



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 274 Summer 2022





Editorial

What a brilliant idea from the JP11 team! A 4am trip to see the sunrise on Midsummer Day. It was rewarded with perfect weather to judge by some of the amazing photos.

The only time I ever did such a thing was the day after the canal re-opened in May 1991, when the old JP set off from Frimley Lodge Park at 4.30am leading the procession down to the River Wey.

I remember sitting on a balance beam at Lock 22 with a mug of tea and a bacon sandwich and the sun just coming up and thinking that I now understood why there were so many folk songs that started out "As I walked out on a May morning..."

I must remember to book myself on next year's JP11 trip and hope for good weather again and perhaps enough water to go up to the castle.

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The latest meeting of the Canal Joint Management Committee on 15 July had a new Chairman, Cllr Marisa Heath. Despite representing Englefield Green, not exactly at the centre of the canal, she had clearly done her homework and ran the meeting firmly and efficiently.

Rushmoor have decided to halve their contribution to the Canal budget, apparently taking the line that if Surrey Heath never pay their full amount, why should they. This line of reasoning is one that the Canal Society has

been fearing for many years and one can understand the frustration of the Councils who have been paying, but following one rotten example does nothing to help preserve the canal. The Society has written to the leader of Rushmoor and I understand that a meeting has been arranged to discuss the whole matter of funding.

Cllr Jonathan Glen, the ex-JMC Chairman offered some interesting thoughts about possible alternative sources of funding for the canal. After the JMC meeting, I asked him if he would like to flesh these out in writing with a piece for the BCN. He seemed pleased to be invited to do this and wrote himself a reminder. Unfortunately I have not received anything, so it is difficult to judge whether his ideas have any substance.

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It is pretty clear that all finances, both public and private, are pretty strained at the moment, so arguing about which Council should pay what is likely to be a bit fruitless.

Perhaps we do need to look for another source of income for the canal. Given the billions of pounds spent on advertising every year and the vast number of people who visit the canal, maybe we should be seeking sponsorship for the locks in the same way as roundabouts are often sponsored by local firms.

No large hoardings but a small sign saying that a company is helping to look after the canal would surely be acceptable and would boost their green credentials that are so desirable these days.

Cover Photo. Midsummer sunrise
(Photo by Sue Peers)

Chairman's report

We have always loved our local Basingstoke Canal but I think it is fair to say that over the past few years we have increasingly realised that this is an absolutely gem and so valuable to all of us. Indeed, it has been recognised as a world class waterway by independent reviewers.

Yes, we want to ensure that the canal is navigable by all craft, both powered and paddled, and actively seen being used by boats (and fulfilling its original purpose). However, in addition, the local community clearly sees this canal as a most important 'go to' place for exercise, sport, relaxation, enjoying nature - and frankly the wonderful heritage of the canal.

We have obviously had the severe challenge of the lack of water and on which the editor will comment elsewhere in the newsletter. Just to say this will continue to be an issue, worsened by what appear to be inevitable changes in climate and all parties continue to look for solutions. That said, this is not easy as people have been looking for solutions ever since the canal was opened in 1794. There are, however, one or two hopeful signs such as the possible reinstatement of the abstraction pump at Frimley and the long-promised cessation of water abstraction at Greywell by the Water Company; neither will happen quickly though.

So what am I building up to? Quite simply with pressures on funding, there is an increased need for us as a community to help ensure we protect

the canal and work with the council owners to ensure that they have adequate funding and support the canal - and that they realise how much their communities value and need it.

The issue of funding is currently of particular concern. Essentially the monies from the councils have not increased over recent years in line with inflation and everyone needs to be aware that an actual reduction would have a serious impact on the canal and the benefits that we will get from it, notably sport, health and relaxation.

Volunteers' effort is amazing and vital to the upkeep of the canal but they can only do so much.

We are in touch with the councils to remind all parties of the real benefits to the local community and we will keep you advised of any positive outcome. In the meantime, it does stress the need for everyone to support the Canal Society so please encourage your friends and family to join as members. And let's not forget the donations and legacies that can help the canal going forward.

And why not write to your local councillor to remind them how important the canal is to you?

50p a head per annum is about all it takes to keep it going - is that too much to ask?

