



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 243 Autumn 2014





It looks as though 2014 will see a new record set, with the canal staying open for a second year in succession. Whilst this is in part due to the ghastly wet winter that we had, it is also thanks to the boating management policies that the BCA have implemented to eke out water supplies. There was concern about the restrictions that these imposed last year, but these have been relaxed a bit and I haven't heard of complaints this year from any of the 81 boats that have visited the canal since Easter.

Cover Picture : The Society's old trip boat *John Pinkerton* leaving Lock 1 with its new owner.

Photo: R Cansdale

It does suggest that the dream of having enough water to guarantee year-round boating may be attainable without the need for enormously expensive new water supply measures. Stopping some of the leaks has probably helped!

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Another encouraging sign is that the depressing messages on certain websites criticising the Basingstoke seem to have been largely replaced

by some very enthusiastic Tweets from people who are enjoying the canal.

It has been suggested that the Canal Society ought to get into Facebook and Twitter as a way of making contact with the younger generation. Whilst this is possibly a good idea, it does require someone to spend a significant amount of time keeping things current.

If there is anyone out there who would like to become the Society's Official Twit, please let us know!

* * * * *

I did some lock wheeling for Josh Kerry and his friends when they took the *John Pinkerton* down the canal at the start of their voyage to Hungerford and it was a very poignant moment as the old boat emerged from the junction and went off down the Wey Navigation.

37 years is a long time to be associated with a boat and the trip down the canal brought back many vivid memories of springtime expeditions into Surrey to see how far we could get as the restoration proceeded.

Indeed, it is doubtful whether the restoration would have proceeded at all without the *JP*, because it was the major source of funds to pay the wages of the Society's full-time employees, Frank Jones, Martin Smith and Jim Reed. It was probably no coincidence that the original head of the Boat Company, Peter Fethney, was also the Society's Treasurer.

Anyway, we certainly got our money's worth out of the old girl. It's the only project that I have ever known to come in on time, on budget and to make more money than expected. The Government could take lessons!

I hope Josh and his friends get as much out of it as we did. They certainly seemed to be enjoying themselves going down the canal and apparently liked the Thames so much that they went all the way up to Wallingford before returning to Reading to head off down the K&A to a first stop at Aldermaston for a repaint.

Josh has promised to keep in touch, so I hope to be able to report the boat opening for its new business at Hungerford next year.

Chairman's report

As the summer progresses, we are seeing more and more reports about visitor experiences on the Basingstoke Canal. Modern media, and particularly Twitter, are becoming an excellent source of opinions on our much treasured waterway. It is very encouraging that many of these views are very favourable from a wide range of users including boat owners, walkers and canoeists. The opinions confirm what we already knew – that the canal is a beautiful waterway which more than adequately repays the immense effort that is put into it by the BCA, the County Councils and, not least, by the volunteers. I have recently spoken to a number of boat owners and their comments are almost always very supportive of our efforts. Boat owners who have cruised over most of the inland waterways system tell us that the Basingstoke is one of the most attractive canals on the network. They also say that navigating the Basingstoke brings back memories of canal cruising over 25 years ago.

Obviously these boaters are preaching to the converted but it does emphasize the point that more needs to be done to promote the canal to a wider audience. I think all the members of the Canal Partnership should be doing this – the Counties, the BCA, the District Councils and, of course, the voluntary sector.

Could I therefore urge members who live in the area adjacent to the canal to press their local councillors to make greater efforts to put the canal on the map. In this regard the Canal Society has been using its trip boats, over the summer, to introduce more District and County councillors to the canal. We have run promotional trips in Woking, in Mytchett (where we hosted JMC members) and in Hampshire where I was delighted to host the

leader of Hampshire County Council on his first visit to the canal earlier this month. I have no doubt that these trips provide an excellent forum for us to get our message across.

Since the improvements to the canal towpath in the Woking area were carried out with a Sustrans grant, we have consistently drawn the attention on the County Council to the potential conflicts which were bound to occur between speeding cyclists and other towpath users. We have seen regular reports of incidents on the towpath and we have directed our efforts, in particular, to the removal of the towpath signs which challenge cyclists to beat time targets. I raised this subject at the last JMC meeting and I am pleased to say that common sense has now prevailed and the signs have been removed. This is the culmination of a long campaign, initiated by Kathryn Dodington, which has eventually produced a satisfactory result. It is one example of where the Canal Society's voice does seem to carry some weight in the corridors of power.

As recorded elsewhere in this edition of the BC News, the original John Pinkerton has now left the canal to start a new life on the Kennet & Avon. I know it was a sad occasion for many members who were involved in the original (and very far sighted) decision to purchase a trip boat but I think the replacement of 'JP1' with our new boat demonstrates a huge degree of confidence in the future of the canal. I would therefore like to repeat my sincere thanks to all the members who have been involved in the commissioning of the new boat and in the successful operation of JP1 during the final phase of her life on the Basingstoke.

