



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 268 Winter 2021





Editorial

My apologies for the late appearance of this BCN. However COVID lockdown and unpleasant weather, added to the usual winter downturn in canal activity, was not going to make for a very inspiring issue at the end of February, so I decided to let things slip a bit in the hope of some spring inspiration.

This perhaps explains why there is a good deal of historic stuff in this issue, but much of it is still very relevant today.

Although physical activity on the canal has been reduced by the COVID lockdown periods, there has been an enormous amount of effort on the part of a lot of newly active members on a wide range of sub-committees. These now report back briefly to the main Society Committee, which can then deal with top-level matters without having to spend a lot of time discussing details.

Zoom and other similar systems have been an enormous help when face to face meetings have been impossible, and I suspect may well continue to be used, at least for some of the time, even when restrictions are lifted; it's just very convenient to sit at home and talk rather than having to meet somewhere else.

I think though that we shall still find an excuse to get together on licenced premises from time to time!

Vice-Chairman's report

The Canal Society has a birthday this year. On the 10th of May it will be 30 years since the opening of the canal

This was a fantastic achievement and we must thank everyone involved for bringing our Canal back to life again with the Society bringing volunteers to help restore the canal and the Surrey and Hampshire County Councils involved in buying the land, and with the local councils, continuing to support the canal. Well done everyone.

We hope to have a birthday party celebration at some stage depending on what we are allowed to do post lockdown.

So what about the next 30 years?

Firstly the prime objective of the Basingstoke Canal Society still remains the same – that of protecting the canal for present and future generations as a navigable waterway for the benefit of all users and the community - in other words 'keeping the canal alive'

And in this there remain many challenges, not least of all is that the canal needs ongoing funding by the council owners, this at a time when budgets are tight. Also for navigation there continues to be a limited water supply (what will the impact be of climate change?) and we have a delicate balance to manage the canal from an ecological viewpoint with the bulk of the waterway being an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest).

Cover Picture : Big freeze at Colt Hill, Odiham.
Photo: Arthur McCafrey of Galleon Marine

Vice-Chairman's report

However progress is being made. Firstly the Canal Society has over the last few years significantly increased involvement with the Community, perhaps helped in the last year during the pandemic, with people really appreciating this wonderful local amenity. Our membership has increased by 30% and we have a good flow of donations coming in to fund projects (we have now raised the bulk of the £20,000 for the Information Boards Project). Quite simply the more the community is involved, the more help we have in mobilising action and addressing these issues.

The wider issue as we go forward is to focus on the benefits of the canal in terms of the major themes that are important to us all across society: that of culture and history, health and well-being, economic and environmental benefits.

What does this mean in practice? A few examples are our new information boards which will help people understand and appreciate local history and wild life; in turn we plan to communicate more the exercise and mental health benefits of walking and sport along the canal, and we are planning electric/hybrid trip boats with disabled access.

We are also working with local Councils to help them make best use of the local canal, again with health and well-being an important theme, along with what the canal can (and should) bring to the local community. Indeed our Trip Boat Kitty is an ideal example of being a 'destination' and attracting visitors to Woking. Another project is looking at linking up a pathway for 'the last 5 miles to Basingstoke' - not only will this be for leisure and interest but

it will bring people to visit and spend in the local community. Further economic benefits include our team working with local planners to ensure that any new housing developers make a contribution to support the canal.

Specifically we are also working with the BCA to help improve income from the canal. For example using a legacy that the Society received, our Working party has built new mooring facilities at Farnborough ('Holland Mooring'). Not only will the moorings allow for more boats on the canal, but the income will go to the BCA. We have other similar projects which will bring further income to the BCA, this all being part of helping the ongoing sustainability of the canal

And apart from work going on 'behind the scenes' what else is going on out on the canal? Our Lengthsmen continue to do great work walking their local lengths of the canal and some limited working party work is continuing, as mentioned, with the Farnborough Wharf. Otherwise though we have been 'locked down'. However there is good news that our trip boat operations at Odiham (the John Pinkerton) and Woking (Kitty) are planning Covid safe trips from May onwards, subject of course to the guidelines at the time. So why not book a trip? Just go to our website to find out more.....

Finally, thanks for your ongoing support as members. You and the volunteers are so important to us - and don't forget to encourage your friends and family to join and become a member.

Ken Sankey

Canal Society Mission

As Ken Sankey says on the previous page, the Canal Society needs to be clear about its objectives and the steps it needs to take to achieve them. With this in mind, a team has been busy drawing up the Mission Statement below. While many people, myself included, tend to shy away from such management speak, it does greatly help to stand back and look at what we are doing occasionally. It isn't the end of the story and it will undoubtedly get amended and added to from time to time. However, this is where we are now and this is how we see things

	Cultural	Social
Core Vision	Ensure navigable and financially viable waterway for both now and the future	Actively involve local communities and councils for leisure, recreation, health and well-being
Actions Now	Agree with BCA list of projects to progress (to deliver above vision)	Encourage greater usage by various users of facilities along canal, through increased awareness and active promotion
	Develop, fund and install projects, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signage Info Boards - Visitor Centre(s) / web museum - Pill Box interpretation 	Conduct users survey into what they want from the canal
Actions - Short / Medium Term	Ensure clear plan and actions to improve Water availability, dredging and access full length of canal	Encourage councils' support of the canal as a natural choice for helping maintain and improve health & wellbeing and reduce
	Progress projects, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop a virtual living museum on the BCS web site - Last 5 miles walk - Return vessel parts of Perseverance to BCS control 	Continue to actively promote the canal and its benefits to the Community
	Improve boat facilities including mooring facilities and electric points	Promote links with local (sports) clubs and societies along the canal
	Strengthen links with national organisations i.e. IWA, Wey & Arun and Montgomery Canal	Increased community involvement through Volunteering and Membership of BCS
Actions - Medium / Long Term	Ensure accessibility of canal to wide beamed boats through to King John's Castle + dredging	Build on above to encourage greater use
	Reconstruction and then display of Perseverance in a suitable location(s)	Regular feedback
Actions - Long Term	Promote transfer of ownership to CRT and retain long term goal of linking to Kennet & Avon	To make the Canal a safe and enjoyable place

Statement

progressing at the moment. It has been given to the County Councils so that they too know what we want to do and see happen to their canal.

