

No. 289 Summer 2026



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News



Editorial

The past few months have been especially busy for the BCS. Our 60th anniversary celebration in Woking was a great success, and you can read more about it on pages 8 and 9. We were also delighted to get a double page spread in the Woking News & Mail on Thursday 23 April – hopefully this will promote interest in the Canal and help increase our membership.

The anniversary inspired a group of volunteers to create a commemorative video marking the occasion. It provides an excellent overview of the key events in the Society's history since its foundation. The video has proved very popular,

attracting more than 2,300 views on YouTube so far - huge congratulations to Neil Barton who led the team. The hardest part was probably deciding what could be left out – the video could well have been several hours long! Neil tells the story behind the video's creation on page 13.

The video can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7BZH2d1zvA.

Finally, the calendar competition is now open – further details on page 16.

Elsbeth Levi

Editor@Basingstoke-Canal.org.uk

Chobham Talks

There will not be any talks over the summer and the series will recommence in October. The schedule is as follows:

Wednesday October 21st, 8pm
Speaker: Jo East, Basingstoke Canal Authority

Jo East, Operations Manager for the Basingstoke Canal Authority, will be talking about her role, her observations since joining the BCA, and the plans for the coming years. She will also take questions from the audience.

Wednesday November 18th, 8pm
Speakers: Chris Davidson and Nick Hobley, Basingstoke Canal Canoe Club

Topic: The Yukon 1000. Paddling 1,000 miles down the Yukon River, the world's longest canoe race, following a route from the 19th century Klondike Gold Rush.

All talks take place at the Parish Pavilion on the A3046, Station Road, Chobham (map below).



Chairman's Report

The Society's Annual General Meeting was held at the Canal Centre on 2 May. The event was well attended and our guest speaker, Paul Deach of Surrey County Council and ardent supporter of the Canal and the Society, brought us all up to date with regards to the ownership and ongoing operation of the Canal. Due to the Local Government Review, the ownership of the Canal will be moving from Surrey and Hampshire County Councils to West Surrey and probably North Hampshire via a novation agreement which is set out in the current ownership agreement between Surrey and Hampshire. The ongoing limitations on the public finances continue to be a concern.

Due to ill health, Ian Moore has had to step back as the Society's Chairperson. He remains a trustee and we all wish him a speedy recovery.

Therefore, at the first committee meeting following the AGM, the committee was tasked with appointing a successor to Ian. So I, John Turner, have been elected Chairperson, with Mike Cawthra as Vice Chair. Both of us are relatively new to the Society.

Following contact with Ken Sankey late in 2020, I became a trustee early in 2021. I am a retired architect with board-level experience in helping to lead a major UK design practice with an extensive international presence. As an architect, I was asked to be the committee lead on the outward facing projects not undertaken by the Society's work parties.

Over the last few years this has involved me, with the invaluable help of Nick Sylvester, in ensuring there is an electric boat charging infrastructure available for *Kitty II*. I have also been working closely with Ian Moore on the liaison with the Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA) and the Canal owners. I have agreed to take on the role for an initial 12 month period.

As has been mentioned before, James Taylor has now retired from his position as Strategic Canal Manager, a role which is not being replaced.

Jo East, who joined the BCA last year as Canal Operations Manager, is now the BCA lead at the Canal Centre. She will be supported by Ben Sword, who is responsible for the Canal Centre which is operated by Surrey County Council. The Society has a good working relationship with both Jo and Ben and we look forward to working together in the future. There is plenty to achieve.

*John Turner
Chairman*



AGM 2026 Report

Members of the Basingstoke Canal Society gathered at the Canal Centre, Mytchett, on Saturday 2nd May 2026 for the Society's 49th Annual General Meeting, an occasion that reflected on a year of significant progress and looked ahead to the challenges and opportunities still to come.

The meeting was opened by Secretary Celia Griffiths, who began by conveying apologies from Chairman Ian Moore, who is currently unwell. Members were invited to sign a get-well card.

Co-President Tim Dodwell then presented his report, highlighting the year's achievements, including the eagerly awaited launch of *Kitty II*.

The Chairman's report, delivered by Celia Griffiths and John Turner, Head of Projects, painted an encouraging picture of the Society's momentum. Membership has risen to 1,265, while the number of volunteers has reached 310, meaning that more than one in four members now gives time and practical support to the Society's work.

