



BASINGSTOKE CANAL NEWS

No. 204 Winter 2004



50p if



Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society Ltd

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Editorial



I happened to catch an excellent programme on BBC2 about the Norfolk Broads last month. The bit that interested me most was not their ancient history but what had been happening in the last half century.

It seems that the previously clear waters of the Broads have mostly become turbid and murky, and the underwater plants have been dying. Sounds familiar? – it got even more so. The first thing to be blamed was boating, so it was banned on some of the Broads. It made absolutely no difference.

Tree shading was not blamed because of the wide open expanses of water. However, after some serious scientific research the cause has been found. High levels of nitrates that have run off surrounding farms have caused a boom in the population of bacteria in the water. Normally these are eaten by water fleas which are then eaten by fish, but the levels became so high that clouding of the water occurred, which in turn caused the plants to die. This reduced the levels of oxygen in the water and put everything into a downward spiral.

It will take time to reverse this trend and return the Broads to their previous state. The programme stated that this effect is happening on other stretches of fresh water throughout the country.

This effect has been suggested as a cause of the Basingstoke's decline in water quality, but if it has already been identified so positively as the culprit elsewhere, why are people fooling around installing more boat counters on the Basingstoke

Canal instead of tracking down the real cause? The levels of boating are already pitifully small – go to Potter Higham and it's like an aquatic version of Piccadilly Circus by comparison. There are, however, a number of fields adjacent to the canal which could well be polluting it.

Some time ago it was reported that water sampling and analysis would be done regularly at a number of points along the canal by the Farnborough Technical College, but I gather that this has all fallen through with the demise of the Environmental Department there.

I understand that the K&A is suffering the same decline in water quality and that large sums of money are being spent to identify the cause. Why is nobody doing anything sensible about the Basingstoke? We had a huge rumpus soon after the re-opening when it was designated as a Site

of Special Scientific Interest, but there seems to be precious little evidence of either science or interest today; just the usual anti-boating dogma.

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A rather curious rumour circulated in October that the Society was being invited to back a campaign to have the canal sold or passed to a well known local entrepreneur, although it is not at all clear whether the gentleman in question has actually expressed a wish to own the canal.

Moreover, since the Society spent several years campaigning to have the canal transferred from the previous private company to public ownership, it is difficult to see the proposed move as anything but a retrograde step. The Society has certainly criticised the BCA on occasions for some of the things it has done or not done, but it is much more likely to be able to influence them than a private owner responsible only to himself and his accountants.

And speaking of accountants, it is hard to see what motive any business man would have for taking over the canal. The chances of making any money from it by anything other than blatant asset stripping seem very slim. Even if he were prepared to fund the £2 million maintenance backlog, it is difficult to believe that he would be able and willing to find £500,000 a year to pay for the running costs, and the County Councils would hardly fund a private owner.

However, if some philanthropist was willing and able to fund the maintenance backlog and provided an endowment sufficiently large to tempt British Waterways to take over the canal, I would be the first to sign up to a petition to have him knighted!

* * * * *

One piece of good news is that the Society applied for, and has received a grant from *Awards for All* for the purchase of equipment for doing presentations. This will enable us to buy a laptop computer, digital projector, screen and software for doing PowerPoint presentations.

This should help us with a variety of tasks, such as lobbying councillors to support the canal, using the excellent ammunition given by Leigh Thornton on page 6, doing the AGM presentations, and even showing films on DVD. The latter is something we could consider for the Chobham meetings if no speaker was available.

Cover Picture: Brian Smith installing a gate valve on the St. John's back-pumping scheme. Photo: Pablo Haworth

Chairman's Report

The Winter Newsletter editorial deadline approaches and our Editor is once again becoming insistent for copy. The clocks have changed and dark evenings remove the last vestige of excuses for compiling the winter reports.

The Canal Director's report for the Canal Joint Management Committee included a list of unscheduled works on the canal. The vast majority was the result of vandalism, much of which should have been headed Criminal Damage. Holes drilled in the bottom of a work boat, overflow weirs on the Ash aqueduct damaged, dredger set on fire, lock gates and sluices tampered with and significant loss of water.

I ask members to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity to the Canal Centre or a Committee Member; our contact numbers are located on the back of the newsletter.

Dry Dock

The meeting between Surrey County Council Officers, Canal Authority and Management committee Chair, Cllr. John Phillips, Guildford Borough Officers and the residents has unfortunately not resolved the issues.

A reduction in the periods for working with power tools was proposed by the residents, the canal management team did not accept this and the existing arrangements continue to be monitored.

Background noise, measured by us at 40 dB. is the base measurement, noise nuisance is advised as 45 dB.

Information on noise levels measured by Guildford Officers is not available to the society at this time. Differentiation of noise from any other sources is not confirmed, the complainant's diary being the prime criteria used.

Users of the dock may be liable to prosecution if they are judged to contravene the conditions of use of the dock. The society has concerns that other operations within the vicinity of the dock which generate noise may result in misinformation and action by Guildford officers, and this may not be related to dock users' activities.

We have been advised that dock users should maintain their own work diary, added proof of their compliance with dry dock usage requirements if checks are made. A secondary benefit is the ability to cross reference with the complainant's log of events. We need to develop a simple system to achieve this data in co-operation with dock users.

Surrey County Council Headquarters

The Planning Application for Brewery Road includes a contribution for canal improvement work, but this is subject to the planning consent being granted. Society and IWA responses to the application suggested a number of enhancements for the canal environment and facilities.

The Brewery Road site has been the subject of numerous planning applications, some sympathetic to the canal and others not. Surrey County Council as owners of the canal and potential occupiers of the site should in our opinion liaise with Woking Borough Council to maximise the canal improvements. This is the last chance to get it right for the benefit of all residents and users of the canal.

