



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 247 Autumn 2015





Editor

The Canal Society's finances have always been a bit of a mystery to me, because I can remember many years when the annual budget estimated a loss and for one reason or another, we made a profit. So it is that despite buying a barn and a new trip boat, the Society assets were revealed at the AGM to be looking very healthy.

This raises a problem, however, because the Charity Commission does not like charities hoarding money for the sake of it. We need to be thinking about spending some of it.

I can think of no better thing for our money to be spent on than ensuring that there is an adequate depth of water in the Canal. It is now nearly 25 years since its Royal re-opening, and although further dredging was done in Hampshire and Brookwood, operation of the *John Pinkerton* is becoming very difficult as the dry summer drops water levels.

Cover Picture : Galleon Marine customers
enjoying summer on the canal at Double Bridge
Photo: Roger Cansdale

The BCA's dredger *Unity* is in need of a major refit, although the basic hull appears to be fine. This is an essential piece of equipment, not only for dredging but also removing fallen trees, etc.

The Society contributed to the original cost of *Unity* and I think a contribution to its mid-life update would be a very sound investment, particularly if it got the project moving.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

At the Society's AGM in May I mentioned that the County Councils had commissioned a consultants report on the benefits (both in money terms and in wider 'value' terms) and the costs of operating and maintaining the canal. The study was completed in February and the results were reported to the Joint Management Committee at its meeting in June.

The study assesses the benefits and the costs and then expresses those in terms of the necessary cost of running and maintaining the canal in good condition. It also examines the opportunities to derive greater income and benefits from both the waterway and the adjacent land. In addition to that, the study assesses the social, environmental and economic value of the canal both to the communities living in the areas through which the canal passes and to visitors from a wider geographic area. The ultimate objective of the study was to identify the most cost effective and sustainable option for the future navigability and long term management of the canal.

Of course, this is not the first study that we have seen over the years but I think it is probably one of the best analyses that we have reviewed so far. The starting point was to examine 13 options which translated into different levels of navigability. These ranged from complete closure of the canal and filling it in to improving navigation through enhancing the water supply and providing for additional water storage (and even boat lifts!).

Chairman's report

The consultants quickly boiled down the options to 5 which could be taken forward. The least favourable (certainly to us) of these options was to close the locks and replace them with weirs. A second option, which we would also strongly oppose, was to keep the major pounds navigable but close the canal to through navigation. A third option was essentially to maintain the status quo with some limitation on navigation due to water shortage. Fourthly, an option to enhance water supply (and thereby increase navigation) was considered. The final option involved increasing boat numbers on the canal both by improving water supply and by investing in additional boat facilities such as boat basins. This option also assumed that addition income could be derived from premiums charged on waterfront properties.

The study concluded that third option (maintaining the status quo) would provide the greatest value for money for the canal's owners. This option was also considered to be more environmentally sustainable than the other options on the short list.

The more ambitious options were considered to be higher risk and I would mention, for example, that achieving income from canal-side developments, whilst highly desirable in our view, has proved to be a very illusive income source in recent years despite the fact that a number of large developments are underway in both Surrey and Hampshire.

Clearly the sourcing of additional income must now be given added emphasis and we would mention, yet again, that attractive propositions such as the upgrading of the camp site at the Mytchett Canal Centre should be vigorously

pursued especially in view of the boom in camping and caravanning which is now being experienced.

We believe that, following the production of the study, the County Councils are considering a number of options for the future management and funding of the canal. We await their recommendations with very considerable interest.

The prolonged dry spell this summer has reduced boat traffic and has posed a significant threat to our trip boat operation. This has highlighted, yet again, the urgent need for spot dredging so we shall be pressing the Counties very hard this autumn to prioritize the dredging programme. We simply must do all we can to keep the boats on the move and avoid disappointing our customers and our volunteers and, by the same token, losing valuable revenue from boat operations.

I have mentioned in my previous reports the Committee's commitment to mark the Society's 50th anniversary with a truly memorable event next summer. As I write, we are taking a serious look at a site in Woking which could provide us with a suitable area and with the access that we need. The event will require a considerable amount of planning and we will need a lot of support from members if it is to provide a worthy tribute to the efforts of all our volunteers and supporters over the last 50 years. I will be making a direct appeal to members in the autumn but, if you are willing to offer your services now, please get in touch with me.

Philip Riley

Magna Carta Plaque

As part of the Magna Carta celebrations this year, Hampshire County Council ran a competition in its schools to design a commemorative plaque.

In the event two winners were declared and both designs were used to create 1m diameter stone plaques.



Above: Daniel Bowhay with Cllr Glen and the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire

One, designed by Will Lloyd of Courtmoor School in Fleet, was installed in the courtyard outside the Great Hall at Winchester.

