



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 276 Winter 2023



EDITORIAL

Twenty four years ago I volunteered to help Kathryn Dodington produce the Basingstoke Canal News but I clearly didn't do it very well because she resigned soon afterwards and I found myself de facto editor. At that point I didn't even have an Internet connection, but rather to my surprise I found that I quite enjoyed the job. I did not, however, anticipate that it would go on for so long and I think that a change is now well overdue, for the Society members' sake as well as mine.

It's been a lot of fun and I have learnt a great deal about the canal from the articles that people have sent in, so I hope that this flow will continue under Elspeth Levi's editorship. She has far more IT expertise than I do and has lived next door to the canal in Ash Vale for many years but has only recently joined the Canal Society. Huge changes have taken place during my tenure and the Society is incredibly busy at the moment on all sorts of fronts. Our campaign slogan "Keep the Canal Alive" certainly rings true.

The Society used to be rather male oriented and I think one very healthy change is the number of

women taking leading roles in our various activities. There is a great deal going on. Some good (dredging!) and some not so good (some Councils' funding), but all of it needing some Society involvement, so there shouldn't be any shortage of news. I wish Elspeth all the best and hope she finds the job as rewarding as I did.

Roger Cansdale

BCN ex-editor

Roger will certainly be missed and I'm sure all the Society members will join me in thanking him for his considerable contribution over the last twenty four years. I certainly have a lot to learn, as his knowledge of all matters relating to the Basingstoke Canal, and the Society is encyclopaedic.

I can be reached at Editor@Basingstoke-canal.org.uk and look forward to receiving your comments and contributions.

Elspeth Levi

Front cover image: Barley Mow Bridge, Photographer Roger Cansdale

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As spring beckons and the canal corridor starts to wake up from the winter slumbers things are starting to happen. At long last dredging has returned to the canal with a programme of spot dredging being conducted to remove some of the main 'bumps' along the cruising route of the John Pinkerton II trip boat. Most of the activity is taking place in the Hampshire Pound around Odiham, with towpath diversions in place due to the re-activation of the Broad Oak silt dump.

The Canal Society has made a significant contribution to the programme of works as we will be one of the main benefactors upon completion.

The other major challenge in parts of the canal has been the explosive growth of the invasive water weed floating pennywort (*Hydrocotyle*) from lock 7 and down the junction with the River Wey. In certain places the mats are completely blocking the canal for all users. Upstream there is a slightly different story with another invasive weed called Cabomba growing up from the base of the canal.

Therefore, the Canal Society is supporting the purchase of a brand new Conver C420 weed cutter to help manage the weed growth in the Surrey pound. It is a Dutch built craft with an orange hull, pictured on the right.

Last year we were able to foster good relationships with several locally based companies, and as part of their internal Corporate Social Responsibility programmes we benefitted from over 1,100 hours of support. In addition many of them gave financial contributions. Indeed we are now one of the charities of choice at Stihl - so you will see more Stihl battery powered kit being used by our trained volunteers.

All the above is good news, and we do need some good news because the elephant in the room is still the financial challenges that local councils now face and the impact upon the canal.

The Campaign Team have been working to develop a series of messages that will all have a common theme and will address at differing sections of our audience - we (BCS, BCA, Counties, Local Boroughs, and Parish Councils, etc) are all in this together and we need to work collaboratively to deliver a sustainable future for the canal.

Ian Moore, Chairman



NOTICE OF AGM

NOTICE is hereby given that the 46th Annual General Meeting of The Basingstoke Canal Society will be held on Saturday 29th April 2023 at the Mytchett Canal Centre, starting at 5.00pm.

The formal Agenda for the meeting is as follows:-

1. To hear apologies for absence.
2. To confirm the minutes of the 45th AGM held on 14th May 2022.
3. To approve the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2022.
4. To reappoint Barnbrook Sinclair Partnership LLP as Independent Examining Accountants.
5. To elect or confirm the appointment of the members of the Board of Directors (Executive Committee) for the year 2023/4(see note 3).
6. To transact any other business relative to the Annual General Meeting of the Society.

By order of the Board of Directors

Celia Griffiths

Secretary

Following the formal business of the AGM there will presentations for the Robin Higgs Award and the Dieter Jebens Trophy.

