



BASINGSTOKE CANAL NEWS

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Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society Ltd

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Editorial



It was good to see so many people at the AGM and even better to see a few new faces in addition to the regulars. I hope that they found it interesting and made some new friends.

We clearly do need new members. Graham Hornsey reported that the number of actual memberships (which include couples and families) has dropped to under 1000. At one time it was more than double this number.

Of course it is always easier to attract members when there is a clearly defined objective, such as re-opening a canal. However, as was apparent from Ian Brown's presentation at the AGM, trying to keep the canal going after it has been restored is every bit as demanding and probably even more difficult as the glamour and enthusiasm of the original campaign dwindles.

Cover Picture: New gates for Lock 21
(Story on page 10)
Photo: Roger Cansdale

A member of the public recently criticised the Society for its failure to prevent a highly inappropriate housing development next to the canal in Dogmersfield. We sympathise with his disgust that approval was granted despite our objections, but it illustrates the point that we need an active and involved membership to fight such threats to the canal.

Why not make a resolution to try to recruit one new member this year, and preferably a reasonably young one? Buy someone a year's membership as a surprise birthday present.

* * * * *

It's been some years since I was last on the water in Woking, so it was interesting to take a turn at crewing the little trip boat *Rosebud* at the Bridge Barn rally on Easter Saturday; interesting but also a bit depressing.

Between Bridge Barn and the town centre, the canal is, quite frankly, a mess. The navigation is reduced to a narrow channel by reed beds and is further impeded by floating debris of one sort and another. It also needs dredging. Perhaps this is why none of the houses backing on to the canal seems to have a boat or a landing stage.

Contrast this with Fleet, where almost every other garden has at least a canoe or dinghy at the end of it.

The irony is that Hart Council has the worst record of any riparian district council for supporting the canal, whereas Woking has always been very good. It seems a shame that their support has not resulted in more being made of the

canal through the town. The problem is that if the canal looks un-cared for, people tend to treat it as a tip. Perhaps keeping the channel clear of rubbish might be a job for the *Swingbridge* team?

We have long pressed for a development on the Brewery Road site that would enhance the interface between the town and canal, and, with the demise of the County Council headquarters scheme, we need to keep an eye on future proposals and perhaps push our ideas forward again.

* * * * *

The *John Pinkerton's* appearance as the venue for the press conference for the new Lightbox building in Woking was a good start for, hopefully, a constructive relationship between the Canal Society and this prestigious museum/gallery/event centre, that might help to give us a voice in influencing developments in the Brewery Road area opposite.

What a pity that the original plans for boat moorings on the off side at the Lightbox were scuppered by English Nature on the grounds that there might be rare plants there. They didn't find any, in what is not anyway part of the designated SSSI, and aren't likely to now after all the building work. I do wish that they could stop crying wolf and target their objections where there really is something endangered. Natural England seems to have a lot of power without being accountable for the consequences of their activities to anyone except themselves.

* * * * *

One occasion when some intervention from Natural England would have been welcome, but was not forthcoming, was when the Society objected to the plans for a so-called 'estate worker's farmstead' next to the canal in Dogmersfield.

Why Hart's Planning Office saw fit to grant approval to this house in one of the most tranquil and remote parts of the canal conservation area remains a mystery, and I think someone should be called to account for it. In a right-to-buy case currently going through the courts, it is being argued that even the canal rangers do not need to live in cottages next to the canal, so even if the Dogmersfield estate worker did need accommodation, there was no reason to position it so close to the canal.

The development looks remarkably luxurious for an estate worker and would undoubtedly sell on the open market for something well in excess of a million pounds. It will be interesting to see how long it takes to appear for sale in *Country Life* or a similar publication.

Or am I being cynical?

Chairman's Report to the AGM

The past year has been one of significant changes for the canal. At our last AGM we were fighting proposed cuts in finance on a number of fronts and a canal closure was being considered by a County Council.

I am pleased to report that last October the Canal Joint Management Committee approved officers' recommendations as follows:

1. Negotiation of a sustainable Revenue Funding formula and Service Level Agreements with Riparian Districts and the two County Councils. Work in kind or agreed finance or a combination of both may differ between Authorities. For reference, Society contributions for 2006 amounted to £47,082 in cash plus Contribution in Kind (volunteer days) equivalent to £27,450, giving a total of £74,532.
2. Surrey and Hampshire Wildlife Trusts' involvement in education and school visits and possibly tree management.
3. Not to close the canal for through navigation.
4. Investigate the Charitable Trust Options, initially for management under contract evolving to full repairing lease as the repairs are carried out.
5. Undertake a condition survey of the canal in Surrey and Hampshire.

Condition Survey

Whilst the fabric of the canal is not yet in Intensive Care, it is in my opinion in a critical condition. BCA surveys, carried out some three years ago indicated that structural failure could occur, and in the last year it has!

Repairs at Locks 27 and 22 were required to maintain navigation, and we agreed to repair the Lock 8 by-pass pipes prior to the Easter Bridge Barn event. The land slip at Deepcut was removed from the canal prior to Easter at BCA expense.

Revenue funding should be used for preventive maintenance, not repairs after structural failure. The BCA have completed repair works with their own resources to keep the navigation open, and the owners now need to give them the support they need on the capital issues.