The other though has been placed in the centre of King John's Castle at North Warnborough.

the formal unveiling, done by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Nigel Atkinson Esq.

The whole party, which included the Chairman of Hampshire County Council, Cllr Jonathan Glen, were transported from Colt Hill to the Castle aboard the *John Pinkerton*.

The designer, Daniel Bowhay from Swanmore College, and his family were invited to

Cllr Glen presented Daniel with a very handsome glass replica of his plaque and his achievement is now marked by a sign on the railings in the castle.

All in all, a very enjoyable morning and young Daniel seemed to survive the ordeal of having his photo taken dozens of times remarkably well!



Canal Society AGM



Above: The party included Daniel's parents, Cllr Alan Oliver, Chairman of Hart DC, Cllr Keith Chapman, Chairman of the Canal JMC, Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager, and Dick King, Chairman of the Boat Company and skipper for the

Magna Carta rally

The Magna Carta rally at Colt Hill in May actually made a modest profit thanks to Dick Snell, who sold off all his remaining stock of fenders etc and gave the entire proceeds to the Society, and to the Odiham Society who gave

us a very generous £500. The lady running the spotlessly clean catering van also gave us a donation of £60.

Thanks very much indeed to all of them!

Bedser Bridge



Eric Bedser 4.7.1918 - 24.5.2006

The wooden footbridge across the canal in Woking was replaced some years ago when the World Wildlife Fund building went up, and was formally opened over a year ago. It was called the Bedser Bridge, but it was missing a couple of essential elements.

This was rectified in June when a pair of lifesize bronze statues of the famous cricketing twins was unveiled by that well-known cricket enthusiast, Sir John Major.

They lived virtually all their lives in Woking, helping their bricklayer father build the



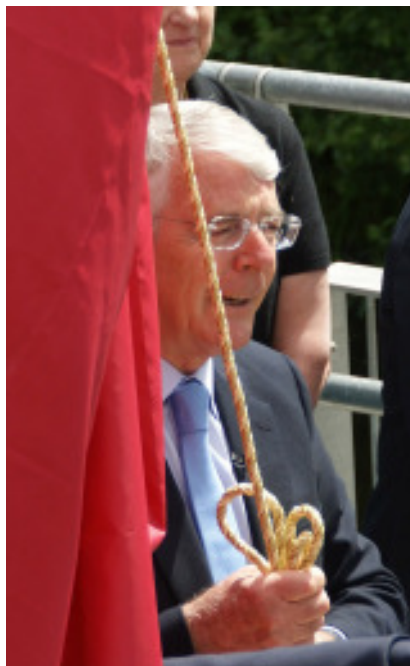
Sir Alec Bedser 4.7.1918 - 4.4.2010

family house in Knaphill. Both began their cricketing careers with Surrey CCC just before WWII and resumed after serving in the RAF.

Alec became the spearhead of England's bowling, helping the team to regain the Ashes in 1953. He was knighted in 1996 for his services to the game.

Eric only played once for England, and never in a Test match, but he was a fine batsman and a very useful spin bowler for Surrey for many years.

After retiring from cricket, still unmarried, the twins went into successful business together.



New boat



Above: Bumble Bee after its last canal outing from Barley Mow

One of the two Boys Brigades in Fleet is closing down and the people who ran it, who also happen to be members of the Canal Society, have offered the Society a small boat together with a trailer and two outboard motors. The other Fleet Brigade has nowhere to keep it and there has been no interest from elsewhere in their organisation.

The boat has a fibreglass hull and is some 13ft long. One of the engines is a fairly old Johnson 5½hp 2-stroke but the other is a virtually new 4hp Mariner Sailmate 5 4-stroke.

It was not immediately obvious what use we would have for it, nor where the boat and trailer might be kept securely. Whilst there might well be times when it could be of use, it

seemed a pity to just have it lying around for the rest of the time, so an approach was made to the Canal Authority to see whether we might find some better shared use.

After they had viewed it and some discussion, it has been agreed that they will keep it on the trailer on their premises so as to have it available at short notice for use anywhere on the canal. This shared use should ensure that it has a useful future and doesn't become another bit of junk cluttering up a yard somewhere.

We are very grateful to the Boys Brigade for this gift and the Society will be making a donation to them.

Canal Centre boating



Photo by Paul Drane

The Canal Authority is always under pressure to increase its income and at the last JMC meeting was given the go-ahead to buy some boats to hire out at the Canal Centre. Since the departure of John Cale's operation, the only way for the public to get afloat was to take a trip on *Rosebud* (below), but now there are again pedalos, canoes and, soon, rowing boats for hire at Mytchett.



Two young men, Adam and Max, have been employed to run the operation during the school holidays.

