



BASINGSTOKE CANAL NEWS

No. 227 Autumn 2010



Editorial



I wrote an editorial but decided that the topic warranted a page of its own (page 6), and was then faced with having to think of something of less importance to waffle about. Fortunately for everyone, I was saved from having to do this by the arrival of an e-mail from one of our Directors, Kathryn Dodington. In case anyone doesn't know her, Kathryn is a forthright and determined New Zealander who lives by the canal in Brookwood and fortunately has just retired.

Her message sums up so well the current problems and what the Society needs to do, that I have printed it in full:-

Cover Picture: The Society's new work boat Alan Flight on its maiden voyage after its refit
Photo: Roger Cansdale

We've talked a lot about volunteering recently and I wonder if it is time to put my money and mouth where it counts.

Brookwood pound is in need of a jolly good tidy up. Probably two or perhaps three day's work. It is a small part of the canal.

I believe we can get community involvement (Brookwood Residents Association - based on past experience) - I have copied in Mike Peel the chair of the Residents Association. I believe we could get Byfleet Boat Club (BBC) support - they are such good supporters of the whole canal but especially the eastern end below Deepcut e.g. Illuminated boats on 27-Nov - Ian Smith the Commodore copied.

I have a good relationship with Woking News and Mail so we could get what Maggie T called 'the oxygen of publicity'. It is something we could have 'before and after' photographs of to show potential volunteers what it's all about.

We could also put it in the Byfleet Boat Club magazine and the Basingstoke Canal News and perhaps national waterways press and IWA publications. Opportunity for local business to become involved.

I think this may encourage the BCA to replace the upper gates on Lock 12 and we could tidy up the lock 'furniture' later.

Opportunity for Brookwood to perhaps 'own' the

stretch between Locks 12 and 15 and retain community involvement?

What would we need? -

People - I think we can count on a fair number from Brookwood, some from the BBC and our potential volunteers.

Equipment - maybe the new Society work boat but remember that all of Brookwood has housing on the off bank so we could get access that way.

Probably work party support for the more technical jobs - e.g. chainsawing down a tree.

Things to overcome:

Getting rid of the stuff that is cut down - there's a fair bit of it - we've had help previously through Serco (Woking Borough Council's contractors - I am not sure if that would be available again).

Any thoughts ?

I don't think it is 'pie in the sky' stuff and it would give us the opportunity to do a small, well defined section of the canal with a distinct community involved.

I am away now for about four weeks but will have E-Mail so would be interested in any thoughts.

Kathryn

PS. The local fish & chip shop has already offered free chips to the volunteers!

My immediate thought is that we need about 5 or 6 more people like Kathryn to start local community groups. What about it?

* * * * *

In our self-appointed role as guardians of the canal, it is important to remember that threats to it come from many directions.

I was reminded of this recently when I got a letter from Peter Coxhead enclosing a notice of rejection of a planning application for new houses backing onto the canal in Woking. This was based on "not taking account of the adjoining Conservation area and too many houses in the proposed development site", which Peter had flagged up in a letter of objection.

Well done Peter!

Chairman's Page

Issues raised in our last Newsletter are ongoing and I will be reporting progress or otherwise in the following report.

Capital Funding

The Asset Management plan for canal structures is a comprehensive database, recording the condition and predicted life of the structures on the canal. The serious defects identified and recommended for priority repairs will be programmed over the three year capital funding period.

Both Hampshire and Surrey County Councils have agreed for a three year contract (term contract) to be let, with works in both counties being issued as individual orders. Supervision of all works will be vested with a designated contract manager. The advantage of this type of contract is that tenders for individual works are not required and work on the ground can commence in shorter timescales.

Progress on the initial tendering process is almost complete and I for one, would press for an earliest possible start on construction work before site conditions deteriorate.

The ideal is for serious defects to be repaired and water retention works (lock gates) to be carried out in 2010/2011 with the second year's work and snagging being carried out with navigation possible. This would reduce the potential for further deterioration through lack of use.



Above: New gates recently fitted to Lock 8

The West Hart Embankment repairs were completed on schedule and the summit section of the canal re-opened for navigation. Water levels are good even with the dry conditions, a promising condition indicating successful repair works.

Below: West Hart Embankment repaired.



Towpath Improvements

At the AGM, the subject of Public Highway type signs, installed on the canal towpath for cycleway route direction, provoked much adverse comment from members and a mandate was passed for negotiating more acceptable signage.

Your Committee agree that the signs are not in keeping with the Conservation Status and historical interest of a 200 year old canal. We raised the subject with the Towpath Improvement Steering Group seeking improvements in signage. Residents' complaints and Village Association pressures resulted in publicity and local petitions to elected members; we are promised a review following councillors' inspection visits; a September date is probable.