Apologies for the small print - it was the best that could be done and still get it all in.

The Committee would welcome members' comments and, better still, offers of help.

Economic	Environment
Ensure ongoing mutually beneficial economic benefits to local areas, councils and resident populations	Proactively support and protect this unique natural environment for future generations
Implement a plan with BCA to increase canal income	Positively work with Natural England (NE) / Environment Agency / others to achieve a fair balance between recreation and conservation
Post Covid to implement safe working practices and restart boat trips (John Pinkerton & Kitty)	Retain the beauty of the canal through continued maintenance and repair
Actively seek funding for projects through donations, legacies, grants	
Actively develop and lead a programme of funded projects for canal users to enjoy	Link to, and promote other parks, nature trails and footpaths
Proactively involve local businesses and councils in sponsorship / volunteering and financially supporting the canal	Make the canal sustainable by replacing diesel boats with electric plus electric points
Specific income generating projects may include: - pop up facilities along the canal for users' convenience and income generation - further trip boats eg Fleet	Work with NE to plan and implement increased water, boat movements and dredging
Identify and secure developers' financial contributions to support and enhance the canal	
Support canal owners in increasing income to ensure ongoing viability	Ensure the continuity of water supply to the canal to keep it navigable and preserve its' biodiversity
Continue to work with County and local council in developing economic benefits in each district, including increased revenue to support the canal	Build links to other relevant environmental groups
Joint working with business, organisations and local councils to ensure a financially sustainable future for the Canal	Ongoing relationship with NE to balance Environment and Navigation

Winter contractor

Winter is a busy maintenance season on the canal. The locks in Woodham were identified as requiring repairs and in this case the Canal Authority engaged a contractor, Kenward Groundworks to carry out the works.

These are mostly structural repairs ranging from rebuilding wingwalls, pointing brickwork and replanking lock gates.

Fish rescue

Before the works could start a full fish rescue had to take place, so the canal could be emptied of water.

This was carried out by a team in drysuits, sweeping through with large nets as the water level was gradually reduced over a few days, with repeat sweeps to ensure nothing was missed. All the fish were moved upstream of Lock 6 at Sheerwater Bridge.

It's a harsh job undertaking a fish rescue in very cold conditions but thankfully they weren't breaking the ice this year, as they have had to do in the past!

It's always interesting to see what we find, whether unusual items on the canal bed or the species of fish. It was good to find some eels, including young ones.



Above: Gates ready for re-planking



Above: Gates re-planked

The contractors are working their way down the locks. Water will not be removed from the sections with houseboats, so additional dams will go in around these sections as works begin on Lock 2 (near Scotland Bridge) and Lock 1 (near the Heathervale Recreation Grounds at New Haw). There will be careful water management to ensure the houseboats stay afloat. All these works are due to be finished before the end of March.

As well as local patching of lock chamber walls and other brickwork, some quite extensive work has been done to extend the towpath side lower wing wall at Lock 6 as the series of photos opposite show.



Below: Upper wing wall patching



Above: Chilly work on the lower wing walls

Meanwhile work is underway to replace the steps at Deepcut Bridge, and two new sets of lock gates are being installed at locks 28 and 27, also in Deepcut (*Below*) by Rob Locatelli's River & Canal Services team..



More popular

It's not surprising many more people have been enjoying the canal during the pandemic – more than three times the usual number of local people, according to the Canal Authority.

The towpath generally has taken a real hit this year with so much additional use, and this is even more noticeable during the winter when that extra footfall has a direct immediate impact on the towpath surfacing, especially in areas of Hampshire where we do not have a made-up surface.

Holland moorings



Above: The eastern end of the new Holland Moorings at Farnborough Road.

The Holland Mooring is nearing completion as can be seen from the photograph and I am hoping to hold an opening ceremony sometime this year. This facility is to provide one temporary mooring for visiting boats with the remainder forming permanent moorings, of which there are few on the Basingstoke Canal.

During the initial stages of design and approval, the Society Treasurer revealed that the Society was to receive a bequest from Peter and Margaret Holland and it was decided to apply this legacy to the new mooring and, in their honour, name it The Holland Mooring. The budget for the project was £60,000 and the legacy from the

Hollands was just under £50 000 so there was a satisfactory fit there

Little was known about Peter and Margaret apart from the fact that they had left money to other canal societies including the Wey and Arun Canal Trust. Our only contact, as far as I knew, was via a firm of solicitors in Peterborough who had handled the estate. I contacted them and spoke to a former partner who had, by that time, retired but several contacts later, I was put in touch with Derek Holland, Peter and Margaret's son. He has been very helpful and gave me some more details as well as providing some old photos of the canal and John Pinkerton I.

from Jeff Hill & Duncan Paine

Coincidentally, I came across a reference to Kay Markham (nee Holland) of Valentines Farm, Odiham. This farm is alongside the canal just upstream of John Pinkerton's mooring at the barn. Kay is Derek's sister and living next to the canal that her parents loved so much was a complete coincidence.



