



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 240 Winter 2013





Editorial

I am clearly not alone in thinking that 2013 was a very good year for the Basingstoke Canal, apart from the Dogmersfield bank slip. Thanks to a combination of a wet spring and the BCA's careful water management, the locks stayed open all year for only the second time since the 1991 re-opening. Over 100 boats visited the canal and by-and-large seemed to have enjoyed the experience.

Cover Picture : Tree felling paused to allow a boat to pass at Winchfield . Photo: R Cansdale

We are now looking to 2014 and at our last meeting of the Society's Committee, we tried to make a list of priority jobs for the year.

These came under two basic themes - firstly to make the canal more boater friendly and secondly to promote the Society.

Into the first of these fell jobs such as a depth survey of the canal that the BCA would like us to do, spot dredging and water supply improvements. Freddie Dawson also flagged up the fact that there

was a building at Ash Wharf that had been unoccupied for years, which if available, might become a home for the Society and a stop-off for boaters.

All these jobs will need someone to project manage them and organise the workers. We currently seem to have people willing to do things, but not to take on the job of organising them.

This emphasises the need to promote the Society. It has been very noticeable in the last few years that nearly all the people who have

joined the Committee have been new members of the Society itself. What we clearly need to do is recruit more new members, so one job for next year will be to design a mobile exhibition that can be taken to libraries, shopping centres, etc along the canal.

We have already designed a permanent display about the canal for the Milestones Museum in Basingstoke, which hopefully will be going up next year, so we have plenty of material.

We have also agreed to try to organise some public meetings to promote the canal and the Society. People in the age range that we would like to recruit (i.e. younger than the 60 to 80 age of most of our long standing members!) will not remember what the state of the canal was half a century ago and probably tend to take it for granted. It is very clear that volunteer support is going to be vital to the canal's future, so we need to remind people of what happens when it gets neglected.

Having said all this, if there are any current members who would like to take on a bit of organisational work, please do contact one of the Committee members; we'd love to hear from you. It's very rewarding and there will be no shortage of advice and backup if you need it.

* * * * *

And finally, if a bit early, may I wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

2013 was a very good year for the Basingstoke, so let's hope that 2014 is even better!

Chairman's report

As the end of the year draws near, this is a good time to reflect on the fortunes of the canal over the last 12 months and to look forward to 2014.

We are all very pleased that the canal has remained open to navigation throughout the summer. Great credit is due to the Canal Authority for achieving this outcome. Clearly a wet spring helped a lot with water supply. However, better management of the water supply has also been a key factor and it is to be hoped that this will enable navigation to be maintained for longer periods in the years to come. We have also seen a lot of visitors to the canal and this will begin to spread the word that the Basingstoke is 'open for business'.

The Canal Society itself has also been undergoing considerable change. Our re-naming, as The Basingstoke Canal Society, has proved popular and the use of our new branding has been helpful in projecting a more modern image. The new trip boat has had a very successful season and we are all indebted to the team who have worked very hard to get the new operation running smoothly, despite the considerable obstacles placed before us by the regulators.

The achievements this year should provide us with a very solid base on which to move forward into 2014. The Committee is very conscious that our financial position is sufficiently sound to enable us to consider ways in which we can use our reserves to improve the canal and promote it as a very valuable public amenity. Over the next couple of months the Committee will be considering our priorities for the coming year and I would like to take this opportunity to begin a debate amongst the membership on where we should be directing our efforts. A number of ideas are

already under consideration including the provision of additional moorings (both permanent and visitors), towpath improvements and the creation of a mobile exhibition which would tour libraries, village halls, shopping malls etc. With regard to the last option, we believe that there is a clear need to promote the canal more effectively and an exhibition could provide an excellent way of reaching a wider public – indeed, I first became aware of the canal when I saw some proposals in Ash library for improvements to Ash Wharf (although those proposals are stillborn, I'm afraid).

We are also very conscious of the fact that much of the canal needs dredging and, at the present time, there are no funds to carry out this essential work. Weed cutting is also a priority and the increasing boat traffic on the canal this summer has emphasized the need for much more weed control. In this regard the Canal Society's engineering team has been rebuilding the BCA's weedcutter over recent months so we are hopeful that this important piece of equipment will be back in service very soon tackling the congested channel, particularly in the Woking area.

So, these are the challenges and the options that face us. We would be very interested to hear your views. Please send your suggestions to me or speak to a member of the Committee. As I have often said, we owe it to the many hundreds of volunteers who worked long and hard to restore the canal to ensure that it has a secure future as part of the national inland waterways network. The Canal Society continues to have a key role in achieving that aim.

Can I also take this opportunity to wish all our members and friends an enjoyable Christmas and a rewarding New Year. *Philip Riley*

Work party

Work on the Colt Hill barn itself is now complete, although the mooring still needs to be piled and a fence erected. Although the barn is beginning to fill up, it is a much cleaned, brighter and tidier space than it was before and, better still, it isn't going to fall down or leak.



Below: Accomodation for the owl.



Work has switched to North Warnborough, where a landing stage is being installed on the off-side just upstream of the lift bridge to make life easier for boaters operating the bridge.

A row of piling has gone in and the work should be finished in December. *(Right)*

In their spare time, the *Pinkerton* maintenance team has been battling with the BCA's weed cutter, which has been sitting on the bank at Ash Lock for some years. It is now equipped with a new cutter and refurbished hydraulics and electrics, which include a solar panel to keep the battery topped up that powers the bilge pump. The cutter is now back in the water looking very smart (*below*) and after some final, hopefully minor, adjustments, it should be fit to start work. Its first job will be to attack the hydrocotyle weed that plagues the Woodham and Woking sections of the canal.



