



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 237 Spring 2013





Editorial

This issue of the Basingstoke Canal News represents a further change in its appearance. In addition to the new logo and cover design, our rebranding advisers recommended use of a serif font for text, so we have switched from Arial to Times. I hope the new look meets with approval, but I would welcome comments. Depending on reactions, there may be further iterations!

* * * * *

2013 seems to be starting with a new air of optimism about the future of the canal. The Counties have undertaken to make a very substantial investment of £4 million in the Basingstoke over the next few years, and the Canal Authority seems very keen to see it open again and being used. We have had some very constructive meetings to discuss arrangements for a visit by up to 60 boats over Easter.

One thing that is very clear about this, however, is that it will only be possible with assistance from volunteers. The BCA does not have the staff to be able to cope with such a mass invasion.

The Basingstoke Canal has been closed to through navigation for about 5 years and we all want to see boats back again. Please help to make this re-opening visit a success by lending a hand. Further details can be found on page 13. Kathryn Dodington has been the driving force behind this and would love to hear from you. She can be contacted at Basingstoke.easter@gmail.com.

Chairman's Report

There has been much in the waterways press recently about the early months of the Canal & River Trust which took over responsibility for the British Waterways network last summer. Some of the commentaries are very complimentary about the new organisation but others are less favourable.

At a meeting I attended this week of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Waterways, Tony Hales and Robin Evans, respectively the Chairman and Chief Executive of the C&RT were questioned by MPs on the successes achieved by the Local Waterways Partnerships which have been established across the regions to act as an interface between the local management team and wider community. The LWPs are required to approve the annual plan for their area and this is intended to give all the interested parties a say in establishing priorities and giving strategic direction. The LWPs also work with the local C&RT team in finding solutions to serious issues; the problems with continuous cruisers on the Kennet & Avon was cited as an example of the sort of issue which the partnership in that area was seeking to resolve. The meeting also heard from Charlotte Atkins who chairs the LWP in the Central Shires.

She painted a very upbeat picture of the success achieved by her partnership in breaking down the barriers which have existed between the 'old school' BW management and the users of the waterways. She referred to much closer engagement with canal-side communities, the significant increase in volunteering and the much greater use of the media in promoting the value of waterways.

Cover Picture : Dedication ceremony at Redway Lock, St John's.
Photo: Martin Leech

Chairman's report

Against this seemingly rosy picture of achievement by partnerships, it is also important to recognise that potential conflicts are also in evidence. For example, C&RT is now competing with the voluntary sector for funding. With regard to volunteering (a subject which has been given considerable emphasis by C&RT) it also appears that the new trust and the existing canal societies are effectively fishing in the same volunteer pool. On the K&A it has been reported that C&RT is offering to pay volunteers' expenses and it is also covering the cost of training, tools and even uniforms.

Are there any lessons for us on the Basingstoke? Clearly the ownership and management of the canal has remained essentially unchanged since the canal re-opened in 1991. The Canal Society contributes ideas and expertise through its participation on the Joint Management Committee and on the other bodies that are concerned with the running of the canal. Our skilled volunteers continue to provide support to the BCA through the organisation of work parties which undertake a whole range of tasks from basic 'scrub bashing' to repairing equipment and constructing boat facilities. We have also led a number of initiatives including an important project to identify additional water supplies for the canal. We have organised events and our trip boat has provided an excellent shop window for the canal for over 30 years.

However, we must recognise that our campaign to save the canal was launched over 45 years ago and the restoration was completed over 20 years ago. Our relationship with the Canal Partnership has always been very close but we must accept that the world will move on and we

cannot take it for granted that our role in the partnership will remain the unchanged.

How should we move forward? Should we continue to pursue our aims through our participation in the bodies that govern the canal and set its course for the future or should we recognise that, with the passage of time, our voice will be less influential as our role in saving the canal and restoring it is largely forgotten or consigned to the history books?

This is a question which we need to face and I would invite members to let me have their views. I am hopeful that we can also debate this issue at our AGM in May.

I would like to end on a positive note. We have recently heard that Surrey and Hampshire County Councils have each agreed (subject to final Cabinet approval) to contribute £2M towards capital works in the next four years. This represents a massive investment in the future of the canal and should secure navigation for many years to come.

As I write this report the BCA and the County Councils have just confirmed that they are making strenuous efforts to ensure that the canal re-opens this Easter. We are told that all the work to achieve that objective (including the replacement of the last remaining time-expired lock gates) is in hand. This should enable the boating event planned for the Easter holiday to go ahead as a celebration of the re-opening of the canal after a closure of 6 years.

Philip Riley
Chairman

Boating on the

The Basingstoke at Christmas.



Above: Rodney Wardlaw winding *Hazel Nut* at Brookwood after Christmas

When we learned that the Brookwood flight would be open at Christmas and bearing in mind the awful weather we have endured this year and the number of times the Wey has been in flood we thought, at Byfleet Boat Club, that a trip to Brookwood proper (rather than Brookwood country park) would be rather nice Christmas cruise.

We did need to convince the BCA that cruising at Christmas was normal at Byfleet Boat Club but once that was done and licences purchased we were figuratively on our way.

So it was we met at Byfleet Boat Club at 09:00 on Thursday 27-December sadly down two boats on our plan due to family commitments and a broken heater and headed towards

Woodham junction and the Basingstoke.

