

THE ITCHEN NAVIGATION

By EDWIN COURSE

THE development of land transport by road and rail has taken most of the traffic from the inland waterways of Britain. In the past they provided the easiest means of moving heavy and bulky goods such as coal or timber, but the combined competition of coastal steamers, railways and mechanised road transport has taken much of their traffic and left many miles of abandoned routes.

There were two main types of inland waterway – the navigations, which were improved rivers, and the canals, which were artificial cuts, sometimes crossing watersheds with the aid of locks and other engineering works. Many navigations were completed in the late 17th and early 18th centuries and many canals, in the latter half of the 18th and the first decades of the 19th century. Because of their special suitability for heavy freight, they were more important and more successful in the new industrial regions than in the south of England. Many of the navigations and canals of the south were in financial difficulties before the coming of the railways; few survived to carry commercial traffic for long after their opening. The Itchen Navigation fits into this pattern, being authorised by an Act of Parliament of 1665 and carrying its last barge, loaded with coal, up to Winchester in 1869. Although the Act of 1665 gives no indication, it is probable that some use was made of the Itchen for transport purposes in earlier times. But the relics which have survived over the 10½ miles from Woodmill, near Southampton, to Blackbridge Wharf at Winchester almost certainly belong to the period 1666 to 1869, with which this account is concerned.

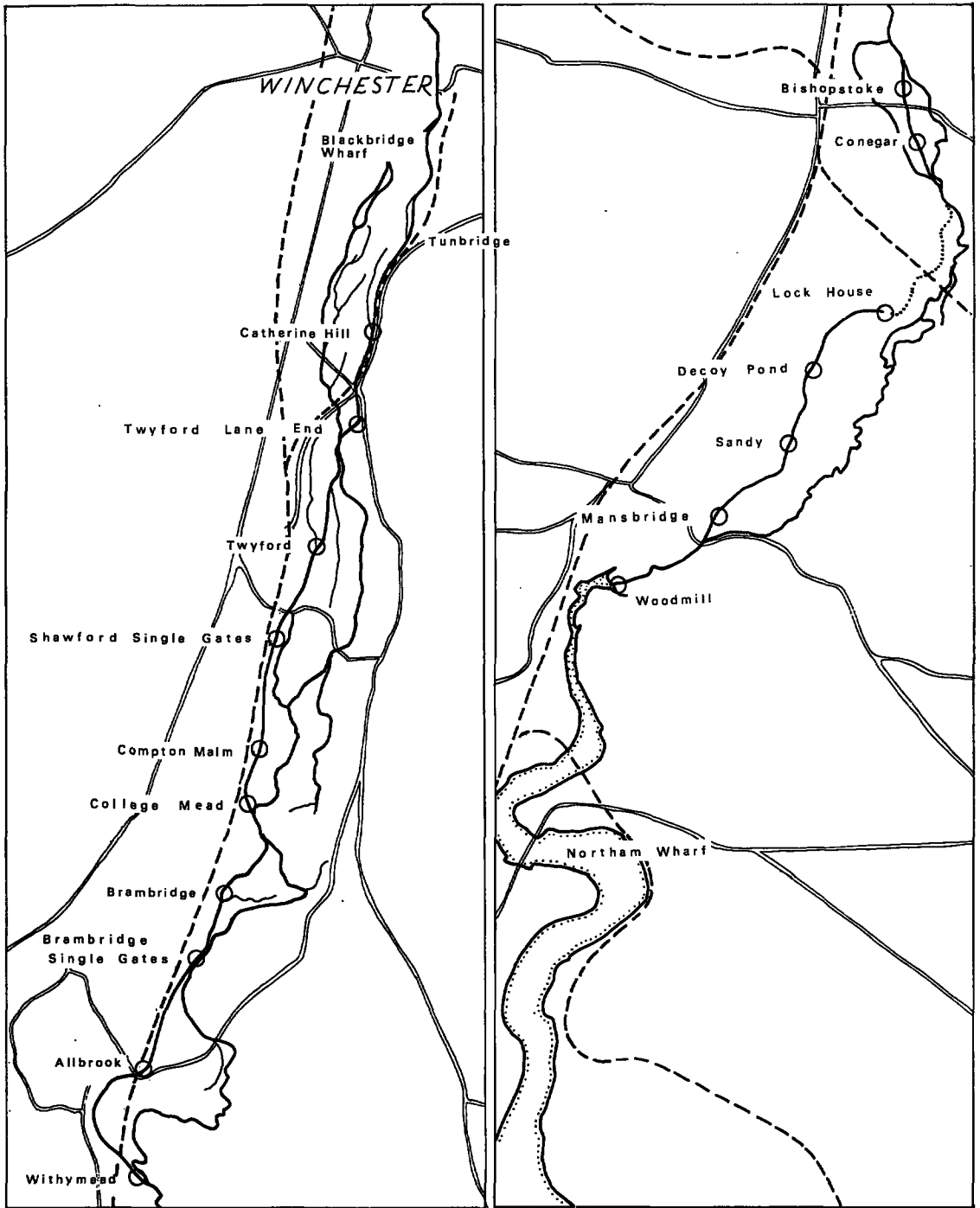
INTRODUCTION (fig. 23)

The Itchen Navigation was chronologically typical of the southern river navigations but distinctive in other respects. For instance, although the Sussex Ouse, and the Arun had ports at their mouths, sea-going vessels could reach Lewes or Arundel without the need for transhipment to barges. But the Itchen bridges and other impediments prevented masted vessels of any size going far upstream and although the works of the Navigation ended at Woodmill, its powers extended downstream to Northam. Its most important traffic was coal, transhipped from the collier brigs from the north-east coast at Northam, and taken up to Winchester. The quantity of traffic was never very great and was always unbalanced.¹ The Napoleonic Wars imperilled coastal navigation and drove traffic inland, the route from London to Southampton including the Basingstoke Canal and a land haul to the Itchen Navigation at Winchester. Proposals to link Basingstoke and Winchester by water failed to materialise. Even at this period of maximum traffic, six barges appear to have been sufficient to move it.

