



Basingstoke Canal News

RESTORING BASINGSTOKE CANAL

Sir, — Having spent a few days of my holiday walking the length of the Basingstoke Canal, I am wondering if the local people appreciate what an amenity they have on their door steps.

It would appear that many are apathetic and treat it as a convenient rubbish dump; however, I know that several people are interested in its possible restoration — although at the moment, due to vandalism and the Canal Company's lack of finance, it is still deteriorating.

I feel that the time is ripe to form a Basingstoke Canal Restoration Society so that a start could be made in removing debris and clearing the towpath. Perhaps it might even be possible to re-open it for navigation.

If anyone is interested perhaps they would be kind enough to write (enclosing a stamped addressed envelope) and a possible meeting can be arranged if there is sufficient support.

—Yours faithfully,

E. J. WOOLGAR.

56 Connaught Crescent,
Brookwood,
Woking.
August 23rd, 1966.

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Editorial

There are very few words from me this issue as there is much to fit in. It is very exciting to be part of the Basingstoke Canal Society as we celebrate our 60th Anniversary. So much has changed over the last 60 years – as evidenced in Jim Woolgar’s letter featured on the front page. I’m sure it is a long time since any of us have sent stamped addressed envelopes to express our support for a cause. Now it is more likely to be a “like” or “follow” on social media.

Along with your newsletter this month, you will also receive our special 60th Anniversary commemorative booklet. For those receiving digital copies, this will be available as a download.

I do hope you will be able to join us at the AGM on Saturday 2nd May and at some of the events to celebrate our 60th Anniversary.

Elsbeth Levi
Editor

Chobham Talks

Many thanks to Neil Barton, who has offered to organise the Chobham Talks - and a huge thank you to Graham Deavin who is handing over the reins after six years service.

Wednesday March 18th 8pm: the Kent, Surrey, & Sussex Air Ambulance. A chance to hear about the valuable work the Air Ambulance service provides - especially around our area. Let's hope we don't need to call them out to the canal!

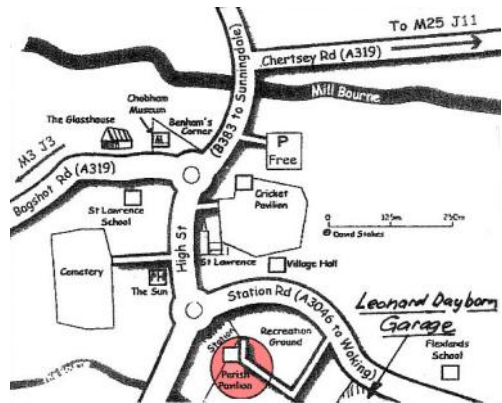
Wednesday April 22nd 8pm: Damsels and Dragons: Basingstoke Canal & Beyond. Presented by Francis Kelly.

As a SSSI, the Basingstoke Canal is a wonderful habitat for dragonflies and damselflies. Francis will tell the story of photographing every species found in

the UK, with a particular focus on those found on our canal.

Save the dates - topics to be confirmed:

Wednesday October 21st 8pm
Wednesday November 18th 8pm



Location: Parish Pavilion on the A3046, Station Road, Chobham

Front cover image: The letter sent by Jim Woolgar to the local press in 1966, which led to the formation of the Basingstoke Canal Society (then known as the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society).

Chairman's Report

I'm pleased to report positive progress on *Kitty II*. Work is progressing with the boat builder to complete all works so that she can be moved down to the Basingstoke Canal in late March or early April. Due to ongoing maintenance work on the canal, it will not be possible to transport her before then.

The charging infrastructure works are due to start on site in early March with an anticipated completion date of 20 March. UK Power Networks are due to install the new supply cable on 11/12 March. We have taken delivery of the Rolec charging pedestals. Now it's fingers crossed that we'll be able to charge her up!

We will hold an initial meeting with Jo East, the recently appointed Canal Manager for the BCA, to discuss the installation of benches along the canal, amongst other matters. We have worked with lengthsman along the Canal to identify areas where there is little provision, or a high demand for an opportunity to sit down and enjoy the Canal.

James Taylor will leave his role as Strategic Canal Manager on 1st May. The role is not being replaced, and I will attend a briefing in March as to how the workload will be covered.

Our work parties continue to be busy continuing to clear invasive foliage and maintain the navigation and towpath of the canal. All of the volunteers are looking forward to the re-opening of the navigation. The BCA winter maintenance works are scheduled to be completed at the end of March, so that we can again welcome visiting boaters onto the canal.

Lastly, I would like to say a huge thank you to two of our long-standing volunteers who will be leaving us – Andy Beale and Graham Corser. Both have assisted the progress of the Society in many ways. You can find out more about their contributions on pages 8/9.

Ian Moore
Chairman

Members trips

A reminder that as a Basingstoke Canal Society member, you can book a FREE trip on one of the monthly (May – September) Members and Volunteers trips on *John Pinkerton II* from Odiham. You can find the members trips [here](https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/book-a-boat-trip/john-pinkerton/themed-trips/) <https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/book-a-boat-trip/john-pinkerton/themed-trips/>.



