



Basingstoke Canal Bulletin

No. 37 NOVEMBER 2018



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John Pinkerton
Canal Cruises

Queen's Award of Voluntary Service Presentation To The Society

This edition comes to you a few days later than normal as we wanted to include [news, pictures and a video of HRH The Duke of Kent presenting the Queens Award for Voluntary Service to the Society](#). This is a unique UK national honour, equivalent to an MBE for voluntary groups, created by Her Majesty to mark the golden Jubilee in 2002 and to recognise the outstanding contributions made to local communities by those groups.

It was particularly apt for The Duke to present the award since [he formally reopened the Canal after restoration in 1991](#). The presentation took place at the Canal Centre at Mytchett, Surrey with around 60 Society volunteers representing the many hundreds who have helped over the years.

The Award also recognises the Society's continued work to support the Canal, including the operation of two trip boats which over the years have brought in about £800,000, monies which are used to fund maintenance and new projects.

Chairman Philip Riley explained in his response that when restoration of the Canal began, no-one knew how to do it, how long it would take or how much it would cost, but the early volunteers nevertheless shared a passionate commitment to see the job completed. He said that having undertaken this huge effort, the Society members have great affection for the Canal and wish to see it prosper and develop. He then invited HRH to present the QAVS trophy (*above*) to long-time volunteer Kevin Redway:



However, the challenge now is to cultivate renewed support in going forward. We were disappointed this month to find out that the Canal & River Trust are unlikely to take over the canal as the Society had hoped. Discussing future development and support for the canal with the councils now takes on a fresh urgency – more on this below.

Furthermore, our initiative

to involve the community becomes all the more important. The good news is our new supporters now number around 4250 (ie Friends and Facebook followers), in addition to our membership of around 950. The more people we have supporting the canal (vocally and though volunteering) the stronger the message is to the councils of the importance of the canal to us all.

The Future Of The Canal And Of The Basingstoke Canal Society

The honour of receiving the Queens Award for Voluntary Service comes a little over 50 years since the Society began its work on the Basingstoke Canal. But how do we see the next 50 years? Looking ahead, we see two major challenges facing the canal and our involvement with it.

Firstly, there is the major issue of the ongoing ownership and management of the Canal. The owners of the Canal – Surrey and Hampshire County Councils – are short on cash and very disappointingly have recently announced that the proposed transfer of the Basingstoke Canal to the Canal & River Trust is not considered viable at the present time (see appendix to the Society's [Press Release](#)). This is a significant setback for the canal and leaves it in a position of uncertainty over its future. In our view it is most important now that all members of the canal partnership, including the District Councils, work closely with the County Councils in promoting the benefits of the canal and in supporting initiatives which will increase its income. We need every supporter to help convey to local councillors that the canal is a wonderful amenity that can be enjoyed by everyone. So please write to your councillors to tell them how important the canal is to you so that they know where they should spend their money.

Secondly, the canal is something of a well-kept secret. Yes, you as a reader of this article are interested – but think of the many people there are within a short distance of the canal who know little about it and who could both enjoy and support the canal. With health, fitness and relaxation absolutely essential to us all, we effectively have our own gym, spa and wellbeing facility on our doorstep. Walking, cycling, fishing, boating, canoeing or a bit of nature therapy – you name it, we got it. We need to make more people aware of the canal - and then get them involved and supporting it.

So what are our plans? Quite simply we have agreed four major initiatives to support the canal:

- Build Community Involvement through Members, Volunteers, Friends and Followers, along with active local groups at key community centres along the canal
- Provide a rewarding Visitor Experience with, in time, a number of Visitor Centres at strategic points along the length of the canal, supported by technology providing mobile information
- Over time, provide a range of easy-to-book, environmentally friendly Trip and Hire Boats, including provision for people with disabilities, thus enabling everyone to experience the canal
- Increase income and fund a rolling programme of projects to support the canal. Project promotion and finance will come from increased membership, donations, sales and involvement of the local business community

Throughout, we will work very closely with the County and District Councils to encourage them to both support and promote our wonderful amenity to their residents and taxpayers.

