



BASINGSTOKE CANAL NEWS

No. 225 Spring 2010





Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society Ltd

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Editorial



We start 2010 with a mixture of good and bad news for the canal.

The bad news is that the Deepcut flight of locks is likely to remain closed this year and, even worse, that the canal is also closed to through navigation in Hampshire for work on the West Hart Embankment. This will have a terrible effect on Galleon Marine's business and will hit the *John Pinkerton's* income too if the lucrative Air Show week has to be cancelled. However, given the dangerous condition revealed by the latest inspection, the decision appears inevitable. The only good thing is that Hampshire County Council appear to be willing to give the BCA whatever resources it needs to get the job done quickly and permanently.

It is easy to argue that these things should have been dealt with earlier once the problems were identified, but we are dealing with County Councils spending scarce public money with many competing demands on it. The reality is that they have to be able to demonstrate that it has been spent for proper and necessary reasons and that all processes and procedures have been followed. It all takes a shocking amount of time and is perhaps the best reason for setting up a trust to maintain the canal, or, even better, integrating it into the national waterways management. For the time being, though, we are stuck with it.

The good news is that at long last the Counties have realised that they do own a canal and that they need to pay for it to be maintained if they want to avoid some disaster that would cost even more. Surrey County Council has agreed to make £880,000 capital money available over the next three years and it is hoped that Hampshire will come up with a similar sum. The Asset Management Plan shows the problems that have been identified so far from the surveys of the locks and embankments. More will no doubt appear when the culverts and bridges are inspected this year.

A grim year may have to be the price we pay for a brighter future for the canal, but it will be vital to keep the pressure on to make sure that contracts are awarded as rapidly as possible and that work does not drag on any longer than necessary.

There has been a bit of Mickey-taking on the quiet about all Ian Brown's various management plans, with muttering about 'action, not words'. However, Ian's plans are probably the first time in 200 years that anybody has actually tried to set down what is needed to give the Canal a sustainable

future. The past has been a constantly repeated 20 to 25 year cycle of decline and recovery and, hopefully, we are now going to emerge from the latest one. Ian has a very clear and correct recognition that prevention is better and cheaper than cure and he will need continuing financial support to implement this in future. We mustn't let the Counties allow the canal to decline again.

* * * * *

There were two appeals in the last Newsletter, for a buyer for *Nancy Belle* and for someone to act as a warden for the Sheerwater woods. It was very gratifying to have such a good response to both. As reported later, *Nancy Belle* has a new owner, who hopes to have her refurbished and ready for action again by the end of the year, and we have several people willing to keep an eye on things at Sheerwater.

It is very nice to have confirmation that someone reads this stuff I churn out and that the Canal Society is still alive and active. It is also very nice to see the list of some three dozen new members on Doreen Hornsey's membership page.

The one thing that I would say to them is that if they want to get involved with any of our activities, please do not wait to be asked. We are trying hard to be better at following up offers of help on the membership form, but if you haven't heard anything, please feel free to contact someone on the Committee directly. We would much rather be pestered than to find out that a new member is feeling browned-off and overlooked!

* * * * *

The Annual General Meeting is only a few months away. We have at least one seat vacant on the Committee. As is obvious from my earlier remarks, the need for the Society's input to the affairs of the Canal is as great as ever, so why not give a thought to getting involved with running the Society?

* * * * *

This issue of the Newsletter is a bit late, because there were several matters of great importance that were due to be announced in February, and I felt that it was better to delay publication in order to include them.

The next issue will also be a couple of weeks late, partly to include a report on our AGM in May and partly because I shall be on holiday.

Hopefully it will all get back on track later in the year.

Cover Picture: Santa Special trip at the Canal Centre
Photo: Roger Cansdale

Chairman's Page

Capital Funding

As quoted in my last report "The fortunes of the canal are varied," but the signs are that an era of degraded structures and closures due to failed installations may now herald a period of sustained recovery. However, a health warning of "Don't be complacent" also applies to this report, and hard work and consultations will continue until a sustainable waterway emerges.

A capital budget of £350,000 for structural repairs in 2010/11, with a provisional funding for 2011/12/13 of a further £540,000 has been authorised by Surrey County Council. Hampshire County Council budgets for the canal have yet to be confirmed, but positive comments and letters from Hampshire County Council encourage expectations of a similar decision on repairs in Hampshire.

We continue to press for the repair of serious defects as a priority, and an objective of an opened canal and celebrations in 2011, the 20th anniversary of the Royal opening, is a challenge we wish to achieve.

Whilst the Society has been active in engaging officers and councillors to support additional funding for the canal, we should recognise and applaud the efforts of the County Officers in preparing submissions that secured funding in a climate of 20% cuts overall. Thank you all for your support and efforts.

Revenue Funding

Revenue Funding, the day to day running expenses for the canal, is supported by the contributions made by County

Councils and Riparian Districts. Shortfalls in Revenue contributions initiated a steady draw down from revenue reserves over some years. Attempts to negotiate work-in-kind by Districts may help improve revenue performance but possibly on a parochial basis.

The hard inescapable financial reality is that the Revenue Reserves are exhausted and the annual contributions are finite. The canal revenue budgets will dictate services and priorities which can be provided by the Canal Authority. The contributions in kind agreed by some Districts may free Ranger time for essential maintenance work but won't pay their wages.

Deepcut

Princess Royal Barracks at Deepcut is being considered for re-development when disposal by the MOD occurs. Surrey Heath BC have published consultation information. This development will have a significant impact on the canal, with increased residential and commercial usage of the site, leisure activity requirements and increased towpath use.

Possible advantages include a potential for water enhancement linked with sustainable drainage policies and improved access to the Dry Dock and canal buildings.