Recently, information has become available which indicates that other projects than the canal may benefit from this application. Planning gain contributions from the Surrey C.C. application may support other landscape works.

Public consultation in Woking has listed the canal as one of the top four improvements for the Borough, and we consider that the enhancements in the centre of Woking should have priority over other works.

Perseverance

A visit to Cheshire last July included a visit to Runcorn Locks on the Trent and Mersey and Ellesmere Port Boat Museum. While at Runcorn a display on the *Daniel Adamson* steam tug restoration confirmed my intention to visit the Museum and check restoration progress on *Perseverance*.

Daniel Adamson is an ex-Manchester Ship Canal tug and was in working order when passed to the custody of the Boat Museum. It became derelict over the years and was to be sold for scrap when the restoration society was formed and removed the tug from the Museum to save a unique vessel.

Perseverance has had work carried out, unfortunately it is not completed and our dredger is no longer a working unit. The pontoons are afloat in the lower dock, but vegetation growth in crevices formed by the two pontoons indicates a lengthy period since they were moved or checked. The main hull is on hard standing, with crane jib and boiler stored in the open alongside. Ring gear is open to the elements and has not been greased recently as rust is forming. Deck gear has been renovated and is stored undercover; I was unable to check its condition.

I was informed that the boiler requires extensive work and that finance is not available to complete the full restoration. The museum has proposed using air not steam to work the

WORKING PARTY

WORK PARTY REPORT – WINTER 2004

Volunteer work on the St Johns back pump installation is entering its final stages. The pump well and valve chamber are constructed and ready for fitting covers and the pipe entries into the chambers.

Once the two control valves are fitted the earth dam at the lock 11 outlet can be removed and the pipeline filled and tested. Contracts for the pump, pump controls electricity supply and acceptance testing will complete the installation, hopefully for spring 2005.

The winter programme includes canal maintenance work on bank protection; this follows the removal of spoil from the dam at St.Johns, for use as piling back fill. Our winter session at Up Nateley includes the removal of fallen oaks and bank side clearing work; this will be scheduled for after Christmas, avoiding the main early season shooting meets.

The Dig Deep consortium of visiting groups continues to support our projects, planning for the spring working parties is in hand although not yet finalised.

FUTURE WORKING PARTY DATES

DATE	LEADER	LOCATION
27/28 Nov	DJ/DL/KR	St. John Pipeline
11/12 Dec	DJ/DL/KR	St. Johns Pipeline Bank Protection
8/9 Jan	DJ/DL/KR	St Johns Bank Protection
22/23 Jan	PR/DJ/DL/KR	Up Nateley
12/13 Feb	PR/DJ/DL	St Johns Bank Protection or Tree Clearance
26/27 Feb	PR/DJ/DL/KR	Up Nateley
12/13 Mar	PR/DJ/DL/KR	Up Nateley
26/27 Mar	PR/DJ/DL/KR	St. Johns Tree Clearance
9/10 Apr	PR/DJ/DL/KR	St. Johns Tree Clearance or Waterway clean up
22-24 Apr		Bridge Barn
Leaders:	PR - PETER REDWAY	01483 721710
	DJ - DAVE JUNKISEN	02089 410685
	DL - DAVE LUNN	01483 771294
	KR - KEVIN REDWAY	01483 722206

Peter Redway
November 2004



Left: The nearly completed pump chamber below Langman's Bridge.

Chairman's Report *continued from previous page-*

dredger mechanism thus avoiding the expense of boiler repairs.

Our committee view is that we should press the Museum to finance and progress the full restoration of *Perseverance*, advocating periodic steaming days and demonstrations. The Museum has significant loss of income and grant aid, as indicated in recent publicity. This should not prevent us

taking action to prevent deterioration or at worst the scrapping of unique waterway equipment.

We would like to have members' opinions, particularly ex-dredging volunteers, on how they see the restoration of *Perseverance* evolve and if they support the action we have proposed.

Peter Redway
November 2004

Local News

New Boat Company Chairman

Ron McLaughlin has stepped down as Chairman of Surrey & Hants Cannal Cruises Ltd and is to be replaced by Peter Wright.

Peter has been serving as the Company Secretary for some years and is also a Director of the Canal Society itself. His post as Secretary is to be filled by Kathryn Dodington.

Our thanks go to Ron for all his efforts (and to Dorothy for putting up with it all!) and best wishes for the future of the *John Pinkerton* and its crew go to Peter.

Kevin saves the day

"One of the top gates on Lock 9 is higher than the other" was the message from a passing pedestrian to a Society Work Party one weekend in November.

Investigation soon revealed the cause - one of the gates had been lifted out of its socket, presumably by one of the boats that had gone up the flight earlier in the day getting its bows stuck under the top beam.

Rangers were informed, but it looked as if the canal might be closed until the dredger *Unity* could be brought up to lift the gate back into position.

At this point Kevin Redway swung into action with the digger that was on hire for work on the St John's back pumping scheme. One lift and the gate dropped neatly back into its socket and several boats that were waiting to go up the canal were able to go on their way.

Nice one Kev!

Kennet & Avon link

The idea of a link between the Basingstoke and Kennet & Avon Canals was mentioned at last year's Annual General Meeting and Roger Reed gave a talk about his ideas at a Woking meeting earlier this year.

Since then, we have been gradually progressing the project. It is clear that to give the scheme any real credibility, a

professional feasibility study will be needed. We therefore contacted three companies who do this type of work. All of them have indicated a willingness to undertake such a study, but, of course, at a cost.

We shall need to find something of the order of £15,000 to £20,000 for a fairly basic look at all the various aspects. This is beyond the current resources of the Society, so we shall have to try to get some financial assistance from some of the potentially interested parties.

