



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal Bulletin

No. 21 NOVEMBER 2013 / JANUARY 2014

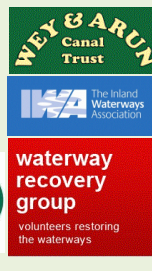
Last Attempted Trip To Basingstoke



The centenary of the last attempt to reach Basingstoke by water occurred recently. On November 16th 1913, Alec Harmsworth (*above*) took his narrowboat *Basingstoke* with a token cargo through the Greywell Tunnel without incident, but then difficulties set in. [Roger Cansdale's press release](#) describes the motivation for the trip, and why it was abandoned. Also [see a contemporary film of the ill-fated journey](#), and a [news article of the time](#) which was reproduced in the [latest Basingstoke Canal News](#). Finally, read the [account by Tony Harmsworth](#), Alec's grandson.

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- [Basingstoke Canal Authority \(BCA\) Website](#)
- [Joint Management Committee \(JMC\) Papers](#)
- [Map of the Basingstoke Canal](#)
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More Storms, More Disruption



No sooner was the Canal cleared of fallen trees and hanging branches from the October storms (see the [last Bulletin](#)), the ranger team has had to get out there again to clear the tree damage resulting from the recent strong winds (*left at St John's, and below left near Lodge Copse bridge*). This work is still going on at the time of writing. At the last count, more than 45 trees are known to have fallen, are leaning or have hanging branches, with around 15

causing blockages to the navigation. In addition, the towpath has been blocked in at least 7 places. However, the BCA have released a navigation report to announce the worst of the obstructions have now been dealt with. Water levels have been

lowered and monitored very carefully to



avoid flooding. One minor casualty was the old John Pinkerton (*right*), which has been moored on the landing stage adjacent to Galleon Marine. A pine tree fell across the stern, but luckily caused only a slight dent in one handrail.

The Canal Centre has been incommunicado since the New Year because of storm damage. They still have no internet and the office number is now diverted to a mobile. The team are managing as best they can and ask for your forbearance. Amazingly, BT stated this could take several weeks to fix.

Society Work Party Activities

The regular Society working party had spent much of 2013 renovating the barn at Colt Hill, the base for the [John Pinkerton trip boat operation](#). Following that, the team completed a sheet-piled temporary landing stage next to the North Warnborough lift bridge (*right*) shortly before Christmas. [Read all about it on the website](#).

January's jobs will include continuing with the sawing up the huge volume of felled trees on the Dogmersfield slip



ready for sale (*left*) and also assisting with the clearance

of fallen trees and floating logs in the Hampshire section. We will return to the barn in February or March to extend the piled mooring there.

We are pleased that, as a result of a company day out on the trip boat, the tool maker Stihl has agreed to donate a brushcutter to the Society. [Jeff Hill recounts how this came about](#).



BCA Weedcutter Returned To Service



Because weed had begun to proliferate in the Canal, members of the *John Pinkerton* maintenance team led by John Wharf agreed in November 2011 to take on the renovation of the then defunct BCA weedcutter (see [bulletin of the time](#).) Well, 2 years on, and after hitting and solving many obstacles, we are pleased to say the craft has been smartened up, substantially refurbished and returned to working order (*left*). [Read about the renovation project and the difficulties that were overcome](#), and [see a video of it being craned into the Canal](#). It awaits a formal safety test before it can go into operation, but then it will in due course be deployed in Woking to clear the pervasive hydrocotyl floating weed.

Capital Works Update



The imminent completion of the [repairs to the Mytchett embankment](#) (*left*) was reported in the [last Bulletin](#). Some more work still has to be done, including laying a membrane over the towpath to prevent it retaining water (which might cause the embankment to destabilise), and the installation of mooring bollards along its 150m length – but it is looking pretty smart. Repairs

to the Malthouse bridge in Crookham have also now been completed (*right*) and the navigation there has been reopened. ([See what a state the bridge was in before work started](#).)

However there are planned closures to the Canal now in force elsewhere: gates due for replacement at Locks 5 (Woodham flight), 14 and 15 (Brookwood flight) were to be temporarily replaced after measuring up, but have been found to be not in a fit state to use. New gates will be installed at the end of February.



Latest On Dogmersfield Landslip



the towpath from downstream of the Barley Mow bridge to Blacksmith's bridge will most likely be closed for the rest of the year.

Many of you will know that a significant [landslide took place not far from the Barley Mow bridge and Dogmersfield last Spring](#) as a result of the very heavy rains. Work has gone on subsequently to steady the slip, including the felling of many trees on the slope. Luckily (as far as we know), no further slippage has occurred as a result of the recent storms and the navigation (though reduced to one boat-width) remains open. The challenge of determining a suitable repair procedure and costing is currently with the Hampshire CC engineers. No decisions have yet been made about how the repair will be done, but the information we have is that work will not start until the Autumn of 2014 at the very earliest. Therefore

John Pinkerton News



**John Pinkerton
Canal Cruises**

The JP2 winter maintenance is now well under way. David

Horwood, our trip bookings manager, kindly donated the work party a gazebo that fits exactly over the rear deck (right), to protect them from the elements. Luckily it has not blown away. Because this is the first season, quite a lot of "snagging" work has had to be done. Also there are a couple of mechanical issues to be fixed that will require the assistance of the engine supplier, one of



which is the persistent wearing through of alternator belts (5 this season!). The hope is to have the boat ready for the crew training season which starts in March.

