



Basingstoke Canal Bulletin

No. 40 MAY 2019



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John Pinkerton
Canal Cruises

Welcome Back!



Spring has well and truly sprung; our thanks to Hazel Jackson for this tranquil photo taken near Crookham Wharf. In this month's edition we take a little look at:

- Odiham Raft Race
- A visit from Mikron Theatre
- Rambles on the towpath
- Boat trips
- Becoming a volunteer
- Links with schools

We also have two in-depth articles on:

- Water management
- Strengthening links with local government

Have You Built Your Raft Yet?

Following our successful [inaugural Odiham Raft Race](#) last year, we propose to repeat the event. It will take place on **Sunday 1st September 2019.**

Last year we had six entries, with the Canal Authority rangers' craft bagging an impressive victory in just over 30 minutes. The rafters started at North Warnborough Lift Bridge and finished at Colt Hill Wharf, a distance of just over a mile. The event raised over £800 towards the upkeep of the canal. Although it was originally planned as a one-off to mark the centenary of the RAF, it was such a huge and popular success that it was decided to put on another in 2019.



This year, rafters will race along a different course, from Colt Hill to Lodge Farm Bridge and back again. This will condense the action into a shorter stretch of the canal, so spectators can expect even more thrills (and spills?) this time around. At Colt Hill there will be food and drink stalls alongside supporting organisations and businesses. We are pleased that the event will also be supported by Odiham Parish Council, Hart District Council, Hampshire County Council, the Basingstoke Canal Authority, Galleon Marine and Basingstoke & Deane Canoe Club.

The event will be great fun and we are hoping for even more rafts entering this year. So, if you are interested in entering or want to help with stewarding, **please get in touch with Galleon Marine on 01256 708691 or info@galleonmarine.co.uk.**

Mikron Theatre Visit 2019

The Canal Society is immensely proud to sponsor the fantastic [Mikron Theatre](#) once again. They will be performing their latest masterpiece in Odiham:

'All Hands on Deck – A Tale of Two WRENS'

Saturday 22 June 2019, 7.30pm

Waterwitch Pub Garden, Colt Hill,
London Road, Odiham, RG29 1AL
01256 702778

New WREN recruits, Ginger and Lily, are looking for wartime adventure. Lily wants to serve on dry land but Ginger is desperate to serve at sea – and the sailors can't believe their luck!

The show pays tribute to all those wartime women who pushed the door to opportunity firmly open. It is full of dots, dashes, semaphore and song, as Ginger and Lily find themselves on a journey they'll never forget...



Bar and food available. Bring garden chairs. No tickets required – just show up. A cash collection will be taken after the show.

For further information contact David Millett on [01252 617364](tel:01252617364), or [by email](#).

Guided Walks Around The Canal With The Farnham Ramblers

The [Farnham and District Ramblers](http://www.farnhamramblers.org.uk) are one of the most active walking groups in the area. The group organises around 8 guided walks every week ranging from 3.5 to 11 miles in length. They make full use of the varied scenery in the area and often visit a pub.

The walks frequently take in parts of the Basingstoke Canal. Indeed, during June and July there are **6 circular walks featuring the Canal**:

- 6 June (10 miles)
- 24 June (4.5 miles)
- 28 June (5 miles)
- 29 June (3 miles)
- 10 July (4 miles)
- 13 July (3 miles).

All the walks are in the Greywell, Odiham, Winchfield or Crookham Village areas with the majority starting around Odiham.

You are warmly invited to join the Ramblers on any of these walks – and indeed any of their other walks; you can try them out for free.



Full details can be found at www.farnhamramblers.org.uk. If a walk interests you, just turn up – there is no need to book. Please remember to bring appropriate footwear for walking and appropriate clothing for the conditions.

Enjoy A Canal Cruise



This year has started with a **record number of bookings** on the Basingstoke Canal trip boats at Odiham, Mytchett and Woking. So if you haven't joined us yet then **book now to avoid disappointment!**

All three boats, *John Pinkerton* (left), *Rosebud* and *Kitty* (which is wheelchair accessible) run scenic public cruises throughout the season. The *John Pinkerton* also runs a variety of entertaining [theme trips](#). Alternatively, you can charter a bespoke cruise on all boats for your

special event.