Some of the euphoria that was spread a couple of years ago by BW's plans for new canals seems to have evaporated recently, so we also need to canvas opinion amongst members of the Society as to whether they feel it is worth proceeding. Let us know what *you* think.

The idea of such a canal is not a new one and even if we did not proceed with the scheme immediately, it is likely to pop up again some time. A professional feasibility study would be an invaluable spring board to re-launch it.

Sheet's Heath Bridge

Could we be heading for a replay of the famous Woking bridges case in 1913, when Woking District Council tried, ultimately unsuccessfully, to sue the then owners of the canal for the cost of repairing six bridges in Woking? The Court of Appeal decided that the first change of ownership in 1874 had failed to transfer the statutory undertaking to the new owners, so that they and their successors had none of the rights or obligations of the original company.

Sheets Heath Bridge in Brookwood seems to be deteriorating and the question of liability for the repairs will need to be addressed again. The bridge consists of a pair of brick plinths spanned by a pair of steel girders with what look like railway sleepers between them. It clearly was not designed with modern traffic in mind and has a 1.3 ton weight limit on it. Unfortunately, it provides access to a number of houses, many of whose owners drive 4x4 vehicles which are almost certain to exceed this limit. The limit also seems to be widely ignored by van and lorry drivers and in early November a lorry actually broke one of the wooden cross members.

Liability for the bridge rests either with the local council or with Surrey County Council and something needs to be done either to reinforce the bridge or to enforce the weight limit. A serious accident could happen otherwise.

The Basingstoke Canal - Value for Money?

By virtue of the fact that you are reading this article, it is highly likely that you are a supporter and user of the Basingstoke Canal. I would like to think that you consider it a good use of public money to fund the canal and that the canal is worthy of further support from business, grant schemes etc. With this in mind, the BCA have been working on some figures to help sell the canal around the important funding "market", in which very key players are the local authorities themselves. Our aim is to be able to work with the Canal Society to make better informed approaches, to not only seek new funding, but to demonstrate continuing good value for money to current funders and those who are "wavering" a bit!

It is virtually impossible to count canal users, although we are taking part in a pilot scheme for Hampshire County Council to install "people counters" at 4 points on the towpath (and don't worry, this isn't an English Nature ploy to limit towpath users!!). Our best method is to extrapolate figures from what is available and accumulate information from user groups who have a recording system of some form (e.g. tickets, members, bookings and so forth). Whilst never entirely accurate it does give an insight in to usage and provides a benchmark to monitor future trends. Below I have highlighted some key statistics, which, I think you will agree, make surprising reading!

Visitor Numbers

The Canal runs through 6 District and Borough Council areas (the "Riparian Boroughs"). Figures show the population of these Boroughs to total 552,290 residents. (Source: Council Websites). In addition to the Riparian Boroughs, regular users are likely to come from the large population areas of adjoining Boroughs including: Basingstoke and Deane, Waverley (Farnham) and Bracknell Forest (Bracknell, Sandhurst, Crowthorne etc). Research at Rushmoor Borough Council has indicated that 44% of the population are Canal users. Centrally located on the Canal, with a population housed further from the Canal than in Woking, yet nearer than in, say, Hart, Rushmoor could be considered a fair indicator of local use.

Extrapolating this 44% figure to the local population gives a user total of approx 1/4 million people from the riparian Boroughs. Allowing for the highly populous neighbouring Boroughs, an **estimate of 1/3million** users would not be excessive. Assuming just 6 visits per year (once every 2 months) we arrive at a figure of **2 million Annual Visits Per Year**.

Private Boating: The BCA typically issues 120 Annual Licences and 150 Visitor Licences a year for powered boats. In addition over 280 canoe licences are issued. Many more canoeists gain access to the canal as an inclusive part of their BCU membership.

Passenger and Holiday Boats:

In 2003 the **BCA** ran the boat operation at the Canal Centre, Mytchett:

- 130 Self Drive Hires took place for 960 people
- 42 Chartered Cruises took place for 1050 people
- Approx. 6000 passengers took a short boat trip
- 1400 passengers enjoyed a "Santa Cruise"

Galleon Marine at Odiham took 130 holiday bookings (typically a 1 week holiday) with an average of 5 passengers a time = 650 people. In addition 40 day hires took place for approx 320 people.

The Surrey and Hants Canal Society provide approx. 130 Chartered Cruises p.a. for 30 – 40 passengers = 4,445 people. In addition 46 public trips took place for 900 people.

Accessible Boating provide hire boats for people with disabilities and their carers. 106 day hire bookings were made in 2003.

Maggie G operated by volunteers in Woking provides trips for groups with disabled members. 42 trips with 173 passengers were made in 2003.

The Swingbridge Community Boat, managed by Surrey Care Trust and based in Woking gave trips to more than 700 people from disadvantaged backgrounds in 2003.

Overall almost **17,000 people enjoyed** a trip on the Canal in 2003 !

Visitors and Users Spend

The Inland Waterways Association (Restoration Handbook, Harrison. 1999) give the following figures for visitor spend, based on 1996 prices:

Private Boats	£3,100 per boat/p.a.
Hire Boats	£23,000 pb/p.a.
Trip Boats	£27,500 pb/pa
Anglers	£3.09 per visit
Informal Visitors	£3.53 per visit

Based on the Canal's 5 hire boats and 4 trip boats and approx 100 resident private boats we arrive at a figure of **£535,000** plus the spend of the 200 or so visiting boats per annum.

The 2 million informal visits will generate a spend of approximately **£7,000,000**.

Meanwhile the 7000 regular anglers, assuming just 6 visits per year, plus the 2,500 match visitors (Source: Basingstoke Canal Angling Association) will have spent approx **£130,000**.

Allowing a modest 25% for inflation since 1996, plus unaccounted spend from visiting boats, we can make a reasonably informed estimate of a **£9,500,000 per year input to the local economy from the Canal's visitors**. As alluded to above, these figures do come with a "health warning" and should be treated as a guide only.