The sensitivity of the canal corridor as a conservation environment and historical interest status seems to have been ignored by officers involved with the cycling project, even after Woking BC insisted on a planning application for the towpath work. Any resident within the canal conservation area has to comply with appropriate planning conditions for any works they may wish to carry out, but this does not seem applicable to County Council officers operating under "deemed planning consents".

It is ironic that one department of the County Council is responsible for environmental protection and an officer employed by the same County is able to implement inappropriate signage with apparent impunity.

The Sustrans web site facilitates download of the Dept of Transport Guidance notes on cycleway construction, shared or segregated use and signage. Chapter 9 – Signing, Parking and other details, states in its last paragraph. "On off-Highway routes the intention is that signing should be sympathetic to the surroundings and therefore a prescriptive approach has not been adopted, however signing should maintain the same standard of clarity and continuity, and must include the route number patches and colour coding."

A much smaller waymark sign, far less intrusive is included in the options for signs and is presumably available, so we consider that these guidance notes should be reconsidered for the Basingstoke Canal and remedial work authorised.

As this newsletter goes to press there are, at last, some indications that the protests are being heeded and that smaller and more appropriate (though in our view still largely unnecessary) signs may be installed. We shall continue to do our best to ensure that the towpath remains primarily a traditional canal feature and not just part of a 21st Century cycle track.

Peter Redway

Work Party

WORK BOAT

Launch day was in July, with a good number of volunteers attending. The launch included a 90 degree turn onto the slipway at lock 29 and controlling some 9 tonne of boat down the slipway into the water. The work boat floated with very little trim adjustment required; at this stage we celebrated a successful project with refreshments and a celebratory drink.

The afternoon required a test cruise to Farnborough Air show and a canal side view of the aircraft. No problems were reported on return to base. (*Photos on pages 10 and 11*)

Having launched the boat, modifications to fit a hydraulic crane are now in progress, this is a recent purchase for loading materials and lifting debris.

With the condition of the canal being largely overgrown, the feasibility of a concentrated winter's work is being considered, see later comments.

BROOKWOOD

The water main connection has at long last been carried out by Velolia, we now need to test the service pipe for leaks and decorate the water point cabinet.

WORK CAMP

The first week of the Waterway Recovery Group Camp commenced volunteer repairs at Lock 17 Deepcut. Demolition of defective upper wing walls and casting new foundations were the major project, but other tasks involved pressure washing the lock chamber walls and making a start on re-pointing defective brickwork.

A second week's camp is arranged for 14th August; reconstruction of the upper wing walls with continuation of chamber re-pointing will be the main tasks for the week. The dry conditions favour construction work. The wall foundations remained dry and work progressed without excessive pumping, a welcome change from lock 22 work.

WORKING PARTY RE-ORGANISATION

Many comments on the overgrown condition of the canal, particularly the off bank, are valid. Assessments are that a working party every weekend through the cutting season would be required to make any impact on clearance.

Provisional analysis on vegetation clearing identifies the need for our Work Boat, with the loan of the BCA's chipper with supporting barges for wood chip transportation. Woodchip can be sold for power station fuel. Suitable transfer sites for collection of woodchip have to be identified.

Working Party frequency will need to be increased, appropriate training arranged and additional volunteers and leaders identified. With sufficient support, a work party rota is feasible. Skills required include boat handling, chipper operation, chainsaw operation, and basic hand tools skill for undergrowth cutting. Training will be essential, and BCA support possibly needed.

Any out of season JP volunteers and members who are interested will be welcome, with no MCA qualifications required. Training and supervision will support you. Basic Health and Safety briefings will cover any identified hazards.

Interested in volunteering? – contact Peter Redway 01483 721710 or Roger Cansdale 01252 616964 if I am away.

The message I will finish with is simple:
The BCA resources are insufficient to maintain this canal, volunteer support is essential for sustaining the waterway.

Volunteers are rapidly becoming a part of waterway operations. I do not advocate taking over Rangers' work but providing support with volunteers for work within our capacity and numbers.

I look forward to a busy winter season.

Working Party Details

DATE	LEADER	LOCATION
14-21 Aug	WRG	Lock 17 Work Camp
21-22 Aug	PR DJ DL	Lock 17
11-12 Sept	DJ DL	Lock 17
25-26 Sept	PR DJ DL	Lock 17
TBA	PR	Aldershot Bank clearance Local Business sponsorship
9 –10 Oct	PR DJ DL	Lock 17
23-24 Oct	PR DJ DL	Lock 17
13-14 Nov	PR DJ DL	Runway End mooring
27 Nov	PR DJ DL	Off bank clearing

Future dates and leaders depend on the response for increasing volunteer support.

