



BASINGSTOKE CANAL NEWS

No. 221 Spring 2009



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Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society Ltd

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Editorial



Despite the financial gloom and doom that seems to be hanging over everything at the moment, 2009 could be the best year that the Canal has had for a long time and hopefully will be seen in years to come as the watershed between its post-restoration decline and a recovery to viable sustained navigation status.

The long list on pages 5 to 8 of projects being done this year shows a real determination to get the canal back on its feet again.

This makes the spat in the local IWA's Cargoes journal over the tree shading issue all the more unfortunate and, largely, irrelevant. What the canal needs more than anything else is recognition that it is a waterway open for use and enjoyment. Tree shading is a minor issue compared to the problems that have to be overcome to achieve this.

Cover Picture: A chilly afternoon at Colt Hill.
Photo: Roger Cansdale

It is also unfortunate because the canal has always benefited enormously from the support given by the Guildford and Reading Branch under the chairmanship of people like Brian Percy and Tony Davies. We may occasionally have differences of opinion, but these should be settled, as such matters normally are between friends and allies, by quiet discussion so that we can speak with a common voice to the rest of the world.

If we do not do this, it will be all too easy for people looking for excuses to cut funding again to point the finger and say that if the canal people don't know what they want, there is no point in putting money into it.

Ian Brown's vision and strategy for the future of the canal depend totally on getting dependable financial support and he is very close to setting up Service Level Agreements with all the various local councils. It is not a time for rocking the boat, particularly over tree shading when, according to a statement at the recent Conservation Steering Group meeting, it is considered that about 35% of all the trees near the Canal are in the category "dead, dying or dangerous"!

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A criticism that has often been made about "conservation" is that Natural England dictates what needs to be done on the canal but makes no contribution to the cost of this. Interesting therefore that at the Conservation Steering Group meeting it was stated that new and existing means of funding the CMP are to be investigated, including a new Natural England fund called the Conservation Enhancement Scheme.

It would enhance their standing among the boating community enormously if they put their money where their mouth is and, most of all, show some real scientific interest in the state of the canal, rather than just dictating what boaters are not allowed to do.

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Comments about the houseboats in the last BCN have prompted one of their owners to write a letter (page 15). Mr Dimsdale says he would be very interested to know which building/boat regulations we think (or know) that the 2 storey boat contravenes.

Irrespective of any regulations, I would have thought it the height of folly to put a boat on a canal that is too big to be capable of being moved to a dry dock for inspection or maintenance. Without the ability to do this, corrosion will inevitably result in the mild steel hull rusting through - there is no "if", only "when".

I think we all have sympathy for the frustration suffered by the boat owners in their dealings with the local authorities, but this is no reason for a lack of common sense.

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The Canal Society's Annual General Meeting is only a couple of months away, so I shall make my usual plea for members to support it. This year we have a venue at Ash that is a bit more central than we have had for several years, so please come along.

As well as getting an update on the work being done on the canal, and last minute information about the rallies at the end of May, this will be an opportunity for members to air their views about how Alan Flight's bequest to the Society should be spent.

We had a special Committee meeting recently to discuss this, and it would be good to be able to compare our ideas (see page 7) with those of the rest of the Society. £150,000 is a significant amount of money and we would like to see something significant achieved with it as a lasting memorial to Alan.

* * * * *

I must apologise for the absence of the promised second part of Tim Denton's article about pill boxes along the canal, but I ran out of space. The good news for people interested in WW2 local history is that we hope to produce an extended version of his article, complete with colour pictures and more diagrams, as a booklet that will be available from the Society's Sales organisation.

Chairman's Page

Snow is falling and Spring seems a long way off, a good time for the Editor to remind me that he would like my report.

Welcome to 2009, so far a year of snow and ice, but also a year which may prove to be a significant year for the canal, many of the initiatives developed in previous years will, I am sure be implemented. Roger has reported these in more detail and the prospects for a viable navigation are achievable.

Many of our members are also IWA Members and will have received copies of Cargoes, the IWA Guildford and Reading Branch Newsletter containing comments on the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the Basingstoke Canal. Prior to these comments and any reply to the CMP Consultation document, meetings between the IWA Navigation Committee, Canal Society and IWA local branch were held. An agreed strategy and criteria for individual responses to the CMP were evolved and actions agreed. The Society responded to the CMP draft in accordance with decisions agreed at the NavCom meeting.

A local meeting between IWA Branch and Society representatives prior to the Canal Joint Management Meeting (JMC) followed in October, resulting in a presentation to the JMC on issues of concern not addressed in the final version of the CMP. The presentation was accepted, amendments to the plan have been introduced and corporate IWA have reported in their Head Office Bulletin.

It is unfortunate that comments on the CMP as published do not match the agreements made at the NavCom meeting. Letters from ourselves, IWA Corporate and the BCA should be published in the next issue of Cargoes. Our letter is also included in this issue of Basingstoke Canal News.

Deepcut structure repairs and survey are scheduled for this month, with completion in this financial year. The ability of Surrey County Council's process for authorising and tendering capital works on the canal requires re-evaluating, because works at lock 15 were agreed as urgent last April (2008) but work has not yet started in February 2009. Urgent repair works should be carried out with expediency; if Lock 15 was a public highway, repairs would have been carried out within days – Not good enough Surrey.

Arrangements for a boat event at Brookwood, followed by a cruise to Odiham in May are well advanced, and details and entry forms are available on our web site. Sponsorship by the Canal Authority on licence agreements is a welcome step in revitalising navigation on the Basingstoke. We need to get boats back on the canal and improve navigation standards - come and support the event.

Peter Redway

Annual General Meeting

NOTICE is hereby given that the Thirty second Annual General Meeting of the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society will be held on Saturday 9th May 2009 at the Ash Centre, Ash Hill Road, Ash, GU12 5DP, commencing at 7 p.m.

The formal Agenda for the meeting is as follows:-

1. To hear apologies for absence.
2. To confirm the minutes of the Thirtieth AGM held on 7th June 2008.
3. To approve the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2008.
4. To appoint the auditors, Hilton and Company.
5. To elect or confirm the appointment of the members of the Board of Directors (Executive Committee).
6. To transact any other business relative to the Annual General Meeting of the Society.

By order of the Board of Directors
Gareth Jones,
Honorary Secretary

18th January 2009

AGM Notes:

- a) This Notice is issued from the Honorary Secretary's address at 9 Mytchett Lake Road, Mytchett, Camberley, Surrey GU16 6AW.
- b) Every member of the Society who is entitled to vote at a General Meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy, who need not be a member, to attend and vote in his/her stead. Forms of Proxy can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary.
- c) Only paid-up members are entitled to attend and vote at the meeting.
- d) Copies of the Accounts can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary prior to the AGM upon receipt of an SAE. In accordance with normal practice the Accounts, when approved, will be published in summary in the Basingstoke Canal News.
- e) **Nomination forms for the election of the Board of Directors can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary.**

Please note the new venue for the AGM.

