



Basingstoke Canal Bulletin

No. 39 MARCH 2019



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John Pinkerton
Canal Cruises

Spring is here and the canal is coming to life – the perfect time to plan a trip on the water. You'll find everything you need to plan your ideal cruise right here in this issue. There are also articles on:

- Where to find water...
- Bringing an old wharf back to life
- The 1913 expedition to save the canal, plus
- We shine the spotlight on an impressive young volunteer. Read on....



Don't forget how you can help your wonderful canal:

- Tell everyone you know [to become Friends of the Canal](#) and they'll benefit from all the latest updates in this regular free Bulletin
- Join us for a spot of volunteering
- Book that boat trip – all proceeds go towards maintaining the canal.
- Most importantly, keep telling the council how important your canal is to your community.

David Horwood

It is with great sadness that we learnt that David Horwood passed away in hospital after a short illness. His wife Jo and family were at his bedside. David took over as Booking manager for John Pinkerton Canal Cruises about six years ago, and rapidly earned the admiration of the Society for his hard work and his dedication to provide a personal service, not only to clients but also skippers and crew. His professionalism and friendliness was an asset to the JP operation, and he will be greatly missed.

Spring On The Cut – Fun For Everyone From Murder To Cream Teas!!

John Pinkerton II (Odiham)

Our trip boat season starts in April and this year the 50-seater [John Pinkerton II](#) is running some new and intriguing themed trips to complement the old favourites. Coming up in April and May:

- *Murder On The Canal* (Friday 12 April, 7pm): Help solve a Murder Mystery set in the late 1930s on the



Basingstoke Canal. Specially devised for this trip, the event will be performed by the Hampshire Theatre Group. Period dress is encouraged but not essential. Fish and chip supper included.

- *Caribbean Night Cruise* (Friday 17 May, 7pm): A taste of the Caribbean in Hampshire. Cruise the canal whilst enjoying Caribbean food and Reggae music from Vintage Soul disco. Outlandish attire recommended. Jerk chicken and rice plus a glass of rum punch included.
- *Family Treasure Hunt Cruise* (Sunday 26 May, 2.30pm): An afternoon trip with a Kings and Queens trail before boarding and at King John's Castle. Puzzle sheets to fill in en route. Cakes, soft drinks, etc. available and prizes for keen hunters. The treasure hunt is aimed at 5–12 year olds but open to all.
- *For garden lovers – a public cruise to the Old Thatch in Winchfield as part of the National Garden Scheme Open Day* (Sunday 7 April), leaving Colt Hill at 1.30pm for an approx 4 hour return trip, including time at the garden.
- *Cream Tea Cruises* (multiple dates starting Wednesday 8 May, 3pm). Cream teas are served with china tea sets and table cloths for a touch of elegance. Lovely piano accompaniment sets the mood.

The boat, with crew, is also available to [charter](#). If you're planning a club or business away day, family reunion, birthday celebration or wedding reception, *John Pinkerton II* offers a unique and attractive venue for up to 50 people.

Kitty (Woking)

Ideal for smaller parties, [Kitty](#) (right) can take up to 12 people and is wheelchair accessible.

Kitty's 2019 season kicks off with special trips on 1 and 2 April, forming part of Woking Borough Council's '[Living Well in Woking 2019](#)' year-long programme of activities. To book these trips please contact WBC either on 01483 743 352 or email: jade.buckingham@woking.gov.uk (not bookable via the normal Canal Society booking process). A flyer advertising these events will be going out to all 40,000 households in the Borough in due course, as well as appearing on their website, Facebook and Twitter: [#livewellwoking](#).

Typically, *Kitty* trips are 1¼ hour long with an option of visiting the Grade II listed Peace Garden on Horsell Common adjacent to Britannia Wharf. However, we are happy to tailor return trips of up to 2½ hours to suit your needs along most of the 4-mile Woking pound that skirts the world-famous Horsell Common.

