



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal Bulletin

No. 35 JULY 2018



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John Pinkerton
Canal Cruises

Get Out On The Basingstoke Canal



Isn't the canal a great place to relax and have fun? This photo by regular canal user Cristiano Degiorgi captures it perfectly. Whether you are walking, canoeing, fishing, cycling, or just chilling out, it's a wonderful space to escape the hustle and bustle.

This Bulletin is packed with yet more ideas for enjoying your canal – perhaps a bit of volunteering, taking a boat trip or joining in the September Raft Race.. Where will the canal take *you* this summer?

This issue also brings you news of a prestigious award, bats and invasive crayfish. Also, learn something about the water supply to the canal.

Interest in the canal continues to grow, with 1275 Friends receiving this Bulletin now, and there are 2125 Facebook followers. That's a fantastic aggregate increase of more than 300 since the last Bulletin, with more and more people wanting to know more and get involved. So please continue to tell people to join up as a [Friend](#) or [Facebook Follower](#) - and [join us as a volunteer](#).

Society Honoured With Queen's Award For Voluntary Service

This UK national honour, equivalent to an MBE for groups, was created by Her Majesty to recognise the outstanding contributions made to local communities by groups of volunteers – and The Basingstoke Canal Society has just been awarded it!

Society Chairman Philip Riley said: *"We are absolutely delighted with the award. It acknowledges over half a century of effort by very many volunteers dedicated to the restoration and preservation of the beautiful Basingstoke Canal"*.

Vice-chairman Martin Leech and Philip were invited to a Buckingham Palace garden party in recognition of the Society receiving the award (below). The Society will also be presented with a [glass trophy](#) and certificate signed by Her Majesty.



The Society was founded in 1966 following publication in the local press of an open letter suggesting that something should be done about the then derelict canal. A campaign began to get the canal taken into public ownership. The Surrey and Hampshire County Councils were persuaded to go for full restoration as a navigable waterway by the promise of voluntary labour. Restoration of 29 locks, many bridges, weirs, embankments and cuttings, and dredging using a 50-year-old steam-powered dredger, began in the early 1970s and continued for 25 years until the canal was officially re-opened in May 1991.

After the canal was again open the Society's volunteers continued work to enhance it, and have undertaken major projects such as installation of two back-pumping schemes in Woking to improve the water supply, resurfacing of several miles of towpath, installation of moorings and lock landings and annual clearance of miles of bank growth. The very successful trip boat operation started in 1978 continues to this day with the [John Pinkerton II](#) at

[Odiham](#) and [Kitty in Woking](#); they have raised over £800,000 for the canal so far.

In 2016, the Society celebrated its 50th anniversary and 25 years since the canal re-opening, with the hugely successful [Woking Canal Festival](#), where we were joined by many visiting boats from the [Historic Narrow Boat Club](#).

Invitation

All volunteers, past and present, whatever your involvement with the Basingstoke Canal, are cordially invited to attend a

Celebratory Barbecue

at the Canal Centre, Mytchett on **Friday, August 31st from 5pm** to mark the Society achieving a **Queen's Award for Voluntary Service**

A joint BCA/Society event, FREE to Volunteers

Places and parking limited— Please share cars if possible

RSVP please to info@basingstoke-canal.co.uk or call 01252-370073

Where You Can Help

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service is a wonderful achievement - but work on the canal is never finished. Alongside ongoing maintenance we have numerous exciting plans for the future and importantly, we want to keep raising support among local people and clubs for this wonderful asset. **This is where you can help:**

There are lots of fantastic [volunteering opportunities](#) and we particularly need more help with the following:

- Press and promotional support
- Local people helping to raise the profile in centres along the canal, including Woking, Mytchett, Fleet, Farnborough, Ash, Odiham and Basingstoke
- Helping organise events
- Trip Boat Maintenance Manager on the *John Pinkerton II* at Odiham

This support can be as much or as little time as people can spare, and it is rewarding and fun working as part of a successful team. As one local resident recently posted on Facebook: 'Three cheers for all the volunteers who keep the canal alive for us to enjoy as a wildlife paradise!' What more encouragement do you need to come and join us?

