



BASINGSTOKE CANAL NEWS

No. 228 Winter 2010





Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society Ltd

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Editorial



The whole world is going through a rather unsettled time and this seems to be mirrored in the affairs of the Basingstoke Canal and producing some strange and unexpected turns of events.

We know that the County Councils are short of money. Taking an example from David Cameron's 'Big Society' idea, they have been talking loudly about the need for more volunteer effort on the canal. For the Society's part, we have been gearing up to try to provide this by, amongst other things, commissioning the new work boat. We have also, with the aid of the Waterway Recovery Group, been repairing the upper wing walls of Lock 17, following on from similar work on the lower wing walls of Lock 22.

Cover Picture: Canal Society volunteers working on Lock 17.
Photo: Roger Cansdale

The work has been going well and nearing completion. It came as a bolt from the blue then to be told by Hampshire County Council, who manage contractors, to cease work. They claimed not to know what was going on, despite this having been reported to the JMC. Surrey CC then asked us to finish the job, but asked for all the method statements and risk analyses to be supplied yet again. They have been supplied twice already and we had been assured that the Society was now on an Approved Contractors list. With commendable patience, Peter Redway sent it all off again and then had a three hour meeting to discuss it with a very junior member of Surrey CC's engineering team, before permission to carry on was given. Even then the engineer was on site at the weekend to supervise.

I guess how you interpret this depends whether you subscribe to the conspiracy or cock-up theory of history, but it is hard to believe that the County Councils are so disorganised that they are unaware of what the Canal Society volunteers have been doing for many years. Peter Redway was nominated for his MBE by Hampshire CC for his work on the canal!

There are undoubtedly a lot of people with justified concerns about their jobs, who don't want a lot of incompetent amateurs coming in and stealing work from them, but in the case of the canal it is blindingly obvious that without the support of the amateur navvies, it isn't going to survive as a usable recreational facility for anyone, let alone a navigation.

We may be amateurs, in the sense that nobody gets paid, but we are not amateur in experience or competence, or in setting down the paper trail of method statements, risk analyses, training, insurance and all the other documentation that current health and safety legislation requires.

But for goodness sake, let us do it once and don't lose it!

If volunteers are needed to fill the gap left by dwindling resources, it must be made as easy as possible for them. As Bob Dylan famously sang "Better get out the way if you can't lend a hand, 'cos the times they are a'changing."

If you are not paying people and it all gets too difficult and complicated, they will vote with their feet. Many of our volunteers also work on the Wey & Arun Canal, which isn't so far away, and there is a growing feeling that they would be more welcome and get better support there than on the Basingstoke.

The fact that the Canal Society is still working on the Canal is very largely down to our Chairman, Peter Redway. My wife recently described him as "indomitable", which is about right. He is also stubborn and determined not to allow 40 years of work on the Canal to go down the drain due to management disorganisation and obstruction.

Although I am sure that the County Finance Officers would love to be rid of the Canal, they are stuck with it for the time being. Perhaps one day the new British Waterways will be in a position to take it over, but they will only do it if it is a reasonably good condition. To get to that state, help from volunteers will be needed, so County Halls, please help us to help you!

* * * * *

The Canal Society received an unexpected bonus recently in the shape of two bequests. One came in memory of Douglas Reith, "who loved sketching along the Basingstoke Canal" and the other from the Walker family.

At a time when it is becoming increasingly hard to find funding for projects, both for the Canal's owners and the Canal Society, bequests could become very important to the future of the Canal.

If the Canal has given you pleasure during your lifetime, why not help to ensure that it continues to do the same for the next generation by remembering the Society in your will? If you need advice on how to do this, our Treasurer Graham Hornsey would be happy to help.

* * * * *

This edition of the Newsletter is a bit late because I wanted to include as much news as possible about the work parties. However, this allows me to be a bit more seasonal and to wish everyone a

Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Chairman's Page

With the first signs of winter conditions our editor has reminded me it is Newsletter copy time once again. Morning frost and Illuminated Boats at Bridge Barn are another sure sign of festivities yet to come. My best wishes to all our members for a Happy Christmas and New Year.

Now for the more serious reports. Earlier this year I had anticipated announcing contract repairs starting on the Deepcut Locks during 2010, but unfortunately delay seems the norm for any repair works on the canal, even when schedules exist and action is promised. Recent dates quoted are 2011, a totally unacceptable situation for re-opening a navigation for the proposed partnership documented in the Working Party Report.

Capital Funding Saga

The West Hart embankment repairs last spring did re-open on time, but unfortunately this winter more leaks at Crookham in the vicinity of Poulter's Bridge dictated the need for a partial drain down of the canal for inspection. In the longer term, repair works may need to be designed and contracts placed. Any delay has the potential for a late cruising season start with commercial operators again bearing the brunt of restricted navigation. Cash flow is important, and cancelled or non-existent bookings can only reduce the viability of the operators' business. This aspect of navigation lethargy should be high on the owners' agenda when closures are contemplated.

A targeted repair programme, spending allocated capital is all that is required. Is this too much to expect for a unique leisure and recreation amenity? Both County Councils need to identify fast track procedures and use them for the benefit of the canal repairs thus avoiding any claw back of allocated capital money.

Volunteers

Attracting additional volunteers for supporting the canal has been an issue for some months. We, as a Society, are attempting to increase our volunteer numbers and range of works.

Volunteers working on Lock 17 were on schedule for a December completion of the Upper Wing Wall repairs, having started in June this year. Health and Safety paperwork was submitted in May, and since then Canal Management Reports have confirmed our volunteers were classed as contractors (unpaid). Assumptions that this status provided some autonomy in our works proved wrong when a County Review Committee decreed we had to cease work on Lock 17.

The efforts by Society and Officers to achieve a resumption of work are commended, but the reasons have not been explained and questions such as "What went wrong?" and "What do we (the Society) need to do now, if anything?" have not been addressed.

The message from the Society to the County Councils is that if the County Councils want more volunteers, this is not the way to go about it,

Towpath Improvements

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

At a recent site meeting a trial for a compromise method of signing was agreed, Councillors and residents supporting the proposal, so watch this space for developments.

Peter Redway

Navigation Update issued by the Canal Authority on 26th November 2010

Ash embankment

Following further inspections of the Ash Embankment by both Hampshire and Surrey County Council, it has been deemed that the planned drain down is currently unnecessary. Both counties will now work together to address the issues and to find the most appropriate solution. The BCA will continue regular inspections, monitoring the situation closely.

Crookham Wharf to Poulter's Bridge

Weekly inspection of the canal structure has identified leakage in the area of Poulter's Bridge. Following inspections by Hampshire County Council (HCC) engineers, repair of the bank is considered a high priority. The BCA is currently monitoring the area daily and have lowered the water level by 150mm, which in turn has stopped the leak. Several solutions are currently being considered but we must be prepared if necessary to dam and drain the canal between Chequers bridge and Poulter's Bridge. HCC and the BCA are working on plans to safe guard the structure and carry out the necessary repairs as quickly as possible to ensure that the work is completed before the start of the main boating season.