Several of *John Pinkerton's* evening [theme trips](#), departing from Odiham, are taking on a decidedly musical flavour:

- Classic Songs – new for this season, on 7 June, **Karen Frances** will take you on a musical nostalgia cruise, singing popular songs from four decades.
- **Still Crazy Duo** – the ever-popular acoustic songsters return on 12 July.
- Trad Jazz – the **Excel Jazzmen** are back on 9 August.
- The **Haslefolk Sea Shanty Crew** round off the season on 6 September.

Tickets for all these and other trips include a fish and chips supper (alternatives available). Real ale, wines and spirits are available for purchase from the bar.

Also hugely popular are **Cream Tea Cruises**:

- **John Pinkerton**: enjoy a traditional cream tea with live piano accompaniment on the second Wednesday of the month (except August).
- **Rosebud**: Cream Tea cruises run from June through September – Westward on Tuesdays, taking in the wildlife at Great Bottom Flash, and eastward on Thursdays to Lock 28 by Deepcut where the cream teas are served at the picnic tables by the old lock cottage.

For garden lovers, there is a cruise to the Old Thatch in Winchfield as part of the NGS Open Day scheme on Sunday, 1st September (the June trip is sold out).

For **John Pinkerton** and **Kitty** cruises visit johnpinkerton.co.uk. For **Rosebud** call the Basingstoke Canal Centre on 01252 370073 or email info@basingstoke-canal.co.uk.

Join Our Team Of Volunteers

Our Friends initiative continues to attract interest, and we now have over 5000 Friends and Followers. One result of this initiative is that, as we had hoped, we now have a steady influx of volunteers willing and available to take on a variety of jobs, including with boat crews, work parties, and lengthsman. We have also found individuals who have been willing to fill administrator and promoter roles. **So, a huge thanks to everyone who is helping already!**

But we still need more help, in particular from people who can assist with:

- **their journalistic and publicity skills**
- **their boat engineering skills**
- **taking boat bookings**

If you want to find out more about volunteering visit the [Society volunteering page](http://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/jp/book-your-trip/), or email volunteer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk. Alternatively, come and join us for a **free evening trip on the John Pinkerton** to find out more (third Monday of the month until September; booking at <https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/jp/book-your-trip/>).

Wondering Whether Volunteering Would Suit You? Here's A Q&A

For an idea of what to expect, here are the experiences of two of our newest volunteers, Bet and Steven, from the Woking area:

What roles did Bet and Steven take on?

They are both learning the ropes on the **Kitty trip boat in Woking** (see below).

How did they get involved?

Bet and Steven both live by the canal and are regulars on the towpath. They took their first trip on **Kitty** for a fun and different activity to entertain a visiting relative. From chatting to the crew, it became apparent they would enjoy volunteering.

What motivated them?

Bet and Steven felt it would be very **rewarding** to give some time towards a **worthwhile** local resource, which without the volunteers would not exist. They have learned **new skills**, become part of something that has its own special pace and joined **a fun team** of like-minded people. The **wildlife**, especially the kingfishers, is also an attraction.



What training did they receive?

Like many of our volunteers, **they had little or no experience**, but have been able to quickly pick up the ropes following the RYA Inland Waterways curriculum and **mentoring** by more experienced crew. After a **weekend of training** by senior volunteers, Ian and Derek, they felt at home on the water.

We are always looking for new faces to join the team. We have a [variety of volunteering opportunities](#), but whatever you choose, you will be supported every step of the way.

Forging Links With Local Schools

As part of our efforts to raise the profile of the Canal, we want to build stronger links with local schools so that staff, parents and, most importantly, the younger generation can benefit from this wonderful local amenity on our doorstep.

We are very lucky to have volunteer Tina Hooker, with 20 years of experience in education, spearheading this program.