Philip Riley

Work parties

The Society's work parties have continued to be active during the summer. One priority was to finish the work on the Colt Hill barn and mooring, which now looks incredibly smart with the water front paved, turfed and even flower bedded! The Barn Manager, Derek Taylor (derek_taylor88@hotmail.com) would be pleased to hear from anyone willing to help with maintenance.

A recent weekend was spent removing more of the logs at the slip site in Dogmersfield in preparation for the remedial works that will take place this winter (*fingers crossed*).

At the other end of the canal, the BCA's weedcutter has been in use to fight the hydrocotyl weed that chokes the canal if left to grow. The team has had to sort out a few more problems with the machine that have come to light with the heavy usage, but the cost is much less than getting contractors in to do the weed removal.

Our friends in WRG have been back for a weekend in July doing a variety of jobs around Lock 28 and the dry dock, which now benefits from a decent access track (*Right*).

WRG will be returning at the end of August for a week-long camp when the intention is to extend the moorings at the Brookwood Country Park.

Other future jobs for the Society Work Party include clearing the ivy that has covered the eastern portal of the Greywell Tunnel and resurfacing the permissive footpath over the western portal that links the towpath to the path over Greywell Hill.



Boat Company

We are pleased to report that demand for charters on *John Pinkerton II* continues, with numbers a little above those of last year. We are now down to running a single boat after *JP1* completed the successful Air Show charters and public trips.

Members' cruises are becoming more popular, and this year we have seen several members (and prospective members) coming to look at the operation, and join the crew. The next is on Mon 8th Sept leaving Colt Hill wharf at 7.30pm - its FREE to all Society members, but please book.

A reminder that we will be running a special trip on 7th Sept to Barley Mow for the NGS open day at Thatch Cottage, with time to visit

this historical garden. The popular Jazz & Ale runs on 12th Sept, and we will be repeating the Halloween trips on Fri 31st Oct.

If any Society member would like to get involved with the JP operation, as well as crewing, we have vacancies for people able to help organise some of the Theme Trips; each trip requires a few hours work spread over a few days, and we would like to be able to distribute the load a little, and then perhaps introduce variations. Next year we will join in with the Odiham Society in the Magna Carta celebrations, so anybody local to Odiham willing to give a little time would be most welcome. Please contact the JP Chairman.

Dick King

John Pinkerton

We finally found a buyer for our old trip boat, which has served us so well since its launch at Colt Hill in 1977 (*Right*). Josh Kerry will be taking it down the Kennet & Avon to Hungerford, where it will begin a new life. We hope to be able to report further next year.

The boat had a busy time before its departure from the Basingstoke. It ran the usual charter trips for one of the exhibiting companies at the Farnborough Air Show and also did public trips at the weekend which proved very popular.

Following this, it did a nostalgic trip for enthusiasts down to Woking, where it was also used to show the canal to groups of Woking councillors (*Left*). It then returned to Mytchett



to give some Surrey Heath councillors a trip before giving a few people a last chance on the helm (*See page 24*). Its final trip was to Ash Lock to allow a prospective new captain to demonstrate his ability to take a boat through a lock to the MCA.

Josh and his crew finally took the *JP* off the canal on 5th August (*See pages 12 & 13*). I hope it serves them as well as it did us.

Basingstoke Canal Authority

After all the delays caused by having to deal with fallen trees in the spring, the BCA rangers are making good progress with the new moorings at the Canal Centre and the first phase is complete. There is now some 150m extra length of moorings, allowing at least half a dozen more boats to be kept at Mytchett. These are not residential moorings however.



The weekly volunteer work parties, usually organised by Ranger Chris Healy, have continued to do stirring work on the canal, clearing weed growth, painting locks and generally doing the mundane but time-consuming jobs that are necessary to keep the canal looking decent. In fact, the Deepcut flight of locks is looking better than it has done for years.

Left: If it moves, grease it; if it doesn't, paint it. Volunteers at Lock 27.

And finally, welcome to the latest member of the BCA team, Jon and Sara Green's newly arrived daughter Evie. For those who worry about such things, she was borne on June 5th at 2.13pm, and weighed 8lbs 0½ oz.

Many congratulations and a big Hello to Evie!



Dogmersfield slip



So far, the only signs of any physical activity in Dogmersfield are on the offside bank, where the tall trees that had fallen away from the canal when the bank slipped, have been removed. This is undoubtedly a good idea because they were threatening to push the slip even further into the canal. In addition, a good deal of earth has been removed from the top of the bank, where John Pinkerton had unhelpfully piled it when the cutting was first dug; this was increasing the load on the bank and making further slippage likely.

I understand from James Taylor, the Canal's Strategic Manager, that negotiations with the landowner are at a somewhat delicate stage, but, hopefully, coming to a head. These obviously cover technical matters - how the banks are to be stabilised, but also things like

the choice of contractors and, presumably, who is going to pay for what.

