 9th Oct.**

Over 30 members enjoyed John Elderton's talk and excellent selection of slides. Many the writer had not seen before, including a wonderful shot of about 12 barges moored at Strood. First he talked about the Kentish Stour that originally ran to Canterbury through two flash locks above Fordwich. It was promoted by an Act of 1514 and a subsequent Act of 1825. For centuries Fordwich was the Port of Canterbury when the adjoining Little

Stour was also partly navigable. We then moved to Dartford Creek, Faversham, Penshurst Navigation, Royal Military Canal, River Rother and Thames & Medway Canal.

He went on to speak about some canals that never came to fruition, including the Kent and Sussex Junction Canal of 1802, around Yalding and Headcorn and the Weald of Kent Canal, of 1812, which would have run from Branbridges on the River Medway to Appledore on the RMC with many branches. This could have meant Appledore becoming a canal town, like Stourport, with narrowboats floating through it instead of juggernauts. So we Kentish folk wouldn't have to travel so far for our boating opportunities.

## **Curator of Time, Strood, Thursday 8th November**

Thirty people at the very nice surroundings of the newly revamped Strood Yacht Club were enthralled by David Rooney, the Curator of Time at the Royal Greenwich Observatory. Young Mr Rooney put so much into his talk that this writer had a job to keep up with him, but he was nowhere near hard going. Astronomers moved out of the observatory in 1959 because London smog obscured the sky. It is now a free museum, with a new Gallery of Time, and we were encouraged to visit. (At which some wag said he would visit twice at two for the price of one). The Observatory is built on a hill, so sailors could set their timepieces before leaving the Thames for the open sea and beyond. David told us that the time ball at Deal served the same purpose but Greenwich was first.

He showed us slides from his collection of old postcards, with Edwardian ladies and gentlemen at the Meridian Line behaving more sedately than people nowadays (who must jump over the line, pull faces, etc). For us boaters he mentioned the Rugby Radio Station, built in 1920 at Hillmorton Locks. It has recently been taken off air and largely demolished. David recently rescued an original 1940s Quartz Digital clock, one of only two working in the world, which had passed through a couple of skips. Luckily he knew a man who could repair it and it now clicks and flashes beautifully; resplendent at the museum. The Observatory displays a green laser beam along the Meridian Line which can be seen for forty miles in good circumstances. Recently Barratt Homes built a high-rise apartment and asked it be moved because it shone into someone's kitchen. We all thought David was an outstanding speaker and plenty of questions followed.

## **France 2007 & past events, Gravesend, Thur 6th Dec**

IWA, Thames & Medway Canal Association members and some new faces gathered at Gravesend Sailing Club for a pre-Christmas get-together. Bernard described his and Joyce's trip to France with their trailable Wilderness boat and five or six others of the Wilderness Boat Club, whose members always seem to have great fun and adventures. They put in at Le Mans (of motor-racing fame). It has an outstanding cathedral, very difficult to photograph from ground level, and a spectacular evening light show on the old city walls (so good they watched it twice). Bernard showed us pictures of many chateaux, lovely mills by the riverside and pretty locks (many worked by students on vacation). Some of the sunsets and sunrises were outstanding.

We broke for tea and nibbles and to admire the display prepared by Brian and Maureen Amos of recent events along the canal. Bernard then screened a digital presentation of events around our area, including the IWA Jubilee visit last year and Charlie Dimmock's visit to the Thames & Medway. We all appreciated Bernard and Joyce's work (with their brother and sister-in-law) in putting together this entertaining programme. *Angela Acott*

# Chairman's Piece

Since the last IWAKES News was published, your Committee have spent some time carefully considering the results of the recent Opinion Survey. From the Survey it is clear that your overriding concern is that we do all we can to ensure that navigations are not threatened by local development. In order to do this most effectively we need your help. Although we have nominated Committee Members who represent particular navigations in our area they need support. So if you hear of or know of any development being proposed that may impact our waterways please let us know. We may already be aware, but it is better to be alerted twice to your concerns than not at all!

Our Winter programme of events is in full swing and I hope that, by varying the location of our meetings, more of you are able to attend. We are now busily planning our 08/09 programme and we have some interesting topics coming up. Remember, this is your Association and as we come up to our AGM (Agenda below) please think whether you could join our Committee or whether you could offer assistance in some other way. I look forward to meeting you at our AGM in February.