Rosebud (Mytchett)

The 12-seater trip boat *Rosebud* (below right), run by the Basingstoke Canal Authority and also crewed by volunteers, starts the season with three special *Mothering Sunday cruises* on 31 March. So why not treat your mum to a trip down the beautiful Basingstoke Canal? There are two trips to Greatbottom Flash in the morning and a longer one to Deepcut in the afternoon. A small posy of spring flowers will be presented to each mum on board.



Over the Easter holidays, *Easter Hot Cross Bun trips* will run to Greatbottom Flash on Thursday, 11 and 18 April. Served with tea, coffee or soft drink. Look out for mini eggs hidden onboard! Trips are 90 min, leaving at 11.30am and 2pm. Advance booking is recommended for all these special cruises.

To Book: More information about the above and the regular public trips on *John Pinkerton II* and *Kitty* can be found at johnpinkerton.co.uk. More information on *Rosebud* is available from the Canal Centre on [01252 370073](tel:01252370073) or info@basingstoke-canal.co.uk

Other Boats at Odiham:



Accessible Boating Association (ABA): run by volunteers, [ABA](http://www.accessibleboating.org.uk) invites disabled people and those with mobility or socialising difficulties to enjoy day trips or longer cruises with carers, family and friends on two specially equipped boats. Last season was a very busy one with over 150 trips on the two boats, *Dawn* and *Madam Butterfly*. They also ran Father Christmas trips -

look out for them later in the year!

ABA are repeating their Public Trips for individuals and small groups which usually run on two weekdays and two Sundays each month from May to October. They will also be taking part in Heritage Open Days on 14th September when they will be running trips to give visitors a chance to experience the canal and see Odiham Castle. See www.heritageopendays.org.uk for more information. *Dawn* will also be running trips from the garden at Old Thatch on the three days when it's open for the National Garden Scheme. Look up the website at www.accessibleboating.org.uk for more details.

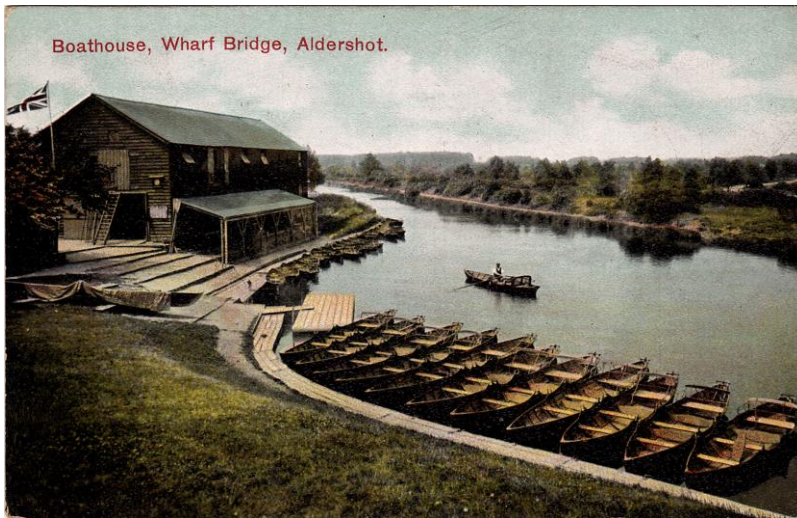
Galleon Marine Boatyard: [Galleon Marine](http://www.galleonmarine.co.uk) is a commercial boat hire business that is also getting ready for the 2019 season. This winter they have blacked the boats and have also fitted a new engine to *Holly* one of the medium-sized boats, improving the boating experience and reducing emissions. The rowing boats will go back in the water at the end of March after a fresh coat of varnish and the kiosk will also open, offering ice cream, snacks, hot and cold drinks and homemade cake.

There is already a good level of narrowboat holiday and day-hire bookings this year; perhaps Brexit is making people think about holidaying closer to home. There are 4 holiday boats in the fleet: *Teasel* a 2-3 berth boat, *Holly* and *Hazel* the 6-berth boats and *Bramble* an 8-berth boat. They have all been assessed by Visit England as 4-star boats and have all the comforts you would expect



including fitted bathrooms, mains power and central heating. There is also a purpose-built day boat called *Juniper* which can often be seen meandering between Odiham Castle and Chequers Bridge with lots of happy day-hirers waving to everyone. Visit www.galleonmarine.co.uk for more information and reviews from previous holidaymakers.