The Canal Society now has three people qualified to use chainsaws, which is just as well because we have been asked by the BCA to assist in removing the trees that were felled at



Work party

the site of the Dogmersfield slip. These are being cut up into man-portable logs which are being transported to Barley Mow in the work boat. There are a lot of trees and this will take some time.

Anyone with facilities for wood-burning who would be interested in some of these logs and willing to make a modest donation to the Canal Society, should contact Duncan Paine at duncanpaine@talktalk.net.

Sadly, we do not have any news yet about how or when the slip itself will be tackled. The matter is in the hands of Hampshire CC's lawyers and civil engineers, and Phil Allen, who is the HCC man responsible for the canal, has been unwell for some time. We wish him a speedy recovery. Meanwhile, the navigation is open with care, but the towpath between Chatter Alley and Blacksmith's Bridge is closed.

LENGTHSMEN TRIP

On Saturday 19th October 17 Lengthsmen and their guests had a very pleasant trip on the JP2. Although we dodged the showers before and after, we were blessed with fine weather for the afternoon. We set off from Colt Hill Wharf at 14.30 and as we made our sedate passage up to King Johns Castle were treated to golden nuggets of local knowledge and history from Roger Cansdale. There was plenty of time for me to circulate and chat to every one and I was rather shocked to discover that many Lengthsmen, some of whom have lived in the area for a long time, had never been on the canal before. BCA Manager Fiona Shipp joined us and had a lively "Q & A" time throughout the journey.

As the boat turned in the winding hole at the limit of navigation the 37 passengers had three options. The most energetic had 30 minutes to walk on, towards the Greywell Tunnel admiring the crystal clear undisturbed water of the canal above the limit of navigation and also of the River Whitewater as it passes under the canal. A gentler option was to explore the ruins of the castle, while a few who opted for no exercise stayed on board as the boat turned.

The conversations were many and varied on the way back to the wharf. A lot was learned, new friendships formed and old ones re-kindled. All too soon we were back alongside the wharf. Our new boat got a big communal 'thumbs up' and after the obligatory group photo for propaganda purposes many of us decamped to The Waterwitch, where the conversations continued aided by sustenance.



I suppose by nature, being a Lengthsman is a solitary pursuit and we don't meet as a group very often. However, when we do, it is a very enjoyable and valuable exercise. I think we should do another trip next year and explore in the other direction. Many thanks to all who helped make it such a successful day out. (And raise £210 for the society.)

Mike Gordon

Thanks for photos to Duncan Paine, Martin Leech, Nigel Searle, Jeff Hill and the BCA.

Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager

One year in, one year forward.....

My one year anniversary at the canal was spent out with the Tuesday volunteer team clearing saplings in the Aldershot area of the Canal.

It was great to be out for the day and to see just how much we could achieve with a small but very keen team. It's a huge boost to the canal that we have so many volunteers willing to give up their own time to do something to help. What they have achieved over the last few years however has by no means been small and we have started to break the back of some long overdue jobs such as getting all the canal edges cut back of saplings, getting this back into a more manageable rotational system, and re-painting all the locks. Instead of a forlorn looking canal it is starting to look more like the well loved canal that it is.

I have been lucky to arrive at a job with an existing team of staff who are very keen to see the canal progress. We have worked hard this year to show that we want to make changes for the better and show action.

Key areas of work are trying to increase our income so we have more revenue budget to spend on all those jobs that need doing. However we couldn't do this until the canal was back open and operational and this was our first stage of work last year.

While the practical work was happening on site, behind the scenes the rest of us were carrying out research and preparing plans for a new pricing structure that was more realistic for an open and navigable canal in this area. All our paperwork was overhauled at the same time.

Our next challenge was to actually run the

canal this summer and do our best to manage the water to keep it open as long as possible. I am very pleased to say that we achieved this and have had over a 100 boats using the canal locks this season. We are now at the reviewing stage, meeting with the various user groups and seeing how it has gone and talking about next year and setting up new systems for meetings and consultation.

This winter's work is already now planned with a key area being building new moorings to attract new boats to the canal and bring in revenue income as well as adding to visitor moorings. We are still dealing with the backlog of larger maintenance on the canal, with 3 new sets of lower gates to be replaced this winter and the rangers working on off-side cutting in Hampshire to remove those branches overhanging the canal. Like the saplings management we hope to get this back into a rotational system with each area of the canal being re-visited every 4- 6 years to keep growth at a more manageable level. Rangers are currently working on tree thinning and crown lifting works as part of the Higher Level Stewardship funding from Natural England to let more light into the canal and improve our bankside vegetation quality.

So what's coming up? Well next season we would like to have even more boaters using the canal, be able to provide them with improved facilities and a better experience. We need to start thinking about a dredging plan and where money is going to come from to finance this.

In the background we are also working on emergency safety systems for the canal and we now have a contract with a company who are on 24hr emergency response cover for the

Winter works

canal in case of major emergencies such as a breach. We are also carrying out asset inspections and planning work for next year.

The recent storm has been a big test for us, testing our 24hr response system. I sighed with relief that it wasn't as bad as expected but yet we still had 70 incidents to deal with. Our duty ranger was up all night monitoring the weather and checking weirs and sluices. All staff were on standby through the night and attended site as soon as it was light to start checking the canal's embankments. The lengthsman went out as soon as the wind died down and started checking their lengths which was then collated and reported in so we could prioritise works and target staff straight to the right areas. We have learnt quite a bit from this storm and hope to make quite a few improvements for next time.....

Safe to say it has been a busy year on the canal, but I feel pleased with what we have all achieved. I think we have built a better working relationship with the Canal Society and are beginning to work more towards shared goals. The newly revived lengthsman scheme has been a massive bonus, acting as our eyes and ears on the canal. I feel that we are now all moving forward together.