Peter Holland was born in London in 1923 and worked for the BBC as a radio engineer where he met Margaret. She was born in Renfrewshire, Scotland and worked for BBC Scotland moving south to cover the Olympic Games in 1948. They were married and lived in South London moving to Virginia Water in the late fifties. They retired to Peterborough in the 1980s.

Peter and Margaret had many canal holidays and supported a number of canal societies along with the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society and the Nene Valley Railway.

They died within six months of each other in 2016 when they were in their nineties after 67 years of marriage.

The Basingstoke Canal Society and all boaters on the canal must be thankful to Peter and

Margaret Holland for their generous bequest. They showed an appreciation for the beauty and tranquillity of the canal and we shall hope that these qualities continue into the future.

I hope to be able to report on the opening of the Holland Mooring later in the year. Thanks to Derek Holland for a lot of the above information and permission to use the photo of Peter and Margaret.



All credit to the Work Party for getting the project finished apart from some landscaping, despite the winter conditions which included 30 mm thick ice round the work boat at times according to Duncan Paine.

Slightly worrying was his report of the number of vehicles that came into the Farnborough Road car park, saw the Work Party there in yellow jackets and turned round and went away. He wondered what they came in for. Perhaps the BCA should be thinking about a CCTV installation to keep an eye on boats moored there, perhaps from the opposite bank.

Boat Company Report 2020

John Pinkerton Canal Cruises Ltd operates the charter side of the boat. Last year was the first time it was unable to make a financial contribution to the Society at the end of the year. In fact, despite running about a dozen trips during August and September to keep us in the public eye, we ended up in deficit, although considered solvent as we were able to carry forward many bookings to 2021.

Surrey & Hampshire Canal Cruises Ltd is the home for trading all other marketing, including sales on the boat, via the web shop, and through pop-up stalls at many Society events. It fared better, due solely to the effect of the web shop coming on line during the latter part of the year. Books, calendars and Christmas cards, kindly posted by Roger Cansdale, contributed to a small profit, enabling £3570 to be donated to Society funds.

Boating Plans 2021

Arising from the recent roadmap, it is immediately obvious that Easter will be too early for any public boating, although we should be able to complete maintenance work during April and May. As JP commences her third year in the 5 year Passenger Licence schedule, she is due for an out-of-water survey by the MCA. The dry dock has been booked for the week commencing Thursday 8th April.

We will require volunteers to take their exercise by scrubbing down the under-water part of the hull, followed by blacking. With the obligatory couple of days to dry-off, she will be ready for the surveyor on Wednesday 14th April. As another first, he has agreed not only to do the out-of-water examination, but also to complete the in-water survey as soon as she is re-floated.

The topsides were freshly painted during the sunny periods last year, and newly sign-written. If time permits, the roof is the only outstanding part to paint.

Reopening

When pubs reopen on May 17th, we can begin to offer restricted cruises on the basis of our socially distanced pandemic cruises last year, under rule of 6 / two families, limiting passenger numbers to about 50% capacity.

Charters will be honoured where passengers can fulfil prevailing pandemic restrictions, but are unlikely to commence before 21st June, for no restriction working.

We have to re-plan our themed and public trips, and booking for these will commence as soon as details are confirmed.

Crew Training

As published in recent emails, on-line training will commence in March for all crew. Part of the MCA survey is that we can show training for all crew has taken place, and, that we have documented feedback following training. This is why last year, trainers started to ask crew to complete a questionnaire; the trainers benefit from this as well, so that future training can be tailored to your requirements.

There should be opportunity for on the water revision following the dry dock work.

Annual General Meeting 2021

This has been scheduled for Friday 12th March at 7.30pm as a virtual meeting. Please register your attendance by emailing 'jpcrew@btinternet.com.' (Do not send to jpcrewing - see below - till after 5th March)

Progress

The link and papers will be sent out during the week preceding to all who have registered.

Web Site and JP On-Line Booking Service

When the new BCS web went live in August last year, it was done knowing that much work was outstanding. The web Shop was gradually brought into action, membership requirements improved, and the Booking Service put to a test through its use for the public 'It's Up to Us' drama evening. However, since then much more work has been done by our volunteers and designers, and now, for the first time ever, we are able to initiate bookings for Charters as well as take bookings and payments for Public and Theme trips.

Charters are a special case, as charterers prefer to have their specific arrangements confirmed before they part with money, which is why it was never implemented while we used a third party booking service. Our in-house solution now has a sequence, automated to a fair degree, keeping human intervention to a minimum, but still retaining that personal touch. We have an excellent booking team built up over the last year, who answer the phone, or reply to emails, and our thanks go to Trisha, Cheryl, Sue, and Jeremy. Documentation is held in the cloud.

To reduce overheads, we prefer the larger charter payments to be made by direct off-line methods, although on-line card payments can be catered for on request.

The Committee acknowledge with thanks the excellent work carried out by volunteer Ian Sims and web manager Mel Lewis to help us achieve this goal. There is still more to do to automate the rostering – watch this space!

Canal Society eMails

As part of the web programme, key Society members and those with Public facing emails will shortly be centred on Google G Suite. Individuals will be contacted directly when ready to go live. Personal home emails will return to being just for personal use.