The BCA and both County Councils will continue monitoring the situation to prevent any unnecessary restriction to the navigation, we will keep you informed of any developments for both sections of the canal.

Work Party

WORK CAMP

The first week of the Waterway Recovery Group Camp commenced volunteer repairs at Lock 17 at Deepcut.

Demolition of the 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 some of the defective brickwork.

The second week camp concentrated on constructing the off-side wing wall. Brickwork was completed up to coping stone level and the first load of concrete backfill was poured, reinforced with 12mm bar and mesh. Work on the towpath side wing wall was clearing out an assortment of original shuttering from behind the retained wall section and preparing for brickwork and wall construction.

Thanks Fred and your team for good progress and preparation of the second wall.

A further visit by WRG, together with effort by the Society's own volunteers has resulted in the offside wall being completed and the towpath side nearing completion.

CHANNEL CLEARING IN WOKING

Society volunteers used the dredger *Belfast Girl* to clear weed, tree branches and an assortment of bicycles and other objects from the canal in preparation for the boats coming up for the Illuminated Boat procession in Woking. A mechanical problem unfortunately prevented the job being completed, but a great deal of rubbish was removed.

WORKING PARTY RE-ORGANISATION

Visiting Groups and support from Residents Associations have increased volunteer resources during January, which will be deployed on tidying up the overhanging growth on the canal, particularly on the off-side bank. Access will mainly be by boat, but sites with land access in frozen conditions have been identified as a fall back precaution.

Brookwood is a trial site for village support, and the initial weekend will be in January with Kathryn Dodington as SHSC leader. Other weekends may be required dependant on progress.

RUNWAY'S END

The mooring at Runway's end needs to be completed by Spring 2011, so this work will be programmed in during February and March avoiding bank clearing weekends

CANAL PARTNERSHIP

A proposal for re-branding the Canal as "Basingstoke Canal Partnership" was tabled at the last JMC Meeting, with Counties and Volunteers under one banner.

Identity and freedom of choice is a fairly basic ingredient we

have identified when volunteering, so we will continue to press for flexibility and autonomy where possible.

WORKING PARTY DETAILS

DATE	LEADER	LOCATION
11/12 Dec	PR,DL,DJ	Lock 17
8/9 Jan	KD	Brookwood
15/16 Jan	PR	Western End clearing Visiting group: Newbury
22/23 Jan	PR, DJ, DL	Western End clearing Visiting group: Bit In The Middle
22/23 Jan	PR, DJ, DL	Western End clearing
12/13 Feb	PR, KR, DJ, DL	Runway End or clearing
26/27 Feb	PR, KR, DJ, DL	Runway End
12/13 Mar	PR, KR, DJ, DL	Runway End
26/27 Mar	SHCS	TBA

Contact Numbers

PR - Peter Redway	01483 721710
DJ - Dave Junkisen	0208 941 0685
DL - Dave Lunn	01483 771294
KR - Kevin Redway	01483 722206
KD - Kathryn Dodington	01483 473630

Peter Redway



*Above: WRG nearing completion of the L17 offside wall
Below: Belfast Girl with some of the bicycles removed from the canal on the way up to Woking. (Thanks to Mark Coxhead for the photo)*



Towpath Titbits

IWA Award for SHCS



The Canal Society won the award for the Best Non-Commercial stand at the IWA National Rally at Beale Park in September. In addition to the plaques that John Ross is holding above, the Society received a cheque for £100.

Congratulations to John and Verna Smith who were largely responsible and thanks to Denise Smith and all the others who helped to man the stand, and thanks to Ray Carnell for the photo.

Fire at the Swan



The Swan pub next to the canal in North Warnborough suffered a disastrous fire at the end of September, a week after it was vacated by the previous tenants. It severely damaged the ground floor and first floor of the pub and half of the roof. Although it is not a particular favourite for boaters, because of the difficulty in mooring nearby, it is a historic pub and it is to be hoped that it will re-open in due course.

SHCS 200 Club Winners

Here are the lucky winners of prizes for the second half on 2010. Thank you all for your contributions which have added £696 to the Canal Society funds. The new 200 Club subscription form for 2011 should be in this newsletter.

Jim Johnstone

August

Mr B Smith	£58
Mrs MJ Marchant	£29
Mr DA Webber	£15
Miss P Ford-Young	£14

October

Mr DA Smith	£58
Mr A Larcombe	£29
Mr A Hocking	£15
Mrs R Millett	£14

December

Mr DA Smith	£58
Mrs J Tyrrell	£29
Mr B Savill	£15
Mr B Holmes	£14

Good deed on River Wey



While heading up to the canal to do weed clearance in Woking, the crew of the dredger *Belfast Girl* did a detour to clear a couple of fallen trees that were blocking the Wey Navigation. The owners of the property responsible for the trees can think themselves lucky!

Thanks to Kathryn Dodington for the report and photo.

Work done and planned

The announcement earlier this year that the two County Councils were committing £1.6 million to repairs to the Canal was greeted with delight, and the intention to let a "Term Contract" that would effectively make a contractor immediately available for jobs over the next 3 years was also seen as a good idea that would get things done more quickly.

Since then however, there has been increasing frustration at what appeared to be a lack of urgency in placing this contract. This was apparent at the IWA National Rally at Beale Park in August, where Canal Society Chairman, Peter Redway, was invited to give a presentation about the Basingstoke. Without trying to conceal the problems, he attempted to be reasonably upbeat about what was going on, but was met by the sceptical reply "We'll believe you when we see some evidence of something actually happening."

It is clear that volunteer effort is going to be needed more than ever in the current financial climate, and we were concerned that our ability to provide this was being put at risk by an impression that the owners of the Canal were dragging their feet. As a result, representations have been made urging the Counties very strongly to get work going as soon as possible. Philip Riley, Society Vice-Chairman, repeated this at the Joint Management Committee meeting in October, and in reply the owners made an effort to explain the very complicated, sequential and hence time-consuming process that has to be followed prior to contract award.

One suspects that this all stems from the bad old days when it was not unknown for people to get themselves elected as councillors with the aim of making it easier for their friends and relations to obtain lucrative council contracts, but as is often the case, the cure is almost worse than the disease. The involvement of two County Councils also complicates things.

It is unlikely therefore that the Term Contract will be let much before April next year. However, the good news is that the two County Councils will be getting work done before this contract is in place.

In Hampshire, this will be largely focussed on embankments at Ash, Chatter Alley, Dogmersfield and Dinorben in Fleet. The bank slip in Swan Cutting will also be attended to and the survey of culverts will be done. The total cost will be in the order of £200,000 and the intention is to complete the work in the current financial year. These are all problems highlighted by the survey that was done, as were the West Hart and Dogmersfield Swing Bridge embankments that were repaired earlier this year.

An embankment also features in Surrey's plans, where the offside bank below Lock 1 will be raised and bank protection

installed to reduce the risk of a breach that would flood the electrical sub-station there. Recommended tree felling for the same reason is apparently being frustrated by Runnymede's Tree Officer.



