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Post-War Years to Present Day

In the face of road competition and the relocation of industry, there was a steady decline of canal traffic after the Second World War. Long-distance traffic did not recover from the Great Freeze of 1962-3, while traffic from the Docks ceased with the closure of the up-river docks in the later 1960s, timber from the Surrey Docks being the last to finish in 1970.

The government nationalised rail, road and canal transport in 1948 and set up the British Transport Commission to administer them all. The canal came under the Docks and Inland Waterways Executive and traded under the name "British Waterways". The last horse drawn commercial traffic was carried in 1956 following the introduction of motor tractors three years previously.

The British Transport Commission was split up in 1963 and British Waterways took over the running of 2000 miles of canal and river navigation.

In July 2012, British Waterways handed over its responsibilities as a navigation authority to a new charity known as the Canal & River Trust.



Hampstead Road Locks from Interchange Warehouse, Malcolm Tucker, 13th May 1977

Changes since the 1970s





The canal is now widely used for a variety of recreational and leisure activities and since the 1970s the towpaths have been opened up to the public. Boat trips are regularly available especially between Camden Town and the picturesque Little Venice in west London where the canal meets the Grand Junction near Paddington. In London the boroughs work together with the navigation authority to provide a historic and interesting canalside walkway through London for all to enjoy.

However, the canal still has a future for supporting commercial traffic, because it provides a viable, environmentally friendly alternative to the congested roads, and supplies will always be needed to the newly developed and restored waterside premises. The main difference from previous eras is that the canal has become a shared use highway, where commercial and leisure crafts can co-exist and members of the public are not shut off from the waterways.

The Regent's Canal Plumes



New Uses for the Canal

-  Housing of power cables under the towpath
-  Wildlife
-  Recreational Cycling
-  Guided Walks



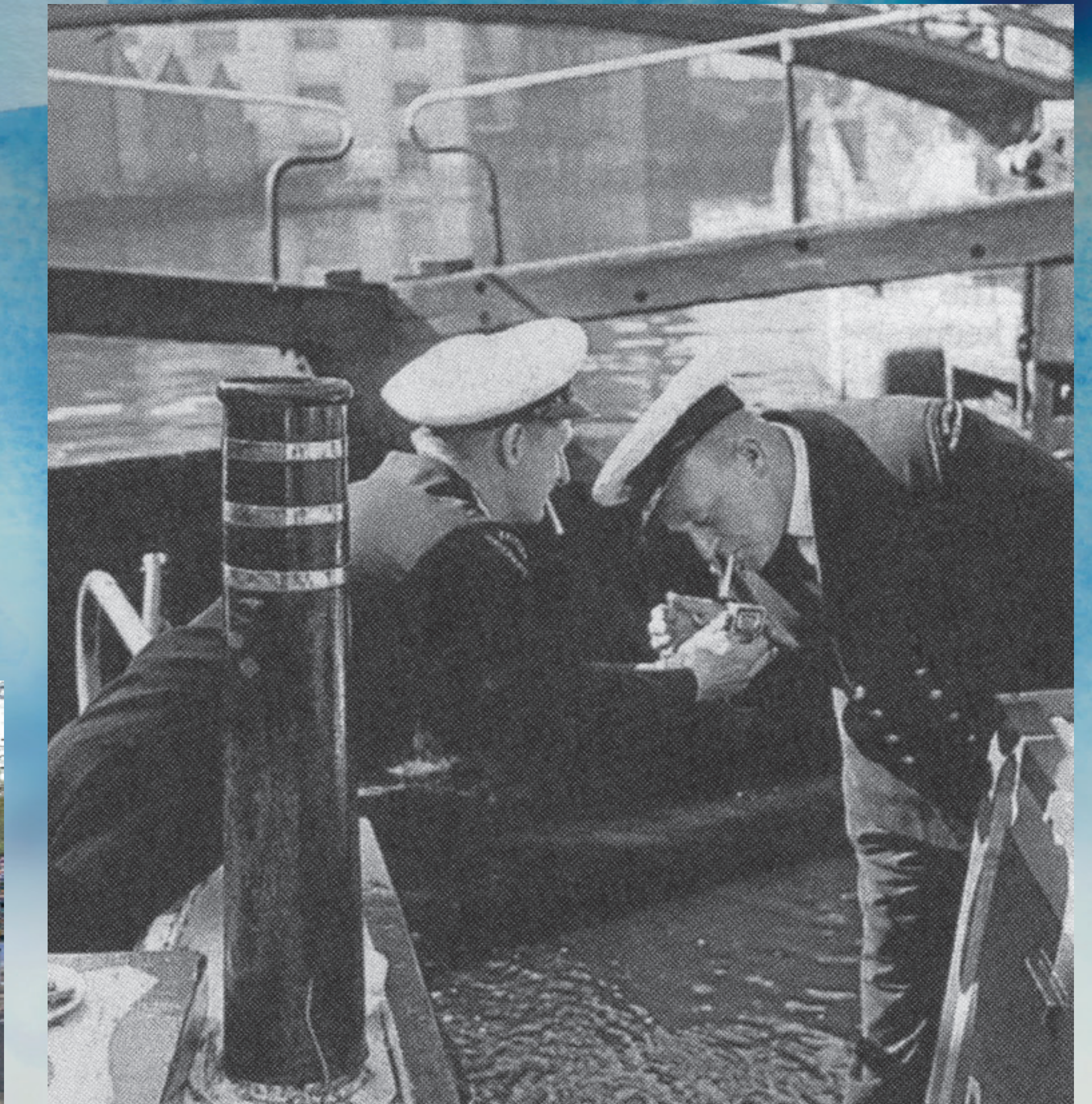
St Pancras Cruising Club by Michael Covey-Crump



Hampstead Road Locks



Canalway Cavalcade at Little Venice by Roger Squires



Hampstead Road Locks, 1958 (Daily Telegraph 25th September 2008)

1968

Westminster Council opens a stretch of the towpath to the public for recreational use.

1970

Crystal Hale founded the Islington Boat Club as a part of a campaign to save the City Road Basin.

1974

Camden Council opens the towpath within its boundaries. It was now possible to walk from Maida Hill Tunnel to Islington Tunnel.

1982

The remainder of the towpath, down to Limehouse is open to the public.

For Further Information

Visit the London Canal Museum, near King's Cross.

Visit these websites:

www.friendsofregentscanal.org
(Friends of Regent's Canal)

www.whenlondonbecame.org.uk
(When London became an Island)

www.canalmuseum.org.uk
(London Canal Museum)

canalrivertrust.org.uk
(Canal & River Trust)

www.crht1837.org
(Camden Railway Heritage Trust)

Read these books:

The Regent's Canal, London's Hidden Waterway, Alan Faulkner, 2005 (Waterway's World)

The Regent's Canal, David Fathers, 2012 (Frances Lincoln)

Acknowledgements:

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