And as mentioned above, you can help here by writing to your local councillors telling them how important the canal is to you and to their constituencies.

And finally, we need to recruit volunteers to put these objectives into practice and help protect our beautiful canal. When the canal was restored in the 1970s there were huge numbers of volunteers involved. Today we have over 200 volunteers currently supporting our work on the canal but [we are looking for more people to help us in a variety of ways](#) including:

- project management
- press and marketing
- fundraising
- organising and supporting local events
- approaching and involving local businesses
- maintaining and running trip boats
- ensuring that developments in the canal corridor confer direct benefits on the canal

Without more support this vision for the future simply cannot be realised. We need volunteers to come forward and work with us in whatever way they can. It can be as little or as much as you are able to contribute. It doesn't matter what skills you have - what is important is the ability to work in a small team and to enjoy the rewards that participation in our work can provide. In joining us you will also be doing something that helps the whole community. Please have a look at our website basingstoke-canal.org.uk or contact us on email volunteer@basingstoke.org.uk or 07850 652769. Come and join the team!

Ken Sankey

Water Sources And Losses On The Basingstoke

Our [last article about canal water supplies](#) provided a brief history of the canal's water shortage problems since it was originally constructed, and applauded the Rangers for managing what little water is available, especially in dry summers. Unfortunately, this year's drought (compounded by damage to Lock 18) resulted in the closure of the Deepcut flight of locks for most of the boating season.

The scarcity of water for through navigation raises several questions:

- What are the present water sources for the canal?
- Why is the water lost and where does it go?
- Why can't winter rains be stored?
- Why can't more water supplies be found?

This article deals with the first two questions. We can say this in anticipation of the next article which will consider the last two questions: if finding or storing extra water were an easy task then solutions would have been found many years ago - nevertheless, some progress has been made in the last 25 years.

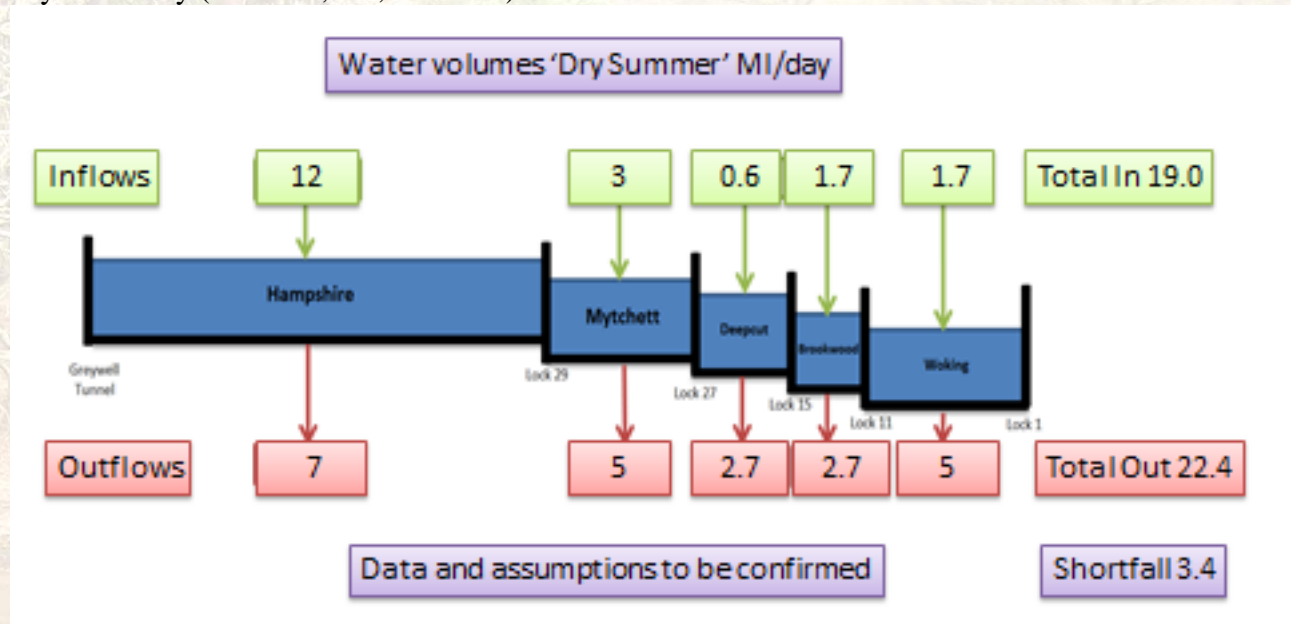
Southampton University allocated a study of the canal as a graduation project to a team of four students. The team presented their 200-page thesis in April 2013, which comprised reviews of past studies, establishing a "water balance model" (WBM) and assessed the long-term effects of climate change. This study has helped to provide some answers to these questions and develop some new ideas for "water strategy".