We really had no problems on our first day going up to Woking; the only thing that the canal needs on this section of the canal is more boats to keep the locks exercised and the silt at bay. We spent an enjoyable evening in the Bridge Barn.

A log behind the offside lower gate on Lock 8 was the only issue we encountered on the St Johns flight and that took no time to resolve. Once up to the A322 Brookwood crossroads we were on new ground - well it's not been used for about four years save the BCA workboat going up and down and a boat from Brookwood going down. No issues at all here apart from some adjustment to the offside lower paddle gear at 13. The Brookwood pound could do

The Basingstoke at Easter

with a dredge but that's nothing out of the ordinary for any canal. We spent a pleasant time at Sheets Heath Bridge (*see back cover*) and a very enjoyable evening in the Fox at Fox Corner.

The return to the Wey was trouble free in reality; a bit of an issue with the duck weed, which was 18 inches thick at Lock 14 and jammed the first two boats in the lock. We took the second pair down singly.

We had a thoroughly enjoyable time, we enjoyed the lovely comments from the fishermen and the other towpath users who were delighted to see boats back on the Basingstoke.

Despite what you may hear, the Basingstoke is open, albeit only as far as Deepcut at the moment but we are confident the BCA will have Deepcut open in time for an early Easter so Byfleet Boat Club will be up the Basingstoke, as far as King John's Castle during the week after Easter.

Following the success of the Byfleet Boat Club's Christmas visit, Kathryn, in her dual role as a Director of the Canal Society and Commodore of the BBC, has organised an Easter cruise open to all.

There is still an element of risk in that contractors are still at work on the canal, but the Canal Authority and the Counties have been very helpful and everything is being done to ensure that the canal will indeed be fully open for boating by Easter.

The Society, in conjunction with Byfleet Boat Club and the Guildford and Reading branch of the IWA are behind a boat trip on the Basingstoke from Woodham to King John's Castle over Easter and during the following week.

There are options to only go to Woking or to go to Woking and Brookwood Country Park but the option that has attracted the most interest is the trip over the full length of the canal from Woodham Junction to King John's Castle and return. Currently 27 boats have registered and paid for the trip. We are limited to 15 lockings (30 boats approximately) a day so will be happy to accept a further 33 boats for Odiham and the Castle.

Boats are coming from as near as Woking and as far as Gas Street Basin in Birmingham. If you can help with locking and/or caulking (full training will be offered by the BCA) then please e-mail me at Basingstoke.easter@gmail.com.

Kathryn Dodington

For details of the trip, including timings and licence applications, please see Kathryn's blog at <http://www.leo-no-2.blogspot.co.uk/>

The Canal Authority's manpower will be severely stretched with this many boats using the locks and volunteer help is going to be essential. If you would like to help making this event a success, please contact Kathryn as requested above.

YOUR CANAL NEEDS YOU!

Canal Society Annual General Meeting

NOTICE is hereby given that the ThirtySixth Annual General Meeting of the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society will be held on Saturday 18th May 2013 in the Deepcut Village Centre, Swordsman's Road, Deepcut GU16 6TB, commencing at 2 p.m.

The formal Agenda for the meeting is as follows:-

1. To hear apologies for absence.
2. To confirm the minutes of the Thirty Fifth AGM held on 12st May 2012.
3. To approve the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2012.
4. To appoint the Independent Accountants, Rutton B Viccajee.
5. To elect or confirm the appointment of the members of the Board of Directors (Executive Committee).
6. To transact any other business relative to the Annual General Meeting of the Society.

By order of the Board of Directors

Gareth Jones, Honorary Secretary
16th February 2013

Following the formal business of the AGM there will be reports from the Chairmen of the Canal Society and Boat Company and presentation of the Robin Higgs Award.

AGM Notes:

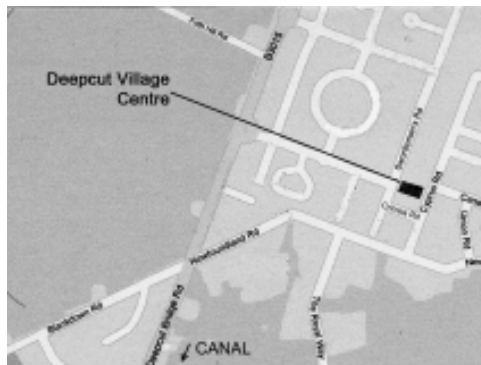
- a) This Notice is issued from the Honorary Secretary's address at 9 Mytchett Lake Road, Mytchett, Camberley, Surrey GU16 6AW.
- b) Every member of the Society who is entitled to vote at a General Meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy, who need not be a member, to attend and vote in his/her stead.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

Please note the afternoon 2pm start time.

AGM Venue

The Deepcut Village Centre is again the venue for our AGM. It is not hard to find and there will be signs off the main Deepcut Bridge Road.

Turn off onto Newfoundland Road, follow this round, turn left when you come to Cyprus Road and then immediately left into Crimea Road. The hall and ample parking is on the right.