They can be seen left with other members of the BCA staff trying out the new craft.

So far it seems to have been a roaring success

with queues at the weekends, particularly for the pedalos; not a very traditional canal craft, but great for families because they take two adults and two children.



Pedalos cost £8 for half an hour, canoes £11.50 an hour and rowing boats £14.50. The canoes take two adults or one adult and two children and the rowing boats will take four adults. Minimum age for pedalos is 8 years old and 12 years old for the others. Hiring starts at 10.30am and winds up at about 4pm. Life jackets are available

Canal Centre

The towpath between the Canal Centre at Mytchett and Frimley Lodge Park is one of the most heavily used sections on the canal, with walkers, joggers, cyclists and dog walkers.

The last of these are prone to letting their animals swim in the canal. This puts the dogs at risk from Weil's Disease and it has also caused huge amounts of damage to the edge of the towpath when they scrabble their way out. This tears the vegetation which normally binds the bank together and has produced large "wash-outs" that in some places made the towpath almost impassable for push-chairs.

A couple of years ago, the Canal Society used money, that came from a fine levelled on a local company for some environmental offence, to repair a couple of hundred yards of the bank at Frimley Lodge Park. The rest has now been done by contractors, mostly using soft bank protection.



Opposite the Canal Centre, the towpath edge has been sheet-steel piled to withstand the boat operations there.



The Basingstoke Canal Canoe Club operates from the Canal Centre and getting in and out of canoes there is not particularly easy, especially when water levels drop. To solve the problem, the contractors have installed a purpose-designed landing stage for canoes near the swing bridge (*below*).



All we need now is the go-ahead from the County Estates Department for the Canoe Club to build their long-awaited new clubhouse with toilets and showers that could allow extra camping at the Canal Centre and extra income for the BCA. An action was placed at the last JMC meeting to find out how this was progressing, so will the next meeting reveal any progress?

Events

CHOBHAM SOCIAL MEETINGS

As usual meetings will be held at the Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road, Chobham, near Woking, GU24 8AZ (see map for exact location).

Meetings will start at 8pm on the third Wednesday of the month (October to April). Raffle and Retiring Collection.

Coffee/tea and biscuits will be available during the interval.

Non-members and friends are very welcome.

21st October 2015. **Graham Lewington** **'History and Restoration of the Wey and Arun Canal'**

Graham, from the Wey and Arun Canal Trust, will describe the history and bring us up to date with all the latest restoration work that has taken place over the last few years. The amount of fundraising has been incredible and has enabled major projects to be undertaken to one of the most historic of southern waterways.

18th November 2015. **Roger Squires** **'Leonardo's Canals - Waterways of Milan and the Papia Region'**

Roger will be returning to give us a talk about the city of Milan which was one of the leaders of early canal building in Europe. Canals covered include the Naviglio Grande, Pavia Canal, Bereguardo Canal, Martesena Canal and the Padermo Canal which was the final link in the network constructed to overcome the rapids on the River Adda, and to offer a through route from Lake Como to Milan.



Most of us have probably never heard of these canals in Italy which date from 1177 through to 1485.

16th December 2015. **Ron & Myra Glover** **'Trail Boat Festivals on Isolated Waterways around Britain'**

As a change from Ron and Myra's talks from around Europe, this presentation details the trailing of craft around Britain since the mid-1970s and attending festivals that are held on land-locked waterways which narrow boats are unable to reach, Starting at the first IWA trail boat rally in 1985 held at Pewsey on the Kennet and Avon Canal to the most recent festival at Tiverton on the Grand Western Canal in Devon.

Further information from David Millett on 01252 617364 or email d.millett7@ntlworld.com or www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk

Details of next year's talks will appear in the next BC News.

Canal Society 50th Anniversary 2016



Things are beginning to shape up in the planning of next year's 50th Anniversary celebrations.

The original assumption was that the rally would be based at Brookwood Country Park, as was the do in 2006. However, the site that now seems to be finding favour is actually in the middle of Woking on the piece of Council-owned land to the west of Chertsey Road Bridge. This is shown in red on the map above.

The site is behind the towpath and is some 200 yards long. It is where it was suggested that a marina might be built at some stage.



The site is rather nice with a large area of grass surrounded by trees; plenty of room for a marquee or two. It is easy walking distance from the main car parks in Woking and the station.

A major attraction will be the boats of the Historic Boat Club, which is also celebrating its 50th anniversary next year. Our Vice-Chairman, Martin Leech visited the Woking site with Phil Prettyman, the Chairman of the Historic Boat Owners Club. He was happy that their boats could be moored there.

Security could be a problem in an urban area such as this and we will have to make provision to deal with this. However to balance this, the canal in Woking is not part of the SSSI, so approval from Natural England for the event will not be a problem.