Special thanks were expressed to the many people whose work has helped drive that progress, including Heather Sloane for events, Jeremy Martin for *Kitty II*, Nich Crowson as a former Director, Andy Beale for membership, Graham Deavin for Chobham Talks, Peter Whitlock and the archives team, Ken Sankey for volunteer support, and Graham Corser, Maura Corser and Neil Barton for their valued contributions.

The report also noted changes within the Basingstoke Canal Authority team. James Taylor, Strategic Manager for the Canal, has

now left and Jo East has recently joined as Operations Manager.

Roger Cansdale paid tribute to Frank Jones, whose contribution to the reopening of the Canal was immense. Members then observed a minute's silence in his memory.

Projects and Priorities for the Year Ahead

Among the most exciting updates was the news that *Kitty II* and its electrical infrastructure are now complete. The new boat is expected to begin carrying fare-paying passengers at the end of May 2026. As part of the agreement connected to the Your Fund Surrey grant, *Kitty* will be sold. Members also heard that three charging bollards have now been installed at Bridge Barn, with one dedicated to *Kitty II*.

The Society's financial commitments remain firmly focused on practical improvements to the Canal. These include funding repairs to *Unity*, the dredger owned by the Basingstoke Canal Authority, for up to £35,000; supporting dredging work this autumn following a report identifying the areas of greatest need; and purchasing another weed cutter for the Hampshire Pound. In addition, £5,000 has been spent on new personal protective equipment and additional power tools for work parties.

Training has also taken place for volunteer lock keepers to support the Basingstoke Canal Authority, an important step that should help more vessels travel along the Canal in the months ahead.

AGM Report (cont.)

Looking further ahead, the Society acknowledged several major challenges, including local government reorganisation, ongoing work with Natural England in relation to the Canal's Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and the continuing growth of weeds that make navigation more difficult.

David Wall, Treasurer, presented the accounts for review. These will be available on the website members' area.

The Society is keen to invest in dredging and purchasing a new weed cutter, and is continuing to work closely with the Basingstoke Canal Authority to move these projects forward.

Co-President Liz Dodwell brought the formal meeting to a close with warm congratulations for all that had been achieved and a strong call to keep momentum behind the projects already under way.

The guest speaker for the evening was Paul Deach, Councillor for Frimley Green and Mytchett and Chair of the Basingstoke Canal Joint Board, the body that scrutinises management decisions affecting the waterway. He spoke about the Board's role in overseeing the Canal's management and maintenance as an environmental, navigational and recreational asset, with the aim of balancing the interests of users while protecting the natural environment for future generations. His talk was followed by an informal and engaging question and answer session with members.

The AGM concluded with the presentation of awards, followed by refreshments and the opportunity for attendees to continue conversations with fellow members, volunteers and guests.



Co-President Tim Dodwell cuts the celebration cake to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the BCS.

Annual Awards

At the AGM, two awards were presented: the Robin Higgs award, given for services to the BCS and the Dieter Jebens award for photography.

This year, the Robin Higgs award was presented to Philip Riley (accepted by Martin Leech in Philip's absence).

Philip sent the following thank you note:

"I would like to sincerely thank the Committee for giving me the Robin Higgs Award. Robin was a great friend of mine and a tireless campaigner for the waterways, including, in particular, the Basingstoke Canal for which he had a life-long passion. Robin led the group of volunteers who secured the future of the canal in the 1970's and then led the huge volunteer effort which resulted in its re-opening in 1991. Robin's legacy must not be forgotten and we owe it to Robin and the visionaries who worked with him to ensure that the canal prospers and

continues to provide both a priceless natural environment and an important example of our rich industrial past."



Above: Martin Leech accepting the Robin Higgs award on behalf of Philip Riley. The trophy was presented by Liz Dodwell.



This year's winner of the Dieter Jebens award for photographic journalism was Lucy Beckford.

Since joining the Marketing Team last year, Lucy has provided photographs and stories for the BCN and social media, such as the John Pinkerton Wedding Anniversary trip, the Baton of Hope and the "Friday Find Its".

Her winning photograph has been used as this edition's front cover - a great shot of *Kitty II* making her way up the Canal for the first time. The award was presented by Roger Cansdale.

Frank Jones - a Tribute by Philip Riley

I first met Frank in the late 1970s when the restoration of the Deepcut Flight was well underway. Prior to that, in 1976, Frank had organised the Big Dig, which had launched the restoration of the Deepcut 14 providing a massive boost to the restoration effort. At that time, Frank organised all the work parties and was working full time on the canal with his two friends, Martin Smith and Jim Reid.

