



The Basingstoke  
Canal Society

# Basingstoke Canal Bulletin

No. 33 MARCH 2018



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John Pinkerton  
Canal Cruises



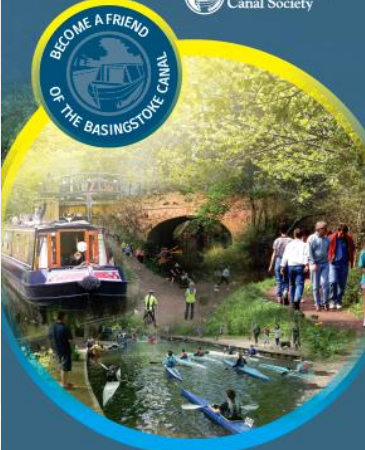
With the weather finally shifting gear from Winter to Spring, so too is the scenery, and the work taking place on the Canal. This misty shot perfectly captures the essence of Spring on the canal, with ramblers strolling contentedly and volunteers hard at work clearing vegetation, while stoking the obligatory bonfire of course!

In this Bulletin there is an update on some of the work along the canal, upcoming boat trips, canoeing and a bit of WW2 history on the pillboxes.

We are pleased that the “Friends” initiative to engage the community is gaining momentum (we now have a new Friends leaflet, *right*). With 1300 followers on the [Society Facebook page](#) and around 1000 now receiving this Bulletin we have already built a substantial base of people interested and keen to support the canal (in addition to our membership of nearly 1000).

But with your support we would like to get the Friends total up to 5000 by the end of the year - so please help us by getting your own friends, neighbours and colleagues either to follow us on [Facebook](#) or press the Big Red Button on the website to [become a Canal Friend](#).

Having a large number of supporters helps us protect the canal by lending weight in discussions with the councils and showing that you, the community, really value the canal as a local amenity.



**BECOME A FRIEND  
OF THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL**

Thousands of people enjoy our beautiful Canal every week, including walkers, runners, cyclists, boaters, anglers, artists and nature lovers. For many it is a local haven to escape from a frantic world, for others a place to exercise and have fun.

The Friends initiative aims to raise the profile of the Canal with its users and to protect the Canal for future generations. It's FREE to sign up with no commitment.

**Love it, Share it, Support it!**



## Book Your Trips On The Basingstoke Canal

During the winter months the various trip boats are being prepared for the new season, which starts at Easter. Our volunteer crews are doing their refresher training for the season ahead – the canal is fun but we must know our safety drills and our ‘port and starboard’.

### *John Pinkerton in Hampshire*

The 50- passenger *John Pinkerton II* Society trip boat is in dry dock during March to have the bottom blacked and checked over. Trips depart Colt Hill, Odiham unless otherwise stated and this year will include:

- **Public Cruises:** we kick off the season with three public trips over the Easter weekend, with many more scheduled throughout the season
- **Old favourites:** back again this year are Cream Tea cruises, Acoustic and Ale cruises, Jazz and Ale cruises and Farnborough Airshow cruises departing from Fleet
- **NEW FOR 2018:** Quiz and Curry cruise, Sea Shanties and Ale cruises, Blues and Ale cruises, and our pièce de résistance... a Wine and Food of France cruise with Guillaume, a trained sommelier offering regional wine tasting accompanied by authentic cheeses and charcuterie, with French music playing softly in the background on a midsummer evening!
- **Cruises from Fleet:** for the Spring bank holiday weekend, the *John Pinkerton* moves to the Fox and Hounds pub at Fleet to offer public trips Saturday to Monday



### *Kitty in Woking*

Our 12-person Society trip boat, *Kitty*, is currently at Ash Depot having undergone her winter maintenance. The final top coat of red paint on the rails is the last action to be completed and then she will be returned to Woking in time for the start of the season. Public trips take place from Woking Town Wharf, departing at various times on Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays, and May and August Bank Holiday Mondays. Trips last approx 1¼ hours though can be longer upon request. *Kitty* may also be chartered for special occasions.

For full details about all Society boat trips, visit [johnpinkerton.co.uk](http://johnpinkerton.co.uk). You can book on the website (look for the button on the right) or contact our Booking Team on 01256 765889 (10am – 8pm), or [jpbbookings@basinstoke-canal.org.uk](mailto:jpbbookings@basinstoke-canal.org.uk).

**BOOK YOUR TRIP >**



### ***Rosebud, at Mytchett***

At the Canal Centre, Mytchett, the Canal Authority's 12-seater boat *Rosebud* will again be running:

- **Public Cruises:** weekends from Easter to September, as well as Monday, Wednesday and Fridays during the late May and Summer school holidays.
- **Cream Tea Cruises:** Thursdays from the end of May to the end of September
- **Spring and Autumn Specials:** Mother's Day, Spring weekends in March and Autumn Colour trips in October are also planned .



Visit [www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryparks/basingstokecanal/onthewater/boathire](http://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryparks/basingstokecanal/onthewater/boathire) for more details about these trips and other activities.

Not to forget Galleon Marine at Odiham ([www.galleonmarine.co.uk](http://www.galleonmarine.co.uk)) where you can hire narrowboats for a few hours up to a week or more.