Dieter Jebens Trophy

Taken any good photos of the canal lately? If so, please let us see them; you might get your photo in the BCN and be the next winner of this trophy. Please email your picture to editor@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.



AGM NOTES

1. This Notice is issued from 138 Alexandra Road, Farnborough, Hants, GU14 6RN. In advance of the meeting our Registered Address at IWA, Island House, Moor Road, Chesham HP5 1WA is set to change as IWA are moving.
2. Every member of the Society who is entitled to vote at a General Meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy, who need not be a member, to attend and vote in his/her stead. Forms of Proxy can be obtained from the Secretary at celia.griffiths@basingstoke-canal.org.uk or 138, Alexandra Road, Farnborough, Hants GU14 6RN. Only paid-up members are entitled to attend and vote at the meeting.
3. Following the changes to the Articles in 2022 :
 - one third of directors (4) – usually being those with longest service become eligible to resign and seek re-election by rotation.
 - in addition, any person who has been a director for 9 consecutive years must resign and seek re-election. This affects Philip Riley and Kevin Redway, who will be standing for re-election.

Full details of those directors who will be resigning and members seeking to being re-elected or proposed as directors for a first time by ordinary resolution – (which must be received not less than 14 days before this meeting) – will be shown on the Members webpages and on application to the Secretary.
1. The Report & Accounts and Articles of Association will be available to view on the website before the AGM. Copies can be available from the Membership Secretary by email or post if requested. In accordance with normal practice the Accounts, when approved, will be published in summary in the Basingstoke Canal News. Any changes to the details given in this notice will be published on the Society's website at www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

Following the AGM at around 6pm there will be a social for members and volunteers – further details will appear on the website nearer the time. Tea, coffee and soft drinks will be provided.

JOHN PINKERTON II



Review of the year

Last year was the first reasonably free of Covid restrictions but we were affected by low water levels resulting from the canal leak at Crookham Deeps. This meant we only operated to the Barley Mow for much of the year, and even then were ploughing our way through silt for much of the voyage.

Fortunately the leak was fixed in late August and trips to the castle were possible from September onwards.

New this year was the fully booked Midsummer's Day dawn trip, requiring the crew to get up at 2:30am. It was very well received and both crew and passengers are

keen to repeat it this coming year.

Possibly due to the shallow water, JP suffered a number of mechanical problems. A harsh vibration and stern gland leak was fixed by changing the flexible coupling between the gear box and propellor shaft. One theme trip was plagued with a loss of 240v power, running out of fresh water and a failed card reader. Despite it all, the passengers seemed to have enjoyed it.

On the final trip of the year the pulleys for the belt drives to the water pump and alternators became detached from the crankshaft. The trip was abandoned at Broad Oak bridge and JP towed backwards with Dawn to the Barn.

by Chris Hunter

Financially, the end of year accounts are being processed as I write this, but it looks as so we have raised between £35,000 and £40,000 for the Basingstoke Canal Society. The final total will be available at the AGM in March.

None of this could have happened without all the volunteer crew and committee – grateful thanks are owed to all who took part or supported the operation. Our mission is to raise awareness of the canal, allow people to enjoy it and raise money to aid maintenance of it. I think we succeeded in all of these.

Winter maintenance

The maintenance gang has been meeting on Mondays since the end of the season. Those who have walked past will have seen the bow deck protected with tarpaulin and a scaffolding structure over the engine bay. This has been to lift the engine to gain access to the pulleys that drive the water pump and alternators.

It appears that a small retaining pin had fractured, allowing the

retaining nut on the end of the crankshaft to unscrew and letting the pulley assembly slide off its keyway. Beta, the engine mariniser, have an approved fix for this involving attachment to the splines on the crankshaft.

Much time (involving large hammers and a lot of unrepeatable words) has been spent but the assembly is now together. With the engine out, we discovered the engine mounts are worn, so replacements should be fitted shortly and JP will be a powered boat again!

As well as the mechanical work, all the windows have been resealed, hopefully addressing the leaks. Cabling has been tidied up and various small items fixed. A new touch screen is being installed and there will be a new glass washer for the start of the new season. A lot of the interior and exterior paintwork will be touched up. The roses and castles painting on the rear doors and port side are being restored.