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Events

Fox & Hounds Rally

The Basingstoke Canal Boat Club's annual Fox & Hounds rally took place at the end of September and attracted a good number of boats, including the traditional steam launches.

Weather-wise it wasn't too bad and there were stands and boat rides to attract the public.

Below, left: A good crowd of boats, including *(right)* "Ursula", a welcome new member of the steam fleet



Bridge Barn Rally 2005

The annual Bridge Barn Rally will be taking place as usual next year over the Easter weekend. The rally is being planned as a 2-day event as far as the public is concerned and will be on 26th and 27th March.

The organisers will be making their usual appeal for assistance in running the event, but if you would like to forestall this by volunteering early, Verna Smith would love to hear from you (01252-517622).

Woking Council is intending to develop the old Brookwood Hospital site below Lock 12 as a country park, and would be keen to have a boat rally based there. So, if the infrastructure can be put in place and if we can find the money to complete the St. John's back-pumping scheme in time to guarantee adequate water, there is a possibility that the 2006 Easter event might move a little further up the canal. Watch this space!

Cont from previous page

And the cost? The annual budget for running the Canal is around £600,000, with some £150,000 of that generated by the BCA through fundraising, licensing, sales etc. This leaves a balance of about £450,000 to be met by the funding authorities. Assuming they all pay as required, this works out at some **90 pence** per head of population. Put another way, an outlay of £450,000 per year of public money is generating some £9–10,000,000 for the local economy, or for every £1 spent another £20 is generated.

You can play all sorts of statistical games with these figures but the general message is quite clear: the Basingstoke Canal provides unique recreational, social, educational and environmental benefits to the local population. It greatly improves the quality of life for local people and generates a significant income to the local economy. It does this for less than a £1 per head of population. That is not a lot to ask, is it?

As ever, get out and enjoy it!

Leigh Thornton—Canal Director

More events

CHOBHAM SOCIAL MEETINGS

The new venue at the Parish Pavilion, Chobham is proving ideal with an excellent room and kitchen facilities (*See the map below*). The first illustrated talk in October featured the work of the Swan Life Line from Eton and explained the lifecycle, problems and how the organisation rescues and cares for injured swans.

This was followed in November by a very interesting and beautifully illustrated talk by Dick Allan on a voyage in his narrow boat down the River Rhone to the Canal du Midi and back. The Rhone is one of France's mightiest rivers and a rather daunting prospect, but Dick's experience indicated that with a good measure of common sense and preparation, it was perfectly feasible and not too nerve-wracking. As Phil Riley pointed out afterwards, this was far more encouraging than recent articles in *Waterways World*, which seemed to focus on bureaucratic difficulties.

Wednesday 15 December 2004

Peter Crawford of the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust:-
Update on the K & A Canal's £29m improvement scheme (1996-2002) showing the work undertaken. This was one of the first and largest Heritage Lottery Fund grants at £25m.

Wednesday 19 January 2005

Paul Bryant of the Cobham Mill Preservation Trust:-
Restoration of this ancient watermill.

Wednesday 16 February 2005

Richard Thomas:-

President 195? Richard will give a detailed history of Fellows, Morton and Clayton's most famous steamer, from her building in 1909, through her life under steam, until in 1925 she was converted to diesel. Later she was restored from scrapheap condition to her original configuration.

Wednesday 16 March 2005

Eric Lewis of the Southampton Canal Society:-

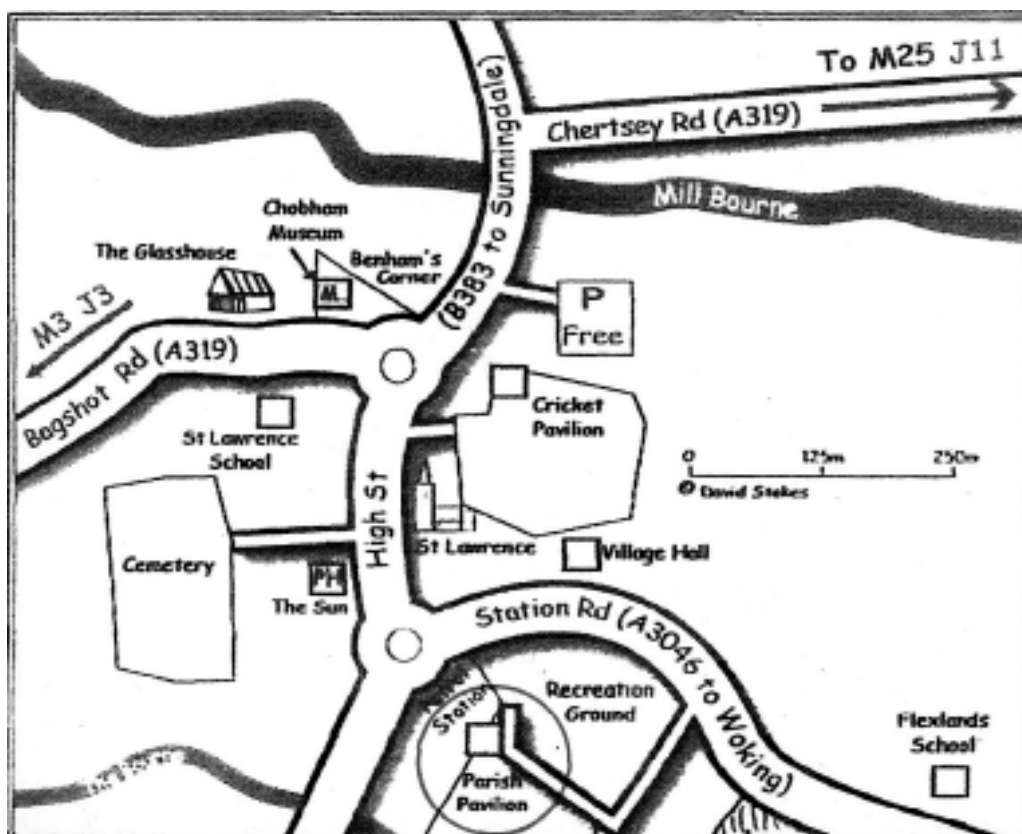
Eric will illustrate a variety of cruises on different boats around the country in a logical sequence. The slides will show where fairly significant changes have taken place over the years.