¹ The lack of balance between upstream and downstream traffic is reflected in the following amounts of toll collected during the closing years of the Navigation:

1866	Up	£160	13	8	Down	£15	19	6
1867	Up	£155	5	4	Down	£13	12	2
1868	Up	£122	17	10	Down	£7	9	4
1869	Up	£5	8	0	Down	Nil		

(HRO 13M48/55)



1 mile
 Fig. 23. The Itchen Navigation. The railway is shown as a broken line

In fact, the value of the Navigation lay only partly in its transport function; it was also important for winter irrigation and summer drainage of the adjoining water meadows.² This involved the manipulation of the hatches or sluices in the banks of the canal, a frequent source of controversy between the proprietors and the riparian landowners and tenants.

Until 1802 the proprietors enjoyed the monopoly of providing water transport on the Itchen, by virtue of owning the waterway and having the right to exclude all other boat owners. Another striking feature of the Navigation was the far greater interest shown in it by the Winchester people as compared to Southampton. Although Southampton was represented on the Commission charged with ensuring that the powers of the proprietors were properly used, its representatives achieved almost complete non-attendance.

It is perhaps fair to say that the works of the Itchen Navigation were formed over so long a time as to be the result of evolution rather than a definite period of construction. The authorising Act of 1665 specified that the river should be 'Made navigable for boats, barges and other vessels'. This was to be achieved partly by improving existing parts of the river, partly by improving irrigation channels and partly by new cuts. The work was supposed to be completed by 1st November, 1670, but it is clear that it continued into the following century, being virtually completed by 1710.³ The new cuts reduced distance and avoided mills and by virtue of their limited width, gave a greater depth for a given quantity of water. Sufficient water to float the boats was retained by means of locks, but the owners of water meadows in winter, and mill owners at all times, were competitors for the water which was needed for transport, for irrigation and for power. A towpath was provided so that horse traction could be used for the barges. When it was decided to provide water transport in the rather similar valley of the River Test in the 18th century, mainly because of the concentration of mills, an entirely separate cut was made rather than a navigation.⁴ The locks on the Itchen were spread over the 10½ miles between Blackbridge Wharf at Winchester and Woodmill, near Southampton, and although in 1795 powers were obtained to extend down to Northam, they were never used. There is evidence that the somewhat uncertain surveillance of the Commissioners was not sufficient to keep the various proprietors up to scratch, and although essential work was done, and some of the locks were rebuilt, there were intermittent complaints about both the navigation and the service provided by the boats until commercial traffic ceased in 1869. The end of the Navigation is as ill defined as its beginning. It continued to deteriorate for the rest of the 19th century; and systematic maintenance was not revived until the Hampshire Catchment Board started work in 1942.

² The 'drowning' of water meadows in the winter months brought on the hay crop; by late spring or early summer, when the water levels of chalk streams could still be high, drainage was important. The Act of 1665 refers to the 'great advantage to His Majesty's subjects by preservation of meadows from summer floods.' (Preamble 16 and 17, Car ii, c. 12.)

³ The magistrates granted various extensions of time. In 1697 W. Bayly, gent. was given until 1700 for

completion. Then the responsibility was taken over by R. Soames, H. Grey and J. Stafford, who were to complete the work by 1707. In 1708 it was recorded that £6,110 had already been spent and a further extension of one year was granted on account of the delay caused by suits in Law and injunctions 'to stay the work'. (HRO 13M48/32.)

⁴ The Andover Canal 1796-1859.

THE HISTORY OF THE ITCHEN NAVIGATION

The industrial archaeology of the Itchen Navigation reflect its history, but nothing has been identified between Winchester and Southampton that predates the improvements authorised by the Act of 1665. However, documentary evidence suggests that work was done in the reign of King John, and there are references to a survey of 1617.⁵ The Act of 1665 specified a group of seven 'capitalists' who, in return for the grant of a transport monopoly, would carry out improvements on a number of rivers – those in Hampshire being the Itchen, the Test and the Hamble.⁶ Advantages anticipated for the community include the 'preservation of meadows from summer floods and the improvement of the value of Land and of Trade and the Ease of repairing the highways and other advantages'.⁷ To ensure that the monopoly should not be abused, the Act stipulated that the cost of the carriage of goods must not exceed a moiety of the land carriage rates in force in 1663. Commissioners, appointed from the Justices of the County, were to confirm the rates to be charged, the proprietors having a right to appeal to the Assizes. All the things to be done were carefully specified, including the clearing and deepening of existing channels, and the removal of 'impediments that may hinder navigation either in sailing or hauling of boats with horse or men'. Locks, weirs and sluices could be constructed and the wharves and landing places could be equipped with cranes. New bridges were to be provided where new channels intersected roads or old bridges were obstructive. Of special interest was the right to make any new ways to bring (goods) to or from any of the aforesaid 'Rivers or Wharfs' and the placing of 'foot-rails of timber' which would have made these feeder roads embryo railroads. The towpath was to be on one side and only 3 feet wide, sufficient for men but narrow for horses. There were various clauses for the protection of the community including a requirement not to sever roads, not to demolish houses and to allow boats already trading on the river to continue to do so. The works were to be completed in five years, by 1st November, 1670, failing which the Commissioners could transfer the monopoly to other proprietors. In fact, the monopoly was transferred and the works were not completed for nearly fifty years.