Frank commanded enormous respect in the canal restoration movement and he was very effective in building fruitful and enduring relationships with a number of canal restoration groups. All of them worked on the canal for several years, including the London branch of the Waterways Recovery Group, the Southampton Canal Society (led by Peter Oates), the Kent & East Sussex IWA (led by Ken Parish) and the Newbury Working Party Group (led by Bill Nicholson). Frank appointed Mike Fellows to co-ordinate all the volunteer work parties which turned out, whatever the weather, each weekend. At that time, the volunteer work parties were run by several of Frank's trusted lieutenants including Alan Grimster, Jules Wood, Jim Chisholm, Chris Brazier, and his brother, Peter. Frank's organising abilities and his knowledge were also drawn upon by the team at St Johns (organised by Peter Redway and Ken Halls), by Pablo Haworth (on locks 5 and 6) and by Dick Harper-White who led the IWA restoration team at Lock 1.

Frank was responsible for liaising with the County Councils (mainly Surrey) to ensure that all the plant and materials were available at the worksites for the weekend activities and that the working plan had been agreed. During the week, the full-time team worked on the locks and bridges and built the majority of the 118 lock gates needed for all the lock flights and the Deepcut dry dock.

Frank built up a very close relationship with the County officers and became extremely adept at ensuring that the Canal Society got what it wanted from the Counties with the minimum of bureaucracy (which he strongly disliked).

Frank was also instrumental in organising the Basingstoke Canal Job Creation Programme, part of a Government scheme, which employed work parties of young people to work on the canal where they learned practical skills, including brick-laying and concrete form work. His encyclopaedic knowledge of the Basingstoke Canal, practical skills and long experience in dealing with the many individuals who had influenced its development over the years, enabled him to become the source of much of the knowledge and experience that were needed to complete the mammoth task of restoration.

I believe it is true to say the restoration would not have been achieved without Frank's unique contribution. He had that essential quality of leadership and the ability to inspire his team and taking a 'can do' approach to any problem, however intractable. Frank's legacy is the beautiful canal that we enjoy today. It now falls to us to preserve it and to ensure that we pass it on to the generations that follow us.



60th Anniversary Event

Saturday 18th April saw the Basingstoke Canal Society mark its 60th Anniversary with a community event where their new electric trip boat *Kitty II* was officially named.

The family friendly celebration at Boundary Road Recreation Ground in Woking gathered hundreds of people throughout the sunny afternoon, all of whom enjoyed the insight into the Society's archives, the many local community groups and charities, the fair ground rides, the balloon artist and, of course, hopping aboard *Kitty II* to see the new trip boat and perhaps also taking a trip back to town on *Kitty* as well!

It was a wonderful celebration bringing together Basingstoke Canal Society members, volunteers, supporters, Facebook followers and local people.

Following some rousing tunes from the Almac Bisley Brass Band, *Kitty II* was officially named by Liz & Tim Dodwell, Presidents of the BCS, after some words from Neil Barton, BCS Volunteer and Rob Leech, Deputy Mayor of Woking.

There really was something for everyone and we were overwhelmed with the outpouring of support from the community and all those who came along who value this beautiful canal on their doorstep.

Celia Griffiths, BCS Secretary, said she was particularly thrilled to welcome so many local residents to look around *Kitty II* and to see so many spectators for the Convey weed cutter displays.

No other day has personally made me prouder to be a Canal Society volunteer, a true triumph for the charity!

Charlotte Rodgers

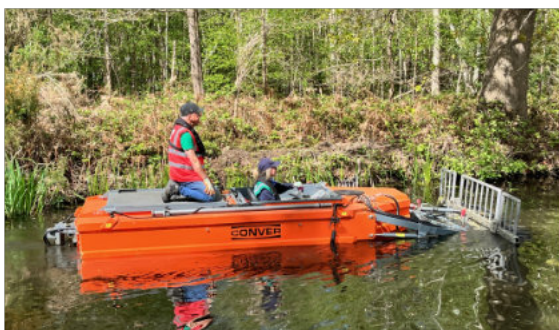


Aerial view of 60th Event - image credit Michael Evans

60th Anniversary Event



Volunteers started early



The Conver weed cutter and team



The display by the Archive Team was very popular



Presidents Liz and Tim Dodwell with Kitty II



Naming ceremony for Kitty II

BCS Volunteer Lock keepers

It's great to report that the new Volunteer Lock keeper initiative is underway with the first boats already having been helped through the Brookwood and Deepcut flights.