AGM Announcement

NOTICE is hereby given that the 49th Annual General Meeting of The Basingstoke Canal Society will be held on Saturday 2nd May 2026 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 48th AGM held on 10th May 2025.
3. To approve the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2025.
4. To reappoint Wilson Partners (were known as 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 2026/7 (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 be presentations of the Robin Higgs Award and the Dieter Jebens Trophy. We look forward to welcoming guest speaker, Paul Deach, Deputy Cabinet Member to the Leader of Surrey County Council.

Following on from the AGM at about 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.

AGM Notes:

1. This Notice is issued from our Registered Address at 20 Springfield Road, Ash Vale, Aldershot, Hants GU12 5EN.
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, but can attend and vote in their stead. Forms of Proxy can be obtained from the Secretary at celia.griffiths@basingstoke-canal.org.uk or in writing to 138, Alexandra Road, Farnborough, Hants GU14 6RN. Only paid-up members are entitled to attend and vote at the meeting.
3. The arrangements for the election of directors provide that one third of the directors and any director appointed since the last AGM must retire and are eligible for re-election.

AGM Announcement

4. Full details of those directors who will be resigning and seeking to be re-elected and members being proposed as directors for a first time will be shown on the Members webpages and on application to the Secretary in advance of the meeting. Nomination Forms (which must be received not less than 14 days before this meeting) are available from the Secretary at the address shown in 2 above.
5. The Report & Accounts will be available to view on the website before the AGM. Copies can be available from the Secretary by email or post if requested. In accordance with normal practice, when approved, these will be published in summary in the Basingstoke Canal News.
6. Any changes to the details given in this notice will be published on the Society's website at www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

Frank Jones

I am very sad to announce the recent passing of Frank Jones.

The restoration of the Basingstoke Canal probably owes more to Frank than any other individual. He started as a volunteer in 1968 and ended up running the Youth Training schemes that restored the Deepcut flight. Amongst other things, he was also responsible for managing the construction of the lock gate workshop, the dry dock and Cowshot Manor Bridge. When the *John Pinkerton* reached the junction with the Wey for the first time on 11 May 1991, we passed the tiller to Frank; we wouldn't have been there without him.



Frank was the man you went to when there was a problem and he always delivered.

A fuller obituary will appear in the next BCN.

Roger Cansdale

Celebrating our 60th Anniversary



The Basingstoke Canal Society (originally The Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society) was founded in 1966. On 23rd August, a letter from Jim Woolgar was published in the local papers, inviting all those who were interested in saving the canal to contact him. An inaugural public meeting was held on 18th November with about 60 people present. From that small beginning, a huge amount of effort was expended by thousands of volunteers to create the Canal we all know now. For example, the “Deepcut Dig” alone in 1977 saw 600 people working on the Canal.

To celebrate our anniversary, we are planning events at different sites along the canal to enable as many people as possible to join in. The aim is to mark the occasion when an idea to restore the derelict, muddy, rubbish filled old canal became a reality. As well as honouring the amazing achievement of those dedicated pioneers, we want to thank the people who still work hard to “Keep the Canal Alive”.

As well as various events, we are publishing a 60th Anniversary booklet to commemorate some of the key activities over the decades. A group of volunteers are working on a video which will capture the story of the last 60 years of the Canal – thanks to the archivist team who have provided some wonderful archive footage.

We are publishing a list of 60 things to do on the Basingstoke Canal this year which includes everything from paddleboarding to spotting a heron, having a coffee at Myrtle & May or even going inside a pillbox near Crookham Wharf. This will be available on our website, via social media and at the 60th Anniversary events.

We are also working on a series of “Find it on the Basingstoke Canal” booklets full of things to spot from the towpath, such as local landmarks, canal features and sneaky hard to find objects as well as wildlife. Ideal for adding interest to a walk with the family or simply as a personal treasure hunt challenge.

There is also a schedule of special 60th Anniversary themed talks taking place on the *JPII*. Booking is open now for the following talks from experts:

Friday 24th April at 7pm – Bats of the Basingstoke Canal by Paul Hope.

Thursday 18th June at 7pm – How to save a canal by Neil Barton.

Friday 17th July at 2pm – My Mother bought a canal by Liz Dodwell.

Tuesday 13th August at 2pm – Bridges of the Basingstoke Canal by Peter Whitlock.

Saturday 19th September at 2pm – WW2 and the Military by Roger Cansdale.

More information and a list of all themed public trips can be found at

<https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/book-a-boat-trip/john-pinkerton/themed-trips/>.

Last but not least, we're working with a local brewery on a special Basingstoke Canal Society brew to mark a tremendous milestone.

Our first event will be on **Saturday 18th April** at Boundary Road Recreation Ground, Woking, known on the canal as Spanton's Wharf, from 12 noon to 4pm. Here there is a slipway and the site of the 50th Anniversary plaque. This is just a short walk along the towpath from The Lightbox. We will be running a shuttle boat service from Woking Town Wharf along the canal to the site. There will be stalls beside the canal and tents in the area beside the playground. We will have some archive displays in a tent as well as our shop to view all the current publications and souvenirs of the day. There will also be entertainment and amusement to keep everyone happy.