Despite the fact that planning is beginning, we are still very much in need of people to help with the organisation. The event is not only intended to celebrate the last 50 years, but also to launch the Society into the next century.

The Society's whole future may depend on the success of this rally, so we are really appealing to our newer members to come forward to lend a hand. Please contact Phil Riley by email at wincombecottage2@gmail.com) or phone 01256 702109.

Open letter

I don't normally print anonymous letters, but I have decided to make an exception for the one opposite as it echoes the views I heard being widely expressed after the last meeting of the Canal's Joint Management Committee.

A bit of background about the set-up of the JMC may help to explain what the problem is all about:

The members of the JMC come from two sources. There are voting members representing the County Councils and the riparian District and Borough Councils, which provide the funding for the Canal, and there are non-voting members from special interest groups. Apparently some Local Government regulation prevents them from having a vote on this type of committee; it doesn't really matter as votes are seldom taken on the JMC. The Canal Society has two seats, the IWA one and Natural England one, and there are four others that are voted onto the committee. One of these currently is Cllr Alastair Clark, the Chairman of the Hart District Association of Parish and Town Councils.

Because there are four Borough Councils in Surrey - Guildford, Surrey Heath, Woking and Runnymede, and only two in Hampshire - Rushmoor and Hart, the Surrey ones have one representative and the Hampshire ones two in order to keep numbers balanced between the two counties.

The funding for the Canal comes mainly (56%) from the County Councils with the Borough and District Councils supposed to pay the rest according to a formula that takes account of the length of their bit of canal and the size of

the local population. Sadly this is only a gentleman's agreement. Some, Woking, Guildford and Rushmoor, do pay their full contribution and two have never done so. Surrey Heath's underfunding over the years must total about a quarter of a million pounds.

Hart now pays half its contribution but has managed to persuade its seven Parish Councils to fund the rest.

One of these, Fleet Town Council, contributes over £18,000 to the Canal budget. This is more than the £10,000 that Surrey Heath pays out of its £26,000 budget share. It is also more than Runnymede's contribution even if they paid it, which they don't; they pay about half.

The leader of Fleet Town Council, Bob Schofield is of the opinion that in view of this funding situation, they deserve to have a seat on the JMC and there is a threat that they may withhold their funding if they don't get it.

The problem is that creating a new seat would unbalance the Committee.

At the last JMC meeting the matter was discussed at length but without any positive conclusion.

Now read on....

The Editor, BC News

Dear Sir,

I would like to submit the following open letter to the Canal JMC.

to the JMC

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I sat and listened to 40 minutes of argument at the last JMC meeting, none of which seemed to have anything to do with the wellbeing of the Canal.

Whilst I understand the desire of Fleet Town Council to have representation that reflects their budget contribution, I would remind them that their job is to represent the inhabitants of Fleet, such as myself, and that we already have 3 people on the JMC doing this - 2 District Councillors and Cllr Clark of the Parish Councils. Why do we need another?

However, given that Hart DC is only funding half its calculated contribution, surely the answer is for them to yield up one of their two seats to the Parish Councils. They can then decide who should represent them. As Cllr Clark is already on the JMC, perhaps all that needs to be done is give him a vote.

This would have several advantages:

- ❖ It would preserve the current balance on the JMC between the Counties.
- ❖ It would free up a Special Interest seat on the JMC.
- ❖ It would halve the amount that Hart DC has to pay in attendance allowances.
- ❖ It would save wasting any more of the JMC's time on things that are irrelevant to the running of the Canal!

Yours respectfully

A Fleet voter and Canal lover

This solution does seem so blindingly obvious that I fear that there must be some hidden factor at play. I hope that the Canal is not falling foul of a party political game.

Let us hope that by the next meeting of the JMC in October, a sensible arrangement will have been reached within Hart. It really is their business to sort this out, not the JMC's.

Canal Funding

The representatives of Surrey Heath and Runnymede Councils always seem supportive of the Canal when they come to meetings of the JMC, but they appear to be powerless to do anything about their councils' refusal to fund in full their contribution to the Canal budget.

It is one of the fundamental flaws of the JMC that the representatives of the District and Borough Councils never seem to be the people who actually control the appropriate council budgets. They are therefore unable to make decisions about canal funding and the people who do this do not appear before the JMC to explain their decisions.

All very frustrating. It would be very nice to invite the Leader of Surrey Heath to a JMC meeting to explain why the Borough is so poverty stricken that it can only afford the same amount as the Church Crookham and Crookham Village Parishes, whose combined population is about a fifth of that of Surrey Heath!

Repairs

James Taylor, the Canal's Strategic Manager has sent the following update:

Dogmersfield

We are still planning to do piling / dredging works at the Dogmersfield landslip, and under the same contract a complete replacement of Barley Mow culvert - all being well commencing 1 November 2015.