*Mike Hannan*

## Treasurer's Report

At the end of the financial year on 31st December 2007 we held a balance of £3772.86 of which £1083.00 remains ring-fenced for Thames and Medway Canal Association. We made a small profit on the year of £185.00. Full accounts will be available at the AGM.

*Bernard and Joyce Snell*

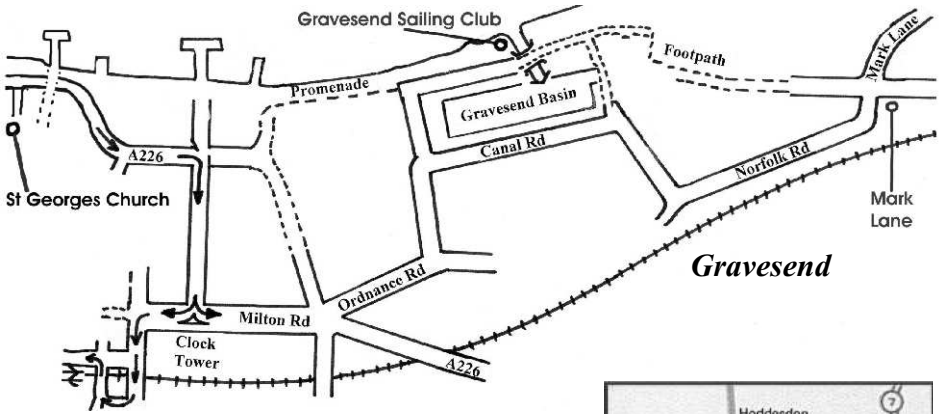
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### **KENT & EAST SUSSEX BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

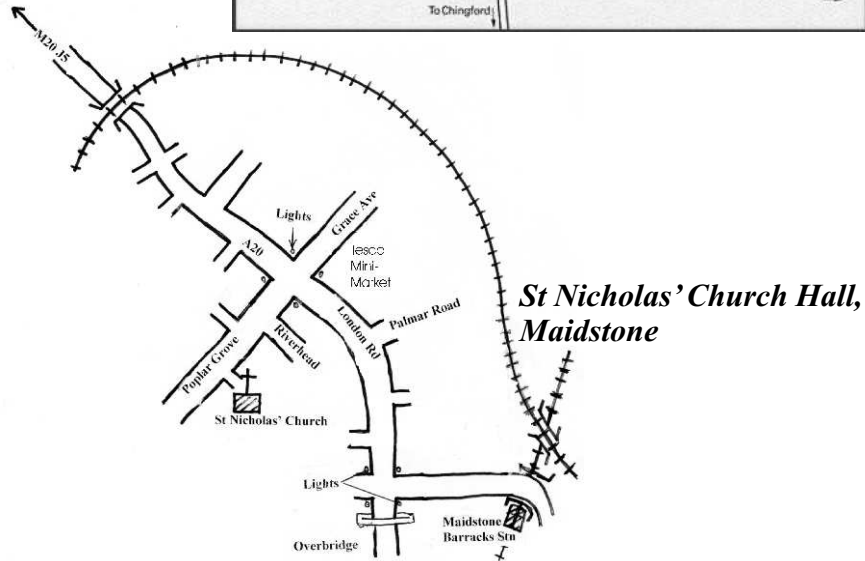
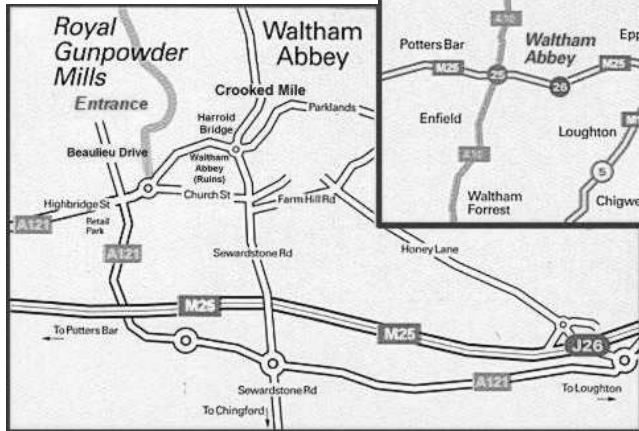
#### **Agenda**

*(Revised to follow byelaws approved by IWA Council on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2007)*