We already know that the Basingstoke Canal is an absolutely wonderful stretch of water, however the the 28 double locks that you have to climb through to the top of Deepcut can be a bit of a challenge and this new initiative will help visitors through the 17 locks of the Brookwood and Deepcut flights.

There are several benefits to this initiative. Firstly, encouraging more visiting boats to the Canal. Following the first 'transits', we are sending out communications to the boating world to let them know that support is available.

Secondly, and most importantly, it should improve water management on the Canal. Our canal is prone to running low on water before the end of the summer. By having dedicated volunteer lock keepers who go ahead with the boats while the Rangers "caulk up" the leaks coming through the lock gates, we aim to use water more efficiently and help maintain navigation throughout the season, encouraging more visiting boaters.

This is a joint initiative between the BCA and the BCS. Also, the Society has provided funding for lifejackets and other equipment. We want to say a hearty thanks to Jayne Raby, the Community Ranger for leading this, a great example of the BCA and BCS working together.

Jayne Raby commented, "Andy and Ross did a great job, especially when there were issues with the lower paddles of Lock 22, proving it is an asset having the volunteers on hand to help."

Thanks also to the volunteers. Within days of advertising the role, we had over 24 people apply and already 18 have been trained and available to help visiting boats. The role is very interesting as it includes meeting and greeting visitors and boaters, being an ambassador for the Basingstoke Canal, assisting boats safely through the locks and helping improve water management across the Canal.

Let's all look forward to more boats on the Canal!

Ken Sankey



Volunteer Andy Beale assists visiting boat

A Hearty Thank You

Pictured on the right is Councillor Paul Deach with Celia Griffiths, BCS Secretary, with one of the defibrillators we purchased with support from Surrey County Council. BCS bought three defibrillators for use on *Kitty II*, *Rosebud* and one of our workboats.

Paul was instrumental in securing a Surrey County Council grant towards two of them, and Will Forster, a former Surrey County Councillor, also provided a grant to strengthen our funding.

These will be a valuable addition to our boats, although we hope they are never needed. *John Pinkerton II*, our Odiham trip boat, also carries a defibrillator.



QR codes to encourage donations

Over the coming months you may notice QR codes being added to the information boards along the canal towpath.

The aim of these QR codes is to both raise awareness of the Society and to raise funds from those visiting the Canal that may not otherwise be aware of our charitable efforts towards keeping the canal alive. When a user scans the QR code using their camera on their mobile device, it will automatically take them to a donation page where they can make a small pre-determined donation of £2.

The QR code panels were designed with security in mind, and they are very purposefully double layered with a piece of Perspex on top. This makes it easier to

spot if they have been tampered with, for example by someone fraudulently over-stickering. This is highly unlikely and we have plans in place to keep an eye on these QR codes.

If you do spot a QR code in your local area and it doesn't look right, please do report this to us (enquiries@basingstoke-canal.org.uk).

We hope this is a new way for people to donate to our efforts and attract attention from new visitors to the Canal.





Ash Parish Council donation

The BCS was the nominated charity for Ash Parish Council, and we were delighted to receive a cheque for £2522.00. A small ceremony was held in April aboard *Kitty II*, and in the photograph you can see left to right: Jeremy Martin & Derek Taylor (Kitty Crew), John Tonks (Ash Parish Councillor), Ali Watmore (Ash Parish Council Clerk), David Wall and Charlotte Rodgers (BCS Trustees).

Councillor John Tonks said, "Our donation is intended to support the excellent work you do in maintaining the Basingstoke Canal for all of us to enjoy. The funds were raised through our community events held throughout the year.

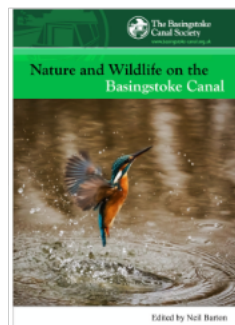
At these events, the Council applied a small fee to any stallholder operating as a business, and we also ran very successful tombolas and raffles. We would like to thank our local community for coming together to enjoy these events, which not only bring people together but also enable the Council to raise money and celebrate the outstanding work of our local charities, such as the Basingstoke Canal Society, who help ensure that the canal running through our village remains a pleasant place for everyone."

Many thanks from the BCS to Ash Parish Council, the contribution will make a tremendous difference to the Society.