There is also apparently a need to get planning permission for the engineering works that will be necessary, but, again hopefully, this will be a case of the County granting itself permission. Nevertheless, the process has to be gone through.

Despite all this, James says that they are still planning to get it done this winter, and have the Canal fully navigable by Easter 2015, even if the towpath takes a bit longer.

Our other concern is Swan cutting and James is having meetings with the Hampshire engineers and using the 2015 Magna Carta celebrations to add a bit of urgency.

Colt Hill barn

A DENDROCHRONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF AN OAK TIMBER BEAM

During the course of restoration of the society's barn at Odiham Wharf one could not help noticing the magnificent wooden beams that vaulted the roof structure of the building. Initially the timbers were covered in layers of dust and dead cobwebs that had accumulated over many years; however in the course of the project various members of the working party group, particularly Nigel Searle, Jeff Hill and several others, methodically cleaned each timber in preparation for treatment by the woodworm specialists.

There has been much speculation about the history of the barn. In Paul Vine's book *"London's Lost Route to Basingstoke"* there is an old picture of the wharf and a brief mention of the history that provides some clues. The area to the east of the Odiham bridge is known as the Great Wharf and the area to the west (which is our side) is known as the Little Wharf and the canal company apparently spent a colossal sum of money (£1000) purchasing both sites in 1810. By 1815 the company assembled a crane, rebuilt the warehouse, established new coal-pens and built a house for the wharfinger. I am unclear whether this reference to the warehouse is our property, but I have heard various suggestions into the history. Some people have mentioned it was used for storing dairy produce including cheese, others for storage of beer for the former Cricketers pub on the London Road, and even livestock.

Also, as I explained at the AGM, many of the timbers do have unrelated grooves and notches and this would indicate that the timbers were originally used elsewhere. I understand that

timbers from medieval ships were often incorporated into buildings.

There were a number of areas in the barn that needed urgent attention, particularly the right hand corner by the door. Previous owners in the last century had installed rain-water gutters and a downward drain pipe that had become blocked due to neglect. In the passage of time the bricks comprising the entire corner had become loose and the timber of the supporting tie-beam had become very rotten and needed partial replacement. David Lunn was responsible for the rebuilding of the brickwork in the corner and Kevin Redway managed to salvage a beam from an old lock gate (*below*),



which once cut down to size provided an adequate replacement for the rotten part of the original tie beam. On the inside of the dodgy corner Kevin ingeniously designed and built a three way steel bracket that was bolted to both the longitudinal and cross tie-beams and also the diagonal beam which provides the eventual support for the roofing tiles.

dendrochronology

Anyway the rotten off-cut remaining from the original beam remained discarded and unwanted. In the course of tidying up the premises in preparation for the re-opening on 9th May we came across the redundant piece of wood and I asked Dave Lunn to cut off a cross-section (measuring 185mm by 145mm by 50mm). Some years ago I always used to watch on Sunday evenings *Time Team* and learnt about how dendrochronological science can be applied to determine with extreme accuracy the date of wooden buildings. Accordingly, I searched on the web and located a suitable company who specialise in dendrochronological dating and normally would undertake this exercise by visiting the premises and drilling holes in parts of the beams in non-structural areas (expensive). Nevertheless, importantly, they were prepared to accept suitable specimens by post.



I let the wooden sample dry out for ten days and then cleaned this very carefully with a vacuum cleaner. I sent the sample off to the dendrochronological specialists and disappointingly nothing happened for about six weeks. Then at the beginning of May a letter came explaining that the wood had been

successfully dated and the full report would be available in a couple of weeks. Fortunately the report did arrive two days before the AGM, hence my announcement.

Within the report there was a brief explanation of the techniques applied in dendrochronologically dating a piece of wood. For those who are not familiar it is based on a scientific technique which matches the spacing of the growth rings in a piece of timber to known patterns that reflect changes in the weather year by year. Also, when timber is felled there are two sections to it. In the middle section is what is known as heartwood which is basically dead wood and is darker in appearance, and the outer section is comprised of what is known as sapwood and is usually still alive. Apparently in northern Europe for an oak tree, 95% have a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 41 sapwood rings. The boundary between the two is known as the heartwood/sapwood boundary.

Quite crucially our sample of timber was oak and contained 63 rings each of which had to be measured microscopically to the nearest one hundredth of a millimetre. Significantly, although the wood I sent contained no sapwood rings, the 63rd ring was deemed to be on the heartwood/sapwood boundary.

Taking into account these facts I announced at the Society's AGM the following conclusions of the report. A 63-year series is dated to span AD 1330 to AD 1392. In the absence of bark, applying a sapwood estimate to the heartwood/sapwood boundary produces a felling-date range of AD 1401 to AD 1433. The section comes from a tree which is likely to have been around 81 years old when felled. While this

Colt Hill barn

date range identifies when the source tree was felled, the presence of unrelated grooves in some of the timbers, indicating the likelihood of re-use, means that the date should not be associated with a construction date for the barn without additional evidence.