The condition survey will identify all repairs required to put the canal in good condition, so that priority works and estimates for repairs can then be programmed over a period.

A brief for the survey has been agreed and work should begin this year; any closure of the canal will be used to complete surveys as appropriate. Seasonal requirements are expected to extend the survey over two years.

Monitoring the spend on capital works is expected to use a proven BW system.

Brookwood Conservation

Remedial SSSI work at Brookwood is being sponsored by the HSBC. Plans to construct a reed bed around the flash at Hermitage Bridge have the advantage of providing habitat and filtering surface water run off.

The Nicospan supports for the shallows have been constructed, dredging the canal channel is scheduled for the autumn, dredgings will provide the shallows and planting will follow. The concept is that boats will be able to turn in the deeper water and that navigation and habitat can co-exist achieving a win-win situation for navigation and wildlife.

Some facilities to improve the mooring on the north bank are also included in the plans.

Perseverance

Publicity in the waterways press about the boat collection at Ellesmere Port, and our continued lobbying of The Waterways Trust have improved the possibility of *Perseverance* being partially restored.

Perseverance is included in the top 20 craft listed for restoration, and a Heritage Lottery application is being made by TWT for restoration funds in a background of some £90 million being re-allocated to the Olympics.

TWT anticipate that restoration to a floating exhibit is the best option for *Perseverance*, or at worst a land based exhibit. Our aspiration is for full restoration to steam and movement around the waterways as part of the National Collection.

The possibility of match funding by SHCS to restore to steam has been raised by TWT, but Society options need to be considered before any decision is made.

In closing, I wish to thank the Committee, the BCA, all the behind the scenes workers and my family for their support and help during the past year.

Peter Redway

And, as usual, thanks to our Chairman for his continuing efforts on behalf of the canal and the Society. As an example, in the last year he has not only been heavily involved in getting the services of a new dredger on the canal, but also recently drove up to Ellesmere Port and back in a day for a meeting to try to ensure the survival of our old one, Perseverance.

Annual General Meeting

The venue for the AGM this year moved to the Fleet Football Club, just up the road from the Fox & Hounds, in order to encourage some more of the Western-Enders to attend. It was gratifying to see that numbers were up on last year and also very nice to see a few new faces. Thanks also to those from the eastern end who still made the effort to attend.

Annual General Meeting

After accepting the minutes of the previous AGM and the EGM, that was held finally to agree the accounts, as true records of these meetings, the Treasurer was asked to present the accounts for 2006.

Graham Hornsey, who took over the post from Jonathan Wade last year, explained that the accounts were now larger and more complicated than before because they had to comply with the Charity Commission's Statement of Recommended Practice. The auditors used a standard template which had produced a certain amount of duplication of information. However, the main information of interest to members was on the final two pages of the accounts (see *Page 13*). These showed that income from subscriptions had dropped, and he noted that the number of individual subscriptions was now under 1000, equating to approximately 1750 actual members. Profits from the Boat Company, however, were at a record level. Interest was also up due to having more money in the bank and higher interest rates. The Advertising and PR sum included the cost of the 40th Anniversary booklet produced last year. Insurance costs actually covered premiums for 2 years because of when these had been paid. The surplus for the year amounted to £6,299.

The Treasurer explained the Fixed Assets included the work-boat that was acquired last year. Other items owned by the Society for some years, such as the *John Pinkerton*, were considered to have been fully depreciated and did not therefore appear, although they clearly did have value.

The accounts now showed three separate funds. The General Fund represented income for no specified purpose, whilst the Restricted Fund was money to be spent according to the donor's wishes, and the Designated Fund was money set aside for a specific purpose by the Committee.

The Treasurer reported that the balance carried forward was £80,933. This was likely to increase significantly this year since the Society stood to receive a bequest from the late member, Alan Flight, that would run to six figures.

The accounts were accepted unanimously and the reborn Hilton & Co were appointed as auditors for 2007.

The Secretary announced that as there had been only 10 nominations for the 12 seats on the Committee, the following were elected unopposed:-

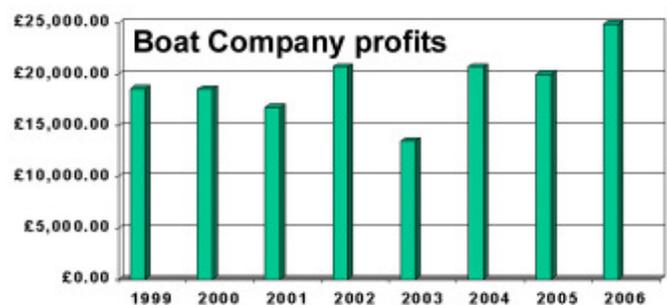
Peter Redway, Dieter Jebens, Verna Smith, Graham Hornsey, Roger Cansdale, Roger Ilett, Philip Riley, John Ross, Jonathan Wade, Peter Wright.

The Secretary thanked David Lloydlangston and Bob Malcolm for their contributions. David had in fact now taken over the job of Bar Stocking Manager for the *John Pinkerton*. She welcomed John Ross to the Committee; he had already played a major part in setting up the recent exhibition at the Milestones Museum.