To find out more about volunteering please contact ken.sankey@basingstoke-canal.org.uk or ring 07850 652769.

Alternatively, come on one of our FREE 'Volunteers' Introductory Trips' on the *John Pinkerton II* which take place on *Monday 6th August, Monday 3rd September at 7.30pm, or Monday 1st October at 7.00pm*, a 2½ hr cruise from Colt Hill, Odiham and hear how you can become involved. Please book beforehand on johnpinkerton.co.uk/booking.

Have You Booked Your Boat Trip Yet?

You have a choice of three unique cruising experiences along the canal:

John Pinkerton

II: Departing Colt Hill Wharf in Odiham (and on certain days from Fleet), this 50-passenger boat offers public and charter trips along a remarkably beautiful section of the canal in Hampshire. Odiham itself is a picturesque, historic market town well worth exploring. Take one of our regular 2½hr public trips or book a theme cruise with food, live music and



entertainment. Our private charter trips are also popular, attracting diverse groups from local preschool children through to weddings, corporate events and birthday parties for folks of all ages. You never know what interesting characters you might meet aboard; indeed you may



have seen on Facebook that local celebrity cat, Wolfie, followed some passengers to the wharf and tried to board for the Blues trip without a



ticket. And another group arrived on a London bus! Oh and not to forget, there is a bar on board with drinks and snacks.

For details and cruise timetable see the website johnpinkerton.co.uk

Kitty: In Woking,

The Society's 12-passenger boat *Kitty* provides local trips along the Woking pound. As word gets around, *Kitty* is proving extremely popular. Already this year we have almost doubled our bookings compared



Kitty with another full charter, serenely cruising at the edge of Horsell Common

to last year (*Kitty's* maiden year), with passengers joining us from Poland, India, Japan, Sweden and the United Nations in Rome!



We are also gaining momentum locally and attracting more Woking residents. To increase our visibility we display our eye-catching new banner while we are operating, which can be seen from the Lightbox across the canal. This will be particularly effective as the frequency of trips increases over the summer holidays. In addition, a recent Facebook competition to win *Kitty* tickets proved hugely popular, further raising her profile.

For further details and booking, go to the Kitty website.



Rosebud: at the Basingstoke Canal Centre, Mychett

The 12-passenger *Rosebud* is operated by the Basingstoke Canal Authority, and runs public trips every weekend until the end of September, and every Monday, Wednesday and Fridays during school holidays. Fantastic Cream Tea cruises run every Thursday afternoon, where you can enjoy a leisurely trip down the canal combining idyllic scenery with a first-rate traditional cream tea.

For details, go to the [BCA website](#), or phone 01252 370073

Things Don't Always Go To Plan

Just proving that we need to look after our canal infrastructure, in late May a visiting boater drove heavily into the lower gates at Lock 18 while entering the lock as part of their passage down the Deepcut flight.

The lower gates were damaged beyond repair, most notably with extensive cracks in the heel post of the off-side gate. Further damage was found following a drained inspection, with damage to the cill, and a crack in the lower cross member at the joint with the gate-paddle framing, caused by the gate warping outwards – none of which were apparent with the gate “in water”.



The gates frames are all made from oak which is imported from France where it grows straight and true with few structural weaknesses. The new timber has now arrived and the gates are being constructed. The builder has had to fit this job into a busy schedule, hence this will take several weeks and an additional week will be required for delivery and installation.

Disappointingly this means that the flight will be closed for several weeks although boats can use the canal above and below the locks. Discussions with insurers are in hand.

Born In The Basingstoke Canal, Consumed In France!

Continuing our series on invasive species, this month we are looking at the American Signal Crayfish. Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager, tells us about them.

Pacifastacus leniusculus is a non-native species which unfortunately has invaded many waterways across England and Wales, including the Basingstoke Canal. These crayfish are highly damaging for the canal, digging burrows into the banks which can cause leaks – a particular problem on embankments! They have also displaced our native crayfish and predate on our water invertebrates.