Navigation and the towpath will be closed between Stacey's Bridge and Blacksmith's Bridge for AT LEAST 8-10 weeks (depending on weather conditions etc, it may take longer). We will discuss phasing to see if the towpath closure west of Barley Mow can be shortened once the contractor is officially appointed (expected shortly).

Boats travelling west will be permitted to wind in Blacksmith's winding hole. However Barley Mow winding hole will be out of commission for the full duration of the works; boats heading east that are unable to wind in the normal channel width should not proceed east of Colt

Hill as they will be unable to wind at the point of closure.

There will be heavy plant working on site - the closure to navigation will apply to ALL CRAFT including canoes/rowing boats and small powered craft for safety reasons.

Barley Mow slipway and car park will also close for the duration of the works (although we may be able to leave a small part of the car park available following discussion with the contractor).

Swan 'cutting'

An engineer's report has been produced by Atkins on behalf of HCC Engineering Consultancy, suggesting solutions to the long term instability in this area, which in turn would allow us to dredge. All solutions involve heavy engineering which are substantially beyond current budgets, plus the southern bank is not with HCC's ownership anyway. Unfortunately, I do not anticipate a speedy resolution of this issue.

The news about Dogmersfield is very welcome, as is the completion of the report on the section west of Swan Bridge in North Warnborough. However the lack of any clear idea when this might be addressed is of great concern, although the difficulties are understood.

The County only owns from the towpath to the water's edge on the offside and this has been slowly creeping northwards as the bank subsides. It is understood that heavy piling or even pre-cast concrete sections that would define the channel have been suggested. Heavy engineering, as James says.

However, for our Boat Company the problem is a very acute one, particularly in a dry summer such as we are having. The castle trip is still the most popular, but is now impossible with a full load. Even going to Barley Mow is getting difficult because of the build-up of silt at some of the bridge holes and the Dogmersfield slip prevents the trips to Crookham that we used to do.

We run the risk of losing a major source of income for the canal if these issues are not addressed urgently.

Repairs



One way of improving water levels is to provide more water, but the other is to avoid losing what we have.

An alert ranger discovered a major leak through the towpath east of Double Bridge in Dogmersfield and a contract was placed on Rob Locatelli's Canal & River Services Company to do an extensive repair.

This was necessary because the bank had eroded to such an extent that some of the concrete post sockets in the towpath, that formed part of the WWII defensive line, were in danger of dropping into the canal.

About 100 yards of sheet metal piling was installed and back-filled with clay to seal the

leak. It has all been leveled with earth and by next spring should be covered with plants. The towpath is now wide enough to allow cyclists to pass without risk of an accidental bath.



Work Boats

Dear Editor,

We would like to explain to the Society members and other members of the public why there are boats and barges along the canal which are not nice and shiny and clean.

These boats and barges are the work horses, used by the BCA, the Society and contractors to keep the canal in running order for nice shiny boats, canoes and all the walkers, cyclists, anglers etc who use the canal. These boats are used for all manner of operations including bank clearance and repair, fallen tree disposal, dredging, the carriage of construction materials and moving mud, and hence are frequently more than a bit grubby as you would expect in the circumstances.



Above: Society boats transporting new lock gates past some of the rest of the Society's fleet moored in St John's.

You will find the boats and barges all along the canal as you never know where they will be needed next. If all the boats were kept in one place and there was a need at the other end of the canal, valuable time would be lost moving the boat or barge. And if the Deepcut Flight

were closed because of water supply issues (as has happened in the past and will again), we might find that there was no work boat available.

There is no secure marina where the boats can be kept, which is why where possible, the boats will be kept at the end of a member's garden, or somewhere where they can be monitored, and in the case of barges, pumped out after heavy rain. It is regrettable that a small subsection of society finds it amusing to vandalise the work boats and barges and, where possible cut the mooring ropes, so the boats drift to block the canal. Society members really do have enough to do without sacrificing their weekends to sort out the mayhem caused by vandals, for example, casting the barge adrift at Lodge Farm bridge.

Yours sincerely,
The Working Party



Above: This barge lives in Hampshire and is often used like this for offside bank clearance work. It has frequently been cast adrift by vandals and is now secured by chains to concrete mud weights. It all makes work for the volunteers who have better things to do!

Another fallen tree



At the beginning of July, the *John Pinkerton* was scheduled to go down to the Canal Centre to take some local councillors for a trip on the canal. The trip from Odiham to Mytchett was advertised and a number of people took up the chance to do this rare trip on the *JP*.

Sadly, the voyage came to a sudden end just short of Crookham Wharf when the boat met a large tree that had fallen right across the canal. There was clearly no chance of getting it moved quickly, so the passengers walked up to the wharf and the *JP* crew did a sterling job of organising cars to shuttle the passengers around.