Nature and Wildlife booklet

As a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the Basingstoke Canal is home to over 100 plant species, 29 species of dragonfly, and one of the largest bat colonies in the country. This booklet explains in layman's terms what can be commonly found, what is unusual, what is rare, and what is invasive.

Available from the BCS online shop: <https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/product/basingstoke-canal-nature-booklet/>.



How to save a canal video

One of the Canal Society's secret treasures is its archives. The archivists have a box of about 50 DVDs containing hundreds of hours of cine film and video taken over the last sixty years. We thought that if we could make a short digestible edit, it would be a good way of engaging the public and informing them about our work and 60th anniversary.

The first task was to find the original letter, written by Jim Woolgar to the Farnham Herald in 1966, proposing the formation of a 'Basingstoke Canal Restoration Society.' This was a bit of a mission - the Farnham Herald don't keep copies that far back - but we finally ran it to ground on microfilm at the Surrey History Centre in Woking.

A previous archivist, David Tonkinson, had diligently been through all the DVDs and indexed them. A good source was some "slidefilms", produced by Arthur Dungate in the early 90s, which held rare images of the restoration and re-opening. Unfortunately, when they were converted to DVD the picture quality was not great, but the sound was excellent and provided us with interviews from people who had worked on the restoration. An excellent find was two DVDs of cine film taken by Mike Hammersley. This provided us with many of the shots showing the restoration and light railway.

There were two other excellent sources. One was the archives themselves, where Peter Whitlock was able to provide us with useful pictures and maps. The other was the extraordinary Roger Cansdale, whose knowledge of the canal, booklets, and stash of pictures and films was invaluable.

One of the most mysterious DVDs was titled "The ones we thought we'd lost (Basingstoke canal and others)", © J.W and C.A Beckett 2010. However, it contains cine film that came from the 60s, not 2010. Inside there is a handwritten note saying "Film by Jim Beckett. Roger, if you need any more information please contact me and I will try to help" and signed by Alf Preston. We have been unable to find out anything more about Jim Beckett or Alf Preston, but since their material was donated to the BCS archives, we made good use of it anyway!

To show the work of the Society today, we needed new footage. A lengthsman, Guy Hillier, kindly let us film him at work. The Tuesday work party, organised by Jayne Raby, were very patient as we filmed them cleaning locks, painting lock gates, and clearing the tow path. To show the aqueduct over the A331, we enlisted a society member with a convertible car and spent a very cold afternoon driving up and down the dual carriageway!

The finished film is 28 minutes long, and you can find it on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7BZH2d1zvA> (or if you prefer at <https://tinyurl.com/w447j7m6>).

Neil Barton



From the Archives

Marker Stones along the Canal

In the archives we have many old maps covering various sections of the canal. These include some original Ordnance Survey maps from about 1872 onwards.

If you walk along the canal on the section between Queen's Avenue Bridge in Aldershot and Pondtail Bridge in Fleet you are likely to notice some of the marker stones beside the towpath. But have you

ever wondered what they were for, and how many more are hidden from view?

The picture below shows one of the more prominent stones. Stone #642 is east of the Norris Bridges near to the 31.0km chainage post.

You can see that it has an up arrow, below which is W.D. and the number. The letters stand for War Department which is a big clue to why they are there, especially with Aldershot being a military town.



Stone WD 642 east of the Norris Bridges

From the Archives (cont.)

Between 1854 and 1859, the military constructed barracks on heath and common land in the Aldershot area, through which the canal passed. These became known as South Camp and North Camp on the relative sides of the canal.

Following acquisition of the land then, and at later dates, stone markers were placed indicating the land that was owned by the War Department. They did not purchase the canal, which at the time was still owned by the original Canal Company. Hence, stones were placed on both the towpath side and offside of the canal to mark the boundary between War Department and Canal Company land.

I have 'surveyed' the canal looking for marker stones and now have a database of over 30 stones that I have found so far, along with GPS co-ordinates. They are on both sides of the canal; some are quite well hidden, even partially buried, and the numbers on some are no longer visible. On the towpath side you need to look, or go up, the earth banks or look over fences to find some of them. On the offside, some can be accessed by straying from available paths, and there are some that can be seen but not accessed. I suspect that there are others that I have not yet found!

The positioning of the stones are clearly marked on the older 25" Ordnance Survey maps from around 1872 onwards. It is therefore possible to find the locations of the stones at that time. There are a few hundred marked on

maps alongside the canal between Fleet and Ash Embankment.

Next time you are out on that section of the canal, have a look and see how many you can spot. Many of the offside stones can be seen from the towpath, particularly between Claycart and Eelmoor Bridges.