Bringing An Old Wharf Back To Life: Farnborough Road



A hand-painted photo of the Farnborough Wharf boathouse--early 20th Century

After the building works diminished, two boat houses were built close to the wharf. Rowing boats and skiffs made the area a hive of activity once more, a trade that continued for the next 50 years, much like Odiham on a sunny summer's day now.

Today however, the wharf is a quiet place. There is some hustle and bustle when the Runway's End Activity Centre launches its boats and there is the occasional visitor launching their boat at the slipway. In fact, the car park is difficult to find as the access is off a slip road leading from the A323 to the A325.

It has been an aim of the Basingstoke Canal Authority to increase income from the canal, so they have been looking at revenue-raising schemes such as mooring sites where boat owners can keep their boats. There are currently very few moorings on the Basingstoke Canal but Farnborough Road offers a potential site for improvement. The Basingstoke Canal Society was asked if they would like to finance and build a 200m mooring platform there to a design based on the existing one at Mytchett.

The existing Mytchett mooring consists of a fibreglass slip-resistant surface on wooden posts. However, for the surface at the new mooring we chose a green colour to make it look more natural. In other respects, the arrangement of the Farnborough Road Mooring could be considered quite unusual – whilst mainly straight, the platform was designed to curve around the bank towards the slipway.

The design was signed off but complex approvals were needed from Hampshire County Council and Natural England (NE). Additionally, NE stipulated that the driving of the wooden piles should only be done between September and March to protect organisms in the silt of the canal. This meant that work on site could only begin in March 2018 and then take a summer break until September. Work is now proceeding apace and currently there are 107 posts in place out of about 350 (*see below*). Although the post driving will have to stop in April, there will be work to do fitting the superstructure including the Fibregrid to the posts.

The current budget, funded by BCS, is £60,000. Touchingly, the society received a generous bequest from Peter and Margaret Holland which has covered a substantial part of the project.

We are extremely grateful for this legacy and as a memorial, the mooring will be named Holland Wharf.

At 200 metres, there is room for around 10 boats. The space nearest the winding hole is to be designated a temporary mooring, i.e. free to visiting boats for a limited time. The remainder will be permanent moorings and it is hoped that one could be a warden boat with an owner who could keep an eye on things.



So take a walk along that section of the canal. There is a small car park opposite, near Wharf Bridge, and another larger one by Claycart Bridge about half a mile west of there. A number of attractive waymarked paths have been prepared through the woods and along the towpath, going in both directions: towards Ash Lock in the east, and towards Eelmore Bridge at the end of Farnborough Airport runway in the west.

We hope that next year a bustling and colourful community of boats will enhance the canal scene for all to appreciate.

Jeff Hill, Society Workparty Subcommittee

Water – Where To Find It

This is the third of our articles concerning ‘canal water’. Last time we considered where water supplies to the Basingstoke Canal come from, why water is lost and where it goes.

The scarcity of water raises further questions, namely:

- Why the winter rains cannot be stored?
- Why more water supplies cannot be found?

This article attempts to answer these two questions. Next time, we will review the projects in progress to improve management of canal water.