Wednesday 20 April 2005

Robin Higgs:-

Barging through Eastern Germany

Our own Vice President will be returning with another of his holiday shows, this time showing his cruise through Eastern Europe on his friend's barge.



Waterways Trust

The Waterways Trust

At the recent meeting of the Parliamentary Waterways Group which I attended on behalf of the Society. Roger Hanbury, Chief Executive of The Waterways Trust gave a presentation about the need to attract £1.1m of new funding from the government to safeguard the waterways museums at Ellesmere Port, Gloucester Docks and Stoke Bruerne.

The Boat Museum, the National Waterways Museum and the Canal Museum together hold 90% of the UK's inland waterways collection but receive no direct government funding.

The three museums hold 60 historic craft, 14000 objects and 80000 records and, altogether, attract 100000 visitors every year. However in 2003 visitor numbers were down 11% mainly due to the fact that most other national museums are now free.

The Waterways Trust has secured sponsorship worth £4.45 per visitor of non-government funding but this cannot cover its costs and the museums must therefore charge for entry. The competition from other free national museums has meant a critical loss of income of nearly £100000 per annum.

The arrears on boat conservation (including the ex-Society steam dredger 'Perseverance') has now reached £1/3M alone.

In complete contrast the other national museums receive government funding as follows which allows free admission to be given, i.e.

The National Railway Museum £8 per visitor
The National Maritime Museum £14 per visitor
The National Mining Museum £19 per visitor.

New investment in the waterways museums can develop them as centres of excellence for education, cultural tourism and public enjoyment. Without action, these museums and the many treasures they hold could be lost.

So will the opportunity to enrich the lives of visitors, our children and grandchildren with the continuing story of the waterways that have had such a profound influence on our cultural, social, environmental, technological and economic development in the UK for three centuries.

The Chairman of the Parliamentary Waterways Group, Bill O'Brien MP is to raise an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons about this issue and to ask the Government for £1.1m per annum for 10 years as this sum is urgently needed to ensure the conservation of this nationally and internationally important waterways collection and to allow free entry to the waterways museums.

The Waterways Trust need your support now. If you love the waterways of this country and their history please help by writing to your MP as soon as possible and ask him or her to sign the Early Day Motion when it is tabled. The more MPs that sign it the better.

Further information is available on the website www.thewaterwaystrust.org.uk

David Millett

BCA activities

New lower gates have been fitted to Lock 16. New uppers are to go on Lock 14. Lower gates for 2 and 6 have been ordered for delivery in February with fitting before Easter with luck.

The Lock 27 byewash pipe appears to be in need of complete replacement, a possible job for the Work Party.

The experimental bank protection put in at Dogmersfield last year using coir rolls has grown an impressive collection of plants; not too good for mooring, but you wouldn't want to moor there anyway and it is certainly an improvement on the crumbly towpath edge that was there before. *(Right)*



Basingstoke Canal in 1806

The Basingstoke Canal as described in 1806 — *Contributed by Roger Reed*

Rees's "Cyclopeadia" was first published serially between 1802 and 1819. This monumental work consisted of 39 volumes and was one of the first works of its kind to be published in English, on the Arts, Sciences and Literature.

In 1972, David and Charles reprinted a selection of articles related to industry and technology. This work consisted of five volumes and was entitled "Rees's Manufacturing Industry (1819-20)". The section on canals was originally published in 1806 and has 142 pages of text and 6 pages of plates. It is an in depth study of canals, covering all aspects of engineering and management together with a description of contemporary canals.

The following extract is reproduced here as it appeared in 1806, but with modern type-face.

BASINGSTOKE CANAL. This line of canal was first proposed in 1772, as an extension of, or appendage to, the canal intended for shortening the course of the navigation of the river "Thames, between Reading and Maidenhead; but it was some years before the first act for this was obtained, in 1778; the other act is the 33rd of Geo. III. The general direction of this canal is nearly west, by rather a crooked course of 37 miles in length, in the counties of Surry and Hants; the summit-pound thereof of 22 miles in length is upon a high level, near the south-east branch of the grand-ridge on its north side. The principal objects thereof seem the import of coals, and export of timber and agricultural produce, from and to the Thames. Basingstoke and Odiham are considerable towns on or near its line, which commences in the Wey river at Westley, (about two miles from its junction with the Thames) and terminates at Basingstoke. A cut of 6 miles in length, and level with the summit-pound, was proposed northward to Turgis Green, but has not yet been begun, as we understand. The first 15 miles from the Wey river has a rise of 195 feet by 29 locks to Dadbrook, (the part at each lock being about 7 feet) from whence to Basingstoke it is level: 45 ton boats are used on this canal. At Grewel is a tunnel, part of which intersects the chalk strata (about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile in length), that had the misfortune of falling in; but the same has, we are told, been substantially repaired. At Aldershot there is a large reservoir for the supply of this canal, (which begun in 1788 and completed in 1796, at the expence to the proprietors of £160,000.) and a feeder from the river Loddon. There are 72 bridges over the canal, and several culverts across, to convey the water from the upper to the lower lands. The company were authorised to raise £186,000. The prices of freight from Basingstoke to Hamborough wharf, London, for coarse and heavy goods, was, in 1800, 15s. per ton; to the dockyards, as far as Deptford, 16s.; and to Blackwall docks, 17s. per ton for timber, &c. The length of a passage is three or four days. In the year 1796 there was an intention of extending a branch from near Grewell tunnel, of about 22 miles in length, to the navigation that connects with Southampton Water; about 1794 there was an expectation of its being joined by the canal which will next be mentioned; and in 1801, notices were given of an intended cut from Chilton-moor to Bagshot-green in Windlesham; for want of these or some other junction that shall throw a greater trade into it, this canal has, though improving, been as yet rather unproductive to the share-holders. In 1800 there was a proposal for extending the Grand Surry to meet this canal at the Wey river.