Ian Moore

Guidance for Canal Users

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL AUTHORITY

Visitors to the Basingstoke Canal are being advised to take extra care as a result of the lower water levels on some sections of waterway which follows an extended period of dry weather.

Councillor Marisa Heath, Chair of the Joint Management Committee that oversees the running of the Canal, said: “After one of the driest periods for over a century, parts of Basingstoke Canal are now experiencing significant water shortages, especially the sections between Aldershot and Brookwood. We want to ensure that visitors to the canal are aware of the impacts of this drought, and take extra care where necessary. This will allow everyone to continue to enjoy the benefits of this outdoor attraction safely, whilst helping us to safeguard the wide variety of wildlife that rely on the canal.”

The guidance over this time is:

- Please keep to the towpath and off the beaches forming at the side of the canal – avoid the margins, which can be deceptively muddy in some areas, and this also helps to protect wildlife.*
- Please keep dogs under close control or on a lead – wildfowl have a smaller area to take shelter if startled, and your dog could become trapped in the mud.*
- Keep yourselves and dogs out of the water.*
- Water can appear much deeper than it is posing a risk of injury. There may be hidden objects much closer to the surface than normal.*
- Stirring up mud reduces oxygen levels for fish and other wildlife.*
- Warm conditions promote the growth of algae – this could be dangerous to your dog*

Over this dry period, the canal’s team is working with the Angling Association and Environment Agency to monitor fish welfare.

In other measures, all navigation by powered and unpowered craft using the waterway between Aldershot and Brookwood have now been suspended.

For the latest updates, please check Basingstoke Canal’s Facebook page.

The statement above was sent out via the usual social media and together with a BBC main television news report may have given some members of the public the impression that all boating on the canal in Surrey was being suspended. In fact, thanks to the back-pumping schemes, water levels in Woking can be maintained, so operation of the Canal Society’s trip boat *Kitty* is continuing as normal.

Water!

Ever since William Jessop decided to design the Basingstoke Canal without a summit-level reservoir, water supply for the canal in the summer months has been a problem.

However, due to a combination of factors, 2022 looks set to be a bit of a record breaker in this respect.

The embankment in Crookham between Poulter's and Chequers Bridges has been a source of some concern ever since the collapse in July 1962 of the culvert that allows the River Hart to pass under the canal. The flow of water when "the bottom fell out of the canal" (*below*)



took with it a lot of the canal bed which resulted in this section being known as Crookham Deeps.

The culvert was repaired and the breach was filled in, but over the years an increasingly serious leak developed on the offside bank nearby. Some years ago contractors put in some wooden piles and nicospan mesh and backfilled it but this failed to stop the leak. A plan was drawn up to do a more thorough job that was to involve installing a bentonite blanket, as was

used on the Ash Embankment. Work was originally scheduled for the winter of 2020/1 but got delayed for one reason or another. The contractors finally arrived early this year, as we reported in BCN Issue 272. Dams were installed at Poulter's and Chequers Bridges by a sub-contractor and attempts were made to drain the section, with somewhat limited success.

Exactly what transpired is something that nobody seems keen to talk about, probably for legal reasons, but the contractors quit the job. It was said that they could not find the bottom of the canal. The dams were removed and the section refilled and the leak started up again at a rate that caused the BCA great concern. A decision was made therefore to lower the level of the Hampshire pound by 150mm (6 inches to us oldies) which reduced the leakage rate to an acceptable level while alternative methods of embankment repair were discussed and the necessary permissions put in place.

In July a contract was placed with Rob Locatelli's River and Canal Services company to do a temporary repair that would hopefully allow the pound to be returned to its normal level, while consideration is given to an alternative permanent solution.

Rob's men arrived in the first week of August and brought in a pontoon on which a small excavator could operate. This avoided damage to the bank and meant that the section could stay in water with no need for dams.

Work is currently proceeding rapidly with the first job being to rip out the old piles and mesh.

Water?



Once this was done, new piles and mesh have been installed and the whole lot will be filled with puddled clay and compacted. It is anticipated that the work will be done by the end of the month.



Unfortunately all this has coincided with one of the driest summers since 1976. The BCA's main aim has been to try to maintain the minus 150mm level on the Hampshire pound to allow boating to continue, albeit with some difficulty.

The Deepcut and Brookwood flights were closed on 22 June and two days later Fiona Shipp announced that Ash Lock would be closed and caulked. This effectively sacrificed

the top pound in Surrey and power boating was suspended there on 11 July.