In anticipation, there are some that crew should be aware of, and to avoid losing them in Junk inboxes, please add them to your address books: The old 'jp crew' will be replaced by

jpcrewing@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

Requests to the JP Treasurer by

jptreasurer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

JP Booking Team by

jpbookings@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

JP Boat Chairman by

jpchairman@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

Boating Safety

The BCS maintains a high commitment to the personal safety of all its volunteers. Following a recent review, there will be more stringent requirements and documented trails to ensure compliance. The boating fraternity will be part of this drive, so expect to see more of this coming down the line. On JP, we have always strived for the optimum safety combined with passenger acceptance, but you may see changes, - as yet unconfirmed!

One risk that we can anticipate will be reduced is for those crew considered to be in pandemic more or most vulnerable classifications. If you are one of these these (including the crew over 70), and have completed a full course of vaccine inoculations, and waited 14 days since the last, you may be considered to be at lower risk whilst crewing in public facing settings. We will require confirmation of this status.

Sub-Committee activities

We now have several very active sub-committees operating within the Canal Society, which has enabled a lot of progress to be made on various aspects that never really got addressed when we were vainly trying to get everything handled by the dozen or so members of the main committee. It also results in much shorter monthly meetings of that committee and opens things up to a much wider part of our membership. Not everyone who wants to help the Society wants to be a Director of it and this helps to remove any impression that everything is being run by a small and exclusive clique. The following is intended to give a flavour of current activities. Anyone wanting to join in should contact Ken Sankey.

Lobbying Group

Contacting local district councils to advise them of our activities in their area and to elicit their support (particularly Surrey Heath). Also working with the BCA to try to ensure that canal funds will get contributions from developers whose sites are near the canal and result in increased use of its towpath.

Boat Company

JP activity is reported on the previous page but Kitty has been out of action ever since COVID struck. However, its brochure is ready for printing and it is hoped that (fingers crossed) trips can start in May. Some of the crew have been keeping their hand in acting as marshalls at vaccination centres.

Marketing Group

The project to install information boards along the canal has made huge progress. £20,000 has been raised from donations from local companies, members and other sources. A

legacy from our late founder member Dieter Jebens will pay for signage at the Wey junction. Thanks to all of them. A list of locations has been drawn up and design work is starting.

Projects Group

John Turner has agreed to lead this group which is hoping to things moving on the projects listed in our Mission Statement (pages 3 & 4), such as the Last 5 Miles Footpath and the return of Perseverance. Swan cutting is the high priority.

Planning Group

Monitoring local planning applications and sometimes raising objections.

Governance Group

Ensuring that the Society is run in an appropriate fashion. Currently revamping the Society's Memorandum of Understanding and Articles.

Web Site Group

As reported elsewhere, their major triumph was getting the new website with its online payment facility operational last year. This resulted in an enormous boost to membership and sales of books etc. The current activity is the introduction of Society email accounts so that people working for the Society will no longer have their private addresses exposed.

Events Group

Events are still rather an unknown and plans for an event to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Canal's re-opening on 10th May have had to be put back until some time in the autumn, perhaps combining in some way with the Odiham Raft Race. Watch this space!

Floating Pennywort

*Fiona Shipp, assisted by the Society's Ian Moore (left in this photo), has produced a paper describing the methods that are used to prevent the canal being completely overgrown by the invasive *Hydrocotyle Ranunculoides*, otherwise known as Floating Pennywort. At 13 pages, it is too long to include in toto, but hopefully the following gives a flavour of the problem. More photos on the back page.*



Hydrocotyle ranunculoides has been present on the canal for many years. It is a non-native invasive species that can grow up to 20cm/day from tiny fragments and quickly choke a waterway, making it impassable to boats and blocking out light for aquatic vegetation; if left unmanaged it would have a detrimental impact upon this Site of Special Scientific Interest. On the Basingstoke Canal this is all located below lock 7 in the Woking and Woodham areas of the canal. The Basingstoke Canal Authority has instigated an active management programme supported by the Basingstoke Canal Society to control the advance of this alien species.

Our analysis indicates that it costs us 126 volunteer hours per kilometre to reduce the impact of Floating Pennywort (mainly provided by volunteers), in order to reduce its effects on other aquatic plant life and keep the navigation open to boats. While we intend this to be a programme of eradication, it is so difficult to remove entirely that in fact it becomes a longer-term programme of management. Work to try

and reduce the floating pennywort has been ongoing for at least the last 7 years. In total for 2019 the value of volunteer hours equated to £12,420. Management and mechanical costs/repairs/fuel would be in addition to this. This doesn't sound so much, but if you brought in contractors to replace the volunteers and paid them to do this work instead, the cost would be approximately £45,600 just for staff time at £350/day/person for an 8hr day. This also excludes hiring in of specialist machinery such as weedcutters, and work boats.

Volunteers man the weedcutter, workboat and canoes, and work from the bank, using rakes, grapnels, loppers and secateurs. BCA Rangers in waders and dry suits sometimes also wade into the canal to tackle difficult bits.

Pennywort will probably never be eradicated, but the work makes a big difference. Aquatic Vegetation Surveys showed that between 2012 and 2016 Floating Pennywort had significantly decreased from presence in 15.7% of samples down to 5.4%.

Activity timeline



We are however expecting this figure to have gone up again in 2020, as a result of a severe reduction in volunteer and staff hours due to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

Canals and the

This article was written for the IWA National Rally held in Guildford in 1970 and is as relevant today as it was 50 years ago.