We will be responding to the consultation brief and I encourage members to respond as individuals. This important site should recognise the unique environment of the canal corridor along the southern boundary.

Peter Redway

NOTICE is hereby given that the Thirty third Annual General Meeting of the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society will be held on Saturday 15th May 2010 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 9th May 2009.
3. To approve the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2009.
4. To appoint the Independent Accountants, Rutton B Viccajee.
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

5th February 2010

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.

Canal news

Hampshire closure

Overshadowing everything at the moment is the decision made at the end of February to close a 1½ mile long section of the canal in Hampshire on 1st March to allow urgent repairs to be carried out on the West Hart Embankment. It had been hoped that some temporary fix might be done to allow the canal to remain open until the autumn, but the condition of the leaking embankment ruled this out.

There has already been slippage and there are trees leaning on the embankment. The County's experts believe that there is a significant risk that the bank could give way and if this were to happen, there would be widespread flooding. There are no stop gates and it would be very difficult and dangerous to insert stop planks with a flow on the canal. One of the areas that would be flooded is a large electrical substation in Coxmoor Wood, where power lines carrying 400,000 volts converge – not a good mix with water.



Ian Brown has been given the go-ahead to use whatever resources are needed to get a permanent repair done as quickly as possible. His e-mail message states:-

"The County Council realises that this will have a detrimental effect on the navigable commercial and recreational use of the canal but must act in accordance with its duty of care to the whole community. We shall attempt to get the damaged bank totally repaired as quickly as we possibly can using the most appropriate specialists and drawing from the engineering expertise that we now have at our disposal. At this stage a set time frame for this work is not possible, suffice it to say that we will act with speed, safe practice and use all the resources that are necessary to get the job done."



Above and top right: The first set of stop planks going in at Chequers Bridge on 1st March



The Canal is being dammed at Chequers Bridge and Double Bridge. A pipe will run through the drained section to allow water to continue to flow down the canal. Ian hopes that the work will be completed in two or three months, so there is some prospect of salvaging part of the season, provided that it rains at the right time to refill the canal.

It is a grim prospect, particularly for Galleon Marine, who have been struggling with the effects of other closures during the past few years, but at this point there really appears to be no safe alternative. Carrying on with fingers crossed in the face of a known problem would not be a good position to defend in court if the County Council was being sued for flood damage.

Funding

I talked to Ian Brown earlier in February and he correctly said that 2010 is going to be "a challenging year". The various plans that he has been working on, Asset Management, Maintenance Service Management, Visitor Services and Recreation Development, etc are just about complete and should be presented for approval this year. All of them will require some degree of extra funding, without which the downward slide in the canal's condition will continue. Ian overspent his revenue budget last year, simply carrying out essential maintenance by £40k, drawing on the reserves, and clearly this cannot continue.

The good news is that the message has finally got through to the County owners. Surrey has agreed £880,000 over three years and it is hoped that Hampshire will provide a similar sum.

So, it isn't all bad. The condition survey of the locks carried out last year failed to produce any big nasty surprises, and in some respects the canal appeared to be in better condition than that previously reported by British Waterways a few years ago. The cost of remedial action looks as if it will be significantly less than some of the more pessimistic estimates.

Canal news

2010 plans

The priority during this time will be to tackle high risk things like weak banks, landslips, culverts and locks, as well as installing stop (flooding control) gates and better sluices and weirs, particularly in Hampshire. Some of the 56 culverts identified may well still have their original 18th century elm lining in places.

Some of this work has started. Draining the section to fix the West Hart embankment will provide an opportunity to install stop gates or at least stop plank grooves, say at the sites of Coxmoor Bridge or the old Dogmersfield swing bridge.

Work on the Deepcut bank slip will be done by Ringway in April, while bank protection work in the cutting should start in February. Blue Boar will use dredgings to infill behind the protection and after a few months to allow the towpath to settle down, it will be resurfaced for re-opening some to during the summer. Surrey Heath Council is being approached for a contribution-in-kind. Similar back protection work is needed on the towpath in Mytchett near the Canal Centre.



Above: The Deepcut towpath after more than 4 years of closure.

Ian will be talking to Guildford Borough Council about the possibility of funding assistance for upgrading the towpath down the Deepcut flight. At present this is pretty uneven and in places rather lower than it should be, giving rise to the danger of over-topping and a bank wash-out. This did happen in the 1980s.

Rushmoor Borough Council has allotted £40k from the TAG Community and Environmental Fund to upgrade the towpath

from Norris Bridge in Fleet to the end of the Farnborough runway. At present this is in a terrible state, full of ruts and large puddles.

Further west in Hampshire, a landslip in Swan cutting at North Warnborough will be fixed using sheet metal piling.

Bad news is that Ian needs to keep the Deepcut flight shut until the various safety issues that have been identified are rectified. These include bypass pipes, 6 sets of gates, balance beams and wing walls. With capital money now available, this work will be done by a contractor. Ian is keen not to keep opening the flight only to have it closed again for some other problem. Provided that the money is forthcoming, this may well be the quickest way of getting the flight back in permanent operation, but a closure that dragged on because of delays in placing contracts would be terribly bad for the canal's credibility as a usable navigation.

The bypass pipe at Lock 12 is due to be lined as soon as higher temperatures allow this. The Canal Society will be doing the bypass at Lock 1.

A list of competent contractors for such work is being put together by Ian and the County Councils, and it will include the Canal Society. Peter Redway has submitted the Society's various methods and procedures to the Counties for their formal approval.

Modifications are being made to the paddle gear at the top of the locks to move the direction of winding from being at right angles to the canal to parallel to it. This has the important safety advantage that the operator will no longer have to be pushing towards the water and risking falling in if the windlass slips. The photo shows the paddle gear at the dry dock that has been modified.