However, with no rain, levels continued to drop and in an unprecedented move, even unpowered boating was stopped on 15 August because of safety concerns; it was becoming impossible for canoeists to get close enough to the bank to get in and out safely (*see page 24*).

The good news however is this sacrifice has not been in vain and the water level in Hampshire has remained remarkably constant, presumably because the Greywell springs have continued to do their job, although the Broad Oak stream has dried up.

The JPII trips to King John's castle have been suspended because passage through Swan cutting is not possible, but the eastward trips to Barley Mow have fortunately been able to continue. Galleon Marine's business will have been affected a bit by would-be hirers being restricted to Hampshire.

Kitty



As we approach the midway point in the year *Kitty* and her crew have delivered an outstanding achievement. We are on track to have carried well over 1,000 passengers by the end of July, with a forecast of 400 passengers (our best ever) for the month of July alone.

As in previous years we are seeing more passengers from overseas taking cruises on *Kitty*, all these passengers are spending money in the Borough to a greater or lesser extent.

To date we have had over 60 charters, including passengers from local care homes, from local businesses, or just people who have something special to celebrate.

The two innovations that we started this year, cream tea cruises in conjunction with *Kiwi and Scott* and the Lightbox Late cruises have been booked up solidly.

We have welcomed 3 new crew members to the *Kitty* crew, and they are joining *Team Kitty*, Woking's number 1 visitor attraction!

The biggest news is the Canal Society have signed and paid for a build slot with Brayzel Boats of Preston for the all electric *Kitty II*, with a delivery date of Q3/4 next year. The project team will be working with the builder to ensure a boat that satisfies our requirements through the process from the detailed design stage through to delivery.

In parallel we are working with SCC, WBC and Whitbread to agree cable routes to the power points at Bridge Barn and Woking Town Wharf.

Lastly on a sad note, another of the original *Kitty* crew members has sadly died. Richard Kelly was a stalwart in the early days when the operation was set up. Our thoughts are with his wife Anabel and his family.

John Pinkerton II



Midsummer Morn Cruise on the JP II 2022

Little did the volunteers who plan the themed cruises for the John Pinkerton II think that, when they had the wonderful idea of putting on a Midsummer Morn cruise leaving Colt Hill, Odiham at 4am on Tuesday 21 June 2022, they would be able to find 40 people mad enough to get there at that time in the morning!

But.....they did and what a stunning success it was. Hot drinks, croissants and orange juice were served to all on board and the atmosphere

was amazing. Peace, tranquility, mist over the fields, the gentle buzz of voices and the sun slowing coming up through the trees, it was truly an event for your bucket list, and hopefully will become a firm favourite among the themed trips aboard in future years.

Make a note in your diary - 21 June 2023, or better still, in your copy of the 2023 Basingstoke Canal Calendar (*opposite*)

2023 Calendar



Basingstoke Canal Calendar 2023

Our Photo Competition this year attracted over 200 entries from more than 50 photographers despite the fact that we brought forward the closing date to the end of July in order to allow more time for sales, particularly on the JP11 whose Midsummer Morn trip stars on the cover.

The wall calendar is the same A4 format as the 2022 one with one month per page and the price will also be the same at £8 including postage and packaging. They can be ordered through the Society web page, but they will also be on sale on the JP11 and at the Chobham talks.

We will be running the photo competition again next year, so why not take advantage of the

remaining months of 2022 to shoot your entry?

This year's winners (who get a free calendar as well as their name in print with their photo) include a few who have won previously, because they continue to take super pictures of the canal, but we also have a lot of new entrants, so there is plenty of scope for new talent.

Just remember - landscape format (40% wider than high), in colour and good enough quality to allow us to print at A4 size. Try not to take recognisable photos of people unless you can get their written permission for us to use them.

Volunteers

Corporate Days

We hosted a team of 14 from Poly.com who helped us remove litter from the canal and towpath from Lock 9 down to Spantons Wharf in Woking. We used the Surrey workboat to remove litter from the canal as well as picking litter along the towpath.

Very few of the Poly.com team were local, some having come from Bath, Brighton, Chesterfield etc to name a few places, all to have fun in the sun cleaning litter out of our world class canal.