Boat Company AGM

The AGM will be held on Friday 24th March at the Mytchett Canal Centre from 7pm.

NATURE NOTES

With spring now within touching distance, it can be easy to feel as though we are sat waiting for the natural world around us to burst into life. The good news is, there are certain animals and plants who do not wait until March to spring into action. Grey squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) typically have two litters a year, with the first round of kittens born in late February and early March. February is also when most badger cubs (*Meles meles*) are born; though it will not be until April that those stripy-faced cubs appear above ground.

When it comes to birds on the canal, the grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*) is one of the most instantly recognisable. You are most likely to spot one standing very still at the water's edge, or in a tree, waiting to grab unsuspecting prey with its long, powerful beak. While best known for plucking fish from the canal, herons will also eat ducklings, small mammals and amphibians.



Standing at a little under one metre tall, these elegant birds are typically solitary creatures, but in February they enter their three-month breeding period. So if you visit the Canal in the coming weeks, you may be lucky enough to spot an uncharacteristically sociable grey heron.

Plant-life along the canal is also undergoing its own annual fight for survival. Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*), also called bulrushes, are identifiable by their dark brown, sausage-shaped reed heads. They shed their fluffy seeds in February – seeds which were previously used to stuff mattresses. These seeds, as well as the caterpillars that live among them, are a popular food source for birds such as the reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*). The reed bunting is the same size as a sparrow, and the male of its kind can be distinguished by its black head, white collar and drooping white moustache.

The Canal is a rich meeting point of both blue and green natural environments, making it home to an array of natural wonders all year round. These perpetual, yet subtle, changes along the Canal ought to buoy you along during the long wait for everybody's favourite: ducklings.

Sarah Cayless

Badger cubs spotted near Malthouse Bridge

SAFETY FIRST

With the prospect of Council funding for the canal being drastically reduced, and disappearing altogether, it may be worth a reminder of the potential dangers of not maintaining the canal to a safe standard. For example, two breaches occurred in September 1968.

The first of these began on the evening before the first day of the annual SBAC Air Show at Farnborough when heavy rain caused the canal to overtop the bank just behind the airfield. This rapidly washed the bank away which, despite the efforts of the Army throughout the night to plug the gap with sandbags, resulted in the flooding of the airfield. As a result, almost all the flying had to be cancelled for the first two days of the show. The breach was eventually fixed by the RAE using an old aircraft fuselage to fill the hole.

The MoD subsequently successfully sued the New Basingstoke Canal Company for damages. The second breach was in a way more serious, because it wasn't repaired for many years, resulting in most of the Surrey section being without water. A tree had been allowed to grow on the Ash Embankment and was blown over in the wind producing a hole through which all the water between Aldershot and Deepcut emptied into the surrounding countryside. Fortunately at that time there were no houses at risk, but that might not be the case today.

The Canal is rated as the Number One risk to public safety by the two County Councils, because of its potential for causing this sort of chaos again, which is why the BCA has to spend a great deal of costly effort to prevent it.

Roger Cansdale



Left: Airfield Breach

Above: Ash Embankment Breach

GREYWELL TUNNEL

From time to time we get sent a collection of photos of the canal. Some of these date back to the days around the formation of the Canal Society which makes them very interesting. The latest set came from Bob Humphrey, one of the very early members and include an expedition to Greywell tunnel, probably in about 1967.

Bob wrote "The "expedition" team was myself, Geoff Holman and Mick Fairless (owner of the front grille from a Mini and featured in one of the photos). We were accompanied by Lynn Holman and Angela Fairless.

We had all been part of Jim Woolgar's "Basingstoke Agitators" group, trying to keep some sort of water system wet up the Deepcut flight. Once the canal society was formed, we had the official banner. Curiosity took us to explore the Greywell Tunnel. We entered from

the North Warnborough end having climbed down from the footpath beside the portal. We launched and rowed up in my new dingy, (designed whilst I was in the mold loft at Vickers Weybridge). The brickwork before the collapse, although different in each section looked in good shape, the water crystal clear. The odd bat tucked away in the joints between bricks. On reaching the collapse, there was plenty of blue clay with the tree roots exposed at the collapse.