Such a historic conclusion is obviously not what any of us had remotely anticipated. After the AGM I came across a web site called www.medievalarchitecture.net which lists eleven other buildings in Odiham which had also been dendrochronologically dated by another company ranging from 1300 to 1499 (average 1409). Clicking on each of the properties you encounter images of about fifty roof timbers which are also very similar in appearance and style of construction to our barn. The nearest property mentioned is probably Lodge Farm (1368). I believe these eleven results demonstrate that the dates on the sample of wood from the tie-beam in our barn are not too outlandish.

It is amazing to reflect that one of the barn timbers is an astonishing 680 years old. The tree from which it came started growing in the days of King Edward III, father of the Black Prince, and was probably felled some time during the reign of Henry V, about the time of the Battle of Agincourt.

Where do we go from here?

I believe the key to understanding the history of the barn may be investigating the antiquity of sites of former buildings in Odiham that were built around 1417 (± 16 years) and then demolished around 1810?

Maybe the Society should invest and consider

having my results collaborated and commission having the other tie-beams dendrochronologically dated. There are two other free-standing tie beams and a third on the partition wall, but even some of the higher beams may produce meaningful results. The investigation bore holes are subsequently patched with pine dowelling, wood-glue, sawdust and wood stains to preserve the original appearance of the timbers.

Clearly the society is the proud owners of an unusually historic (partially medieval) asset which we must continue to maintain and preserve to the highest possible standards for future generations to appreciate and speculate on the barn's history. It would be an appropriate setting to use the barn as a museum to exhibit historical canal artefacts or for the sale of cream teas to boaters!

I would also suggest we give the barn a Proper name – something that indicates its notable and long association with the Basingstoke Canal!

Mark Coxhead

Mark@coxhead.org.uk

Notes

1) If any one would like a copy of the report please contact me. There is a clause in the small print that prevents us publishing the document, but we are permitted to freely distribute the document to any member of the canal society.

2) Acknowledgements. Thanks to Dr. Andy Moir of Tree Ring Services for undertaking the analysis and to all members of the regular working parties of the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society who have contributed to the barn restoration and the subsequent construction of the new off-bank wharf at Odiham.

Canal d'Orléans

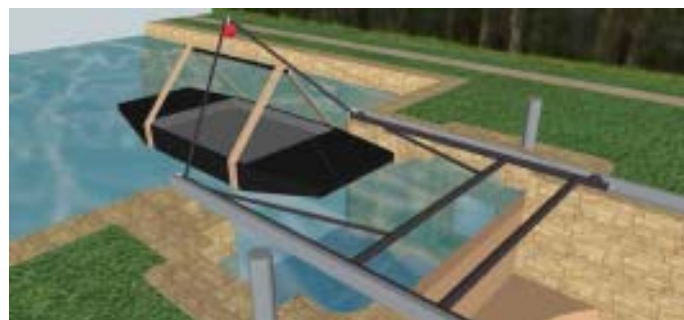
A few years ago, we seemed to be on the verge of turning the unofficial twinning of the Basingstoke Canal and the Canal d'Orléans into a formal arrangement. As well as being an excuse for some very pleasant social occasions, there appeared to be a possibility of a joint venture to extract some EC money from Brussels.

Sadly, things seem to have gone off the boil, due doubtless to more important priorities. It was very nice, therefore to receive an e-mail from Danielle Marsal, with whom my wife and I had had the pleasure of staying during one of the twinning visits.

She sent me a report from a newly established waterways organisation that calls itself “Les Mariniers de Vitry” and is taking an interest in the affairs of the Canal d'Orléans (Vitry is a town on the canal). As well as mentioning a first, very well attended meeting, the report contains a quite detailed history of the canal and an account of a couple of projects that they are embarking on.

It does not appear to be possible to have unpaid volunteers working on canals in France, so instead, the Boatmen of Vitry intend to build some boats based on traditional craft used on the canal and the Loire. The first is called a “Plate de Loire” and is a 2-place rowing boat some 5 m long, rather resembling what we would call a pram-dinghy (*Right*). The second will be a “Toue de Loir” which was a type of shallow-drafted boat used on the Loire, 10m long with a beam of 3.5m, weighing about 2.5 tonnes. The third and most ambitious one is a sailing cargo boat called a “Gabaro”, which is 12m long and weighs about 4 tonnes.

They are still looking for finance for the boat building, but have a further, perhaps more interesting project, which they call a “Transbordeur d'écluse”. “Transbordeur” usually means a transporter bridge and this device is a similar idea designed to enable small boats to pass locks without using any water.



It consists of a gantry that straddles the lock with a crane that can lift a boat out at the head of the lock. It runs on rails either side of the lock, so that the boat can be transported over the top gates and lowered down; or *vice versa*.

They are talking of using it for boats up to 12m long and weighing about 3 tonnes. However, the crane is unpowered, so a fair amount of muscle-power is going to be needed!

I wish them all the best of luck and look forward to getting further news of their progress.