Dredging remains an issue to be solved. With a cost of £50k per kilometre, Ian's current revenue budget is unlikely to make any real impact on it. Extra money will have to be found somewhere; Natural England might be able to obtain funding for specific areas of interest. It is a matter of considerable regret, expressed very strongly by the Canal Society's Vice-Chairman Philip Riley at the JMC meeting,

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Canal news

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that Natural England has failed to send a representative to any of the Canal management meetings for over a year. As well as funding issues, their opinion is vitally needed on other matters such as the various proposals for enhancing water supply. There is no point in spending money on things like Bourley Reservoirs if NE are liable to raise some objection. The JMC agreed to write to them requesting better attendance.

Natural England has already promised funding to implement aspects of the Conservation Management Plan, such as tree shading management. A survey was done in Surrey last year and Hampshire will be done this year. Some trees will undoubtedly have to be removed because they have been allowed to grow where they shouldn't. Ian instanced a large oak that had been removed near one of the Surrey locks, because in high winds it was possible to see the balance beam moving with the tree! In other areas the tree line will be moved back to reduce shading.

Tree felling has already started on the embankment behind the towpath at Mytchett Lake. This is classified as a reservoir, so the BCA has to obey the stringent requirements that apply to them. In this case the surveyor demanded the removal of 74 trees on the bank. As the photo shows, many of these show signs of decay and the amount of useful timber available is relatively small. Nevertheless, if anyone wants a bit of wood for turning, or just for burning, contact the Canal Authority.



Above: Tree felling at Mytchett Lake. The height of the embankment can be judged from the position of the work boat at the top right of the picture.

Plans for the future

Ian is also looking beyond the current problems to enhancements. He would like to move the BCA's operational base to Ash Lock in a development on the lines of that proposed by the Canal Society. This would include a new dry dock and a wet dock as well as new offices and a better workshop. Ian thinks he has finally managed to track down someone who might be able to make a decision about the Army handing over a piece of unused adjacent land that could provide a car park. If this can be agreed, the Society would get the design study that it commissioned completed and this could be used as a basis for funding applications.

If the BCA moved to Ash Lock, it would free up space at the Canal Centre. Ian would like to see a better museum there as well as a larger function room that could be hired out for weddings, etc. Better toilets and showers would increase income from camping in the adjacent field, and a slip way would attract trail boats.

Water supply remains a problem. Ian is keen to get the back-pumping scheme at Brookwood under way and clearly the solution for Deepcut is going to take time. The suggestion of drilling bore-holes at the top of Deepcut to tap into new sources of water is looking rather unpromising. Hydrological advice is that any water is likely to be a long way down and probably of the wrong degree of acidity/alkalinity, so that very expensive pumping and treatment would be needed. Without some better prospect, it is unlikely that anyone, including the Canal Society, is going to fork out the £100k needed to drill the bore-holes.

Ian thinks that better prospects exist in increasing the Frimley pump output, trying to get the use of Bourley reservoirs and eventually building a new reservoir at the top of Deepcut. Currently an enquiry study is being done by South East Water into the effects of water abstraction at Greywell on the levels of the canal and the River Whitewater, which might result in better input from the springs there.

Surrey Heath Council have also recently requested comments on the proposed re-development of the Princess Royal Barracks at Deepcut. The Society has replied pointing out the possibility of solving drainage problems for any housing development at the same time as improving water supplies for the canal by building a reservoir near Lock 28.

So, plenty to think about and plenty to do. The Asset Management plan had its first airing at the JMC meeting in February, with approval scheduled for the October meeting. The Recreation Development Plan, which includes the Canal Centre, will be put before the June meeting.

JMC report

Asset Management Plan

The long anticipated Asset Management Plan and the condition survey on which it is based were presented by Graham Cole of Surrey County Council at the Joint Management Committee meeting in February.

The survey covered locks and embankments and the findings were summarised in two tables. Of the locks, 13 were rated as being in Fair condition (including the dry dock) while the other 17 were said to be Poor.

The 141 embankment sites surveyed were given a rating for both condition and the severity of the consequences of a failure, and these were combined to provide an assessment of risk. Over 80% of the embankments were assessed as being in good or very good condition. In Surrey the remaining 17 sites were all in fair condition with no poor or bad ones. In Hampshire 7 were rated as fair and 3 as poor. The risk rating shows 31 very low risks, 45 low, 52 moderate and 13 high; the high risk is deemed unacceptable and measures will be taken to improve them. There were no sites rated as being in bad condition or posing a very high risk although the recent inspection of the West Hart Embankment presumably pushed it into this category, which requires immediate attention.

Graham stated firmly that there was a need to move away from the present reactive approach. The plan will aim to do maintenance that will prevent problems arising, rather than having to fix them after they happen.

Cllr Roger Kimber commented that it would strengthen the case for additional funding if the number of canal users could be estimated, together with the number of houses at risk from flooding caused by a breach. It was agreed to update the *Basingstoke Canal - Value for Money* booklet that was produced a few years ago.

Paul Roper of the IWA offered his congratulations on the Condition Survey. The results could have been a lot worse. He was delighted that they were thinking ahead to sustainable management. The money being provided by the Counties was a great step forward but the canal will still need continued funding. Once the condition of the canal was back up to standard it must be sustained to ensure a viable future.

(Paul has pointed out that he was misquoted in the report of the previous JMC meeting. He said that "the canal's reputation is well known nationally. It is regarded as a joke." He had considerable sympathy for the BCA and did not regard them as a joke. My apologies for the mis-quotation.)