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
August 2010

WRG at Lock 17



2 for the price of 1! Well, not quite, but British Waterways' loss was certainly our gain because the Waterway Recovery Group spent 2 weeks working on Lock 17 rather than the one originally planned when a planned work camp on the Grantham Canal had to be scrapped.

The upper wing walls of Lock 17 were in a bad way, and the first week saw them demolished and new reinforced concrete foundations poured (*above*). The opportunity was also taken to do some re-pointing in the lock chamber (*right*).

In the second week the walls started to go up again with further concrete reinforcing behind (*below right*). Fortunately, Lock 17 is the most accessible lock on the whole Deepcut flight, thanks to the tunnel under the railway, so the pre-mix lorry was able to deliver right to the towpath (*below*).



Your Canal really does need you!

It is becoming increasingly clear that the Canal Society's original assumption that post-restoration maintenance work would all be done by the Canal Authority, is unrealistic in the current economic climate.

In fact it is obvious from the present state of the canal that the maintenance has always been inadequate, and with the squeeze on Local Government funding, it isn't going to get any better. True, the Counties are putting substantial amounts of capital funding in over the next 3 years, but this is intended to rectify major safety issues; it won't pay for mundane things like keeping the banks trimmed so that people can use the towpath.

The BCA simply does not have enough resources to do these things and the owners of the canal, the County Councils, are having to make further cuts. If we want to prevent the canal turning back into an overgrown rubbish tip, the volunteers are going to have to play a major part.

The good news is that there are volunteers out there willing to work on the canal. Offers have come recently from RAF Odiham and a couple of local firms in Aldershot and Woking. Senior Ranger Jon Green has agreed to act as the BCA focus, but we also need a Society member to co-ordinate this sort of work. We cannot leave it all to Peter Redway again!

Specifically, we need a SHCS volunteer who would be willing to organise working parties and contact the organisations and volunteers who have offered help. With Jon Green of the BCA, he would identify work to be done, check the availability of tools (if we need more, the Society has the resources to buy them), identify suitable leaders and deal with health & safety issues.

Although not necessarily awfully consuming, this is a vital job. One person's organisational effort could result in 50 people working on the canal; without this force multiplying effort, nothing will happen.

If this might appeal to you, please get in touch with Peter Redway, Phil Riley or anyone on the Committee. Your canal needs you!

* * * * *

We could also do with more people to organise the Society's own volunteers as there is clearly scope for more than one work party to be operating.

Once WRG have finished their second week working on Lock 17, there will still be several weekends' work needed to finish the job. In addition, we now have a grant to install the new moorings at Runway's End near Eelmoor Flash, and the new work boat offers the means to do some very necessary offside bank trimming.

Add other little jobs, like getting the BCA's weed cutter back into commission, and it is clear that there is plenty to keep 4 or more groups occupied, without even thinking about installing the Brookwood back-pumping system, but it won't happen if we rely on only one person to organise them all.

We need to return to something more like the restoration days, when we had as many as six different groups operating simultaneously under six different organisers with an overall co-ordinator. We have the ideal man for this post in Peter Redway, but we need people to step forward to take on the group organisation.

Kathryn Dodington is offering to try to set up a group in Brookwood (see the Editorial page). She makes a good point in saying that 2 or 3 days work is probably all that is needed there. What we are talking about here is nothing like the commitment during the canal restoration. People spent all their spare time for years then on the canal. What it needs today to keep the canal looking tidy is 2 or 3 days, 2 or 3 times a year.

Of course other tasks will take longer, but let's start with the easy stuff. Apart from anything else, it is probably the best way of advertising the Canal Society and recruiting new members.

We did it before and we need to start doing it again.

* * * * *

We have set up a Communication Sub-Group, chaired by new Board Member Martin Leech. Its first meeting decided that we needed to have a more immediate and effective way of communicating with our members. To this end, we intend to supplement the quarterly newsletter with a bulletin that will be sent out at least once a month by e-mail. It will provide news of coming events, work parties, talks etc, and anything else of a pressing nature.

Of course, it will only work if we have your e-mail address.

So far, the offer of an e-mail edition of the Basingstoke Canal News in colour brought in about 70 takers, but even if this is of no interest, we would really appreciate the ability to communicate with you quickly, easily and for free. Your address will not be released to anyone else, so if you have not already given us your details, please send a message to membership@basingstoke-canal.org.uk. If you would also like to get the BCN in colour (with or without the paper edition), let us know.

This is important. The Committee is working hard to improve the effectiveness of the Society, so please do this small thing to help us.

Events

St. John's Rally

After all the trials and tribulations with failing locks, the event did take place at the end of July, with 15 boats from the Byfleet Boat Club again battling their way up from the River Wey.