Farewell to the



John Pinkerton



CHOBHAM SOCIAL MEETINGS

The meetings will be 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. Further information from David Millett on 01252 617364 or email: d.millett7@ntlworld.com

15th October 2014. **Nick Grundy**

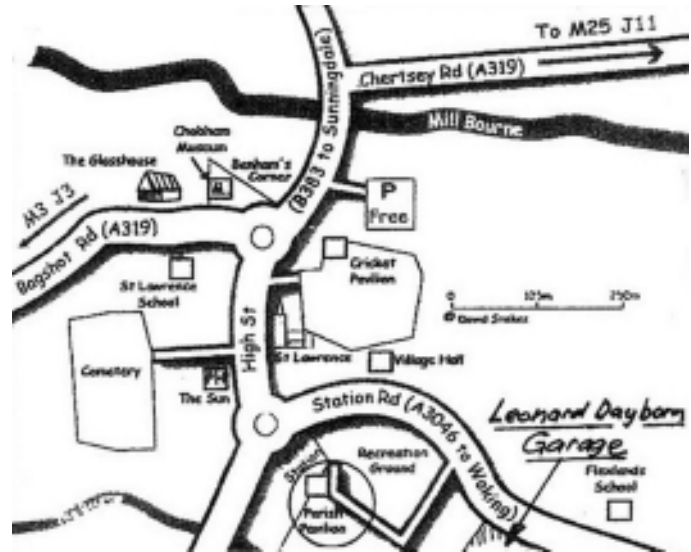
'Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant 2012'

In 2012, Nick was privileged to take part with *Beatty* in the River Thames Pageant. *Beatty* was chosen to represent the county of Merseyside in the Pageant. The talk will cover the planning and preparation for the Pageant, including bringing *Beatty* down to London from Leigh, near Manchester, followed by a full account of the Pageant day when a thousand vessels assembled to honour Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee.

19th November 2014. **Chris Coyle**

'The Wilts and Berks Canal - The Most Ambitious Restoration'

Chris will describe what is probably the most exciting and ambitious canal restoration project in the country. It will include a brief history of the canal, as well as an overview of the Wilts and Berks Canal restoration project covering the reasons for the restoration, what has been done so far, the challenges that are faced and the plans for some major projects in the near future.



17th December. **Richard Thomas**

'A Day In The Life Of. . . . A Thames Tug'

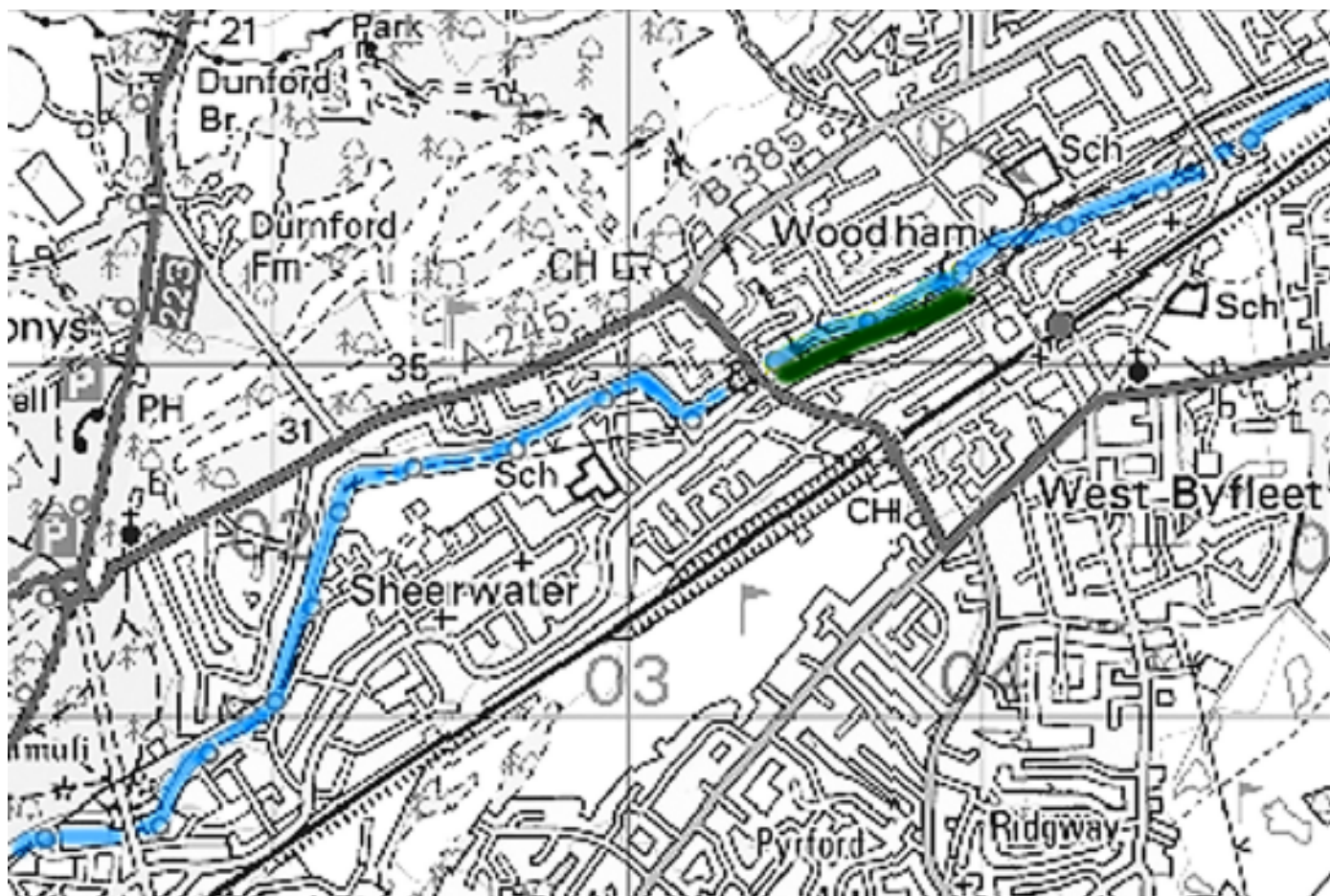
Richard will update his talk from October 1996 with a close look at the work done by Cory tug *General VIII*, which is one of a fleet of seven vessels engaged in the movement of the refuse lighters for the Western Riverside Waste Authority. The talk features a voyage from Wandsworth to the aptly named Mucking in Essex. It gives an insight into one of the remaining commercial operations on the tidal Thames and how this has changed since the closure of the dumping ground at Mucking in 2010.