We hope that you will 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.

Peter Whitlock



Stone WD 585 on the West side of Iron Bridge

Weekend Work Party Report

In late February, we finished the last of the Rhododendron chipping near Barley Mow. The deadline was enforced upon us by the onset of bird nesting season (at the start of March), but also came as a welcome relief to the work party as this was hard physical activity and also probably welcome to local residents as it was quite noisy.

At the beginning of March, we began a series of long overdue odd jobs starting with repairing the fencing at Barley Mow Wharf where, over the years, various parts of the fencing had become rotten and fallen away. It now looks much neater and tidier and, more importantly, safer for the public. We then pulled out of the water one of the Society's smaller boats, called *Tank*, near Colt Hill in preparation for repairs. This was easier said than done and, after several attempts using manpower alone, various winch mechanisms were used to add to the manpower and, eventually, we managed to complete the task. After this, we headed up to our burn site to have a bonfire with all of the accumulated mountain of bank clearance branches. We didn't think we'd get through it all, but with a lot of hard work, and a very hot bonfire, the site was eventually reduced to just a pile of burning embers.



Towards the end of March, we turned our attention to redecking the barge *Beth* where the wooden decking had become rotten. Heavy duty plastic matting was chosen as a suitable alternative and this kept us busy for both days.

For the first work party in April, we dealt with the remnants of a number of fallen trees in the Barley Mow area and then moved the work boat *Alan Flight* and the barge *Beth* from Barley Mow back to Odiham. Typical of the weather for April, one minute it was glorious sunshine, then the heavens opened and we were attempting to set a new Guinness World Record for how many people we could squeeze into the cabin of the work boat.



Above: Alan Flight

For the last work party in April, we were bathed in glorious sunshine. The lawnmowers were set to work on the Society's land at Colt Hill, and preparations were made for future towpath resurfacing near Broad Oak, loading temporary fencing onto the barge.

Weekend Work Party Report (cont.)

On the Sunday, it was back to more odd jobs which involved repainting the roof of the work boat and repairs to *Tank*. We now have a very nicely painted roof and a tired looking rest of the boat. However, the roof was in urgent need of a paint and this will suffice for now until we can do a full paint at some point.

Mid-May saw the team manually load the several tonnes of roadstone back onto the barge *Beth* in preparation for upcoming towpath work at Broad Oak. On the Sunday, floating trees and branches were retrieved from the canal between Colt Hill at Odiham and the Castle.

Greg Sutton



Roadstone for towpath work at Broad Oak

2027 Calendar Photo Competition – Now Open!

It's that time again – the Basingstoke Canal Society's 2027 calendar photo competition is officially open!

Our calendar accounts for nearly half of our annual online sales, making it a vital fundraiser to support and protect our beautiful canal – so your entries really do make a difference. Not only that, all winning entrants receive a free calendar.

📷 What we're looking for:

- Colour photographs
- Landscape format
- High resolution (suitable for A4 at 300dpi – roughly 1MB JPG)

There's no limit to how many photos you can submit, but entries must be from amateur photographers.

📅 Deadline: Thursday 31 July 2026

That gives you two months to dig out your best shots or head out and capture something new.

📧 How to enter:

Email your photos to editor@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

(Please note: entries shared on social media can't be included.)

Top tip:

Winning images often feature a clear focal point – perhaps a boat, a person, or a moment that's connected to our 60th Anniversary. If people appear in your photo, please ensure you have their written permission if they are recognisable. And don't forget – your image must have a connection to the Basingstoke Canal.

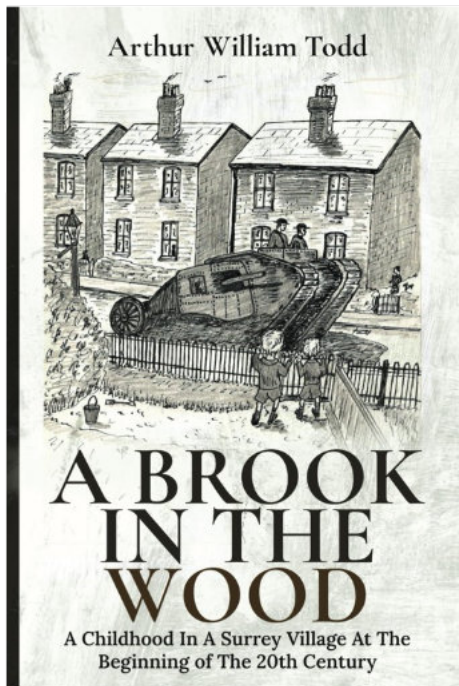
Good luck – we can't wait to see your photos!

