

Chiltern Branch

Social programme

talks 2023-24



Wednesday 27-09-23 8pm The Standedge Tunnel Trevor Ellis

The Huddersfield Narrow Canal, apart from its 74 locks in 20 miles, boasts one of the most iconic structures on the whole of the waterway network – the Standedge Tunnel. Opened in 1811 after 17 years of construction, it is, at 645 feet, the highest canal tunnel above sea level. At 636 feet, it is the deepest below ground and, most notably, at 5698 yards, it is the longest canal tunnel in the UK. Once again navigable following the restoration of the long derelict HNC, the tunnel provides one of the cruising highlights of the national network.

Trevor Ellis is Vice Chairman of the Huddersfield Canal Society and has long been involved in the fortunes of the Canal. He particularly knowledgeable about the tunnel and has written a book about its history. There is therefore no-one better to take us through the story of the UK's most iconic canal tunnel.

Wednesday 25-10-23 8pm Oxford to Cambridge by Narrowboat Simon Judge

Once upon a time, you could catch a train from Oxford to Cambridge. Not now, though the line is under renewal. However, there is no canal link to unite the two towns, so how did Simon make this journey? Which waterways did he cruise, and through which locations did he pass? His talk will explain all and, no doubt, chronicle the highs and lows of the cruise.

Simon is a retired Civil Servant and the owner of the narrow boat 'Scholar Gypsy'.

Wednesday 22-11-23 8pm The Wilts and Berks Canal John Farrow

The Wilts and Berks Canal linked the Kennet and Avon Canal at Semington near Melksham with the River Thames at Abingdon. Its 52 miles length enabled the transport of coal from the Somersetshire coalfields to the towns, such as Swindon, along its route. Opened in 1810 it became the victim of Brunel's Great Western Railway, which taking its trade, caused the Canal's eventual abandonment in 1914.

The Wilts and Berks however, if restored to navigation, would form part of a superb cruising ring involving the Wilts and Berks, the Kennet and Avon Canal and the River Thames. The Wilts and Berks Canal Trust formed in 2012, has subsequently evolved into a professional restoration body. Its aim – to restore the Canal to navigation. So how are they getting on? John will bring us up to date.

Wednesday 13/12/23 7pm Christmas Party
Our usual convivial evening of games, quizzes and a hot supper – and mulled wine too.

Unless shown otherwise, meetings are the 4th Wednesday of the month at 8.00pm at Rickmansworth Waterways Trust Education Centre Batchworth Locks, Rickmansworth
Non-members are welcome. Tea and coffee available

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Wednesday 24-01-24 **8pm** **Expanding Horizons**

Jeremy Batch

Jeremy has been a guest speaker at Branch meetings since April 2011. Such is the excellence of his presentations and the graphics that accompany them. This will be his 13th visit to Chiltern Branch.

This time, his talk takes us on to blue waters as opposed to still, and traces a century of changes in leisure boating and marine technology. Jeremy is on the staff of the Cruising Association, an organisation founded in 1908; his talk will trace the history of cruising and the CA over the past 115 years against the background of developments that have taken place. Intriguingly, his talk includes an explanation of how an ice cream became a CA members' curse or just maybe a blessing and how the most valuable cargo the UK ever sent to America is aboard many boats and is in all our homes. Not to be missed!

Wednesday 28-02-24 **8pm** **The Marine Policing Unit**

Paul Jacobs

The Metropolitan Police Marine Policing Unit is responsible for policing 47 miles of the River Thames from Dartford to Hampton Court. Not only that, they also provide cover for 250 miles of canals, lakes and reservoirs in the London area. Its remit is to detect and prevent crime, maintain public order, help to keep London safe and respond to calls where a water hazard exists.

Paul is a member of the MPU and will give us a brief history of policing the River, describe the equipment employed, types of crime and emergencies encountered, notable events in the recent past and, as no job is without humour, maybe some of the more amusing events that he has experienced.

Wednesday 20-03-24 **8pm** **Chiltern Branch Annual General Meeting**

Wednesday 24-04-24 **8pm** **The Rise and Fall of Pleasure Boating on the Thames**
Simon Wenham

Another visit to the Royal River. Many members will, no doubt, have read Jerome K. Jerome's 'Three men in a Boat' This was originally intended as a guide to the River, but morphed into what has been described as the first English literary comedy. Pleasure boating was already established in 1888 when the book was written, since which time, pleasure boating on the River has waxed and waned. We recall pictures of a Victorian Boulter's Lock crammed with punts and skiffs and ladies in quite unsuitable attire. Today, the River still retains its strong attraction and is still a major player in the boating scene but now punts and skiffs have given way to smart cruisers, some of which earn the unenviable title of 'Gin Palaces'. Simon will take us through the years.

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