



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 250 Summer 2016





EDITORIAL

The AGM seemed to go well from where I was sitting - a good attendance and even better, people coming forward in response to requests for help.

Continuing the trend of recent years, these people are mostly new members of the Society, which is great. They bring new ideas and fresh vigour to the Society, which otherwise could end up as a load of old fogies muttering about steam dredgers!

Cover Picture : The Society's 12 seater trip boat being delivered to the River Wey.
Photo: Roger Cansdale

We could still do with more help, though, because there are many things that we could be doing, which would make the Society more interesting and effective, if only we had people to organise them.

A typical example is our new, small trip boat, where we have taken a bit of a risk. We bought it because it was available and very good value. We have several ideas about what it could be used for, but these could be modified in the

light of experience. What we do need is a small group of people to operate it.

The initial intention is to run public trips in Woking, probably from the Town Quay next to the Lightbox. We would also like to use it to promote the canal to local councillors.

The great majority of our members do not own a boat, but would, I suspect, like to be able to get out on the canal occasionally. I would therefore also like to see the new boat being

made available for hire as a day-boat to Society members. It's very easy to steer once you get used to the wheel steering and, thanks to the spacious aft deck, very sociable.

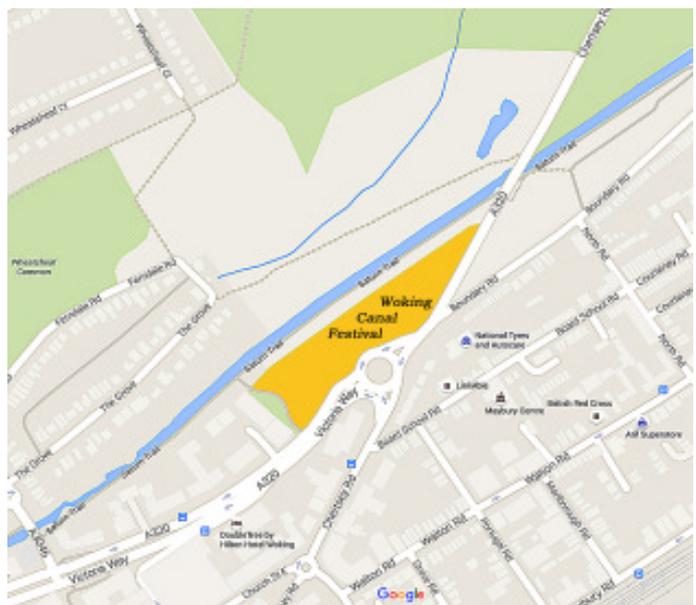
I think we are going to have a lot of fun with *Kitty*, which is the name voted for at the AGM. What we need is people to make it so. Volunteers please contact Dick King at wcf2016@btinternet or 01730 264178.

* * * * *

Even more urgent is the need for people to help at the Woking Canal Festival.

The Brookhouse Common site is a public place and the Society will be responsible for seeing that order is maintained and everybody is happy and clearing the site. This needs bodies! Even if you can only spare a couple of hours, Dick King would love to hear from you.

This is the last BC News before the event, so there will not be another reminder - **please contact him now!**



The festival site is between the A320 Chertsey Road and the canal, just west of the bridge.

Chairman's AGM report

Once again I think last year was a good one for the Basingstoke Canal. The navigation remained open throughout the summer and the number of visiting boats held reasonably steady although numbers were slightly down on 2014. The County Councils continued their major capital expenditure programme with repairs being carried out to Ash Embankment, the Rive Ditch Culvert, some of the Deepcut locks and Hermitage weir amongst other projects.

The Canal Society's activities also produced excellent results. As Dick will report, the John Pinkerton operation had a record year with increased revenues. In May we held a boat rally at Colt Hill wharf in Odiham as part of the Magna Carta 800 celebrations. Although this was a modest event in boating terms, it did focus public attention on the potential to develop Colt Hill as an important site to enhance the value of the canal as a public amenity.

Our weekend work party maintained its strong commitment to improve the appearance of the canal and the work undertaken at Greywell (including the removal of vegetation from the tunnel portal) drew much praise from the public who regularly use the canal towpath in that area. The team which operates the weed cutter has also continued with the clearance work in Woking which has not only improved the appearance of the canal but also removed a significant obstacle to navigation.

