

ROYAL CANAL NEWS

No 4

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RESTORATION

An economic cost-benefit study of the restoration of the Royal Canal suggests that it could be carried out for about £1m. This is for full restoration of navigation. The principal cost, some two thirds of the total, is for the construction of new road bridges where the canal has been culverted in recent years. The study has been made by Mr. Andrew Somerville of T.C.D. for the I.W.A.I. and copies are available on request from the Hon. Secretary of the Royal Canal Committee. (Address overleaf; please enclose large s.a.e.)

Unfortunately, in the present economic climate, the possibility of the Government providing funds for such a project at this time is slight. On the other hand, a very small injection of cash to allow C.I.E. to carry out limited work in conjunction with the voluntary organisations along the canal could enormously improve the immediate amenity value of the waterway and prevent the further deterioration of this national heritage.

The sections of canal to benefit in this way would need to be chosen so that the greatest value would accrue from the limited funds made available. The section with the greatest amenity potential is undoubtedly the twenty miles from the Liffey to Kilcock; passing as it does through areas of dense and expanding population. All but four levels on this section hold water. Thus the repair of only four pairs of upper gates is needed to provide a continuous stretch of amenity waterway and, moreover, enable far better control to be exercised over the flow of water towards Dublin. The latter is essential to prevent the city section from becoming stagnant during the summer. This will be even more important in the future in view of the fact that Dublin Corporation intend spending £5,000 in 1976 on cleaning-up the canal through the city.

At the other end of the canal a start should be made on providing amenity sections of waterway in towns and villages such as Longford, Abbeyshrule and Ballynacargy.

In fact, such a scheme was begun in Longford last year. A section of the Longford Branch was dredged by the U.D.C. and voluntary workers have since cleared the towing-path. However, whilst there is an adequate depth of water in winter, the level in the summer is such that the recreational value is seriously impaired.

There are a number of ways by which this problem might be overcome but the only really satisfactory and permanent solution would be by repairing the breach below the 38th lock to allow water down from Lough Owel. This would not be an excessively expensive project and it would have the added advantage of providing a supply of water for amenity schemes in Ballynacargy and Abbeyshrule, also. In both these villages plans have been put forward for schemes involving local voluntary effort. Although they could be started, they could not be completed without the co-operation of C.I.E., who in turn require Government approval.

The final decision, therefore, rests with the Minister for Transport and Power.

We trust that he will see his way to providing a few extra pounds for essential work on the Royal Canal in 1976. If so, it can certainly be put to good use.

DUBLIN

A detailed plan for the development of the Royal Canal through the north city as a linear park was on view at the European Architectural Heritage Year Exhibition in the Mansion House. The plan is an alternative to the Corporation's scheme to fill-in the canal and build a motorway in its place. It was produced by the I.W.A.I. with the cooperation of fifteen residents' associations along the canal. Most of the cost of producing this plan was raised from the profits of another exhibition of paintings and drawings of inland waterways shown in the Davis Gallery, Capel Street

In July and which earned nearly £150 in commissions from sales. The Royal Canal committee of the I.W.A.I. is most grateful to Mr. Gerald Davis for so generously putting his gallery at their disposal.

It is good to be able to report that there is evidence of a wind of change passing through City Hall. In July the City Council agreed to set up a special sub-committee to consider the Royal Canal and it met for the first time at the end of October. It comprises the 15 aldermen and councillors representing the three electoral areas through which the canal passes.

A further welcome sign is that the Council will provide £5,000 in 1976 to cover the cost of assisting C.I.E. in cleaning-up a section of the Royal Canal. Meantime, local residents have been responsible for cleaning-up the canal between Newcomen Bridge and Clarke Bridge. Organised by the North Central Community Council, over 200 volunteers took part on the afternoon of Saturday 9th September and removed several lorry loads of rubbish.