In his Director's Report, Ian Brown estimated that it would take 3 to 5 years to fix all the problems that had been identified. Paul Roper commented that there was a need for

the BCA to reduce its cost base and increase its income, but he thought that it should be possible to do this and arrive at a sustainable regime. There was a need for everyone to support Ian in trying to achieve this.

In Peter Redway's report on behalf of the Canal Society, he suggested that it would be desirable to have a permanent mooring at the back of the Farnborough Airfield, and that the Society would be willing to install it if any money could be made available. Rushmoor Council invited the Society to put a bid in for some money from TAG, the operators of the airfield.

Peter also raised the issue of the swing bridges that Sustrans had proposed to install in Woking for the benefit of cyclists. He pointed out that these would not only inconvenience boaters but would also increase damage to the banks due to propeller wash as boats stopped and started. Canoeists and Boating for the Handicapped had also lodged objections, and Peter gave notice that the Society would oppose any planning applications made for swing bridges. Ian Brown said that new proposals were being drawn up and a meeting would be called to discuss them. He said that there would not be a swing Bridge at Hermitage; a foot bridge attached to the current road bridge was under consideration.

Peter Redway also commented that the Condition Survey lacked any information about the depth of the canal. He suggested that the Society's new work boat could provide a means of obtaining this when it was commissioned.

The final part of the JMC meeting was the report of the Finance Director. He drew attention to the downturn in the reserves over the years and said that it matched almost exactly the shortfall in funding provided by the Local Authorities. It would have been even worse but for things like the TAG money and the Canal Society input (estimated at about £54,000 in 2009).

The JMC Chairman, Cllr Keith Chapman undertook to talk to the head of Surrey Heath Borough Council, which was now the main defaulter. Their plans for the Deepcut Barracks development recognised the asset value of the canal.

Cllr A J Davis of Runnymede Borough Council said that they would explore other sources of funding.

Surrey County Councillor Ben Carasco wondered whether county money might be better spent if channeled into the Canal Society!

Work Party

Since my last report we have been snowed and iced in. January Working Parties scheduled for piling lock landings had to be postponed for practical and safety reasons. A visit by Newbury Working Party Group was cancelled due to road conditions, and as a result, the work boat project was our only activity that weekend.

At the time of writing this report, we have collected our barge (recently purchased) from Thames Lock on the River Wey and got it as far as Woking when the daylight faded.

WORK BOAT

Good progress has been achieved in fitting out our work boat. Modifications are almost complete, with a ventilated battery installation and sealed fuel tank compartment. Wiring is well advanced and tested, and facilities for deck lights, automatic bilge pumps and an external socket are installed. Welfare accommodation/galley fitting out is well advanced, and a spring launch is achievable.



Above: The work boat nearing completion. The wooden prop was to support the weight of snow on the roof!

BROOKWOOD

A secure structure for the water point at Brookwood has been constructed (*Right*). The steel door and roof have not been fully painted due to the cold conditions.

HEALTH and SAFETY

Our volunteer working parties' organisation and practices are being evaluated by the County Councils for compliance with Health and Safety regulations. The County Council Contracting requirements have been amended for volunteer working and I have formal application documents to complete and return.

As a corporate member of the IWA, the IWA/WRG safety documentation and insurance schemes provide us with considerable relevant documentation. We have a considerable number of generic Risk Analysis and Method Statements on file, covering our activities which we have modified and improved over the years.

The WRG Driver Authorisation scheme has been updated recently and we will need to upgrade some volunteer documentation.

Recent volunteers will be offered initial training and I am checking the requirements for any refresher training requirements.

Peter Redway

FUTURE WORKING PARTY DETAILS

DATE	LEADER	LOCATION
13/14 March	PR/DJ/DL	Woodham
27/28 March	PR/DJ/DL	Bridge Barn or Woodham
10/11 April	PR/DJ/DL	Woodham
24/25 April	PR/DJ/DL	Woodham
8/9 May	PR/DJ/DL	Woodham
22/23 May	PR/DJ/DL	Woodham
12/13 June	PR/DJ/DL	Lock 17
26/27 June	PR/DJ/DL	Lock 17

Contact Numbers

PR - Peter Redway	01483 721710
DJ - Dave Junkisen	0208 941 0685
DL - Dave Lunn	01483 771294
KR - Kevin Redway	01483 722206

Peter Redway



John Pinkerton

Winter maintenance this year focused mainly on repainting the outside of the boat. Some areas of the roof had had at least six coats of paint applied over the years and some of them were not adhering too well, so the whole lot was removed by grit blasting by the same man who had previously done the Society's new workboat. Having stripped the old paint off, he sprayed the boat with red lead paint followed by undercoat and then a top coat.



Above: John Pinkerton in the dry dock.

This unfortunately was where things went wrong. The fly sheet seen above was intended to prevent condensation dripping off the cover onto the new paint, but did nothing to stop cold and humidity causing problems, and the top coat lifted and had to be removed again.

All credit to the Society volunteers who repainted it using rollers in conditions which were near arctic at times. The final result looks very good and it's hard to believe that this is a 32 year old boat. Nevertheless, it would be nice to hope that one day a proper, heated, wet dock might be available for this sort of job if the development at Ash Lock ever takes place.

The boat was moved out of the dry dock to make way for another boat, and taken up to the Canal Centre at Mytchett.

It was there when the news that the canal was to close on the following Monday came through on the Friday evening, so in a move reminiscent of HMS Amethyst's famous Yangtze Incident, the *John Pinkerton* was forced to make a dash for its home base at Odiham to avoid being caught on the wrong side of the closed section in Hampshire.