Above: Hackbridge Electrical Sub-station below Lock 1.

The other work is all on the locks, where repairs, largely to wing walls, are needed, similar to those being done by the volunteers on Lock 17. Locks 15, 19 and 20 all require attention. Lock gates will also be replaced once the structural work is complete and the paddle gear will be modified and safety barriers installed on bypass culverts to address identified hazards on Locks 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14 and 15. In view of the Canal Society's experience in working on the locks, it is good to be able to report that Peter Redway's advice has been sought on the proposed work.

So I hope that we shall be reporting good news of real progress in the New Year. We need to spend that £1.6 million before someone decides to pinch it for something else!

The Basingstoke Canal Director Ian Brown had this to add:

The BCA focus must now out of necessity be on surviving the cuts, securing the canal's future and its long term sustainability. It is my intention to start a process that will set out to do that by restructuring the BCA, updating its objectives and aligning activities and strategies with what's taking place within the wider waterways system. A three pronged approach is called for and I want to make it very clear as to why, how and when.

Because the canal is run on a shoe string budget and directly funded by grants and contributions from the local

on the Canal in 2010

authorities, we will see a significant reduction in that funding. This to any extent is inevitable when each local authority sets its budget, matched against the increasing priorities and needs of front line services. Remember that the canal, which is a recreational and countryside feature is managed under the counties discretionary countryside budgets and these will be among the first to be hit with reductions in central funding. The existing gap in funding will be exacerbated by these additional cuts and by potential withdrawal of grant funding.

The BCA have been tasked with raising the levels of income generation by at least an additional £110,000 per annum. We can do that by focusing on developing the canal visitor centre, increasing the current income from camping and other hired out activities. Also by making more money out of boating once the navigation has been fully restored and made reliable over the next few years.

As part of a restructure the emphasis is going to be on sustainability, shifting existing funding around and making more of the revenue available to carry out essential planned preventative maintenance, so that once the structures are fixed, they will stay fixed.

I have said it before and I will say it again and again, this canal's future is in the balance: if it is to thrive as a fully open navigation, then all and any boating on it must pay! We need a joined up and progressive approach to achieve that and the joint owners, BCA and stakeholder partnership must do its bit by continuing to support and maintain the canal.

So in the coming few months, the BCA will create a new structure that will embrace all parts of the sector, establish long term stability and financial security and further capitalise on increasing non-grant income opportunities.

My final word is that although the current system is cumbersome and does appear inefficient for all the reasons carefully explained, we are stuck with it as far as appointing a term contractor is concerned. It astounds and annoys me that folk seem to think that until this contract is awarded, nothing will get done on the canal. Let's be clear on this point and the significant amounts of work that have already been carried out and are planned for this financial year:

- Five sets of Lock Gates replaced at a cost of £50,000
- Deepcut Cutting land slip, bank and towpath repaired, cost £100,000
- West Hart Embankment and Old Swingbridge Embankment repaired, cost £90,000
- Approximately £400,000 of repair work will be programmed between November 2010 and March 2011.

Once the term contractor is appointed early in 2011, it is my hope that not only will we get a better deal for the canal as a whole, we will be in a position where good engineering and structural support is available for the future.

Ian Brown
Canal Director



New top gates on Lock 8



Resurfaced towpath at Deepcut



Repair to the Dogmersfield swingbridge embankment

WRG IS 40 THIS YEAR

Congratulations are due to the Waterways Recovery Group on its 40th anniversary this year.



This national group of waterway restoration volunteers was formed in 1970 after the National Inland Waterways Rally held on the River Wey at Guildford in 1970. This rally was held to encourage and publicise the restoration of the Basingstoke Canal, which officially started in 1973 although some unofficial work had taken place before that.

Their first leader, Graham Palmer (of the beard), was to become well known all over the country, leading canal restoration working parties. At this stage it was a separate organisation but eventually became a division of the national Inland Waterways Association. The current WRG chairman is Mike Palmer (no relation). Weekly or fortnightly Canal Camps are held throughout the summer months assisting local restoration schemes including those on the Cotswold Canal, Chesterfield Canal, Grantham Canal, Montgomery Canal, and the Monmouthshire Canal, the Wilts and Berks Canal, the Wey and Arun Canal and other smaller schemes.

WRG has been involved with the restoration of the Basingstoke Canal since 1975 starting on Lock 24, with Canal Camps every summer. Currently the Basingstoke

Canal is the only post restoration canal where they are involved in improvements and maintenance such as this year on the wing walls of Lock 17 on the Deepcut flight. In 1977, 600 of their volunteers descended on Deepcut for a massive restoration effort over one weekend (*Above, Work at Lock 16*). The work of the WRG volunteers has been invaluable to the Basingstoke Canal and is much appreciated by our Society and the County Councils.

Current local WRG Groups include the London, West Midlands, North West, South West, and Bit in the Middle (BITM) mainly South Midlands. Their equipment has vastly improved and become more professional over the years and they now own a fleet of vans and a range of plant including excavators, dumpers, pumps, mixers, winches, and other sundry equipment. Full, documented, training is of course given for the use of this equipment.

Let's wish the WRG all the best for the future and for the various canal restoration schemes around the country on which they are helping the local restoration societies or trusts.

David Millett

From Navvies, 1982

The following article appeared in the WRG magazine *Navvies* in 1982. WRG were doing a lot of work on the Basingstoke Canal and regular progress updates appeared in the magazine. This one by Peter Cooper was dated January 1982.

About a year ago, when the cuts all round were starting to be felt, the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society were unsure whether a further grant from the Manpower Services Commission would be available for the year then starting (1980-81). For three years the grants had allowed a great deal of progress to be made, particularly in the restoration of the Deepcut Flight, and it was demoralising to contemplate the thought of their being discontinued. But we did get a scheme that year, and now the picture is quite different. With the present levels of unemployment, the SHCS has found itself under some pressure to take more people, and so after much negotiation a scheme of about twice the size of last year's has now been authorised. For the present year 32 young people and 8 supervisors are being employed under a Manpower Services Commission grant of £103,000. In addition the SHCS is currently employing five further people principally out of its own resources, to strengthen the work-force in critical areas. Quite a formidable body of men are now working full-time on restoring the Basingstoke Canal.

This work-force is currently completing chamber restoration of Lock 17 at Cowshot Bridge, and has now started on a new enterprise. This is the rebuilding of Cowshot Bridge itself. The ugly iron replacement bridge has been removed and a strictly temporary footbridge has been installed. The old brick arch was too far gone to repair, so it has been taken down and the wooden pattern arches for the new bridge, to be a replica of the original, are now being erected (*Top right*). The work force is now sufficiently large for another contingent to be working on the Brookwood Flight, where they have demolished the near-side chamber wall of lock 14, and are now preparing to rebuild it.

The volunteer force at Deepcut is now approaching the end of its work there. At Lock 19 a lower recess wall and an upper wing wall have to be finished, and then it's all bollards, quadrants, footbridge etc, the finishing touches. The volunteer effort will then move to Lock 10 at St.John's, Woking, probably from June.