They were working with BCS volunteers, so it was quite a large team in total. The result was 11 sacks of rubbish, 2 bikes, 1 traffic cone and a section of the cast iron railings from Chertsey Road Bridge, that are presumably the property of Surrey County Council. It took 4 crew on the boat to get that out of the silt and into the boat.



Kitty was engaged as a watertaxi to help bring the volunteers back from Spantons Wharf to the Bridge Barn.

Many thanks to all those who helped out.

Ian Moore

Weed removal

We have also had teams of corporate volunteers from Skanska and BOC doing a splendid job of using the BCA's work boat to remove the dreaded Floating Pennywort from the Woking pound.

Judging by reports, this is a national problem and the Basingstoke Canal seems to be doing better than most thanks to the efforts of volunteers.

The scale of the problem is clear judging by the mountain of weed collected by this group, seen here about to disembark and probably go for some well-earned refreshments at the coffee boat at Woking wharf.



The Canal Society is considering the purchase of a second weed cutter boat. A German design, this is equipped not only with a cutter bar but also with a conveyor belt that allows it to load the weed into its hold and then discharge it later onto the bank. Only snag is that it is in Galway where it has been used for harvesting seaweed, but members of the Society Work Party are currently in Ireland inspecting it before any purchase decision is taken. It would probably be based in Surrey and the Wey Navigation might also be a customer for its use if we bought it.



Work Party

Berky Weed Harvester 6540



Following on from the previous page, first reports on the weedcutter seem encouraging. The boat is out of the water, so most of the mechanisms can be tested out and the hull inspected. It will need new anodes for fresh water rather than the sea, but these are simple to fit. The hull is 10m by 3m and unladen draft is 0.5m. Simple calculations indicate that with 4 tonnes of weed on board this would only increase to about 0.6m, so even the Basingstoke should not be a problem. The cab can be lowered to allow passage under low bridges. Cooling for the Perkins diesel engine is via the flat bottom and there are 2 hydraulic driven propellers.

The manufacturer claims to be the world's leading maker of this type of equipment.

Odiham – the former conifer site

All the logs have now gone and the cordoned off area at Odiham has been restored as car park.

Mary Smith's bench at Up Nately



This has been removed for some major restoration. The timber had to be sanded back to bare wood and the metal work needs a lot of attention. There are two dodgy wooden slats which may need replacing, though matching the timber could be difficult. This project was postponed on the last working party as only a minimal group was run because of the weather conditions.

Information Boards

The last two information boards, Odiham and Frimley Lodge Park, were installed on the second July working party.

Brookwood Country Park.

The County's plans for refurbishing the moorings involved a lot of cutting of the fibre grid decking, which being a composite material is very difficult and rather environmentally unfriendly. A site visit has been done and we are drawing up alternative plans so it is not necessary to cut anywhere near as much fibre grid.

Events

The Events Team's busy year has continued with a presence at the Fleet Carnival at the beginning of July and our usual appearance at the Dogmersfield Flower Show. This is a very traditional country event (my sister-in-law described it as "Very Midsummer Murders") which managed to put on its usual sunny weather. For some reason, the actual number of visitors seemed lower than usual but we sold quite a lot of stuff, talked to a lot of people and got some kind donations. And the Editor's winnings in the bread making and photography competitions paid for cups of tea all round.

The Mikron Theatre Company paid their annual visit on 16 August with a new venue at the Mill House in North Warnborough. With thunder storms forecast, the stage was set up in the barn there and about 70 people crammed themselves in. However, as there were many more wanting to come in and clear skies overhead, the decision was made to move outdoors and about 100 people were able to watch a very entertaining production about the Women's Institute.



The main event still to come is the Odiham Raft Race on Sunday 4th September.

14 entries have been received so far and will be setting off in pairs from Colt Hill, starting at 1pm. The turning point has been moved a bit eastwards to shorten the course, which ends back at Colt Hill. After the Raft Race, any survivors will be invited to take part in a tug-of-war competition in the winding hole.

Prizes will be presented by the Mayor of Basingstoke.

The final outing for the Events Team will be the Wey Festival at Dapdune Wharf in Guildford. This will be open from 11am to 5pm on Sunday 17th September.

The Events Team has represented the Society at a record number of local happenings this year, largely thanks to Heather Sloane's drive and organisational ability, but thanks are also due to all the other members of the team who have helped to fly the flag for the Society.