Nobody was actually shooting at them, but there was drama at Norris Bridge. Duncan Paine takes up the story:

Nigel & I were in the cabin when we had a strident call from Dave Redman who was driving saying that he thought there was a body in the canal. So we reversed up to it on the off

side and we all thought he was correct. I eventually managed to get through to 999 and report it. Police were there very quickly, and when we had 3 coppers on board we poled across and they agreed it was a body. They took photos and then got the boat hook and used that to tow the body across the canal as we poled the boat back. They then had to wait for the 'body recovery team' to arrive, who were in Southampton. It was fun seeing the police walking the plank to get on and off as we could not get very close to the bank and the wooden plank was only just long enough! Dave then had to give a statement as he saw it first and as he was driving he was 'in charge' of the boat. Being gentlemen we served teas all round.



In the meantime we got messages that HCC were panicking before the predicted heavy rain forecast for Sunday. The canal level was being lowered, and there was talk that they were going to put the stop planks in on Sunday, so we had to clear West Hart on Saturday. We eventually persuaded the police that they could borrow the boat hook to hold the body and we could go, which we did after about a 2 hour delay. We got to Odiham eventually just before 5 o'clock.



Above: Back on its home mooring at Colt Hill, the Pinkerton awaits the final bits of sign writing and decoration.

Snow on the



Left:
Crookha
Bridge

Chequer
Crookha



Left:
The Cana
Mytchett

Poulter
C

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the East
but it
weatherf

Basingstoke



m Swing

Right:
s Bridge,
m Village



al Centre,

Right:
s Bridge,
crookham

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ern end,
wasn't
or driving!

Houseboats

Dramas seem to be continuing among the houseboat fleet at Woodham.

Back in August 2008, a programme in the BBC television series "DIY SOS" featured Nick Knowles and his team of handy men doing up what was described as a river barge. In fact it was one of the houseboats between Locks 1 and 2 on the Basingstoke Canal. I watched the programme and was struck by the fact that the workers seemed rather less cheerful and jokey than usual. In fact they seemed a distinctly nervous.

It appears now that they were right to be, because the boat has just sunk while the owner was abroad on holiday. It is not clear what caused it to sink, but the large top structure is sitting on a narrow boat hull, so its stability is probably not wonderful and the condition of the hull is anybody's guess.



Above: Sunken houseboat below Scotland Bridge.

We reported the sudden departure of *Wenonah* in the last newsletter, and that boat is still sitting dejectedly where it was left on the Wey Navigation. Rumour has it that a deal has been done in conjunction with the National Trust to get both boats removed by a contractor.

Interestingly, the eBay advertisement inviting buyers to "Live the dream on a brand new houseboat" costing £270,000, has finally disappeared with no bidders.

At the recent meeting of the Canal's Joint Management Committee, a written reply was provided to a question raised by Cllr Glynis Preshaw from Brookwood. She asked

"In the light of the planning advice received from officers on the construction of new houseboats at Woodham and Woking I would request that Surrey County Council, the Basingstoke Canal Authority and Runnymede and Woking Borough Councils provide a joint recommendation to the JMC on the steps that need to be taken to ensure that the new houseboats fully comply with all the applicable planning,

safety, navigational and public health regulations and the appropriate action is taken to enforce compliance."

There was a lengthy reply which said that it appears that the majority of the existing boats and the ancillary buildings on the bank are immune from any planning enforcement action because they have been there for more than 10 years without any such action being taken.

However, it goes on to say that all of the existing leases expire on 30 June 2012 and a draft lease has been prepared which addresses many of the concerns that have been raised about uncontrolled development and safety. The owners of the existing two storey houseboats have been informed that they may not sell their boats when they assign their leases, so these boats will have to be removed in due course.

It suggested that the JMC might wish to consider setting up a small working group of members to take the issue forward, and it was agreed to do this at the meeting.



Above: The newly extended (vertically) houseboat at Hermitage. It actually looks better now with its timber cladding, and, being next to the flash, is rather less overpowering than those down at Woodham. However, the fact remains that it is now impossible to get it under bridges, so that there is no way, short of draining the canal, to inspect the hull or do any repairs to the underwater structure.

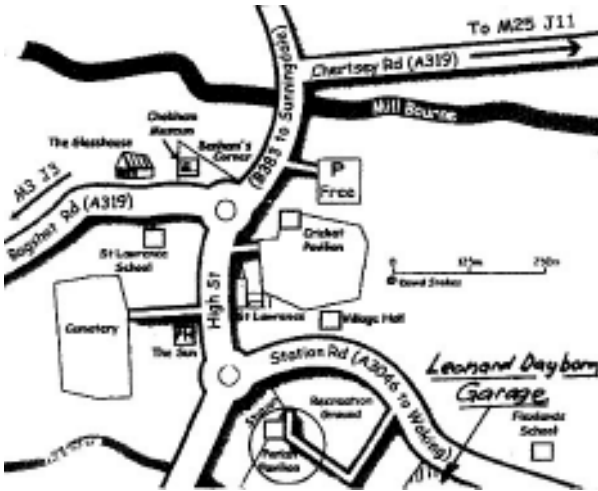
It is believed that the hull was built at the same time as *Dragonfly's*, whose visit to the Pyrford dry dock was reported in the last Newsletter.

That visit ended up with a large bill for replating the hull, and its owner, Julia Jacs, says that she was very relieved that the job was done before they got frozen in during the cold weather in January. She reckons that the corrosion was such that the boat could have been holed by the ice without its new plating.

Events

CHOBHAM SOCIAL MEETINGS

The talks season is now in full swing and will continue to April 2010. The venue as usual is at the Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road, Chobham, near Woking. Meetings start at 8pm on the third Wednesday of the month (See map below for exact location). Coffee/tea and biscuits will be available during the interval. Non-members and friends are very welcome.