This ended the formal business of the meeting.

Boat Company report

Peter Wright gave a brief account of the 2006 season, which had produced record profits of about £25,000. There were several reasons - bookings up, Air Show income, lower maintenance spending and inclusion of the Sales income.



Peter said that bookings were looking good for this year as well. It was intended to dispose of the small trip boat *Dragonfly*. This had been donated to the Society some years ago, but had never done more than cover its operating costs on the occasions when it had been used. The BCA had allowed the Society to use their small trip boat, *Rosebud*, at the Bridge Barn, which had been very successful; £400 had been made over the 2 days that would go to the BCA. It was intended to use this boat in future for such occasions.

Peter mentioned that 3 *John Pinkerton* captains had done an RYA Instructors course and now had formal qualifications to train others. A new licensing scheme would be coming in later this year and they wanted to be prepared. Peter showed a chart detailing all the Boat Company jobs. In addition to the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, there were a dozen other major posts - Crew Managers, Booking Managers, Bar Stocking, Bar licence Holder, Website Production, Uniform Stockist, Records, Publicity, Brochures, Daily Maintenance, Planned Maintenance. Ideally each post shown have one person plus a deputy.

The message was that they needed more help! (*Anyone interested can contact Peter on 01344-772461*)

There were a few questions and suggestions.

Annual General Meeting

One member felt that only good quality wine, properly chilled in the case of white, should be served on the *John Pinkerton*. The difficulties of doing this were explained, but Peter said that as an experiment this year, ice would be obtained from a local garage to chill drinks.

A vote of thanks to the Boat Company was warmly applauded.

Robin Higgs Award

With the Boat Company's record profits, it was appropriate that the award this year was given to John Abbott, who for many years had been in charge of the maintenance of both the *John Pinkerton* and *Dragonfly*, as well as helping to crew the boats.

Below: John Abbott, left, receiving the trophy from Robin.



Chairman's report

The text of Peter Redway's talk is on page 3. He concluded by saying that although the JMC resolutions had been very positive, there was still a lot of work to do. In his opinion, the canal was not yet in intensive care, but its condition was critical. In the last year there had been failures of locks, gates and embankments. What was needed was preventive maintenance rather than having to respond to problems.

Work Party report

Peter then turned to the activities of the Society work party during the last year.

They had returned to the Western End to do towpath and tree clearance. There was renewed interest in a footpath on the line of the last 5 miles into Basingstoke and Philip Riley and Ian Brown had hosted a walk for local councillors.

Repairs to Lock 8 had been carried out on behalf of the BCA. What appeared to be a small hole next to the lock turned out to be a major problem that took 4 weekends work to sort out. Trench digging, piling, and installing a new bypass pipe were required.

The St John's back pumping scheme was now complete, apart from installation of the grills over the inlets, and attention was now turning to the Brookwood flight. A survey had been done and a concept developed for the inlet. Detailed plans were being drawn up.

As previously reported, the Society had acquired a work boat from BW. This was now at Ash Lock (*see below*), where it would be pulled out of the water for modifications to the stern to allow an engine, propellor and tiller to be fitted. Its advantage was its very shallow draught compared to the tugs and barges.



The Society was now able to hire the dredger *Belfast Girl*. It had already been used to fit lock gates and remove the bank silt at Deepcut under contract to the BCA. It was intended to use it to dredge the Hermitage flash at Brookwood.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency would be requiring Boatmaster licences for operators of work boats in 2008, but it was likely that administration of the scheme as it related to canal restoration would be placed in the hands of WRG.

Peter finished by thanking the visiting groups, Newbury, BITM, London WRG and KESCRG, as well as our own volunteers. He also thanked the BCA, the Committee and his own family for their support.

Ian Brown

After an interval Ian Brown, the Canal Director, gave an update on the canal management.

He said that the Basingstoke was a beautiful canal and not everything was bad. Nevertheless, he said that they would be floundering without the Society's contribution that amounted to nearly £75,000 last year.

(continued on page 6)

AGM - Canal Director's

He outlined the asset to the local community provided by the canal:-

- The safe and controlled management of water flow through major built up areas
- An estimated 300,000 regular users contributing to over 1,000,000 visits/year
- 7,000 anglers using the canal
- 17,000 people taking a trip on the canal
- 4,000 canoeists using the canal
- 3 community boats providing facilities for several hundred visitors with special needs and 700 visitors from hard to reach groups
- £74,532 of volunteer contribution to the canal (2006)
- Rich wildlife and landscape with a wider variety of aquatic plants than any other water body in Great Britain
- Major economic benefit if using National models (IWA – Harrison)

In addition, he emphasised that the canal was cut for boats.

The canal, however, also had risks attached:-

- Corporate Risk – one of the highest corporate risks for both County Councils
- Fragility of revenue support from the partnership – local authorities are increasing budget deficit – currently at 12%
- Capital investment required – the condition of the canal is deteriorating and significant capital investment will be required to redress this over the coming years. Crude and approximate estimate of £0.75-1.0m for the Hampshire length and about 2.5m for Surrey
- Pressure from development linked to drainage and flood alleviation issues
- The condition of the canal in terms of sustaining its wildlife value in line with recent legislation (CROW Act 2000)
- Issues for the reputation of the Authority in terms of securing a sustainable future for the canal, following the public and voluntary investment already made and the expectation of users and supporters of the canal.