It could hardly have happened more inconveniently. The BCA's dredger was out of action and anyway was already on its way to the dry dock for a hull inspection. The

contractors who had been doing the piling at Double Bridge had also taken away their pontoon with a digger on it the previous day.

However, the Rangers swung into action the next day and an excavator was hired to lift the lumps of tree out of the canal. By the afternoon, the *JP* was on its way again, but minus its passengers. Some of them, however, joined the return trip.

Quite what caused the tree to come down was unclear as the weather had not been particularly awful. However, as the photo shows, there are a lot of trees leaning over the canal in this area that one day are bound to fall over. A lot of work needs to be done, but it all costs money and time.

Lookback

From Society Newsletters No. 122 July 1985 and No. 123 September 1985

- Since the end of the MSC-sponsored scheme the Society's full time team have been hard at work; their main task has been completing the Deepcut Flight. They have been raising the towpath — with some volunteer help they have laid around 1000 tons of hoggin to provide a decent walking surface and to counter the effects of erosion over the years.
- Leader of the Youth Training Scheme, Frank Jones, reported that no extension of last year's scheme was envisaged because of a lack of recruits and the increased emphasis put on training, rather than actual work to progress restoration of the canal. Nevertheless, YTS workers had restored two of the lock chambers at Brookwood in readiness for new gates.
- Following the success of the first work camp a second one was organised last year. This turned out to be the biggest camp ever held on the waterways. Numbers on site varied between 35 and 45 and during the fortnight over 80 people came from all over the country and abroad with 5 foreign visitors from the U.S.A., Germany and Iceland. The work was centred around the St Johns locks and during the camp all sections of this flight received attention.
- The next site is lock 4 which had a serious access problem as there was no way for materials to be delivered to the site. Thus the first job was to build a causeway across the canal above lock 3 to connect the towpath to a public road. This causeway had to be able to carry 30 ton lorries and so it took all the old brickwork from the lock to build it. It was completed by November when ready-mix lorries crossed it to deliver the concrete for the chamber invert. Since then the bottom cill has been excavated and the offside chamber wall half re-built.
- The public enquiry into the development of Brookwood Lye by Arundel House Securities for industrial use took a new turn with the plans by the South West Thames Regional Health Authority to sell off a large part of the hospital grounds on the opposite side (northern) of the canal for industrial development. Coupled with both Surrey County Council and Woking Borough now opposing development of the Brookwood Lye, our member Les Harris represented the Society at the Inquiry. He made it clear that we are strongly opposed to any development of either site.
- Apart from the threat of bad weather, the Society's second boat rally at Ash Lock on 8th-9th June attracted as much interest as last year's gathering which was salvaged from the postponed civic re-opening of the centre length of the canal. Thirty-eight trail boats took part, coming from as far away as Poole and Worksop. On Saturday morning TVS recorded the sight and sound of John Pinkerton leading a flotilla, including some elegant steam powered launches, across Ash Embankment. The private boats went on to cruise down to Deepcut top-lock for a picnic lunch. When the visitors had gone home, the John Pinkerton settled in the lock chamber to provide beer and other drinks while Chris and Janet Brazier, together with numerous helpers, cooked and served an excellent barbecue. Folk music was provided by "The Great Bottom Flashers".

- As a result of reading a newspaper report of the Society's AGM, Mr. Roy Willis, a local NACRO manager offered to organise an MSC Community Programme scheme to restore Brookwood Lock 12. The project, funded by the Manpower Services Commission, sponsored by Surrey County Council and supported by the Society will provide work for ten unemployed adults. Work was expected to start on 5th August and commencement represents a major breakthrough in a long standing dispute over ownership of the lockside which has become a vehicle park by the adjacent garage owner.
- Surrey received a 35ft steel work boat designed by Society's dredger manager, Andy Stumpf, a naval architect who works for British Waterways Board. The boat will be painted in red and green which were the colours Alec Harmsworth painted his barges. A similar work punt for Hampshire on order is expected in four months time.
- Mr Sydney Edward Cooke, Managing Director of the New Basingstoke Canal Co. Ltd. which took the waterway over in 1950 died on Thursday 11 July aged 78. Little is known about Mr Cooke's life: he is popularly described as an engineer and inventor of a patented fishing reel. It is believed that he worked in the aircraft industry, particularly for Napier and Fairey, and that he was involved in the development of the Rotodyne. Even as owner of the canal Mr Cooke was an enigma and reticent, preferring to make pronouncements about the canal through his Solicitor, Mr Harry D Swales. The passing of Mr Cooke marks the end of an era in the history of the Basingstoke

Canal. His determination to pour scorn on the Society's proposed restoration of the waterway, set out in our book "Basingstoke Canal: the Case for Restoration" fuelled the founding members' resolve to activate the County Councils and bring about public ownership.