Houseboats

Houseboats have been part of the Basingstoke Canal scene for over 60 years, and possibly even longer than that judging by this 1917 photo of what was then known as Wheatsheaf Bridge in Woking.



However, the largest community of more than forty converted narrow boats was first established at Woodham in 1959. A smaller number of floating homes was moored above Arthur's Bridge, Woking and two houseboats have been moored above Hermitage Bridge since the early 1960s.

The idea of buying up disused commercial boats and converting them into homes was the brainchild of an enterprising barber from Balham, Mr Philip Dresman, who teamed up with a businessman, Mr John Frawlaw, to start Floating Homes Ltd. on the Basingstoke Canal.

The Company bought a number of 80-year old narrow boats for £5 each lying on the Coventry Canal. Some of the 70-ft long craft had broken backs - these were cut in half and fitted with false transoms to make two homes. The Company had the option to buy as many as 200 boats but finally converted and fitted out 42 homes.

Some of the former working boats used were the

fine-lined traditional butties from the fleet of the Samuel Barlow Coal Co. Ltd. of Birmingham, still decorated in their traditional painted livery. Others were the less shapely 'Joey' boats, without living accommodation, used as day boats throughout the Birmingham system for carrying coal.

They were brought down the Grand Union Canal to Brentford using Boy Scouts on holiday and any single working motor boats that were prepared to tow one or two down through the system. Six at a time were towed from Brentford to Weybridge by the McAnn towing company of Putney. The firm consisted of Rodney McAnn, his father and grandfather, and on the first few trips all three manned the tug and crewed the string of six narrowboat hulls breasted up behind. On arrival at Thames Lock, Weybridge, they were locked through two at a time and then continued on up the River Wey to the bottom of the Basingstoke Canal at Woodham. This was quite a slow process and took all day because only two boats could be locked through at a time, and the tug. So each lock required four passes to get them all through. As soon as they reached the junction with the canal, they were just pushed into the entrance and left (*Below*).



Houseboats

The boats were then fitted out with cabins and interiors by a team of carpenters working near Scotland Bridge and we have a short Pathé News video showing them in action.



The video also shows them sawing one of the boats in half to produce a couple of rather bijou houseboats.

With housing in short supply following the second world war, there was a good demand for the £2,000 houseboats, especially since they were close to Woking and West Byfleet commuting stations for London.

One of the first to move in was Mr Oliver Hibburd, an airline steward (*Right*), who saw an advertisement for the houseboats in Dalton's Weekly. The idea appealed to him so much that he persuaded the Company to sell their 'showboat', named Joan Marshall after the general manager of the New Basingstoke Canal Company, owners of the waterway. Originally moored at Woodham - first at Scotland Bridge and then at Lock 3 - Mr Hibburd decided to follow a neighbouring boat Pandora up to Hermitage Bridge. While Pandora was towed up by Mrs Marshall's cart horse Captain, Mr Hibburd bow hauled his 70-ft long home, with

the help of Les Foster (who became one of Surrey's canal rangers), the six miles westward.

As well as the houseboats that were being built, other boats occasionally turned up looking for a home, including the famous *Adelina*, owned by David Horsfall. This passed to Tim and Liz Dodwell when they got married. Despite the rather grim circumstances suggested by this photo, they still are!



By the early 1960s plans to moor houseboats at ten sites up the canal to Hermitage Bridge, ran



Houseboats

into trouble. In December 1963 the Minister of Housing and Local Government ruled that planning permission was needed: permanent mooring constituted “a material change in the use of the land” the Minister decreed.

Moorings established at the three sites in use today were upheld, but the restriction put an end to Mr Dresman’s wild but fascinating schemes which included a floating shop to cater for the houseboat owners.

The departure of Floating Homes Ltd. left the houseboat owners without water and electricity supplies which the Company had provided. So, in 1964, residents set up their own service company, Canal Mooring Services Ltd. in which each boat owner at Arthur’s Bridge and Woodham had a share. But it was very much a case of self help, as new arrival at the time, Tim Dodwell, Mrs Marshall’s son-in-law, recalls -

“One of the first jobs on moving into our new home, on returning from our honeymoon, was to dig a trench for a new water pipe!”

The houseboats were the last craft to use the locks before the decaying gates finally became inoperative in the mid 1960s.