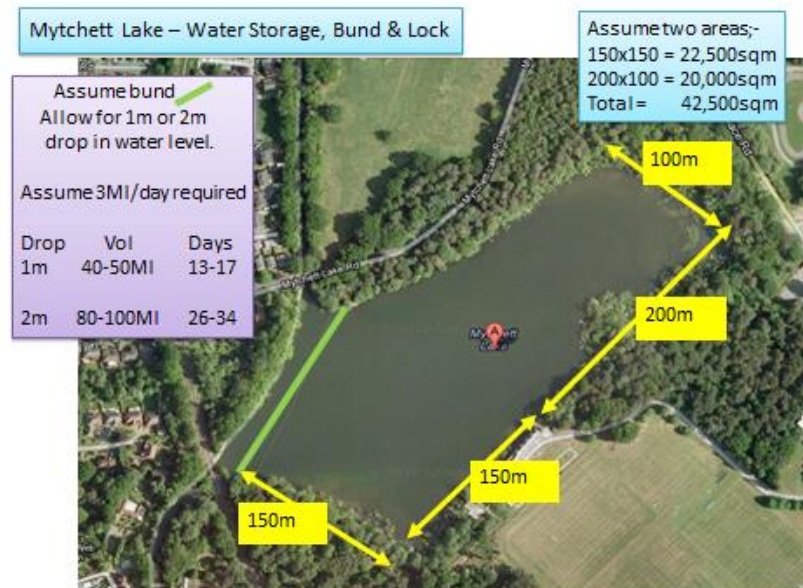
Why the winter rains cannot be stored?

Storing sufficient quantities of water to top up the level of the canal during a dry spell requires a large area, such as a lake or reservoir. We believe that an additional 3 megalitres per day (Ml/day) would be required during prolonged dry weather (1 Ml = 1,000,000 litres). If dry weather lasted a month, a storage volume of at least 90Ml would be required. Allowing say 2m water depth requires an area of 45,000 square metres, equivalent to 7 football pitches. Unfortunately, there are no substantial plots of spare land available near the canal to provide such water storage facilities, otherwise they would have been exploited before.

Nevertheless, various possibilities for water storage near to the canal have been investigated over the last 5 years – but thus far all have been rejected for various reasons. These include:

- Small lakes to accumulate drainage from the A331, which currently discharge to Blackwater River. Costly pumps would have to be installed to fill the canal.
- Area alongside Deepcut locks to construct a series of large ‘side ponds’ to act as mini reservoirs. Considered too expensive and risky. Reservoirs bring much regulation and considerable responsibilities to maintain them.

- Use of water from Mytchett Lake (a reservoir), by effectively damming it off along its boundary with the canal: While this could provide a good quantity of water to the canal (*see right*), it is likely there would be considerable opposition to such a scheme from neighbouring residential areas, fishermen and the public to the lake level being lowered 1 or 2 metres during the summer months. Again, pumps would have to be installed.



- Bourley Reservoirs; land in the Fleet area belonging to the MOD, the water from which may be required for other purposes. (However, we may return to this area to investigate further).



When the canal was constructed, the Hampshire pound was dug with an extra 300mm depth of water so that it might provide some water storage for the dry summer months (that is, to act as its own reservoir). Much of this extra depth has been lost over the years as the canal has filled with silt. We are currently investigating the possible dredging of the canal. The BCA have had the pound profiled and depth surveyed. Finances are available for some dredging. Before employing dredging contractors, it is hoped to refurbish the BCA's old clam dredging

machine ("Unity") currently moored near lock 28 (*left*), which could potentially be operated by qualified Society volunteers.

Why more water supplies cannot be found?

Most people are probably aware that the South of England is already in a 'water stress' situation, and also that there is legislation controlling the extraction of water from whatever source (even if it is your own garden). All existing surface water supplies near the canal, such as they are, have been investigated and for various reasons none is available for the canal to use during dry summer seasons. The only alternative is to find water below ground.

In October 2012, the BCA agreed to finance a contract with British Geological Surveys (BGS), for a desk-top study on the potential of water abstraction from boreholes. The study considered the area outlined in red on the map below, and focused on areas of land owned by the BCA (or to which it has access) which are larger than just the width of the towpath.