What are the present water sources for the canal?

The Basingstoke is an unusual canal, sloping throughout, from west to east and effectively is a (very) slow moving river, with no summit reservoir. All locks have bypasses, to allow this flow. It is widely assumed that the canal obtains all its water supply from the Greywell tunnel

springs, but this is not correct. In a dry summer only about 50% of the canal water comes from Greywell & Broad Oak springs. The rest is derived from ground water and rainfall.

Inflows and outflows of the canal system during a normal dry summer (though not a drought as occurred this year) can be presented as follows. The water is measured in megalitres per day or MI/day (1 MI = 1,000,000 litres).



“What does a megalitre of water look like?” I hear you say. If we assume a lock is 21m long by 4m wide and has a fall of 2.5m, then its volume is $21 \times 4 \times 2.5 = 210$ cubic metres, or 0.21MI. So 5 locks-full approximately equates to one megalitre of water.

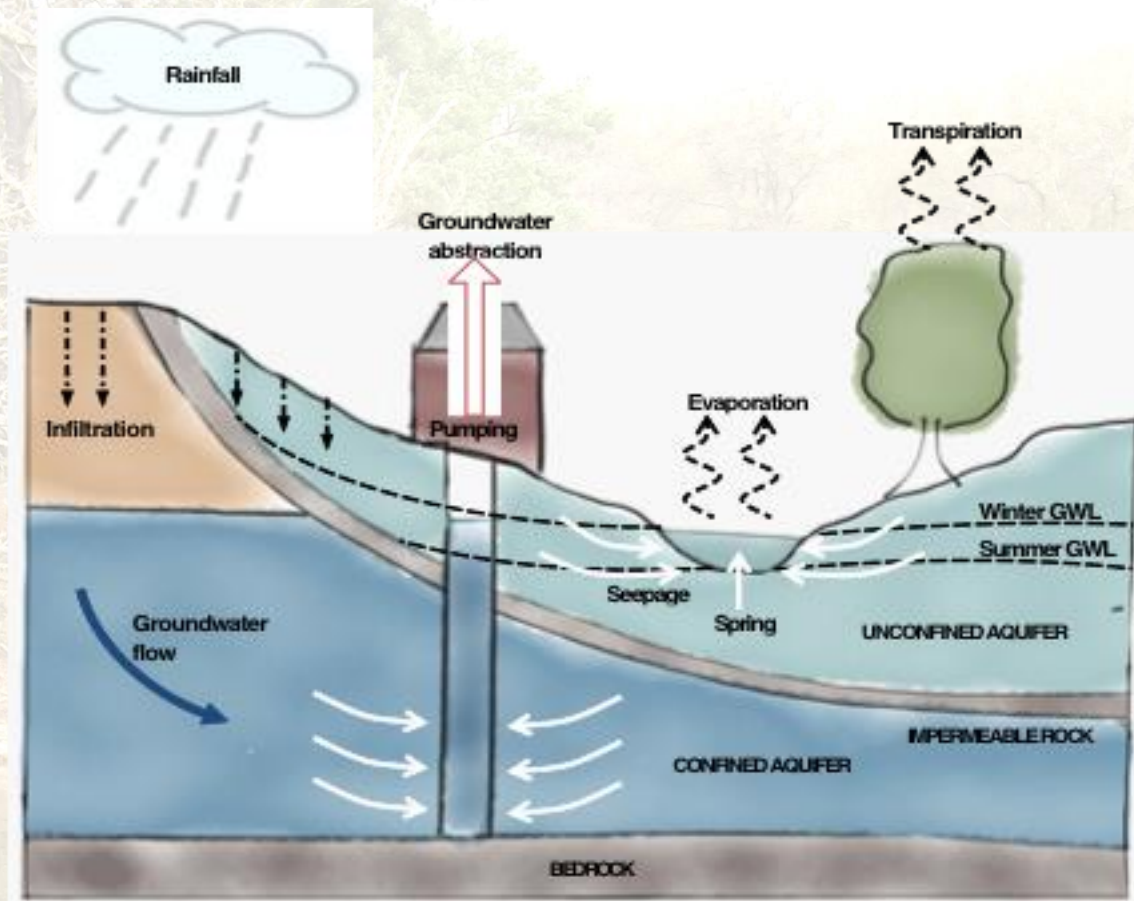
Major inflows of water during a dry summer are as follows:

- Greywell and Broad Oak springs (50% of the total) – these supply the western end
- Rainfall runoff and seepage into the canal from ground-level water (30%) – supplying the length of the canal
- Supplies from pump stations (20%) – these supply the eastern end. The Canal has three pump stations. Two are back-pumping systems, used in summer to ‘recycle’ water flowing down the Woodham and St John’s flights of locks (principally resulting from boat movements) back to the top of the flights (i.e. above locks 6 and 11). The Environment Agency limits the maximum quantity ‘recycled’ to 3.4MI/day and 1.7MI/day respectively. The third pump station (Frimley) drains water from a railway embankment to avoid flooding of Sturt Road near Frimley Lodge Park.

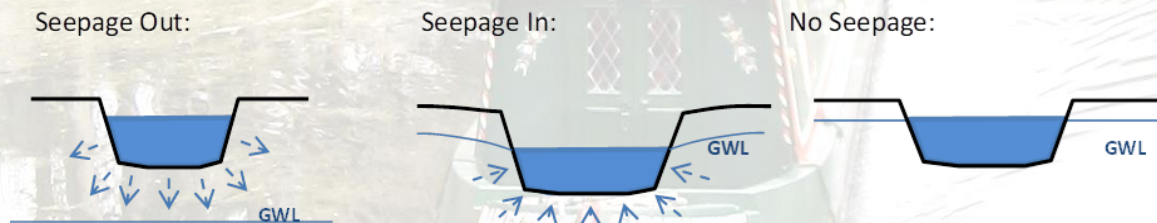
Even when combined, these supplies of water to the Basingstoke Canal *along its whole length* are very limited, at around **20 MI/day**. To put this into perspective, the [Summer inflow to the Kennet and Avon Canal at Reading](#) (that is, at just one location) is around **350MI/day**!

Why is the water lost and where does it go?

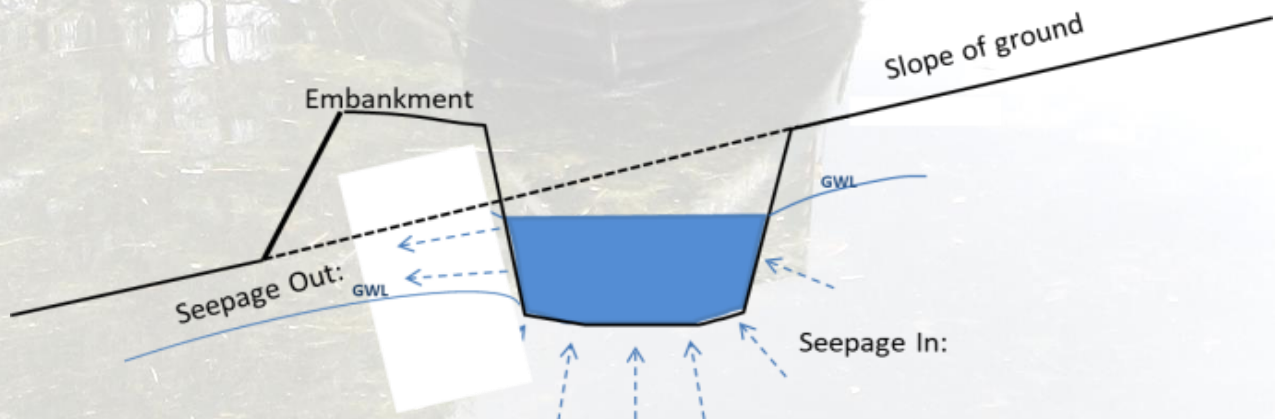
There are several causes of water loss (or gain), illustrated in the diagram below. Canalside vegetation, in particular trees, accounts for about 15% of water lost through evaporation and transpiration. However, the major loss (nominally 85% of the canal water outflows) is through seepage, mainly through embankments.