It is not hard to find - next to the Standard of England pub near the canal at Ash Wharf.

Work Party



DEEPCUT

Our working parties have concentrated on the reconstruction and underpinning of the lower walls at Lock 22 Deepcut. Extensive voids under the flank and return walls had been exposed when excavating the wing walls of the lock. Ground conditions required the provision of steel trench sheets to support the excavations, and ground water plus the variable levels due to drainage systems entering the canal require almost continual pumping when working.

The offside lower wing wall and bye wash channel have been reconstructed up to coping stone level. The flank and return wall voids have been underpinned, with considerable quantities of concrete required on both walls. The original towpath side wing wall foundations had eroded from under the wall, leaving the wall intact but not supported; this has been under-pinned with a more robust foundation.

The foundations for an extended towpath side wall have been excavated, but progress on this section is a casualty of the severe conditions, with rain, frost and snow preventing delivery of pre-mix concrete on two occasions. We have reluctantly moved to other work until conditions improve.

BROOKWOOD

Two visiting groups, NWPG and KESCRG, planned to work at Lock 22 and the Hermitage / Brookwood section of the canal, were combined to work on the event site preparation at Brookwood Park. The canal was frozen with the work boats iced in, resulting in no dredging work. Both groups combined to clear bank side growth and commence work on a water supply for boats; the jetty at Brookwood Park has been selected for a water point.

Good progress was achieved in very cold conditions. The local lads were walking on the ice, with one eventually breaking the ice and then falling in the hole he had made, so at that point sanity prevailed and they went home.



The length of the north bank of the canal was coppiced and 200 metres of water pipe installed (*Photo. NWPG*). A thank-you to Graham and Eddie for your teams' efforts.

Society volunteers were again frozen out of lock 22 and continued with the water pipe at Brookwood - another 200 metres, only 130 more to go!

Peter Redway

FUTURE WORKING PARTY DATES

DATE	LEADER	LOCATION
7 - 8 Mar	PR, DJ, DL	Lock 22
21-22 Mar	PR/, DJ, DL	Up Nateley footpath
27-28 Mar	KR	Woking clean-up Dredger work, Boats
4 -5 April	KR	Woking clean-up cont.
25-26 April	PR, DJ, DL	Brookwood Event site preparation
9-10 May	PR, DJ, DL	Brookwood Event
23-24 May	PR, DL, DJ, KR	Brookwood Event
13-14 June	PR, DJ, DL	Water supply TBA
27-28 June	PR, DJ, DL	Water supply TBA

Canal News

We may be suffering the coldest winter for 20 years but a lot of things are happening on the canal, or are about to happen. Some of these are long overdue, but none the less welcome. The following round-up is in no particular order.

The bywash failure at Lock 15 has kept the Deepcut flight closed for far too long, so it a relief to report that the repair contract has been let and that work is due to start in mid-February, weather permitting. It should only take a few weeks and thanks to the proximity of the road bridge, pre-mix concrete can be delivered directly to the site.

Rangers are working on the upper wing walls of the flight, but these are less critical than the lower walls of Lock 22, where the volunteers' progress is reported opposite. It will be complete by the spring.

The bottom gates of Ash Lock were found to be rotten before Christmas and replacements were immediately ordered. The old ones have been removed (*below*) and the new ones should be arriving any day.



It is believed that the old gates are actually the ones built for the Canal Society by Tony Harmsworth and his father Wilf in 1969 (*below*), so they haven't done at all badly. Rot finally got into the heel posts, with the nearside gate being held together only by the balance beam.



Also due to start in February is the condition survey of the canal structures that is being done by Jacobs. This will include embankments, culverts and locks. The lock surveys will use CCTV to inspect paddle ducts and ground penetrating radar to look for voids in the surrounding ground. The final report will form the basis of the Asset Management Plan and could make worrying reading, but it has to be done - ignorance is definitely not bliss when safety is at stake.

Jacobs will also be involved in repairing the bank slip above Lock 28 that happened over 3 years ago. This may take some time because the BCA also want to make improvements to the towpath and do bank protection work on this stretch. Surrey Heath Council will be contributing to the towpath improvements, which should go all the way to the Canal Centre, as their payment-in-kind contribution to the Canal budget.

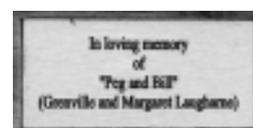
The towpath in Hampshire has been getting very overgrown and Earthbound Services have started on a winter cut, which will also remove the small trees that have started to grow between the towpath and the water in some places. The clearance will go from the Greywell Tunnel to the Canal Centre and the rangers are also doing work on the offside bank to remove some of the overhanging branches.

At King John's Castle, materials lie heaped up on the towpath at the new mooring ready for it to be properly surfaced (*below*). Hopefully, some bollards will be installed.



King John's Castle itself had a face lift last year and the new interpretation boards have been installed. These are imaginatively and attractively done (*photo on next page*) and one can only hope that the whole site now looks sufficiently well cared for to deter potential vandals.

A very nice seat has also been placed at the back of the towpath in memory of Grenville and Margaret Laugharne.



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Above: New transparent interpretation boards allow a better understanding of the castle's original layout.

Below: A sturdy new seat at the castle mooring.



It is good to report that the BCA's dredger *Unity* is back in action having had its hydraulic system purged of the biodegradable fluid that ruined the seals. The rangers did some dredging at Malthouse Bridge to remove the debris left by the contractors who did the bridge work last year. The

spoil was used to fill holes in the bank further down the canal (*below*). When the work on the Deepcut locks is complete,



it is planned to take the dredger down the flight to Brookwood clearing the debris that has accumulated around the locks during the period when they were not being used. Once that is done, *Leo II* and three other boats are booked to come up Deepcut as a trial run before the rallies in May; *Leo II* has a long-delayed booking in the dry dock.

It is hoped that the volunteer dredger, *Belfast Girl*, will be doing similar work on the lower reaches.

Deedman's Bridge (*below*) at Mytchett is due to be replaced in March, hopefully without causing too long an interruption to navigation. The old wooden bridge became increasingly rotten and the late owner of the bungalow on the offside bank replaced it with a structure based on a couple of RSJs, which is slim and elegant but has a worrying degree of flexibility!



Before the current banking crisis hit, the HSBC gave a donation of £20,000 to the Society for environmental work. This is being used to implant a reed-bed at the back of Hermitage Flash in Brookwood, which will provide habitat for wild-life and act as a filter for water running into the canal

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from the road. Spoil from the dredging work done last year at Hermitage was dumped at the back of the flash and recently the Canal Society paid for the hire of a long-reach excavator to enable this to be spread behind the line of piles (*below*).