Another volunteer job now approaching completion is the delivery by narrow-gauge railway of puddling clay across the newly restored Ash Embankment. Several thousand tons of clay have been delivered in this way and practically the whole bed of the canal across the embankment has now received its clay (*Centre right*). Before very long we should be able to see water crossing the embankment once more.

Until recently, one aspect of restoration which we felt might

be falling a bit behind was lock gate construction. A new solution to this problem has now been adopted. Surrey County Council supply the wood and the SHCS are having sets of top gates prepared in kit form by local contractors and delivered to the lock gate workshop. Volunteers then assemble these kits into gates and thus the Society gets a pair of top gates for about £350. The top gates for locks 15, 23 and 22 have been assembled in this way. What this doesn't do, of course, is to provide us with bottom gates, as the parts involved are too large for local contractors to handle. These will continue to be made by the two carpenters employed within the full-time work force. With chamber restoration at Deepcut now almost complete, the job of getting this flight of locks is now around the half-way mark.



Above. Celebrating the completing of Lock 24

Canal Society

JOHN PINKERTON

Despite the national financial gloom, the Society's trip boat *John Pinkerton* looks set to have had its most profitable year since it started work in 1978, with about £30,000 raised.

This reflects enormous credit on the Boat Company and all the people who crew and maintain the boat, as well as those who work behind the scenes taking bookings, arranging crews and, not least, keeping the bar stocked.

We received a long and obviously heartfelt letter from Harry Halls, which names many of these people. However, it is a bit long to print all of it and to spare their blushes, I have left that bit out, but he goes on:

This year as every year I have had the privilege of working on the John Pinkerton with some wonderful people who rarely get a mention for their unstinting efforts; they are the people who make every trip on the JP an outstanding success - THE CREW.

This year alone several hundred pounds in donations have been accrued and this demonstrates how satisfied our valued customers are with the running of the JP, which I point out is because of the skilful hard working crew members. They turn out in rain, wind or the intense heat of summer or darkened evening trips, where members sometimes get home after midnight after cleaning the JP and readying it for the next voyage. These people are amazing and I must say I am humbled to know such ladies and gentlemen.

It's the crew that makes everything run smoothly and with a good knowledgeable crew the skipper can sit back and relax, doing what I enjoy the most, observing the smiling faces and happy chatter of our passengers.

Yes, crew members should indeed be proud of what they do. Up to a million people every year get enjoyment from the Basingstoke Canal because of your efforts in raising money for its maintenance, nearly £30,000 last year alone and more than half a million pounds during the working life of the JP.

Best wishes

Harry Halls

Well said Harry!

It also helps to have a good skipper for the crew, which he is too modest to mention.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT

A warm welcome to the following members who have joined us in the last few months:

Trina Sellers of Brookwood
The Busenhart - Morgan Evans Foundation of Woodham
Murray Jones of Camberley
Penelope Thompson of Chatter Alley Dogmersfield
Russell Slater of Chatter Alley Dogmersfield
Carlton Macdonald Gilham of Dunton Green, Sevenoaks
Gareth Jones of Beare Green
John Gilbert of Woking
Edward Talbot of Basingstoke
Andy Davine of Overton
Bridget McWatters of Goldsworth Park
Peter Jackman of Send
Tim Cadle of Sandhurst
Tessa Everett of Hersham
Valerie Clinch of Fleet
Victoria Mason of Oxford
Joy Savastano of Fleet
Douglas Rudolph of Haslemere
Jeffrey Hayward of Yateley
Karen Wellerd of Knaphill
Eamon Edward Wiggins of Portsmouth
Mrs M Irving
Jane Sladen of Fleet
The Basingstoke Canal Boating Club

We still have a number of members who have not paid their 2010 subscriptions. If you are one of these and wish to remain a member of the Society, would you kindly let me have your payment as soon as possible – amounts due as listed below:

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

I hope you will all continue to be members as we need your support.

As you will probably have seen in the newsletter we are now publishing an e-mail bulletin. If you would like to receive this and have not already given me your e-mail address, or have changed your e-mail address and not advised me, would you kindly do so so that I can make sure you are on the distribution list.

Doreen Hornsey
Membership Secretary

E-Mail: Membership@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

E-Mail Bulletin

We mentioned in the last issue that the Society was planning to issue a monthly news bulletin by e-mail to provide a more immediate link to members and Martin Leech has been hard at work on the first of these, which is due to go out at the beginning of November. Those of you who have taken heed of the request to send us your e-mail address should have already seen it by the time you get this issue of the BCN, but for those who haven't we reproduce the first page here to show you what you are missing. There are two further pages covering work party activities, the John Pinkerton and forthcoming social events.

The intention is that the bulletin will be available to anyone who asks for it, including non-members of the Canal Society. I think Martin has done a first class job and produced something which will attract general interest and hopefully will encourage people to join the Society.

The bulletin provides links to the Canal Society web site for those wishing to join and to other related sites.

Subsequent issues will probably shrink down to 2 pages, but the size will depend on the content. It is not our intention that the bulletin will replace the Basingstoke Canal News, at least until everyone has a microchip in the back of their head and can receive e-mails directly! We are very conscious that many people may not be on e-mail and may still prefer to receive news the old fashioned way printed on paper.

I also hope that the News will continue to cover things in more detail than is possible in the Bulletin, and have more photos, and will have things that will not be in the Bulletin, such as comment, historic articles and letters.

This is a new venture, so we would welcome any feedback, either to myself or to Martin.



BASINGSTOKE CANAL BULLETIN

No. 1 November 2010

Welcome...

to the first Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society electronic bulletin. For over 40 years, the Society has been communicating with its members by means of a hard copy newsletter, the Basingstoke Canal News (BCN) which is published quarterly. However, a lot can happen in three months so we have decided to supplement the newsletter with a free email bulletin like this. We have also decided that these bulletins will be available to anybody who has an interest in the Canal, with the hope that readers who are currently non-members may be encouraged to join the Society.

We encourage you to forward these bulletins to your friends, family and colleagues and get them to sign up (at no cost!).

Bulletins will be sent out roughly every month and so will provide more up-to-date news of things happening on the Canal, together with reminders of forthcoming events. So here goes...

Quick Links

- [Join the Society](#)
- [Contact the Society](#)
- [What the Society is about today](#)
- [SHCS Website](#)
- Sign up to receive future bulletins (if this one was forwarded/downloaded): [Members](#) [Non-members](#)
- [Read the latest Basingstoke Canal News](#)
- [John Pinkerton cruising on the Basingstoke Canal](#)
- [The Basingstoke Canal in pictures](#)
- [Basingstoke Canal Wiki Page](#)
- [Basingstoke Canal Authority Website](#)
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Structural repairs

The fact that the Basingstoke Canal is in need of repair and maintenance will not have escaped those who walk it or live nearby. There is need for day-to-day maintenance, for example tow-path and weed clearance, cutting back overhanging trees etc; and for major works to remedy significant weaknesses in the lock structures, embankments etc.