MULLINGAR

and an exceptionally large population of

At the time of writing weed cutting is in progress at the summit level. The condition of this level deteriorated during the year and C.I.E. are making a determined effort to improve it. There has been particularly luxuriant weed growth in the canal on the western outskirts of Mullingar and there can be little doubt that this is a direct result of pollution. The canal at the rear of the cattle mart is filthy and one doesn't require being an expert to discover why! Measures should be taken by C.I.E. to prevent the canal from being used as a slurry pit.

Also on the summit level, it is understood that the scaffolding blocking the bridge hole at Marlinstown is to be removed. It is a rather Heath Robinson way of supporting a water pipe across the canal anyway! The new Mc Nead's bridge is almost complete. The dam built by the contractors was removed in October allowing water to flow towards Dublin once again. It does appear, however, that part of the dam may still remain as the canal is very shallow above the bridge.

THE LONG LEVEL

The weed-cutting boat has been busy on this level, too, and its condition is much improved. C.I.E. plan additional weed control measures in 1976 which should enhance the amenity value of this 20½-mile stretch. The water supply into this level, and hence towards Dublin, should also be improved by reinstatement of the neglected feeder at Thomastown. This is supplied by the Riverstown River on which drainage work is presently being carried out.

COUNTY DUBLIN

The towing-path is now clear for walking from Kelly's Bridge, Ratoath Road to Callahan Bridge, Clonsilla, a distance of 5 miles. This work, which took 18 months to complete, was carried out by the Royal Canal Amenity Group assisted by the Porterstown Youth Club and the Venture Scouts. At the end of October several dumped cars blocking the canal at Porterstown were removed, along with others nearby on the bank. It was a major operation as all the cars had to be hauled over 20 feet up a steep slope. Members of Junior Chamber Dublin and Castleknock assisted with this task.

Shortage of water due to reconstruction of Mc Neads Bridge meant that the canal remained almost dry from June to October. This was a great disappointment to members of the amenity group who had restored the 16' rowing boat to use for pleasure trips on the 7½ mile level. The main publicity and fund raising project for the summer had to be abandoned.

In June the Inland Fisheries Trust electrically fished the royal canal from

Eels.

Discussions have taken place with the planning department of Dublin County Council and C.I.E. with a view to the council taking in charge the towing paths and other canal-side open spaces for development as a natural linear park. Agreement in principle has been reached.

FULL COLOUR ROYAL CANAL PRINTS

The Royal Canal Amenity Group can again offer fine reproductions of the 1818 Brocas watercolor of Broadstone harbour (long since filled-in) on the Royal Canal in Dublin, to raise money for its work. Showing canal boats loading and a view over the city, this print (approx. 18" x 14", ready for framing) may be obtained, cash with order, from Mr. Brian Thornberry, 85, Roselawn Road, Castleknock, Co. Dublin, for £2.50 inc. postage.

LONGFORD

On 19th September, representatives of Longford Urban District and County Councils, Midland Regional Tourism and Development Organisations, C.I.E. and the I.W.A.I. met members of the local Royal Canal group to consider a plan to reopen the 9 miles of canal between Longford and Richmond Harbour. A detailed scheme had been prepared and costed and was discussed at length. The difficulty of financing the scheme at the present time proved to be a stumbling block. However, it was considered that a less ambitious scheme might be got under way. Essentially, this would take the form of an extension of the amenity scheme at present being undertaken by the U.D.C. and would extend over the full 9 miles. It would require the repair of the upper gates of the 43rd, 44th and 45th locks and the provision of a water supply to supplement the springs feeding the Longford Branch. The scheme is at present being costed by C.I.E. The Longford group and the I.W.A.I. will be responsible for seeking a source of funds to carry out the work.

ROYAL RALLY - 1976

A date for your diary •••••

Next year's Royal Canal Spring Rally will be held on the weekend of 24th/25th April.

The venue for the event has yet to be decided but there is no doubt about the date. Full details in the next Royal Canal News.

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

News items for inclusion in the next RCN by

Leixlip to Clonsilla and found good stocks
of: Rudd, Perch, Tench, and pike

31st January at the latest, please.