Following this, we entered the shorter section from the Greywell end. The bed of the canal was solid mud at the tunnel mouth, caused by a land slip, we climbed over this with the dingy, Again, the brickwork seemed in good condition."



Greywell Tunnel Blockage, Tree Roots



Greywell Tunnel exploration, Western Portal, 1966

by Roger Cansdale

The collapse of the tunnel has always puzzled me because I was told that it was caused by a tree pushing its roots through the tunnel roof. However, the collapse began in the early 1930s and the last passage through the tunnel, by an intrepid canoeist, took place about 20 years later. These facts didn't seem to add up, but Bob's photos seem to explain the sequence. There was a roof fall in the 1930s, where the tunnel passes through clay, and it stopped through navigation, but not someone prepared to drag a canoe over the fallen debris.

The final complete blockage appears from Bob's photos to have

taken place not long before his expedition and tree roots and what looks a bit like a fence post can be seen in the photos. The top of the tree can be seen in the last picture sticking up from a hole in the ground caused by the cave-in. It looks as if the roof of the tunnel is only perhaps 5 to 10m below the surface at this point. More material fell in after Bob's expedition and there was a significant fall only a few years ago that was audible from the eastern portal.



Hole in ground above Greywell tunnel roof fall. 1966

Keep Your Canal Alive

There has been considerable effort over the last few months to develop an ongoing campaign to raise awareness of the need to support the canal and increase the Society membership.

The campaign will launch in April with press, leaflets and posters for all canal users.

If you don't already, why not follow the Society on Social Media to keep up with all the news.

Facebook

Twitter @BasingstokeCS

Instagram
Basingstoke_canal_society

FROM THE CANAL AND RIVER TRUST

In a first-of-its-kind trial, we've released South American weevils into the River Soar to help eradicate floating pennywort.

As part of our [award-winning Invasive Species Eradication Project](#), we are waging the war on floating pennywort in a ground-breaking new trial featuring South American weevils.

[Floating pennywort](#) is a non-native invasive species, which spreads rapidly and causes major destruction to our waterways. Its large mass depletes oxygen levels in the water, in turn affecting other plants and animals.

Its presence is also felt by boaters and other waterway users, who are unable to paddle or propel their way along the navigation as a result.

South American weevils have never been used to aid in floating pennywort removal before, but research suggests that these small beetles could make a mighty impact.

What are South American weevils?

Imported from Argentina and measuring approximately 5cm in length, South American weevils are a type of beetle which offer a natural and environmentally-friendly alternative to chemical sprays.

How do weevils combat floating pennywort?

These plant-munchers feed and breed amongst the foliage, slowly but effectively reducing its vast quantities which span across our canals and rivers.

If weevils are a non-native species, how is releasing them on our waterways safe?

Along with other collaborators, [CABI](#) (Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International) spent time in Argentina monitoring and observing various insects and pathogens, including the South American weevil.

After ten years of comprehensive testing and research, there was no evidence to suggest that the weevil would attack any other living organisms beyond floating pennywort.

As a result, in 2021 the South American weevil was cleared for combat under a carefully coordinated release strategy along our canals and rivers.

How long do South American weevils live for?

Given that they don't attack other plant species, we expect the weevils to remain in the waterways and feed until the plant has gone.

WEEVILS vs PENNYWORT

When will we know if the trial is a success?

Along with CABI and other partners, we will be regularly visiting the release site over the next 12 months to visually inspect the area. CABI will also be continuing with data and evidence gathering along the way.

We hope to see the first signs of improvement at around month two, but this is dependent on a huge number of factors, such as weather conditions and water quality.

Will more weevils be released if this trial is a success?

That's the plan. Watch this space for more updates on this innovative trial.

How you can join the fight against invasive non-native species (INNS)

If you spend time on our canals and rivers, one of the most important things you can do is to remember to [Check, Clean, Dry](#). These steps help stop the spread of harmful plants and animals to a new area, and should **always** be done before exiting a waterway, even if you are moving to another spot just a few miles away.

If you would like to volunteer on this project with us, we are currently looking for someone to help out with admin and reporting. Please contact [Charles Hughes](#) for more information.



South American Weevil

RHODODENDRON WARS



We have had a number of hacks at the profusion of rhododendron in Dogmersfield over recent years but the wretched stuff keeps growing back.