Currently, the canal's risk rating was High if nothing was done, but dropped into the Medium band with the controls that were now in place. Further controls would be necessary to reduce it to an acceptable level, but as a canal it could never be totally free of risk.

Ian described the risk reduction measures, which included additional inspections, implementing recommendations from the structural engineer's report (only about 20% of the recommendations of the surveys done 10 and 3 years ago have been carried out so far), tree management and Emergency planning.

Key to all this was secure funding and various options were still being studied. These included management by an

outside body, such as Landmarc Services. However, the Society's concerns about lessened stakeholder influence were shared by Ian and by the County Officers. A trust was another option and lessons were being learned from the experience of the Milestones Museum.

Ian showed a diagram which illustrated his opinion that regular small amounts of maintenance would probably be cheaper than allowing things to decline to a point where a major remedial programme was necessary.

Ian's current focus was on:-

- Ongoing work to manage current costs down whilst realising potential income streams and concentrating resources onto canal maintenance
- Finalising a Strategic Management (Business) Plan that will be made up of 4 action plans:
 - Conservation (SSSI) Management Plan
 - Asset Management Plan
 - Service Level Plan
 - Canal Centre Development Plan

Ian concluded his presentation by saying that he had been greatly heartened by the support from the Society, the riparian District Councils, the IWA, IWAAC and the general public. He was passionate about the canal and wanted it to succeed so that his grandchildren, and their grandchildren could enjoy it as he had done.

Open Forum

Ian Brown answered questions from the floor.

Q. Should we be doing more to encourage other local councils to follow Woking's example in supporting the canal?

A. It was always worth lobbying councillors to emphasise how much the canal was valued. The Society does have a powerful voice. The Conservation Rangers had been tasked with talking to local schools to improve their awareness of the canal.

Q. When the *Pinkerton* was being taken down to Woking, they had had to stop at 3pm because of the rangers' working hours. Would this not deter visitors and decrease income?

A. Health & Safety considerations dictated that boats must be escorted at the moment and unfortunately the BCA quite simply could not afford to pay overtime.

Q. If the water supply situation improves and the locks are put into safe working order, will Health & Safety still require boats to be escorted?

A. It is anticipated that, in that case, boats would be able to operate in the same way as on the rest of the waterways system.

presentation & open forum

- Q. The slipway for boats at Potter's pub in Mytchett had been closed. Were there any plans to replace it?
A. The slipway had been closed following an accident with a car. Ian had spoken to Bob Potter's business manager. There were thoughts of a marina there. He would also talk to them about a possible barrier with a BW key.
- Q. The trees planted next to the canal below Lock 2 were still there. What was being done?
A. They would be removed, one way or another, in the next 10 days.
- Q. How will the water supply at Greywell be monitored?
A. The BCA has a close relationship with the Environment Agency who monitored the underground supplies. The aquifers were full at the moment.
- Q. Why are the new lock gates being made of oak rather than more durable tropical hardwoods?
A. There was a requirement for sustainable supply. The gates currently being made by the company at Liss used French oak and were expected to last for at least 20 years. They were supplied faster and more cheaply than those made previously on the Rochdale Canal.
- Q. The gates leak because they do not match when they close. Shouldn't the straps be adjusted?
A. This is probably true in some cases.
- Q. The cottage at Lock 15 was not being lived in and was deteriorating. What was being done about it?
A. No comment possible, as it was part of a court case.
- Q. Do houseboats need planning permission and do they pay council tax?
A. There was a lease agreement with Surrey County Council. They do pay council tax, but there was no income to the BCA.
- Q. Misuse of the towpath by motorbikes, etc was occurring. To what extent were the bylaws published?
A. The BCA was working to improve the towpath and signs. The intention was to continue with the permissive footpath status for the towpath. A motor cyclist was currently being prosecuted.

The Chairman concluded the meeting by thanking Ian Brown for his presentation and willingness to answer questions. He also thanked the organisers of the meeting, the Coxhead family for doing the refreshments and the Fleet Football Club for the use of their premises.

CANAL MILESTONES

As far as I know (although I stand to be corrected on this) the distances on the canal were not marked with milestones. The old Basingstoke Canal Company did use stones to mark boundaries and a few of these remain.

However, a number of canal societies have now introduced milestone schemes and I think this might be a good idea for the Basingstoke. Apart from being useful to boat owners, walkers and other canal users, milestones could also be used to publicise the canal in local areas and might even be used for fund raising.

I have been in touch with the Chesterfield Canal Trust and they have been running a successful milestone scheme for the last 5 years. They seek sponsorship from Trust members and from local organisations such as parish councils.

The CCT's milestones are made out of limestone and the overall cost, including a suitable plaque, is about £200 each. The stones are mainly installed by Trust volunteers.

If we do launch a milestones scheme, we would need a Society volunteer to organise it. Help would be available from our friends in Chesterfield and I would expect that other

canal societies might be able to provide advice. We would also need to obtain the agreement of the BCA on certain issues including the location of the stones.