A few weeks ago we decided to buy a twelve seater trip boat from the Chichester Canal Society. For some time we have been considering whether we should invest in another trip boat to use at the eastern end of the canal and for special trips to promote the canal to the wider community. Some members may

question whether this was a wise decision but the boat (which has a disabled lift) was offered to us at a very attractive price so we decided to go ahead with the purchase. Of course, buying a boat is the easy bit. We now need a team to crew and manage it and to develop a new trip boat operation on the Surrey section. We also need a new name for the boat – several suggestions have been made including Kitty which was the name of Mark Hicks' horse which is featured in some of our historic photographs. What name would you like? Dick will have more to say about the new boat when he gives his report later on.

On a negative note we were disappointed that the work at Dogmersfield could not be carried out this spring as originally planned. We do appreciate the difficulties faced by the County Councils in tackling repairs of this kind (especially where other landowners are involved) but it does emphasize the need to anticipate problems more effectively rather than waiting for the problems to become acute. A good example of this is Swan Cutting at North Warnborough which has been causing difficulties for some years. We have now reached the point at which lack of attention to the bank slippages and silting have resulted in boats struggling to navigate towards the lift bridge. It became apparent from our discussions with the County Council that they had no plans to repair Swan Cutting so we are now working with the IWA on a repair scheme which we will then provide us with a basis for raising the funding that will be needed to cover the cost of the work. This provides an excellent example of where the Canal Society (in partnership with the IWA) can pursue critical issues which the Counties, for whatever reason, cannot include within their list of priorities.

Chairman's report

I will now turn to the future. At this meeting last year I referred to the work being undertaken by the County Councils to identify a solution for the long term future of the canal. Since then the Government has significantly reduced the Revenue Support Grant which it gives to local authorities. In the case of both Surrey and Hampshire, the reductions were far more than were originally expected. Surrey's cut was 42% (on the previous year) and Hampshire suffered a cut of 37%. This is all part of a Government policy to phase out the Revenue Support Grant by the end of this Parliament. As many of you know, the whole of the capital budget for the canal (which covers lock repairs, embankments, culverts etc) is provided by the County Councils. In 2010 the Counties each agreed to fund capital expenditure of £700K over a 3 year period. This was followed, in 2013, by further allocations of £2M from each County which is to be spent over the period to 2017. So, the Counties have already committed to fund capital expenditure amounting to £5.4M. The Counties have made clear to us that no further capital programme is planned after 2017. They have also said that the capital programmes to date were designed to "break the back of the backlog of maintenance but were not intended to solve all the problems".

So, where does this leave the future of the canal? Well, as I mentioned last time, the Counties are actively considering a number of options including disposal of the canal to a 'commercial' owner/operator, transfer to a newly formed charitable trust or a move of the canal into the Canal & River Trust. In our view the last option is the only feasible one on the table. We are aware that discussions have taken place with the C&RT but, as far as we are aware, no terms have been agreed. The

negotiations are further complicated by the fact that the C&RT is also working with the Environment Agency on the long mooted transfer of the EA waterways to the Trust. So, whilst the possibility still exists of finding a permanent home for the Basingstoke Canal under the C&RT umbrella, we currently far from achieving that objective. I am hopeful that this issue can be resolved in the next 12 months. If agreement can't be reached, the decision by the Counties to eliminate capital expenditure grants after 2017 will leave the canal facing the same situation it encountered in the mid 2000s when lack of maintenance to the infrastructure led to the canal falling back into dereliction. Surely that cannot be allowed to happen a second time?

To end on a positive note, we are all looking forward to our 50th anniversary rally in Woking on 6/7 August. As I'm sure most of you know, Dick and his team has been working very hard on the planning for this event and it is certainly shaping up to be a memorable occasion and a fitting tribute to all those volunteers who campaigned and worked on the canal to make it the beautiful waterway that we see today. Please come to the Canal Festival and please offer your practical support if you are able to do so.

I would like to finish by thanking the Committee, once again, for all its support and hard work over the last 12 months – it certainly makes my task much easier knowing that the different responsibilities are in such good hands. Finally can I thank all of you for helping us carry the Society forward to its 100th anniversary.

Philip Riley
Chairman

AGM report

The **2016 Annual General Meeting** saw a healthy attendance, with 65 people turning up at the Deepcut Village Hall on a sunny May Saturday afternoon.

Our Presidents, Tim and Liz Dodwell welcomed everyone and, after the usual apologies for absence, the minutes of the 2015 AGM were accepted. The real business then began with Guy Faller presenting the 2015 accounts.

He noted that net income was down on that of 2014, but that year had seen a number of unusual sales - the *John Pinkerton*, Thames barge and logs from the Dogmersfield slip. However, income from the Boat Company was up by about £10,000.