What are some of the benefits of schools outreach? Well, here are our thoughts:

For primary age students	Canal Visitor Centre Pond dipping Boat trips Learn to identify wildlife on the canal Learn about canal maintenance and erosion Learn to protect the environment Write a story, colour a picture or take a photo of something you have done or seen on the canal for the Society Bulletin.
For secondary age students	Learn about the canal year History of transport Learn about leisure, health and wellbeing Contribute to the Society Bulletin Learn to protect the environment Become a volunteer, support a project, join a work party



For The Basingstoke Canal Society	Increased awareness Increased usage of the canal and its facilities More Friends, Members and donations More volunteers Engage the future generations to help protect this wonderful resource
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If you feel you would like to lend a hand or contribute in any way to the Canal Schools programme, please contact Tina at schools@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

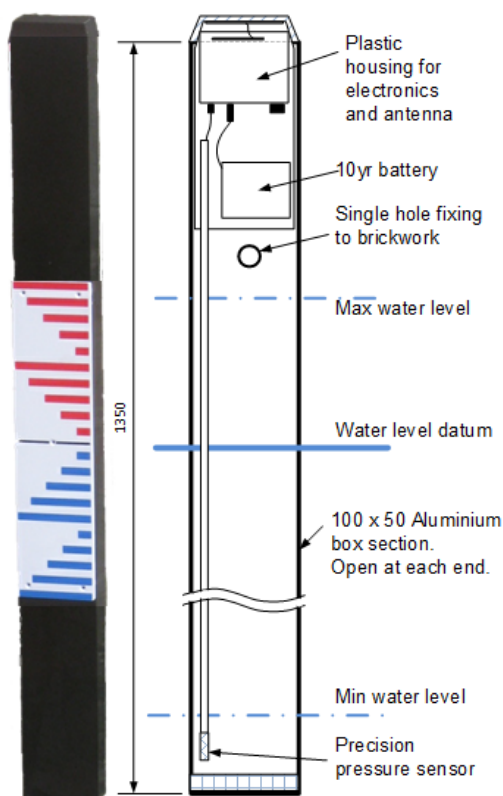
Remote Monitoring Of Canal Water Levels

This is the last in our series of articles concerning water in the Canal. In our previous articles, we explained why the canal is occasionally closed in dry weather; we applauded work by the Rangers in keeping navigation open for as long as possible, and explained that lack of water for through navigation for at least some of year requires us to focus on the following questions:

- Where does the canal obtain its present water supplies?
- Why is the water lost and where does the water go?
- Why the winter rains cannot be stored?
- Why more water supplies cannot be found?

In the last article, we identified various ongoing investigations to find areas to store water and/or to find additional water supplies.

This article covers the *Smart Canal Project* (SCP), which is intended to help the Rangers manage the movement of water along 52km of canal, through 28 locks, each with its own water bypass, plus the ten weirs and sluices that discharge water from the canal during wet weather thereby preventing flooding.



The SCP uses Internet-of-Things (IOT) technology to provide 24/7 displays of water level and related data history to Rangers' smartphones or office PCs, measured by special sensors at strategic canal locations. Actions can then be taken accordingly. The BCA & BCS have been working with a Surrey-based start-up company to develop these cutting-edge facilities that hopefully can then be sold worldwide and provide us with a small 'benefit share' of resulting sales.

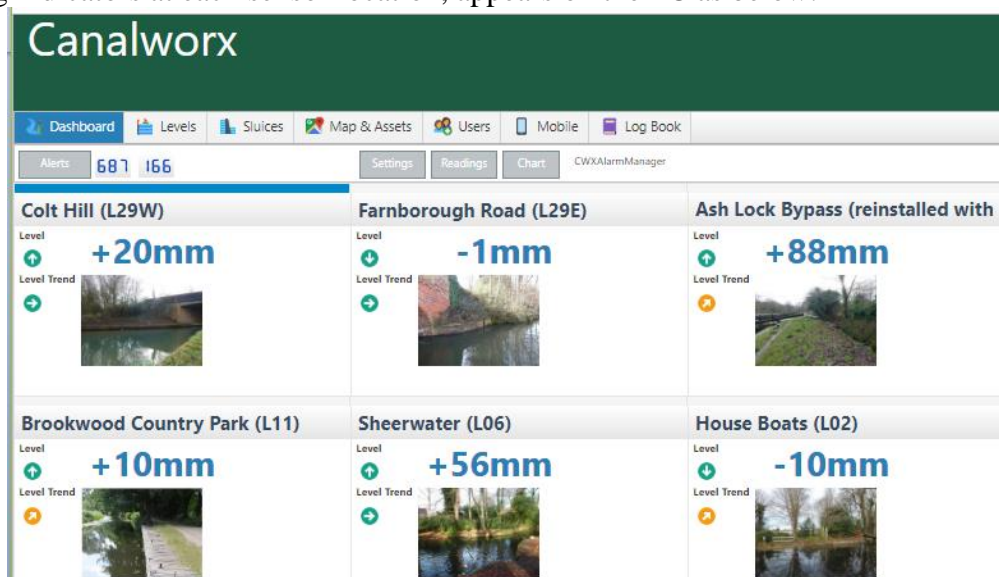
Sensors. Today we have seven prototype water level sensors in the canal (*above*) which have given us a good basis on which to design a much-improved sensor (*left*). We are now awaiting a total of 14 improved production units, which will have a significantly longer battery life and other enhanced features. The sensors are powered by lithium batteries and housed in black box-section aluminium as shown to avoid vandalism and theft. A simple gauge board is attached to the casing as shown.