The original intention of the event had been as a combined effort to raise awareness of the plans for a new St John's Memorial Hall and to promote the canal. In fact the canal took pride of place with the boats moored outside the hall and a number of stalls and displays inside. Films were also shown of the steam dredger and the history of the canal, as well as the canal in the 1950s courtesy of Jim Beckett and his parents.



The hall never really seemed crowded, but I didn't sit down all afternoon, so there must have been a steady trickle of people coming through, many of whom had stories to tell about the canal.

The band originally booked for the evening had dropped out, but we were entertained by an excellent 3 man folk group playing largely Irish music. A pity that more members of the

Canal Society didn't join us.

Thanks are due, as usual, to the BBC for their support, to Verna Smith, the Redways and John Ross for organising various aspects, and to the BCA Rangers for getting the essential lock repairs done on time and helping to show the world that significant amounts of the Basingstoke Canal are still navigable.

World's Smallest Gallery

Now that almost everyone has a mobile phone, the old red telephone boxes are becoming redundant. So what do you do with a disused telephone box?

Well, if you are Canal Society member Kevin Davis, you turn it into one of the world's smallest display galleries. Having lovingly restored the box on the main road near Brookwood Station, his first show recorded the restoration and the various objects found during it - 1970s crisp packet, ice lolly wrapper, etc. After that came a presentation of the Brookwood Football Club.

Currently the telephone box features a small presentation of the Canal Society's activities in Brookwood over the years. It will remain there until some time in September when it will be the turn of the Jehovah's Witnesses. No cause for complaint about lack of variety!



Above: Kevin with the World's Smallest Gallery

If you can't get over to see it, you can find details at www.brookwood-expo.org.uk.

Work boat "Alan"



The boat was initially at right angles to the slipway and one of the stub axles took exception to the turning process. However, with the aid of Kevin Redway and his tele-handler, the boat was manoeuvred into position and down the slip. A final nudge from the telehandler launched it into the canal, where it floated level without the need for any ballasting.

The rear decking that had been added proved its worth in making installation of the engine an easy job for two people, and with 10 men, 1 woman and a dog aboard, the boat set off for its maiden voyage, to Eelmoor Flash and the Farnborough Air Show.



Flight" launched



The new work boat will be formally named the "*Alan Flight*" after our late member who left us the bequest that enabled the boat to be purchased.

A small amount of work is still to be done on it to fit a manually operated hydraulic crane in the bows that will enable heavy objects to be lifted from the canal without the usual hazard of people hanging over the side.

Once that is done, the *Alan Flight* will be ready to begin its working life on the Basingstoke, probably starting with off-side tree pruning.

Events

Fox & Hounds Rally

The Basingstoke Canal Boating Club's annual rally in Fleet will take place on Saturday 25th September. There will be the usual sales stands from the Canal Society and IWA.

Illuminated Boat Procession

With fingers crossed, it is still intended to hold the Illuminated Boat Procession from the Lightbox to the Bridge Barn in Woking on Saturday 27th November. This is jointly organised by the Byfleet Boat Club and the Canal Society.

River Wey Barges

SHCS members and friends are warmly invited to a talk about the River Wey Barges on September 29th at 7:30pm at the National Trust Buildings at Dapdune Wharf. This talk will cover the history of the River Wey barges and the efforts to raise £20,000 to save the barge 'Perseverance'.

There will be a chance to view the barges at Dapdune Wharf on September 22nd as part of the free Heritage Day scheme. For more details of the Heritage Open day and the Campaign to save the barge Perseverance, please see the River Wey website.

Gareth Jones [Chairman Guildford & Reading Branch, IWA]

In fact the River Wey website doesn't appear to have much about this, but there is information about the Heritage Open Day at Dapdune Wharf at www.heritageopendays.org.uk/directory/HOD008671E and information about Perseverance IV on the websites of the National Trust and the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities at www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-trust/w-support/w-donations/w-appeals_and_campaigns/w-donations-appeals-perseverance.htm and www.aina.org.uk/docs/News-Perseverance.pdf. If you would like to make a donation, go to www.justgiving.com/perseveranceIV

Hampshire's OctoberFest at Milestones

On the 2nd and 3rd of October, the Milestones Museum in Basingstoke will be hosting "A festival of fine food, fine beer and fine times."

There will be countryside craft stalls and demonstrations, including John Ross showing off his canal painting skills, exhibitions, talks and displays of steam, vintage and historic vehicles, 60 Hampshire beers, cookery demonstrations, a barbecue and food stalls. Children will also be catered for with a Victorian Fun Fare, Punch & Judy, and an animal petting farm. Dance and theatre troops and a traditional Oompah Band will add to the festivities.