Fiona Shipp

Winter Works Advance Warning

- "Swingbridge" workboat (Surrey Care Trust) is working in Woking area during October but should be easily passable.
- Closure of Malthouse Bridge in Hampshire from Mon 28th October for all of November. No boats will be able to pass under this bridge as it will be dewatered for brickwork repairs.
- Closure of Woodham flight January 2014 through to mid February 2014 for replacement of lower gates at Lock 5
- Closure of Brookwood flight January 2014 through to mid February 2014 for replacement of Lower gates at Lock 14
- One other lower set of gates still to be confirmed in either St Johns or Deepcut to be done at the same time as the others.
- Mooring construction works at the canal centre Mytchett during November. This may cause the odd temporary delay while posts are being driven from the work boat. Approach slowly and make the Rangers aware of your presence and they will move out of the way.
- Offside cutting will be taking place in Hampshire this winter. Work is mainly carried out from the dredger and shouldn't obstruct boating. However always approach the dredger slowly and make the ranger team aware of your presence. They will provide further instruction if required.
- A contractor will be carrying out winter towpath cuts over sections of the canal (12km in total) which might result in some temporary towpath closures during the winter. We will give more detail nearer the time. This cut will be quite significant and will also remove saplings right up to the waters edge from the towpath side.
- The Canal Society will be working on a new landing stage at N. Warnborough lift bridge, installing piles over 3 weekends from 27th October. There may be a temporary closure for a few hours while piles are being driven.

A management perspective – a couple of big steps forward?

We are nearing the end of the first full season of boating on the Basingstoke Canal in a long time, and a long way into my second year on the Canal. When I say “full” I mean that navigation hasn’t been uninterrupted through our persistent lack of water issue – this has been a problem ever since the Canal was built, and has only got more severe in the years since restoration. This is only the second season since restoration in 1991 that the Canal hasn’t closed due to lack of water, which has got to have been an achievement in such a dry summer.

While some may say that the wet winter and spring helped us, and they may have a point, the change in policy over lock use has undoubtedly also been a key reason. The Canal Management Team (Phil Allen, Fiona and myself) realise that placing restrictions on lock times was not a popular decision with some boaters, but needs must given our water and staff resources – it is also a far from unique system on canals with water supply problems. Doubtless if we find more water, and the canal becomes more economically sustainable we will be able to be much more flexible with the lock opening times in the future.

Finding additional water will not be an easy task, but I have been delighted to work alongside volunteers Martin Leech and John

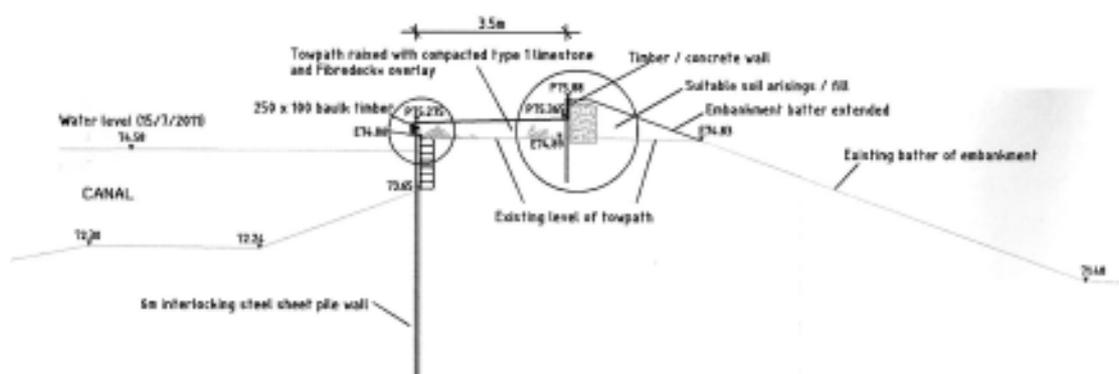
How in the Water Strategy Group to better understand the water we have and the potential sources of water we may acquire in the future to try and alleviate

our problems.

I think all of us involved were massively impressed with the report and research done by Southampton University students into a water balance model; this showed just how short of water we really are, with their model showing we lose more water per day in a dry summer than we receive - without considering any for navigation. We hope this study will be the start of a long collaboration between the University, the Canal owners and the Society.

For those of you who are not familiar with the numbers, I will make no apologies for plagiarising Martin Leech’s post on the *Canal World* forum for some figures; the whole of the flows into the Basingstoke Canal come to about 11 million litres per day at best (including our backpumping at Woodham and St John’s); by contrast the Wey / Wey Navigation rate at Weybridge is between 300 and 1400 million litres/day and the Kennet (which supplies the K&A) has between 350 and 2000 million litres a day. No wonder we can’t easily refill a half-empty pound in summer!

Another success I am pleased to report is that we have nearly completed the strengthening of Mytchett Lake Embankment, work which Surrey County Council has funded. Our contractors, Dyer & Butler, have installed a new sheet pile wall at water’s edge (*Below*) to



Surrey County Council

reduce water seeping into the core of the embankment and provide it support, as well as raising the towpath and embankment levels which is a requirement of the Inspecting Engineer. During the piling operation it became evident that strengthening the embankment was not a moment too soon, with undetected voids under the towpath being discovered – these are thought to have been exacerbated by the burrows of the alien North American Signal Crayfish which have become a pest on this part of the Canal. The strengthened embankment will now stand the test of time and water for another couple of centuries.



Above: Mtchett Lake work nearing completion.

Whilst on many fronts we have had a successful year now is certainly not a time to become complacent. There is still a long list of deferred maintenance to pick up and fresh safety surveys to undertake, the recent storm has only served to highlight the need to inspect our tree stock for example. Both County Councils will be employing a range of contractors over the next 2-3 years to compliment the work of the BCA Ranger team in dealing with the backlog.