It was originally intended to transfer reeds from Woking, where they threatened to block the canal, but this could result in the spread of the accursed *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides* which infests parts of the Woking pound, so other sources may have to be found.

Installation of a third back-pumping scheme to serve the three Brookwood locks has been delayed while the IWA's hydrology expert, Tony Harrison, completes a report on the water supply needs of the canal. This will show what has to be done to keep Deepcut in water, which could obviate the need to back-pump Brookwood. Tony's report has been delayed because one of the vital inputs to his analysis is the quantity of water provided by the pump at Frimley. This takes water from the railway line and helps to maintain levels in the top Surrey pound. Unfortunately, the pump has been out of action for some time because the steel mounting has collapsed due to corrosion. The well in which the pump sits needs to be pumped out to enable people to get in to do some measurements for a new stainless steel mounting. The Society has offered financial assistance to enable this to be done as soon as possible.

The Society has also funded a study of options for redeveloping the Ash Lock site. Currently this important piece of the canal estate is not really fulfilling its real potential. Ash Lock Cottage, a listed building is largely occupied by the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership, which also has the cottage by the road. The vision is to bring other parts of the BCA's facilities, such as the dry dock and the lock gate workshop at Lock 28, onto the Ash Lock site. The dry dock has had problems in recent years with its use being restricted by noise complaints from a nearby house, and lock gate workshop would need work to meet modern

health & safety requirements before its lease from the Army could be renewed. The Aldershot Extension plan, which involves selling off large areas of military land for housing development, could bring money to the canal under Section 106 agreements with developers.

With all this in mind, the Society has contracted Lathams to prepare some schemes for possible redevelopment of the Ash Lock site, and a preliminary draft has been received.



This shows three possible schemes. The first includes a dry dock, refurbished cottage and slipway and a workshop where the current storage barn is, while the last has in addition a wet dock and a building providing visitor/community/Trust facilities, perhaps with a museum and tearoom.

It is worth emphasising that the Society could not afford to fund such redevelopment, but the study should provide a very good basis for funding applications in future. It has cost the Society just under £5000 and is the first project to be paid for by Alan Flight's legacy.

We intend to use his bequest to fund things that we might otherwise not have been able to do. A special Committee meeting was held recently to discuss this and a number of possible projects were discussed. Some of them would obviously need agreement from third parties, so the list is rather speculative at present. The ideas include:

- > A professional repaint for the *John Pinkerton*
- > Study of a reservoir above Deepcut
- > Extension of the line of the canal in Up Nately
- > Repair of the storage building in Up Nately
- > Proper mooring for visiting boats below Lock 1
- > More slipways for trail boats
- > Preliminary work to raise interest in the K&A link

Please come to our AGM on 9th May and give us your ideas and views.

Conservation Management

As we reported in the last issue of the BCN, after the Joint Management Committee meeting it appeared that there was a general consensus that the canal's new Conservation Management Plan was broadly acceptable, albeit with a few reservations that our Chairman raised at the meeting. There was therefore considerable surprise later when the newsletter of the local branch of the IWA, 'Cargoes', appeared with a very critical 12 page article from their Chairman, Tony Clark, aimed mostly at the tree shading issue. As he also appeared to disapprove of the line agreed between IWA centrally and the Society, as well as BCA approach, the following letter has been sent for publication in 'Cargoes':

The Editorial Team, Cargoes,
Inland Waterways Association

1st January 2009

Dear Tony,

Cargoes Article on the Basingstoke CMP

1. On behalf of the Surrey and Hants Canal Society I feel I must write to express disappointment at both the tone and the content of your recent article in the "Cargoes" newsletter of the IWA Southern Region. Our concerns are threefold:
 - a. This was an extremely lengthy article occupying nearly half of the publication and some might question whether a newsletter covering activities across three IWA branches should be so dominated by the Basingstoke CMP. Indeed we would have welcomed an opportunity to express our views and also to have presented other SHCS activities in support of the Basingstoke Canal.
 - b. The article continues your critical and confrontational approach with thinly veiled criticism of SHCS, IWA Corporate HQ, BCA and Natural England. We doubt that this approach will be successful in benefiting the canal or promoting wider IWA objectives.
 - c. Whilst you purport to be presenting facts, in practice you present views supported by very selective use of facts, and in some cases there are errors.

2. SHCS will continue to work in support of the Basingstoke Canal as a multi user facility as we have done for many years. To set the CMP in context it is worth noting that the canal's SSSI status is but one challenge we have to deal with. The others include inadequate funding for canal maintenance, the poor state of some canal infrastructure and the lack of a robust water supply for the canal. Interestingly these other factors are currently having a more profound effect on the navigation than restrictions brought about by the CMP although we do not wish to underplay the significance that the CMP could have in the future. For all these challenges our approach has been one of negotiation, consultation and where necessary compromise. We believe this approach has earned us credibility with the wider stakeholder base (including IWA HQ) as well as serving the interests of the canal. Specific SHCS action on the other challenges has included:
 - a. On funding we continue to engage with the two County councils and the various riparian local authorities to promote the value of the canal and its financial needs. For example we recently arranged an informative trip on the John Pinkerton trip boat for the parish councillors. The news on the funding front is better than it has been for years.
 - b. On the state of the infrastructure our attention is focussed on the currently closed Deepcut flight where we have lobbied all concerned to employ a contractor to repair lock 15, the state of which has closed the canal. In parallel with this our own work parties have been repairing lock 22 and in this we were assisted by a WRG summer work camp. We have been assured by the BCA director that this flight will be open this Spring in time for our celebratory boat rally. However the Deepcut flight was not well constructed over 200 years ago and we are in no doubt that further challenges await us.
 - c. On water supply this is ultimately the most limiting factor on navigation and has been a feature of the canal since it was built. We promoted and assisted with the two back pumping schemes for the Woodham and St John's flights. More recently we commissioned a report from one of IWA's consulting engineers whose findings have raised other questions. Our attention is now focussed on getting the Frimley pump back into action and to assist the BCA in seeking revised EA extraction licenses. When this is achieved we will be in a position to assess the next step forward in securing a robust water supply.