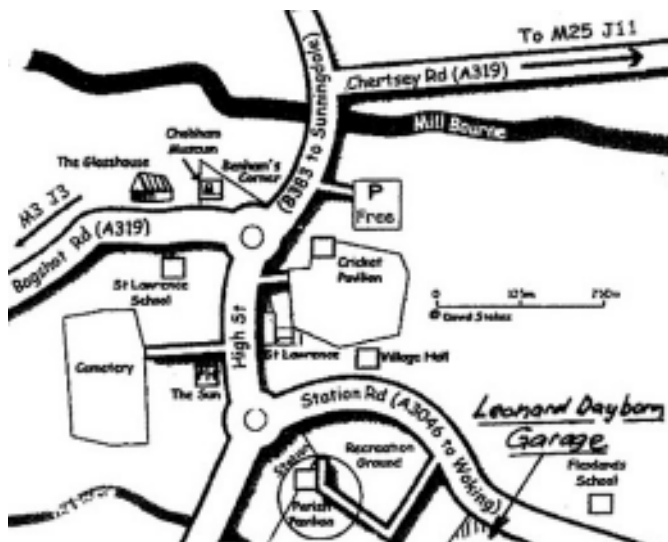
Admission is £8.50 for adults, £4.50 for children between 5 and 15, or £25 for a family (2A + 2C), and this includes free admission to the Milestones Museum itself, which normally costs £7.50. Opening times are 10am to 11pm on the Saturday and 10am to 5pm on the Sunday. More information at www.hants.gov.uk/octoberfest.

As well as John Ross, the Society has been invited to have a display about the canal, which we hope eventually will lead to a permanent Basingstoke Canal feature there.

There will also be a CAMRA Beer Festival at the Woking Leisure Centre on Friday 12th and Saturday 13th November that will have a display about the canal.

Events

CHOBHAM SOCIAL MEETINGS



The new talks season will restart in October and will continue as usual to April 2011. The venue will be as usual at The Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road, Chobham, near Woking. Meetings start at 8pm on the third Wednesday of the month (See map above for exact location). Coffee/tea and biscuits will be available during the interval. Non-members and friends are very welcome to come along.

Wednesday 20th October 2010

Ron and Mary Heritage - 'Some Highlights of their Waterways Adventures'

Ron Heritage is Chairman of the Oxfordshire Branch of the IWA and his programme will include the Thames Tideway, Limehouse to Gravesend on a campaign cruise escorting the IWA boat 'Jubilee'. Also the Liverpool Coal and Cotton Rally (last trip on the River Mersey before the new canal was built) plus Waterways in Scotland.

Wednesday 17th November 2010

Ron and Myra Glover - 'The Ups and Downs of the Belgian Canals'

Ron and Myra will be returning and will start on the River Moselle in France and continue via Maastricht in Holland into Belgium. On the Canal du Centre we rise through four lifts to the Canal de Charlerois. These lifts run parallel with the recently opened lift at Strepy Thieu. We then turn towards Brussels and descend on the Ronquiers Inclined Plane. The steel works at Charleroi are also passed through.

Wednesday 15th December 2010

Patrick Moss - 'The Somersetshire Coal Canal'

The Coal Canal is an almost forgotten waterway near Bath, the history of which is intertwined with the Kennet and Avon

Canal (they received assent on the same day in 1794) and the Wilts and Berks Canal. The talk explores the history of the canal's twin main lines, the surviving lengths of the canal and the hopes for the future.

Wednesday 19th January 2011

Liam D'Arcy Brown - 'The Grand Canal of China'

Liam will present an illustrated talk on the fabric and history of the canal and people who live and work upon it. He is an experienced writer and has considerable knowledge of China. He is the first westerner, in over 200 years, to travel the full length of the canal, all of 1114 miles. As well as the history, he will cover the construction, route, politics plus both the historic and current use.

Wednesday 16th February 2011

Roger Squires - 'The Suez Canal - Past and Present'

Roger recently cruised through the Suez Canal on a northbound daylight convoy. He will share this experience with us and will start the evening by telling us about the history of the various earlier links between the Med and the Red Sea. He will highlight the various enlargement works undertaken on the current canal since it was nationalised by Egypt.

Wednesday 16th March 2011

Roger Clay - 'The Hidden Avon'

Roger from the Stratford and Warwick Trust will talk about the stretch of the River Avon above Stratford-upon-Avon up to Warwick with a description of the proposed restoration scheme. There will be some slides of the existing navigation as well.

Wednesday 20th April 2011

Runnalls Davis - 'Canal Architecture -An Illustrated Survey'

One of our regular speakers will be returning to show the Roman workings of the Fossdyke to the marvels of the Falkirk Wheel and the Drop Locks of Glasgow. This lavishly illustrated survey endeavours not only to portray these varying feats of architecture and engineering but to present them in the social and aesthetic context of their time, thus providing not only a comprehensive tour of the English waterways but an amusing and involving history of English taste and character.