Probably the most important item I am working

on is to ensure the Canal becomes more economically sustainable and reduce reliance on local authority revenue, which is increasingly in short supply. This means that we must make the most of the Canal and land we have, and make sure it works hard for us without over developing it and changing the character we all seek to preserve. We need to ensure that Canal visitors have a good experience and want to come back spend time with us, thereby supporting the local businesses along the Canal.

In the early autumn I took a break boating on the Brecon & Monmouth Canal, which in many respects is very comparable to the Basingstoke – being roughly the same length, running through some very pretty scenery, but each having their own engineering problems. I saw some areas there, where the canal and its visitors had been embraced - they were thriving and are model we should look to. I also saw areas where the canal was apparently unloved, where visitors were apparently unwelcome - this is something we should also take heed of.

Fiona in her article mentions some of the work that the BCA are doing to increase income, but by itself increasing charges to comparable levels and providing some additional on-line moorings is unlikely to be enough to stem the developing funding gap. Fixing this is not an overnight exercise, and we will need to work with partners in the business, local authority and voluntary sectors to deliver many individual projects on and off water to make the Canal the thriving heart of the local economy it deserves to be.

James Taylor

Last attempt to reach

This month marks the centenary of Alec Harmsworth's last attempt to take a boat to Basingstoke. This was done at the request of the Canal owners to stave off the threat of an abandonment order under the provisions of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act of 1888.

The story of the trip is well documented in Paul Vine's "London's Lost Route to Basingstoke" and also in an article that Alec's grandson Tony wrote for the BC News No 187 in 1980.

However, we are indebted to Mark Coxhead for this piece which appeared in the "Woking News and Mail" on 21st November 1913:

NAVIGATING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

SAVING THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL

A "Voyage" On Dry Land

Once in every five years the owners of the Basingstoke canal are compelled by law to demonstrate that the waterway is navigable. It is no easy task seeing that for a distance of about five miles the canal bed is dry land, but these difficulties have been successfully overcome in the past, and are again being overcome this week.

According to law (*The Basingstoke Canal Act of 1778*), if five years elapse without a barge travelling the whole length of the canal from Byfleet to Basingstoke, a distance of 37 miles, the owners of the land through which the canal runs can claim the waterway, and it ceases to be a canal. It will be recollected that in the recent action in the High Court in connection with the Woking Urban Council Act under which they claim powers to recover the cost of bridge construction and the cost of the

Parliamentary proceedings in obtaining the Act, from the canal undertaking that exception was taken to the term derelict being applied to the canal, whilst on the other hand one of the counsel engaged referred to it as a "ditch". Anyhow, Messrs. A.J. Harmsworth and Sons, of Ash vale, have again decided to demonstrate the possibility of taking a barge along the canal from end to end and so comply with the legal conditions.

With this object in view a party started off on Monday, with Mr. Alec Harmsworth in charge, for a "voyage" to Basingstoke, the barge used being the good "ship" "Basingstoke". Its freight was ten tons of sand duly consigned from a person at Ash Vale for delivery at a given address at Basingstoke. The party in charge were prepared to encounter many difficulties on the way, the chief being the absence of water in the last five miles of the way, the bed of the old canal for that distance being absolutely dry land.



Above: Ash Vale start with Alec Harmsworth on the left.

Mr. Harmsworth thoroughly understands the difficult nature of his task, but his money is sunk in the canal, and he contends that a good livelihood can still be made out of it. A good deal of ingenuity is required to get the barge over the last five miles of dry land. A dam had been constructed at Nately, and when the

Basingstoke, 1913

barge reaches there the dam will be let down, the pent-up water being thus utilised for flooding the remaining stretch to Basingstoke. He knows he will be unable to run straight through even in this way, and he has ingeniously constructed several additional dams which will be broken down as the barge passes through. Once the barge has reached Basingstoke it will have accomplished its purpose and the fact that it may be weeks before it can return is of small consequence.

One part of the journey is through a tunnel three quarters of a mile in length, starting at Greywell, just before Natley is reached. Here leg power will be used in place of horse-power. The captain and crew will lie on their backs and leg the vessel through by kicking at the roof of the tunnel. Foul gases are encountered in the tunnel, and the barge must get through quickly.

This article appeared on 21st November, when the boat had already passed through Greywell Tunnel, but the trip continued until 10th December when the boat ended up high and dry just short of Old Basing (Below).



It remained there over Christmas until enough rain had fallen to enable it to be turned at Broad Water and return to Ash Vale.

There was also considerable interest in the voyage shown by the national Press, with the following tongue-in-cheek article appearing in the Daily Express:

Little did I think when I sailed away from Mapledurwell last evening, singing shanteys and waving handkerchiefs, that in a few short hours our ship would be coming back this way again, stem foremost. Alas! the canal had another bad puncture during the night, and at dawn the look-out discovered that we were running directly on a mile stretch of dry land. One of the narrowest escapes we have had.

The captain, with admirable presence of mind, immediately ordered us to reverse the horse, and we ran back about half a mile for safety. We are now hove to under a tunnel (*Little Tunnel*) and, after consulting the chart and repeatedly pacing the distance to the King's Head, I find we have lost about a quarter of a mile as compared with our position ten days ago.

It is a cosy sort of tunnel with tophole echoes and very convenient to strike matches on, but somehow I don't like the idea of eating my Christmas plum duff underground. Far better to die a brave death on the open canal than to vegetate in a tunnel and may be get covered with those horrid stalacite things. It was not for this kind of sailing that I bought a telescope and had anchors tattooed on my As a matter of fact I have made up my mind to desert the ship . . . tonight I shall swim ashore, stain my face with walnut juice, and make my way across country to the nearest British consul. (*Ivor Heald, Daily Express*)

We sent out a Press Release to mark the centenary, but it remains to be seen whether today's Press displays the same level of interest!