Events

CHOBHAM SOCIAL MEETINGS

The remaining programme for the winter/spring season is shown below:

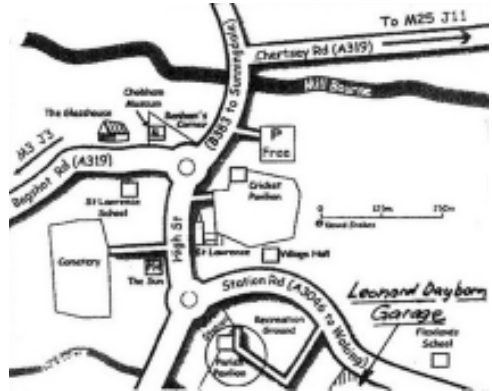
The meetings will be held at the usual venue, the Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road, Chobham, near Woking, GU24 8AZ (see map for exact location), starting at 8pm on the third Wednesday of the month.

Coffee/tea and biscuits will be available during the interval and there will be a raffle and an exit collection. Non members and friends are very welcome to come along.

Wednesday 20th.March 2013

David Saady - 'The Ribble Link and the Lancaster Canal'

David will be visiting us to describe the history of the Ribble Link and the Lancaster Canal and recount his cruise along the two waterways including the seven mile crossing between the two, one of the riskiest water crossings for narrow boats in the country.



Wednesday 17th.April 2013

Ray Orth - 'The Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal'

Ray is the Assistant Restoration Director of the Wendover Arm Trust and will present an illustrated talk on the history of the Trust and the Wendover Arm, why the Arm was built and the story of the restoration to date and the Trust's longer term aims.

Further details from David Millett on 01252 617364 or email d.millett7@ntlworld.com

MIKRON THEATRE COMPANY

The annual visit of the Mikron Theatre Company will be on Sunday 28th July at the Fleet Football Club, Calthorpe Park, Crookham Road, Fleet, GU51 5FA starting at 1.00pm.

This year's show will be 'Don't Shoot The Messenger'

When a gun toting hoodlum holds up a village post office, the Postmasters want justice...of the restorative kind...by any means necessary.

But can a comical journey through five centuries of postal history rehabilitate the rascally rogue?

And what of the Postmasters' own motives - a noble act of public service or the desperation of the doomed? Will they get closure or just get closed?

A story of deliveries and deliverance.

Further details from David Millett as above.

BCA rangers

The winter season is an important time of year on the canal for the BCA Ranger team. One of the bigger winter jobs is the offside canal bank vegetation cutting and after several weeks work doing this in Hampshire last winter the focus has been the Surrey section for the 2012/2013 season. We began in the Brookwood section and have been moving downstream over the past few weeks covering much of the Hermitage, St John's, Woking, Sheerwater and Woodham sections of the canal. As a result of this work, the width of the navigation has been improved, more light can reach the aquatic and marginal plants so both the boating community and the bio-diversity of the canal benefit from this work. Work on this task is often interrupted by windblown tree clearance and a frozen canal but we have managed to achieve most of what we set out to do and will be hard at it again next winter.

I have continued to run a weekly volunteer work party day each week throughout the winter. Attendance at the work parties has been very encouraging with around a dozen volunteers helping out each Tuesday. The focus for the winter sessions has been on vegetation management. We started November off with a couple of sessions clearing the vegetation off the side of Mytchett Lake embankment. Much of the vegetation here was holly and bramble so it wasn't a particularly pleasant task but everyone got stuck in and completed the job.

The volunteer team then moved down to Woodham where we worked from Lock 2 down to the junction with the River Wey. Again the focus was on clearing overgrown vegetation and thinning the stands of trees near the canal

to allow more light to reach the canal itself. Hopefully this will result in better growth of marginal and aquatic plants in this section which will benefit the ecosystem in the long run.

We then undertook a couple of sessions between Lock 28 and Deepcut Bridge Road removing sapling growth along the towpath side canal bank to prevent trees becoming established. Hundreds of small trees and non-native shrubs such as Laurel and Rhododendron were then removed from the cutting. The trees were removed to allow light to reach the canal and the non-native species removed as part of the management of the canal's SSSI status.

Since the start of 2013 the volunteers have been busy clearing vegetation around the canal in Crookham, Dogmersfield, Fleet and Farnborough (*right*). This is ongoing and further sessions are planned over the coming weeks for Claycart and Rushmoor flashes and the offside canal bank in between. Once the weather improves we can begin the annual task of rubbing down and re-painting the lock gates, hand rails and bollards around the canal. There is usually a ranger led volunteer work party each Tuesday. If you are able to offer your services as a volunteer please register your contact details with the BCA by calling the office on 01252 370073.

Canal Ranger Andy Loader has been busy replacing Jack Heads (winding gear). The BCA has been removing the old wooden units and replacing them with steel ones. The emphasis here is on user safety. The design of the new Jack Heads allows the user to stand sideways on to the canal whilst using the winding gear rather than facing the canal directly. Hopefully all the new upper Jack Heads will be in place by the end of

report from Chris Healy

February. Several new Lock gates have been fitted on the canal and this work continues with further new gates due to be fully fitted at Brookwood before the re-opening of the navigation. Rangers have been busy working alongside Dyer & Butler to achieve this. This has required a huge amount of investment with money from both capital and revenue budgets being required for this (*below right*).