Basingstoke and Hampstead. About the year 1794, a line of canal was projected, and notices given, extending from the *Basingstoke* canal at that town, to the *Kennet and Avon* canal at Hampstead, 2 miles above Newbury, the length of the line was said to be 22 miles; we have heard nothing of this scheme.

At some time later, two amendments were made to the text.

- 1) The extent of the Canal was changed to "Cooper's meadow, adjoining to the town of Basingstoke, and enters the river Wey about two miles above Weybridge", deleting "the Wey.....Basingstoke"
- 2) After the word 'Loddon' the following was added "The Proprietors are prohibited from touching the Loddon, or any of the springs or streams that feed it."

So, no water from the Lodden, but what happened to the large reservoir at Aldershot? Bourley reservoir wasn't built until about 1850 and was never intended to supply the canal. "Dadbrook" is, I think, the old name for the River Blackwater. Paul Vine's "London's lost route to Basingstoke" has a map of 1790, on which are marked two small reservoirs near what is now the Army's Long Valley training ground near Eelmoor, but they do not look big enough to merit the description "large". They could have been fed by the Claycart Stream, but it seems unlikely that this would have been adequate. I could not find any reference to the reservoir in Paul's book.

Editor

Canal du Midi

If the Duke of Bridgewater is usually regarded as the father of the English canal system, then Pierre-Paul Riquet must be its godfather, because it was his Canal du Midi that inspired the young Francis Egerton to build his Bridgewater Canal.

Some old friends of ours emigrated earlier this year to live just north of Narbonne and we spent a fortnight with them at the beginning of October. We helped them with a bit of *bricolage* (DIY to you and me), but still had time to have a look at the some of the local canals, including the Midi.

Like most other French canals that we have seen, it seems to be very well maintained and shortage of money does not appear to be a problem. Indeed, money has been lavished on it, sometimes to not very good effect. At Fontserannes is a flight of locks (once 9, now 7) that takes the canal down into Bézier. In the 1970s, it was decided to bypass these by means of a “water slope”. This is a rectangular concrete channel that runs up the hill. A large machine with about 20 wheels straddles the channel and pushes a moving dam up the hill, taking with it a pool of water and the boats in it. We were told that unfortunately one day there was an incident when the wheels lost traction and the whole device slid back down the hill, creating great consternation both amongst those trying to go up it and those waiting to do so at the bottom, who got hit by a tidal wave. Since then, the slope has been unused. I suspect that they have recognised that there is a fundamental flaw in the design and it may never be used again.



Above. The enormous, disused water slope vehicle at Fontserannes.

Nevertheless the rest of the canal seems to function fine, largely because Riquet went to a lot of trouble to ensure adequate water supplies. The dams, reservoirs and feeder canals that he built in the 17th century are still doing a grand job. What a pity the builders of the Basingstoke didn't do as well!

Much of the Midi is lined with plane trees, which must be very pleasant in the summer, and it is very attractive.



Above: Le Somail, one of the attractive villages on the Midi

We had a look at the famous circular lock at Agde (*below*), which sadly is no longer circular, aesthetics having lost out to functionality when a straight wall was put in to allow boats to moor while waiting for the three sets of gates to operate.



While we were there the mooring was occupied by a cruiser, from whose cabin emerged a huge, sinister, grey dog that started to make the most appalling baying noise. It sounded as if it was auditioning for the lead role in *Hound of the Baskervilles* and it didn't look as if its owner needed to worry too much about vandalism on his boat. Perhaps that's what we need at the Canal Centre.

With cheap flights from the south of England to Perpignan, Montpellier and Carcassonne, the Midi looks like a very tempting location for our next canal holiday.

Roger Cansdale

Letters

Dear Mr Cansdale,

I am always pleased to get my copy of the Basingstoke Canal News. It is always very interesting. I loved the article about George Hedger—he was a lovely man. This time there is a marvellous picture of the Red Arrows flying over the John Pinkerton.

I have a suggestion to make. Do you think you could include some “hot line” telephone numbers? The Fleet Pond Society does this. It has the Environment Agency for pollution – 0800 807060, the ranger’s land line and his mobile, and also the Swan Helpline – 01753 859397. I believe the swan helpline is quite quick. It seems a pity that the Woking swan had to suffer so long.

The reason I have thought of this is that yesterday I noticed two wheels sticking out of the water by Reading Road bridge. They were in the middle of the channel and looked as though they might be part of something quite large. They were near the bridge so a boat coming the other way would not see them and could be badly damaged. A canoe could be overturned.

I phoned David Millett but he was on his ansafone. Then Janet Hedger suggested the Canal depot at Mytchett. I had no idea where to find that number but Janet provided it. They too had an ansafone but eventually intercepted it. I’m glad to say the wheels are gone today.

So if there was a phone number one could ring in the Basingstoke Canal News it would be helpful. I see on p.13 it says advise the BCA of loose fishing lines but it doesn’t give the number.

All best wishes

Yours sincerely

Celia Davis

Thanks for a good idea. I have added the BCA’s number at the bottom of the back page. For those in the Basingstoke, Alton & Farnborough telephone area, the number is also to be found in the telephone directory under Basingstoke Canal. It is also quite easy to remember as it is palindromic – 370073; area code is 01252.