We are planning to introduce and name the electric trip boat *Kitty II* and a team will be on hand to take bookings for our trip boats. We aim to have demonstrations of kayaking and the Conver weed cutting boat. The Conver is used extensively to keep the Hydrocotyle (marsh pennywort) under control in the area. Various work boats and leisure boats will be moored along the towpath and we welcome anyone arriving in a kayak or on paddle boards.

We have arranged for local organisations to come along to run their stalls, display information about their organisation or provide refreshments; but there will be space for others. If you know of a club, organisation or individual in the Woking area that would benefit from attending a public event (free of

charge) beside the canal, then please contact [Heather Sloane](mailto:heather.sloane@basingstoke-canal.org.uk) (heather.sloane@basingstoke-canal.org.uk) and we can get them involved.

We also need lots of visitors to make sure that the event is a success. So please put the date in your diary. Also spread the word to family and friends; anyone who lives, commutes or plays near the canal. All are welcome to come and help us celebrate.

Later in the year, we are planning a canal side gathering on **Saturday 11 July** at the Fox & Hounds, Crookham Road, GU51 5NP. There will be a barbecue and music – and hopefully some sunshine. More details and how to book will be in the next newsletter – or if you are a Facebook user, please follow us to find out more: <https://www.facebook.com/basingstokecs>.

Plans are also underway to continue the celebrations at the Odiham Raft Race in early September. The date has provisionally been set as **Saturday 6th September**, but will be confirmed in the next few months.

We hope to see you at one or all of the events – preferably with any friends or family you can bring along to join in the fun.



**The
Basingstoke
Canal Society**

Thanks to Andy and Graham

While we have lots of volunteers doing great work we want to mention in particular a couple of people who are stepping down from their main roles.



Andy Beale

First our Membership Secretary **Andy Beale**. Andy joined the Society at the time of the Restoration in 1991 and recalls working on the tug and getting involved in the mucky job of dredging. Later he became crew and then skipper on the first *John Pinkerton* and continued this through to *John Pinkerton II*. Around 8 years ago he also took on the role of Membership Secretary and, using his IT skills, has led the membership team in introducing a streamlined process of online applications and renewals - this has been integral to our work in increasing the membership to over 1200. Added to this Andy is also a regular volunteer and a leader on the Tuesday work parties.

Having restructured the membership system, Andy is now stepping back from this role but will stay involved with the occasional work party and crew. In the meantime, he has done a fantastic job in helping the Society - a big thank you.

We are also losing **Graham Corser** who is moving away from the area. Graham joined the Society in 2017 initially as a Lengthsman on the Frimley section of the canal and a volunteer on the Tuesday work parties, and on the latter subsequently taking on the role of a volunteer leader.

Most importantly for the Society he also took on (and indeed developed) the role of “voice of the canal” on tracking and reviewing local planning issues.

This has been invaluable in supporting both the BCS and BCA in assessing and protecting the canal in terms of potential development work that could have an impact on the canal.



Graham Corser

As part of his role in monitoring planning, one particular project of note is working with local councils and landowners to create a walking route along the last 5 miles from Up Nately to Basingstoke. Aply called the 'Last 5 miles Project', we do need some volunteers to help continue this plan Perhaps there are some volunteers from the Basingstoke area who would be particularly interested in getting involved? Wouldn't it be great to be able to walk the last 5 miles?

We will still keep in touch with Graham as his wife Maura Corser is also

actively involved with the BCS and will continue to support our social media remotely. In the meantime, a hearty thanks to Graham for his contribution to the Basingstoke Canal Society.

If you are interested in helping with either of roles, or have any skills you would like to offer please contact volunteer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk or visit our [website](#):

<https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/volunteer/volunteering-roles/>

Ken Sankey

Are you planning an event or celebration in 2026?

John Pinkerton II at Odiham, Hampshire is a unique and attractive venue, ideal for family celebrations, team building events, club outings, wedding receptions, business meetings/conferences, etc.

A private charter cruise is the perfect way to celebrate with family and friends or work colleagues. You can bring your own music, decorate the boat, arrange the seating to suit, and arrange catering for food. Trips can be booked from April through October and last around 2.5 – 3 hours. The boat can accommodate up to 50 persons, although a maximum of 40 makes for a more comfortable cruise. There is a licensed bar on board serving hot and cold drinks and snacks.

Our skipper and crew man the boat and galley while you and your guests enjoy a cruise along our beautiful canal.

Discount on charters for children's groups

For 2026, schools and other groups of school age children (such as Rainbows, Cubs, Brownies and Scouts) are being offered a 50% discount on weekday, day-time charter bookings and also on the 10am departure time at weekends.

We believe that it is very important to give children access to nature in whatever way possible and we have a unique opportunity to provide that. Our canal cruise gives children an awareness and appreciation of the canal, which hopefully they will spread to their families and friends. It is a practical experience linking aspects of the curriculum with local history, geography and PSHE learning. Please pass this information onto any schools or groups you think may be interested.