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

Letters

The Lower Heyford Crane

The mention in BCN 226 of the wharf crane recovered from Lower Heyford brought back some strong memories, as I became rather intimately involved with that lump of metal in 1982 & 83.

I was a member of Martin Bowers' gang when we first went to Lower Heyford sometime in 1982 to size up getting the Society's "gift" back to the Basingstoke. No need to describe the crane in detail, as it is there to be seen at Ash Lock but, essentially, the jib and all the working parts are carried on an iron frame which sits on and rotates around a fairly massive cast iron central "king" post. Getting this top-hammer apart was no more difficult than was to be expected of something that had been bolted together for several decades, so it was not too long before these components were backloaded to our Canal (on Trevor's crane lorry if my memory is right).



Above: Adrian Birtles with the king post in May 1983

Upperright: Geoff Hudson

Lower right: Chris Reed

At this juncture, Martin was drafted to more important restoration work on the Canal, and I was asked to organise the removal of the final components of the crane. The kingpost was steadied and supported at ground level by a large cruciform iron casting with holding-down bolts cast into concrete at the four extremities (see photos); we thought innocently that the kingpost was just sitting in the centre of the cruciform and that, once the holding-down bolts had been cut off, the job would be done. No such luck! Returning to the site in the Autumn of 1982 armed with a generator and Kango hammers, we soon broke out the concrete around the holding-down bolts and cut them offonly to find that nothing would move.

Digging down a bit under the centre of the cruciform soon revealed why; the cast iron post went on downwards into the ground or, rather, it went on downwards into the massive block of concrete with which the hole excavated for the post had been backfilled. Our hearts sank at the prospect of having to dig out that concrete to an unknown depth but, in fact, that concrete was a blessing in disguise. The photos show how close the crane was to the bank of the Oxford Canal and, by keeping our digging tight to the cast iron post and wholly within the concrete block, we were able to excavate safely without the need for sheet-piling support (which would have been expensive, as well as probably having required lengthy negotiations with British Waterways); the concrete was also tolerably watertight, though we still needed a pump once we had got down a foot or two.



So we went to Lower Heyford most Sundays in that late Autumn and dug steadily down through the concrete in a very narrow excavation, until the rains came and the site was flooded for a long period. It was not until Spring 1983 that we went back and started again where we had left off. It did not take much longer. When



we had got to more than eight feet below ground level (well below the bottom of the canal a few feet away), we started to run out of the concrete block and water started to come in quite seriously. Clearly we were getting close to the bottom of the cast iron post and, equally clearly, it would not be safe to excavate any further in the way that we were.

Letters

Rather than get involved in major and expensive work, we asked HQ (ie, Robin Higgs) for permission to cut off the post as low as we could without any more excavation. This was given and we set to. Much easier said than done! Our very narrow deep excavation meant that only hand tools could be used (i.e. hacksaws and, as the cut got deeper, hacksaw blades out of the frames). It was back-breaking and wet work but, fortunately, traditional grey cast iron is quite soft once you get through the molding skin, and it was not too long before we had a deep slit cut all-round the post. Then a sharp tug on a rope slung between the top of the post and the tow-hook on my Landrover snapped the remaining metal, and the job was done bar calling in the crane lorry and one more day to fill in the hole. I seem to remember that we then made our one-and-only visit to the Lower Heyford pub just across the road from the site.

If anyone wants to see where all this took place, the site is now a housing estate on the East bank of the Oxford Canal at Lower Heyford, just on the Oxford side of the road bridge that spans canal and railway on the Oxford side of Heyford Station (between Oxford and Banbury).

Looking back on this episode from 27 years later, I am struck by the very matter-of-fact way in which we all undertook quite demanding tasks. This applied to the whole Basingstoke Canal Restoration Project, and our little job at Heyford differed only in being 60-miles from base (though that did make one careful in compiling one's equipment

list!). Perhaps that sounds a bit smug, but it was true. What made all this possible, which most of us took entirely for granted at the time, was the splendid logistical back-up that the Society had established; a 'phone call to Frank Jones, often at short notice, unfailingly produced all the plant and equipment we needed ready to pick-up early on a Sunday morning. Happy days!

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Birtles



Above: The crane installed at Ash Lock

Dear Sir

I could not agree more with the writer of the recent article on page 18 of the recent magazine, 'Towpath or Cycle Track?'

For the past 10 years I have walked the canal from Frimley Green to the Canal centre at least once a week and it is becoming a nightmare due to the attitude of cyclists who believe they have total right of way. They fail to dismount under bridges as requested and expect pedestrians to always give way to them automatically.