21st. January 2015. **John Gibson**

'National Trust and the Wey Navigations'

John, the Manager for the National Trust on the River Wey, , will give us a presentation on the history of the Wey Navigations and the half century since the Trust's acquisition of the Navigations from the Stevens family in 1964. Although local to us this waterway has not featured previously in our Talks programme before and this talk will bring us up to date.

Sheerwaterwoods



It was back in 2007 that the Canal Society received a letter out of the blue from a private trust, offering to pass a piece of land at Sheerwater into the Society's ownership. The land consisted of a strip of woodland behind the towpath between Locks 6 and 4 (*green on the map above*) and the trust had acquired the land to keep it out of the hands of possible developers.

The Society decided that this was an offer it could not refuse, although it was recognised that there might be public safety risks attached to ownership of open woodland. More than one tree survey has since been done and a few dodgy trees have been taken down.

Several attempts were made to reduce the

Society's responsibility for maintaining the woodland by, for example, offering the land for use as a SANG (Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace), but it was not deemed suitable for this purpose.

However, our previous Company Secretary, Gareth Jones, discovered that there was a process by which the land could be declared Open Access under the terms of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and Natural England have placed it on their register.

This essentially means that the public can enjoy the use of the land for recreational purposes but do not have a right to sue the Society if they are injured by any natural hazard while doing so.

Mystery bridge

I have received the following message from a Facebook group:

*Hello,
I belong to a facebook group that exchanges stories and post photos of historical Farnborough.
We have one photo that gets posted regularly; its a great photo of a canal bridge which has since
been demolished. The main topic of conversation about this bridge is where was it located. Photo
attached. The photo/postcard is dated 1939. Most people think that this is located near St Omar
Barracks and the Queens Avenue playing fields are in the background but we cannot find any
proof. This is the reason for contacting you in the hope someone from your society could shed
some light on this bridge and its location. It has to be near Farnborough.
Could you possiblally help us?
Best regards
Karl Quent*



I suspect that their guess about the location is correct, but I have never seen a photo of this bridge before. I guess that it was a temporary structure built by the Army as it would appear to block the navigation unless it is a swing bridge pivoting about a central pillar.

Any information would be gratefully received (editor@basingstoke-canal.org.uk).

More about historic Farnborough at www.historicfarnborough.co.uk.

Weedcutter

The Society's volunteers have spent a lot of time and a fair bit of the Society's money refurbishing the BCA's weedcutter. It has already done a lot of work in Woking clearing the dreaded Floating Pennywort, but still has a few reliability problems that need sorting out.

More recently, attention has turned to the old weedcutter that dates back to the time of the New Basingstoke Canal Company. The BCA have purchased some large pumps for use in emergencies and wish to store them in containers that will be sited at the Ash Lock depot. To make space for these, they have been having a bit of a clearout and intended to scrap the weedcutter that has been lurking there for about 40 years.

The Society felt that it was of historic significance and has removed it to temporary storage elsewhere, while its future is being discussed.



In Mrs Marshall's time, the weedcutter served both in its intended role and also as a tug for occasional boat trips that she organised. Despite its paddles only being powered by a Ford Popular engine, it appears to have been capable of towing the 70ft x 14ft *Glendower* with enough passengers to give the MCA hysterics.