This year is European Conservation Year. It is also a year in which the population of this country will again increase by some 500,000, and another 50,000 acres of countryside will disappear into urban use. Our natural resources are far from limitless and European Conservation Year is aimed at drawing attention to the need to plan and manage our re-sources so that we do not unwittingly destroy our environment.

The countryside in Britain is already under pressure. We are an urban nation, and at weekends and holidays we like to escape from the noise, the fumes, the crowds to enjoy the fresh air and the countryside. More leisure, more cars, more people could bring about a real crisis in the next few years, unless we plan the use of our countryside as carefully as we plan our towns. Inland waterways can and must play a central role in providing for our recreational needs while helping to ease the pressure on more wild and solitary areas.

Our canals are ideally situated for such use. They were built for commerce, hence they link major urban areas and are easily reached without long journeys on congested roads. It needs little effort to imagine the canals as linear parks, stretching from the heart of the countryside into our crowded towns.

Access is one question, recreation another. Can the canals offer 'a variety of recreational activities', which is what the Countryside Act requires? Undoubtedly they can. Already many enthusiastic anglers have discovered the pleasures of coarse fishing along the canals. When British Waterways took a count one wet

Sunday afternoon, they found over 27,000 fishermen out. Angling and walking are two of today's most popular sports, second only to swimming. Canals were made for walking. The original traffic was horse-drawn barges, so alongside the water there is always a towpath. Many people tramped these routes in the past, leaving their homes

in search of work. To-day the serious hiker can again shoulder his pack and tour the country, but this time for pleasure. As a network of long distance paths the canals are a superb asset. For most people, however, a walk in the country is more likely to mean an afternoon out with the family. Here, too, canals are invaluable. Not only are they near at hand, but the presence of the water, the sparkle and reflections, are an added delight. There is so much to see, flowers, butterflies, perhaps a water-vole. The pleasure could be increased tenfold if short nature trails were marked out, with descriptive notes to help identify what can be seen. Occasional resting places and picnic sites might be welcomed.

To many people canals mean boats and 'there is *nothing* - absolutely nothing - half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats'. Holiday advertisements attest to the popularity of canal cruises, the most pleasant way imaginable of discovering the English countryside. There are many privately-owned small craft out at weekends. Youngsters find a particular thrill in canoeing. Quiet canal waters are ideal for this sport. Add a small tent, or a youth hostel card, and day trips can be transformed into holidays of exploration and adventure. Occasional camp sites would extend the scope of such activity. Nothing elaborate is needed, enough clear ground for a few tents, water supply, and simple toilet facilities.



Above: The Canal Society's stand with the theme of the 1970 Guildford Rally "Save the Basingstoke Canal". *Photos by June Sparey*

The pace of travel along the canal is slow and as you wind through the countryside there is time to appreciate the form and structure of the landscape, to notice the details. In addition to the wildlife of the surrounding area, the canals support their own fauna and flora and often the contrast gives them a special interest. To take a local example: the Basingstoke canal traverses wide areas of greensand. The soil is generally poor, rather acid, and typically supports conifers and heathland. Beside the canal a quite different community of plants flourish, including wild clematis and spindleberry trees and attractive marsh flowers not to be found elsewhere in the area. There are gay dragonflies and waterbeetles, some of them rare species, whilst the normal bird population is enhanced by waterbirds, such as grebes, reed-buntings and kingfishers. To the conservationist it is important that this derelict canal should not be allowed to die, for a great

variety of plants and animals would disappear with it, and such losses are permanent. Conservation does not mean 'put under a glass case labelled Do Not Touch'. It means a balanced use of our natural resources, so that the environment is not destroyed. In the case of canals the passage of boats is often welcome in reducing weeds and algae, which might overrun and choke the waterway. The survival of man, like other animals, depends on a healthy environment. Children have a keen interest in living creatures; we should do all we can to encourage this enthusiasm for nature study, and where better than along the canal-side? Watching communities of plants and animals that depend on our waterways, seeing their varied habitats and how they interact with each other; here is the basis for a new understanding of ourselves and our environment, a fascinating start to the science of ecology.

Canals and the Countryside cont.

Canals are a part of our countryside, its life, its traditions, its history. They are living monuments to the first generation of engineers, who founded the Industrial Revolution. Names like Telford and Brindley can be found in the history books, but to see their locks and bridges, the tunnels and aqueducts which they built is at once to realise the immense achievement of these men. Industrial archaeology is a new form of history, that lives, not in confined classrooms, but in the visible evidence of the past all around us. A hundred and fifty years ago the canals were the main arteries of commerce. They carried coal for industry, raw materials like china clay for the potteries, corn and bricks for the rapidly growing towns. Traditional narrowboats still ply their trade in some parts, but even where the canals are no longer in commercial use, the varied architecture of the wharves and warehouses beside them are reminders of their former importance.

Our waterways have undoubtedly had a useful past, but they could have an even more important future. As the working week becomes shorter and the population grows larger, the need for leisure facilities is becoming acute. Hundreds of miles of canal exist, some almost entirely neglected. Careful planning and management will be required if we are to make full use of them. Each section of the waterways has its own character and development cannot, and should not, be made indiscriminately along the length of the canals. At the same time, some parts of the network, within easy reach of towns, are the perfect basis for limited development as countryside parks. Information should be collected about each canal, its place in the countryside, the amenities available and other appropriate notes. Where club premises



exist, or are established, they could be used as display centres for such information, or as local 'museums' with maps and pictures, even short films or slide-shows to illustrate the wildlife and history of the canal. 'Development' need not mean ice-cream vans and soda-pop bottles. Indeed, brash commercialism would destroy the very qualities of the countryside that most of us value. The creation of 'countryside centres' is, perhaps, the best way of describing what has been sketched out here. There is no call for uniformity, some areas might emphasise boating or fishing, others might stress natural history and become living laboratories for our schoolchildren to further their interests in botany and zoology, even geology, geography and history. Nor would such centres, whatever their emphasis, cover more than a fraction of our waterways. Everywhere people should be actively encouraged to enjoy, without spoiling or destroying, their surroundings.