Wednesday 17th March 2010

Ron and Myra Glover - '**Crossing Germany from west to east**'

Ron and Myra will be describing and illustrating their cruises in Germany in their steel motor cruiser from the River Rhine in the west through to Berlin and then north to the Mecklenburg Lakes and back to Berlin thence eastwards to the Polish border.

Wednesday 21st April 2010

Runnalls Davis - '**Birds, Beaux, Barges and a Great Big Bang - The Regent's Canal**'

One of our popular speakers returns again to talk about London's very own canal which is comparatively little known, and this voyage follows it from its somewhat sordid beginnings at Limehouse on the Thames to the sublime Regency beauty of Little Venice. Its history and changing fortunes are described, as well as some of its landmark buildings, strange curiosities, and the eccentric characters who have left their mark on it.

For further information on this talks programme please contact David Millett on 01252 617364 or email: d.millett7@ntlworld.com

RALLIES

Despite the traumas further up the canal, it should remain navigable at least as far as St John's and it is planned to hold some events in 2010.

The first will be a gathering at the Bridge Barn in Woking at Easter (3, 4 April). There may not be as many boats in attendance as usual, but it is hoped that there will be enough on the land-side to attract and entertain the public.

St John's village is holding an event on 26th June and asked the Society to try to get some boats there on the canal. They are presumably looking for something more decorative than the fleet of assorted working boats that currently lives outside our Chairman's back door! This should be a pleasant village fete type of event combined with a mini boat rally.

Finally, it has been agreed to have a pre-Christmas Illuminated Boat Event in Woking. This didn't happen last year because of the weed-choked canal in Woking, but as the photos show, things have changed!



Woking before (left) and after (right) weed cutting last autumn. Even the reed beds have gone.



Nancy Belle

Hi Roger,

May I through the medium of the Basingstoke Canal News thank the Society for the help given in finding a new home for nb *Nancy Belle*. I was one of several who responded to the article in the last issue, and we were all given extreme courtesy and help by the members of the Society involved. Special thanks must go to Dick Snell, friend of Nancy Larcombe, who not only undertook the resurrection of the engine, but drove the boat down to the dry-dock for wash-off prior to a hull inspection. Thanks also to Roger and Peter who have helped me through the logistics nightmare!

Reading through some of the paperwork, and 'Its a Boat's Life' by Nancy Larcombe - well worth a read if you haven't already - it is apparent that Nancy and Don looked after their boat, as was shown in the positive hull report. Interior design, however, has changed considerably since the 1970's, so I hope I will do her justice, as the lucky new owner.

I am now awaiting quotations for transport and final clearance of the fallen trees on the canal, so that *Nancy Belle* can be lifted out. I look forward to working on a re-fit, and return her to local waters as soon as possible.

Thank you

Dick King



Above: Nancy Belle moored in Fleet after a trouble-free voyage from Mytchett, waiting to be craned out at Crookham to be transported to Dick's home for the refit.

Nancy Larcombe has donated £500 of the money paid for the boat to the Canal Society, which was extremely generous and quite unnecessary - after all, she helped me to fill a page in the last Newsletter! Anyway, we are very grateful and wish her a speedy recovery to full health.

BCA dredger 'Unity'

It doesn't always pay to be green, particularly if you are dealing with hydraulic systems. A directive to use biodegradable hydraulic fluid in the BCA's dredger seems to have caused irreparable damage to the hydraulic system operating the excavator mechanism and drive. Ian Brown, the Canal Director, at the User Group meeting, described it as being terminally ill and suggested that it might not be replaced, with contractors employed to do dredging,

This might well work for major dredging programmes, but it would surely be prohibitively expensive and time consuming to get a contractor's dredger in for every small job that still required water-born lifting equipment, such as removing the 150-odd trees that came down in the canal during the recent snow fall.

Large trees often fall into the canal, sometimes in places inaccessible by land. Surely we must have some means of removing them and also doing spot dredging in places that silt up, such as the inflow of the Claycart Stream.



Above: Unity 'terminally ill' at Poulter's Bridge

Unity appears to need a transplant of the working bits of an excavator and the BCA is still short of capital resources. Would this be a proper use for some of the Canal Society's funds?

Perhaps a topic for discussion at the AGM?

Counter View

Poulter's Bridge Cottage

It was sad to see an attractive old canalside cottage altered beyond recognition; Poulter's Bridge Cottage has been a feature at Crookham ever since the canal was constructed in the 18th century. True, the original workman's cottage had been extended over the years but it did not lose its character and charm.

Unfortunately the cottage did not have listed building status and so, given planning permission, the new owner could alter it as he wished. When the plans were initially presented many people, including this Society, objected to demolition of the old cottage.

Admittedly given time and some landscaping, the new building, which is not unpleasant, will no doubt become visually quite acceptable, but the link with the past has gone.

The cottage was once part of the tobacco growing Redfields estate. A former resident was Jim Foley who worked for the New Basingstoke Canal Company as a lengthsman responsible for the Dogmersfield to Pondtail, Fleet, length of the canal. It was Jim who led the funeral party that hauled the barge carrying the coffin of Mark Hicks from Crookham Wharf in 1966.



Above, the old cottage, below, the new. I'm not sure that a house of this size can still be called a cottage, but the old building had also been extended several times. I quite like the front aspect of the new building but I find the rear view rather odd and I hope that some tree planting will obscure it. Doubtless the new house will be easier to live in, but I share the sense of sadness that our anonymous contributor "Counter View" expresses about the passing of this bit of local history.



Centenary Display

According to Paul Vine's definitive history of the canal, a letter from Herbert Hall, who was the wharfinger at Odiham, to Alec Harmsworth stated

"Your monkey boat laden with sand from Mytchett arrived in Basingstoke on 18th February 1910."