3. Turning now to the specific issue of the CMP. We were in no illusion that striking a balance between the needs of conservation and navigation could prove difficult. Although SSSI issues have been dealt with satisfactorily on other canals, the special SSSI status of the Basingstoke together the presence along most of its length put it in

Plan

a class of its own, probably only matched by the Montgomery Canal. Against this background we are more than satisfied with the outcome and whilst you have focussed on presenting the CMP in a negative light we feel there is much to be positive about:

- Recognition of navigation as a key feature that needs to be preserved not just for the benefit of boaters but for the improved enjoyment of the canal amenity by all users.
 - Acknowledgement that the adverse conservation status of the canal is not down to boating and indeed recognition that modest boating can enhance conservation.
 - A mention of the fact that boating brings an important income stream to the canal.
 - Acceptance of the need to seek additional sources of water supply to the benefit of both navigation and conservation.
 - Agreement that restrictions on boat movements could be relaxed as the conservation status improves (the current restrictions are in any event largely academic until the other issues in para 2 are dealt with).
4. You appear to have allowed the tree shading issue to dominate the CMP discussion. We are also on the record on questioning the need for a 90% reduction in shading and indeed have challenged the practicality, a factor that all seem to agree upon. However we are very clear that something needs to be done about trees - the degree of shading has increased dramatically since the canal was restored and in turn historical photographs reveal that in its commercial days the canal was relatively clear of trees. We feel there would be great benefit in a significant reduction, not just because of conservation but also for the enjoyment of the canal by all users as in some places it is now a dank and dreary place. Added to this is the fact that many trees are approaching the end of their life and pose a threat to the fabric of the canal and potentially personal safety. Our view is that a 50% reduction may be a sensible target but we are confident that rational thinking will evolve throughout the 10 year life of the current CMP as proactive tree management develops.
5. Finally you suggest that the Basingstoke Canal has been singled out with restrictions on free boat movement. In practice there are many instances across the system where access to a navigation is closely controlled whether it be for environmental conservation, water preservation or managing flood risk; and many of these restrictions are likely to be in place for a long time if not indefinitely. We could provide you with a list if you are interested. In the case of canals with SSSI issues you have been very selective - you could have mentioned the Rochdale, Yorkshire Derwent and the Pocklington, all with access controls in place. You do quote the Montgomery but get the facts wrong - the 5000 boat movements will only be achieved on the less environmentally sensitive English section; the agreed ultimate figure for the Welsh section is 2500 movements a year and this will only be built up to in parallel with conservation improvements. You failed to mention that a permanent 3mph speed limit throughout the Montgomery was one price to pay for this. We have looked into the offline reserve issue that you mention - the Montgomery Canal is very rural and the restoration project has been able to purchase large tracts of land at agricultural prices in order to build these. Such land is unlikely to present itself in Surrey and an expert has questioned the viability of this for the Basingstoke. However we do hope to make use of the existing flashes wherever possible.
6. In conclusion the challenges of returning the Basingstoke to an acceptable cruising status are demanding, requiring sustained, positive pressure from all waterway organisations. To move towards enhanced navigation use, is in all probability a medium to long term objective; the Society can lobby, negotiate and influence policy but at the end of the day we all need to have a common objective and strategy.

The Society and IWA, Local and Corporate, need to work towards the common goal of a sustainable and improving waterway – a major challenge but achievable.

Peter Redway
Chairman SHCS

CMP - response from the

I write in response to the article in the IWA Winter 2008 'Cargoes' that covers several pages and purports to such undertaking by the Basingstoke Canal Authority as a 'waste of public funding', lack of understanding of the facts'. These are strong criticisms which are unfounded and display a lack of the true facts as they now are at the final assent and publishing of the Conservation Management Plan in November 2008.

This critical and highly confrontational approach not only to us but also I perceive the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society and Natural England, requires that you be appraised of the established facts.

Firstly, this article focused deeply on presenting the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Management Plan (CMP) in such a negative light and goes on to suggest that the canal has been singled out with restrictions on free boat movement. In my view this could not be further from the truth, as a healthy canal will eventually support a viable navigation.

To try and be positive in answer to the question of 'raising the standard of flora and fauna to above the state at first designation', I must communicate from a BCA perspective and by that qualifying what that overall interpretation is and what action the BCA propose to take in the execution of the plan under further guidance and direction from the established conservation steering group which is an ongoing and enabling process during the period of this particular action plan.

This CMP is designed to guide the actions needed to set the Basingstoke Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest on a path towards recovery from its present unsatisfactory state, while the waterway continues to be a major recreational and amenity resource. The Plan is for the ten year period from autumn 2008 and within that period provision is made for adjusting actions at intervals as necessary.

It is most important to realise that this canal has been seriously under funded and it is for that reason that we now see a legacy of structural issues that in turn has directly impacted on the ecological and SSSI status. This is the first of four BCA specific action plans that will make a serious attempt to set part of that right.

The canal has other important functions, being especially highly valued as a linear public park providing recreation and amenity within its liveable community neighbourhoods. There is therefore a need to manage the SSSI in ways which both achieve its Conservation Objectives and maintain its recreational and amenity functions. Overall if the SSSI is in good condition, it will contribute substantially to the canal's appeal to the visiting public and to the waterway's amenity value to those who live near it.

So the question raised about exceeding the value of the SSSI past or current is only evident to the extent described above. The BCA will always apply best practice in balance to both conservation and recreation activities, ultimately improving both in the way suggested by the plan.

To summarise, the commitment will be to find ways to reverse the current decline in the SSSI status, first achieving unfavourable recovering condition then progressing towards favourable condition.

A noticeable decline in the value of the SSSI has been noted in recent years. The reasons are many fold, however the key issues that need urgent addressing are:

- over shading from trees that prevent healthy successional marginal and sub-aquatic growth
- high levels of sediment caused by leaf litter from trees directly along the bankside
- the direct impact of trees growing along the bankside on an aging structure and increasing concern over structural integrity
- concerns over water quality as a result of leaf litter
- potential water pollution as a result of leaf litter
- water supply and retention as a result of tree root infiltration and trans-evaporation during the warmer months.

These all combine to reduce our ability to maintain and enhance the demand for recreational use, whilst preserving the high ecological and SSSI value.

One of the more sensitive and troubling concerns that was commonly shared by many was the matter of tree shading and how the new plan proposes to deal with it.

Let me reassure you on this point; firstly, the BCA through a policy agreed and confirmed by the Conservation Steering Group and approved by the Joint Management Committee will provide a clear framework within which the necessary and

Canal Director

selective maintenance of all trees will be undertaken. As such it seeks to achieve an appropriate balance between the needs of safety, conservation and amenity values. This means being realistic and responsible in the way we shall attempt to arrive at the targets set in the plan.

The realistic and achievable view is that over time (during the ten year succession of the plan) we shall aim for an overall fifty percent reduction of tree shading along the banks of the canal, concentrating on the worst affected places where clear safety and ecological gains are most evident. The need to remove dead, dying and diseased specimens is self explanatory and these will be dealt with as a priority, as with all trees that pose an immediate safety risk to the canal's structural integrity or neighbouring properties.

In all cases, the BCA will work closely with the local authority arboriculturists (tree officers) and adopted planning regulation will be adhered to. The authority also intends to replant trees where appropriate with suitable native specimens that can be easily maintained.