Those of you that are familiar with the area will know that these invasive plants extend from just downstream of the Barley Mow winding hole for about half a mile to just before the area where the slip happened.

The Society Work Party spent a couple of weekends there about eight years ago and cut the upstream end to just opposite Towpath Cottage where there is a small forge. The limit of cutting can still be seen despite the regrowth.

As I frequently walk the circuit from Barley Mow car park down to

Blacksmiths Bridge, across Dogmersfield Park to Sprats Hatch Bridge and back to Barley Mow, I am constant aware of the intrusion of the rhododendron across the canal and it has become an itch that needs to be scratched. I therefore arranged for BITM to return in November to try to make some inroads.

To increase the effectiveness of the available workforce, I arranged for Alan Flight (society work boat) and Beth (dumb barge with covered hold) to be moved to Barley Mow in advance of the weekend. We could then use Beth as a platform for a woodchipper to deal with the cuttings. This was delivered to Barley Mow on the Saturday morning.

by Jeff Hill

The weather over the weekend was decidedly mixed but, fortunately, the daylight hours of the two days were dry although there was considerable rain on Saturday night.

We moved the two boats to the downstream end of the rhododendrons so as to reduce the noise for the residents. The Canal Authority (BCA) had obtained permission for the work from the landowner and so cutting began. Two of us had chain saw certificates and so led the cutting and one volunteer had a chipper ticket.

A full risk assessment had been completed and the insurers had been informed.

It was soon apparent that I had been wildly optimistic about how much bank we would be able to clear.

The bank was quite steep and the rhododendrons had been rather

uncooperative in that they grew down into the water quite frequently.

These branches proved rather time-consuming as chain saws do not work well underwater and so bow saws were needed and getting to the right point was not easy.

However, over the two days, we cut about 100m of bank and the cuttings were chipped. The chipper was kept busy for most of the time which shows how much timber had grown on the bank since the last cutting had been done. There was tremendously good work done by the eight volunteers.

The group stayed at Baker Hall in Odiham, a scout hut close to the village centre. We have used this before but it has recently been upgraded with a new kitchen, showers and heating all of which were appreciated by the work party.

I would like to thank the hall manager and the hall committee for an excellent facility.

In light of the success of this weekend, it was proposed that a return visit be organised and this is likely to be in February or March.

Many thanks to other members of the society for their help in making this weekend possible.



CHOBHAM TALKS

There are two talks coming up where we will be delighted to welcome the speakers and audience.

Wednesday 15th March

Lynda Hunter & Gary Mason from the Chichester Canal Trust on "The Chichester Canal - 200 years of History"

Wednesday 19th April

Josh Bowes, Wetlands Officer for The Surrey Wildlife Trust will give a talk on the wildlife that lives in, under and above the Basingstoke Canal.

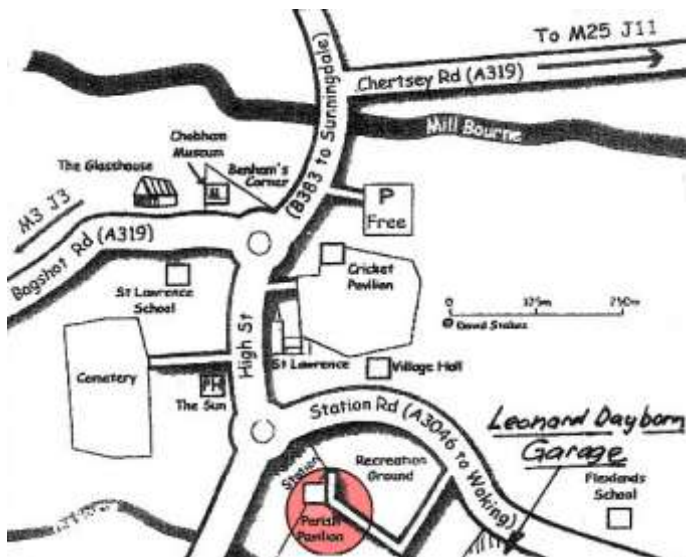
This will be the last Chobham talk until the Autumn.

Both talks will be at 8pm.