This is the last boat known to have reached Basingstoke. (A monkey boat was another term for a narrow boat, used on the Grand Union and other canals round London. It is said to come from Thomas Monk, who designed the first living cabin that became the traditional design for narrowboats.)

To celebrate the centenary, the Society approached the Willis Museum in Basingstoke about mounting a display. This was agreed and it opened at the beginning of February for four weeks.

Since many people living today in Basingstoke will have no idea where the canal was, the centre piece of the display was a map of present day Basingstoke with the line of the canal overlaid and a few photos showing what it looked like a hundred years ago. Photos of Alec Harmsworth's attempt to reach the town in 1913 and details of the Canal Heritage Footpath and our ideas for a new line into the town via a link to the Kennet & Avon were also on display.

According to the museum, the display has been very popular, with people coming specially to see it. There is a



Left.
Herbert
Hall



Right.
Alec
Harmsworth

possibility of a permanent feature about the canal at the Willis Museum in future.

It was very pleasant to be able to show the display to Maria Miller, the MP for Basingstoke, who has recently agreed to become one of the Canal Society's Vice-Presidents.

Mrs Miller became the town's MP in 2005. Although her main interests are the family and education, she is also interested in local environmental improvement. In 2007, she launched an M3 Action Campaign in 2007 to get the motorway resurfaced to reduce the noise that currently blights the peace of much of the local area, including the canal in Up Nately.

Below. Society Vice-Chairman Philip Riley and Exhibition Manager John Ross with Maria Miller MP at the Centenary display at the Willis Museum in Basingstoke.



Canal Society

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY 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 receive a renewal letter and I look forward to receiving your payment. If you pay by bankers order, please make sure that you are paying no less than the minimum 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 members who have joined us in the last few months:

Jenifer Hall of Gosport
Ann Whittle of Frimley Green
Benjamin Scott of Farnham
Gillian Wain of Fleet
Sheilagh Merrett of Windlesham
Ray Badminton of North Warnborough
Jane Fowler of Reigate
Betty Underwood of Pirbright
David Noyes of Farnborough
John Wharf of Fleet
Barbara Gerrie of Fleet
Helen & Tony Gorham of Ash Vale
Richard King of Petersfield
Bernard & Janet Hales of Egham
Malcolm & Valerie Chase of Fleet
Barry Avery of Worthing
Elizabeth & Trevor Hall of Fleet
Colin Archibald of Selsey
Martin Leech of Bracknell
Grant Robertson of Crowthorne
John Haspineall of Crowthorne
James Duckworth of Frimley
Jill & Tony Hazell of Cove
Jillian & Brian Smith of Fleet
Noel Brownsell of Purley
Mark Richardson of Church Crookham
David Richards of Alton
Nigel & Deidre James of Bordon
Peter Marshall of Knaphill
Mark Griffiths of Odiham
Alan Witts of Horsell
Sue Kiley of Winchester
Robin & Susan Bugg of Farnborough
Stephen Barklem of Woking

Doreen Hornsey
Membership Secretary

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Waterways World: Britain's best selling canal and river magazine since 1972

- At the time of writing at the end of January we are hopefully coming towards the end of the coldest winter period for many years with snow before and after Christmas, and very cold night temperatures leading to many icy mornings. Whilst the snow has been a photographer's dream along the canal unfortunately it has led to around 150 trees, boughs or branches coming down either across the canal or towpath due to the weight of snow. However the rangers have made good progress with clearance.
- Nationally 90% of British Waterway's canals froze over which must be a record since 1963.
- The date of 18th February 2010 is notable in the history of the Basingstoke Canal as it is 100 years since the last boat reached Basingstoke Wharf. Of course, there is now no trace of the terminus wharf which was situated on the site of the present Basingstoke Bus Station. It was 1913 when the last barge navigated Greywell Tunnel and tried to reach Basingstoke but only succeeded in reaching Old Basing. Luckily there is film of this attempt which is held in the Society's archives.
- Good to hear that the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) National Waterways Festival is returning to the south on August Bank Holiday this year at Beale Park near Pangbourne. This will be the third time it has been held at this location as it is an ideal site with a lake having access to the River Thames through a short cut. Visiting boats moor on the Thames and all the exhibition and display boats are moored to floating pontoons on the lake. If you haven't been to this event before it is well worth doing so. As well as the boating side there are all sorts of craft and equipment marquees plus entertainment in the arena.
- At Rushmoor Borough Council's recent Cabinet meeting, approval has been given for £40, 000 to be spent on upgrading the existing surfaced towpath in Rushmoor and extending it to the Hart boundary. This money will come from the Environmental Improvement Fund which is provided by TAG with a levy on all aircraft take off and landings at Farnborough Airfield. We have been pressing for this extension to the Hart boundary for many years as in winter this section is full of muddy dips and holes. This time the improved surface will be brought up to 'Sustrans' standard to enable use by all sections of the community including the mobility impaired in wheelchairs. or scooters.
- During the Second World War around 330,000 Canadian soldiers were stationed in and around the Aldershot Garrison area, undertaking training for D-Day and before that the Dieppe landings. In off duty time they took part in all sorts of local social occasions including dances and entertaining children at parties. They made use of the canal for training and hired the rowing skiffs and canoes from the Harmsworth boathouse at Ash Vale.
- A quote in Mark Maclay's Book 'Aldershot's Canadians In Love and War (1997) from local entrepreneur Bob Potter said "It was beautiful the way their canoes glided on the surface, dipping their blades smoothly in the water, like they were paddling up the lakes and rivers of Canada. Often when a Canadian took a woman out for a ride in his canoe, you would see it pulled upon the canal bank as he and his girl disappeared into the forest. . . . They had a great time admiring the scenery. They were all 'living for today'. "
- The work that was undertaken by Hampshire County Council at Odiham (King John's Castle) in 2007 was commended in the 2009 Regional Awards of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). The £500, 000 facelift project included arresting the decline of the ancient monument's walls, providing better and safer access the grounds and improving access by canal by upgrading the wharf mooring. Also included were the new information boards detailing the history of the castle.
- The news that the structural survey of the canal's locks and embankments has been completed is good news This will enable a proper asset register to be kept detailing any urgent repairs that are needed both now and in the future to be identified, such as the leak in the West Hart embankment in Hampshire, and other urgent work in Surrey. These are capital funding issues rather than general day to day maintenance and need to be provided by the owners Hampshire and Surrey County Councils.
- The Inland Waterway Association's Waterway Recovery Group is celebrating its 40th. anniversary this year. Formed in 1970 to provide voluntary labour to help restore the various derelict canals around the country it has grown into a very well run organisation without which many canals would not have been restored, as the local society and trust volunteers could not have coped with all the work involved. The Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) have been helping on the Basingstoke Canal since the early days of restoration and still do so each year on annual work camps.
- A little known fact is that the second oldest man made waterway in the country is the Titchfield Canal which runs from the village of Titchfield in Hampshire down to the Meon shore at Hill Head. Although only about two miles in length, and not now navigable, it was opened in 1611 Water still flows down the channel and there is a footpath alongside from a small car park in Titchfield to Meon Shore. There are a few old bridges remaining and a cosmetically restored lock near Meon Shore where it crosses the lane.