The seepage rate (into or from the canal) is dependent on ground water level (GWL), which typically rises in winter and drops during the summer:



Where the canal is built on sloping ground, seepage can occur both into and out of the canal:



Losses per km are less in some areas of Hampshire, where the canal is 'puddled' with clay to prevent leakage. Puddling was (and still is) an expensive process and therefore not used

throughout the canal length. Although modern materials are now available to line a canal, both Natural England and the Environment Agency restrict the widespread use of such materials due to the canal being a 'Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

However when severe seepage (ie a leak) poses a threat to the integrity of an embankment or culvert, then remedial action can be taken, such as when the Ash Embankment was relined recently with a clay "blanket", and an embankment near Farnborough airfield had to be reinforced with steel piling.

Boats passing through locks result in further loss. The number of boats allowed on the canal may be limited in dry weather and in any case [locking is limited to particular days of the week](#). Though there are back-pumping schemes in Surrey for this purpose, there is no way to replenish the Hampshire pound once water flows through Ash Lock and the Deepcut and Brookwood flights.

Water is also lost from the lock structures themselves, either through the gates or seepage through brickwork. This accounts for two operational practices by the BCA that are regarded as unusual by boaters from the rest of the network, but are necessary to conserve limited water supplies. Firstly, boaters are asked to empty locks after use, to reduce the amount of water lost through the lock walls, and secondly, the upper gates are "caulked" after use with sawdust by the rangers to prevent leakage (which can be checked for effectiveness because the lock is empty).

Hopefully the above has shown some of the difficulties facing the BCA in keeping the canal open to through navigation. In the next issue, we will deal with some of the potential solutions being investigated.

John How and Martin Leech

Stuck For Christmas Present Ideas? How About A Society Trip Boat Voucher?

If you are struggling to find those last few Christmas presents, then how about this: give a gift voucher for a cruise on one of our two trip boats [John Pinkerton II](#) and [Kitty](#) that can be used next season. Vouchers can be purchased on-line by simply filling in a form and making a card payment, and then they can then be redeemed by the recipient as part or full payment for any cruise **bookable on-line for the respective boat** (or you can contact our [booking team](#)). It takes only a few seconds to purchase and email these vouchers!

Canal Trees – The Good, The Bad And The Wildlife

The BCA is often asked to carry out works on trees along the canal, but before any work can take place there are several factors that must be taken into consideration.

Historical legacy

Over the years, long stretches of the Basingstoke Canal that were once in open ground have become heavily wooded. This encroachment has been a consequence of the commercial decline and subsequent neglect of the canal corridor. Old photographs show that when this and other canals were working freight routes, trees were generally much sparser and indeed were discouraged by many operating companies. Although tree control was a part of the restoration of the canal from the 1970s onwards, on balance growth has exceeded removal in subsequent decades.

The good and the bad for the canal's wildlife

A diversity of waterside trees is beneficial to wildlife in a few ways:

- local shading provides cool areas for fauna in hot, sunny weather; also, a niche for shade-tolerant bankside plants

- trees are important habitats for birds, mammals, reptiles, spiders and the adult stages of some insects with aquatic larvae, including some species of dragonflies;

- groups of trees provide roosts, sources of insect prey and flight paths for bats. These valuable features are, however, sufficiently provided by quite small numbers of trees.