- The Society entertained local booksellers and journalists aboard the *John Pinkerton* to mark the publication of 'Basingstoke Canal Restoration', the Society's new 48-page illustrated book by Dieter Jebens and David Robinson. The new book has been enthusiastically received by reviewers and booksellers. Many people have remarked on the unusual quality of reproduction which was achieved by a little-used continuous tone plate making process. The publisher says 'The Society's book could well become a collectors item in the future because so few books have been printed this way'.



The book can be found quite often on eBay if you haven't already got a copy. It is well worth buying.

Share the Space, Drop your Pace

The 'Share the Space, Drop your Pace' campaign to moderate cycling speed, that started in Woking, has been moving up the canal. Mike Gordon, the Lengthsman Organiser reported on the event at St John's:

Hi Fiona,

I am very pleased to report that our little event at St. Johns on Saturday went very well. The weather was kind to us apart from a few short showers. We were set up by 09.45 on the grass area just up from the lock and both large banners were on the bridge itself. Ken and Denise did a fantastic job all day and it was so convenient to be able to use their house as a base.

Ted & Stella were in attendance the whole time and Paul Smith, Lengthsman and councillor, put in a good two hours or more. Councillor Graham Cundy who spent most of the day with us really put his heart into it.

In the afternoon we were visited by Linda Kemeney and John Kingsbury. Sadly a number of Surrey Lengthsmen who were expected to turn up, did not. It was their loss as we all had a most enjoyable day.

We had five or six very busy periods but by 13.30 it went quiet. As the rain started again at 14.00 we decided to call it a day. By this time we had also run out of wrist snap bands, and our stamina was ebbing.

As with the launch in Woking the response from the public was all positive. A lot of people stopped for long conversations. Everyone was supportive of the campaign in particular and the BCA and BCS in general. Particularly mentioned a number of times was the obvious improvements in the state of the canal over the last two years!