The two major obstacles that have delayed the certification of the boat by the MCA have thankfully both been removed, but not before extensive discussions had taken place between boat company and maintenance team members and MCA officers (Mark Griffiths deserves thanks for his tenacity). We still don't have this approval in writing, but these concessions are a considerable load off everybody's minds.

The [public trips schedule for 2014 has recently been announced](#), and the [brochure with all the details of public and charter cruises is now published](#). Since they were very popular last year, several [new theme cruises](#) have been included in this year's schedule (some requiring the crew to shed a few inhibitions, *above left*).

It seems that 2013 was a bumper year for trip takings, and the hope is that 2014 will be even more successful.

A reminder for crew members, their families and friends, and anybody else who might be interested in our trip boat operation, there is a [Social Evening on Friday 24th January in Odiham](#). For more details, [see the website](#). Booking is required at the [latest by Friday 17th January](#).

Other News

New Society Vice President

We are pleased to announce that Cllr Alan Rice (a Hampshire CC councillor) has agreed to become a Vice-President of the Society. He was elected as one of the first chairmen of the Canal Joint Management Council (JMC) in 1993, not long after the body was set up, making him ideally suited to the role.

Electrical Fire in the Woodham Pumphouse

A fuse in one of the Woodham water recycling pump control panels recently overheated, setting the surrounding plastic on fire (*right*). The control panel internal wiring was damaged and it was put out of action. Ranger Sara Green found out the hard way that the panel casing was temporarily live (however she was uninjured). There are two pumps installed, and luckily the other control panel which regulates the backup pump is still functioning (not that we need it to at the moment, of course!). However this is all rather unfortunate, and an expense the BCA and Surrey CC could do without.



Volunteers needed to take on aspects of the Chobham Social Meeting organisation

A note from David Millett:

Peter Coxhead, who as co-organiser of the [Chobham Social Meetings](#), has booked the hall, and arranged the raffle, the refreshments at the interval and collection at the end, is retiring from this role at the April meeting. Many thanks are due to Peter for undertaking this task for very many years. We are looking for one or more volunteers (as the job could be split), ideally from the Woking area, to take over this job.

The meetings (see below) are the main social contact for many members from October to April each year; we are fortunate in that we have been able to engage interesting speakers who talk on a variety of subjects, though usually connected to canals. It is therefore important that events continue. Please email me, [David Millett](#), or ring me on 01252 617364 for further information if you would like to volunteer for this vital role. Note that I will continue to book the speakers for the foreseeable future.

David Millett

Website Search Facility provides access to Society online archive

The [Society website](#) search facility has recently been enhanced to allow it to access all the files archived under the old websites. The search box at the top right of the window (containing the words *Google custom search*) is accessible on any page. By using this feature in the normal way, you can search all the 240 previous editions of the Basingstoke Canal News dating from January 1967, and many articles (and booklets) from the old website relating to the restoration and history of the Canal and of the JP. Over time, we hope to produce a more useful index, but in the meantime the following search terms bring up a lot of interesting information which you may wish to browse: 'Perseverance', 'Ash Aqueduct', 'Basingstoke Canal Railway', 'Opening Ceremony', 'St John's Castle', to name but a few.

Lengthmen Report

Senior Lengthsman Mike Gordon has just released his [latest report](#) on lengthmen activity on the Canal.

Forthcoming Events

The new [Social Events and Illustrated Talks page](#) shows the latest list of events and venues.

- **[2013/14 Chobham Illustrated Talks Season](#)**

The current season of talks held at [The Parish Pavilion in Chobham](#) will continue with the following:

- **Wednesday 15th January at 8pm – Dr. Roger Squires** – 'The Canals and Navigable Rivers of Southern France'
- **Wednesday 19th February at 8pm – Graham Deavin** – 'The Rivers and Canals of Brittany'

For more details of this and other talks, see the [Talks page](#).

- **[JP Social Evening, Friday 24th January at 7pm, at the Cross Barn, Odiham](#)**

This is open to John Pinkerton crew members, families and friends, and anybody else who is interested in knowing more about the [JP trip boat operation](#). For more information, please refer to [the website](#). Booking is required at the **latest by this Friday, 17th January**.

Your Feedback Is Welcome...

We would of course welcome your feedback on this Bulletin, on the new websites and on the Society's new look in general. Please send any comments you may have to the [bulletin editor](#). Short articles about the Canal with accompanying photos if possible would be appreciated.

Published by The Basingstoke Canal Society

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