Expenditure was down on 2014. Less had been spent on materials and equipment hire, but more on printing.

The overall effect was a surplus of £18,787 compared to £36,079 in 2014. Total assets stood at £361,153.

The Treasurer felt that the Society was in a strong financial position to pursue its objectives.

Peter Jones asked what the £361,000 was for; he and his brother Frank had always tried to bankrupt the Society during the canal's restoration! The Treasurer pointed out that only £125,00 was cash in the bank; the rest was in assets. The Chairman replied that the Society needed money to spend on projects that we considered important but which were not high on the Counties' list of priorities, such as, perhaps, repairs to Swan cutting. Mark

Coxhead felt that it might be needed as a fighting fund if moves were made to dispose of the canal in ways we disapproved of.

A motion to approve the accounts was carried unanimously, as was the appointment of the Barnbrook Sinclair Partnership as auditors.

The list of people standing for the Committee included Philip Riley, Martin Leech, Guy Faller, Verna Smith, Dick King, Kevin Redway, Roger Cansdale, Jeff Hill, John Wall, Stuart Black and Janet Buckley, who had been co-opted in 2015. Mr Riley noted that Mrs Dawson had been forced to stand down due to pressure of work and he thanked for her efforts.

Her departure left a vacancy for the Company Secretary post and for someone to look after insurance matters and he appealed for volunteers.

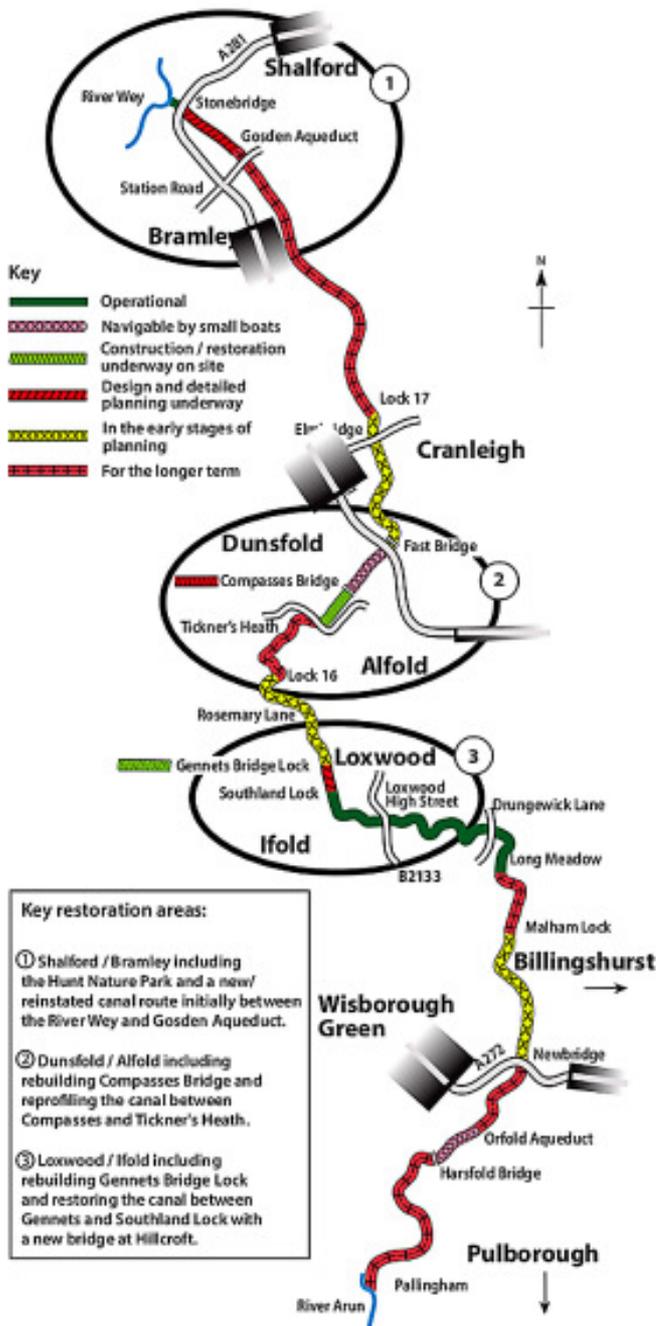
This marked the end of the AGM's formal business.



Graeme Lewington of the Wey & Arun Canal Trust then gave a talk about the current work on the canal.

Graeme described himself as a skipper, crew, speaker and general dogsbody!