### **Keeping The Canal Open And Working**

During winter there are two main jobs for the Rangers. First is the major cutting back of overhanging vegetation to avoid the formation of a dense canopy, which can kill understory plants and clog the canal with leaves. It also helps to keep the towpath open and accessible for everyone who wants to use it. All clearance work must be completed before the spring nesting season.



*Weedcutter clearing Floating Pennywort  
(photo courtesy of Paul Drane)*

Second, winter also provides an opportunity for major structural work including the draining and full structural check of the St Johns Flight along with some replanking work on lock 25 on the Deepcut Flight.

Additionally, there is the annual task of removing a particularly invasive weed known as Floating Pennywort at the eastern end of the canal, from the junction with the River Wey up to Lock 6. This extremely aggressive weed can grow up to 20 cm a day in the summer so it is important to keep on top of it.

Volunteers can use the BCA's weedcutter where it is major problem, with others pulling the smaller pieces from the canal manually. It is great to report that thanks to these efforts the amount of weed has reduced by two thirds over the last three years – but it is something that requires continual work.

Going forward over the next few months are planned works in both the Surrey and Hampshire sections to repair damaged banks (known as 'softbank protection') along with ongoing maintenance of the towpaths.

### **Society Nominated For Queen's Award For Voluntary Service**

Representatives from The Basingstoke Canal Society recently attended a reception with other voluntary groups from Surrey which have been nominated for the QAVS this year. See [here for more](#).



## Volunteers – Have You Got A Few Hours To Help?

Much of the work on the boats and towpath mentioned above is done with the help of volunteers. However, there are many other Canal-related activities which are undertaken by those willing to give their time.

Crucially, we need more help to promote the Canal and build strong links with local councils. So if you can help with any of the following jobs and could spare a few hours per week, then please contact us:

- **Organizing events**
- **Liaising with the local press and radio**
- **Handing out leaflets**
- **Reviewing planning applications for developments around the Canal**

You can volunteer and work from home and it is very flexible with no commitment. It's very rewarding to work in a team for the benefit of the community and the canal. Furthermore, you can learn new skills, meet new people and learn all about the history, engineering and natural environment of the canal.

**The bottom line is please just come and have a chat with us or visit our website and see if there is something that appeals to you - or contact the [bulletin editor](#) or call 07850 652769 to find out more details.**

## Focus On: Basingstoke Canal Canoe Club



Formed in 1979 by boating enthusiasts in Fleet, the [Basingstoke Canal Canoe Club](#) offers a variety of canoeing activities for people of all ages. It is a family-centred club, and members are encouraged to try all forms of the sport. The club has experience in most disciplines, specialising in flatwater racing and recreational paddling.

They support people at all levels of ability, whether they enjoy recreational paddling; the thrill of white-water rivers, surfing on the sea or the cut and thrust of competitive canoeing.

Several of their members have represented Great Britain in competitive events including Helen Reeves, the Athens 2004 Ladies Olympic slalom bronze medallist, who started her career with the BCCC and was for many years a member with the rest of her family.

The BCCC moved their base to the Canal Centre, Mytchett in 2003 to gain better facilities and boat storage and this has enabled them to improve their training resources and offer canoeing to all the family. Moreover, they have received Canoe England's Club Mark accreditation which recognises the quality management and coaching provided for young people

So if you are interested in canoeing, their beginners' courses will start when the weather warms up after Easter. Contact [b3cmembership@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:b3cmembership@hotmail.co.uk).

***Are you a regular user of the canal? We want to include articles about all local clubs and users – please contact the [bulletin editor](#) to include your club or activity.***





## The Canal's Role in Defending Our Country



In 1940, Churchill approved a plan for a nationwide network of defensive positions known as 'stop lines', designed to slow down an invasion by the enemy. One of these lines ran along the Kennet and Avon Canal from Bath, then dropped down to join the Basingstoke Canal above Swans Farm, Winchfield.

The defensive structures included various types of pillboxes, numerous anti-tank defences, road blocks, and air raid shelters. Today much still survives intact and can be found between Crookham Wharf, Blacksmith's Bridge (Dogmersfield), Tundry Pond and Sandy Hill,

Winchfield. Defences can also be seen East of Crookham Wharf, around Fleet where they were incorporated into the defence ring of Aldershot Garrison, the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, and Deepcut, Bisley and Pirbright barracks. It is well worth a trip out to find some of these historic defences; they are poignant reminders of Britain's darkest hour.

The picture above shows the pillbox opposite Tundry Pond, and right, 'dragons teeth' anti-tank obstacles nearby. For more information there is a booklet about these structures called [Wartime Defences on The Basingstoke Canal by Tim Denton](#) available from the Society or the Canal Centre.



## And Finally..... Let Us Have Your Stories

Please continue to tell everyone about our wonderful Basingstoke Canal, along with posting your stories and pictures on [Facebook](#). Encourage them to become Friends by [registering on the website](#).

And don't forget that it is important to take every opportunity to remind local council representatives of the wonderful amenity value of the Canal. When it comes to protecting its long-term future, it is vital to ensure our council leaders are fully aware of how much the canal is valued by you, the community.

Enjoy the Canal.

*Ken Sankey, Bulletin Editor*

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*The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Society Trustees.*