It is clear that a 17th century monopoly was quite unacceptable in the 18th century, and in 1767, 102 years after the first Act of Parliament, a second Act sought to remedy matters by appointing a new Commission, which was expected to be more effective. The Preamble states that the proprietor 'doth not only demand and impose exorbitant rates but frequently refuses to carry and convey by water coals and such other goods as interfere with his own trade whereby he has in a great measure obtained and acquired the monopoly of several of the necessaries of life to his own use and benefit to the great damage and oppression of several poor Persons and to the great loss and prejudice of the inhabitants of the City of Winchester'.⁸ The stress on Winchester reflects the

⁵ *Registrum Johannis Pontissera* II, p. 741, publ. Cant. and York Soc. vol. xxx.

⁶ The proprietors named in the Act of 1665 were Sir Humphrey Bennet, William Swan, Nicholas Onden, Robert Holmes, John Lloyd, John Lainson and William Holmes. Sir Humphrey Bennet had presented a silver fruit bowl and a cup on receiving the freedom of the City of Winchester in 1660.

⁷ Presumably the highways would be kept in repair more easily, if heavy traffic, such as coal was transferred to the Navigation, and in this way, certain parishes would be relieved.

⁸ 7 G. iii c. 87.

balance of traffic, which was always upstream rather than downstream, with Southampton taking little interest in the Navigation. The Commission was to consist of the Mayor, Recorder and Aldermen of Winchester, the Justices of the County, the Dean of Winchester and the Warden of Winchester College and was to be served by the Clerk of the Peace of the County. After a first meeting in June, 1767, they were to meet in Winchester Town Hall twice yearly in July and September.⁹ Three kinds of charge could be levied on traffic – tolls for the use of the waterway, carriage rates for the use of the boats, and wharfage for the use of landing places. The first two were now to be fixed at Quarter Sessions, but wharfage charges were only payable if goods were left there for more than ten days. The teeth of the Act lay in the powers which the Commissioners held in reserve. For instance in order to ensure maximum use of their boats, proprietors had usually only maintained the number that could be continuously employed and this led to serious delays to vessels wishing to discharge into barges at Northam at peak periods. Now, if the monopolists failed to supply sufficient boats, the Commissioners could license others to provide them. If they failed to maintain the Navigation in reasonable condition, the Commissioners could order the construction of ‘locks, pens for water, drains, quays, wharves, winches, weighing beams, cranes or warehouses’. However, no order they made was to interfere with the rights of the King, the Bishop of Winchester, the Town of Southampton and George Griffiths of Epsom and Thomas Dummer of Cranbury at Northam Quay. Since 1711 the proprietors had rented the site of Blackbridge Wharf at Winchester from the Bishop for £3 per annum. This adjoined the road from Bar End to College Bridge, near the Bishop’s Palace. The 1767 Act made the proprietors of the Navigation responsible for repairing the road in return for the Bishop waiving the rent of the Wharf and instead paying £50 down and £7 per annum.

The Minute Book of the Commissioners with its final entry in 1829 has survived and the complaints they received cast light on the operation of the Navigation.¹⁰ The rates were fixed by the Commissioners so these were not considered as subjects for complaint. Indeed, the scarcity of cases raises doubts as to whether the Commissioners were very effective in controlling the proprietors’ monopoly. For instance in 1786 complaints could not be considered because there was no quorum to hear them so the Clerk could only send a warning note. The most common complaint concerned preferential treatment. For instance in 1771, William Hooper, a coal merchant, stated that the proprietors, John Moody and William Meadow, had brought up the cargo of the *Providence* from Northam before that of the *Witterington* even though the *Providence* had arrived many days later. The proprietors were fined 10s. for every ton of cargo they had delayed. After a series of meetings at which no Commissioners were present, there was a sudden revival in 1793 when a number of complaints were heard against James D’Arcy, who had taken over the Navigation from Moody and Meadow. A complaint that he had failed to mark his six boats with his name and address, together with their registered number, dimensions and tonnage as required by the 1767 Act was substantiated. Other complaints, including two from Moody and Meadow, the former proprietors, were dismissed. In 1795 T. Deane of Winchester complained that D’Arcy

⁹ Presumably the building now occupied by Lloyds Bank.

¹⁰ Minute Book. Hants Record Office.

had kept the brig *Swallow* loaded with 80 tons of culm, waiting so long at Northam, that instead of transshipment, the cargo had been unloaded onto Northam Quay. The Commissioners imposed the usual fine of 10s. per ton.