A detailed and wide-ranging structural survey of the Canal has been carried out in recent months. The survey has identified a number of serious defects in need of attention. In conjunction with this, the Surrey and Hampshire County Councils have between them identified £1.6m of capital funding over the next three years for structural repairs. The Canal Society was pleased to learn about the funding being allocated this year, but was dismayed to hear that the County Councils were not expecting to place a "term contract" for the remedial work before next year. The Society has made some very strong protests about this delay. The good news is that it has been confirmed that the following works totalling around £400,000 will now take place from November 2010 to March 2011, while the term contract is being finalised:

Hampshire:

- Embankment repairs at Ash, Chatter Valley, Dogmersfield and near the Fox and Hounds at Fleet
- Bank slip repair at Swan Cutting

Surrey:

- Raising and reinforcement of offside bank near Lock 1
- Structural repairs at Locks 15, 19 and 20 (similar to those being done on Lock 17 – see below)
- Lock gate repairs at Locks 1,4,5,6,12 and 17 (once structural repairs are complete)
- Winding gear modifications and safety barrier installation at Locks 1,2,3,6,7,11,12,14 and 15

The Society will be kept abreast of progress through the involvement of Peter Redway, the Society's chairman, with the Canal Asset Management Working Group (the responsible oversight committee).

Ian Brown, the Basingstoke Canal Authority Director, is at pains to point out that work on the Canal has not stopped while the term contract is being awarded. Already during this financial year 5 sets of lock gates have been replaced (£50,000), the Deepcut towpath has been reopened following repairs to the land slip and bank (£100,000), and the West Hart and Old Swingbridge embankments have been repaired (£90,000). He is hopeful that the term contract will bring with it a better deal for the Canal as a whole.

Events, past

Fox & Hounds Rally

As usual, the Basingstoke Canal Boating Club's annual rally at the Fox & Hounds pub in Fleet enjoyed pretty good weather and a record 14 boats turned up.

It was good to see the beautifully presented launches of the Steam Boat Association of Great Britain again, as well as some of the boats that live on the top two pounds of the Basingstoke. Because of the frequent closure of the Deepcut flight, for them, this is often their only chance to get to a boat gathering.



A very English boat rally - Steam launches and Morris dancers!

Dick and Alison Snell's boat *Athai* won the trophy for the best presented boat, while the best steam boat was judged to be *Sarah Jane*, owned by Graham Towle from Nether Avon. The farthest travelled trophy was won by the steam launch *Margaret Morrison*, owned by Colin Rudall from Stonehouse in Gloucestershire.

Ash Wharf re-opening

The area round Ash Wharf has for too long looked pretty scruffy, which was a shame, given that this is potentially a place where boats might like to stop and local people could come to enjoy the canal.

Happily, this is changing. The bridge was rebuilt a couple of years ago, the piling behind the shops was straightened up and finally, the area next to the bend in the canal has been landscaped. A small re-opening ceremony took place at the end of September with three boats in attendance to remind people that this is actually a navigation.

Thanks to Jan Byrnes for the photo.



Robin Higgs

And Many Happy Returns to past Canal Society Chairman, Robin Higgs, who celebrated his 80th birthday recently. A rather splendid cake was much enjoyed by those attending the October social evening in Chobham.



Events, future

CHOBHAM SOCIAL MEETINGS

The new talks season restarted in October and will now be continuing to May 2011 as we have an additional speaker. Sadly, our speaker for the April meeting, Runnalls Davis has passed away, but one of our Directors, John Ross, has kindly agreed to step into the breach. 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 right for the exact location). Coffee/tea and biscuits will be available during the interval. Non-members and friends are very welcome to come along.

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

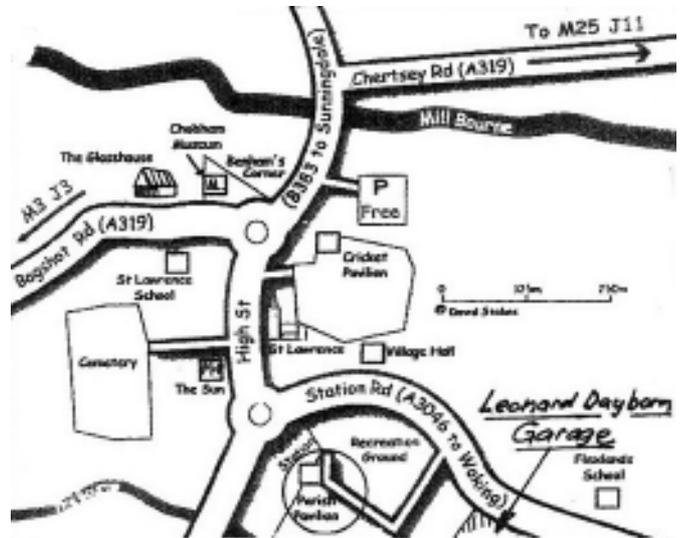
Roger Squires - 'The Suez Canal - Past and Present'

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

John Ross - 'Roses and Castles - Canal Boat Decoration'

John Ross, one of our Society's Directors, who built and decorated 'Elizabeth Rose', his Mirror dinghy with the Rosie and Jim theme, is a fully accredited journeyman in decorative painting with the Waterways Craft Guild. He will be discussing the history of canal art and will demonstrate the painting of Roses and Castles. He will also bring along an exhibition of canal ware.



Wednesday 18th May 2011

Pablo Haworth - 'The Making of the Forth Bridge at Walton-on-Thames'

Pablo Haworth, a longstanding Society volunteer, will be coming along to talk about the history of the bridge at Walton-on-Thames which was designed in 1933 but built in 1953. The designer was Archie Hamilton, a New Zealander and Pablo will describe what led up to its design and how it was put together.

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

Letters

From the Chairman of British Waterways

14 October 2010

Dear Waterway Supporter,

GOVERNMENT GIVES THE GO AHEAD FOR A 'NATIONAL TRUST' FOR THE WATERWAYS

The Government has today made an important announcement about the future of the inland waterways in England and Wales, in probably the biggest shake up of our canals and rivers since nationalisation in 1948.

The plan, to move the waterways out of state control and into a new independent national charity, builds on the proposals I launched at the House of Commons in May last year and on Robert Aikman's vision for a 'National Waterways Conservancy' half a century ago. When we called this proposal '2020', we thought it would take a while to achieve. The fact that the Government now wishes to adopt it as policy, replacing British Waterways with the new charity by April 2012, is a tremendous achievement and I have congratulated the waterways minister, Richard Benyon MP, on his imaginative and positive response.

The waterways have been utterly transformed for the better in the time since British Waterways was established in 1962 and they are used and enjoyed by more people, in a wider variety of ways, than ever before. This transformation owes its success to the contribution of countless staff, volunteers and enthusiasts. Moving the waterways into a charitable body recognises the need to build on that enthusiasm and marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter in their history.

The Board and directors of British Waterways believe that this is absolutely the right next step for the nation's magnificent waterways. The move will attract new funding for waterways maintenance, safeguard investment and give everyone who uses and enjoys the waterways a greater role in how they are cared for. I don't underestimate the challenges ahead in making it happen, but history has shown that the waterway movement, when it pulls together, can achieve great things.

