



Lagan lockkeepers house



Navigation House

INDUSTRY

2014 was a year of great industriousness (!) and achievement thanks to Brian Cassells, Colin Becker, Jim Henning, Michael Mulholland, Drew Nelson and others who brought the rebuilt lighter *Industry* home to Lock 3 on the Lagan. The project was given wide media coverage locally and we are now taking it further with the delivery of an original Bolinder engine donated by ESB at Ardnacrusha. Work is now in progress towards fitting it.

AGM

Fred Hamond the industrial archaeologist who was consultant to the project, gathering the information and illustrations now displayed on board, came to our AGM to present a very comprehensive illustrated talk on the history of the lighters in general and the story of *Industry* itself.

The business of the AGM reviewed the year's activities, solid accounts were presented by Hon. Treasurer John Ferron and the officers and committee were re-elected en bloc. The planning for 2015 is now largely in place and we look forward to keeping up the levels of interest and improving further.

CHRISTMAS WALK

As it was the turn of Lagan to host the walk, there was no better venue than the

Lockkeepers Inn. The plan was: a special opening of the *Industry* for IWAI members, a walk along the towpath and lunch at the Inn. A very cold and wet day did not deter a probably record attendance which filled the lighter to capacity. As the seventy or so members, many from other branches of IWAI, departed, an equal number of curious passers-by queued to have a look on board. It is hoped in future to have the vessel manned by volunteers to give explanations to visitors. The Lagan Valley Regional Park who are responsible for the towpath and considerable park-land adjoining it will be in charge. Visitor numbers to the park as a whole overshadow most other attractions in Northern Ireland. Our member Jackson Tinto also volunteers as a regular warden of the tiny lockkeeper's cottage and many of us were glad to retreat to his blazing fire. Jackson was kept very busy explaining how a family of twelve persons lived in two small rooms and an attic. A good warming stew catered by the Inn concluded the walk.

NAVIGATION HOUSE

Navigation House is a Victorian detached villa invisible behind an overgrown garden fronting the main road near Sprucefield. Just at its rear is the flight of four Union Locks and an original canal workshop. The house was built for the manager of the canal company, later passed into private ownership and then,

several years ago, it fell vacant. Lisburn councillors Mr & Mrs Partridge were active in saving it from demolition and it is now to be restored by the Hearth Trust for occupation as offices by the Lagan Canal Trust.

Brenda Turnbull, manager of LCT, invited Lagan members to look over the premises after our Christmas walk. Snow fell as we made our inspection, so it was a brief visit for most. Some clearance of the invasive rhododendrons had already begun and extensive redecoration will be needed but it was a house of character and built to last. LCT hope to move in later in the year.

PROGRAMME

Our first talk will be 12 Feb, *White Star Line & Titanic* followed by 11 Mar. *Comets in Irish Mythology* (based on tree-ring dating). On 16 April we take a trip to the National Maritime Museum, Dun Laoghaire and the Waterways Ireland 'box in the docks' at Grand Canal Dock. On 2 May we look forward to the cruise in company hosted by IWAI Lough Erne and hope that the bluebells will be just as marvellous as last year.

This report illustrates how important it is for branches to support each other's activities. And its great fun too.

Photos: Terry Needham



Bluebells on Inish Davarr, Lower Lough Erne