



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal Bulletin

No. 31 NOVEMBER 2017



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John Pinkerton
Canal Cruises

The New Look Bulletin

Welcome to your "New Look" Basingstoke Canal Bulletin. A new initiative is under way to more actively promote the Canal to its users and to the community at large. This is being led by Ken Sankey, a Basingstoke Canal Society volunteer and skipper of the Society's [John Pinkerton II](#) canal trip boat. The project has the full backing of The Basingstoke Canal Society (BCS) committee and the Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA), who are grateful to Ken and his colleagues for taking it forward. This Bulletin, now being produced by a new editorial team, focusses on the Canal as a flourishing local amenity that can provide enjoyment for all.

Martin Leech

The Basingstoke Canal – Love It, Share It, Support It

The Basingstoke Canal is perhaps the best kept secret in our area. We are remarkably fortunate to have over 30 miles of water with wonderfully diverse opportunities for exercise, fun and relaxation. It is a green corridor that runs from the River Wey, through Woking, Fleet and Odiham and to a few miles short of Basingstoke. Indeed one of the aims of The Basingstoke Canal Society (BCS) is to ensure that everyone is aware of the full range of activities offered by the Canal and really enable them to come and enjoy it. The Canal is there for the benefit of the community – so let's tell people about it – and get them to tell their friends!

We have kicked off an initiative to help raise the profile of the Canal. The initiative aims to build a 'Friends' group so that through email and social media we can regularly update people on what is going on along the full extent of the Canal. Our [new Facebook page](#) will provide a central hub for getting our message out to a wider audience online.



The John Pinkerton II passing under the Barley Mow Bridge near Winchfield

Our intention is that this periodic Bulletin will keep you up-to-date on the many things happening along the Basingstoke Canal. Each Bulletin will showcase key activities and interests, such as canoeing, running, boating and wildlife. To kick off this first new edition, here is an overview of what's happening near you.

Boats on the Canal

There are around 70 boats based on the Canal, including privately-owned narrow boats, various smaller craft, and also 22 residential houseboats in Woodham. In addition, there are the 8 assorted workboats operated by the BCA (Basingstoke Canal Authority, who run the canal) and the BCS (the charity which helps protect and develop the Canal), which are used for maintenance tasks.



The Society's trip boat Kitty in Woking



The BCA's trip boat Rosebud and pedaloes at the Canal Centre
canoes, rowing boats and kayaks for hire.

In turn there are various trip boats that provide public and charter trips on the Canal. These include: the Society's 50-passenger [John Pinkerton II](#) based at Odiham, Hampshire (with trips up to King Johns Castle) and its smaller sister boat the twelve-passenger [Kitty](#) (above) which operates in Woking. The BCA runs hour-long trips on the [twelve-passenger Rosebud](#) from the Canal Centre at Mytchett (left). The summer trips even include cream teas, and in winter there are the very popular Santa Cruises (already sold out for this year). [Also available at the Canal Centre](#) there are pedaloes,

And that is not all. At Odiham you can hire self-drive narrow boats from [Galleon Marine](#) for part of a day or for longer break, and [Accessible Boating](#) has two boats specially adapted for disabled people. In turn there are also two canoe clubs based on the Canal, [the Basingstoke and Deane Canoe Club based in Odiham](#), the other [the Basingstoke Canal Canoe Club](#) based at Mytchett (which has competed at national level).

Not just about boats

Alongside boaters, there are countless other users of the Canal. Many thousands of people cherish walking in the tranquil setting of the towpath, much of which is set in spectacularly attractive surroundings. The Canal is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for most of its 32 mile length.

People use the towpath in their daily exercise routine in other ways, be it running, dog-walking or cycling. We also have various running groups and clubs, which include the [Frimley Lodge park run](#), the [Blackwater Valley runners](#), [Hart Roadrunners](#) and the [Fleet & Crookham AC](#), amongst others.

The Canal is also popular for fishing, and angling clubs regularly hold competitions along various stretches of the waterway.



The Basingstoke is renowned for its fish stock

Keeping the Canal in good shape

By the 1960's, the Basingstoke Canal was largely derelict, and [a few enthusiasts got together to campaign for its return to a navigable waterway](#). This group became the then Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society, and was largely responsible for the restoration of the Canal which started in 1976 and took 25 years to complete.



The Society workparty busy at Lock 1

CC)

- extensive work in Hampshire filling in broken parts of the towpath and gaps called dog washes (where dogs climbing out of canal break down the bank and leave a hole) (BCA)
- just starting at Ash is the work at Heathvale Road to correct the collapsed towpath (BCA)
- repairs to degraded towpath near Odiham (BCS)
- installation of a new water point at the Canal Centre (BCS)
- bank, overhanging branch and invasive weed clearance at various locations (BCA and BCS)

On top of this there is ongoing work to keep the towpath tidy, along with the annual painting of the twenty nine locks!

Over 200 volunteers support the BCA in this work. The BCS runs a fortnightly weekend group doing major works, and the BCA have a regular Tuesday group (*right*) which steadily works along the Canal tidying up vegetation, keeping weeds at bay and doing various painting jobs to keep locks looking tidy. In addition there are the volunteer crews on the various boats, admin helpers in the offices, people doing the social media, and the 60 lengthsmen (men and women!) who regularly walk their section of the Canal, to keep it tidy and report any problems. Indeed volunteer work is very rewarding not only in the satisfaction of helping and giving back to your community but it is great exercise, an opportunity to make new friends and a good way of learning new skills. Needless to say we are always looking for more volunteers so please contact the [Canal Centre](#) if you are interested in helping in some way or finding out more.



Tuesday Workparty at Crookham Wharf

Nature and Environment

Effectively the Canal is a thriving nature reserve along its 32 miles from the River Wey to the Greywell Tunnel – and let's not forget the [5 miles on the other side of the tunnel](#) although it is not navigable there. There are tree management activities and ongoing conservation work along the full length of the Canal.

Of particular significance and relevance is the SSSI status of the Canal where Natural England are involved to help ensure that the unusual plant and wildlife species are protected.

Nearby we also have a protected bat roost of international importance in the Greywell tunnel; the second biggest colony of its type in Europe.



The Greywell Tunnel (Eastern end)

Going forward

We hope this gives a flavour of some of the many things going on along the Canal. Our wish is to help people become more aware of opportunities for fun, exercise and relaxation. So please visit it and enjoy it, and tell your friends.

And as we say.....*Love It, Share It, Support It*

Like us on [Facebook](#) and look out also for the Friends messages on social media. Contact the [Bulletin Editor](#) if you have any stories to tell, you would like to contribute to the Bulletin or you are interested in volunteering.

It is also important to understand that the Canal is owned by Surrey County Council (SCC) and Hampshire County Council (HCC) with the six riparian (neighbouring) districts supporting it, both financially and by promoting improvements. Accordingly as part of this initiative we would ask that the Canal community takes every opportunity to speak up for the Canal by stressing its importance as a local amenity when contacting Parish, Town, District and County Councillors, and local government officers.

Ken Sankey

Published by The Basingstoke Canal Society

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