There is still a lot of work to do to: develop the new governance model, agree a long-term funding contract with government and, put in place transitional arrangements. Defra will examine the inclusion of the Environment Agency's navigations, as part of a coherent plan for the waterways it funds in England and Wales, and the Scottish Government will decide whether Scotland's waterways will be in the new body. British Waterways will continue to work with government officials and waterway stakeholders to ensure good continuity, a smooth transition and a successful launch for the new body.

The question for us all now is not whether we should form a new waterways charity, but how we can do it. Open dialogue and involvement will be vital to making this happen and I know that Defra intend to consult with waterway stakeholders as they develop the content of the Public Bodies Bill, through which the new charity will be set up.

I cannot overstate what an enormous opportunity this is for the waterways, and for all those who feel passionately about their future. We must all make sure our views are heard and I look forward to many interesting and constructive debates during the next six months. With this in mind, please pass this letter on to any colleagues, friends or members who you think will be interested and feel free to reproduce it in your own publications or websites.

Yours faithfully

TONY HALES, C.B.E.

Chairman British Waterways

Letters

Dear Sir,

Please could members of the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society stop their cyclist bashing.

Cyclists are just as much stake-holders in the Basingstoke Canal as boaters, walkers, joggers, fisherman, naturalists, residents of neighbouring properties and dog-walkers. There may be a small number of cyclists who behave in an inconsiderate manner just as some boaters speed up and down the canal, some walkers indulge in anti-social behaviour such as throwing stones at boats and their occupants, some dog-walkers fail to clean up their dog's mess, some householders use the canal as a refuse tip and some fisherman block the towpath with their fishing rods. I have observed all these but such people are very much in the minority.

An inevitable consequence of enabling greater access to the canal is that more people use the canal. Therefore although the proportion of this thoughtless and sometimes dangerous behaviour is small it is more apparent because of the greater number of people enjoying the canal. I enjoy the canal as the owner of a house backing onto the canal, as a walker, a jogger, a boater and, yes, as a cyclist. The new, widened and resurfaced towpath is an asset to our canal and no more encourages cyclists to speed than it encourages youths to throw stones at boaters or dog walkers to not clear up their dog's mess. I would also note that the tow path was originally intended for horses pulling boats and is not primarily walkers as Mrs Whittle states.

Dear Roger,

A small anecdote for you.

Andrew and I went to Ash Embankment last week to tidy up the growth round Bert's Memorial seat – we went armed with shears, secateurs, large plastic bag, etc, and under all the brambles and bracken we found 36 assorted drink cans, plastic bottles, even newspapers and a cardboard box which contained Stella Artois cans.

I admit it had been about 4 months since we had checked it, through various seasons, but I hope our small effort helped to improve the area, specially as it overlooks the aqueduct. Andrew did most of the work and I sat on the seat, privilege of my advanced years!

Perhaps others could do just small areas like that – “Every little helps!”

Yours sincerely

Betty Scammell (Mrs)

The main problem is that the new signage on the canal is not in keeping with the canal and its surroundings and is not fit for purpose. In particular signs should state the distance to nearby locations as this enables all users to then estimate the time needed to travel to that location at their preferred speed. Providing timings on signs is of no more use to cyclists than it is to pedestrians. Every person travels at a slightly different speed. Timings do not encourage cyclists to speed as, in the absence of signs giving distance, they have no more idea of the distance to their chosen destination than does the pedestrian.

I would encourage members of the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society to concentrate on pressing for useful signs that are an asset to the canal rather than an eyesore. This is an issue for Cycle Woking and Woking Council and not the fault of the cyclists.

Yours sincerely

Ann Muggeridge

I agree with much of what Ann says in that problems are nearly always caused by a minority of thoughtless people, and it is good to be able to report that the issue about the signs has been sorted out. A suggestion made by one of our Directors, Kathryn Dodington, was accepted at a recent meeting and the signs are to be replaced by ones at ground level, where they will be unobtrusive but easily visible to cyclists. There will be no times quoted.

However, I'm afraid that I do not agree that a better surface does not encourage speeding or that posting times to destinations does not present a challenge. When you are young, you cycle as fast as you can - in my youth I did Bristol all the way to London at an average speed of 12 miles per hour, which is a lot too fast for a towpath to be safely shared with pedestrians.

The fundamental issue is that the towpath is, and must be recognisable as, a facility for all users and not something that appears to be primarily a cycle track that pedestrians happen to be allowed to use. The Wey & Arun Canal Trust refuse to have anything to do with Sustrans for this very reason. Jim Phillips, their Treasurer, said that they reckoned that the towpath was in the right state when all users complained about it equally!

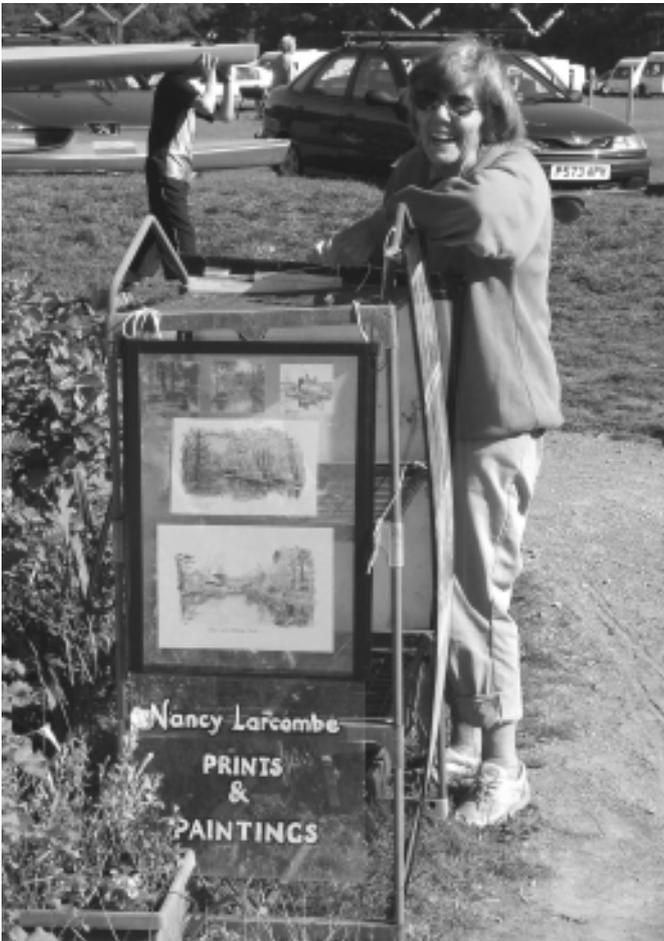
The newly surfaced towpath in Woking is undoubtedly a great improvement, provided that everyone recognises that it must be shared sensibly, but personally I am quite happy to cycle along my local bit of towpath in Hampshire even if it is a bit bumpy and muddy.