Ian Brown – Basingstoke Canal Authority Director

Surrey & Hants Canal Cruises Ltd

AGM and Crew Meeting

The Annual General Meeting this year will be held, as usual, at the Canal Centre, Mytchett, on Friday 13th March 2009. The room will be open from 7.00pm for a 7.30pm start. The evening will follow the usual format. After the formal business session, we will be having an informal crew meeting with a question and answer session and time for discussion. Tea and coffee will be available during the evening.

This year's brochures are available and will be distributed at the AGM. We hope that crew members will help distribute them throughout the season.

John Pinkerton

The main difference that crews will notice this year is the new cabin floor that has been installed. This has a plastic surface that should make cleaning a deal easier. Looking to the future, the Canal Society, which owns the boat, has agreed to pay for a professional repaint of the boat and a new PA system.

Mike Hammersley

Mike has been acting as Crew Organiser for daytime trips during the week ever since the *Pinkerton* started operating in 1978. Some people may have heard that he suffered a heart attack before Christmas and subsequently had triple bypass heart surgery. It was therefore a relief today to receive the following e-mail from Andy Beale:

I've just been visiting my Mum in Frimley and on the way out I bumped into Mike Hammersley. He was strolling down the corridor display a fine zip like scar!! He took a while to place me but soon cottoned on. Apparently the triple bypass at St Georges nearly went wrong and he says he is lucky to survive. Although he is a few weeks behind in his recovery he is looking amazing, everything considered, and if I remember correctly will be discharged at the end of this week. He thinks he might have had a minor stroke because he feels slightly disconnected from the world, hence not recognising me, but he has been told this will all improve with physical and mental exercise. Being in hospital for weeks can do that to you!! He says he is looking forward to being reunited with his sheep!!!

Get well soon Mike !

Events

Brookwood Boat Rally, 23-24th May 2009

In order to re-establish boating over the entire length of the Basingstoke Canal, the Canal Society, in conjunction with Byfleet Boat Club (BBC) and Basingstoke Canal Boating Club (BCBC) have joined forces to run two rallies on the canal in May this year. The first rally will be over the weekend of 22/23 May 2009 at Brookwood Country Park between Hermitage Bridge and the A322 bridge at Brookwood. The second, the following weekend, will be at Odiham and will include a shore based event. At the time of writing (early February) we have 15 confirmed entries from as far afield as Nottingham and as close as Brookwood.

We will hopefully see the canal being used fully. The Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA) have kindly waived licence fees for those just attending the Brookwood event and reduced licence fees by 50% for those attending both events.

If you'd like to help us (and we'd be most grateful for any help) or know someone who'd like to attend please E-mail Brookwood.Rally@Gmail.com or call Kathryn on 01483 473630.

CHOBHAM SOCIAL MEETINGS

Just to give more talks in this season's programme. The venue is still the Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road, Chobham. The meetings will start at 8pm on the third Wednesday of the month. See map right for their exact location. Coffee/tea and biscuits will be available during the interval. Non members and friends are very welcome.

Wednesday 18th March 2009

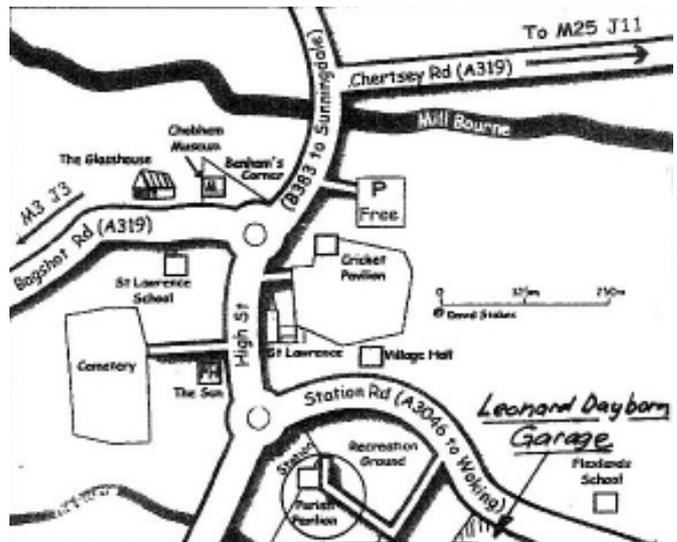
Richard Thomas - **'The Highland Canals'**

Another of our popular speakers, Richard Thomas will be returning to talk about the Highland Canals. The presentation comprises a passage along the Crinan and Caledonian Canals in Scotland. The Crinan is the 9 mile short-cut across Argyll and the Caledonian is the 60 mile journey through the Great Glen linking the North Sea with the Atlantic and including Loch Ness. Both canals are surrounded by stunning scenery.

Wednesday 15th April 2009

Steve Haywood - **'One Man and a Narrowboat - The Changing Face of England's Waterways'**

Controversial author and Canal Boat columnist Steve Haywood talks about changes that have happened to Britain's canals over the last 40 years. Steve's grumpy mixture of humour and polemic is guaranteed to be an interesting evening. He will be available to sell and sign copies of his books on the night.



For further information on this talks programme please contact David Millett on 01252 617364 or email: d.millett7@ntlworld.com. Equally, if you have any bright ideas for speakers or topics for next winter, please pass them on to David.

MIKRON THEATRE COMPANY

Date: Friday 3rd July 2009

Time: 7.30pm

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

Show: TALES FROM THE THAMESjourneys up and down the riverbank.

More details in the next issue, or from David Millett.

Events

Illuminated Boat Parade, Woking

Once again the stalwarts of the Byfleet Boat Club braved the lower reaches of the Basingstoke Canal to provide pre-Christmas entertainment and cheer to the inhabitants of Woking. This year they had to contend with a pontoon across the canal above Lock 3 that was being used as a floating bridge by one of the houseboat owners (*No, you do not need 3 days notice to move it!*), and large quantities of debris, reeds and weeds that had accumulated during the long period of inactivity on the canal due to the various closures; the Basingstoke is clearly inadvisable at present for boats that need canal water for engine cooling.

The fleet, which included Kathryn Dodington's *Leo II* down from Brookwood, assembled next to the Lightbox with a very good crowd of spectators, before setting off in the dark for the Bridge Barn. Despite a few strange manoeuvres everyone arrived safely. The winning boat in the parade was judged by the Mayor to be *Angonamo*, with *Miffy* second and *Winter Lily* third. Best under 40 ft was *Mr Bunbury* and best small boat *Dawn Whisper*.

Thanks again to the BBC for a splendid effort!



Above left: Winning boat Angonamo

Above right: Spectators watching from the Lightbox

Also present were two new, rather unusual, members of the Byfleet Boat Club. Their boat was in the Brewery Road car park and will not be appearing on the canal. Instead it will be transported in October by container to the Canary Islands for the start of a Transatlantic rowing race that could take 60 days to complete.