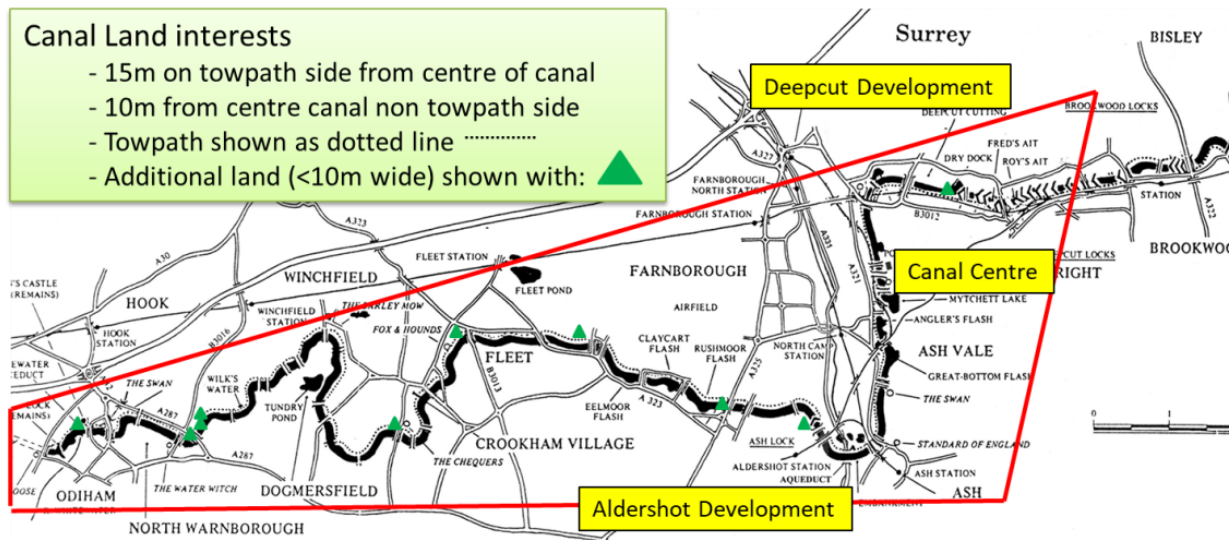
The accessibility of water-bearing strata (aquifers – mainly chalk) and the likely yield at various locations were assessed. The study indicated that there is only one location that might provide a viable borehole, which is in the Frimley area where historically there was abstraction for domestic water supplies. This location is now actively being investigated having obtained

approval from Berkeley Group (previously Mitie), the land owners. However, even if water were found here in a trial borehole, the water quality

Basingstoke Canal – Search for extra Water Supply

Canal Land interests

- 15m on towpath side from centre of canal
- 10m from centre canal non towpath side
- Towpath shown as dotted line
- Additional land (<10m wide) shown with: ▲



might not meet the requirements of the Environment Agency (EA) or Natural England (NE) to support the canal's SSSI.

One positive factor for canal water in the future concerns the domestic supply which is extracted at the Greywell pumping station (in Deptford Lane). Following representations from the Whitewater Valley Preservation Society (WVPS), BCA and BCS, with the EA and NE, South East Water will now have to cease abstraction from the Greywell source, though this is not now expected before 2025 (this is when an alternative supply for domestic use will be piped to the area from near Maidenhead). When this happens, the water table will rise and flow from Greywell springs which supply the canal (and also the Whitewater River) will increase. Both the BGS and the Southampton University study assessed that this increase in supply to the canal may compensate for additional canal water losses due to climate change, over the next 20 years.

Water Project - Help Needed

As should be clear, we are actively investigating a number of topics regarding supply to the canal to eliminate or reduce the occasions the canal must close to navigation due to water shortages in dry weather. Progress on any of these topics is usually slow due to the many interested bodies we need to contact (or seek approval from) - for example, the EA, NE, land owners, local councils, the MOD, Network Rail etc. Any volunteers to help with these studies will be most welcome. If you are interested and have relevant/useful experience, please email volunteer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

John How and Martin Leech

A Bit of History: The Last Boat to Basingstoke

The last boat to reach Basingstoke by canal was in 1910. Under the provisions of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act of 1888, an abandonment order could be applied for if a line had been unused for three years, so in 1913, William Carter, the owner of the Basingstoke Canal began to get worried. He asked Alec Harmsworth, who operated a carrying business on the canal, to try to take a boat to Basingstoke.