Dear Roger Cansdale,

LOCK WATER USAGE

Further to my letter of 21.03.04 and the page devoted to this subject in BCN No.202, I was impressed by your very tidy explanation that lock water wastage is not related to the size of the vessel.

However this still doesn’t seem to be quite right and I think the reason is that you have overlooked the water that is NOT used. When a vessel enters the lock the volume of water that it displaces returns to the pound that it has just left. The larger the vessel, therefore, the more is the quantity of water left behind to be used on a subsequent occasion. In other words larger vessels use and, therefore, waste less water.

Whilst I agree that efficient usage of locks is a far more important issue it would be nice to sort out this intriguing detail once and for all.

Yours sincerely,

Roger Hand

What about the larger volume of water that has to go back into a lock when the larger boat emerges from it? Surely this must cancel out the saving you suggest.

I agree that it would be nice to sort this out, but I am getting a bit bored by it and I suspect that the readers are as well. I doubt whether it makes any practical difference and the answer probably depends on the size of the pounds, the water levels relative to weirs and umpteen other factors, so I intend to draw a line under this subject unless anyone produces anything very startling.

Dear Roger,

Why do locks 7, 12 and 15 have winding holes above them? All three have a bridge close below them. I had thought that barges would be emptied above them, but I now think that extra ‘earth’ was required to build up the area around the lock and bridge area at the start of a flight.

Pablo

Can anyone offer any other explanation?

More letters

Dear Editor,

The question about the K&A and the Basingstoke Canal locks being left empty (*BCN Issue 203*) is easy to answer. They both had the same 'cheapy' bypass system, the overflow weir directs the water into the chamber, hence to make sure the excess water is passed through, the bottom paddle or gate is left open.

When the Basingstoke was rebuilt we built new by-passes that would direct the excess water around the whole structure, and this is slowly happening on the K&A.. Unfortunately there are locks on the K&A, that having a new bypass, still need to be left empty because the full lock would flood the neighbouring property. On the Deepcut Flight when we put in the new weirs nobody looked at the mathematics to decide the proper length of such weirs. An accident at lock 27 showed this up, and so the bottom gates are two inches lower than the upper ones, and as such can act as an emergency weir.

The main reason now for leaving the locks empty, on the Basingstoke, is that it is simple to seal the top gates. If you look behind the bottom gates, when they are sealed, there is always water leaking through. If other boats are in the offing, the ranger will tell you if he wants the locks left full. I suggest the following should be done on each lock, once a week if no boat has come through: the lock should be filled by the rangers.

I have recently been on the K&A, down and up the Devizes flight on our own. There are a number of regular local users of that canal that did not know the reason for the locks being left empty; I am about to tell them by way of *Waterways World*. By the way, the Devizes flight has got the cheapy weirs and at the end of the day the lock-keeper empties all the locks by winding up one paddle.

Pablo



Dear Editor,

There are three things which get me angry, one is the paddle gear 'nearly' being left down, second is the bottom gates that refuse to stay closed and third the quadrant that you use to push the balance beams are not quite long enough. The latter two are corrected by recalling the bricklayers, the gates have not been hung at the right angle. On the K & A the ratchet tops are painted white, helping users to see where the paddle gear should be left.

Of the hundreds of locks I have used, the best quadrants are at Lock 4 on the Basingstoke Canal, laid by non-expert bricklayers.

Pablo

Dear Editor,

It has surprised me that a long serving member of the restoration group did not know about the peculiar leaking problems on the Basingstoke Canal, this I saw was happening on the Aldermaston Lock of the K.& A.. The top gates droop when they are swung closed because the restraining collars are loose, and water pressure does not completely overcome the droop. This means that the second gate to close has a progressive enlarging fountain from the heel to the mitre. If the gates are forcefully closed by water pressure you see the inside frame is shunted into the hollow post. If weights are put on the balance beams or the straps are tightened, the gates will seal better. Tight collars will need to be greased.

Pablo

Jim Woolgar sent us this picture that he took on the road to Beirut in 1969. The sign in the back window of the Volkswagen says "Save the Basingstoke Canal". Do we have supporters in Hez Bolah?