Richard Hoyland, a 38 year old Programme Manager from Leatherhead, and Steve Coe, a 46 year old Landscape Gardening company director are pictured here with the Mayor of Woking and his wife. They plan to raise funds for the British Heart Foundation and the Princess Alice Hospice.



If you would like to know more about them and the race or offer them sponsorship, go to www.rowacrossthepond.co.uk. For £10 you can have your, or someone else's, name written on the boat and you will receive race updates by e-mail.

Good luck to them!

Letters

Dear Roger,

Pleasure Boating on the Basingstoke Canal

I was interested to read Tim Dodwell's chronology of boating events (BCN Summer 2008). Further research (since 1968) indicated that the Bonthron boat trip was probably in 1896 or 1897 when the canal was owned by the Woking, Aldershot and Basingstoke Canal Company.

Boating on the canal became popular after the building of Aldershot Camp (1854-9). Accounts of excursions are relatively scarce although reference to its use by H W Taunt (1879) and Prothro & Clarke (1896) indicate its popularity for those stationed there.

Yours sincerely

P A L Vine

Henry Taunt was a famous Victorian photographer, celebrated mainly for his pictures of the Thames. However the photo below of the Basingstoke Canal in the English Heritage archive was taken by him in 1885. Would anyone care to identify the bridge? My money is on Double Bridge in Dogmersfield, but I stand to be corrected.



Dear Mr Ross,

Matthews Castle

You will remember our conversation at the Fox & Hounds regarding the possible location of "Matthews Castle". I am wondering if you have had any success in finding records of the construction of the canal in the length between the Fox & Hounds and the Coxheath Road Bridge that might have some bearing on the land shown on the Enclosure and Tythe map at the end of Road No. 21 and which might have been known locally as Matthews Castle.

This land had been owned by a John Matthews, who was born about 1765 and who was probably a labourer on the construction of the canal. As the land is bounded on one side by the canal it could be that John Matthews had purchased the land from the canal owners and had set up some shop or bar that was known to the Irish navvies working on the canal as Matthews Castle.

Yours sincerely

Peter Hughes



Matthew's Castle is shown above on the first edition of the one-inch Ordnance Survey map, published in 1816, as a single building some way from the canal. The Fleet & Crookham Local History Group has so far been unable to find any information about it and Tony Harmsworth has never heard of it. Can anyone enlighten Mr Hughes?

Letters

Dear Sir,

As the owner of one of the new hulls referred to in your publication I am saddened to find that a canal magazine seems to have a problem with people living on the canal they supposedly love.

I can confirm that the hull will definitely have living accommodation built on it, as this makes it so much easier for me to live aboard it. My present boat, a converted canal barge, is in need of urgent replacement because SCC, as part of the lease agreement, require all boats to be 'canal worthy', ie not sink and cause a problem for other canal users.

With regard to SCC (or Runnymede) taking a stand (against what?), I have lived on these moorings for 10 years and I am still waiting for them to do any of the things they say they will. The other residents and myself will be as happy as you when they finally get round to sorting the canal out instead of yet another re-organization, where responsibility is passed between different council departments, none of whom receive our rent monies but are expected to pay for the canal upkeep.

With regard to my neighbours boat mentioned in the 'JMC meeting' article, it was designed and built as a 2 storey boat, and I would be very interested to know which building/boat regulations you think (or know) that it contravenes.

Yours

D Dimsdale
Houseboat Lodore

I asked an owner of a "normal" canal boat for a reaction to Mr Dimsdale's letter:

Dear Roger,

I have read Mr Dimsdale's letter with interest - I don't think anyone minds people living on the canal as a proper residential boat owner (in accordance with local planning requirements) with a boat that complies, as I have to, with the standards set by the Basingstoke Canal Authority. Those standards are:

1. That I must be able to move it if required, when, say, the BCA wish to carry out maintenance or other work where I am moored.
2. That I must pay a mooring licence fee and, if I cruise, a cruising licence fee in addition.
3. That every four years I must obtain the marine equivalent of an MoT – known as a Boat Safety Certificate which covers all aspects of the safety of my boat including all the gas, ventilation, fire extinguishing items and diesel fittings.
4. That I must insure it comprehensively and carry at least

£3,000,000 in third party liability insurance.

The first experience most boaters have of the Basingstoke Canal is ascending the 'Woodham Six' locks. In the middle are the houseboats. Most of them either take up half the width of the canal or look somewhat derelict and, in my uneducated view, would not pass a Boat Safety Certificate inspection. Friends who brought their narrowboat up to Woking for the Illuminated boats procession in late November were confronted by a pontoon across the canal and had some difficulty in having it moved so that they, and the other boats with them, could continue up the canal. This is no way to welcome boaters to our canal.

I have noticed that some proper 'narrow' house boats (i.e. those of 6' 10" width and up to 70' in length) are being replaced by 'wide' boats - i.e. approximately 14' wide. Having recently extended my house I was limited to 30% increase in space. If a narrowboat is replaced by a two storied boat of double the original width that equates to a maximum 300% increase in available living space and that, in my view, is unfair to all local authority tax payers. Not only that - I had to pay some £400 for that planning permission; I didn't just take over the local car park and do my thing in an anarchic way without planning permission.

To be 100% fair to Mr Dimsdale I have painted a worse case scenario from the experiences I have witnessed on a number of visits to the Scotland Road bridge area recently. The houseboat community there is historically interesting but narrowboats should be replaced by narrow boats in a sympathetic way as is required by our Local Authorities when we rebuild or restore houses that are similarly historically interesting.

I am sure, and certainly hope, that not everyone at Woodham ignores planning permission requirements. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the longer term plans for the houseboats but have found that any conversation I have tried to engage the houseboat residents in when passing by boat has not been universally welcomed.

I am concerned that if a fire broke out on one of the houseboats at Woodham it would spread like the fire of London did all those years ago because of the construction of the boats and the closeness of the moorings - just look at what's happening in the southeast corner of Australia at the time I am writing this.

You will note I am a director of the Canal Society - I would like to make it very clear that my response to Mr Dimsdale's letter is undertaken in my capacity as a private individual, a boat owner and fellow canal user and does not represent the views of the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society or any other canal related organisation that I am a member of.

Kathryn Dodington

Correspondence

Dear Sir,

In the years of working on the canal I have yet to know of its boundaries and contents within; they remain a mystery. A detailed map would be welcome at a reasonable cost to the public. At present small blocks of stone in the undergrowth can and do disappear from view. Boundaries could be marked on trees about one yard high for easy identity.