The towpath is primarily for pedestrians and this should continue to be made clear or terrible accidents and near-misses (as I have had many times) will continue to happen and even ringing the bell does not help the hard of hearing.

I am not one of these 'professional' letter writers who enjoy making a fuss but I do feel so strongly about this and hope that the former balance we used to have about these issues may return. On a pavement or a public footpath these rules

would be taken as read: that pedestrian safety is paramount and any kind of vehicle should always give way.

Yours sincerely

Ann Whittle

Editor: I recently received an e-mail from Paul Fishwick stating

"Cycle Woking are looking at a series of 'Awareness Campaigns' related to walking and cycling on shared-use areas, including the canal towpath. These are currently 'under development' but it is the intention to run them during the autumn period."

He also says that smaller, non-reflective signs are being discussed. Progress at last?

Book review

The Royal Military Canal

P A L Vine, published by Amberley Publishing @£16.99. Paperback
ISBN 978-1-84868-450-8

Paul Vine's history of one of the only two waterways built in Britain by the Government was first published as a hardback by David & Charles in 1972. This second edition has been revised and now includes details of the 15 station houses built to accommodate the sentries posted along the canal, as well as new pictures.

Sadly, there is little to report in the way of progress in restoring the canal to navigation. Efforts by the Kent and East Sussex Branch of the Inland Waterways Association in the 1970s to raise interest in this seem to have run into a mixture of apathy and hostility from groups such as anglers, and nothing came of it. However, Kent's loss was the Basingstoke's gain because the Kent and East Sussex Canal Restoration Group became one of the most active visiting work groups on our canal.

The Royal Military Canal was built as a defensive line at a time when invasion by Napoleon was a real threat. The gently sloping beaches around Dungeness offered a perfect landing ground for his fleet of over 2,400 boats that were intended to carry an army of some 120,000 men. As an alternative to flooding Romney Marsh, it was decided to build a sort of moat from the coast near Hythe round the back of the marsh and back down to the coast between Rye and Hastings. Unusual features of the canal were the incorporation a defensive parapet on the northern bank and kinks to allow enfilading fire along the line of it, if the enemy attempted a crossing.

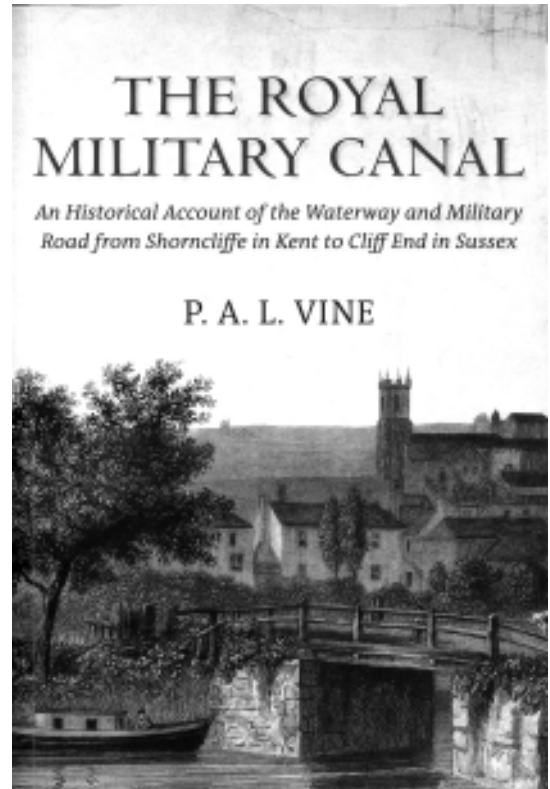
Building was prolonged by various factors, including the need to pump water from the cut using a steam engine originally destined for the Kennet & Avon, and by the time it was finished in 1809 the threat of invasion had largely evaporated. Although the canal remained under military control until the 1870s, when it was abandoned, it was used for commercial carrying and various schemes were promoted to link it to other waterways, but none came to fruition.

Like the Basingstoke, it was popular for pleasure boating and the canal still provides a venue for the spectacular floating tableaux at the Hythe Venetian Fête, held in August in odd-numbered years. Other parts still provide drainage and fishing waters.

Paul's book is the usual mixture of slightly dry scholarly facts and intriguing titbits that bring the whole history to life, reflecting the vast amount of research that must have gone into it.

Highly recommended as a change from the histories of the usual commercial canals.

Roger Cansdale



200 Club

Here are 200 Club winners for beginning of 2010.