Nancy Larcombe

It is very sad to have to report the death of two long standing members of the Society, who both contributed greatly to the life of the Basingstoke Canal, Nancy Larcombe and Wendy Walker.

Nancy Larcombe's distinctive little boat *Nancy Bell* and its even more distinctive Tudor cottage-style butty *Towed Haul* have been a familiar sight at the Mytchett Canal Centre for many years. However, because of her failing health, Nancy sold her narrow boat last year and donated the butty to the Canal Authority.

Sadly Nancy herself is now no longer with us.



Nancy was brought up in Huddersfield, but her interest in boating and canals only really began after her family had grown up, triggered by a holiday on the Norfolk Broads.

Nancy was nothing if not resolute and she decided to buy a boat and was soon the proud owner of a 40 foot Colecraft, which she renamed *Nancy Bell*. To help fund her new acquisition, Nancy turned to her artistic skills which she had been practicing from an early age, and began selling her landscape paintings.

She quite rapidly decided that she needed a floating studio and *Towed Haul* was hitched on during a cruise from Godalming to Fenny Compton on the Oxford Canal. In addition to the paintings, Nancy recounted her boating experiences in a book "It's a Boat's Life", complete with beautifully drawn sketches of the people and places that she met.

She drew portraits of the lengthsmen on the River Wey and this led to another book, "Captain White's River Life", about the life of one of the last bargemasters who worked their boats between the London docks and the Wey and the Basingstoke Canal.

One of her first long distance cruises took her all the way up to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal to show her boat to her 94 year old mother. She kept a detailed log (that was included with the boat when it was sold last year), and contributed six articles about the trip to Canal and River Boat, accompanied by her black and white drawings. Following this, she became a regular contributor to the magazine and was accepted into the Guild of Waterway Artists.



Above: Nancy Bell and Towed Haul passing through Woking in 1999.

Left: Nancy and her paintings at the Canal Centre.

She moved her boats to the Basingstoke in the late 1990s and said that she appreciated not only the beauty of the canal and the friendliness of the people at the Canal Centre, but also the fact that there was not the risk of flooding that could affect the Wey.

Determined in her approach to life, forthright in her opinions but very generous and warm hearted, Nancy will be greatly missed. We send our condolences to all her family.

and Wendy Walker

David Gerry, who was the Canal Society's first Chairman, has sent the following appreciation of Wendy Walker.

Wendy and her family joined SHCS in the very early days; they may have been founder members. I have searched through early newsletters for a photo of our activities that might show the family and in particular Wendy, without success.

That is very typical: they were back room workers being involved in jumble sales, washing up after refreshments, manning sales stands and attending evening meetings of our craft group making things for sale at the next event. She led her family from the front, attending campaigning meetings. She was the Walker family powerhouse. The family walked miles on social rambles and sponsored walks; we always enjoyed their company and one particularly memorable walk was exploring the River Itchen.

When restoration started, the family joined working parties, clearing the towpath in Dogmersfield and so on. For me Wendy's real value to the Society was the quiet support that she gave to the committee and particularly to me during my Chairmanship. When the going got tough, as occasionally it did, Wendy would come and quietly encourage me to keep going; "It is all going well David" she would say and "We are getting there, we will win" and she was so pleased when we did get there.

Wendy's eldest son Peter was our first sales manager at the age of about 16, setting the high standards that have been maintained by his successors. However University

called and we lost him and had to find another. Peter now lives in USA, married to an American doctor, with a family of his own, who know all about the canals of the USA and the UK. They have come home on many occasions and often timed their visits to visit a SHCS event with Wendy and her grandchildren. I think that the last time I saw them all was when they were on a cruising holiday on a Galleon Marine boat at Odiham.

Wendy was a charming, bubbly lady always ready with a laugh and a smile. Her canal interest extended when the Boats for the Handicapped Association (now Accessible Boating) was formed where she was also very supportive.

David & Judith Gerry

Dick Snell, another Founder Member, sent this memory:

Wendy was the 'Jumble Sale Queen' in the early days. I shall also never forget an occasion on one of our early campaigning cruises on the top pound. We (and I cannot remember exactly who 'we' were, except for Les Harris) were planning to spend the night aboard our motley assortment of small craft on Eelmore Flash. The Walkers had been following the cruise by road during the day in their large American car, and, as dusk was setting in we suddenly heard a ghostly voice from across the flash. 'Would we like to go back to their house for an evening meal?' So they took us back to their house at Carlyon Close and fed us a very welcome supper. Very kind people, and great canal supporters.

Dick Snell

Nancy Bell

First of all, an apology from me for adding an 'e' to the name in the Summer BCN. Nancy took the name from a rather gruesome poem by W S Gilbert, "The Yarn of the Nancy Bell" which explains how the story teller came to be the "Cook and a captain bold, and the mate of the Nancy brig, and a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite, and the crew of the captain's gig" by eating them all after the boat was shipwrecked!

Nancy's boat was bought by Dick King and transported to his home near Petersfield, where he has spent the summer working on her. As can be seen from the photo of the galley area, Dick has been making impressive progress.

He also tells me that he has been offered a mooring for her at Pyrford, which is ideal for him and his wife Brenda.

He hopes to have her complete in time for a re-launch in the spring, so with a bit of luck we may see *Nancy Bell* back on the Basingstoke next year.

Nancy would be delighted that the boat that gave her so much fun is about to start a new life.