BCA rangers at work

A start has been made on tree management in Hampshire using Higher Level Stewardship funding from Natural England. Andy Foster and Sara Green began at Yew Tree Copse in Winchfield and are now moving down to the Pillar's Bridge site near Broad Oak. The BCA's dredger *Unity*, which was returned to use a couple of year's ago after the Canal Society funded new hydraulic pipes and oil, is proving invaluable for moving some very large pieces of tree trunk (*below*).



Andy and Sara seemed to have a very slick operation going when I watched, taking only about an hour and a half from first chainsaw cut to finishing stacking the logs on the bank and piling up the smaller stuff for burning. Apparently the owner of the land on the offside is happy to deal with the logs.



Andy said that a lot of the trees that they had cut down were showing signs of disease and this was clearly to be seen in one of the stumps (*below left*). No doubt some of the trees that blew over in the October gale were similarly afflicted.

Although a lot of the bankside trees remain, the work has certainly brightened up this stretch of the canal which was becoming a green tunnel, and it should benefit both the underwater plants and the boating interests.



Chris Healey's regular week-day work parties have continued, tackling a multitude of jobs from sappling clearance to balance beam painting. These provide a really good link with the local community as well as getting a lot of labour-intensive but relatively unskilled jobs done.

John Pinkerton Canal Cruises

As the 2013 cruising season closes, I think we can be proud that the first year of operation for *JP2* has proved to be so successful, with profits for the Society anticipated to equal or better last year's results. It has been a long season, running from an early Easter right through to Halloween. The introduction of Theme trips has added interest for all ages; Pirates and Halloween cruises for the youngsters, and Jazz & Ale cruises for the adults. So for 2014 we are planning a few more of these. They do require a bit more organising, and if you would like to help spread the load a bit, do contact us. (see below)

Thanks go to all concerned in the chain of operation: the Booking Manager, the members of maintenance teams who keep the boat ready to sail by doing the regular servicing, and weekly 'watering & pumpout', the skippers and crew for their continued unstinting support, and of course the publicity and financial teams.

Training has taken up a fair amount of extra time this year, learning the different systems and methods of working, and we are indebted to the superb team of trainers, who have quietly instructed and encouraged everyone to reach a high standard. All are volunteer members of the Society, and we appreciate the time they give so that the Canal can benefit.

Over the year we have gained some new faces, whilst sadly, a few old faces have retired. So we are continually on the lookout for people who would like to help with the boat in any capacity; if you are interested, or want more information, contact Dick King 01730 264178 (jpchairman@basingstoke-canal.org.uk).

The boat is now out of service for its winter maintenance, which will incorporate many of the suggestions for improvements from the crew, and complete any outstanding MCA requirements*, enabling *JP2* to achieve full passenger certification.

We look forward to the 2014 season – perhaps you know a group or friends who would like to enjoy a celebratory cruise on the Basingstoke Canal. Please keep talking about the John Pinkerton!

**Good to hear that the MCA have backed off from their original requirement for the boat's freeboard to be increased, which would have seriously compromised passenger access. The double walled fuel pipe issue is, however, still to be resolved; rumour has it that the very expensive requirement may be removed next year, but the boat needs to be re-certificated before then. Let's hope that common sense prevails again.*



*Above: A busy 20 minutes for David Jackson unravelling a keep net from the prop of *JP2* after a trip to King John's Castle.*

Events

CHOBHAM SOCIAL MEETINGS

Programme for the remainder of the autumn and winter season is shown below.

The meetings are held at the usual venue at The Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road, Chobham, near Woking, GU24 8AZ (See map for exact location)

Meetings will commence at 8pm on the third Wednesday of the month. Raffle and retiring collection. Coffee/tea and biscuits will be available during the interval. Non-members and friends are very welcome.

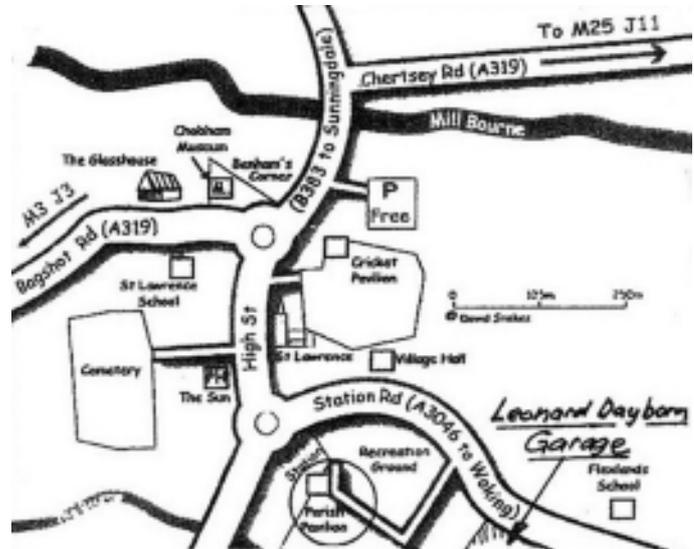
Wednesday 18th. December 2013

John How 'The London Water Ring Main'
John, who is now a volunteer with the Inland Waterways Association, currently working for the Basingstoke Canal leading the 'Water Strategy Group', will describe the history of the London Water Ring Main known as 'the best kept secret for London in the last 100 years'. The Ring Main now supplies drinking water to the 8m people in London from a tunnel 40m to 60m below ground and has avoided Thames Water bringing the capital to a grinding halt through digging up the roads to repair existing waterpipes.