Landscaping on the off side perhaps but not the towpath. It needs to be upgraded to a minor road, increased width to take and rear the heavy traffic. Excavators, surface rollers, skips, stone, gravel etc all use the same ruts causing heavy pounding on fragile surfaces. The dumping of stones and gravel are wasted on the surface being quickly tossed aside leaving the small grit to form a concrete surface impregnable to pick efforts; it jumps with sparks. At Lock 22 the embankment foundations are a black sponge easily flooded if the pound is full.

No mention is made of bikers. Any obstacle is bypassed - they move in a "make way for me" ideal. Should they be asked for funds to the towpath repairs that will keep them on the straight and narrow?

K Blake

I presume that the owners have a map showing boundaries, but I don't know how accurate it is. I think that marking them all would be an expensive luxury at the moment and producing maps is not cheap. Likewise upgrading the towpath would be better done after the current work on Deepcut is finished. BW tried to charge cyclists for using their towpaths but I don't think it was very successful - who would collect the fees or enforce licences? More non-navigation work for the rangers? Maybe one day we'll get these things - after the canal is working properly!

Narrow Boat Trust

Established In 1970, the Narrow Boat Trust strives to uphold the time-honed methods and experience of carrying cargo on the 1930's 'Town Class' pair Nuneaton & Brighton. The butty Brighton with its detachable stairway allows the general public access at waterway events to our authentic boatman's cabins that also serve as cosy accommodation for crew. But the NBT is no preservation society with floating museum pieces, but a charity that earns an honest income from canal carrying by using the boats as they were intended.

The membership consists of all ages and gender and there are a number of experienced couples, some accompanied with their children who enjoy crewing as a family, along with a growing number of younger enthusiastic individuals from all walks of life, eager to crew and work on the boats whatever the weather!

Opportunities to crew the boats are many as they are frequently moved from one place to another carrying cargo or to be welcomed at waterway rallies and events countrywide and this allows boating skills to be learnt quickly if one has ambitions to become a captain.



Above: Robert and Mandie Knight and their children Christopher and Elizabeth brought the boats to the 2006 Brookwood Rally

The experience of crewing the pair of boats, smoothly and efficiently through the waterway system is incomparable to any other canal experience and one that gives a profound appreciation of what the canals were originally built for.

Explore the Narrow Boat Trust's website www.narrowboattrust.org.uk to discover more about its activities and opportunities, and to download a membership form.

Membership Report

May I please remind all our members that your subscription renewals are due on 1st March. If you pay by cash or cheque you will have received a renewal letter and I look forward to receiving your payment shortly. If you pay by bankers order, please make sure that you are paying the correct amount as follows:

Adult £10, Family £12, Senior £5, Senior (pair) £7, Group £15, Junior (under 18) £3, Life £120.

Thanks to everyone for your continued support.

A warm welcome to the following new members:

Mr T Denton of Finchampstead
Mrs A Swatton of Fleet
Miss J Beyer of Upper Norwood
Mr & Mrs D Kaye of Woking
Mr & Mrs A G Gleave of Fleet
Mr J Mugridge of Brookwood
Mr I Sutherland of Farnborough
Mrs R P Eagle of Crookham Village
Basingstoke & Deane Canoe Club

Mr I Yates of West Byfleet
Mr J Haines of Crookham Village
Mr B S Chessum of Epsom
Mrs A Easdown of Church Crookham
Mr & Mrs RDS Bass of Fleet
Mr LM Ashenden of Southsea
Mr J H Simmonds of Farnham
Mrs C L Harvey of Fleet
Mr A R Brookes of Derby

Doreen Hornsey
Membership Secretary



Canal-side cottage
£275,000

New to the market is this Victorian cottage situated on the Basingstoke Canal by Lock 9 between St John's and Woking

Owned by SHCS member



Two bedrooms, spacious full-length lounge, loft-room office/study conversion, kitchen and utility room. Well-presented and much improved with double-glazing, garage (plus further parking for two cars), this cottage still oozes character in abundance.

These canal-side cottages rarely come onto the market – early viewing recommended

For sale through Curchods, tel: (01483) 776644. More pics: www.curchods.com and search for semi-detached properties in Woking priced between £250,000 and £300,000

THE WEY & ARUN CANAL

OFFICIAL OPENING of the LOXWOOD CROSSING PROJECT

The Wey & Arun Canal Trust are delighted to announce that the Grand Opening of the Loxwood Crossing Project will be on Saturday 9th May.

The first ceremony to take place at 11.15 will be the naming of "WIGGONHOLT" which is the Trust's new 50-seater electric public trip boat, donated by the Wiggonholt Association. This will be followed by the official opening of the bridge/tunnel and of Loxwood Lock by The Rt. Hon. The Lord Sterling of Plaistow, GCVO, CBE.

Further information is available from www.weyandarun.co.uk.

Do go along for this historic event, but don't forget our AGM in the evening!

- At the time of writing (end of January), the winter towpath clearance along the canal between the Canal Centre and North Warnborough is under way by contractors. This should be the most complete cutting back for many years and will involve all the saplings (hopefully) growing on the water's edge being fully pruned. In places along the Hampshire section these saplings have almost become trees especially in the North Warnborough area near Swan Bridge where the canal is fairly narrow.
- The recent cold spells which resulted in the canal being frozen over for days at a time led to the usual spate of debris being deposited on the ice in the urban locations. The worst locations were Woking, Ash Wharf and parts of Fleet. The local youth in these areas took a great delight in throwing anything movable onto the ice, which ranged from road repair signs, wheelie bins, fence panels, logs and anything they could lay their hands on. The worst location was Ash Wharf because of the amount of items behind the parade of shops. It took five Canal Rangers to clear this area and also resulted in a letter to the editor of the local paper bemoaning this vandalism. In Fleet five bicycles were removed from under a couple of the bridges.
- Following on from my paragraph in the Winter edition about discussions taking place in Hart with regard to the Parish Councils contributing to the canal funding in future, it is pleasing to learn that seven councils will be contributing in 2009/2010 based on the population in each of the participating parishes, at a rate of £2 per dwelling. The contributing parishes are Odiham, Winchfield, Dogmersfield, Crookham Village, Fleet and Church Crookham (via the Special Expenses budget) and two non riparian parish councils, South Warnborough and Rotherwick. These contributions will be paid direct to the Canal Authority and the Parish Councils will have a representative to liaise with the Canal Director on how their contributions are spent.
- Dogmersfield Park planning issues are still ongoing. The retrospective planning application for their trip boat shelter was approved by Hart Council in spite of objections by the local parish council and observations by the Society. It was not built exactly in accordance with the original planning permission (which the Society opposed) so an amended application had to be submitted. The wooden building which has appeared between the waiting shelter and the estate worker's farmstead and livestock storage building has, however, been built without planning permission. Prompted by the Society, Hart's Enforcement Officer has ordered the agents for Dogmersfield Park Ltd to submit a retrospective planning application for this building which we will oppose. If this application is turned down

by the Planning Committee (and we hope it is) then an Enforcement Order can be served on Dogmersfield Park Ltd for the building to be pulled down.