Canal Ranger Sara Green has been working with Natural England to plan and implement tree management policies for land adjacent to the canal. Hopefully this will result in some important projects which will have huge benefits for the conservation value of the canal including felling trees on Ministry of Defence land beside the canal.



Above: Canal Society Chairman, Philip Riley and other volunteers doing coppicing work on the old silt dump site in Crookham.

The Ranger team lost a valuable member in January when James Emmett left us to take up a new role as Senior Ranger for the Hampshire Northern Area Rights of Way team. James had

worked on the canal for twelve years and leaves with an extensive knowledge of the canal that will be hard to replace. We wish him well in his new role.

Mark Foster, son of Canal Ranger Andy Foster has been volunteering alongside the Ranger team for the past couple of months. He has proved a valuable member of the team and has been appointed as a temporary member of staff whilst the search for James' long term replacement is undertaken.

Over the coming weeks the Ranger team will be focusing on all the tasks needed to ensure the canal is ready for the Boat Event planned for the Easter Bank Holiday weekend.



Above: The gates of Lock 13 being removed prior to being measured to ensure that the new ones fit properly. Inadequate measurements led to trouble fitting the new gates on Lock 12, so no chances are being taken. The order for the new gates has been placed with high priority.

Letters

Redway Lock

As the cover photo shows, a good crowd turned out for the unveiling of the stone to mark the renaming of Lock 11 as Redway Lock.

Dear Roger,

I would like to say a big thank you, to you and all the work party members and others who braved the snow and bitter cold on Sunday 20th January, for the unveiling of the stone in memory of Peter at Lock 11 (Redway Lock).

It's a lovely gesture and tribute by the Society, which the boys and I have found very moving.

Janet can be very proud of her work. The stone looks great. Several locals have commented on it and asked who did it.

It was a shame Janet was not there herself to see it unveiled, but she ended up instead having her finger stitched up at hospital after an accident with a carving knife at home earlier that morning. Hope it's healing alright, Janet.

In spite of the cold weather the occasion seemed to go well. John Kingsbury and Linda Kemeny were very impressed and surprised at the number of people who had braved the cold to be there.

Thanks also to Verna, who did all the invites and arranged for the buffet at the Rowbarge Pub afterwards, where we were all able to thaw out by a huge log fire.

Thank you all

Margurite Redway, Kevin and Ian

Presidents

It took a long time following the death of our previous President, Lord Onslow, to realise that we had an excellent replacement, or rather, replacements, right under our noses.

Tim and Liz Dodwell have been involved with the Basingstoke Canal probably for longer than anyone else. Liz is the daughter of Joan Marshall, who was the canal's General Manager from 1949 to 1964, and Tim and his brother John organised rallies and visits to the canal in the 1960s. John today is a Trustee of the Canal and River Trust.



Tim and Liz have been regular visitors to the canal in recent years, sometimes with their boat, as seen below at Deepcut.

Dear Philip,

Thank you for your letter of 28 December 2012.

We are very honoured to be invited to become Joint Presidents of the Society, and now write to confirm our acceptance of that invitation.

Letters

We only hope that we can fill this role in a way that will lead to greater success in the campaign to see the canal open for navigation and fulfilling all the other functions that a waterway of this nature can offer. As you may know, apart from our earlier boating activities on the canal, Tim was a member of the IWA team that prepared a report for the Surrey County Council in 1965, 'Basingstoke Canal - The Case for Restoration', and subsequently was a member of the Surrey County Council's Surrey Basingstoke Canal Consultative Group from 1977 to 1981.

We are sorry that our plans for the summer will preclude our involvement with the Society's forthcoming events in that period, but look forward to provide what assistance we can, and in particular in building a fruitful relationship with the management of the Basingstoke Canal Authority.

Yours sincerely,

Tim and Elizabeth Dodwell

Bill Homewood

It was very nice to receive a Christmas card from Bill Homewood offering best wishes to all in the Canal Society.

Bill was a very active member of the Society back in the 80s and 90s, acting as crew and maintenance manager for the John Pinkerton as well as organising a lot of very interesting walks. He received the Society's Robin Higgs Award in 1996 for these and many other efforts.

Car Insurance

I remember that many years ago there was a Goon Show entitled "Insurance, the White Man's Burden" and, indeed, it often seems to be just that, particularly when a company finds something in the small print that saves them paying out.

It appears that using your car while volunteering, such as travelling to a meeting or to crew the *John Pinkerton*, may not be covered by your insurance if its cover is for "Social, Domestic and Pleasure" driving only.

Most of the large insurance companies, such as Direct Line or Churchill, will cover use for voluntary work at no extra cost, but require you to notify them that you intend to use your car for such a purpose.

You can find out whether your company covers voluntary work at www.abi.org.uk/information/consumers/general/volunteer_driving_.aspx

Quite how an insurance company can differentiate this from ordinary social use, I do not know, but best to be on the safe side and tell them. A phone call to Direct Line sorted it out for me without any difficulty.

He is no longer a member of the Society and we don't have his current address, so Bill, if you are reading this online, best wishes to you and drop us a line so that we can fill you in on the current situation.

Contractors at work

Having spent most of last year working in Surrey, the contractors, Dyer & Butler, moved up the canal into Hampshire last autumn. The initial focus of the work has been to install or overhaul the stop plank grooves under a number of bridges. This will ensure that the BCA has the ability to drain down sections of the canal for maintenance or to stop water flow in the event of a breach.