Wednesday 15th. January 2013 - 8pm

Dr. Roger Squires 'The Canals and Navigable Rivers of Southern France'

Roger will be returning to illustrate the inland waterways of the South of France that offer a unique blend of historic waterways and amazingly scenic river navigations. The Canal du Midi was opened in 1680, and linked the Bay of Biscay to the Mediterranean. It used



an innovative water collection system that has ensured, even in hot summers, that it never runs dry. The Rivers Lot, Tarn, and Baise were early river navigations that were slowly improved, but now are sadly partly truncated due to Hydro dams. However, moves are afoot by local groups to reopen them for pleasure boating. The presentation will highlight the key features of these attractive cruising grounds.

Wednesday 19th. February 2013 - 8pm

Graham Deavin 'The Rivers and Canals of Brittany'

Graham and his wife Lyn will describe and illustrate the geography of the waterways and their links, their history and engineering features, and how the system is currently operated plus the various craft using them. In the second half Graham and Lyn will talk about their experience of having a boat based in this area and describe some of the major sights, towns and cities one can see whilst cruising this beautiful part of France.

Perseverance

We have not entirely forgotten our old steam dredger that has now been languishing in pieces at the National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port for some 20 years. Gareth Jones, Chairman of the IWA Guildford & Reading Branch, offered to make an exploratory visit recently. He took a boiler expert with him with a view to making an educated guess at the possible cost of restoring it to working order. The answer they came back with was somewhere between £200,000 and £400,000!

This, of course, would only be the beginning and perhaps the bigger problem would be the subsequent operating costs. Although it could undoubtedly be a visitor attraction, it is very hard to see how it could be made to pay without it being in some sort of enclosed space where admission fees could be charged - not really compatible with useful operation on a canal.

There is now a full length video (35 minutes) available on YouTube of dredging operations going in Fleet right at the end of the restoration period. It was produced by John Bull, and shows *Perseverance* at work. There are lots of good close-ups of *Perseverance*, and also of the Bantam tugs that hauled the mud barges back and forth.

To view it on the Internet, go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4GYAxaeT4k>

There is also a video of its removal from the Canal at Reading Road Wharf, Fleet in 1993, to the National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2NfJP2F3kw>

Wednesday 19th. March 2013 - 8pm

Nigel Crowe ‘Conserving the Waterways Heritage’

Nigel, the Canal and Rivers Trust’s Head of Heritage, will describe the work of the Trust in managing and conserving the many and varied historic waterways that the Trust cares for. He will explain what waterways heritage consists of, how heritage assets are maintained and restored and how the Trust deals with archaeology, listed buildings, scheduled monuments, historic boats and its museum collections.

Wednesday 16th. April 2013 - 8pm

Dr. David Hilling ‘Inland Shipping in West Africa’

David is a Vice President of the Inland Waterways Association and a members of its Freight Group and is UK representative on the Berlin-based European River Sea Transport Union and an academic geographer and his main interest is in port development and inland links of ports. He has studied ports and waterways in North America, Europe, Asia and West Africa where he lived for five years at the start of his career. Both then and on later visits he made waterway journeys and examined the character and significance of the waterways in different environments. His talk will be concerned with some specific examples.

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

Bridges

Malthouse Bridge

The parapets of Malthouse Bridge have frequently been damaged by vehicles, but now concern has arisen about the condition of the brickwork on the offside under the arch (*below*). The whole bridge looks a bit unhappy, probably not helped by the lorries and coaches that often ignore the 7.5 tonne weight limit.



Contractors have installed sheet metal piling above and below the bridge to form dams and two pumps are being used to pump water across the blockage and to empty out under the bridge to allow the underwater brickwork to receive attention. The stoppage was forecast to last for the whole of November, but the work seems to be progressing rather slowly. The piling proved difficult and the contractors are obviously being very cautious in lowering the water level, for fear of back-pressure behind the brickwork causing further damage.

Below: First dam being installed.



New bridge for Woking?

Woking planning applications give details of a foot/cycle path link between the existing primary school on Connaught Road, Brookwood and a proposed satellite site on the Brookwood Farm site adjacent to the telephone exchange on Bagshot Road (A322). It is proposed that a canal crossing will be achieved using a Canal Centre type hand-operated swing bridge located between Lock 14 and Sheet's Heath bridge.

The canal bridge works will be based on the recently constructed footbridge at Mytchett and involve the formation of a new canal bank formed using sheet piling with backfill and new engineering brick/concrete coping with brick paving to new hard-standings on either side. The bridge pivot is to be located on south bank of canal for security and bridge operation from school side. Adequate temporary mooring to be allowed for riverboat (*sic*) users during bridge operation. The bridge surface is to be non-slip and level access each side with side upstand edge protection.

There is also a suggestion that a fibre optic cable would run in the canal bed between the two sites.

Deepcut Railway Bridge

Deepcut Railway Bridge has closed due to structural concerns. It is estimated that the bridge could be closed for 18 Months which will obviously cause major disruptions to local roads. Although it does not affect the canal directly, anyone wanting to drive down to Lock 28 will have to approach from the North.

1950s problems

Thanks to Mark Coxhead for the following:

Article from the "Woking News and Mail" – 3rd May 1957

CANAL LOCK GATES DAMAGED BY EXPLOSION

Soldiers from Pirbright Camp are suspected of causing an explosion at Lock 27, Frimley, on the Basingstoke Canal on Saturday when damaged estimated at over £1,000 was caused to the gates, and to two adjoining locks on the canal, which suffered from the effects of the blast and disturbed water.

Lock-keeper Mr. H. York was in his cottage having his tea, but heard little of the explosion because it was under water. It was heard by Mr. G. Poulter of Camberley, a historian, who was at work nearby. He believes the group of men he saw running away from the vicinity after the explosion were Guardsmen from the camp.



Above: Mr York with some junior assistants.

Mrs. Joan Marshall, general manager, New Basingstoke Canal Company, says she intends to arrange for special watches to be kept along the canal at week-ends.