You can find more information and available dates on the website at

<https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/book-a-boat-trip/john-pinkerton/charter/> .

From the Archives

THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL ACT

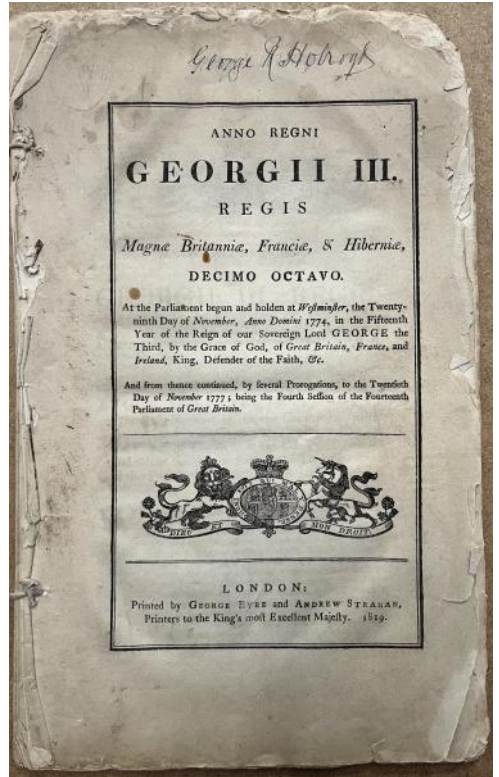
The Basingstoke Canal Act 1778, as it is now more commonly known, is referenced as 18 Geo III Cap LXXV meaning that it was an Act of Parliament made in the 18th year of the reign of King George III (1860 to 1920) and was the 75th Private Act of that year of the King's reign. It began its life as a Draft Bill in 1774 which was presented to parliament in 1777. It was passed in 1778 receiving Royal Assent on 15 May 1778. The archives include several printed copies of The Act, one of these is pictured.

The full long title of The Act was:

"An Act for Making a Navigable Canal from the town of Basingstoke, in the County of Southampton, to communicate with the River Wey, in the Parish of Chertsey, in the County of Surrey, and to the South East Side of the Turnpike Road in the Parish of Turgis in the said County of Southampton"

The Act created a company called The Company of Proprietors of the Basingstoke Canal Navigation. Under The Act, £86,000 needed to be raised before work could start. The American War of Independence (1775 to 1783) delayed attempts to raise the required subscriptions due to the economic crisis and recession which followed the war. It wasn't until late 1786 that applications for subscriptions were requested.

Records show that by 29 February 1788, £84,400 had been raised. Within days, Charles Best, clerk of the Canal Company, wrote to subscribers



confirming that the issue was oversubscribed with pledges totalling £92,900. The funds were formally received on 28 March 1788, allowing work to begin.

There were 154 original Proprietors who had to subscribe for a minimum of £100 and a maximum of £4,000, these being approximately equivalent to £13,125 to £525,000 today. There were 4 subscriptions for the maximum amount of £4,000. These Proprietors were the Right Hon. Earl of Dartmouth, the Right Hon. Earl of Portsmouth, the Right Hon. Lord Rivers and Andrew Newton of Litchfield.

By Peter Whitlock

Share certificates were issued to the Proprietors and we have an original certificate, as pictured, number 815 issued in 1791 in the name of Thomas Stiff. This was donated to The Society by his great granddaughter Mrs P.A.L. Vaux, along with further certificates from 1792 and 1794.

The Proprietors at the time were most likely persuaded to invest based on a document produced in June 1787 that estimated the likely annual trade of goods on the intended canal. The account listed 26 different items totalling 30,700 tons and estimated income of £7,783-8s-4d. According to that account there would be an estimated surplus of 7.5% for subscribers.

Unfortunately, this account did not prove to be accurate and a certificate in the archives indicates that the holder had received only 2d in the pound when the company liquidation was completed in 1874.

If you are interested in reading further regarding the history of the canal then a good starting point is the 34-page A5 booklet published by The Society, and available via the website, *A History of the Basingstoke Canal* by Glenys Crocker, Roger Cansdale & Dieter Jebens. This is a relatively brief but concise history of the canal and is available for £4.90 including P&P.



A much more detailed history of the canal can be found in *London's Lost Route to Basingstoke, The Story of the Basingstoke Canal* by P.A.L. Vine ISBN 0-7509-0359-7 (2nd Edition 1994). This is out of print but second-hand copies can be purchased relatively easily online on many sites typically for £3.50 to £4 including P&P.

We hope that you find the 'From the Archives' articles interesting and we are happy to receive requests and suggestions regarding what you the members would like us to write about. These can be sent to us at archivist@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

Spotlight on volunteers

Everything that the Society does is done by volunteers who want to help protect our wonderful Canal for navigation and the community.

We currently have 305 volunteers doing over 32,000 hours of volunteer work a year. Of these, many volunteers take on several roles. This is a crucial contribution to the upkeep of the canal. If this was costed at 2025's minimum wage of £12.21, the Society is contributing almost £400,000 in labour each year, a huge sum and critical to helping maintain the Canal.