However, if denser tree cover develops, then undesirable features become predominant:

- continuous deep shade prevents reed growth, so bank protection is lost;

- submersed and floating-leaved rooted vegetation is also lost due to insufficient light; this results in almost total loss of the vegetation features for which this Site of Special Scientific Interest is designated;

- autumnal leaf fall to the water smothers the canal

bed with slowly decaying leaf litter, leading to de-oxygenation of the sediment and depressed dissolved oxygen concentrations in the water, which together are detrimental to the whole range of flora and fauna in the channel;

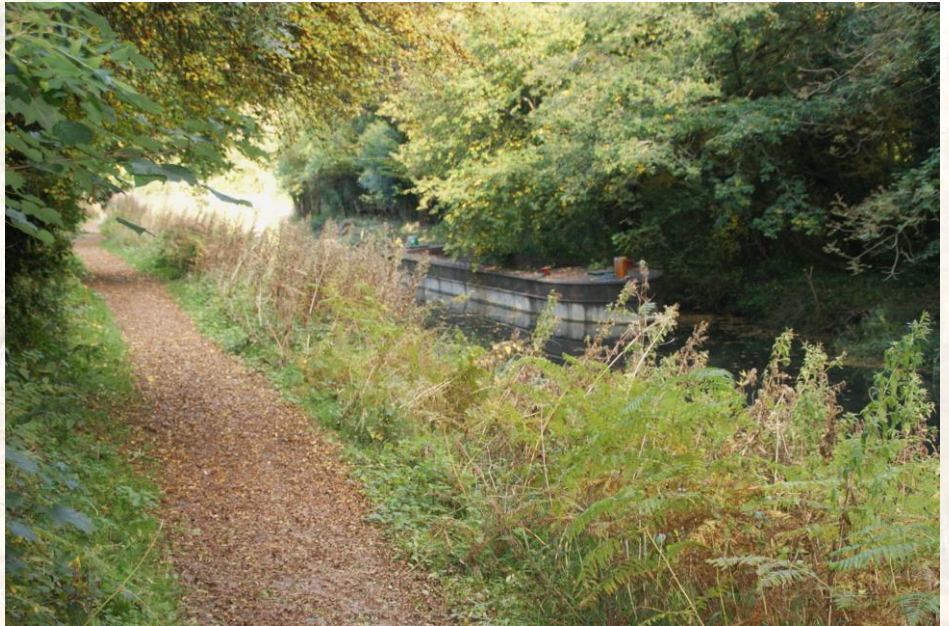
- residues left after leaf decay accumulate quite quickly as black, soft sediment which then requires dredging to maintain navigable depth in the canal for boats.

Although it is best to reduce tree shading there is currently no funding to carry out extensive tree-thinning works. When funding opportunities become available however you may see more tree-thinning projects taking place. Projects have been carried out in the past in areas such as at Greywell which was extensively thinned a few years ago (*see above for before and after photos*) and this has had noticeable benefits for wildlife in this area.

