

## IWA Guildford and Reading Branch

### Minutes of AGM held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at Dapdune Wharf, Guildford

Verna Smith opened the meeting by introducing herself as Acting Chair and welcomed the rest of the committee and all attendees.

1. Apologies were received from Sue O'Hare, Ben Scott, Jean and Tim Harrison and R B Brockhurst.
2. Present: Verna Smith (Acting Chair), Mike Lewis (Treasurer), Chris Jones (Secretary), John Jones (co-opted committee member), 7 members and 1 visitor.
3. Minutes of the AGM of 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023 were approved. Proposed by Chris Jones, Seconded by Mike Lewis.
4. Acting Branch Chair's Report  
This has been a better year for the branch. We managed to attend the Reading Water Fest and Wey River Festival, and support Oxford Branch at the Banbury Canal Festival weekend. WRG joined us at Guildford.  
Verna has agreed to continue on the committee and roles will be decided at the next branch meeting.  
There was a meeting at Portcullis House between various waterways organisations, including EA and CRT, but IWA were not involved.  
Surrey CC gave a press release to BBC Surrey about the Basingstoke Canal which was taken completely out of context. Further details will follow. It is important that we look after our Heritage.  
On the whole the Basingstoke Canal Society has been doing well but the K&A has been having maintenance problems. K&A Trust has been trying to improve the first mile of the canal and the Thames through Reading. There have been discussions between EA, CRT, K&A Trust and Reading BC.
5. Branch Treasurer's Report:  
The interest this year was £160.46 and there was a donation of £375 (including tax relief) from a member who sold their boat and wanted the proceeds to go the several charities. The Lock Game raised £204.80, and sales of donated goods raised £29.00 between the two events we attended.  
The donation of £375 was ring fenced for the K&A and has been forwarded to them. As our branch account is now part of the Head Office account although we can make deposits, we have to ask Paula at HO to make payments. This is working well.  
We have donated £1,000 to Accessible boating charities (4 charities each received £250). We still have a commitment to donate £300 towards the *Perseverance IV* appeal if the situation changes. There was a discussion into charging for adverts in Cargoes and match funding. Any monies raised for adverts would go to IWA, not branch funds.  
Verna thanked Mike for his report. Proposed by Mark Lee. Seconded by John Gunner.
6. Cargoes: As previously advised Cargoes has been reduced to 3 times a year due to cost. Spring, Summer and Autumn (every 4 months). In the latest issue, which was 48 pages, due to concerns over weight and postage costs the inside pages were reduced to 100 grms. As no adverse comments have been received this will continue. There will be a small reduction in costs.

7. Sales Report:  
The branch attended 2 events this year: Reading Water Fest and the Wey River Festival. WRG joined us at Guildford. Both events were well attended and sales were good, especially at Guildford where the Lock Game made over £140! We also supported Oxford Branch at the Banbury Canal Weekend.  
This year we are looking for volunteers to support us at Reading Water Fest (Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June) and Wey River Festival (Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September). We are also looking to help at the Banbury Canal Weekend.  
Volunteers will be welcome at all these events. Please contact Verna or Chris Jones if you can help.
8. Fund Britain's Waterways: FBW was started during the year to bring together waterways organisations to put pressure on Government to provide sufficient funding so our waterways do not degenerate. Over 100 organisations have currently joined and several rallies took place during 2023 including one on the Thames outside Parliament. This year the first event coincides with the early May Bank Holiday when organisations are being encouraged to hold events to promote FBW. There is also plan to hold a rally on the Thames outside Parliament again, subject to favourable river conditions. All waterways are short of money with some organisations receiving only 50% of planned funding. The Rivers and Canals are a vital infrastructure to help mitigate flooding. There is a template on the IWA website for anyone who would like to write their MP.
9. Election of Committee  
The existing committee is continuing. Members are always welcome to join. The roles will be discussed at the next Branch meeting.
10. AOB. The committee will consider having a hybrid AGM in 2025 subject to a suitable venue being found with a good internet connection, etc.  
Public Right of Navigation – Kevin East a volunteer with British Canoeing advised us of the continuing conflict with the Thames over Public Rights of Navigation. Amy Tilson is aware.

The AGM finished at 7.45pm and was followed by a talk by Mark Rudall

Mark gave us a very interesting talk on Steam Engines and how they evolved over the years.

Verna Smith finished by thanking everyone for attending, especially our Speaker, Mark Rudall