If you would like to consider volunteering for this project, please give me a call and I will provide further background and contact details.

Philip Riley
Vice Chairman
Tel : 01256 702109 e-mail : wincombecottage@gmail.com

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Events

Bridge Barn Rally

The annual spring boat rally returned to the Bridge Barn site after last year's event in Brookwood. We would like to do another rally there, but feel that it should wait until some of the access problems and services are sorted. Better drainage of the field would also be a good idea!

This year's rally was blessed with the unusual combination of lovely sunny weather and lots of water in the canal thanks to the very wet winter.

Despite the usual solid support from the Byfleet Boat Club, the number of boats seemed a bit down, but there were a few more stalls and the public turn-out was good and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

The Society operated the BCA's little trip boat *Rosebud* and made £400 for the canal over the two days. *Maggie G* also did well.



Above: Another full load of passengers for *Rosebud*.

Below: There was a good turn-out for the illuminated boat procession. *Aquarius* arriving at the Bridge Barn.



Above: Prize-winning *Athai*. This year's theme was Red, White and Blue.

Below: *Aquarius*'s crew receiving the Best Illuminated Boat prize from the Mayor of Woking.



Events

MIKRON THEATRE COMPANY

Date: Wednesday 11th July 2007

Time: 7.30pm (*Not 7.50pm as incorrectly stated in the last issue*)

Venue: The Canalside Garden of the Fox and Hounds, Crookham Road, Fleet.

Show: **“Married to the Job - The life and work of Thomas Telford”**

Having explored the lives and achievements of Richard Trevithick and Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Mikron now turns its attention, with the customary blend of humour, song and strong narrative, to another great engineer, Thomas Telford, 250 years after his birth. Without a wife or children, perhaps you could say that Telford was married to his job! In the 21st century, is there room for another of his kind, male – or female?

2007 will be the 36th year that the company have toured the

waterways of England in their 71 year old narrow boat ‘Tyseley’ No.183’. Come along by boat, car or foot and enjoy the presentation by this versatile company. Bring a folding chair or rug or just sit on the grassy bank. Indoor back-up in case of rain.

This annual show is eagerly looked forward to by waterways enthusiasts and local people alike. The Mikron Theatre Company have gathered a very loyal following over the years and some cast members have moved on to greater acting careers after their Mikron experience. Don’t miss this show as your support is vital to ensure the Mikron’s future, as their grant funding is restricted.

Admission is free but there will be the usual collection after the performance. Come early and enjoy a meal in the pub.

For further information please contact David Millett on 01252617364.

CHOBHAM SOCIAL MEETINGS

The 2006/7 season of monthly meetings at Chobham ended with Pablo Haworth's talk about Bailey bridges. This proved to be a very well informed and interesting talk about the huge part played by this apparently simple but versatile device in the Second World War, and indeed up to the present day.

The new season of autumn and winter social meetings will start again in October at our regular venue at the Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road, Chobham. The meetings will continue at 8pm on the third Wednesday of the month.

Wednesday 17th October 2007

Ron Croucher - ‘The Channel Tunnel’

Ron Croucher was a Senior Engineer during the building of the Channel Tunnel and he will be presenting the story of the

building of this magnificent project so, for any members who are interested in Civil Engineering this is a must. Even those who are not will no doubt find it very interesting and informative.

Wednesday 21 November 2007

Runnalls Davis - ‘Thomas Telford’

This will be the third presentation given to us by Runnalls Davis and this show will feature the life and works of the renowned civil engineer whose magnificent creations include the Menai Bridge, the Harecastle Tunnel, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and the London Holyhead road. It will be interesting to compare Runnalls' account with the Mikron Theatre's.

Further dates and speakers will follow in the autumn edition of the Basingstoke Canal News.

King John's Castle

Work is due to start soon on a £0.5 million HLF-funded scheme to enhance the 800 year old castle and the adjacent canal. The somewhat crumbly walls will be stabilised, new

interpretation boards installed and a proper mooring for boats put in. Some dredging will also be done to allow boats to get in to the bank.

Out and about

New gates for old

Under Ian Brown's policy of concentrating the BCA's resources onto canal maintenance, the programme of lock gate replacement has continued, although not quite as planned because of the discovery that the bottom gates of Lock 21 were in a seriously dangerous condition. Gates originally destined for Lock 3 were fortunately close enough in size to be able to be fitted to 21 instead.

The BCA is now buying gates from a company at Liss in Hampshire, whose main business is timber framed buildings. The oak used comes from France and looks to be of better quality, with fewer shakes and spilt in it, than the local timber that was used for the original "restoration" gates. The Liss gates are also said to be a lot cheaper than those that were being obtained from the Rochdale Canal.



Actual installation of the gates was done with the assistance of Rob Locatelli and Pinewood Services. Society volunteers also helped at Lock 14, where the new gates had first to be retrieved from their storage in the flash above Lock 15 in particularly nasty weather (*see above*).

After they had been fitted, the dredger went up the flight in convoy with the Society's new workboat and a tug pushing a barge, and dropped the old gates off at Lock 28 (*top right*). It then went on up and cleared the bankslip that has been blocking the navigation since last August (*centre right*). Further bits of spot dredging in the cutting were done before *Belfast Girl* headed back to Woking for an appearance at the Bridge Barn rally. A couple of other jobs were done and it is planned to use it to dredge the Hermitage flash.

