

Royal Canal News

No.2. JANUARY,
1975

RESTORATION - THE WAY AHEAD

The past year was a momentous one for the Royal Canal and the developments that took place rose directly from the public meeting held in Maynooth at the end of 1973. There is every reason to be thankful to the organizers of that meeting for bringing together, at what has since transpired was a crucial time in the canal's history, representatives of so many interested bodies.

The events of 1974 are recorded in this and the September newsletter, but what of the future? Voluntary participation in restoration work is increasing and will undoubtedly continue to do so, and further assistance from C.I.E. is almost certainly assured. What is needed most urgently, though, is the commitment of the Government to the eventual restoration of the whole of the canal.

Restoration of the 53 miles from Dublin to Mullingar is implied in the decision of the Minister for Local Government regarding Mc Nead's Bridge, but the remaining 37 miles form the vital link to the Shannon. The first 17 miles of the latter section from Mullingar, via Ballinea, Shandonagh, Coolnahay and Ballynacargy to Abbeyshrule have, until now, remained free from obstructions to possible future navigation. It is imperative that this situation be maintained and that Westmeath County Council be persuaded to think again about their plans to culvert the canal at Shandonagh and Ballinea bridges. Unfortunately, the final 20 miles from Abbeyshrule to Cloondara have suffered at the hands of Longford County Council but the position is nowhere near as bad as would appear at first sight. There are six low-level road crossings but these are not bridges; they are only pipes under a new section of roadway. They were constructed at minimal cost and should correctly be considered as temporary structures to be replaced by proper bridges as restoration work proceeds.

It cannot be restated too frequently that the Royal Canal has enormous potential as a local and national recreational amenity and a tourism potential which could contribute substantially to the prosperity of the towns and villages through which it passes. This potential can be realised at very little cost to the community and the prospect of building six or seven new bridges on the western section of the canal must not be allowed to daunt the decision makers. The way ahead is clear; all that is needed is for the decision to be made

ENFIELD

The local Development Association are very concerned about the future of the Royal Canal as they have been working on it for over five years. Great progress has been made and, thanks to the help of the Inland fisheries Trust, the town is recognised as a major coarse angling centre.

In 1973 Meath County Council rebuilt and surfaced part of the towpath and an extension has since been sanctioned. The Amenity Committee of the Council has examined the 6-mile length between Cloncurry Bridge and Moyvalley and it is planned to develop it as a linear park cum nature trail.

A canoe club is planned following a successful canoeing demonstration held during the year.

MULLINGAR

On 8th November Mullingar Branch I.W.A.1 held a film show and public meeting in the Greville Arms Hotel. There was a good attendance to view Douglas Heard's film of a journey through the Royal Canal in 1955. The discussion was certainly lively and Westmeath County Council's plans for a culvert on the canal at Ballinea and Shandonagh bridges were justly condemned. Councillors present pledged their support for the restoration of the Canal

MOYVALLEY

Reconstruction of the road bridge over the Royal Canal at Moyvalley will allow for full navigational width, and headroom. The work here is being done by Kildare County Council.

LEIXLIP & MAYNOOTH

Much of the overgrowth in the vicinity of the 13th Lock at Blakestown has been cleared by a voluntary work party, and C.I.E maintenance staff have been carrying out repairs to the lock gates. It is hoped that once the water level is restored that the weeds will be cut in the levels above and below the lock and in Maynooth harbour. The harbour appears to be badly silted-up and in need of dredging. If cleaned in this way it could be put to many uses, particularly for the instruction of beginners in the handling of small boats and canoes and water safety in general. Perhaps Kildare County Council could assist with developing the harbour area as a local amenity

BLANCHARDSTOWN, CASTLEKNOCK & CLONSILLA

Over 70 people attended the Royal Canal Amenity Group's first public meeting held

on the 27th November. Douglas Heard's film again set the scene and was followed by a resume of the Group's activities and aims. After a full discussion of many aspects of restoration of the development of the amenity potential of the canal in the area, the evening brought to a most enjoyable conclusion by the showing of the film 'Journey Down the Barrow' by Liam Foynes and Des Barry.