Harmsworth agreed and the narrowboat *Basingstoke*, laden with a token load of 5 tons of moulding sand for the agricultural engineers Wallis & Steevens, set off from Ash Vale at 6am on 16th November 1913. The voyage started well and they had no trouble passing through Greywell Tunnel by about midday.

However, things then rapidly became more difficult due to shortage of water. They were forced to stop at Penney Bridge in Up Nately and install stop planks to allow the level to rise before proceeding. This process continued, with the boat being laboriously towed by teams of men and horses (*below and right*), until the outskirts of Old Basing were reached on 10th December. There the attempt finally ground to a halt with the Basingstoke high and dry (*below*).



Ironically the threat of abandonment disappeared for other legal reasons and after Christmas, enough rain had fallen to allow the boat to turn around and return to Ash Vale

in early January. The *Basingstoke* was scrapped in 1932, but its metal frames were used for the building of another barge, *Brookwood*, whose remains are still sunk in Great Bottom Flash at Ash Vale. Alec Harmsworth went on to buy the Basingstoke Canal in 1923 and ran it until he died in 1947.



For more about the 1913 trip see [here](#) and [here](#). A [contemporary film of the trip](#) also exists.

Roger Cansdale

Volunteers: Spotlight On An 'All-rounder'

Martin Thompson started volunteering when he was 7 years old, helping the Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) on Chobham Common. At that time he had also taken up the hobby of flying model aeroplanes on the Common and as the years progressed he found that hobby helped him mix with interesting people and avoid some of the troubles that his fellow students got themselves involved in. Now aged 21, model aeroplanes and volunteering have been the making of him.



Indeed he turned his hobby into a successful business; he now specialises in buying and selling model aircraft, driving around the country delivering aircraft to buyers. And to cap it off he was recently asked to take a lead role in the prime time four-part Channel 4 series "Battle Of Britain

Model Squadron" where model aircraft were used to recreate the key battles in the Battle of Britain.

After leaving school at age 16, Martin had a week's work experience with the SWT for whom he had periodically volunteered for the previous 9 years. He enjoyed the week so much that he stayed on for a further 3 years and changed his studies from an Engineering course to Countryside Management at Merrist Wood College for 2 years. At the same time, he helped SWT on Chobham run corporate events, maintain machinery, run work parties and do presentations at Imperial College London. Unfortunately, 18 months ago the SWT had a budget cut and the volunteer team was disbanded.

Thankfully for us on the canal, Martin was walking along the Canal when he saw a sign seeking volunteers - a year later he is still here and finds himself writing this article! He comments 'I must say that to volunteer and help with the Working Parties is amazing from the staff to the other volunteers and it's always an enjoyable experience even when it's raining!'

Moreover, Martin adds: 'Most recently the realisation of what volunteering can achieve has dawned on me after filming for the television program and I was wondering what else I could get myself into. So I had a quick Google and came across VSO, a voluntary organisation where they send volunteers overseas to help disadvantaged communities. I applied and I am just about to go off to Bangladesh for 3 months to help local entrepreneurs and small business as well as the local community in the area where I will be staying'

Martin Thompson - Volunteer

Volunteers Needed

So if our inspirational 'all rounder' Martin has whetted your appetite, just go to our website basingstoke-canal.org.uk for details of volunteer opportunities or email volunteer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk to find out more. In particular, we really need volunteer help on:

- 1) **Publicity and Marketing:** Lots of you have experience in this area so please give us a call and tell us what you may be able to do. We have a team in place but need a bit more help
- 2) **Boat Bookings:** We need help on bookings and handling enquiries. This is good fun liaising with customers and can be flexible working from home
- 3) **Fundraising:** most important to help us fund future projects we need a team to help us attract donations and legacies and finding fresh ways of raising monies

...please contact us to find out how you can help.

So lots going on here on your wonderful canal. But with pressures on council funds we need your help to protect and keep the canal in good condition..... so please book that boat trip, do a bit of volunteering, or just get your friends and neighbours to sign up as Friends. It all helps. Contact us on volunteer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

...and of course please let us have your stories and ideas.

Thanks for your support

Ken Sankey, Editor

Published by The Basingstoke Canal Society

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