Book Review by Lucy Beckford

A Brook in the Wood by Arthur William Todd is a gentle, engaging account of his childhood in Brookwood between 1912 and 1924. With sharp observation and understated humour, Todd recalls the close-knit nature of rural village life - from schooldays and family routines to the simple pleasures of exploring the surrounding countryside. He also reflects on the upheaval caused by the nearby military camps during the First World War and the hardships that everyone endured.

Of particular interest are his vivid descriptions of the Basingstoke Canal, the story behind Halfpenny Bridge (now Sheets Heath Bridge), the antics he and his friends got up to on the Canal and his recollections of the Brookwood Cemetery and Bisley train lines.

Authentic and sincere, this memoir will appeal to anyone interested in Woking's local history, early-20th-century village life or the civilian side of wartime Britain. With original illustrations, *A Brook in the Wood* remembers a bygone era with honesty, insight and charm. Available from Amazon for £8.50.



Coming Soon!

A new series of four "*Find It on the Basingstoke Canal*" books is on the way, starting with the Woking edition due this summer.

Packed with interesting things to spot and discover from the towpath, these handy guides will add interest to walks along the Canal. Available soon from the Basingstoke Canal Society online shop.

Drydock Activities

Each year in early February, a group of Society volunteers migrate to the drydock at Deepcut where they service and carry out the various renovation tasks required to keep the BCA's Mytchett based fleet in good running order. These are annual tasks that can be performed during the winter months between boating seasons. Although, there are other "high priority" tasks during the year which need immediate attention to keep the operation running and ensure revenues keep flowing in. For example, during last season, the engine mounting brackets on *Rosebud* failed, which required a very short notice trip to the dry dock so that replacement brackets could be welded into place ensuring continued safe operation.

The BCA Mytchett based fleet consists of 3 vessels: the rescue dory used by the BCA pleasure boat hire team; the Patrol Boat which is mainly crewed by BCS volunteers and regularly patrols between Deepcut and Ash Lock, sometimes venturing up to Fleet and beyond; and finally there is *Rosebud*, the BCA's revenue generating trip boat which must be ready and returned to Mytchett in time for the start of the season on Mothering Sunday, a very popular event which is always sold out.

Apart from servicing all the engines, the integrity of the vessels' hulls and superstructure need inspection and maintenance, and this year was no exception. *Rosebud*'s cabin needed considerable attention including the replacement of several internal side panels, improvements to the weather protection and a complete paint refresh throughout. *Rosebud* now looks very smart inside and out.

The Patrol Boat is very heavily used throughout the year and consequently always needs a lot of attention. A few years ago, the foredeck was replaced and should have lasted considerably longer than it did. But it seems that the plywood we were supplied really wasn't up to the job and unfortunately needed replacing again. This year, it was replaced with "hopefully" top quality marine ply, and we treated it with epoxy primer and topcoats which should give it a much longer life. Other areas that needed attention included the port side of the work deck, the electrics for the bilge pump and a replacement starboard side window and then finally a complete repaint.

All three boats are now back at Mytchett ready for another busy year.

Mark Gaines

*Patrol Boat
maintenance
activity in the
drydock*



Events

When we met to decide how and when we would celebrate the 60th Anniversary of The Basingstoke Canal Society (BCS), we of course had to include two counties, 32 miles of canal and a few months of longer days. We decided upon three events in the towns closest to the canal. As you will have read, the first was in Woking and gave us an ideal opportunity to introduce *Kitty II* to members and visitors in Surrey.

The next will be on **Saturday 11th July** where you can enjoy a tasty barbecue at The Fox and Hounds in Fleet and an afternoon of entertainment beside the Canal. The pub will be open from 12 noon. Tickets for the barbecue can be purchased on the day with drinks at the bar and a variety of bands will perform throughout the afternoon.

We will have displays on the towpath near the pub, plus games and stalls a short walk along the towpath on the grassed area beside Reading Road bridge. The Accessible Boating Association (ABA) are also celebrating their 40th Anniversary this year and will be bringing "*Dawn*" to provide

short trips along the towpath between the two sites, as *Kitty* did in Woking. Anyone who wants to come along on boats, kayaks or paddleboards will be most welcome.