The old bridge at Pondtail in Fleet was the first site. Unfortunately, the job proved more complicated and difficult than expected for a number of reasons.

Weather has not always been on their side and nor have the local yobos, who slashed the inflatable dams (*below*) that were originally put in to allow the work area to be pumped out.



As a result, lines of sheet metal piling were driven in across the canal either side of the bridges.

There was also a brief embarrassment when an attempt was made to put an excavator onto the BCA's work boat. Apparently calculations had indicated that it was within the boat's loading capacity, but the boat thought

otherwise and sank (*below*). Fortunately the digger driver managed to extricate it without too much difficulty or damage.



In addition to the grooves either side of the bridge hole, into which the stop planks fit, there is supposed to be a socket in the centre of the channel for a post to provide extra support to the planks when they are under pressure. At Pondtail, a test showed that this did not work. As a result a new set of grooves with an associated socket had to be installed (*below*).



Unlike the grooves that were installed below Lock 12, these are recessed and present no obstacle to boats. The work at Pondtail is now complete and D&B have now moved on to Coxheath Road Bridge, which hopefully will cause fewer problems.

Out and about



The new footbridge in Woking, named after the famous cricketer Bedser twins, has been installed. It will provide a link from the town to the towpath and the new headquarters of the World Wildlife Fund that is going up on the old Brewery Road car park. It is reported that the WWF is keen to support the canal, so it will be interesting to see what transpires.

Elsewhere in Woking, local inhabitants have been rather less helpful, digging ditches behind the Horsell Common winding hole in an apparent attempt to cause a breach. The Society's work party used the dredger Belfast Girl to reinforce the bank there (*below*) and there are now warning signs from the Police (*above right*). In addition, 16 bicycles, 6 shopping trolleys, a motor bike and various



other items of domestic debris were removed from the canal.

Thanks to Nigel Searle for photos.

There has also been a lot of bank clearance work done at various sites. I caught up with a work party near Lodge Copse Bridge in Odiham at the end of last year (*below*).



Boat Counters and

Another article from John How, leader of the Water Strategy Group. He poses the question "Why have boat counters when the Canal has so few boats?", and explains why :-

The owners of the Canal (Hampshire and Surrey County Councils) have made significant investments over the last two years and plan to do so again over the next few years, and to change the image of the canal to that of being 'open for through navigation'.

The Water Strategy Group is investigating how to ensure adequate water is in the Canal to allow through navigation for the whole year and thereby attract more boaters. All possibilities are being considered to retain water or find new sources of water supply, particularly during the dry season (if we ever have any in the future!!).

These investigations have required discussions with Natural England (NE), to ensure we continue to protect the eco-systems of the SSSI. The Conservation Management Plan for the Canal (see Appendix 6, page 114), proposes that 780 to 1300 boat movements per year are appropriate to support the SSSI. Fewer than 780 movements results in too much weed growing (which can clearly be seen as a problem at the moment, for example in Brookwood – see photo below),



whilst more than 1300 movements per annum might have a detrimental effect, but this needs to be re-evaluated once this limit is approached. Generally speaking, we currently need more boats to support the SSSI.

Anticipating increased boat movements in the future, Natural England have donated funds to install two sets of boat counters. One set is located just above Lock 6 in Woking, to log boat movements generally related to entry to and exit from the Canal (*below*),



and the second set is located in the Hampshire countryside at Dogmersfield, away from the majority of any trip boats.

The boat counters have been designed and manufactured specifically for the Basingstoke, as no proprietary equipment is available. The requirement is to count and log boat movements both upstream and downstream. This requires a boat to pass through two beams that are nominally 4m to 6m apart, hence each set of boat counters requires two boxes on each bank, one pair for each beam. The system is designed to exclude wildlife such as swans, people waving hands across the beams and exclude non-powered boats such as canoes,

Water Supply by John How

rowing boats etc. Data is then transmitted by a 3G signal to a hosted website, where the information can be presented in a variety of tables/graphs, all to be available to the BCA Rangers and for regular reports to NE as part of the Conservation Management Plan.

Naturally, we look forward to the canal steadily regaining a reputation for being 'open for through navigation' and boat movements approaching the present maximum of 1300 per year, though accept there is much to be done to reach this point. Watch this space!!

John How

House for sale

Detached house in Frimley Green with 37ft mooring on the offside bank of the Basingstoke Canal. £450,000. More photos and further details at www.housebybasingstokecanal.co.uk or contact Stuart Black on 07796 266377 or sblack@xcdservices.com

Also boat for sale - 20' Viking 20 GRP



Help needed with Depth Survey Equipment and Methodology

Over a period, the Canal has silted up, resulting in part from the extensive tree cover, and this has obvious implications for navigation and ecology, but also on water supply. When the Canal was built, the Hampshire pound was designed to be around a foot deeper than the Surrey section, so that the waterway would act as its own reservoir. With the steady accumulation of detritus, and no substantial dredging programme for many years, the effectiveness of the Canal as its own reservoir has diminished over time.