Monitoring the canal's tree stock

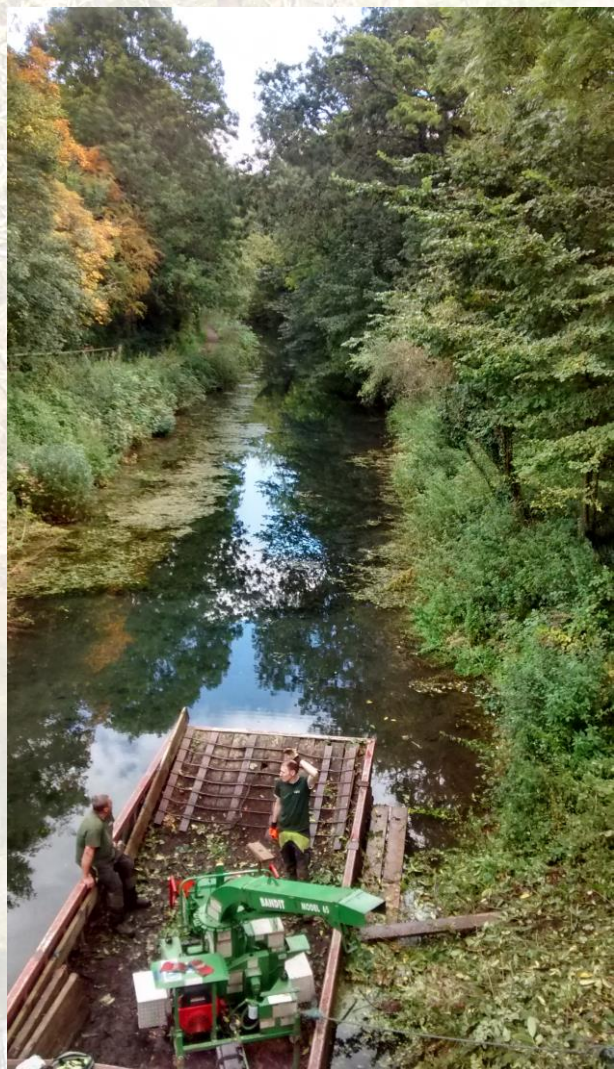
A full canal tree hazard survey was carried out in 2014 which took over 6 weeks to complete. It concluded that:

"The authority owns or has responsibility for many hundreds of thousands of trees along the canal route. The recording of only 516 trees requiring remedial action is an indication of the



relatively good health and structure of the trees and the high quality of on-going management on site”.

These thousands of trees lining the canal are monitored to reduce risk of potential danger to the public. They are split into zones of low, medium and high risk, depending on the volume



of public usage in that area. The trees are then surveyed on a frequency dependent on that zone: every 2 yrs (high risk), 3 yrs (medium risk) or 5 yrs (low risk). This is a health and safety-based survey, allowing monitoring of the health of those trees and prioritisation of works as required.

Our neighbours' trees

Canal neighbours sometimes request works to trees. These works are assessed on a case-by-case basis; however, funding is not available to carry out works to trees that are not safety related. Trees simply blocking light or views or dropping acorns or sap or the odd branch for example would not be deemed reason to carry out works.

Sometimes permission may be granted for neighbours to fund and carry out work to trees if it is desirable for them, and not detrimental to the canal or the health of the tree. However, as all trees along the canalside come under the Canal Planning Conservation Area, all of this work must first be approved through planning permission by the local council as well as the Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA). The BCA also need to be confident that any contractors who access canal land or work over that land are suitably qualified and

insured to do so.

Liability for a tree lies with the owner of the land from which it grows. Trees that fall across the canal can sometimes belong to a neighbour. If this is the case the tree owner will be responsible to pay for any clearance works to remove that tree from the canal land (or water) and for any damage that the tree has caused. These usually have to be dealt with as a matter of urgency to reopen the towpath or canal navigation to boats.

For further information about planning permission to carry out works to trees, contact your local planning authority. Much of this information is available on their websites.

Trees are important for us and wildlife but too many or unsafe trees are detrimental for the canal and its many users. As is often the case in countryside management, striking an appropriate balance is key where time and funding allows.

Fiona Shipp – BCA Canal Manager

A Bit Of History – Did You Know We Have A Dry Dock On The Canal

The cottage next to Lock 28 at Deepcut was originally occupied by the lock-keeper and the area next to it was always a site for work on boats. At one time there was a large carpenter's workshop and a forge there and next to those, a dry dock.

The dry dock was a somewhat primitive construction; boats would be floated in and stop planks were then placed across the entrance, which had no gates. A sluice was then pulled and the water drained away via an open ditch which ran around the back of the lock cottage.



The original lock cottage, which was believed to have been thatched with heather, was in a very bad state by the 1880s and was demolished, although it appears to have been a good home for the lock keeper and his big family! (*see above*). A new tin bungalow-type cottage was built just to the east i.e. downstream of the present-day saw pit, so facing the lock chamber. This in its turn came to be in a very poor state about 1918 and was pulled down with the present lock cottage being built about 1925 when Alf Hyde and his wife moved there as lockkeepers. The bedroom extension on the western end was added in the 1930s.