It was the second attempt to cause damage, a

similar one having been made three weeks previously. On Saturday water was forced 100ft into the air and debris and dead fish littered the towpath. Luckily no one was injured.

Mrs. Marshall has already taken steps towards the repair work. The incident occurred at a time when the company was preparing for the Whitsun traffic along the waterway.

Article from the "Woking News and Mail" – 16th August 1957

CANAL STILL AFFECTED BY MAY EXPLOSION

Working Against Time

Workmen are still repairing wilful damaged caused by an explosion at Lock 27, Frimley, on the Basingstoke Canal. Inspection by experts has found the damage to be far more serious than previously estimated.

It now will not be possible to give passage to any traffic this summer, but workmen are racing against time to beat the bad weather. If the lock is not repaired to take the heavy rains there will be danger of floods.

Drought, however, is the New Basingstoke Canal Company's present worry. The town section of the stretch of the canal affected must be kept full to feed several concerns in the area. Woking Gas Works have a contract with the company to take water for cooling purposes. The water, because of contamination, cannot be returned. This means a constant drain on

Continued on page 18

1950s problems

the limited supply which cannot be replenished whilst work is in progress.

This section must be kept supplied and the company have an emergency measure. If necessary they can pump water from the Rive Ditch, a running stream. Owing to the distance and uphill gradient, however, this would prove a very costly measure.

The Admiralty have also shown their concern. The Woking Sea Cadets, whose H.Q. is on the canal bank, has been effected. They have had to put off bringing up a bigger craft.

LOW LEVEL

The Byfleet section has been at a very low level, but only because lock panels were damaged by hooligans and the water allowed to drain away. It could not be replaced from the adjoining Woking section, where it was even more necessary.

The explosion occurred three weeks after another incident when a bomb rent the gates of Lock 28. The company just managed to repair this in time for the Easter traffic on the upper reaches. The second explosion came as they were preparing for Whitsun traffic and they have since missed Bank Holiday traffic, too, in a sweltering summer when requests for cruising have been higher than ever before. Apart from some requests for private cruising, two companies had intended to run trips from the Thames. They all had to be refused.

New lock gates have already been fitted, and work stopped for a couple of weeks to let through supplies of water of Woking and Byfleet. The flow is now being put off again

to dry out the lock for further repairs.

WALLS CRACKED

The thick walls were seriously cracked by the explosion, which sent a 100ft column of water into the air, smashing the gates and sending such a force of water flooding the banks that it crashed through the next gates. Debris and dead fish littered the tow path.

The bed of the lock is pitted with holes from hand grenades. It will be necessary now to rebuild the thick wall which has been seriously undermined and is no longer safe against the pressure of water.

Special watches have been arranged by the company's bailiffs. Mrs. Joan Marshall, company general manager, reports that there are now Army patrols in the area.

The canal will definitely open to traffic again next summer. New lock gates will also be brought up the canal and fitted at Woking and Byfleet then.

Interestingly, Paul Vine's book says that the damage was done to Lock 22, but the newspaper clearly says 27 and 28. It does seem a little unlikely that soldiers would damage 22 because that was the length that was used as a swimming pool by the Army.

Mrs Marshall pursued a claim for damages against the Army for a long time afterwards, but doesn't seem to have been successful.

At least the Army today seems to be better behaved, or maybe they are just too busy.

Farewell

Dick Elder



In September, the Basingstoke Canal lost another friend and stalwart. My association with Dick goes back to the birth of the Basingstoke Canal Boating Club in 1989. Dick was but one of many who helped with the birth pangs of the Club, however he made an immediate impact.

The BCBC held a hugely successful rally at Frimley Lodge Park in 1990, 'Boats Afloat', for which event Dick's enthusiasm for boating and organisational skills made him the natural

choice as harbourmaster. This was a dry run (if indeed that's the right description) for his reprise of the role at the Royal Re-Opening, also at the Park, in 1991.

Within the BCBC he never lost his enthusiasm for anything and everything to do with boating on our Canal. He served on the committee of the BCBC for many years, and represented the Canal's boating interests nationally at the Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs. And of course he and his wife Bobbie owned boats – little and large, a Wilderness boat to trail and which was moored at the bottom of the garden in Ash Vale, and a narrow boat moored off the Basingstoke for longer distance cruising.

And when the BCBC was in danger of folding a few years back, Dick was of course there to help rekindle enthusiasm for the Club.

Dick, who is survived by his wife Bobbie, will be missed by all who boat on the Basingstoke. The loss of his continuing contribution to a cause he held so dear is particularly untimely now that the Canal is able to be used more fully for navigation.

Chris de Wet

Mike Burrow & David Hoyle

It is sad also to report the death of Mike and David, both of whom worked on the dredger *Perseverance* during its near 20 year operation in Hampshire.

Mike's main career involvement was also with water, but in this case the sea. He founded a firm called Underwater Marine Equipment that developed an atmospheric rigid diving suit for deep water operation. Unlike the usual diving suits this allows the diver to breath air at normal

atmospheric pressure, thereby avoiding the risk of the bends etc. He was also involved in the building of the first British commercial manned submersible and high-speed underwater remote control vehicles.

It is understood that David very kindly remembered the Society in his will.

Our condolences to both families.