Rob had to be called back with his crane barge for the emergency replacement of the lower gates of Lock 21 (*bottom right & cover*). These were found to be in such bad condition that the crews of the few boats that were allowed to pass through were required to stay on the bank whilst the boats were in the lock. The flight is now open again.



Thanks to Duncan Paine and Pablo Haworth for photos.

on the canal

Bridges & closures

The older Norris Bridge (*right*) has been closed to road traffic for a couple of months, but fortunately the navigation was unimpeded. The rubber bearings that the bridge rests on were replaced and the parapets strengthened to ensure that, in the event of a road traffic accident, passing boats would not have a car landing on them. Work was due to finish at the end of May.

Work is also going on to grit blast and paint the railway bridge at the western end of the Ash Embankment (*below*). The contractors unfortunately seem not to have recognised that the canal is a supposedly navigable waterway and managed to obstruct the passage of at least one boat. However, the situation has now been remedied.



Several other steel girder bridges that cross the canal appear to be just as rusty and in need of attention. The railway bridge at Ash Vale Station is due to be replaced later in the year and the canal will be closed for a period. A pair of dams will allow the canal to be drained under the bridge.

The road bridge over the canal at Ash Wharf is reputedly due for a makeover sometime, but the date is still to be announced.



The North Warnborough Lift Bridge was also closed for a short while for maintenance by Hampshire County Council Bridges Section; it is understood that the wire rope that pulls the bridge up was showing signs of wear and tear. Unfortunately, a breakdown in communication somewhere resulted in the *John Pinkerton's* passengers not getting to the castle and the boat having to reverse back to Colt Hill.

Following the short closure for the replacement of Lock 21's gates, the BCA has given notice that the Woodham Flight will close for the week beginning Monday 4th June to allow the upper gates of Lock 2 to be replaced.

The **GOOD NEWS**, however, is that the canal is full to the brim, the Broad Oak stream is running flat out and the aquifers at Greywell are said to be full as well. This may be because the water company has been prevented from abstracting water from them since the Environment Agency stopping it during last year's drought.

The signs are that the canal could be remaining open to boats for the longest period for some years. Let's hope that no other disasters happen to prevent this.

Galleon Marine

Galleon Marine, the boat hire base at Colt Hill, Odiham has been up for sale for about a year now. We understand that at least two people have expressed an interest, one of whom would like to continue the business.

Jim and Jan Piele have done a great job of boosting the hire business, despite the canal's problems, and have proved good friends to other users of the canal.

The Canal Society is anxious to see this, the only hire base on the canal, continue and will fight any attempt to try to close it and build housing on the site. Hart's Planning Department has in the past shown a rather deplorable lack of interest in the preservation of the canal as a public amenity, and we shall be watching developments closely.

Lightbox

When the directors of the Lightbox, Woking's new museum and gallery, wanted to hold a press conference, they had a problem: the building was not due to open until September and was still full of builders. They appealed to the Boat Company to allow the *John Pinkerton* to be used.

Their request was supported by Peter Coxhead, who has been trying to influence canalside developments in Woking on behalf of the Canal Society for many years. Since it involved a 2 day trip in each direction, there was a bit of head scratching, but the go-ahead was given and the *Pinkerton* duly arrived opposite the new building in time for the conference.



Above: The Press Conference on board the *JP*. L to R: Anthony Pooley, Commercial Director, Marilyn Scott, Director of the Lightbox, and Hamish MacGillivray, Exhibitions Manager.



Above: The *John Pinkerton* moored opposite the Lightbox.

Stephanie Renouf, PR Consultant for the Lightbox, who organised the press conference, said that she had been delighted by the Society's response to their request and the help provided by the crew to ensure the success of the event.

The Lightbox will open its doors to the public on 14th September with an exhibition featuring the work of Aardman Animation, the creators of Wallace and Gromit.

Wonder if we could get them on board the *Pinkerton*?

Letter

Dear Sir,

The interesting article "How I found the Basingstoke Canal in 1947" brought back memories of 60 years ago to me .

I was a cadet at 167 OCTU, Blenheim Barracks, Farnborough for the 4 months Nov./Dec. '39 Jan, /Feb. '40. It was a bitter winter with snow and ice.

The Army wanted us to carry out a practice crossing of a water obstacle but the canal was frozen over. After about a week, waiting in vain for a thaw, we were told to break up the ice and carry out the drill by launching a bridge of kapok floats.

Two men had to cross, walk or swim, with ropes and hold these taut while we got across. One chap, Watt by name, thought he would liven things up a bit and kept twitching his

rope as we went over. Several nearly went in. His turn came and so did revenge. The new rope man gave his rope a jerk and in went Watt!

Watt was wrapped in blankets and driven back to barracks. The Colonel and Adjutant were furious.

Next morning we were all paraded and torn off a strip and threatened with R.T.U. (returned to Unit as unsuitable). None of us were.