By this time traffic was increasing and the Third Act, that of 1795, included powers to extend the works from Woodmill down to Northam, and for D'Arcy to raise more money and to replace himself by a committee.¹¹ This would have facilitated through traffic to the Salisbury and Southampton Canal which was planned to reach the Itchen at Northam. The powers for making 'aqueducts, sluices, locks and towpaths' between Woodmill and Northam were never used, and therefore produced nothing for the industrial archaeologist. If they had been completed there were clauses for compensation for damage to the mill and fishery at Woodmill. The financial measures covered both tolls and the raising of more capital.¹² D'Arcy could either raise capital by means of mortgage loans or by selling shares; in the latter case the shareholders would have formed a managing committee. If he failed to provide sufficient barges for the traffic, the Commissioners could transfer management to a committee. The necessary cash was raised by selling shares and the names of the holders are recorded in a Register of Proprietors.¹³ Like many travellers, the bargees appeared to have lacked respect for property, and the 1795 Act specified a £5 fine for any caught with guns or fishing nets.

By 1799 a report received by the Commissioners makes it clear that D'Arcy had not formed a managing committee and was failing to meet the obligations which might have justified his monopoly. Moody referred to five boats being in a bad condition; other complainants stated that only four boats were available and that there were not enough horses to work them. Trade had suffered greatly from the detention of vessels at Northam waiting to tranship their cargoes into barges. The situation had been aggravated as formerly Winchester merchants had been allowed to leave goods on Northam Wharf free of charge, but now the Wharf had been sold to a company who levied charges, and the merchants insisted on coastal vessels waiting for the barges. The Commissioners ruled that D'Arcy must provide six boats each carrying 20 or 30 tons, with the necessary horses to draw them, on pain of a £200 fine. At their meeting in September 1799, the Commissioners heard Edward Knapp complain that collier brigs were refusing to come to Northam on account of the delays arising from D'Arcy's failure to provide sufficient barges.

George Hollis was D'Arcy's agent. He acquired, with the help of Harry Baker, a linen draper of Westminster, all the 150 shares and in 1800 assumed control, with Baker as a sleeping partner. Hollis gave up the idea of being the sole provider of barges, and expressed his intention of seeking Parliamentary power to abandon the monopoly and open the Navigation to all barge owners who paid the appropriate tolls.

The fourth Act, that of 1802, goes into considerable detail about carriage rates, about work required to bring the Navigation up to standard and about operating details such as rules for working the locks. Tolls on coal, culm, corn, iron, stone, timber

¹¹ 35 G. iii c. 86.

¹² Rates from Northam to Blackbridge Wharf, Winchester were as follows - Culm, Stone, Scotch Coal, Weighable goods and Corn, except oats, 3/9d. per ton; Oats, 3/6d. per ton; Coals per chaldron, 3/- (an Imperial Chaldron weighed 1 ton 5½ cwt.).

¹³ Register of Proprietors, Hants Record Office. The Acts of 1795 and 1802 both refer to 150 shares but the Register of Proprietors lists 160 at £3.15.0 each allocated in 1795 as follows:

1 - 40	John Garland	81 - 120	John Martin
41 - 80	Peter Watt	121 - 160	William Smith

THE ITCHEN NAVIGATION

and all other goods were to be at 1½d. per ton mile. A full scale of carriage rates were given. For instance, a chaldron of coal from Northam was conveyed to Mansbridge or Gaters Mill (3 miles) for 1s. 3d.; to Bishopstoke (6 miles) for 2s.; to Shawford (9 miles) for 2s. 9d.; and to Winchester (12 miles) for 3s. Wharfage for coals per chaldron and for other goods per ton at Blackbridge Wharf, Winchester, was 2d. with a surcharge if they were not removed within ten days. Many of the details are of interest such as the provision of mileposts to ensure that correct charges were levied, and the exemption from toll of chalk carried downstream by the barges 'when going for freight'.¹⁴ As tolls were charged to the nearest half mile, 'stones or posts' were to be provided at intervals of half a mile, but as none of these have ever been found, they were either removed or else were never erected. A timetable was laid down for cleaning, deepening and necessary repairs – Bishopstoke to Decoy Pond Lock by 1802, Decoy Pond Lock to Mansbridge by 1803 and the rest by 1805. There was to be a fine of from £2 to £5 for depositing ballast in the Navigation; owners of sunken boats were required to refloat them.

Operating instructions were designed to conserve sufficient water for navigation, but not so much as to cause flooding. As the passage of any boat through a lock inevitably used a lock full of water, boats carrying under 20 tons could only use the Navigation with the permission of the proprietors. All barges were to be registered by the Clerk to the Commissioners, and these were to be of 20 to 45 tons burthen. Presumably because of their interest in the transshipment operations at Northam the Mayor, Recorder and Justices of Southampton were added to the Commissioners but never seem to have attended. Under the new arrangements, three barges were registered in July 1802, and another two in May 1803. For instance, Barge No. 1 was of 30 tons burthen and was owned jointly by W. H. Gater of West End, T. Black of Southampton, W. Earle of Winchester, J. Paul of Winchester, Edward Knapp, H. R. Hanley, Mary Ann Knapp and the Trustees of T. Knapp; Richard Walsh was her Master.

A meeting of the proprietors of mills and meadows dependent on the Navigation for irrigation, drainage or power was held at the George Hotel, Winchester, in October 1808 and they arranged for a survey.¹⁵ This was submitted to them by Richard Eyles in 1809.¹⁶ Eyles pointed out that the 1802 Act had required the Proprietors of the Navigation to put it in order, especially between Bishopstoke and Mansbridge, but this had not been done. He drew special attention to leaking banks above the locks, where the water was above the level of the adjoining land, and seeped through to lie stagnant in the meadows. Eyles did not attempt a monetary valuation of the damage caused by flooding, but he did assess loss of value arising from the Navigation depriving owners of mills and meadows of water for power or irrigation. The annual value of the mills was estimated at £1,000, and they would be useless without water, the water meadows valued at £4,450 would be worth £1,907 if deprived of irrigation water, and the Navigation revenue was put at about £1,000 per annum which covered operating

¹⁴ The purpose of this is not clear. It could have been used as ballast by the collier brigs or it could have been necessary to enable the barges to get under the bridges.