Location: Parish Pavilion on the A3046 Station Road, Chobham

I plan to arrange an evening cruise on Kitty with priority for Chobham talks attendees. This will be on June 21st, leaving at 19:30 from the Bridge Barn wharf. We will enjoy a slightly longer cruise than the standard daytime trips arriving back at about 21:30. We will be limited to 12 passengers. Booking will be on the BCS website. Cost will be £7 per person.

Graham Deavin
Chobham Talks Organiser



EVENTS

The Society's events team, led by Heather Sloane has a long list of local events where a Society presence is planned:

26 March	Fleet Half Marathon
29 April	BCS BBQ and AGM, Canal Centre
7 May	Surrey Heath Family Day, Frimley Lodge Park
8 May	Boat Rally, Fox 7 Hounds, Fleet
14 May	Basingstoke Festival of Transport
29 May	Donkey Derby, Farnborough
17 June	St John's Village Fete
1 July	Fleet Carnival
2 July	Zebon Copse Summer Fete, Crookham
15 July	Dogmersfield Flower Show & Fete
3 September	Odiham Raft Race
16 September	Weyfest, Dapdune Wharf, Guildford

There is a distinct western end bias to the list, so if anyone knows of any events in Woking that might benefit from a Canal Society presence, please let Heather know (heather.sloane@basingstoke-canal.org.uk).

In Memoriam - Carol Hardyman

I think Carol and I joined the society in the early 1970s after walking much of the Surrey end. She later worked for Hampshire CC in the mid 1970's and typed many of the letters and documents pertaining to the canal purchase by the local authorities. We followed the progress of restoration whilst we lived in Cornwall and became a little more involved when we returned to Surrey with a house backing on to the canal. For many years she delivered the magazines locally. She was a keen supporter of all the events and rarely missed a Chobham talk.



Carol passed away in February, our sympathies to Phil and family.

Phil Hardyman

SUNKEN BARGE REFLOAT

A group of volunteers recently undertook the refloating of a sunken barge at Hermitage Flash. The barge had been underwater for a good while and to make things even more difficult, the work was done during extremely cold and icy conditions.

Previously, in order to help raise the sunken barge the two larger (floating) BCA barges had been placed & tightly strapped on either side of it in order to give some lift as water was pumped out.



Strips of heavy duty polythene were positioned so as to be over both the barge's sides and its gunwales to give some degree of water tightness. The effective height of gunwales was increased by scaffolding boards clamped in place which, at the lowest point, even then, only gave about 25 - 30mm of projection above the water line.



Sandbags were used to hold down the plastic sheet as well as giving further support to the scaffolding planks; Similarly, plastic sheeting and sandbags were used around the second buoyancy chamber which was still completely under water (in foreground to left).

by Nigel Searle



The group resumed work on Sunday morning, the first task being breaking up the ice which had formed overnight.

The intention was to use four pumps, one Society owned and three hired with the hope that these would be able to pump out water faster than any leakage in. Unfortunately one of the hire pumps, was of no use. Thank goodness that three pumps, although marginal did prove to be adequate, and we were able to get the water in the barge's hold down to a level - i.e. below wellie tops - where it was possible to get down into it to allow plugging of the most severe leaks. The hold was pumped out first as the weight of water in it was likely to be more than that in both the buoyancy chambers combined, and the fact that one of the chambers was still fully underwater.



After quite a lengthy period of pumping, and once the level of the water in the hold had, it appeared, dropped to a level which could be maintained with just two pumps, the third was then used to drain the non water covered buoyancy chamber and . .

eventually there were signs of bubbles coming up in the water outside the hull, followed by some just perceptible movement of the hull itself indicating some buoyancy and quite suddenly – and to our great relief - up came the lighter end taking the gunwales above the water line and stopping most of the leakage into the hold.

This was a truly heroic task, given the haulage to and from the work site, and the extreme weather.

WORK PARTY REPORT

January 2023

We had a visiting WRG (Waterways Recover Group) coming for a weekend in November. The plan for them was to attack the Rhododendrons downstream from the Barley Mow. For this they were using Alan Flight and Beth our dumb flatbed barge. So, before they came, we needed to re-deck Beth as the old boarding was breaking up and would not stand the rigours of a large chipper.