Vice-President

From Society Newsletter No 90 April 1980

- Full-time workers will continue to be employed on restoring the Deepcut flight of 14 locks on the Basingstoke Canal for at least another twelve months. The Manpower Services Commission has made a further grant to the Society under the Work Experience Scheme which will provide jobs and training for twelve school leavers under the existing five-man supervisory team. The successful application was announced by our Chairman, Robin Higgs at the AGM on 8th. March. The new scheme ends fears that restoration of the canal might be long delayed if full-time work is to be terminated.
- Restoration is approaching the half-way stage said Robin Higgs who added "We are now really moving into a new stage, where the fruits of our work are beginning to be seen. However, I would emphasise that there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done and I appeal for more members to volunteer to take an active part in the running of the Society and to join voluntary working parties. But with costs escalating alarmingly, the Society would continue to approach local industry for support."
- It is anticipated that in the year ahead the restoration of the 14 Deepcut locks would be completed except for the fitting of lock gates at the lower end. Restoration of Ash embankment would be completed and that the 11-mile centre section of the canal from Fleet to Deepcut would be re-opened early next year.
- Mr Higgs also said that looking ahead the Society was still seeking a Trust or Joint Management Committee to be formed representing the two county councils and the Society to run the canal as an entity. Discussions had already taken place and both county councils had agreed to the proposals in principle.
- At the AGM it was reported that the Society had received a donation of £2,000 from the Queen's Silver Jubilee Appeal Fund and £250 under the Shell Inland Waterways Restoration Awards Scheme. The Society's Annual Grand Draw had raised £1,700. The Society had a balance in hand of £10,408 at the end of last year from an income of £24,495. Member Richard Allnutt had been approaching charitable trusts and had been very successful, and the Woking firm of James Walker & Co. Ltd had contributed £500. The Society's trip boat John Pinkerton also had a successful season last summer and a surplus of £9,226 had been achieved.
- The death of Roy Fowles was reported, who was one of Hampshire's canal wardens. He started work on the canal in 1975, putting in many hours of heavy work, while fortifying workers with his famous 'Rosie Lee'. When the Society acquired a drag-line he dredged the flash above Lock 24, creating an island which became known as 'Roy's Eyot'.

Lookback

- In spite of restrictions imposed on local authority expenditure, Mr Raymond Stedman, Surrey County Council's Countryside Officer responsible for the canal, told the AGM that the County Council was determined as far as possible to keep their restoration budget at last year's level. He said "It is a measure of the high regard the County Council has for the effort the Canal Society is putting into the restoration work. For Hampshire County Council the Canal Manager David Gerry reported that the County Council had repaired the breach in the Ash Embankment, restored Ash Lock, for which the Society had supplied the lock gates, and dredged the section through Aldershot military town.
- The 90-year old steel girder viaduct, which carried the former Brookwood to Bisley branch line over the Basingstoke Canal above Pirbright wharf, has been demolished by British Rail. Built in 1890 by the London and South Western Railway, the line served the National Rifle Ranges at Bisley. The line was closed in July 1952. Between 1916 and 17 the Army constructed an extension to serve Deepcut and Blackdown camps. The weekend leave train was known as the 'Bisley Bullet' or the 'Bisley Flyer'. Deepcut station was built by Canadian troops as a replica of the Canadian Rockies log-timbered stations, and until recently was used as married quarters.



Above: A Drummond M7 Class tank engine drawing the 'Bisley Bullet' over the canal in 1952.

- Although Hampshire County Council acquired their section of the canal in November 1973 by agreement with the former owners the New Basingstoke Canal Company Ltd, the purchase has only recently been completed,
- When the Ash Wharf area of the canal was dredged recently an antique army issue revolver was retrieved, vintage 1873. The weapon has since been restored and will be displayed in a local Army museum.

SHCS notes

IWA National Festival

The Canal Society will be having a stand at the IWA's National Rally that will again be taking place at Beale Park on the Thames over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

If you would like to help, Verna Smith would be delighted to hear from you!



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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