C.I.E. has recently completed the repair of the upper gates of both the 11th and 12th locks, cleaned out the 12th lock and the area surrounding it, and cleared the overgrowth from about half a mile of towpath between Castleknock and Coolmine. The Amenity Group holds a regular weekly working session of a Saturday afternoon and is presently clearing the towpath between Coolmine and Porterstown. It is hoped to establish a canoe club in the near future, a nature trail is planned in collaboration with 18 Dublin Naturalists field Club, and in the Spring the Inland Fisheries Trust will assess the coarse angling potential of the canal.

DUBLIN

Junior Chamber

Junior Chamber Dublin's involvement in the revival of interest in the canals commenced in late 1973. A Canals Committee was set up and 18 activities of this Committee culminated in reception on board the Robertstown barge at Meispil Road, during Junior Chamber week in October, 1974. In his speech, the Chairman stated that as a non-aligned group the Junior Chamber Dublin 'must put all the pressure it can command to impress on those concerned that the canals, both the Grand and Royal, must be fully developed to serve the recreational needs for the citizens of Dublin.

We wish the Committee well, and look forward to the opportunity of cooperating with the Junior Chamber in the work of restoration and development of the Royal Canal in Dublin.

LIVING CITY GROUP

The Group published recently a 22-point plan for the involvement of the community in future planning of Dublin City and County.

The plan suggests that a study be made of the use, for transport and amenities of Dublin's rivers and canals and that all roads plans, past present and proposed, in conflict with these purposes, will cease to operate. The group is supported in these aims by the I.W.A.I.

NORTH CITY

The clean-up of the Binn's Bridge to Shandon Mills section of the canal by C.I.E. last summer was in no small way a result of the activities of the Iona Residents Committee. Following the clean-up the Committee launched an appeal for funds from local of the Iona Residents and Business Interests towards an amenity scheme. An excellent response is reported and, in addition C.I.E. is to help by planting a number of trees along the Whitworth Road section.

These efforts of the Iona Residents committee certainly deserve the full support of North-side Dubliners.

BOAT RALLY WEEKEND 26TH 27TH APRIL 1975

A rally is being organized by the Dublin and Athlone branches of I.W.A.I., in collaboration with Enfield Industrial Development Association. It will be held on the 20 mile level between Thomastown (18th lock and Ferns Lock (17th), near Kilcock, with Enfield the venue for the Saturday night. Full details will be available shortly from Liam Foynes, Derrybeg, River Road, Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin. (01) 383024.

PLEASE SUPPORT THIS EVENT if you have a boat suitable for launching from the bank.

An exploratory trip on the 11 miles from Thomastown to Moyvalley was made on 9th November by members of I.W.A.I. and the Royal Canal Amenity Group. A variety of outboard-propelled craft and two canoes made up the flotilla and the condition of this western half of the level was found to be excellent throughout. There was ample depth of water and weed was only a minor problem. There are no obstructions and no polythene bags. Boats drawing up to 2 feet will have no problem navigating this section and it is intended to explore the remaining 9 miles by boat before April to ensure all is well.

BOAT SHOW, R.D.S., BALL'S BRIDGE, 2-9 MARCH

There will be a Royal Canal exhibit on the I.W.A.I. stand. In 1974 students at the School of Architecture, Bolton Street, made a study of the canal in Dublin City and County and it is hoped to display some of the material prepared for the study.

STOP PRESS

Abbeysrule Development Association intends to commence cleaning-up the Royal Canal through the village, in the next few weeks. Athlone Branch I.W.A.I. is to sponsor the dredging of a section of the canal and it is hoped that other bodies will assist in a similar way. This is a preliminary to a more comprehensive restoration scheme which, it is hoped, can be implemented in the near future.

Restoration of the Royal Canal harbour features in plans prepared by the Maynooth Development association for a recreation complex in the town. A model of the suggested development was unveiled at a reception held in Moyglare House on 12th January.

At the A.G.M. of the Dublin Branch I.W.A.I. the go-ahead was given to the building of a passenger launch for use on the canals. This will enable trips to be made on the 7-mile level between Blanchardstown and Leixlip on the Royal Canal. It is hoped it will prove to be a tourist attraction. Commencing 1976.

Royal Canal News is compiled by the Hon. Secretary, Royal Canal Committee, Inland Waterways Association of Ireland, 39, Park View, Castleknock, Co. Dublin.