I trust Paul Vine will be interested and amused at how I first met up with the Basingstoke Canal.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Boulcott

Canal Society accounts

Income and expenditure account for year ended 31 December 2006

	2006	2005
	£	£
Income		
Subscriptions	10,154	11,380
Donations - general	3,891	5,695
Profit of boat company	24,441	19,655
200 Club profit	716	1,139
Brookwood Rally/Bridge Barn profit	1,828	1,500
Other fundraising income	45	3,165
Grants received	20,500	23,000
Interest received	2,686	371
Other	-	983
	<u>64,261</u>	<u>66,888</u>
Less expenditure		
Backpumping project	(30,174)	(9,961)
Projects and working parties	(7,355)	(6,338)
Newsletter production and postage	(4,156)	(4,788)
Stationery and office costs	(2,465)	(2,458)
Advertising and PR	(2,797)	(1,596)
Insurance	(5,475)	(2,520)
Depreciation	(895)	-
Equipment maintenance	(1,552)	(1,154)
Bank charges	(58)	(83)
Subscriptions	(495)	(785)
Accountants' charges	(1,685)	(900)
Sundry	(855)	(852)
	<u>(57,962)</u>	<u>(31,435)</u>
Net income	<u>6,299</u>	<u>35,453</u>
Fixed assets		
Investment in subsidiary company	100	100
Workboat	3,580	-
Amounts due from subsidiary company		
Loan	8,152	8,152
Profit for year	24,441	19,827
Cash at bank and in hand	45,776	47,739
Accrued expenses	(1,116)	(1,184)
Net assets	<u>80,933</u>	<u>74,634</u>
General fund	58,293	59,273
Restricted fund	20,500	15,361
Designated fund	2,140	-
Total funds	<u>80,933</u>	<u>74,634</u>

- Good to see the canal exhibition proving very popular since it left the Milestones Museum a few months ago. So far it has visited Basingstoke and Fleet libraries and it is planned for the display to visit all the other local libraries along the line of the canal. With the display are leaflet stands so that the general public can find out any information they want about the canal and where to visit for boat trips and places of interest. We also hope that many people will pick up a Society membership leaflet and join the Society as it is important to keep our numbers up to show that the canal is well supported.
- Many members who have visited the Canal Centre at Mytchett over the years will remember David Dare, who used to own and operate the restaurant boat and day trip boats and also ran the hotel boat operation cruising round the canals of this country. After he left the Basingstoke Canal he moved to Lower Heyford on the Oxford Canal and acquired the boatyard and hire boat business based there. Recently he has been featured in the business columns of the Daily Telegraph in their articles on waterway businesses. He now has a thriving business running Oxford Narrowboats at Heyford Wharf expanding from two employees to now employing twenty people in hiring, building, repairing and refitting narrow boats, hiring bicycles, selling groceries and fuel, and providing cooked meals, teas and cakes from a newly constructed bistro. The recent cutbacks in waterway funding from DEFRA has left him wondering about future investment in his business.
- Congratulations to the Wey and Arun Canal Trust on all their achievements over the last two years or so in lowering the Brewhurst pound and lock at Loxwood and also constructing the new lock and bridge above the road. The final phase will be to tunnel under the road. This particular project has cost £663,000 so far with 88% coming from individuals, 5% from the trading subsidiary and 7% from grants. A wonderful record. The recently launched Completion Strategy prepared by Atkins estimates that the total cost of restoring the whole canal will be £93M less the value of voluntary labour over the years ahead. Good luck to them.
- Members will recall that improvements to the towpath near Farnborough Airfield were undertaken by Rushmoor Borough Council under their Strategic Partnership scheme using monies received from TAG, the operators of business flying at Farnborough airfield. However the final section to the Hart District boundary at Norris Bridge was only levelled but not surfaced. This final section became a muddy quagmire during the winter rains and it is to be hoped that the work can be completed this year before the (hoped for) rains of next autumn and winter. This section is now about the only section along the whole canal that has not been surfaced or improved. The work is essential as the canal is now being increasingly used by walkers and cyclists as a recreational route.
- At the time of writing the local elections are about to take place and there will presumably be many new councillors serving wards in the local Borough and District council areas. It is important that members whenever possible point out the benefits of the canal to the local community so that they are able to be in a position to try and make sure that the canal gets adequately funded when the budget cycle comes around again in the autumn. Because the canal was re-opened in 1991 it is easy for many council members and the public to forget the amount of work that went in to get the canal restored during the period from 1973 to 1991. Finances are getting ever tighter and the last thing we want is for the canal to once again deteriorate back to the condition it was in before restoration started.
- Many local people are used to visiting the Canal Centre at Mytchett and making use of the Tea Room while they are there. It is disappointing, therefore, that it did not reopen at Easter due to Surrey County Council deciding to re-tender the operation of the business. Hopefully it will re-open sometime during the summer as it is an important feature of the Canal Centre.
- It has been interesting to see the vast amount of national press and media coverage of the DEFRA cuts to the funding of British Waterways over the last six months or so. The campaign to fight the cuts organised on behalf of all the various waterway groups including the IWA under the umbrella title of 'Save our Waterways' was very successful in terms publicity but whether it will have any effect remains to be seen. Let's hope so. The various blockages by narrow boats around the canals and rivers certainly caught the attention of all the local media as well.
- Having been in Devon recently near the border with Somerset, the writer had a good look at the Grand Western canal which stretches from Tiverton to Loudwells near Wellington. The canal used to go to Taunton after it was built but the Loudwells to Taunton section was closed very early on due to many factors. The section open now is owned by Devon County Council and it has a very good and well maintained towpath with excellent information boards at the main points of access. It is only open to unpowered craft or small trailed craft with small engines or outboards. In 2008 the canal will be the site of the Inland Waterways Association National Trailboat Festival at Halperton, which should give it excellent publicity. The canal is well known for the horse drawn boat trips operating from the Tiverton terminus of the canal.