Software within the level sensor measures water depth (against a defined datum) every 20mins and transmits a package of three readings to the cloud once every hour. In addition to water level, other sensors measure water and air temperature, barometric pressure and humidity as well as

battery voltage and signal strength. Wireless communication has to be very low-power to maintain operation for 5 years or more.

Web interface. This system, called Canalworx, is based on a special IOT service called Thingstream, which provides a secure, reliable and cheap messaging capability capable of connecting to a large number of different devices, and tools to create web-based interfaces to monitor them. It has been developed to detect unusual patterns in water levels: for example, a rapidly falling level might indicate a lock paddle has been accidentally left open or (less likely) a breach has happened. A quickly rising level might occur as a result of heavy rain and precede over-topping that could cause local flooding. The web server is linked to an SMS service so that alerts signaling particular conditions can also be sent to the Rangers' phones.

A wide range of facilities to present and compare data are available for the PC and a subset is available for the smartphone. A typical water levels summary, showing headline depth and warning indicators at each sensor location, appears on the PC as below:

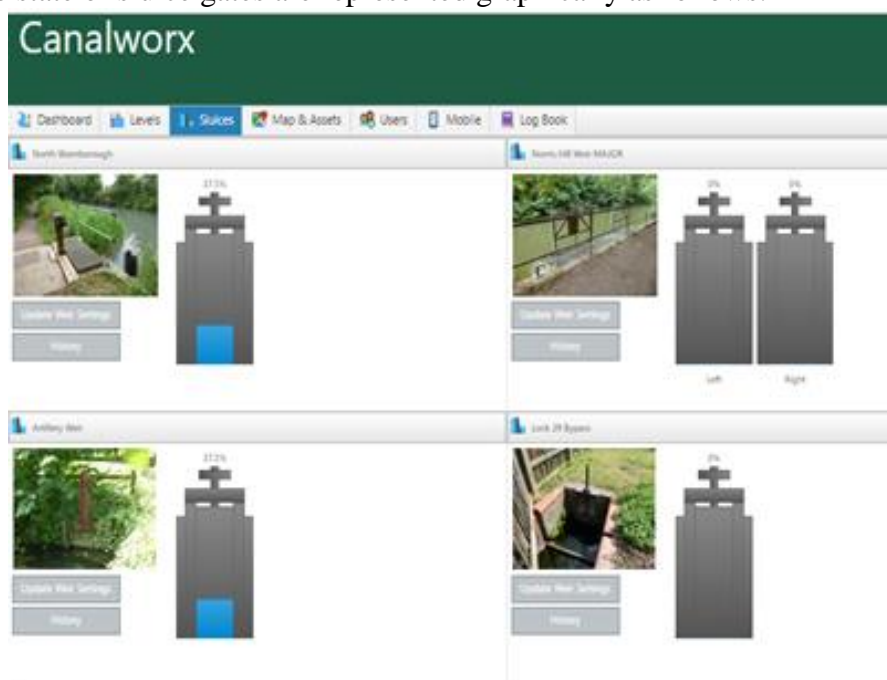


And the water level at each sensor location over time is shown graphically:



The depth of water is indicated on the Y axis (+/-100mm, or 4 inches, in this case). The falling part of the graph in this example (indicating a level drop) shows what would appear if a leak had been taking place over several days (e.g. due to an open lock paddle) with back-pumping also in operation, which accounts for the partial level recovery (“stepping”) each day. The subsequent sharp rise reflects the return to datum level once the situation has been rectified.