We have a mix of ages across our volunteers - from students doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award (with parents' support) through to working people perhaps helping remotely or in

evenings/weekends, and of course retired people.

There are 10 Trustees steering the Society with many teams leading the varied work that we do. In 2018, the Society was awarded the Queen's award for voluntary service for over 50 years of outstanding voluntary work.

On our two trip boats *John Pinkerton II* and *Kitty* there is a crew of 95 volunteers. The boats carried just under 6,000 passengers last year and make a significant contribution to our fundraising. More than 90 volunteers help in our various working parties each year. They work along the 32 miles of towpath with the 'winter' and 'summer' cuts, along with many miles of the offside being cut back using workboats.



Volunteers enjoy a coffee break - Photo by Graham Corser

By Ken Sankey

In addition they help paint the 29 locks along the Canal, repair the towpath, run the weedcutter, build moorings, repair bridges, etc.

During 2025, we ran 14 corporate days for local businesses where their employees got involved with supporting the Canal. (PS if you know a local business that might welcome a rewarding team day like this, please let us know).

Our 94 Lengthsmen, who regularly walk a local length of the canal and report in any issues, are the 'eyes and ears' of the Canal; checking for fallen trees, overgrown towpaths, and spotting any problems.

Most importantly around a quarter of our volunteers work 'behind the scenes', organising and planning the Society's work with a whole range of projects underway. These include the brand new 12 passenger electric boat *Kitty II* at Woking (involving all fundraising, project management, and technical advice), the launch of QR codes to raise money from users of the canal, a second weedcutter, managing archives and dredging (not sexy but important to keep the canal open). This is in addition to managing Health & Safety, membership and the volunteers themselves.

Fundraising is important, with the team running campaigns supporting particular projects. We raise round £130,000 each year with around half coming from the trip boats.

Our marketing and social media team reach over 120,000 people each month. In addition, the Events team are involved with a variety of events throughout the year (18 last year),

encouraging people to become a member as well as selling our books and merchandise - all of which helps the Canal. They are now planning the Society's 60th anniversary celebrations.

Other work includes the important wider liaison in working with the BCA and the County Council owners - supporting the day-to-day contribution the Society makes whilst also securing the Councils' continued commitment.

Indeed there is so much going on we can't list it all here - but it gives a flavour of what is happening

.....and we always welcome new volunteers!

Why do people volunteer? Perhaps it is best summed up by a quote from a volunteer the other day:

'One of the great things about volunteering for the Society is that you really feel and know that you are contributing. When you walk along the towpath, you know that you're part of a team and that you are making a difference'.

So thank you all volunteers for the support – and for anyone who wants to help (or knows someone who may be interested), please look at our website for some great opportunities and roles where we need help.

<https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/volunteer/>

Alternatively just drop a line with your contact details to volunteer@basingstoke.canal.org.uk and someone will be in touch with you.

Tuesday Work Party

Jayne Rogers, BCA Ranger has provided a summary of the tasks, locations, numbers and hours (approx. 1688) contributed from our amazing Tuesday Work Party Volunteers since the beginning of October 2025.

Only 3 Tuesdays were missed for Christmas, New Year and very heavy rainy conditions.

There has been an average number of **28** Volunteers each Tuesday.

The average **112** hours given each Tuesday session, is equivalent to **3** full-time Rangers each week.

The tasks undertaken over the last few months have included:

Winter cut towpath side from Pondtail in Fleet to Claycart: **308** hours;

Winter cut towpath side from Frimley Green Guildford Road Bridge to Mytchett Lake: **244** hours;

Winter cut towpath and offside with additional use of workboat from Zebon

Copse Swing Bridge to Coxmoor Woods – reaching last year's cut back downstream of Double Bridge: **580+** hours;

Offside cutback of saplings, steps clearance and winter cut along Ash Embankment/Aqueduct: **232** hours;

Winter cut, Hydrocotyle removal and litter clearance, Boundary Road, Woking : **112** hours;

Lock 11, St John's, tidy of step entrances from St John's to the Canal offside, fallen tree clearance from navigation, saplings downstream and cleaning of Lock top coping stones and quadrants making the Lock top safer and the entrances to the Canal more appealing: **68** hours.

Many thanks to all the Tuesday work group volunteers who also contribute to many other tasks for the BCS, alongside their work party achievements.



Photo of Lock 7, St John's after cleaning by Garrie Hunter

News in Brief

Themed public trips

Throughout the season the Boat Company will be running special themed public trips on *John Pinkerton II*, from Odiham.

Mothers' Day, **Sunday 15th March**. There is a morning and an afternoon trip, with a small gift for Mothers.

Sunday 12th April and Sunday 14th June an extended trip goes to the Old Thatch cottage in Winchfield. Passengers can visit the gardens (for an additional cost) as part of the National Gardens Scheme and then take the return trip approximately 2 hours later.

There are 3 trips over the Easter weekend (**3-5 April**) at 2pm on Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday. A small egg is included with every child ticket.