From Society Newsletter No.74, June 1977

- The debate that followed the issue of the proposed Recreation Plan for the Hampshire length was very interesting. Mostly the reaction was very positive but the few who raised objections were in a minority and mainly stemmed from misunderstandings. But some knew better. Perhaps the most succinct observation came from Councillor Mike Corfin who was reported to have said 'that everything important has been covered by the plan and that opposition was only being entered by those who resented the idea of providing amenities for the people of Hampshire on the canal this summer'.
- One bone of contention has been the Society's plan to run a pleasure boat service by a colourful traditional-style narrow boat between Colt Hill, Odiham and North Warnborough. Hampshire's Recreation Committee approved the plan in principle and Hart District Council had no objections. But the County's Planning and Transport Committee are concerned about the extra road traffic the boat will generate and wants adequate car parking space provided. The Society have suggested a solution to the car parking problem but cannot do much about the universal problem of traffic - if a few coach parties a week can be regarded as that much of a 'problem'.
- The Job Creation Scheme at Deepcut has now reached the half way mark on Locks 26, 27 and 28. Everyone who has seen the work must be impressed and encouraged by the work that has taken place. The scheme, in conjunction with the weekend volunteers, has been very successful, and has been very dependent on the narrow gauge railway to transport all the materials up to the locks from the depot on the towpath at Curzon Bridge. Thanks are due to the team under Stan and David Meller and John Peart.
- During the summer months it is hoped to once again 'dry dredge' the canal at various places in Fleet and sell the silt. Last year 1200 tons were disposed of in this way. It is good for sandy gardens and has a high humus content. It also has a pH of 7.5 and contains the odd item dropped into the canal over the years!
- The Lengthsman Scheme has been operating successfully on the Hampshire section of the canal for some years but the equivalent scheme on the Surrey section of the canal was operating but now seems to have lapsed. It is now our intention to revive it and 10 or 15 members are required so prospective volunteers should contact David Junkison as soon as possible.
- An unusual find has come to light during inspection of dredging operations at Deepcut. A piece of equipment was discovered deep in the sand bottom, which it has been agreed can only have been left when the original Navvies finished in 1793. It is a wooden roller over which the ropes used to pull the barrows up the side of the cutting during excavations. It has been sent to the Museum Service for some preservation work to be done on it, as a few days after the discovery it shows distinct signs of disintegration.
- There are now six different working party groups along the canal. These comprise Lock restoration at Deepcut in conjunction with the Job Creation Scheme, work at Lock 6 (Sheerwater), Lock 1 (Woodham), towpath clearance at Deepcut, dredging in Hampshire, and towpath clearance on the Hampshire section.
- The trip boat is now ready for delivery. All that remains to be done is for the Department of Trade and Industry to inspect it prior to delivery. Had events gone to plan the boat would have been launched on the canal at Colt Hill, Odiham on 10th May, ready to start fitting out. However, further complications have arisen in our efforts to gain permission to operate the boat. This will mean the best part of the summer cruising season will be lost. However, thanks are due to all who have contributed so generously to our Boat Appeal. Volunteers to crew to boat are required and training will be given. Please contact Peter Fethney on Fleet 5524.
- One Friday last October Fred Hill's boss told him his next job would be a week's contract dredging for Surrey County Council on the Basingstoke Canal. At the time it was just another job, Today, eight months later, he's still on the canal and says he will be sorry to leave. For Fred not only likes working on his own, he enjoys the attractive surroundings of the cut and gets a lot of satisfaction from helping to restore the canal. He has transformed the 2-mile section from Brookwood to Deepcut from a weed and mud filled ditch to the clean, broad contours of the former navigation channel. He is now so attracted to canals he is having his first canal holiday on the Coventry Canal.

Below: The Society's new workboat passing Fred's Ait, a small island that Fred Hill created in a flash below Lock 26.



SHCS notes

Membership

Doreen Hornsey, our Membership Secretary, sends a reminder to any members who have still to pay their 2007 subscriptions.

I had a good response to my request in the last issue for members to let me have their e-mail addresses as an aid to rapid communication. However, if any other members would like to be able to receive messages from the Society this way (including, if requested, a colour version of the Newsletter), please drop me an e-mail. Contact me at roger.cansdale@ntlworld.com.



Anyone interested in joining the Society should contact the Membership Secretary, Mrs Doreen Hornsey, whose contact details are listed below. The annual subscription is Adults £10, Junior £3, OAP £5, Family £12, 2 OAP £7, and Group £15, payable on March 1st each year.

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