- 1) Apologies for Absence.
  - 2) Approval (following amendment if necessary) of the minutes of the AGM of 22nd February 2007.
  - 3) Matters arising from the minutes (and not under other agenda items).
  - 4) Branch Chairman's Report.
  - 5) Branch Treasurer's Report and Accounts.
  - 6) Any items for discussion of which the Branch Chairman has been notified in writing by 10th January 2008.
  - 7) Election of Branch Committee Members. (Members are elected for a three year term but are not obliged to serve a full term. Members retiring after three years are eligible for re-election. Nomination is no longer necessary. Simply contact the Chairman to apply to join the Committee or do so at the AGM.)
- (A Committee meeting will be held immediately after the AGM to elect Branch Officers)



**Royal  
Gunpowder  
Mills**



# Sussex Ouse

Winter and access restraints have stopped work at the Isfield Lock site until April or May next year. We have already set targets for 2008. Once we are able to access the site, scaffolding will be erected on the east wall in preparation for the repairs necessary to the brickwork, a task that will dominate the summer work schedule. KESCRG will make a very welcome return visit over the weekend of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> June to assist mainly in the repair of the east wall. Prior to that visit it is planned to repair damage discovered to the invert below the lower gates. *Hazel Lintott*

# Thames & Medway Canal



The Thames and Medway Canal mid week clean up team had a surprise recently when a full scale television production team appeared along the towpath together with BBC's Ground Force gardening star Charlie Dimmock. During a break from the litter picking Thames and Medway Canal's chairman Brian Macknish talked to her about the ongoing work of the Association towards restoration and the future aspirations of the Canal. Charlie Dimmock and the team are making a documentary on the 'Saxon Shore Way' with Cloud One TV for Meridian and Anglia television to be screened early next year. Brian and his team usually meet for the clean up's every Tuesday morning and would welcome any new faces.

Gravesend based volunteers are needed for other tasks, including planning and project management. Perhaps you are past the first flush of retirement and looking for a hobby. Speak to Brian on 01732 823725 to talk it through. More information on the website at [www.thamesmedway.co.uk](http://www.thamesmedway.co.uk) *Bernard Snell*

# Royal Military Canal

Kent Highway Services are currently constructing a new bridge over the Royal Military Canal (RMC) at Bilsington. The original bridge failed its structural assessment and was beyond economic repair and strengthening to meet current standards to cope with changes in traffic loads. A temporary adjacent bridge was constructed to minimise disruption to traffic flows during the demolition of the old bridge and construction of a new one. The new bridge is slightly wider with both parapets set back from the traffic to enable routine maintenance to be carried-out without having to close the road. Visibility from the side junctions is also improved. The headroom under the bridge remains the same as the original structure. Construction started on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2007 and is scheduled for completion on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008.

Another new bridge is to replace Stone Reaches bridge which crosses the Canal Cut on Boltolph's Bridge Road. The existing structure was found to be under strength for full traffic use and has been operating with temporary barriers recently and weight restrictions for a number of years. It was similarly found to be beyond economic repair. The bridge is being built to modern standards and will be suitable for all normally permitted road vehicles, without a weight restriction. The new structure is being built adjacent to the existing one, with the old bridge remaining open to pedestrians and, for the majority of the time, to existing vehicular use. It was intended to complete the works in two phases with a break over the spring and summer but, in order to minimise disruption to the area, it is now hoped the work can be completed as one, subject to weather and water levels. Construction started early in September 2007 and is scheduled for completion in either summer 2008 or winter 2008 dependent on the phasing. *Alan Hales*

## Dartford & Crayford

We still do not have a representative for this navigation. That means we have no-one on the ground to keep an eye on things (especially as Dartford plans to regenerate the town centre along the River corridor). The Representative can do as little or as much as they want. Please call our Chairman (see back page) to volunteer. You do not have to attend meetings!

## River Medway

Bernard Snell is overloaded with other things (including being our Thames & Medway Representative and our Treasurer) and wishes to retire as Medway Representative. Do you boat on the River? Do you live by it? Do you walk along it? In any of these events would you volunteer to be our Medway Representative? It means attending two meetings a year (or more if you wish). Again, please call our Chairman to volunteer.

# Your Committee

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The IWA may not agree with opinions expressed in this newsletter, but encourages publication as a matter of interest. Nothing printed may be construed as policy or an official announcement unless stated otherwise. The IWA accepts no liability for any matter in this newsletter.

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