For many years, teas were served at this point as people were rowing down to Deepcut – as far as they could go from Frimley boathouse – therefore there was a good trade to be had at this point. This has been revived in recent years with trips there on “Rosebud” operating from the Canal Centre.

When the Deepcut cutting was dredged in the late 1930's, at the expense of the military authorities, the opportunity was taken to fill in the old dry dock which had not been used since 1900, apart from (according to legend) serving as an unofficial swimming pool for soldiers.

By the time the canal was being restored in the 1980s, the dry dock was no more than a rather unpleasant muddy hollow. This, however, was about to change. Towards the end of 1982, Frank Jones, who was managing the Youth Training Schemes that taught youngsters brick laying at the same time as rebuilding the Deepcut locks, came to one of the Society's monthly Committee meetings. He reported that the County Council's budget for building materials was nearly exhausted for the year and he faced a problem of what to do with his trainees until the new financial year began in April. He said that if the Society could provide him with a couple of thousand quid, he would build a dry dock.



This seemed an excellent idea, so work began. The dock was completed by the autumn and the Society's trip boat, *John Pinkerton*, underwent its first out-of-water hull inspection there in September 1984. The supports on which a boat sits to enable access to the bottom of the hull were originally a temporary bridge that the army

had put across Lock 17 because of the dangerous state of the original Cowshot Manor Bridge. However, this was completely rebuilt by Frank and his team in 1982 and the girders of the army bridge found a new use.

Some years after it opened, the dry dock acquired a cover in the form of a polytunnel that had originally served as a greenhouse at the nursery at West End run by Robin Higgs, who was chairman of the Canal Society at that time. The cover enabled painting and other work to be done in relative comfort.

The dry dock (*in use recently for John Pinkerton II maintenance recently, right*) is an invaluable resource for the canal and its boat owners and also a significant source of income for the Canal Authority. If you want to use it, please contact the Basingstoke Canal Authority and book well ahead, because it is very busy - in the meantime it is worth a walk up the lovely Deepcut Flight to find this hidden secret.



Roger Cansdale

Christmas Cards Available – Help Spread The Word

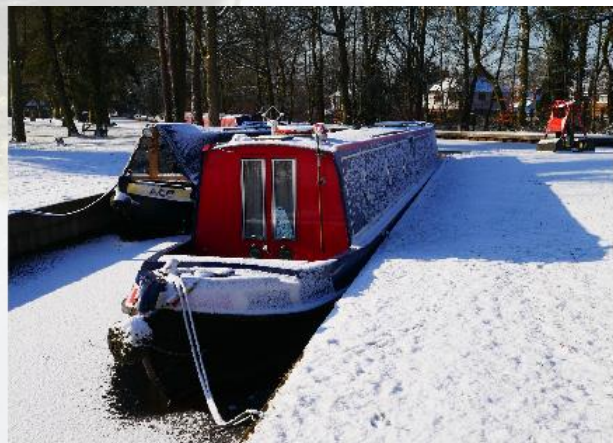
All profits from the sale of these cards help to support the Basingstoke Canal

'Boats moored at the Canal Centre at Mytchett'

Photo by Betty Haniell

**Basingstoke
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'Zebon Copse swing bridge, Crookham Village'

Photo by Roger Canadale

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We have two designs, one showing boats in the snow at the Canal Centre and the other Zebon Copse swing bridge. Price is £3.75 for 10 including p&p. Available from the Canal Centre or order via our Facebook page or from sales@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

Let Us Have Your Stories And Pictures

So lots going on, and more than ever we need your support to protect our wonderful canal.

As always please let us have your stories and comments. Do you have a story to tell or a club that you would want to mention in the bulletin? – quite simply send an email to bulletin@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

And don't forget – if you love the canal and have a bit of time free to help do your bit to protect the canal please contact us to find out more (volunteer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk). In the meantime, write and tell the local councils how important the canal is to the community.

Thanks for your help.

Ken Sankey - Editor

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