It was refurbished by the Army in the 1970s and Society members Howard Diamond and David Robinson are seen here taking it for a trial run. It was equipped with a large V-shaped blade for underwater weed cutting, but lacked the current weedcutter's ability to scoop weeds out of the canal.

We believe that all the component parts still exist, so it could certainly be restored as an interesting and possibly unique museum exhibit.

Galleon Marine



Jim and Jan Peile took over Galleon Marine at Odiham at Easter 2000. Now the boat hire business at Colt Hill again has new owners.

Arthur and Karen McCaffrey (*Above*) and **Chris Timmins** took over at the beginning of August and intend, at least initially, to carry on the business much as before with the four holiday narrowboats and the assorted rowing boats at Colt Hill. However, Arthur has a few new ideas already, including offering one day trial boat hire and a discount on subsequent longer hires, to allow newcomers to canals to see what it's all about before committing themselves to a holiday.

Chris has his own boat and they all enjoy canals. Arthur's previous business was website design and Karen worked as a special needs catering tutor. They have already met the JP crew and the Accessible Boating people and have kindly agreed to carry on the arrangements made with Jim Peile.

Jim and Jan had a trying time in recent years with closures on the canal, for a variety of reasons, that made things very difficult for them and their customers. However, we hope that the worst of these are over and that Arthur, Karen and Chris will be able to develop this business, which is very important for the Canal. It brings money into the Canal and is the only way that non-boat owners can have a holiday on it.

We wish them all the best of luck, and a very happy retirement to Jim and Jan with many thanks for past favours.

Letter

Dear Editor,

Now the mileage of totally restored and re-opened waterways exceeds 750 miles (not counting canals partially restored but not yet fully re-opened), I wonder whether the time has come to reconsider the fate of the Basingstoke Canal west of the tunnel. I was prompted to think of this by 'London's Lost Route to Basingstoke' which showed the route considered to avoid the tunnel.

Can I suggest:-

- a) SHCS should seek to get the canal route west of the tunnel protected by local authorities so the long term possibility of restoration is not prevented.
- b) SHCS should reconsider this alternative route avoiding the tunnel and/or examine the feasibility of a new parallel tunnel which would avoid conflict with the nature conservation interests.

It would be a great shame if the Basingstoke Canal was not fully restored when schemes of comparable difficulty, such as the Montgomery or the Cotswold Canals continue to progress.

Yours faithfully

Michael Handford

The map above shows the route originally considered to avoid the tunnel, superimposed on a current map. The route would involve 2 crossings each of the M3, A30 and railway and would then require further crossings to get to Basingstoke; clearly not a sensible route today.

The feasibility of a parallel tunnel to avoid the bats was proposed in Stan Mellor's "Promise



of the Western End”, some 25 years ago, but it failed to gain support from the Canal’s owners.

However, perhaps we should be making another effort to take forward Roger Reed's Hants & Berks Canal proposal to make a link to the Kennet & Avon. This is surely a much more constructive idea than merely shifting the end of the canal westwards a few miles. His proposals included the possibility of a new line back into Basingstoke.

Work is also already going on to establish a footpath from Basingstoke town centre to the towpath of the canal in Up Nately.

Basingstoke Canal on TV

As Nigel Searle first spotted, the Basingstoke Canal has been starring in the first episode of BBC3's new serial "Our World War", and got paid as well!

It was doubling for the Mons-Condé Canal in Belgium with Claycart Bridge (*Top right*) providing a passable imitation of Nimy Railway Bridge (*Below right*).

What looked to me rather like the bridge over Tundry Pond, was rather less convincing as the much larger Jemappes Bridge that got blown up in one of the later scenes.

Claycart Bridge was built by the Army in 1916, replacing a nearby lift bridge to allow their vehicles to cross the canal.



Jack o'the Locks

I am a bit dubious about many of the outdoor art works that get installed in public places, but I think this bronze statue in Wharf Street at Sowerby Bridge in Yorkshire is absolutely delightful and totally in keeping with its surroundings.

The work of Roger Burnett, it is entitled "Jack o'the Locks" and depicts Richard Tiffany, lock keeper of Sowerby Bridge during the last days of commercial carrying, with his great-grandson assisting him.

It was funded by the people and friends of Sowerby Bridge and very well done to them!