Friday 15th May - Sea shanty evening with the Kings Pond Shantymen, hot meal included.

Other themed trips throughout the season include Lunchtime trips with fish and chips, Cream Tea afternoon trips and a Cruise and Crafts for children. Perhaps you would prefer a summer afternoon with saxophone quartet, 4 in a Bar, strawberries and cream included. These trips are very popular so don't delay booking.

<https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/book-a-boat-trip/john-pinkerton/themed-trips/>.

A 1/12 (4 week) share has become available within a private narrowboat syndicate, priced at £3000 (negotiable). Teal is a substantially-built 1997 56ft 4/7 berth cruiser stern narrowboat (ex ABC hire fleet) with a forward open plan saloon (with dinette, double & storage), open plan kitchen, 2 toilets (one with shower), 2

fixed singles (one with pipe cot over) and a rear double. Our syndicate has maintained and progressively improved Teal over the past 15 years, including a recently fitted new engine and heating system. Currently based at Calcutt Marina, she awaits your inspection.



Contact: David Prothero
07986 531209.

Weekend Work Party Report

The winter season was upon us and that means one thing, bank clearance. This is the term used to describe the maintenance process of removing overgrown vegetation, trees, shrubs, and debris from the canal banks to ensure the canal remains navigable.

Last season we started at Double Bridge and worked our way upstream, past Blacksmith's Bridge towards Barley Mow wharf. This year we continued where we had left off. It's always very satisfying doing bank clearance as you can look back and see that you've made a difference, safe in the knowledge that it will be a few years before it needs doing again. If you are taking a stroll along the towpath in that area you'll be able to see the progress that has been made.

The first weekend work party of November continued the bank clearance on the canal near Dogmersfield Park and we were blessed with good weather while the local buzzard kept a watchful eye on us.



Buzzard near Dogmersfield Park

In late November a small team processed the growing pile of scrap metal that we had accumulated at Ash Lock. This was taken to a local scrap metal merchant and a couple of hundred pounds was raised for BCS funds. This also freed up valuable working space around the project boat *Fly* for when work recommences.

On Saturday, it was back to the bank clearance in the rain. On Sunday, we had a change of scenery and location. We were asked to go to the Society's land at Sheerwater woods in Woking. A tree had fallen onto neighbouring land, damaging a chain link boundary fence. The fallen tree was processed by our qualified chainsaw operators and repairs were made to the fence. The tree was not in good health and very rotten inside which explained why it had fallen. We also took the opportunity to have a general tidy up of the area too.

For the work parties in December and the middle of January it was back to bank clearance. On one occasion, a fox was lying outside its den, basking in the sunshine and observing our activities. We were able to make good progress past the site of the historic landslips (over a decade ago), where there are now extensive ground anchors. A lot of shrubbery and saplings had grown up around these ground anchors and extended horizontally out into the canal.

By Greg Sutton



Ground anchors opposite the towpath



Wood chipper

We had now reached the point where the Rhododendrons start, near the site of Chatter Alley Bridge (now demolished). This was where the Waterways Recovery Group had spent a weekend tackling them. In the late January and early February work parties, we hired a tracked wood chipper. With our qualified chipper operator we set about this long-overdue task. The going was slow and the work was physically hard for the team as the Rhododendrons had extended around

12-15ft across the canal and were also woven into a twisted mass. Rhododendrons are beautiful when they start flowering in early spring and make for lovely photographs, especially with the reflection in the canal. However, behind this beauty is the fact that they are non-native and highly invasive. So, whilst the work may look harsh from the towpath, it is important to keep these under control to prevent them from taking over the canal.



Rhododendron clearance

Kitty

As we look forward to the arrival of *Kitty II*, it's a good time to remember her namesake, the horse Mrs Joan Marshall purchased to pull boats along the Basingstoke Canal. Whilst Kitty features heavily in Chapter 4 of Liz Dodwell's book "My Mother Bought a Canal", my research has uncovered new information and photos of Kitty – my thanks to Liz Dodwell, James Gregory-Marshall, Peter Whitlock and Chris Davies.

Kitty was purchased in June 1949 for the princely sum of £30 – including harness! Her previous owner, Mrs Freda Simpson, had had a change of circumstance which meant that she could no longer keep Kitty. Kitty's spirit and character must have endeared her to everyone even then, as Mrs Simpson was determined to go against her husband who was ready to sell Kitty to a dealer. She says in a letter to Mrs Marshall dated 11th March 1949, "I don't like to think of her going that way." How the two ladies first connected remains a mystery, as Mrs Simpson lived in Fairford, Gloucestershire. To our good fortune, this letter exists only because Mrs

Simpson made the journey to Fleet to discuss Kitty on 1st March 1949 - but Mrs Marshall was not at home. It was the day of the Canal's auction!

Kitty was a vanner, a traditional term for a cob used to pull vans and wagons. They were valued for being strong, steady and calm in busy urban settings, able to cope with noise, crowds and tight spaces. She was ideally suited to canal work as she was on the small size for a vanner, only 15 hands (5 feet/1.52m). She'd already proven her unruffled resilience pulling vans through bombing raids and gunfire during World War II. Plus she was very tolerant of children, which was just as well as Liz told me of a time when a group of children were merrily playing under and around Kitty during a canal outing.