Lookback - David Millett, VP

From Society Newsletters No.111 October 1983 and No.112 December 1983

- Hampshire and Surrey County Councils are planning to buy a weed cutter for use along the canal from next year. The recent increase in the growth of weeds between Ash Lock, Aldershot and Pondtail Bridge, Fleet indicates the need for it. The Society has many times made the point that navigation alone can help to keep the channel clear but not completely. Without the use by motorised boats to help prevent silt deposits forming sections of the canal will soon become unnavigable again.
- After repair, the traditional method of launching canal narrowboats and barges proved to be the cheapest and easiest way of getting a 70ft.mud barge back into the canal at Barley Mow at Winchfield After being quoted £500 for the hire of a 100 ton mobile crane, Hampshire's senior ranger Tony Harmsworth put the clock back 60 years to the time when his grandfather used to build barges and launch them broadside at Ash Vale. A slipway constructed of two 42-foot pitch pine ramps, carefully angled and greased was used to successfully launch the barge.
- An informal ceremony was held at Deepcut on 3rd.September to celebrate the completion of the new dry dock in a scheme co-ordinated by the Society's Frank Jones and which was a partnership between the Society, Surrey County Council, Surrey Heath BC and the Manpower Services schemes. The young people employed on the scheme have learnt many useful skills which would help them to secure a better future.
- It is now ten years since restoration work on the Basingstoke Canal officially started. Fifteen of the canal's twenty nine locks have been completely restored and fitted with new gates; a further six chambers are well on the way to completion and four more under way. Just four chambers remain untouched. Only five miles of canal are still to be dredged and all major engineering works have been completed. Although the end is in sight the amount of effort and funding required to finish the project remains as demanding as ever.
- The magnificent 52ft.narrow boat 'The Return' which Mike Borrow lent to the Society so that members could have half-price boating holidays raised £750 towards the restoration funds over this year's boating season. Members also helped with turn rounds and sometimes had to attend to breakdowns. 'The Return' was based on the River Wey Navigation for the season which enabled the hirers to



Above. The tall figure on the bridge is my then 2 year old son Jamie, sitting on my shoulders.
Editor.

explore that navigation plus the River Thames.

(Sadly, Mike Borrow died in June; see page 19)

Bankside badger watch

Dieter Jebens, our Vice-President and Crookham wildlife correspondent reports:

Badgers have long been known to live in the banks of the Canal through Crookham, but being nocturnal creatures they are seldom seen, but they have been seen in the garden of Tall Pines, close to Malthouse Bridge. I've been lucky enough to see a group of three cubs, to whom I feed peanuts at dusk which they are well known to love. So if you have visiting badgers or know of a set, sprinkle a handful or two of peanuts in the vicinity. Their eyesight is poor, so you can safely shine a torch on them but don't make a sound and keep up wind because they have very acute senses of smell and hearing.



(Photo: Roger Cansdale).

Hampshire County Council has recently voted against culling badgers though the matter has not yet arisen in the county. If you live in the Fleet area, the Bird Man sells peanuts on a stall at the Saturday market outside the library.

Ownership of the canal

Isn't it strange, the way you can go along for years thinking that you know about the history of the canal and then find that you are completely wrong about some point.

I had always understood that Hampshire County Council bought their end of the canal by agreement with the New Basingstoke Canal Company in 1973, with Surrey CC following on in 1976 with a Compulsory Purchase Order.

I have since been firmly corrected by Helen Jex of Hampshire CC's Estates Department, who tells me that the formal transfer of ownership of the canal did not happen until 1980. The conveyance is dated 25th January 1980 and was actually between the County

Councils and the liquidator of the Canal Company, which presumably had declared itself insolvent at some stage. The purchase included the Colt Hill barn that the Society has recently acquired.

There must have been some informal transfer of control to the Counties before this time, because the restoration work had been going on for years. By 1980, the first lock had been restored, the steam dredger was nearly at Barley Mow and the *Pinkerton* was in its third year of operation.

The February 1980 newsletter makes no mention of the legal milestone, which was probably more a matter for the lawyers than those actually involved with the canal restoration. Still, nice to get the facts right!

BCS Membership

Membership Secretary Report

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

Ashley Paine of Aldershot

Keith Mundy of Fleet

Chris Griffin of Winchfield

Jill & John How of Staines

Reg Jelfs of Staunton-on-Rye,
Herefordshire

Alan Rice of New Milton

Tim Rolt of Andover

Barbara Igra of Odiham

Doreen Hornsey

Membership Secretary

E-Mail:

Membership@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

Alan Rice, who has joined the Society as a Life member, has been a Hampshire County Councillor and a good friend of the Canal for many years and was the first Chairman of its Joint Management Committee.

Tim Rolt is a descendant of Tom Rolt of "Narrow Boat" fame. Tom had local connections through one of his other interests, the Vintage Sports Car Club, which I think still meets at the "Phoenix" near Hartley Wintney.

200 Club winners

August

Mr D Jebens £54

Mr I Bell £26

Mr J Crook £13

Mrs V Vine £13

October

Mrs G BRowne £54

Mr J T Lyddon £26

Mr T Dodwell £13

Mrs P Jenkins £13

December

Mrs B Scamell £54

Mr R Wilson £26

Mrs M J Marchant £13

Mr B Smith £13

Congratulations to winners of the 200 Club for the second half of 2013; sorry if you have not won, but you have contributed £630 to the Canal Society this year - thanks to you all.

You should also find an application form to the 200 Club for 2014 with this issue of the newsletter. If anyone wants to set up an annual standing order, please send me an e-mail at jimj467@yahoo.co.uk.

All the best for the New Year.

Jim Johnstone

Canal Society AGM

The Society's Annual General Meeting next year will again be held at the Deepcut Village Centre, starting at 2pm on Saturday, 17th May. Further details in the next BC News.

BCS information



The Bulletin is now up to Issue 20. If you want to keep up with the latest news about the canal, 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.

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Storm damage



The great storm that was forecast at the end of October was a bit of an anticlimax, but still blew a number of trees over along the canal, including these in Brookwood. It kept the BCA rangers very busy for a few days, but the main damage was to the conservatory and decking of this canalside property, where, unusually, the tree fell away from the canal.