A further aid the system provides for Rangers is a mechanism to record adjustments made to the sluices within the 10 overflow weirs along the canal that control water discharge. These sluices are manually operated gates that can be opened to allow more water to be discharged than the normal weir overflow rates, hence ensuring no flooding of local properties. When a Ranger physically adjusts a sluice, they manually record this on a smart-phone to ensure all the Rangers are informed of this action, who took it and when. Sometime in the future (if required and funding were available), the position of the sluice could be monitored through IOT and eventually the adjustment made remotely, thereby reducing the need for the Ranger to go out on site. The state of sluice gates are represented graphically as follows:



Topics for future work

- Reduction in pumping costs. The annual electricity cost for back-pumping at Woodham and St Johns is in the order of £10,000pa, all from the BCA budget. All pumps are manually controlled. Once the upgraded water level sensors are installed and proven, the Canalworx system could provide automated control of the pumps to ensure these are run for the minimum of time. Potential annual savings might be significant, possibly 10% to 20%.
- Develop a Water Balance Model (WBM). Work is progressing to refine an existing, crude water balance model for the whole canal. Data collected during the summers of 2019 and probably 2020 will hopefully allow the model to be refined for use by the Rangers. In time this might allow predictions of future water levels and corrective actions to be taken in anticipation.

Water Project - Help Needed

We would appreciate offers of additional help. We particularly need someone with knowledge of design and maintenance of 3-phase Motor Control Centres in a water pumping environment.

If you are interested and have relevant/useful experience, please email volunteer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

John How and Martin Leech

A Great Working Relationship With A Local Council

A note from Andy Denner – Marketing Communications Manager, Woking Borough Council

Woking Borough Council oversees a significant part of the Basingstoke Canal – from the junction with the River Wey in the east through the centre of the town to Pirbright Bridge in the west.

Most of the stretch is designated as SSSI with 16 bridges, many of them over 200 years old and 14 locks of similar vintage. With its large population, many living very close to the canal, Woking is a key partner for the Canal Society.

Over the past few years, the already excellent relationship between the Council and the Canal has blossomed through an initiative which has enabled a regular dialogue between Douglas Spinks (Deputy Chief Executive) and his team, and Richard Kelly, representing the Canal Society. There are now regular meetings which address topics such as publicity, planning and fresh ideas to invest in the waterway.

We share a common understanding of the value of the canal and an ambition to enhance its value to the community. Together we are trying to make it more accessible to local residents and visitors to the area and to promote its benefits to the wider public. The essential priority is to encourage increased use of the canal both by making the towpath more enjoyable to the many walkers, cyclists, fishermen, paddlers and boaters who use it every day.

It must be said that the many pressures on the Council (and the canal) mean that tangible change can seem illusive and long term. However, we agree on the importance of working to safeguard this wonderful asset and to enhance it whenever possible.

In recent years the canal in Woking has seen considerable investment and change. The canal has been enhanced hugely by the WWF building, the Lightbox and the Bedser Bridge. Only recently the new Woking Wharf has been completed (*right*) and work will begin shortly on a new turnover bridge at Chertsey Road. In addition:



- *Kitty*, Woking's own canal trip boat, is now into its third season and has been operating with fantastic success – raising the profile and generating funds to plough back into the canal's maintenance. *Kitty* has had a number of visiting groups from overseas, including the Children of Chernobyl. Trips are now a popular feature of Woking's Living Well initiative and Woking Heritage Open Days.
- The Canal Society also provide a presence at the Party in the Park (this year hosted on Saturday 6 July 2019) and the St John's Fete every summer.
- The Canal's events team staged a very successful boat rally in 2016 on the canal adjacent to Brookhouse Common and they are planning a further boating event in 2020.
- The Council is really grateful to see that volunteers regularly patrol the canal and towpath carrying out maintenance and keeping it clear. They also pick up litter!

Woking Borough Council genuinely appreciate the value of working closely with the Canal Society. Together we are working to make the Basingstoke Canal in Woking a resource we can all share and be proud of.

Andy Denner

Anything You Want To Get Off Your Chest

It's always a real pleasure to get feedback from our readers, both positive and negative (how else can we improve?). We are now in the process of reviewing and streamlining our communications so if there's something you want to comment on please do get in touch.

And as ever, if you have a story to tell or a club that you would want to mention in the Bulletin simply email bulletin@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

Thanks for reading.

Ken Sankey - Editor

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