Imagination and restraint, these are the keynotes. The canals are already there, a priceless asset. Whether in the future they continue to serve us, or whether they are destroyed, neglected, or insensitively exploited, depends upon our awareness of the results of thoughtless action to-day, which could, so easily, lead to an unbearable tomorrow.

Dick Snell

The following obituary for Dick Snell was sent in by Flo Flemming, who says that Dick was like the brother she never had and helped her through some hard times.

It was so very sad to hear of the death of Dick Snell on 15th November. I've known him for nearly 60 years, a kind generous man who never lost his temper and always had many reasons when dealing with arguments.

I first met him when my then husband (*Jim Woolgar*) started the S&HCS with meetings in our house. Dick was one of the people attending the very first meeting, but when it came to choosing a committee, he said he definitely didn't want to be on it but would rather help working and telling

I remember his boat 'Nootnop' and it took me ages to realise it was pontoon in reverse – one of his jokes! (*Photos below courtesy of Howard Diamond*) He loved boating in a relaxed manner and years later made surprise visits by boat on holiday with Alison who became his wife. They were great company.



people about the Society. He was a persuasive man and at every public event, wherever it was, he always managed to introduce at least 3 new members and often many more.

Recently he talked about selling his boat but the last time I spoke to him, about 3 weeks ago, he was thinking of boating again in the summer. Alison saw him through all his years of illness. Never idle, he learnt how to make fenders and branched out to other ropework. We have a lovely fruit bowl he made us with rope. We phoned each other every 2 to 3 weeks and they even managed to visit a few times while having a boat built quite near us.

Our thoughts having watched his funeral on our laptop are with dear Alison.

Flo Fleming
Great Heywood

The Great Bottom Flash

There have been stories floating around for many years about flying boats being parked in Great Bottom Flash to deter any German invasion by such aircraft during WW2. Exactly what they were and what became of them was unclear.

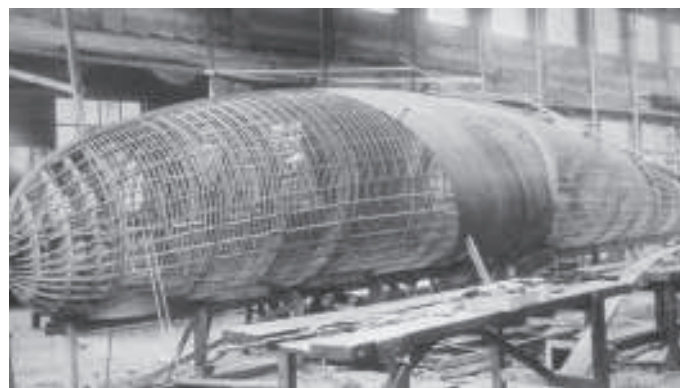
One of our founder members, Howard Diamond, recently lent me his slide collection to scan and, lo and behold, among them were some pictures of the remains of a flying boat being removed from the flash in 1960s by personnel from the RAF Museum. There was a suggestion that it was a Sopwith BAT boat.

A bit of Googling revealed that this was clearly not the case as these small WW1 flying boats had all be scrapped by the end of that war. More internet investigation, however, came up with another design, the English Electric Kingston flying boat. English Electric were to become famous post-WW2 for the Canberra bomber, the fabulous Lightning fighter and finally the cancelled TSR2, but they had a previous period of aircraft activity in the 1920s at Preston when they tried to get into the flying boat business.

In 1924 they built a small single-engined 3-seater biplane called the Ayr (*below*). This was a disaster that refused to take off and was rapidly abandoned.



Work concentrated on a larger twin-engined machine called the Kingston. It was intended to meet a specification for an anti-submarine and coastal patrol aircraft. Its hull was designed by a man called Linton Chorley Hope, an Olympic medal-winning sailor, and used boat building principles. Mahogany strips were wound around delicate spruce frames. This produced a shell on to which longitudinal laths were mounted to form the water-borne skin. The hull was then assembled with copper rivets and brass screws (*below*).



Despite the first prototype's maiden flight nearly ending in disaster when it struck some flotsam and almost sank, an order for 4 aircraft was received (*below*). One of these, N9712, was dismantled and its wooden hull was sent to the Royal Aircraft Establishment for structural testing, as was normal practice; N9712 was rebuilt with a metal hull. In the event, it was a metal hull that was tested at Farnborough and the wooden one presumably lay around



Flying Boat Mystery

somewhere on the airfield until it was dumped in Great Bottom Flash. The Kingston was not a great success and in 1926 English Electric gave up the aircraft business until 1944.

The remains were removed by a party from the RAF Museum in the 1960s and transported initially to the museum at Hendon. They then went to Cardington and Woodford and arrived at the BAe airfield at Warton in 2000; a report said that they were still there in 2009 awaiting transfer to the RAF Millom Museum, Cumbria. However that closed in 2010. The BAe Heritage website says that the remains were taken by the Lytham Heritage Group and I have made enquiries of them as to their current whereabouts, but have had no reply. The photos taken by Howard certainly show a structure that looks very like the one of the Kingston under construction.