It has been planned to do a detailed depth survey along the length of the Canal for some while. A depth survey would enable the Water Strategy Group and the BCA to plan a long-term dredging programme, and identify areas in which to concentrate spot dredging. One way in which depths could be measured from a workboat is with a ruler, and then to transcribe the measurements and location manually. However many hundreds of readings would need to be taken and this is very labour intensive and potentially inaccurate.

The WSG is looking to anybody out there who may have experience of, or have access to, equipment that would speed up this task. Ideally, it would be something that is equipped with a GPS locator and could be towed along behind a workboat, and measure the depth and profile of the canal bed via a connection to a laptop. The maximum depth of the Canal varies typically between about 1m and 2m. If you feel you could help or provide any useful information, please contact the Newsletter editor initially.

Let's not forget....

The Counties apparently sometimes feel that relations between them and the Canal Society have declined and it is true that there have been times in the last few years when we have been unhappy with some of the things that have been going on. However, this does not mean that we cannot remain friends, albeit sometimes critical ones and, as the Chairman's Report indicates, things currently seem to be looking up.

Nevertheless, I doubt whether everything will always be sweetness and light, so I thought that this piece from Newsletter No 23, that went out to Canal Society members in June 1969, might help the people involved today with the canal, who were not even born when this saga started, to understand and, perhaps, have some sympathy with what motivates us.

We have invested nearly half a century of voluntary effort in re-establishing the Basingstoke Canal as a navigation, starting with the manufacture of a pair of lock gates as an act of faith before it was even known that the canal would continue to exist.

Is it any wonder then that we sometimes appear obsessive, bloody-minded even? Had we not been, the canal would not exist today.

We owe it to those young men and women, like Tony Harmsworth (right, with the gates he and his father built) and the founder members of the Canal Society, to continue what they started..



MEMORANDUM

To: All Committee Members. June 1969

One pair upper lock gates as specified 6' 6" for Ash Vale or Frimley locks are now completed.

Signed: Tony Harmsworth

This memorandum reached committee members during the last week of June. It marked the successful completion of one of the most ambitious projects ever launched by a voluntary canal society - the building of a pair of lock gates, a feat never before achieved by volunteers alone.

On Saturday, June 28, on a sunny afternoon at Ash Vale barge yard, the gates went on show to members of Surrey and Hampshire County Councils, representatives from other waterways, and members of our society whose five bobs and pound notes had financed the project through the Lock Gate Fund. Our chairman, David Gerry, described it as an occasion when the society should "pat itself on the back". It was - and we did.

The incongruity of the occasion - opening a pair of lock gates on dry land - did not go unnoticed. It was indeed a strange ceremony, as author Paul Vine remarked as he hammered in the last (gold plated) nail to complete the gates.

The first lock gates

Tony Harmsworth, the “brains” behind the operation told the county councils’ representatives “What happens to these gates is up to you”.

Tributes came thick and fast, and here are a few samples:

A county councillor: “Your enthusiasm and initiative has not gone unnoticed”.

Argus, Aldershot News columnist: “Those who follow and report on the society’s activities cannot help but be impressed by their drive and efficiency: their functions are well organised and when asked a question they have the facts at their fingertips. Now, in a practical way, they have shown they can at least make an attempt at getting the canal into running order once again ... I would like to see them given the chance to prove that they could undertake it. I hope that the local authority representatives who attended Saturday’s ceremony were impressed. It would be good to see the county councils step in and buy the canal”.

The New Basingstoke Canal Co Ltd: “Whilst congratulating you on your society’s enthusiasm in constructing lock gates, I venture to suggest that quite apart from not consulting the canal company before undertaking this work, you will be well aware from the company’s memorandum on policy that such arrangements conflict with the future of the canal ... A proposal by your society to install lock gates of your own construction at Ash Lock could not possibly fit in with the arrangements that are envisaged for this lock”.

This reply from the company’s solicitor, Mr. Harry Swales, followed our offer to install the gates at Ash, where the present lock gates are protected by a dam and are in a suspect condition.

We know only too well of the canal company’s refusal to acknowledge that the Basingstoke Canal could be used for through navigation, and therefore its policy of abandoning the locks and replacing them with weirs. Nevertheless, we felt that considering the present sorry state of the canal, our offer of a new set of lock gates might have changed their minds.

The lock gates will now be stored and presented to the county councils if and when they succeed in taking over the canal. They will stand as a symbol of our ability and sincere intentions of providing all the help we can in restoring this lovely waterway.

Meanwhile, our petition - with 10,000 signatures calling for action already presented to the county councils - will continue, as the society will continue to fight for what it believes to be the right future for the canal, and - sadly - as the rate of deterioration in the canal’s condition goes on.

The successful building of a pair of lock gates is one thing. To build them without the certain knowledge that they will ever be used for the purpose intended is quite another. We don’t know whether Surrey and Hampshire County Councils will ever buy the canal. We don’t know that in, say, ten years time the canal will have disappeared for ever under housing or road development in the name of progress. But we do know that with every bang of the hammer on the gold plated nail that afternoon the message went home!

“SAVE THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL”

Lengthsmen

THE LENGTHSMEN SCHEME

The Lengthsmen are a mixed group commonly bound by a love and appreciation of the canal. There are currently 25 volunteers involved in the scheme and between us we endeavour to cover the entire 32 miles of the canal.