Her only apparent fear was that of being confined as, during one raid, her stable had caught fire and she only just escaped. After that, she would try to kick down any stable door and preferred living free in a field.



A rare colour photograph of Kitty.

By Lucy Beckford

Kitty was 15 years old when she came to the Basingstoke Canal and worked alongside Mark Hicks for the next 12 years. She was intelligent, independent and quite the character! Whilst she had never pulled a boat before, she soon adapted to the sideways pull from the rope that attached the boat to her harness. She learnt every twist and turn of the canal and definitely knew where home was. It was well known that "Kitty's homeward gait is always about twice as fast as when she's travelling away from her stable!" (Aldershot News 2nd Sep 1955).

In the years of post-war rationing, even working horses were subject to strict controls. A letter dated 21 Nov 1949 from J.R. Kempe, Executive Animal Feeding Stuffs Officer for the Southern Division of the Ministry of Food, records that the horse Kitty, "engaged in canal work," was out of condition. Recognising her importance, he authorised a special allowance of 1 cwt

(112 pounds) oats and 1 cwt of bran to help restore her strength.

There are several notable occasions when spirited Kitty went on strike. Once, on a hot summer's day she "accidentally" fell in the canal, ignored everyone's panicked efforts to help her out and lay there until evening when she decided to get out by herself. Liz recounted another time when Kitty refused to pull a barge, possibly because she'd taken a dislike to a couple of workmen nearby, and her mother had to have strong words with Kitty until she graciously acquiesced.

On 24th August 1957, Kitty was pulling the dredge punt "Ida" with 40 Railway Enthusiasts Club (REC) members on a special outing. The trip started at 11.30am Queen's Avenue Bridge, Aldershot destined for Colt Hill Wharf, Odiham for 5.45pm. It was an eventful day out, which I'll write about another time. Kitty was as good as gold – until mid-afternoon when they had a scheduled stop at Chequers Bridge, Crookham – near where she was stabled. At this point, she felt she'd done more than enough for one day and refused to go any further. Despite additional rest and being allowed to graze, 8 of the passengers had to take over pulling the barge while Kitty walked alongside. They got as far as Winchfield before calling it a day. Whilst you might expect them to ask for a refund, actually the REC members had a great time and booked again for the following 2 years!

*Both photographs of the 24th Aug 1957
REC trip with the kind permission of
Chris Davies
(www.photosfromthefifties.co.uk)
whose father Hugh was the trip
organiser.*



Kitty alongside the 8 strong railway men who are pulling the boat!

Events Team

Events Plan for Spring and Summer 2025

Usually, the beginning of a year will involve making applications to attend other events. However, so far this year has been primarily helping to plan and organise the first of three public events to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the establishment of the Basingstoke Canal Society (originally The Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society).

As you can see from the list of summer events below, we have a lot going on, but can only attend if we have enough support from volunteers to transport, set up and run a stall. You would be most welcome if you have an hour or two to spare to help at an event near you. Please give me a call or drop me a message.

Heather Sloane - Events Coordinator
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Sat. 18 th April 12 noon to 4 pm	60th Anniversary Celebrations and Naming for <i>Kitty II</i> . At Boundary Road Recreation Ground, Woking.	The first of our events to celebrate 60 years since the Society was established to restore the Basingstoke Canal. Naming of Kitty II, boats, stalls, refreshments, and displays.
Mon 4 th May	Chobham Carnival Parade and stalls. Theme - Children's Story Characters.	Chobham Recreation Fields - an annual event, close to the venue for canal talks.
Sun 10 th May	Basingstoke Festival of Transport. Memorial Park.	Large car show of around 900 vehicles. Classic cars and vintage service vehicles.
Mon 25 th May	Farnborough Donkey Derby, King George V Playing Fields.	The Rotary Clubs of Farnborough and Rushmoor annual event.
Sat. 6 th June	Victoria Day, at Princes Gardens & Aldershot Town.	A colourful parade & family event. Themed Folklore and Fairy tales.
Sat. 13 th June - date tbc	Hartley Wintney Festival, On The Green.	A busy event and music festival on the village green beside the A30.

