

# ROYAL CANAL NEWS

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## CHANGE AT THE TOP

A Cabinet reshuffle was announced at the beginning of December, resulting in the Minister for Transport and Power, Mr. Barry, moving to the Department of Education and his place in Kildare Street being taken by Mr. Tom Fitzpatrick, previously Minister for Lands. How these moves will affect the future of the Royal Canal remains to be seen but it is understood that, in the first instance, the Minister intends to carry on where his predecessor left off and settle the question of the future ownership of the canals.

There can be no doubt at all that there is considerable and widespread support for full restoration of the Royal Canal and everything possible must be done to encourage the many local groups and organisations willing to carry out voluntary restoration work. The Government has nothing to lose and the community has much to gain by the Minister issuing an unequivocal statement that nothing further will be permitted to be done to the canal that will in any way jeopardise its eventual restoration and that it is the intention of the Government to eventually reopen the canal to navigation from the Liffey to the Shannon.

It is obvious that the condition of the canal is deteriorating much more rapidly in that part, west of Mullingar, which has been de-watered. Restoration of water to this section is urgently needed to arrest further decay so please Mr. Fitzpatrick, give us the green light to go ahead with restoration work as soon as possible in 1977. The longer the delay, the more difficult the task will be. We agree the question of the future ownership of the canals is an important one - but even more important is to preserve the Royal Canal.

### BOAT SLIP NEAR LEIXLIP

Work on the boat slip is well underway. A few problems were encountered, the main one being that although the canal immediately above the 12th lock is virtually empty, little impression has been made on the water level at the site of the slip, some five miles upstream. It has thus been necessary to resort to a pre-casting technique for the lower part of the slip. The concrete planks were due to be placed in position at the beginning of January, following which the upper section will be cast in-situ.

Voluntary labour for this project is being provided by the Royal Canal Amenity Group and the work is being carried out as a joint project with the Dublin Branch of the 'I.W.A.I. An opening ceremony is planned for the Spring.

So far two events have been held to raise funds towards the cost of the boat slip. On 11th November, Kildare Association of An Taisce organised a Supper and Film Show in Osberstown House, Naas. Three films were shown and, despite the dense fog, well over 100 members and friends travelled from near and far to partake of a most enjoyable night. The sum of £58 was donated to the boat-slip fund as a result of this event, for which many

The venue was the Belvedere Pavilion at Ashtown. There were two main attractions, the E.A.H.Y. award winning film by Sean Brophy and Douglas Heard's ever popular "1955 Royal Canal Voyage". There was also a supporting programme of films of local interest including one of the October Rally on the 12th level of the Royal Canal. The net proceeds of the show amounted to £25 and thanks are due to those who showed films and to Mr. Eddie Slane who was responsible for the organisation

### COUNTY KILDARE DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVISION

In reply to a letter from the Council's Planning Officer the I.W.A.I. has submitted suggestions relating to the restoration and development, as a recreational amenity, of the sixteen miles of the Royal Canal flowing through County Kildare.

Nine of the sixteen miles, from the 13th lock near Leixlip to the 17th lock west of Kilcock, form the link between the 7½-mile Blanchardstown-Leixlip level and the 20½-mile long level extending as far as Killucan in Co. Westmeath. Thus restoration of the five locks in Kildare would open up 37 miles of navigable waterway through counties Dublin, Kildare, Meath and Westmeath. The Royal Canal Amenity Group hopes to pioneer this

thanks indeed Kildare Association

restoration work by restoring the 13th lock in the near future.

#### KILLASHEE

Longford County Council has forwarded to the I.W.A.I. plans of a new bridge to be built across the Royal Canal immediately below the 43rd lock, replacing the existing bridge on the Longford to Roscommon road, and has asked for the Association's comments on the plans.

The County Engineer suggests that the proposed bridge would allow for future navigation on this section of the canal but the I.W.A.I. is certainly not happy that this is so, principally because the new bridge would appear to be considerably lower than the existing bridge. This means that the 10' 0" headroom to be allowed under the new bridge can only be achieved by lowering the water level of the canal. This, in its turn, reduces the depth of water to a bare 3' 0", which is certainly insufficient for navigation which requires a minimum of 4' 6".

These comments have been sent to the County Engineer, with a request for further information and a reply is awaited

#### DUBLIN - ROYAL CANAL WATER RATS

On 6th and 20th November the Water Rats held two further mammoth clean-ups, concentrating on the lock at Cross Guns and the stretch to Shandon Lock. The assistance of the Corporation Cleansing Department trucks proved invaluable as an incredible amount of rubbish was removed including two and a half cars, a bird cage, a cooker, bicycles and tricycles, numerous tyres and a telegraph pole.

Less strenuous activities over the festive season included carol singing around Claremount Court by a group of musical Rats who by their efforts collected £25, and a treasure hunt along the banks of the canal in which a hardy band of stalwarts participated despite the wet and freezing conditions.

A comprehensive programme of "clear-outs" and money-raising schemes is planned and there are hopes that activities in 1977 will bring a new look to the Royal Canal both above and below the water line.

#### ROYAL CANAL AMENITY GROUP NEWS

Towpath clearance Mr. A.H. Pilgrim, Clonsilla has kindly lent the group an "Allen Scythe" to help with this work. Dublin County Council has also sanctioned an amenity grant to meet 50% of the cost of further mechanical aids which the Group intends to purchase in 1977. Members are concentrating their attention once again on the section between Talbot and Granard bridges (between Castleknock and Blanchardstown) and will then move westwards, trimming back the past season's growth of brambles, etc. as they go. The stretch between the 10th and 11th locks at Ashtown is also to be trimmed back again over the next few weeks.

#### Nature trail

All the numbered posts have been replaced and the trail fully reinstated.

The Nature Trail and Towpath Guide (Ashtown - Blanchardstown - Castleknock) is on sale at: Castleknock Post Office, Cash Stores Clonsilla, Ginnell's Blanchardstown and the Half Way House Ashtown.

#### 13th Lock Restoration

The 13th lock, between Leixlip and Maynooth, separates the 7½-mile Blanchardstown level from the 4-mile Maynooth level. Restoration of this lock would enable the I.W.A.I. Water Bus "Clonskeagh" to operate in and out of Maynooth Harbour and would, it is hoped, prove a great stimulus to the re-development of the Harbour area in Maynooth as an amenity area. The tail gates of the lock are in reasonably good condition but the breast gates require considerable attention. This is particularly true of the south breast gate which looks as if it is ready to fall asunder if an attempt were made to open it. C.I.E. does not have the resources to build a new gate but has provided the Group with the necessary plans and measurements and is agreeable to restoration work being done by members. The Group has decided that the restoration of this lock should be attempted as a pilot project and, if successful, further lock restoration work will follow. As with nearly all the Royal Canal locks, the masonry is in excellent order and it is only the gates and the racks that need attention.

BOAT TRIPS ON ROYAL CANAL

The next issue of Royal Canal News will, it is hoped, bring you full details of passenger boat trips on the canal this Spring and Summer. Provisional arrangements are for "Clonskeagh" to be based on the Royal for at least part of the season and to operate in the, Leixlip/Lucan area as well as from Castleknock. "Royal Talbot" and "Royal Granard" will, from Easter onwards, operate to regular schedules on the 10th and 12th levels.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

March 1 - 6 Boat Show at the R.D.S. Dublin  
April 23 - 24 I.W.A.I. Royal Rally on the  
"Long Level"  
May 29 R.C.A.G Rally on the 12<sup>th</sup> Level

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