A small sleeper stage was built by Waterways Properties Ltd (an associate of the New Basingstoke Canal Company that owned the canal) in the bed of the canal between Locks 3 and 4 at Woodham and this was used as a makeshift dry dock. Boats were taken above Lock 3 three or four at a time and the pound was then filled to about 4 feet deep. Boats were positioned over the stage one at a time and the water level was lowered to drop them onto it,

where they could be worked on with relative ease (*Below*).



Eventually the houseboats were moored in the vicinity of Slococks Nursery, which is now the site of the Bridge Barn restaurant, and between Locks 1 and 3 on both sides of the canal. In many places, certainly in the vicinity of Arthur’s Bridge and from Scotland Bridge down to Lock 1, the towpath could not be used by the general public as it was enclosed as part of the houseboat gardens.

By 1988 although many were still lived in, a number had fallen into disrepair, and with the imminent re-opening of the canal to navigation, all the houseboats had to pass canalworthiness inspections which reduced the Woodham community to 22 boats. Those that failed were broken up or burned, while others were effectively “re-hulled”.

One of the houseboats was made famous in waterways circles by David Horsfall who wrote a book about life aboard *Adelina* with his family in the early 1960s (*Well worth a read if you can find a copy*). However *Adelina* was allowed to become derelict and she too had to be burned.

Houseboats

As part of the preparations for the re-opening of the canal, the remaining boats at Arthur's Bridge were relocated in 1990 to new moorings at Woodham, below Lock 3, while the *Joan Marshall* and *Pandora* remained at Hermitage.

New canalside services were provided, and while dredging and piling dramatically altered this end of the canal from a sleepy backwater to working waterway status, renovation was better than gradual decay.

Management of the houseboat and land agency matters are carried out on behalf of Surrey County Council and all income from the houseboat moorings goes direct to the County Council. The Canal Authority does not benefit in any way from the boats being moored on the canal and does not appear to have any control over them.

Since the canal re-opened in 1991, several of the boats have succumbed to the effects of 40 years absence from a dry dock, but there have been a number of new arrivals. These mostly bear little resemblance to any type of canal boat and appear to be designed purely to circumvent planning regulations.



A BBC programme in the DIY Rescue series

dealt with efforts to do up one of these floating homes. Unfortunately these did not prevent it sinking some time later (*Below*).



This is not the only boat to suffer this fate but some years ago when leases came up for renewal, Surrey County Council decided to get things under control. Boats were required to have a Boat Safety Certificate, which in turn necessitated an out-of-water inspection of the hull. The nearest dry dock is at Pyrford marina.

This put paid to the two storey constructions that were unable to pass under bridges as well as anything that was unable to obtain a certificate.

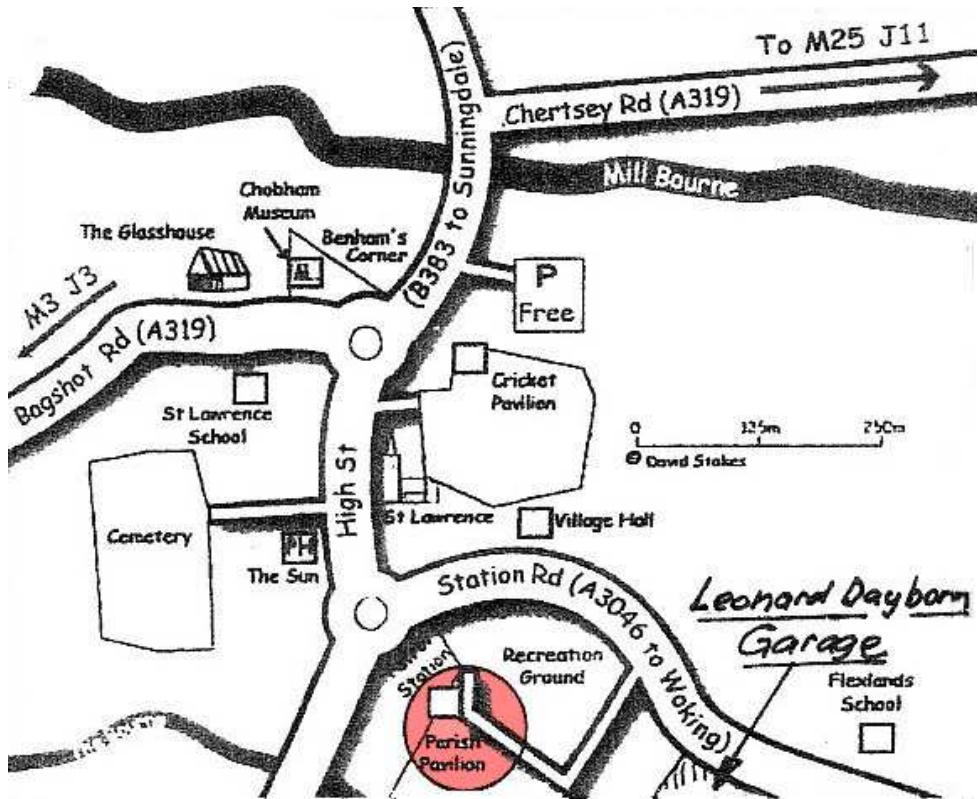
For those who remain, such as *Dragonfly* below, the bottom end of the Basingstoke Canal continues to provide a unique life style and connection with the past.