According to a BAe Systems website, “One of the Kingston flying boats was turned into a house boat and moored on a river in the south of England, but when the owners finished with it they simply left it to rot away.

Our Company was alerted about it some years later and recovered the remains which were brought back to Warton. We were then approached in 2011 on behalf of Lytham Heritage Group to see if they could acquire the remains so that some archive pieces from the flying boat could be preserved as exhibit pieces for their exhibitions.

Permission was granted and three members of the group were allowed on site to recover the remains. Today they remain in safe keeping – a



permanent reminder of this important period in Lancashire’s military aircraft heritage”.

Was the “river in the south of England” actually the Basingstoke Canal?

A confused situation, not helped by the fact that there were several wooden flying boat designs in the 1920s, such as the Fairey Felixstowe and Supermarine Southampton, some of whose hulls ended up being used as houseboats or as rather similar looking fragmentary exhibits in various museums. They all looked rather alike and there is also a suggestion that there was more than one flying boat in Great Bottom Flash.

Anybody know anything more?

Membership

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT

As we head into Spring our Membership stands at a little over 1000, over 150 more than this time last year. This is great news and probably reflects the impact and promotion of the new web site – which offers clear information about the society and an easy way to join. The Membership team are aiming to increase this to 2000 by the end of the year, because more members means a bigger community, more resources to achieve improvement projects and a greater voice with our partners to help keep the canal alive. You can help us to achieve this goal, by asking friends, neighbours and relatives to also join the society. If every member were to find one or two new members each, we would easily achieve our goal! Please direct them to the website, where they can sign up in a few easy steps: www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk/join.

Those that are used to renewing their membership at this time of year should already have received their renewal notice. This now goes out

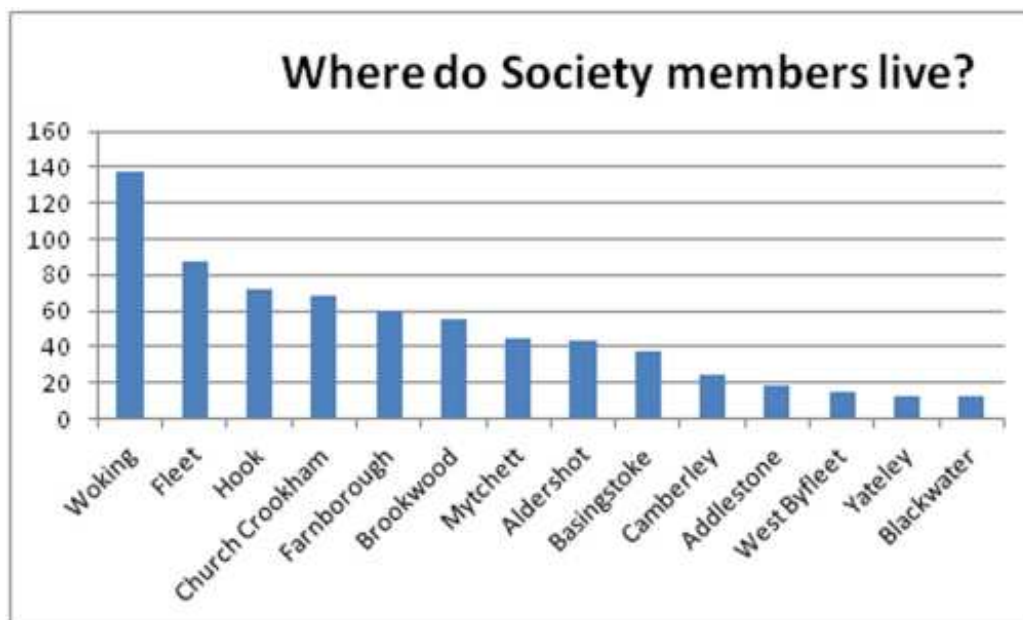
automatically from our on-line membership system. If you have yet to receive an email please check your junk/spam folders. If you normally pay by Standing Order then you need take no further action – but please be aware that we cannot see from our bank statements that you have a Standing Order in place. I know some of those that have paid on-line have had a few problems with the new system so many apologies if you have been affected by this. We are still learning about it!!

And finally we are beginning to use the members database to generate demographic data. This graph is a snapshot of geographic locations.

The recent survey [reported opposite] gives a lot more information about Canal users.

Thank you for your continued support.