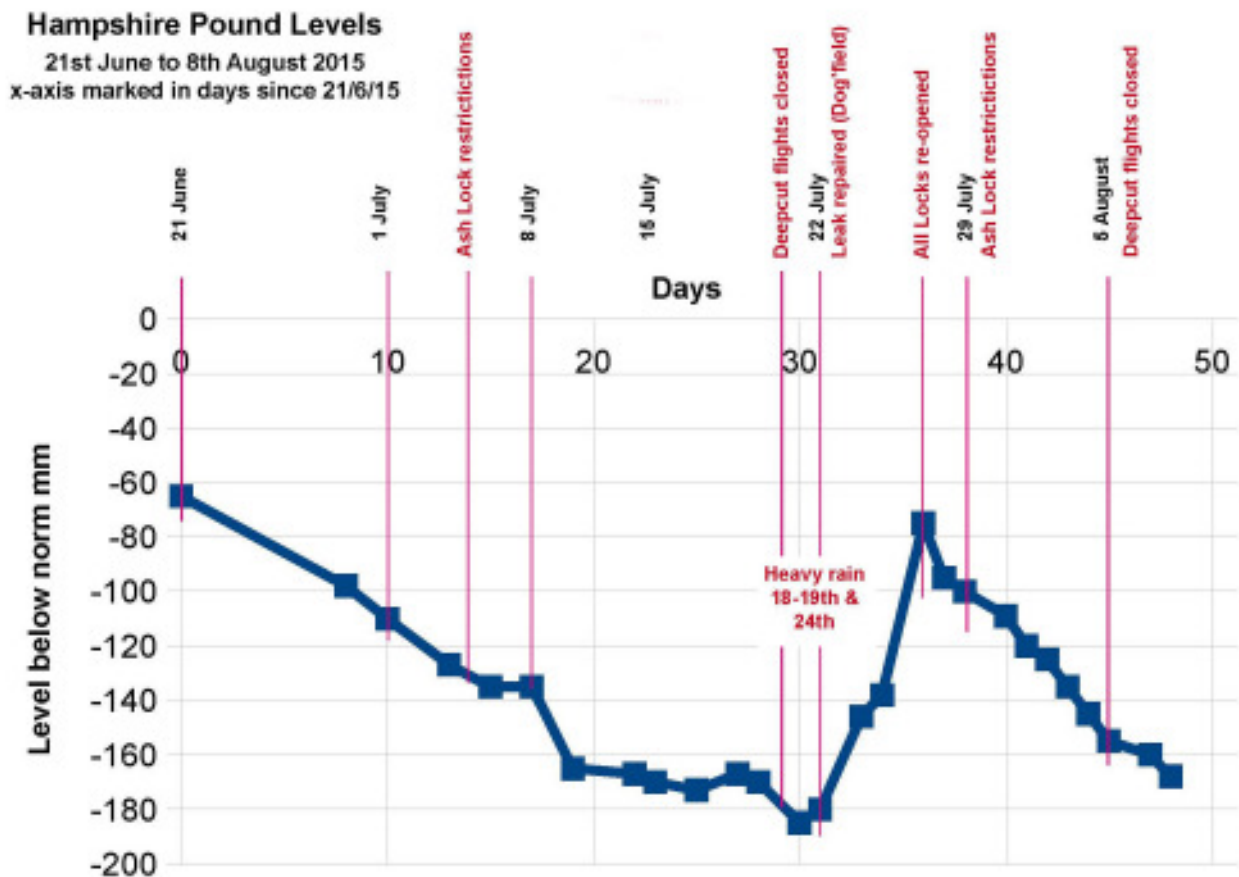
Regards,

Mike.



A couple of weeks later, the campaign moved up to the Canal Centre, where the same team can be seen above, waylaying cyclists and runners and handing out goodies at the lift bridge.

Water levels



Thanks to Dick King for letting me pinch this chart from the latest 'Pinkerton's Progress' showing water levels recorded at Colt Hill. It shows all too clearly what happens in the summer when it doesn't rain. It also shows, though, how water levels can recover when it does. I don't know what the Odiham rainfall was, but Southampton got about 50mm of rain in late July, so not surprisingly the canal recovered fairly dramatically.

The BCA has been doing its best to manage water levels and keep the canal working, but closure of the locks is inevitable unless we get some serious rain. However, as I write this heavy thunderstorms are forecast for tomorrow, so perhaps the chart will swing up again.

The dry weather is highlighting the need to

do some spot dredging in Hampshire, not to mention fixing the narrows at Swan Bridge. It would be tragic if we lose business for the *Pinkerton* because trips have to be cancelled.

The BCA's dredger apparently needs to have the mechanical bits replaced. The current setup came from a Smalley excavator, which is no longer made, so a more modern replacement is needed. Perhaps the Society could make a financial contribution if this would help to get some dredging underway more quickly; it would be a good investment.

If it is any consolation, Bob Malcolm has drawn our attention to a BBC report that due to an El Nino event, the Panama Canal has reduced the maximum draught for boats from 39.5ft to 39ft from 8th September and maybe by a further 6 inches a week later.

BCS Membership

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT

A warm thank you to all our members who paid their subscriptions promptly for their 2015 subscription renewal. Unfortunately, we still have quite a few members who have not paid their subs for this year. I will be sending out reminders shortly but if you are aware that you have not paid your subs and still wish to remain members I should be grateful if you would let me have your payments as soon as possible as follows:

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

Thank you for your cooperation.

Doreen Hornsey
Membership Secretary

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

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

R Rasmussen of Aldershot
David Rowe of Bracknell
David & Pam Dickens of Ash Vale
Paul Smith of Knaphill
Ruth Dillon of Fleet
Andrew Sworn of North Warnborough
Michael Sydney of South Godstone
Neville Welsh-Smyth of Basingstoke
Roy and Frances Stewart of Farnborough
Clive & Sue Burgess of Farnborough
John & Janet Ferguson of Farnborough
Mark Hingston of Farnborough
Steve Hammatt of Camberley
E Warmington of Virginia Water
Deborah Carpenter of Yateley
Adrian Pallant of Farnham
Lucy Newman-Smith of Ash Vale
Ken & Kim Cody of Farnham
Paul Nancollas of Stoke Newington
Chris McDougall of Woking
Penny Blacker of Fleet
Geoff Dorrell of Farnham
Mark Flatt of Fleet

200 Club winners

February

Mr A Carter	£50
Mr A Hocking	£25
Mr T Dodwell	£13
Mr R Debenham	£13

April

Mr T Carter	£50
Mr I Bell	£25
Mr J Evelyn	£13
Mr N Mayne	£13

June

Mr B Holmes	£50
Mr J Meredith	£25
Mr L Ashenden	£13
Rev D Tonkinson	£13

Logs for sale

With autumn and winter approaching, Duncan Paine reports that we still have a few aggregate bags of mature logs of oak or mixture of ash / sycamore available for sale at the barn at Colt Hill.

Contact him at duncanpaine@talktalk.net or phone 01252 614125

BCS information



The Bulletin is now up to Issue 25.

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.

Date for next copy 31st October 2015

Published by the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society Ltd., a non-profit distributing company limited by guarantee, registered as a Charity. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Society. Executive members of the Committee are shown in bold type and Directors of the Society have an asterisk () after their name.*

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A good year for birds