Events

Chobham talks

The Covid numbers are indeed dropping so I have decided to go ahead and resume Chobham Talks from October onwards. The meeting starting time will be 8pm in each case and the venue is the same as before, the Parish Pavillion on the A3046 Station Road in Chobham..



The programme for Q4 2022 is as follows.

Wednesday October 19th. Our chairman, Ian Moore will open the series with his talk “Setting up and running a new trip boat operation: a personal view”.

Wednesday November 16th. Phil Horton, The Sustainability Manager of the Royal Yachting Association will speak to us. His subject will be “Sustainable Inland waterways”.

Our Wednesday December 21st the meeting will be a film evening with no speaker. We will show some archive film from the early years of the restoration of the Basingstoke Canal. It will be a reminder of the sterling work done by volunteers many years ago when the future of the canal was very uncertain. We hope that some members who may have taken part will share their memories with us.

Many thanks to Graham Deavin and Mark Coxhead for getting this very popular series of meetings back up and running again. Entry is free and open to the public but we do have a raffle and a collection to help pay for the hire of the hall.



What was it like to live on the waterways?

Many years ago, around 1760, canals were dug out and constructed for transporting goods on barges across the country.

The Basingstoke canal was opened in 1794. Timber, flour and chalk were the main items taken to London. Barges returned with coal and fertiliser. It was a very busy and hard life for the thousands of men and women who did this work. The pay was not very good and so to earn more money they had to work faster, often travelling through the night.

On some canals families began to live aboard the boats with their husbands or dads. This saved them money as they didn't have to pay for a house on the land. Only the captain of the boat got paid but the whole family helped with the jobs on the boat. The quicker the boat got to the destination, the sooner they were paid for their load.

The women on board did the cooking, laundry and cleaning and looked after the children. Little children often sat on the roof in fine weather, fastened with a harness to prevent them slipping into the water. As they got older they had more freedom but had to be watched carefully. The canal was a dangerous place and many people couldn't swim.

Boat children didn't have much time to play, as from around 5 years old they began helping to steer the boat. They were leading the horse by about 7 years old, and working locks by age 12 was not uncommon.

Most children hardly went to school at all, only for about three weeks a year. Sometimes they would go to school for half a day or occasionally up to a week, depending how long their boats were tied up.

You can find out more about their lives, such as what they ate, what they wore and how things changed over the years on the Canal and River Explorers topic pack

[31089-life-on-the-english-waterways.pdf](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/31089-life-on-the-english-waterways.pdf)(canalrivertrust.org.uk)

There are lots of interesting facts and old pictures to see.

You can also visit the Canal Centre at Mytchett to take a look at a section of the inside of an old barge. There are many old pictures displayed there, along with local historic information about the canal.

Letters

From Professor John A Davis MD FRCP

Dear Editor

Apropos your article on Trees, as a very long term member of the Society dating back to the 1960s, I would like to support your proposal to cut back the trees now lining much of the canal's banks which though beautiful keep the water that used to be clear in shade with the result that both plant and animal life are limited compared to what I remember as a boy. Then one could observe shoals of fish, crayfish, dragonflies, water boatmen, water voles and a variety of flowers including primroses, wood anemones, orchids, cowslips, bullrushes, flags, etc, and kingfishers, dabchicks, coots, swans, wagtails as well as moorhens and mallard as at present and listen to relays of nightingales from our boat when one rowed from Crookham to Odiham. I would like to think that before I die the canal might be restored as a haven of natural history as it once was.