When the canal was completed in September 1794 the largest settlement along it was Odiham, so this had to be included in the 60th anniversary plan. We are delighted that the organisers of the annual Odiham Raft Race have invited members of the BCS and ABA to come along and join in the fun on **Saturday 6th September**.

The races start at 12:30 and are followed by a very entertaining tug-o-war between any rafts still afloat! There will be stalls, a beer tent and tasty treats available and you are welcome to bring a picnic. We suggest you also bring folding chairs.

If you are interested in helping for an hour or two at an event near you, or would like more information about any of the events listed here, please contact me: heather.sloane@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

Heather Sloane, BCS Events Coordinator



Waiting for the Kitty II naming ceremony at our 60th Event on 18 April.

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 20 June 12 noon - 4pm	Ash Village Fete, The Ash Centre, GU12 5DP	A popular event run by Ash Parish Council.
Sunday 28 June Armed Forces Day, 10am - 5pm	Queens Avenue, Aldershot, GU11 2JL	Community event, more information at: www.rushmoor.gov.uk/armed-forces-day-national-event-2026/what-s-on-sunday-28-june/
Sunday 5 July 1 - 5pm	Zebon Copse Residents' Association Fete, Church Crookham, GU52 0ZE	The Community Centre is a short walk from Crookham Swing Bridge.
Saturday 11 July 12 noon - 7pm	The Fox & Hounds, Crookham Road, GU51 5NP	BCS 60th Anniversary Celebrations - BBQ and music evening on the canal side.
Sunday 12 July 12 noon - 5pm	Frimley Green Carnival on The Green.	A busy summer event not far from the canal in Frimley Green.
Saturday 18 July 12 noon - 3pm	Friends of Oakley Park, Burnside, Fleet, GU51 3RE	Summer Fete, BCS stall More information will be available at: www.oakleypark.org.uk
Saturday 18 July 2 - 5 pm	Dogmersfield Flower Show, Pilcot Farm, RG27 8ST	Annual country flower show with vast classic cars display.
Tuesday 21 July 7pm	The Mill House, North Warnborough, Odiham, RG29 1ET	The Mikron Theatre will perform 'Wensleydale Whey'. <i>No tickets required; donations welcome.</i>
Sunday 6 September 1 - 5pm	Odiham Raft Race, Colt Hill, RG29 1DH	Return of the annual raft race.

As this information is published well in advance of the events, we recommend checking up to date event information on the internet before attending.

Book your Summer trips now

There are several special trips coming up on *John Pinkerton II* departing from Colt Hill Wharf, Odiham, to celebrate our 60th Anniversary.

On **Thursday 18th June** at 7pm there will be a special cruise and talk (How to save a canal), by Neil Barton. Neil's talk will cover why canals need saving, how the canal restoration movement took off, and how the Basingstoke Canal was brought back from the dead.

Why not enjoy an afternoon cruise on **July 17th** at 2pm when Liz Dodwell will be discussing her book "My mother bought a canal"? Tim and Liz Dodwell have been involved with the Basingstoke Canal ever since Liz's mother, Joan Marshall bought the canal at auction in 1949.

Celebrating the solstice

Join us on an early morning cruise to enjoy the canal at sunrise on **Saturday June 21st** departing at 4am. There will be stops along the way to allow for photography so bring your camera to capture the natural beauty along the way. Continental breakfast will be served on the return journey.

On **June 24th** there will be an evening trip to make the most of the longest day. Enjoy the scenery, watch the sun set and maybe take some stunning photographs, weather permitting. The Skipper will pause for any good photo opportunities. The fully licensed bar and galley will be open serving a wide selection of drinks, snacks and souvenirs.

Full details and booking on the website:

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

Kitty II

Kitty II is now running a full schedule from Woking. This is a great opportunity to enjoy a journey on our newest trip boat and experience the quietness of an electric boat.

<https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk/book-a-boat-trip/kitty/public-trips/>



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.

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Chairman	John Turner *	JPII Trip Boat Manager	Chris Hunter *
Vice Chair	Mike Cawthra	Kitty Trip Boat Manager	Ian Moore/ Jeremy Martin
Honorary Secretary	Celia Griffiths *	Lengthsman organiser	Barry Jones
Treasurer	David Wall *	Lobbying	TBC
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Events Co-ordinator	Heather Sloane	Sales Manager	Lucy Beckford
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IT	Daniel Bradberry *	Work Site Manager	Kevin Redway

Useful Information

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Website: www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk

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Back cover image: *Kitty II* at Woking Event