- Pleased to hear that the draft proposals by the Environment Agency to sell ten and let twelve lock and weir keepers' houses along the Thames have been withdrawn. This was due to immense pressure from staff, MPs, river users, and those living on the Thames floodplain. A sensible conclusion has been reached that it is essential to have the staff living on site to control flood risks by operating the weirs quickly and to respond to incidents outside normal working hours. So a resident lock and weir keeper will be retained at forty five sites along the Thames.
- Congratulations to the Wey and Arun Canal Trust who will be having a ceremony on Saturday 9th May at Loxwood to celebrate the completion of the massive project to build a new lock, bridge and a tunnel under the road at this important location. This is almost certainly the largest project organised by a volunteer canal trust in this country.

Accessible Boating Association

As most members will be aware, the Accessible Boating Association is a charity offering opportunities for people with access difficulties to go boating on the Basingstoke Canal. They operate two self-drive boats, *Dawn*, a day boat, and *Madam Butterfly*, a cruising boat.

The Accessible Boating Association was formed in 1985 when Councillor Mildred Stocks, Founder and President of the Association, was elected Chairman of Hart District Council and for her chosen charity decided to raise funds for a project which would interest and involve people across the whole District. The Association (formerly named Boats for the Handicapped) has been very successful over the ensuing years.

The Association is now looking for more volunteers to come forward, especially to help on the administration and management aspects. Management Committee meetings are held once a month to hear the reports of the Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary and to hear updates on the operations and bookings. Other volunteers are always welcomed to help with maintenance of the boats and to act as boatmen, for which full training is available.

Any members interested in helping this excellent Charity or requiring further information should contact the Chairman, Tony Carter on 01252 615785. The Association web-site is www.accessibleboating.org.uk

From Society Newsletter No.84 April 1979

- A year of substantial progress in the Basingstoke Canal's restoration was reported to members at the AGM held at the St. Andrews's Hall in Frimley Green on the 17th. February. The Society's Chairman, Robin Higgs told members "I think I can say that we are coping well with the task, that is all of us together, the Society and the County Councils. This year, if things progress as they show every sign of doing, then we shall be half way through the restoration process." He also emphasised that more voluntary effort was needed." There never can be enough volunteers or enough money so I do make a plea to you all to do what you can to push the restoration work".
- The need for the formation of a Trust was also emphasised to manage the whole canal which was one of the two main recommendations made in the original Joint Working Party Report in 1973. "The amount of finance and resources available, and the interests of the community, of which the restored canal will be a part, will, in the view of the Society, best be served in the years to come by the formation of a Trust", said Mr. Higgs.
- The Society submitted a 109-page document to Hampshire and Surrey County Councils, prepared by Richard Allnutt, for the setting up of a Basingstoke Canal Trust. This included the financial and administrative benefits of managing the canal by an autonomous charitable trust.
- The major event of 1978, the launch of the trip boat 'John Pinkerton' for public and charter trips proved to be very successful. The boat carried nearly 10,000 passengers and made a surplus of over £6,000 which will be used to restore one of the original bridges over the canal at Broad Oak, near Odiham. Other major fundraising activities included the Society's first Grand Draw which raised £1,500, a sponsored walk bringing in nearly £1,000 and donations totalling £1,400 largely achieved by Mr. Richard Allnutt who organised a special appeal.
- Brian Bane, the manager of our steam dredger 'Perseverance' reported that the dredger had now reached Baseley's Bridge, Winchfield. Progress had been impeded by the five bridges between Sandy Hill and Winchfield, each of which took four weekends to work through. A new silt dump had been opened at Lousy Moor which was nearer to the operating site. The tug boat 'Sparkle' -one of two bought with a donation of £1,000 made by Johnson Wax, had been put into service and Brian thanked Ron Jesse and the volunteers who had kept the dragline crane, used for off-loading the barges, in good working order.
- A start had been made on building lock gates in a custom built workshop constructed on the foundations of an ex-Army swimming pool adjacent to the canal at Deepcut with timber supplied by Surrey County Council from their mill near Dorking. Job Creation workers had so far produced eight lock gates with more under construction. Frank Jones, the supervisor of the Job Creation Programme, reported that a total of 89 boys had worked on the JCP scheme and he reported that 'we have encouraged them and most have gone on to reasonable jobs. Some have been outstanding and one is now a foreman bricklayer at the age of 19 years.'
- A unique journey by canal narrow boat, an old double decker bus and steam locomotive, with a visit to the world's only steam fairground, will launch the 'John Pinkerton's' 1979 season and make a special new attraction for visitors to southern England. On April 7th representatives of the Press, TV and radios have been invited on the inaugural journey which is sponsored by the Southern Tourist Board. After a trip on the canal, and a visit to the Mid-Hants railway by double-decker bus, the journey will end at the Hollycombe Steam Fairground and Railway near Liphook. This round trip will be available on Sundays only to pre-booked parties.
- Members may not be aware that the wharf site at Reading Road Bridge, Fleet which once had a thriving rowing boat hire and teas business as part of its attractions, was not included in the purchase arrangements made by Hampshire County Council when they acquired the canal in Hampshire from the New Basingstoke Canal Company Limited. The Company, who still own this area of land, applied last year to Hart District Council for outline planning permission to build two two-storey blocks of maisonettes and garages on the site. The Society and local Fleet residents reacted strongly to this proposal which was subsequently turned down by the Planning Committee. Later, of course, the land was bought by Hampshire County Council separately to use as a wharf, car park and access area to the canal.
- Following the heavy rains in 1968, and after years of no maintenance, a tree fell and took part of the Ash Embankment with it. A large area was flooded and a concrete dam was placed across the top of Ash Lock. This year the embankment should be cleared of undergrowth by our volunteers and the local Ash Vale Residents Group, with the larger trees cleared by tree surgeons from Surrey County Council. After the silt has been removed by Hymac a trial section will be puddled and filled with water. HCC will fill the breach, Society STEP and WEP schemes will construct a new run-off weir so surplus water can be run off into the Blackwater River. By the end of the year it is hoped to get water into the Surrey section of the canal.

SHCS notes

General Canal Society contact number: 0796-4357442

The Brookwood Rally at the end of May has already attracted more than two dozen entries, with the majority of boats intending to go on up to Odiham for the gathering on the following weekend.

For more details nearer the time, please go to the SHCS website, www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk



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.

Date for next copy 30th April 2009

Published by the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society Ltd., a non-profit distributing company limited by guarantee, registered as a Charity. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Society. Executive members of the Committee are shown in bold type and Directors of the Society have an asterisk () after their name.*

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