For many years licences were issued to individuals for crayfish trapping for personal consumption. However, a few years ago we decided to follow the lead of the River Wey who have removed all personal licences and brought in a commercial trapper instead. Using this method is more effective as it blitzes large targeted areas, allows us to monitor catch weights and sizes and gives us more control over the whole process. Individual trappers tend to only take larger crayfish which doesn't reduce the population size as a whole, whereas a commercial trapper will take all sizes which has a greater effect on numbers.

At first we only trapped in key areas where large

numbers of crayfish had been reported. After a couple of years, however, this was expanded to cover the whole canal. Last year we achieved our record annual catch so far which was *10 tonnes* of crayfish removed. Reports from the Basingstoke Canal Angling Association have also been positive with fewer reports of fishing bait being taken, which is a good indication that this method is working

Now we are successfully tackling this nippy issue, Basingstoke Canal crayfish can be found on the menu as far afield as France!

While we do not allow personal licences, and will remove any unauthorised nets found in the canal, our current trapper is thinking about moving up the food chain. So, although trapping can be a tough and smelly job, if you are interested in carrying this out as a full-time, self-employed role, contact Fiona Shipp 01252 370073.

Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager



Where Does The Canal Water Come From?

In the first of a series of articles, John How and Martin Leech tell the story of water shortages (and possible solutions) on the canal.



When the Basingstoke Canal was built in 1794 not enough thought was given to providing sufficient water supplies or water storage. It has never had a summit reservoir nor a river feeding it. As a result, the canal has always suffered from water shortages and resulting closures.

The canal was derelict by the 1960s and eventually after 25 years of restoration was re-opened to navigation in 1991 between Greywell in the west and the Wey Navigation in the east at Byfleet. However, limited funds during restoration meant that few improvements to water supply or storage could be introduced.

The main sources of water supply to the canal remain limited to the Greywell tunnel and Broad Oak springs (*right*) at the western end, together with some pumped supplies at the eastern end. The Hampshire pound was constructed with 300mm extra depth of water to provide a nominal



'reservoir', however this has silted up over the years. Unfortunately, the main discharges from the canal (when there is too much water), are also predominantly located in the western section, whilst the 28 locks are in the eastern section of the canal.

Restricted by the canal's original design, available water supplies, main discharges and lock locations, today's canal rangers are to be complemented for performing a difficult balancing act: ensuring adequate water throughout the canal for navigation, without causing any flooding in the eastern, more populated areas. During dry periods, when supplies are limited, the rangers need to "caulk" lock gates with sawdust after boats have passed through to prevent leakage from the pounds and protect every little bit of water. Also, it is unfortunately necessary to limit boats passage through lock flights to a few days per week to allow levels to recover.

Major investments on the canal (around £6m over the last 7 years), such as embankment and culvert repairs and lock gate replacements, have all helped reduce areas of water leakage. The long Hampshire pound has recently been surveyed to identify what dredging is required to re-establish the 300mm



'reservoir', and an investigation into how best to refurbish the BCA's dredger *Unity* (*left*) is under way.

We are pleased to hear that, in the medium term, there could be an improvement in the water supply to the canal from the chalk springs at Greywell. Currently, South East Water (SEW) abstracts from boreholes in the vicinity of these springs.

The effect of this abstraction is to reduce the water quantity feeding the Greywell Fens, the Whitewater River and the canal by lowering the water table. The Environment Agency has now instructed SEW to cease abstraction by 2023 (when a substitute supply for domestic use will be piped to the area), which should result in more spring water for the canal.

In the next few articles on water and the canal, we will explain the various investigations completed over the last 6 years to enhance water supplies and storage; understand the potential impact of climate change, and investments to help the canal rangers manage the water levels, all with the objective of keeping the Basingstoke Canal open to navigation throughout the year.

If you would like to read more about water supply to the canal, you may find [this article](#) interesting. If you would like to help us, and in particular have 3-phase motor controls and pump maintenance experience, please contact John How by [email](#) or call 01784-465658.

John How, Martin Leech, Water Strategy Group

Bats In The Belfry – Well, Actually In The Greywell Tunnel

Article by Paul Hope, and photos by Roy Champion

First a bit of background: Bats (Chiroptera) make up the second largest order of mammals with over 1,200 species currently recorded. They comprise a diverse mammalian order and are encountered on every continent except Antarctica.