¹⁵ The George stood at the corner of High Street

and Jewry Street and was demolished after the Second World War.

¹⁶ A Survey of the Meadows and Mills from the City of Winchester to Woodmill taken by Richard Eyles, 6th February, 1809.

expenses of £700 per annum. However, to put the Navigation in good order would cost 'upwards of £11,000' and if all the users of water were to be adequately served, this amount should be spent. This Report evoked a vigorous defence from Hollis.¹⁷ In 1809 the Commissioners recognised rising prices and allowed an increase in the charges on the Navigation.¹⁸ These were enumerated in the fifth Act of Parliament, passed in 1811, which raised the toll on coals by ½d. per chaldron per mile. The proprietors were given another year to complete their scouring and repair works. The control of sluices and hatches had been in the hands of the Navigation, but a clause was included which gave the owners of meadows the right to open sluices to lower the water should a bank give way. In addition to the sluices, water was released over 'Tumbling Bays' when the level rose above normal. As there was no control over these, in 1811 Sir W. Heathcote and Mr. Richard Goldfinch made an agreement with Hollis to permit them to draw the hatches when necessary to prevent flooding.¹⁹ The sixth and final Act of Parliament was passed in 1820 and authorised a further increase in tolls of ½d. per chaldron per mile on coals and ½d. per ton per mile on corn, salt, iron, timber and other commodities.²⁰ Somewhat oddly, in the same year that the tolls were increased, the Commissioners required the carriage rates to be reduced to those specified in the 1802 Act. The effect was presumably to increase the income of the Navigation and reduce that of the barge owners.

The 1802 Act had protected the rights of the Proprietors of Northam Quay and the Corporation of Southampton by empowering the Commissioners to regulate the proportion of barges loading at Northam Quay as opposed to direct transshipment in the river and in 1809 they required every fourth barge to go to the wharf, provided there was cargo waiting. They were also able to authorise the construction of a second wharf at Northam by the Winchester merchants. In 1824 the Commissioners renewed their ruling that a proportion of the boats should serve Northam Quay, subject to priority being given to perishable cargoes, such as corn and salt, over for instance, coal, culm or timber. In 1828 the Commissioners received complaints from Messrs. Knapp, Earle, Wells, Mant, Vaughan and Smith about the condition of the Seven Hatches which controlled the water flowing into the meadows between Blackbridge and Catherine Hill Lock. The last recorded meeting of the Commissioners took place on 1st May, 1829.

How well the Navigation could have continued to compete with horse drawn road transport is unknown, because from 1839 it had to compete with steam traction on the new London and Southampton Railway. Because of well established links between the Navigation and various merchants, hope was sustained longer than was justified. For instance, in August 1850 a Mr. Forder wrote to Bulpett as follows – 'There are two or three very important points which ought to be constantly attended to that the Navigation might be maintained in that condition which will enable it to contend with the Railway. The first is to keep the locks and all the appendages in proper repair, secondly

¹⁷ Answer to the Report of Benjamin Bevan and Richard Eyles by George Hollis, Proprietor of the Navigation, 1809. (HRO 13M48/2.)

¹⁸ This appears to have anticipated the appropriate clauses in the 1811 Act. 51 G. iii c. 202.

¹⁹ Sir W. Heathcote was concerned with the Navigation both as a drain to prevent flooding and an irrigation channel. For instance, in 1850, Bulpett was proposing an annual payment by him of £200 for water taken from the Navigation for irrigation purposes.

²⁰ 1 G. iv, c. 75.

to lower the tolls equal to or rather below the charge of the enemy and thirdly to induce the mortgagees to accept a lower rate of interest; by the operation of these propositions I cannot but think the canal may be made to stand against the competition. . . .’ The railway intersected a loop of the Navigation at Allbrook and an agreement of 1837 between Hollis and the company entitled him to £6 for every 24 hours in which the railway construction works obstructed the waterway.²¹ The railway embankment came so close to Allbrook lock as to necessitate its reconstruction in brick at railway expense. Perhaps influenced by imminent railway competition, George Hollis sold up in 1839. His son, F. J. Hollis, who had been Manager and Clerk since 1832, was replaced in 1841 by W. W. Bulpett. There is evidence of considerable improvement under his control, for accounts were kept, and repair work put in hand. Writing in 1843, Turner P. Clarke, the manager of the Andover Canal, refers to repairs to locks ‘during the last year’.²² He also commends the improvement to the banks and towpath but states that ‘the benefit has been entirely lost by the non-regulation and consequent overflowing of the water’. In 1861, Mr. F. J. Hollis, who claimed to hold three-quarters of the shares, demanded that management be transferred from Bulpett to a Receiver. Probably in an attempt to ascertain if there was any future for the Navigation, Clarke was asked to make a report. This he presented in May, 1863.²³ By this time only two barges were in use, and he estimated that their owners paid £250 per annum in tolls. £121 10s. od. he attributed to the letting of warehousing, stables and a Malthouse at Blackbridge Wharf. The Bishop of Winchester continued to pay his £7 per annum for the repair of the road, as required by the 1767 Act.²⁴ Mr. Wheeler paid £3 per annum for water, drawn off above Catherine Hill Lock, to operate his saw mill, and Winchester College paid £20 per annum for the privilege of bathing by the scholars. Another £9 was derived from rent, and small sums accrued from the payments of fishermen and pleasure boats, giving a total of a little over £410. The survey of the works which follows gives an invaluable picture of the Navigation in the last days of its commercial life, and enumerates and comments on the locks and bridges and the principal hatches. The attempt of Hollis to dislodge Bulpett failed but Bulpett’s victory was of limited value as the declining commercial traffic finally petered out in 1869. The accounts for the closing years indicate how quiet the waterway had become. Apart from Bulpett there were two employees – H. Palmer, carpenter, paid £14 19s. od. for 13 weeks and J. Smith, waterman, paid £7 3s. od. for 13 weeks. Other disbursements included £6 3s. od. to Mr. Newton for carriage of chalk, presumably for repairs to the banks and towpath, £2. 2s. od. for weed cutting and £2. 7s. 6d. fire insurance.²⁵ Parish rates included £1 14s. 9d. for Blackbridge Wharf, 2s. od. for Compton and 2s. 6d. for Twyford. Tolls are enumerated, mostly for coal and salt from Northam to Winchester. Sand and building materials were conveyed from Chapel, near Southampton, to the West End Wharf, near Gaters Mill. The last barge, owned by Robert Newton, brought coal up