We did this with some unused fibre grid and finished the ends off with some boarding. Alan Flight then pushed Beth down to the Barley Mow for the WRGies weekend. (See article on p.15 from Jeff)

After that weekend the two boats were returned to the Barn where we reworked the wooden decking to allow easy access to the well deck for pumping out and maintenance. At the same time a picnic bench which we had recovered from in the canal at Colt Hill was repaired and put back in place. Now not only bolted down but also chained, hopefully to deter the hooligans.



The Mary Smith memorial bench (below left that had been repaired from Up Nateley (between Slade's and Eastrop bridges) was replaced and bolted down. The locals were pleased to see it back.

In the last work party before the Christmas break and with the weather getting colder and no projects requiring immediate action, the work party split into two. The "heavy" gang returned to Ash lock to continue with the work on our work boat Fly II and to prepare Jim Douglas for a BSS inspection and future sale. We had procured her as a work boat but she has proved to be unsuitable for the shallow Basingstoke canal.

The second group warmed themselves up over the freezing weekend with a massive bonfire, after they had fought the frozen canal to get Alan Flight to the bonfire site. This burned off stuff that had accumulated over the last year, and was augmented by some extra off bank clearance near the site while we were there.



by Duncan Paine



End of first wet weekend barge lifting



Last weekend work party

The new year started with a very wet weekend. We first pumped out the barge stored near Lodge Farm bridge then the party split with half moving down to Hermitage where there are a couple of other dumb barges. One of these had sunk and needed pumping out as the contractor who will be doing some spot dredging wants to use them, together with the one from Lodge Farm bridge. On the first day after accumulating the required equipment and in the atrocious weather on that Sunday the barge was prepared. Sadly, first attempts failed as the canal water level was continuing to rise exacerbating the problem. It was raining hard all weekend!

The rest of the party started on off bank clearance, moving up stream from Colt Hill. While working in the pouring rain a walker commented "*you must be volunteers working today in this*". I must admit we did finish a bit earlier than usual that afternoon.

The following work party again split in two. While the barge raising party report is covered elsewhere, the off bank clearance party continued with moving up the canal from Colt Hill. This was not the nicest of occupations as it was cutting back about a barge width of a mixture of blackthorn, hawthorn, bramble and dog rose. After moving three boat loads on Saturday and a further one on Sunday to the bonfire site, we still failed to burn off all the horrible prickly stuff, but at least it was warm work unlike the job of the barge re-floating party.

A small work party has been doing some off bank clearance work during the week using Alan Flight. It has now been out a couple of times this period and has plans for a number more outings before the end of March when all clearance work has to stop for the bird nesting season. They have been clearing the off bank downstream of Piller's Bridge (remains).

MEMBERSHIP

I have just found my report from last February where I reported membership as just over 1000. Unfortunately this year it is just under 1000 so, despite all the recent new members it seems we have quite a turnover in membership.

For those that joined before August 2020 now is the time for membership renewal and perhaps by the time you read this you will have received a reminder. Those with email addresses will receive automatic reminders and I have written to those without. One thing that repeatedly crops up is people telling me they have a Standing Order and perhaps I don't need to remind them! Unfortunately I can't tell that from our bank receipts so I ask you to bear with me and trust the system!

In years gone by many members added a bit extra to their subscription by way of a donation. The current Membership system doesn't really allow for that but members can, if they wish, still donate online at www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk/donate-and-support.

As ever we welcome the support of the following who have recently joined us:

Margaret Tyler of Wokingham

Anne McCabe of Hook

Paul McGonigal of Fleet

Rory Pringle of Woking

Ursula Harman of Woking

Guy Greenwood of Fleet

Pauline Greenwood of Fleet

Brian Simpson of Aldershot

John Orchard of Hook

Stuart Pink of Oxted

Maria Andrades of London

Emrhys Barrell of Goring

Cherrilyn Howell of Guildford

Andrew Davies of Hartley Wintney

Peter Hicks of Alton

Steve Crouch of Aldershot

Martin Jenkins of Alton

Emma Robinson of Farnborough

Brian Messenger of Hook

Lyndsay Piper of Woking

Ella Best of Camberley

Robin Dixon of Old Basing

Chris Ashworth of Hook

Andy Beale

Membership Secretary

BCS INFORMATION

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NEW GATES FOR LOCK 3



New gates being fitted
to Lock 3.

Photos from the BCA