Andy Beale
Membership Secretary



Survey feedback

From Ruth Hinton, Membership Team

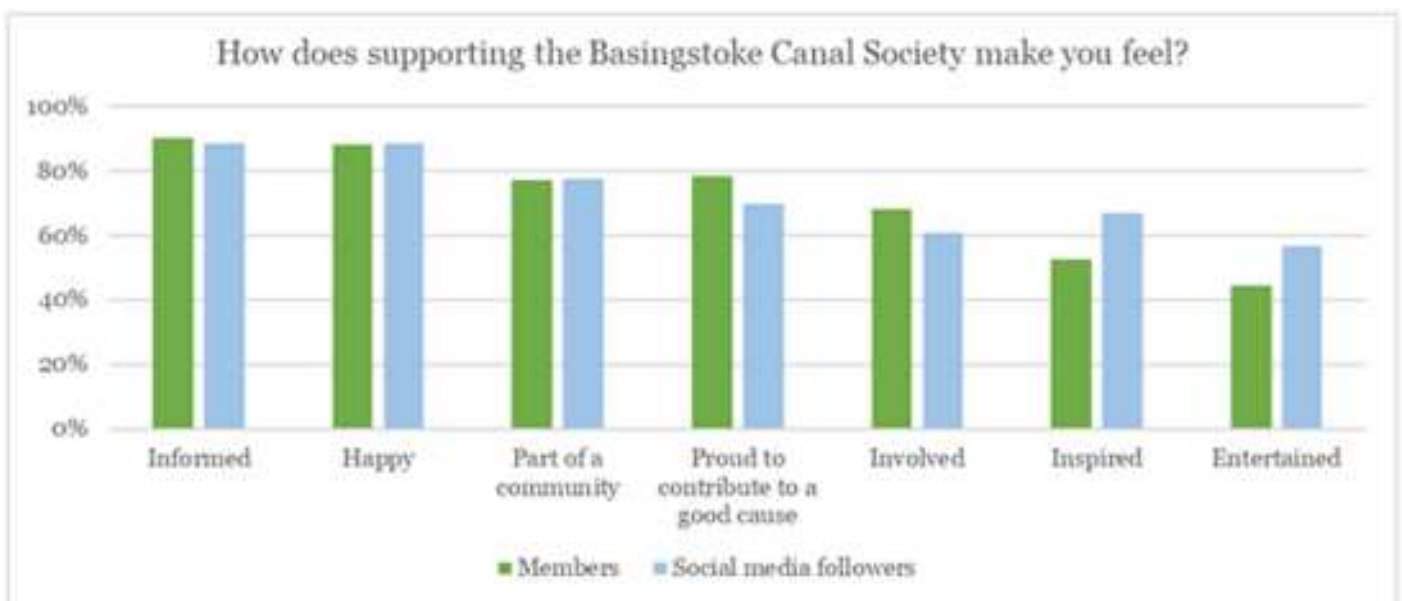
Thank you to all our kind members who, along with readers of the Bulletin and many of our followers on social media, filled in our online survey. We had 289 responses in total. It's so valuable to have your views, which will inform the Society's plans and communications.

It was really interesting to see that, while 82% of members live within 5 miles of the canal, we also have 6% of members who live 20 miles or more from the canal. We hope these more distant members amongst you are enjoying being part of the Society, to keep in touch with canal news and the local community.

Amongst the canal's supporters (which includes Society members, readers of the bulletin and people who follow the Society on social media), the most popular reasons for visiting the canal are walking (92%), to enjoy the scenery (95%) and to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere (92%).

The next most popular reasons are to look at birds/wildlife (73%) and to look at the historical features (70%). 67% of supporters tend to visit the canal with their partner, 65% visit alone (with some overlap: 35% of people do both). 22% of supporters visit the canal with children – which includes parents and grandparents, and we're all very much looking forward to when we can visit the canal with our families again later this year.

It was great to hear confirmation that the canal is a special and favourite location for our supporters. 73% of supporters say the canal is their favourite (10%) or one of their favourite (63%) outdoor places to visit. The most popular reasons for choosing to visit the canal instead of other outdoor places are: the pleasure of being by the water (96%), pleasant views and scenery (95%), because it's a quiet and peaceful area (87%) and because of the variety of attractive wildlife (77%). It is also chosen over other



Survey feedback

outdoor places for being convenient (85%) and because it is free to visit (82%).

We were really pleased to read that supporting the Society makes our members feel informed, happy, part of a community and proud to contribute to a good cause. People who follow us on social media additionally feel entertained and inspired – so if you're not already following us, please do find us on Facebook (@basingstokecs) or Instagram (basingstoke_canal_society) for more news, photos, historical stories and the occasional mystery!

And while most new members find the Society from Google searches or local media, it would be great to also reach more new members through word of mouth. So, if you have a friend, neighbour or relative who enjoys the canal but is not yet a member of the Society, why not tell them about us and encourage them to join.

The survey also included information about what members would like to see from the Society in the future, and we will be looking into all of this insight with the Committee members in the coming months.

Sales

Our new website went live last autumn, bringing with it the ability for customers to pay for things like books, Christmas cards, calendars etc online. As we are now living in an age where a large proportion of the population no longer has a cheque book, this had a rapid and dramatic effect.

Fiona Shipp's Paddle Guide to the Basingstoke Canal was an immediate best seller and the Rambles book has also done well. We printed 300 calendars and only 10 are unsold. 20 of the double pack of tea towels went, together with over 700 Christmas cards. In all, we have sold nearly 400 of our books. We are planning to have an A4 size calendar for 2022.

As a result, profits from sales since the website opened now stand at over £3400.

We are looking to expand our sales range of Basingstoke Canal items this year with perhaps a jigsaw puzzle, coffee mug and T-shirt or polo shirt. We also hope to get an updated map of the canal by Heron Maps, like the one that used to be produced by GeoProjects.

Our 8 book titles cover the canal's history and geography, in the form of guides, so we now hope to turn our attention to its natural history with books about its flora and fauna. If this appeals, keep an eye on the Sales page on our website at basingstoke-canal.org.uk/shop

BCS information



The Bulletin is now up to Issue 48.

If you want to keep up with the latest news about the canal, please click on the Friends button on the Society website at

www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk

To join the Society, please contact the Membership Secretary, Andy Beale, whose contact details are below.

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The Canal Society has introduced a new Email project under which anyone who needs one can have a personal and/or an organisational email address. If you need to contact someone, their addresses are likely to be in the form
elvis.presley@basingstoke-canal.org.uk or
singer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

General Canal Society contact number: 07305 340547

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Canal Authority Internet Website: www.basingstoke-canal.co.uk

Pennywort control