Their highly sophisticated echolocation system has allowed them to exploit a diverse range of ecological niches. Bats also play their part in the ecosystem as they are important for seed dispersal, pollination and suppress populations of insect pests.

However, worldwide many bat species are under threat and The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categorise 22% of bat species as *Threatened* and a further 23% as *Near Threatened*. The legal protection for bats has improved and bats have been identified as important bioindicator species; by assessing the distribution and stability of bat populations more general conclusions may be drawn about the health of ecosystems.

The Greywell Tunnel is 1,124m long and was constructed in tandem with the Basingstoke Canal between 1788 and 1794. Now disused, the brick-lined tunnel is approximately 5m high and has a maximum width of 4.5m. It was excavated through an area of changing geology from Hampshire chalk through Reading beds into London clay. There was a partial collapse in the tunnel during the 1930s and a further fall during the 1950s that left the bore of the tunnel blocked about 800m from its eastern entrance and at 130 m from its western entrance.

All British bats hibernate for periods during the winter using bouts of torpor to survive when opportunities to find insect food are much reduced. Greywell Tunnel is ideal for the bats and has long been known as an important site for hibernating and swarming bats. It was designated a SSSI for bats in 1985.

Hibernation surveys are conducted from a boat by a team of up to five surveyors. As you work your way into the tunnel light from the portal becomes a distant dot. During hibernation counts many of the bats encountered are hanging against the brick lining, however a high proportion are often packed into crevices and openings in the brickwork left during the tunnels construction. Within crevices it's sometimes a matter of counting ears and feet to get as accurate a count as possible and on occasion it's not possible to record bats to species.



As to the type of bats, the Natterer's

bat (*top*) is the most commonly encountered species (highest count of 569 in 2013); Daubenton's bat is also regularly recorded (highest count of 69 in 1986). We also often record Whiskered, Brandt's and occasionally brown long-eared bats. The count this January gave some very exciting results. We had our second highest count for Natterer's bat in the eastern end (564) and our first ever record of a Greater Horseshoe bat (*above left*).

Paul Hope

A Bit Of Fun – Get Building That Raft....



Odiham Raft Race
Sponsored by **Galleon Marine**
Sunday 2nd September 2018
2pm - 5pm
To raise money for the

The Basingstoke Canal Society

Adult & Childrens Races Finishing at the Boat Basin, Colt Hill Wharf

Raft Teams
£5 per Adult
£2 per Child

100 Years of the RAF

Fancy Dress Prizes!
Spectators! Why not dress up and cheer on the competitors. Our Fancy Dress Theme is 'As you were when the ship went down'

Stalls Drinks & Food. Lots of Prizes for Competitors & Spectators!
Entry Forms are Available From
The Frame in Odiham High Street and
Galleon Marine Boatyard Colt Hill
or online www.galleonmarine.co.uk/rafttrace
Full details and rules can also be found online
Our thanks and appreciation to the following Sponsors:

SPECTRO W CARE **REGION** **McCarthy Holden** **THE FRAME GALLERY & FRAMING** **Let's Race It**

We are very excited to be involved in the first Odiham Raft Race, to be held on **Sunday 2nd September**.

Please put the date in your diary to come along - and to enter a team or for more details, please visit www.galleonmarine.co.uk/rafttrace.

All funds raised will go to the Society!

We are also looking for volunteers to help out with this event. Again, if you are interested please contact Galleon Marine.

Please Tell Everyone About The Canal – Love It, Share It, Support It

Phew, lots going on. So please continue to tell everyone about your wonderful Basingstoke Canal, encouraging them to [become a Friend by registering on the website](#), as well as posting your stories and pictures on [Facebook](#).

We also want to hear from clubs, societies, schools or businesses along the canal. Again, please let us have any “Focus On” stories and information that we can publish - send them to me, the [bulletin editor](#).

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 give our council leaders feedback on how much the canal is valued and used by you, the community.

Enjoy the summer.

Ken Sankey

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