More ramblings

William Bland

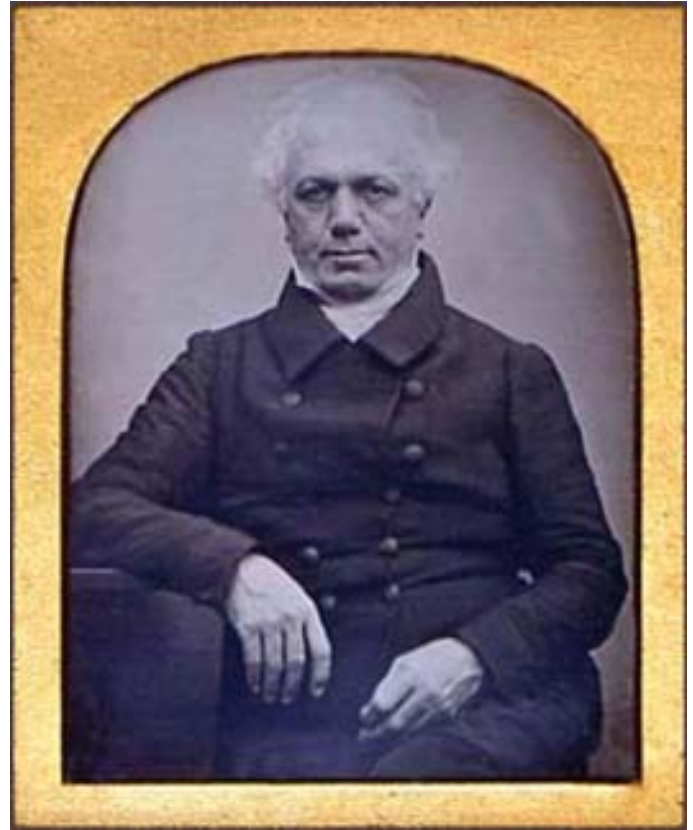
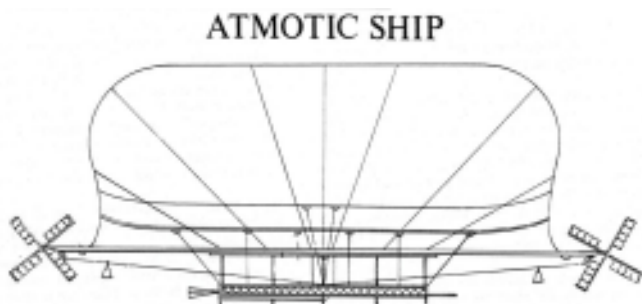
I always enjoy finding unexpected connections between things that interest me; these include aviation and the Basingstoke Canal.

I was reading a book by Richard Branson recently about aviation pioneers. Despite being a bit like an advert for his airlines, it was not uninteresting and it included a bit about a man called William Bland.

He was born in 1789 and qualified as a surgeon before setting out to travel the world. His travels took an unexpected turn in 1813, when he was convicted of murder and sentenced to be transported to Tasmania for 7 years after winning a duel with the purser of the ship he was on.

However, Australia needed doctors and he was soon pardoned and became a farmer, politician and founder and first president of the Australian Medical Association.

In his spare time, he was also an inventor and in 1851 he designed a steam powered airship with a payload capacity of 1.5 tons. He claimed that the twin propellers of the “Atmotic Ship” would be capable of driving it at 50mph, allowing it to travel from Sydney to London in under a week.



Above: Willaim Bland in 1845, the first photograph ever taken in Australia.

Sadly, it was never built, but the design caused a sensation at the 1851 Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London and inspired the building of a successful but much smaller steam powered airship in France the following year.

And the Basingstoke Canal connection?

William's father was Dr Robert Bland, the man who ensured the survival of the Basingstoke Canal by organising a bond issue in 1800 to prevent the Canal Company from going bankrupt and who was the Company Chairman from 1796 to 1816.

Interesting family!

BCS Membership

MEMBERSHIP

We still have quite a few unpaid membership fees for 2014 and I have recently written to those members to find out whether they still wish to belong to the Society. We very much appreciate our members and do not wish to lose any so if you have received a letter would you kindly contact me and let me know whether you still wish to be a member.

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

Dru Owen of Hook
Colin Brookes of Nuneaton
David and Jeni Trice of Fleet
Anthony Hopgood of Basingstoke
Derek Youds of Farnborough
Patricia Paterson of Hook

Doreen Hornsey
Membership Secretary

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

200 CLUB

Here are the latest 200 Club winners:-

February	Mr DA Smith	£44
	Mr RH Rowley	£22
	Mr J Simpkins	£11
	Mr JT Lyddon	£11

April	Mr R Cobley	£44
	Mr DA Webber	£22
	Mr DA Webber	£11
	Mr B Smith	£11

June	Mr R Malcolm	£44
	Mrs E Gemson	£22
	Mrs E Westerman	£11
	Mr T Dodwell	£11

Congratulations to 200 Club winners for the first half of 2014 and thanks for your support. Looking back through my records it would appear that I have been doing this job for about 12 years; it is not a greatly onerous task but if anyone else out there would like to take over then it would be most welcome.

Jim Johnstone

Canal ware

Thanks very much to Mike and Moya Pearson for the gift of hand-painted canal ware to be sold for the Society's funds.

Contact Denise Smith if you are interested in any of the items and make her an offer.



BCS information



The Bulletin is now up to Issue 23.

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.

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John Pinkerton handover



Robin Higgs and Philip Riley having a last nostalgic turn on the tiller of the *John Pinkerton* before its handover to its new owner Josh Kerry.