Yours faithfully

John A Davis

Nice to hear from Professor Davis again and good to know that he supports moves to move the tree line back a bit. The trees have been doing their best to do this themselves with over 100 falling down already this year!

I don't know when John was last able to revisit the haunts of his youth, but I think he might be pleasantly surprised these days. Sadly, the water voles fell victim to the mink that were let loose, but all the other plants and animals are still to be found on the canal. One of the winning entries for our photo competition this year is Wendy Almond's great picture of a kingfisher at New Haw.



One of our future projects is to produce a few booklets about the natural history of the canal - flowers, birds, etc.

Online with the Basingstoke Canal Society - www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk

Members and the public have given us some great feedback about our new(ish) website. Whether you want to find out what's going on today or about the history and restoration, the website has it all.

For members specifically, there is a membership section where, after you've logged in using your username and password you can access links for members boat trips, members news and shop discounts (including a great 15% discount at Cotswold Outdoors). Also, if you're interested in becoming a volunteer or wish to renew your membership, all the information is easily accessible.

To access the membership section, just click on MEMBER ACCOUNT on the top right corner of the home page. If you've forgotten your login details, don't worry, you can reset them online.

For members and non-members alike Our Activities & Wellbeing section has some great articles about activities and events connected to the Canal, including a list of just about every pub nearby! For those more energetic perhaps walking or paddling routes, or a yoga session may be of interest.

Whatever you do on our website, from booking a boat trip, making a donation or just reading the latest news, please visit often and you're sure to find something different every time! Just visit www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk

A typical idea for an afternoon is the walk suggested overleaf on page 22.



Walking



Paddling



Camping



Sports



For kids



Explore

Membership

Membership numbers have dropped off a little recently, to just below 1000, but it is pleasing to see 14 new members in July and 6 so far in August. It suggests that some members are not renewing so I'd be interested to hear of thoughts as to why that might be. So a warm welcome to the following who have joined us recently:

Derek Stephens of Fleet
Caroline Hassanein of Woking
Marcus Bawtree of Frimley
Chris Bard of Woking
Katherine Mockeridge of Fleet
Simon & Sue Carter of Woking
Neil Rorie of Fleet
John Geering of Fleet
Tina Dixon of Frimley
Claire Buxton of Camberley
Matt Pickard of Camberley

Ross Maclagan of Camberley
Peter Still of Aldershot
Andrew Smart of Church Crookham
Mark Crook of Aldershot
John Curtis of Sandhurst
Roger Martinez of Ash Vale
William Lynn of Woking
Steve Olszak of Woking
Howard Thomson of Camberley
Charlotte Rodgers of Aldershot
Tash Sperrey of Bracknell

Andy Beale *Membership Secretary*

Basingstoke Canal Circular

★★★★★ 3 reviews · Hiking Route · United Kingdom



Responsible for this content
Tim Gordon

3D Preview

Reviews: ★★★★★ 3

Difficulty: moderate

Distance: 13.8 km

Duration: 3:26 h

THE ROUTE DETAILS TURN-BY-TURN DIRECTIONS GETTING THERE LITERATURE CURRENT INFORMATION

Gentle walk around the canal. Can be muddy after heavy rain fall.

Gentle walk following the Basingstoke Canal toe path. Some copes to cross, can be muddy under foot, following heavy rain.
Can be walked in either direction, but this starts from the car park, head back on to the road (north toward the village centre), then turn left into Shroud Lane.

BCS information



The Bulletin is now up to Issue 59.

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, at membership@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

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Editorial Team: Editor: Roger Cansdale

29 Knoll Road, Fleet, Hants GU51 4PT

01252-678608

e-mail: editor@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

Presidents: Tim & Elizabeth Dodwell

Chairman:	Ian Moore*
Vice-Chairmen:	Tony Balch*
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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

Basingstoke Canal Authority Canal Centre, Mytchett Place Road, Mytchett, Surrey GU16 6DD

01252-370073

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

Low water in Surrey top pound



Deedman's Bridge near Mytchett Lake showing why all boating was stopped on this pound.
Photo by Derek Taylor