- The Coalition Government's recent announcement that British Waterways, the national waterways body, is to be turned into a charitable body rather like the National Trust was not entirely unexpected, especially as they wished to reduce the number of quangos. It is all part of the belief that our waterways, which are an important facet of our national heritage, can be successfully managed by civil society, consistent with the Government's aspirations for 'Big Society'. So British Waterways will no longer be a public corporation. However, in spite of receiving income from its property assets, and from boaters and other sources, the new organisation will still need to receive core funding from the Government to maintain the canals and river navigations it operates.
- The national Inland Waterways Association welcomes this move since for over fifty years they have been campaigning for a National Waterways Conservancy to be created as an all purpose authority for the waterways. This is a first step along the way but the IWA also would like to see the navigable rivers of the Environment Agency, and in the longer term, the private waterways such as the Basingstoke Canal, included as well. The ongoing proposals for our canal to move towards a Trust model are in very similar vein, but core funding from the county council owners and the boroughs and districts will also be required here. The Government's current proposals envisage the Environment Agency, which manages the Thames for example, continuing as a separate body, albeit substantially reformed.
- As part of the re-organisation of British Waterways to meet the challenges necessitated by their decreasing grant aid, especially since the announcement of the Comprehensive Spending Review, they have identified, similar to the Basingstoke Canal, that an increased use of volunteers and other third-sector opportunities is needed. As a pilot scheme under this model, the Kennet and Avon Canal, which runs from Reading to Bath has been selected to trial the need to increase volunteer support to help maintain the canal. The Kennet and Avon Canal Trust are working with British Waterways to come up with definite proposals on how to achieve this.
- Sorry to hear that the upgrading of the towpath between Runway's End and Norris Bridge near Fleet and from Farnborough Road Bridge to Government Road Bridge in Aldershot will not be taking place this year. The grant from the TAG (Farnborough Airfield)/Rushmoor Community & Environment Grant of £40,000 needs to be matched from revenue funding which is not available in the current financial climate. However, the section between Eelmoor Bridge and Norris Bridge will hopefully be tackled next year. Next year a new application under the TAG/Rushmoor Community & Environment Grant scheme will be submitted to fund the remaining sections.
- A good show was put on again in the summer by the Mikron Theatre Company during their annual tour of the waterways. However, the show, 'Striking the Balance - The Fight For Equal Pay' had to be transferred to Fleet Football Club for the second time in three years due to rain. 2011 will be the 40th year of touring but for the first time the Company have no formal funding from any grant organisation, so it could be their last year. They may have to sell their trusty narrowboat 'Tyseley' to raise enough money to tour. This would be tragic as it is their home for the tour. However, they have launched a 'Ruby Appeal' and donations, however small, will be very welcome to help make the 2011 tour go ahead. Details on the appeal and their work can be found on www.mikron.org.uk
- Sad to see that a well known canalside pub, the Swan at North Warnborough has been destroyed by fire. It is a sorry sight at the present time and who knows whether it will ever be rebuilt and reopened again. On the canalside to the left of the pub are some old stables where barge horses used to be stabled overnight by the bargemen trading along the canal.
- A few days ago the writer of this article was contacted by a lady from Hook to say that a swan was in trouble in Greywell cutting just to the east of the tunnel. She was very concerned for the swan as it had had an argument with a discarded fishing line and had come off worse. Someone had put her on to me and I was able to contact the Swan Lifeline service, who are based at Cuckoo Weir at Eton. They contacted the Woking Swan Rescue Service and Trevor and Sue Fox from that organisation met the lady at Greywell and successfully released the swan from the fishing line although the swan was left with a swollen neck. If any member sees a swan in trouble on the canal the contact numbers are: Woking Swan Rescue, 01483 765108, Mobile 07946 869933 or Swan Lifeline 01753 859397.
- Reports from the Regents Canal in London indicate a new form of invasive species affecting the canal environment. First it was the American Signal Crayfish now it is Red Swamp Crayfish. Every year seems to bring a new alien weed or species to our waterways. This must be a sign of the times, but it usually means more research to come up with a method of combating the problem but these methods are not usually very successful.
- With a boat rally planned for Frimley Lodge Park in June 2012 it is essential that all the repair work planned for the Deepcut flight of locks is completed in time for the flight to be reopened to enable visiting boats to come up the canal from the River Wey Navigation. The reputation of the canal will be at stake if the engineering works are not completed in time to enable the event to take place.

From Society Newsletter No. 95 February 1981

- The comment column in this edition of the Newsletter went beyond the Basingstoke Canal to comment on the state of the national network which is causing alarm. The list of stoppages - places temporarily closed for engineering works - is mounting, the causes are becoming more serious and the scheduled repair dates increasingly prolonged. The situation is likely to get worse with the news that the Government's grant to British Waterways will be increased by a meagre 6% in the 1981-82 financial year. Compared with the current rate of inflation, this means a cut of 10% in real terms!

The country is aware of restraints and reductions being imposed on Public Spending, but when expenditure on maintaining - let alone improving - inland waterways has been less than adequate for years, there is a good case for maintaining, at least, the current level of expenditure. Now, more than ever before, canal enthusiasts, representing their various interests in our waterways, must unite to gain a greater level of Public support and exert pressure on Government to do more for the waterways than make do and mend.

Our inland waterways system represents a national heritage and ought to be preserved for that reason alone. Some canals and stills are used for commercial carrying and this use should be developed where it is viable. And all our canals, including some already lost, have an increasingly important future for recreational use.

This Society fought, often against considerable odds, to save the Basingstoke Canal. It was a campaign of education and persuasion conducted by a group of dedicated people united in a single minded aim.

The national campaign should be conducted in a similar manner under the banner of the Inland Waterways Association. But it must have the unfailing support of all canal enthusiasts and users, and perhaps become a little more aggressive for its part in leading the way.

- David Gerry sent in an article from the South Western Gazette dated 1st December 1904. It is an account of an auction which took place that year following the death of Sir Frederick Hunt who bought the Basingstoke Canal in 1895. This was understood to be the first sale by auction of an English canal.

"By order of the Court of Chancery, Messrs. Fairbrother, Ellis, Egerton, Breach and Co, will sell by auction at The Mart, Tokenhouse Yard, EC, the property known as The Woking, Aldershot and Basingstoke Canal, consisting of part freehold, part copyhold and leasehold land commencing in the town of Basingstoke and having a length of thirty-seven miles through some of the most

picturesque and residential neighbourhoods of Hampshire and Surrey, and terminating at the junction with the River Wey".

"May I say £50,000 for the 366 acres, wharves, warehouses and cottages?" No answer. "May I say £40,000, £30,000. Gentlemen, am I to go back to the Court of Chancery and tell them that nobody wants the Basingstoke Canal? Will nobody make me an offer of £20,000 for it?" Still no answer. "Very well gentlemen, I can sell it for more than £20,000 privately without any trouble" remarked the auctioneer.

- The Society's trip boat 'John Pinkerton' in spite of indifferent summer weather made a surplus of £10,584, an increase of £1,600 over the previous year. The boat carried 14,497 passengers on 316 trips of which 241 were charters making a 17% increase. With the canal now open to Winchfield in 1981, charter hirers will be offered the choice of cruising eastwards or westwards during June and July. Public trips will be made eastwards from Colt Hill on the first Sunday of each month.
- Amanda Ward, a regular volunteer at Lock 19, has recently taken up an appointment in Oudenbosch, Holland and on Friday 5th December she completed her final X-ray of the day, drove from Oudenbosch to Zeebrugge arriving at Dover at 2am. She slept in the car (with a morning call from the Police at 4.00am) before driving to Ash Hall to help the working party ladies prepare Christmas Dinner for the navvies. On Sunday she was working at Lock 19 and then returned to Holland on Monday to start work on Tuesday. What a wonderful effort.
- Four new gigantic lock gates left the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough on November 27th to be transported by the Army from Church Crookham to be installed at Lock 20. They were built by apprentices at the RAE as a training exercise often using tools made specially to cope with the largest gates which measure 12ft by 9ft 6inches each. The four gates weighing a total of five tons were first seasoned in an RAE water tank to prevent warping and swelling.
- For the past few weeks British Rail has been working on the repair of Frimley Aqueduct where the aqueduct has been leaking as well. As the aqueduct was constructed to carry the canal over then two track railway line in 1838, British Rail inherited practically no construction details, so trial bore holes were dug during 1980 over the older section to discover the construction secrets. They decided to use various impervious layers of polythene, a cork based material and concrete. They also found the lead lining, which had been reported by the Harmsworth family, over the older section.

SHCS notes



The canal bulletin is now live. If you want to receive it, don't forget to send us your E-mail address.

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



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

Date for next copy 31st January 2011

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