Jim Johnstone

February	Mr P Hattersley	£58
	Mrs MJ Marchant	£29
	Mrs J Hunter	£15
	Mrs D Bracewell	£14

April	Mrs P Jenkins	£58
	Mr H Williams	£29
	Mr N Mayne	£15
	Mr A Shilling	£14

June	Mr I Davey	£58
	Miss GL Miller	£29
	Mrs G Browne	£15
	Mrs V Vine	£14

From Society Newsletters No. 93 October 1980 and No. 94. December 1980

- After several weeks of negotiation the year's most spectacular event on the canal had to be abandoned in early September. A combined military operation, with a Puma helicopter from 33 Squadron based at RAF Odiham was planned to air-lift the four lock gates built by apprentices at the Royal Aircraft Establishment to Lock 20 on the Deepcut flight. At the last minute the unusual training exercise between the RAF, military units and the RAE was called off due to an unbending insurance company who wanted a £2,500 premium to insure the helicopter.
- The new gates for Lock 20 have been built by first year apprentices at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough. Plans, together with technical expertise were provided by Patrick Bere one of the Job Creation Supervisors. The completed gates have been sunk in the emergency water tanks at the RAE to complete their seasoning before being transported by road to Deepcut. The RAE takes on various projects with the two-fold intention of teaching its apprentices various woodworking skills whilst at the same time benefiting the community.
- 321 walkers took part in the 1980 sponsored walk to raise funds for the Society. A total of £5,578 was raised. Two walkers must be mentioned for their achievements, one being a nine year boy who successfully completed the walk both ways - a total of 24 miles and who had £3.25 per mile on his head. The other was 79 year old Bill Wright who raised £227. A wonderful achievement considering that he broke his neck in 1949, his back in two places in 1969 and subsequently suffered two heart attacks leaving him with angina.
- Hampshire County Council has recently drained the canal between Coxheath Bridge and the Fox and Hounds in Church Crookham for the installation of a new culvert. In addition tree clearance and dredging work will be undertaken before the section is re-watered. Plans have also been made to level the towpath between Barley Mow Bridge and Baseleys Bridge at Winchfield to give the Society's dragline access to the new silt dumping site on Goddards Farm. The HCC rangers also supply our dredger 'Perseverance' with 1/2 ton of coal, 20 tons of logs and 180 gallons of gas oil that it uses every month.
- A workboat has been donated to the Society by the waterways author Tom Chaplin of Riparian Owner Services and a tender for a 62 foot mudboat has been accepted by the Thames Conservancy Division of the Thames Water Authority. The canalside crane from Lower Heyford will be erected at Ash Lock yard with the agreement of Hampshire County Council.
- The Society 1980 Grand Draw raised £1,725 towards Society funds and 620 members sold tickets. Jeremy Browne of Fleet sold a magnificent 56 books and received a £10 prize and Mrs Woolbridge of Greywell sold 40 books and received a £5 prize. The Grand Draw enables those members who do not help with the restoration physically to offer their support to the Society and our restoration efforts.
- Congratulations are due to Margurite Redway (wife of our current Chairman Peter Redway) who has just won £5,000 for the Society whilst doing her weekly shopping. Margurite picked up a leaflet giving details of a national competition, sponsored by Spar, in which entrants were asked to present a case for supporting an environmental improvement or restoration project. She prepared her entry, sent it off and promptly won first prize. The cheque was presented by the Rt. Hon. Tom King MP, Minister of State for Local Government and Environmental Services on the occasion of the official start of work to restore Lock 11 at St. Johns, Woking.
- Tuesday 26th August was a special day for the Society's trip boat 'John Pinkerton' when it made its first eastward cruise on the canal from Odiham with passengers. It was on the occasion of an evening Club Night so that the privilege would go to Society members. It was fortunate that a prompt start was made otherwise the 'John Pinkerton' would have disappeared under the sheer weight of numbers.
- 13th October was the date for the move of the 62ft work boat recently purchased from the Thames Water Authority (Conservancy Division). When the two 45 ton cranes hired from Marsh Plant lifted the barge out of the water at Caversham the weight on the cab gauge showed 40 tons as against the expected 30 tons. When the low loader arrived at Colt Hill Odiham it immediately bogged down on the track to the waters edge. Once it was freed by a Faircloughs bulldozer working on the Odiham By-Pass the mud boat was eased into the canal bringing the Society's fleet of barges to six.
- In September, after years of excellent service near Odiham and at Lousy Moor, the Society's Smiths dragline was retired for overhaul and the Priestman's dragline on loan from the Kennet and Avon Canal trust was taken to the new dump site at Goddards Farm, Winchfield. The Smiths dragline was originally discovered lying unused in the back garden of a property in Fleet and the Society was able to arrange a low cost lease of the machine on an annual basis. A real bargain in view of the sterling work the dragline has done.

SHCS notes



Please don't forget to send us your E-mail address.

A message to editor@basingstoke-canal.org.uk will do it.

We promise not to pass it on to anyone else without your permission.



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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