I suppose due to the nature of the scheme we all live on or close to the Canal. Otherwise, we are completely mixed bunch, old and young, athletic and decrepit. We all enjoy regularly walking and/or cycling the tow path, but have the extra dimension of keeping an eye out for problems.

We could be looked upon as the eyes and ears of the canal. Invariably for most of the time we are simply enjoying the delights of the tow path perhaps picking up litter as we go but occasionally we do find things to report and in some instances our early reporting has averted potential disasters. It has often been the case that Lengthsmen have been the first to report leaks,

navigational hazards, fallen trees and the like. Often our early action has been a great help to the Rangers.

Do you use the tow path to get to work or to the shops? Do you perhaps walk the dog every day or simply get some exercise once a week? If your answer to any of the above is "Yes", then we would love you to join the Lengthsmen scheme and get even more from your outings as well as actively help with the maintenance of the canal. Why not give it a try? Go on, your involvement will be greatly appreciated. To join the scheme or for more details, contact Mike Gordon on 07505752157 or by email at mjgordon2206@hotmail.com

There is also a warm welcome awaiting you at the New Members and Lengthsmen gathering on Saturday 23rd March at the Canal Centre (see page 22).

FAREWELL

It is sad to have to report the passing of two long-standing members of the Canal Society and the crew of the John Pinkerton.

Colin Pye Colin peacefully passed away on 27th January. He had been ill for some time, excellently cared for by carers, nurses and doctors at home where he always wanted to be, and then finally in the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice.

Alf Preston passed away at the beginning of February in Frimley Park Hospital, after a short period of ill health. As well as crewing the trips, Alf used to help with the winter maintenance and always seemed to be on hand to help when the boat had to be moved.

They were both very good company and will be much missed. We send our condolences to their families.

Lookback by David Millett, VP

From Society Newsletters No.107 February 1983 and No.108 April 1983

- Work on the Surrey section is centred on three main fronts. At Deepcut Top Lock 28 a new dry dock is being constructed on the site of the original demolished dry dock and at the Ash Embankment progress is being made on building the new weir on the towpath side (later demolished when the aqueduct was built). Back at the Deepcut flight the last lock No. 19 has now had its gates fitted and the flight as a whole now has to be brought to a state ready for reopening.
- As more of the canal is restored the need for regular maintenance is increasingly becoming more urgent. Already the dredged canal bed between Ash and Deepcut is filling with weed growth. To this end the Society is glad to note that Hampshire County Council is seeking Surrey County Council's approval to buy a new weedcutter which would share the cost of an essential piece of capital equipment.
- After JCP, STEP, WEP, and YOP, we now have the government's latest scheme - YTS - (Youth Training Scheme) to cater for school leavers who cannot find work. The Society have received approval and a grant to take 23 young people and four supervisors to work on the Deepcut flight plus Jim Reid as senior supervisor and Frank Jones to manage the group. Three days will be spent actually working on the canal the other two days will be training 'off the job' under skilled supervision.
- Plans have now been finalised for the stabilisation of the canal bank at Dogmersfield which slipped last year as the dredger passed through. HCC have drawn up the method to be employed. An 11 metre high retaining wall will be constructed using wire mesh baskets filled with rock (gabions). The 1,400 cubic metres of rock required will be transported to the site using the Society's tugs and barges from Barley Mow Wharf.
- The removal of 2,800 cubic metres of soil from the site will be undertaken in the same way and will be deposited on the offside bank at Tundry Pond to buttress the canal bank at that location.
- Surrey Heath Borough Council have now given planning permission for Bob Potter to build a canalside pub and moorings at Mytchett, after extensive public consultation. This contrasts with the situation at Pondtail Bridge in Fleet where the Friends of the Earth and the NCC jumped in at an early stage before public consultation took place. Later, however the FoE backed down somewhat when they realised they had thought the Pondtail plan was on the north (towpath) side of the canal when in fact it was on the south side.
- Shortly before Christmas a 30ft. section of the towpath between Locks 26 and 27 at Deepcut was breached. 600 cubic yards of soil was washed away above Lock 26 and gallons of water pored through the hole. The canal bed was undamaged as when an earlier breach took place at this site in the 1930s the canal bed was puddles with clay and held firm this time. The repair work will be done by the SCC lengthsmen supervised by the SCC structural engineer.

John Pinkerton

NOTICE OF THIRTY FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of

SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE CANAL CRUISES LIMITED

to be held on Friday 8th March 2013
at the Basingstoke Canal Centre, Mytchett, at
7.30pm

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To approve the minutes of the 33rd Annual General Meeting.
3. Matters arising.
4. Directors' report.
5. Presentation of the accounts.
6. Composition of the JP boat company directors and committee.
7. Any other notified business.

The formal business will be followed by our usual informal discussion, covering reports for 2012, new boat information and crew arrangements for 2013.

Any Society member is welcome to learn more about the John Pinkerton fundraising operation, especially if you are considering becoming a crew member.

JP2

By the time you receive this BCN, we will have a much better idea of when the new boat will arrive on the Basingstoke Canal. For up-to-date information, you can follow us on Facebook (John Pinkerton Canal Cruises), where we will post the arrangements. The initial lift-in will be followed by a period of acceptance trials, during which any snags can be sorted. The MCA have to carry out an inspection, and once

we have our certificate, crew familiarisation will commence. Cruising starts at Easter.