²¹ HRO 13M48/18.

²² Turner P. Clarke: General Observation 1843.

²³ T. P. Clarke: Report of 1863. (HRO 13M48/31.)

²⁴ In fact the Bishop was already dissatisfied with the state of the road from Bar End. After an inspection in 1862, he decided to put the repair work ‘in other hands’ and despite his statutory obligations seems to

have ceased making his annual payments shortly afterwards. (HRO 13M48/54.)

²⁵ Mr. Robert Newton was a Coal, Salt and Corn Merchant and Barge Proprietor. The fire insurance seems to have been justified for in March 1869 £20 was received from the Guardian Fire Office, presumably following a fire.

his yard at the Wharf in 1869 after which the Navigation slipped into gentle decay.

Mr. Bulpett remained as Manager and collected such revenue as was earned by non-transport functions. For instance in 1872, the Southampton Gas Company paid £100 for laying gas pipes on the Navigation's property. In 1865, the Southampton Waterworks Company were detected taking the Navigation's water. 'Southampton Waterworks Company having (as was now lately found out) clandestinely constructed a culvert or aperture through the bank of the Itchen Navigation for the Water Supply in connection with their works.' Mr. Bulpett's statement of petty expenses does not make quite clear where the offence was committed, as he charged £1 5s. od. to go to Portswood to see 'where the Southampton Waterworks Company had put in a pipe' and later 10s. 6d. to investigate 'the water being taken out by Mansbridge Lock'. There was a reference to the sale of water to Southampton Waterworks in 1854, so presumably the water company had not considered it necessary to inform Bulpett that they were tapping the Navigation at an additional point. Apart from collecting what income there was, Mr. Bulpett had to stave off the agrieved users of the bridges, most of which were beginning to fall down. In September 1879 the Winchester Highway Board gave him 21 days to repair Shawford Bridge. Bulpett replied that he had 'for years past been acting as agent to what was once called the Itchen Navigation Estate which has for years been in a perfect state of insolvency. . . . I shall be very happy to render any assistance in getting it placed under the control of the County.' The Highway Board carried out a temporary repair by shoring up the bridge in the middle of the span, Bulpett agreeing to bear the cost if ever navigation recommenced. In October, 1880, Mr. A. R. Naughton, J.P., who had moved to Bishopstoke, threatened Bulpett, who by this time was a Deputy Lieutenant and a Justice, with legal proceedings because of the condition of Bishopstoke Bridge. Subsequently, it was decided that as the Navigation had no income and was without value, the Highway Board would have to repair the bridge. In view of this it is rather interesting to find in 1881 Bulpett making a claim for damage done to the bridge at Brambridge by a steam traction engine. However, it seems clear that after about 1880 the Highway Board took over the responsibility for the bridges. As late as 1911, there was still a shadow of the Navigation when Mr. Bowker applied to divert the towpath at Shawford and among the objectors was Bulpett's descendant, Mr. C. W. C. Bulpett. With the benefit of hindsight it is only too clear that the days of the Navigation were over, but on at least two occasions during the 19th century people considered buying it. In 1872 Bulpett began negotiations with J. R. Stebbing, and in 1881 he was corresponding with Mr. H. F. Yeatman of Bath.

The resurgence of interest in canals in the first part of the 20th century did not miss the Itchen and Mr. Downie of Alton produced a report, dated July, 1902.²⁶ It states that Mr. Bulpett who, apart from the break when Hollis had tried to oust him, had managed the Navigation since 1841, still held the right to collect tolls, and Downie felt that it might be possible to purchase this from him. In June, 1909, Mr. Patrick O'Carroll, a Southsea estate agent, obtained an option to purchase the Navigation from Mr. C. W. C. Bulpett and registered the Itchen Navigation Company with a nominal capital of £20,000. In September, 1911, Mr. O'Carroll organised a meeting in the Corn Exchange at Winchester, in the hope of selling shares. However, partly because

²⁶ HRO 13M48/32.

of difficulty in clearing titles, his company never traded, and was wound up in 1925.²⁷ There have been no further moves towards resuscitation and the care of the waterway and the bridges has devolved on various local authorities.

INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ITCHEN NAVIGATION

It is possible to walk the whole length of the Navigation from Northam Bridge to Blackbridge Wharf, Winchester, in a day which, making allowance for working through the 15 locks, is almost certainly the time the barges would have taken. However, the section from Northam Bridge to Woodmill is perhaps the least relevant, as there was probably never a towpath, the barges working up and down stream on this tidal section with whatever assistance they could get from wind and tide.²⁸ The present Northam Bridge was opened in 1954, but the old bridge of 1796 and the railway bridge of 1866 had both been required to give clearance for boats passing upstream. The tide lock at Woodmill was built mainly of brick and the roadbridge crossed the chamber of the lock diagonally.²⁹ The towpath started here, and followed the left bank as far as the roadbridge at Mansbridge. This belonged to the county and not the Navigation and is therefore not mentioned in Clarke's survey, but allowing for possible changes in water level, it does give an indication of the height above water of the barges. It has the distinction, with the lower bridge at Blackbridge, of being the only major work surviving from the Navigation period. At this point the towpath changes to the right bank and a few yards to the north, an artificial cut diverges to rejoin the natural stream about half a mile south of Conegar Lock. Apart from the locks at Woodmill, Conegar and Allbrook all the chambers had sides of turf between the upper and lower gates. The gates swung from walls, originally of stone but often repaired with brick, and in many cases, these walls have survived. The first lock at Mansbridge is typical, although the walls are very overgrown. Here the towpath changed to the left bank; the horses crossing by a wooden occupation bridge.³⁰ The cut between Mansbridge and Conegar has been drained and the occupation bridges have been replaced by filling the bed of the waterway. The crossing at Mansbridge consisted of a wooden bridge just below the lock. The site of Sandy Lock is even more overgrown than Mansbridge, tree roots picking their way between the courses of the masonry. The towpath becomes so difficult that there is a temptation to abandon the right of way, and walk through the adjacent fields. However, there are clearly defined sharp slopes in the towpath corresponding to the difference in water level once maintained by each lock. Decoy Pond Lock was described by Clarke as 'out of repair' and if the proportion of brickwork in

²⁷ PRO BT 21/109863.

²⁸ Charles Penton of Cheesehill, Winchester, 'captain of a barge for many years', gave evidence concerning the Itchen Bridge of the Netley and Southampton Railway in 1863. He stated that the barges never went up against the tide; they sometimes went down against it. 'I and other captains of the barges sometimes use a sail on the tidal portion - the railway bridge would interfere with this.' (HRO 13M48/63.)

²⁹ The tide lock had an extra pair of gates set to prevent salt water flowing in from down river on a high tide; all other gates were set in the opposite direction to retain fresh water in the Itchen. Following

complaints a detailed survey of the bridge was made by J. Hill in February 1862. He describes a wooden bridge built in 1829 crossing the lock at an angle of 40 degrees. It was 15 feet wide, with trussed outer beams, cross beams and a deck consisting of wooden planking. Woodmill Lock remained in use for barges going up to Gaters Mill at West End after navigation to Winchester had ceased. (HRO 13M48/54.)

³⁰ The Navigation maintained bridges of a higher standard to carry the traffic of the public highways, and lighter private occupation bridges for use by the owners of land severed by the cut. (Pl. Xa.)

the walls is any indication, there was very little done to it.³¹ The wooden occupation bridge that served North Stoneham Farm has gone. The next lock is referred to in various documents by at least three names – Chickenhill Lock, Chickenhall Lock and Lockhouse Lock. The latter, which derived from the provision of a lock-keeper's house, became generally accepted and was adopted by the Ordnance Survey. The masonry which supported the lower gate on the right bank is clearly exposed, but the foundations of the house are covered with bramble bushes. The bed of the canal, with varying degrees of sogginess, is well defined to the point at which the branch line railway from Eastleigh to Fareham and Gosport crossed the cut. There are in fact two adjacent railway underbridges, or a two-arch viaduct, in the embankment, one arch over the canal and towpath, and the other over an occupation crossing. In 1967 the former occupation bridge was disused and the Navigation bridge was being used for occupation purposes.

Between the bridge and a point opposite Eastleigh Sewage Works, the cut has been filled in, and from the ground it is difficult to distinguish its line. It curves across a field and beyond the stile on the north side, the present path diverges from the towpath, rejoining it above the point at which the cut joined a part of the natural stream. From here to Winchester, the waterway still carries water. Conegar Lock lies on a short stretch of cut, which leaves the natural stream about one-eighth of a mile below it, and rejoins it beyond Bishopstoke Bridge, about a quarter of a mile north of it. The lock chamber is of unusual interest for the turf sides have been built up. Clarke describes the lock as 'very dilapidated' with the 'upper apron' (or sill) about to disintegrate and a large shoal below the lower gates. Above the lock are the remains of hatches for irrigating the adjacent meadows. The wooden occupation bridge has gone. The path is on the left bank below the lock and the right bank above, a footbridge crossing the lock on the site of the lower gates. Although there were a number of occupation bridges, Bishopstoke Bridge was the first highway bridge above Mansbridge, and has been completely rebuilt. The wharf appears to have been on the north side of the bridge, but no remains have been discovered. The site of Bishopstoke Lock is marked by a weir and sluices. From here to Withymead Lock, the natural stream was used for the Navigation with the towpath on the right bank. Water meadows lay to the west, and remains of the hatches survive. Another section of cut stretches from below Withymead Lock to Otterbourne. There are substantial remains of the lock and a footbridge carries the path from the right to the left bank.³² The cut describes a loop which was crossed at both ends by the London and Southampton Railway. Subsequent widenings of the railway have been matched by extensions of the two railway underbridges. For most of its length the environs of the Navigation remain surprisingly rural, but here there are houses, with gardens running down to the waters edge, most of which postdate the days of commercial navigation. The concrete occupation bridge on this loop replaced what was probably the last of the Navigation's wooden, occupation bridges which collapsed into the water about 1950.³³ Allbrook Lock lies just east of the railway embankment, and as mentioned above, was rebuilt at the expense of the railway