- The waymarkers are now back in place along the Basingstoke Heritage Canal Path from Basingstoke Town Centre to Old Basing. This path follows as far as possible the line of the canal but repeated vandalism of the waymarkers and information panels is a continuing problem. Just an example of the increasing anti-social behaviour of the younger element unfortunately.
- Sorry to report that the Boat Museum at Ellesmere Port has advised the Society that no progress has been made with the restoration of the steam dredger 'Perseverance' since the last report in December 2002. Problems with craneage emerged after the Science Museum Prism grant had been applied for and granted, which effectively meant a total re-think in operations and costs, so the grant was cancelled. Since then the upheavals at the museum have taken their toll in that the driving force at the museum, Director Tony Conder is no with them. As the museum is now run by the Waterways Trust, which has staffing and financial problems, the outlook is not good.
- Helen Reeves, who won a bronze medal in the Olympic Ladies Kayak Slalom event in Athens, started canoeing on the Basingstoke Canal at Fleet Wharf when she was nine years of age. From little acorns grow.... A feather in the cap for the Basingstoke Canal Canoe Club who are now based at the Canal Centre at Mytchett.
- Good to read and hear that both the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust and the Wey and Arun Canal Trust are continuing to make progress with their restoration schemes. Both are fairly long term projects, but, little by little, inroads are being made into the massive amounts of work needed. Good luck to both Trusts.
- The mooring basin scheme at the Canal Centre at Mytchett inches forward with the completion of the flora and reptile survey. The latter required a reptile rescue to an area nearby and which included the construction of an artificial "hibernaculum". Hopefully, at long last, final approval should be given by SCC in December and work can actually start. Let's hope, that this time around it
- Autumn rains have now arrived and the canal is back to normal level. This summer the levels fluctuated greatly, with the Surrey locks being closed one week and opened the next and then closed again. If only there was a good sized reservoir serving the Hampshire pound so that rainfall could be stored during the winter and released into the canal in the summer.
- Shocked to hear of the increasing vandalism problems along the canal. The Canal Director reported ten instances to the recent meeting of the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee. A rough figure of around £10,000 in material damage and £30,000 "wasted" staff time was quoted but the more significant fact is the disruption to the work programme including the loss of the dredger for six weeks. The total cost of £40,000 puts into perspective, for example, Hart's annual contribution of £20,000 to the canal budget, which should be spent on maintenance and improvements but, instead, is in effect paying towards the cost of rectifying vandalism.
- Good to hear that the next draft of the new Canal Management Plan will be circulated soon with a view to the final version being placed before the Canal JMC next April. There was a lot of valuable feedback from the Society, IWA and other interest groups and organisations to the initial draft.
- The figures relating to the Society's input into the canal continue to be impressive. Our contribution to the canal in the form of the backpumping scheme amounts to £116,454 so far. To the canal in general this year so far alone the total is £42,589 including the value of 326 volunteer days (valued at £50 per day) amounting to £16300.
- They say that canals and railways go together. The outgoing chairman and chief executive of the Strategic Rail Authority, Richard Bowker, has now been appointed as a part-time non-executive member of the Board of British Waterways. He has a life long interest in the inland waterways and owns his own narrow



The hull of one of the old houseboats is currently parked on the bank just above Scotland Bridge in West Byfleet. It appears to have rivetted iron sides and knees and an elm bottom which has been concreted over inside. It could be restorable, but I don't know who is doing what with it.

From Society Newsletters No.60 Jan-Feb 1975 and No.61, March-April 1975.

- As 1975 is European Architectural Heritage Year, the Society is launching an appeal to purchase the special capping bricks needed to complete the restoration of 7 canal bridges between Crook-ham Village and Odiham which contractors, engaged by HCC, are in the course of rebuilding. We need 4000 bricks costing 20p each. This will be our contribution to this Heritage Year in a practical way.
- Little Tunnel Bridge in danger? Until recently this bridge between Up Natley and Mapledurwell was hidden from view in a deep and densely overgrown cutting. Now, as a result of substantial earthworks, the grand eastern portal stands exposed and maybe in danger of demolition. The reason for the work by a private landowner is being investigated. Already the canal bed eastwards to Penny Bridge has been bulldozed flat.
- The Society has been successful in preventing a number of new developments from encroaching onto the canal. Vigilance is particularly important in Surrey where the canal is still privately owned. Members are asked to remain watchful and report news of planning applications and developments near the canal. Just give any Committee member a ring and drop a line to our Secretary.
- On 15 December 1974 the newly inserted stop planks under Colt Hill Bridge, Odiham retained the water released by lifting the temporary dam and successfully concluded four months work. Stop planks are thick planks fixed across the canal under a bridge to form a barrier to the flow of water in an emergency or when it is necessary to drain a section for maintenance. 27 to go... that's the number of bridges along the Hampshire section alone.
- The Society is to hold it's second May Ball at the Civic Hall, Fleet. Dancing from 8pm to lam to a superb 9-piece band and a light show disco. Catering by Fleet Country Club. Tickets £3.50. Book early as last year was a sell-out.
- The Steam Dredger 'Perseverance', newly restored, was 'At Home' to members on Sunday 9 February. A large number attended including friends, children and passers by. There was continual activity with demonstrations of dredging given at hourly intervals. Technicalities were explained by the dredger engineers Ron Jesse and Ian Cripps and crew. The sales stand did a brisk trade and new members were signed up. Refreshments were available and the children had a 'field day' in the mud.
- Hampshire County Council Recreation Department has decided to apply for a grant towards the reconstruction of Greywell Tunnel Eastern Portal and the walls of Greywell lock chamber, dredging the canal within the Greywell Conservation Area and landscaping the tunnel cutting. Much of the top of the portal is missing and known photographs are being studied to make sure that the reconstruction matches the original. The application is under the European Architectural Heritage Year 1975 scheme designated by the Council of Europe to halt the steady loss of irreplaceable monuments and the erosion of character of historic European towns.
- An unexpected report from Cranley Onslow, MP for Woking at our recent AGM made an exciting end to the Society's eighth year. His address came a couple of days after a Parliamentary debate on the Basingstoke Canal and in the same week that the Government confirmed the County Councils' compulsory purchase orders. This decision came eighteen months after the public inquiry. Two points emerged, firstly that the Minister of Sport Denis Howell indicated that the Sports Council and the Countryside Commission could consider making a grant towards the cost of restoring the canal. Secondly that SCC might well be advised to reach a voluntary price agreement over the sale of the Surrey section from the private owners. In Hampshire the CPO was little more than a formality as the County Council already had possession.

What better way to explore the canal on an autumn morning than an inflatable canoe built for two?



Membership news

Many thanks to those members who responded to the subscription reminders - welcome back!

But - there are still quite a lot of people paying by Banker's Order who are not paying the current subscriptions.

Would all members paying by Banker's Order please check that they are paying the correct amount as detailed here and, if they are not, would they kindly amend their payments before the beginning of March 2005 when the next payment will be made.

The current subscription rates are as follows:

Family:	£12.00
Adult:	£10.00
OAP:	£5.00
2 OAP	£7.00
Junior:	£3.00
Group:	£15.00

Many thanks.

Doreen Hornsey
Membership Secretary

Xmas cards

Don't forget that the Society's Christmas cards are available from Verna Smith - 10 for £4.50



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