Member's Canal Trips

The Boat Co would like to re-introduce the Member's Evening Canal Trips on the John Pinkerton. The usual Tuesday evening maintenance and cleaning work can be of a variable length, depending on many factors, thus leading to an uncertain time for departure for a member's trip. So we are scheduling the first or second Monday each month (depending on bank holidays) to be a fully crewed Members Trip, departing from Colt Hill at 7.30pm.

Dates for 2013 are:

8 April; 13 May; 10 Jun; 8 July; 5 August; 9 September

As the boat is limited to 50 passengers, please confirm your attendance with the Booking Manager (see contacts page); there will be no charge to Society members – guests welcome for a small donation. This is a great chance to enjoy another aspect of your membership of the Society - bar will be open - and you never know, you might want to do more by crewing!

Public Trips

New this year are a few theme trips to cater for children in May & October, plus a Jazz and Ale evening in June. Details are in the 2013 brochure available now from the JP website. Don't forget to tell your neighbours, friends, clubs about the JP!

We look forward to seeing more Society members enjoying the Basingstoke Canal in 2013.

Dick King

Chairman, Surrey & Hants Canal Cruises Ltd

John Pinkerton II

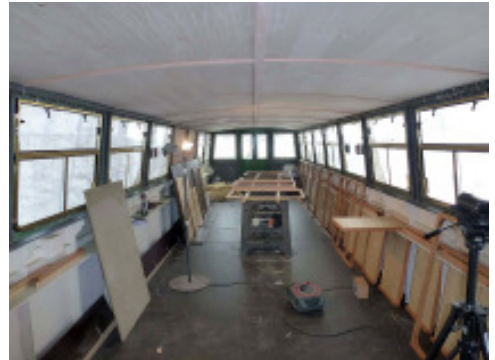


The last progress update from Pete Phillips (above right) reported the following:

- The exterior has been painted along with most of the interior.
- The engine/gearbox has been delivered from Beta marine and is awaiting fitting.
- The windows have been delivered and fitted
- The floor has been fitted along with the ceiling
- The two toilet waste tanks are also fitted.
- The electrics and plumbing work has begun but is being held up awaiting delivery of the wall boards.

We are now several weeks on and things must be nearing completion. Delivery is expected in mid-March. John Ross will then be doing the final decorative painting, There is still a bit of work to do with Lambons and the MCA to prove that the ballast and stability of the boat is as good as the calculations say it will be, along with proving the boat and its systems work OK.

With that done there is quite a bit of crew training to do before we can start operating with passengers.



Above: The cabin is clearly more spacious than that of the old boat. *Thanks to David Jackson for photos.*

It would be a brave man who would predict the date of the boat's first trip, given the ability of the MCA to throw a last minute spanner in the works, but it is hoped to have the official naming ceremony in June.

At the last Society Committee meeting, it was formally decided that the boat should be called the *John Pinkerton II*.

BCS notes

NEW MEMBERS MEETING

An event for new members and lengthsman is being held on Saturday, 23rd March, from 2pm to 5pm at the Canal Visitor Centre, Mytchett Place Road, Mytchett, Surrey, GU16 6DD. This is an opportunity to find out what is happening on the canal and to meet the Society's Committee members.

Individual invitations are being sent out and it would help us to gauge numbers if you could let Doreen Hornsey know that you are coming. If anyone feels that they should have been invited and would like to come, please also contact Doreen.

NEW TREASURER - GUY FALLER



Guy Faller has now taken over the post of the Society's Treasurer from Graham Hornsey, so I asked him to introduce himself:

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT

Annual subscriptions to the BCS are due on 1st March. Those of you paying by cash/cheque will receive reminders with a slip to return to me with your payment. If you pay by Bankers Order, please make sure that you are paying at least the current membership rate as follows:

Adult: £10, Family: £12, Senior (single): £5,
Senior (pair): £7, Group: £15.

Prompt payment of subs would be much appreciated to save the expense of having to send out reminders.

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

David Hubbard of Basingstoke
Chris Birch of Fleet
David & Jane Shaw of Brookwood
Howard & Wendy Ray of Basingstoke
Gyles Lambert of Mitcham

Doreen Hornsey, Membership Secretary
E-Mail:
Membership@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

Having just returned from almost 9 years of living in Norway my wife and I bought a house in a lovely situation on the Basingstoke Canal near the Hermitage Bridge. It is a fantastic amenity, and we immediately joined the Canal Society in order to be more involved. We get a tremendous pleasure in seeing all the different users of the canal getting enjoyment from it - the only thing that is missing is more boats passing up and down it. We hope that will be addressed very soon. I am a chartered accountant, working in industry for the last 20 years.

BCS information



The Bulletin is now at Issue 17. If you would like to receive it, please send your e-mail address to membership@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

To join the Society, please contact the Membership Secretary, Mrs Doreen Hornsey, whose contact details are below.

The annual subscription is Adults £10, Junior £3, OAP £5, Family £12, 2 OAP £7, and Group £15, payable on March 1st each year.

Date for next copy 30th April 2013

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www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk/directory.htm

or by telephone on 0796-4357442

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Canal Authority Internet Website: www.basingstoke-canal.co.uk

Boats to Brookwood