³¹ Decoy Pond Lock named from the nearby pond for decoying wild ducks.

³² The position of the towpath depends on a number of facts, land ownership being the most important.

³³ Hams Bridge. Information from Mr. Mobbs of the Hampshire River Board.

company. It was repaired by the river authority in 1944, but although the gates have been replaced by a weir and sluice, there are still indications of their position. Allbrook is the best preserved of all the locks, but this of course, owes something to its comparatively recent repair. The highway bridge, characteristically adjoining its lower gates, has been rebuilt. The section between Allbrook Lock and Brambridge is well maintained, with the railway which took its traffic running almost parallel on an impressive embankment. The hatches south of Brambridge are replacements but have the same function in regulating the water flowing down to Allbrook by draining off any excess into the natural stream, which at this point is parallel and adjacent to the cut.

The arrangements of the Southampton Corporation Waterworks have modified the line of the Navigation and the path diverges some distance from Brambridge Lock, which is marked by a weir. Apart from the section near Eastleigh Sewage Works this is the only point at which the present right of way diverges appreciably from the old towpath and College Mead and Compton Malm Locks are not normally accessible. The line is rejoined by a bridge on the site of Malm Bridge, where the path changes from the left to the right bank. This is a very characteristic section of cut, a little way up the side of the valley, and narrower, deeper and more regular than the sections of improved natural stream. Just south of the highway bridge at Shawford a constriction of the banks marks the site of Shawford Single Gates. The landing place at Shawford has not been located. Twyford Lock referred to in Clarke's Survey as Compton Place Lock has survived as a turf-sided lock but with the top gates replaced by a weir, and the banks between the gates scalloped out and so that what would have been an elliptical lock chamber is now almost circular.

Between Twyford Lock and Twyford Lane End Lock, the Navigation followed the natural stream, and this section is easily distinguished by its greater width and other characteristics. Willow Mead Hatches were used for irrigation. Twyford Lane End Lock is shrouded in vegetation, but a small section of brickwork is visible. The nearby Winchester to Bishop's Waltham Turnpike road used to cross on its own bridge. Now the situation has been transformed by the opening of the Winchester By-Pass Road, and the cut which has very little water in it at this point, passes under the cross-roads between the former turnpike and the by-pass road by means of a culvert. Followers of the Navigation have to cross the by-pass, and then use the lane which followed the side of the valley above the towpath. This part of the cut, formerly an irrigation channel, had its towpath on the left bank and below Catherine Hill Lock this has been buried by ground from the slope above it. Catherine Hill Lock is represented by some masonry and a weir. The pound between this point and the terminal basin at Winchester is well maintained and gives a good impression of how the Navigation must have appeared in, say, 1841, when Bulpett became Manager. The saw mill, which paid rent for its water, adjoined the right bank by Catherine Hill Lock. The old wooden span at Tunbridge was replaced by the present concrete structure in 1926. Domum Wharf was on the left bank about a quarter of a mile towards Winchester. The site of Blackbridge Wharf is reached through an original brick bridge, and as mentioned above, this and Mansbridge are probably the only original bridges which remain. The stables, the manager's house, and the warehouse are still in position and are in the safe hands of Winchester College. (Pl. Xa, XI and XII.)

PROCEEDINGS FOR THE YEAR 1967

This, then, is what survives after disuse since 1869 – one hundred years of possible change. The River Board is more concerned with drainage than navigation and it is unlikely that commercial navigation will ever be resumed. Pleasure boating lingers on the top pound above Catherine Hill Lock and may extend to other sections. But a more immediate prospect is that the joint efforts of Winchester City, Eastleigh Borough, Winchester Rural and Southampton City Councils will lead to the necessary repair of the towpath. For most of its existence, the Navigation waited for repairs and it is much to be hoped that in this case, it will not have to wait too long.

Sources

This paper is based mainly on material held in the Hampshire Record Office (H.R.O.). Information has also come from the Public Record Office, the Southampton Record Office and the House of Lords Record Office. In 1967 Winchester City Museum produced a most useful exhibition on the Itchen Navigation.

Acknowledgements

For assistance from the Hampshire County Record Office, from Mr. Mobbs of the Hampshire River Board, from the Winchester City Museum, from the Clerk of the Records, House of Lords, from the Southampton City Record Office, and the Winchester City Engineer.

For permission to reproduce illustrations to the Director General, Ordnance Survey, to Mr. Ruthven O. Hall, to Mr. Frank Cottrill, and to the City of Winchester.

For helpful comments on the manuscript and additional information I am indebted to Mr. Charles Hadfield and Mr. Lawrence Cameron.