Forthcoming Events

Sat. 20 th June	Ash Village Fete, The Ash Centre, GU12 5DP.	A popular event run by Ash Parish Council.
Sat. 27 th June	St John's Village Fete, St John's Lye, Woking.	An annual event run by St John's Scout Group.
Sat. 27 th June	Reading Waterfest, Kennet & Avon Canal Trust, Reading RG7 4JS.	An opportunity to join Kennet & Avon Canal Trust who are celebrating their 75 Anniversary this year.
Sun 5 th July	Zebon Copse Residents' Association Fete. Church Crookham, GU52 0ZE.	The Community Centre is a short walk from Crookham swing bridge.
Sat 11 th July	60th Anniversary Celebrations BBQ and music.	A canal side gathering at The Fox & Hounds, Crookham Road, GU51 5NP.
Sun 12 th July - <i>date tbc</i>	Frimley Green Carnival, on The Green.	A busy summer event not far from the canal in Frimley Green.
Sat 18 th July	Friends of Oakley Park summer fete. Burnside, Fleet, GU51 3RE.	An invitation for us to provide a stall and Bubble Blowers.
Sat 18 th July	Dogmersfield Flower Show, Pilcot Farm, RG27 8ST.	Annual country flower show at this pleasant location.
Sat 18 th July	Odiham Church Fete, Hatchwood House, Odiham.	A pleasant church fete in lovely surroundings.
Sun. 6 th Sept. - <i>date tbc</i>	Odiham Raft Race.	Return of the annual raft race beside the canal at Colt Hill.

Membership Report

I am pleased to report that Membership has increased from last quarter by 24 to 1266. Below you can see a breakdown of membership that make up this number. The highest category is household. We are also pleased to see so many lifetime members - a wise investment in the future of the canal.

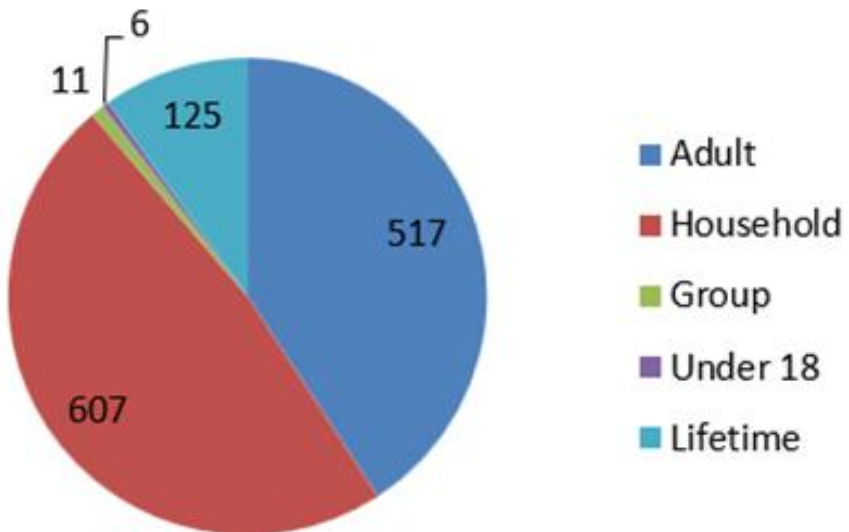
Those of you that renew on 1st March each year should have received renewal information and hopefully made appropriate payments.

And finally – you may have seen elsewhere that I have decided to relinquish this role. We are in the process of putting an updated Membership team together and we will provide more details on this in the next newsletter. However the membership application and renewal process will remain the same. If you wish to change any of your details (email, address etc), please contact us at changeyourdetails@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

Thank you as ever for your support of the society and its aims.

Andy Beale

Membership Secretary



BCS Information

Published by The Basingstoke Canal Society, a non-profit distributing company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Society. Executive members of the committee are shown in bold. * indicates Director of the Society.

Presidents	Tim & Elizabeth Dodwell		
Chairman	Ian Moore *	Kitty Trip Boat Manager	Ian Moore *
Honorary Secretary	Celia Griffiths *	Lengthman Organiser	Barry Jones
Treasurer	David Wall *	Lobbying	Nich Crowson *
Archivists	James Gregory-Marshall, Kevin Pizzey and Peter Whitlock	Marketing & Press Officer	Charlotte Rodgers *
BCN Editor	Elspeth Levi	Membership	Andrew Beale
Chobham Talks	Neil Barton	Planning	Graham Corser
Events Co-ordinator	Heather Sloane	Projects & Fund Raising	John Turner *
Corporate Engagement	Andy Brown *	Sales Manager	Lucy Beckford
External Talks	Roger Cansdale	Volunteers	Ken Sankey
Health & Safety	Mike Cawthra *	Website Manager	Charlotte Greenaway
IT	<i>Vacancy</i>	Weekend Work Party	Janet Buckley *
JPII Trip Boat Manager	Chris Hunter *	Work Site Manager	Kevin Redway

Useful Information

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[Website](http://www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk): www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk

Boat Trips

Fleet public trips

We are again bringing *John Pinkerton II* up to Fleet for the late May bank holiday on **Friday 22nd May** and will be running public trips from the Fox and Hounds pub 3 times a day on Saturday and twice on Sunday and Monday.

If you'd like to see parts of the canal we don't often cruise, you can join us for the journey from Odiham to Fleet or the return. Please note, for these one-way trips, passengers will need to arrange their own transport back to their starting point.

<https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/book-a-boat-trip/john-pinkerton/public-trips/> and scroll to the May calendar to view full details.

Kitty in Woking

While we are eagerly anticipating the arrival of *Kitty II* this spring, *Kitty* will be running the public trips and cream tea trips from the town wharf in Woking. The boat is also available to charter for smaller parties of up to 12 people.

Find out more here: <https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/book-a-boat-trip/kitty/>.