AGM report



Graeme then described the hugely impressive projects at Bramley, Dunsfold and Loxwood. The Trust had about 3000 members, of whom about 300 were active and in 2015 they had put in 13,000 man-hours of work, equivalent to £308,000 in kind. A total of £750,000 had been spent on restoration in 2015.

The re-opening of Compasses Bridge at Dunsfold was planned for 2nd October 2016, which would mark the 200th anniversary of the canal's opening. Other plans for 2016 include the planning applications for Bramley Link Phase 1 and a new visitor centre next to the A281. 3 or 4 other possible future projects were also being explored.

All in all, a very good talk and a very impressive restoration project.

The next item on the AGM agenda was the presentation of the **Robin Higgs Award**, which this year went to David and Rosemary Millett in recognition of their efforts in the past 40+ years. David has finally given up the job of



He started with a brief history of the canal, which had been formally abandoned at about the same time that the Basingstoke Canal first went bankrupt. He then showed a list of the locks with their current status, which went from 'restored and accessible' to 'on private land and inaccessible, only visible as a change in the level of the canal bed'. They had 23 miles of canal to restore to reconnect the Wey Navigation with the Arun.

organising speakers for the monthly Chobham social evenings (and happily we do have a replacement!).

continued

Dick King came on next to give the report from the Boat Company.

Statistics for number of trips and passenger numbers were almost identical to those of 2014, but the gross profit was up by nearly £3,000 and the amount paid to the Society came to an amazing £52,137. This included rent of the barn and repayment of the loan to buy the JP11.



Charters were going well this year, including this recent Pirate Party which drank the bar dry.

Dick mentioned that the Society had recently bought a 12 seat, 32ft long trip boat from the Chichester Canal Society. For practical reasons it is insured in the name of JP Canal Cruises, but it will need a separate group to run it - *volunteers please!*

Thanks to a local member, the boat has a mooring on the offside in Woodham and will operate, initially at least, in Woking. Some work is needed on the hull and she will then go to Ash Lock for painting before, hopefully making her debut at the Woking Canal Festival.

Finally, Dick reminded members that free evening cruises are on offer on the JP11 from Colt Hill on 13th June, 4th July, 1st August, 5th September and 3rd October. Please pre-book.

After a tea break, **Jeff Hill** reported on the activities of the Work Party. 2015 had been a busy year:

Regular Society Work Party (*leader: Kevin Redway*)

- *More scrub, overhanging tree and other clearance (K J Castle)*
- *Clearance of the Greywell Tunnel Portal*
- *Refurbishment of the Colt Hill wharf area*
- *Rebuilding of Wilderness Weir near Lock 28*

Visiting Work Parties (*WRG – leaders: Dave Wedd, Dave Hearnden*)

- *Dogmersfield rhododendron clearance*
- *Lock quadrant rebuilding etc at Locks 23/24 (Martin Ludgate below)*



Society Engineering Team (*leader: John Wharf*)

- *BCA Patrol boat rebuild*
- *Weedcutting in Woking*

AGM report continued

In 2015, the Society had spent £25,000 on plant hire, materials, equipment maintenance etc and the Work Party had put in £550 man-days of effort (=£42,000 value in kind).

Work done or scheduled for 2016 included:

Regular Society Work Party

- *Bank/overhanging tree/rhododendron clearance at Deepcut (right)*
- *Deepcut Depot tidy-up*
- *Depth survey during Swan Cutting investigation*
- *Bridge Barn water/disposal facility refurbishment*
- *Woking Canal Festival preparations and setting up*
- *Refurbishment of the new Society small trip boat*
- *Refurbishment of Little Tunnel Bridge and Last 5 Miles heritage path*
- *Refurbishment of Fly II workboat*
- *Landing stages at Farnborough Road/Runways End*

Visiting Work Party - KESCRG

- *Rhododendron clearance at Deepcut*

Society Engineering Team

- *Weedcutting and Weedcutter repairs*
- *Boys Brigade open boat repainting*

The presentation finished with a big thank-you to the Work Party for all their efforts.

The last report, the Chairman's, came from Philip Riley (*see pages 3/4*). He mentioned the new trip boat and asked for suggestions for a new name. *Kitty* had been suggested, after one of the barge horses in the 1950s. *Alec Harmsworth* and *Lord Onslow* were also



Rhododendron clearance, before and after.



suggested ,but *Kitty* won on a clear show of hands.

Finally, Tim Dodwell wound up the proceedings. He felt that there was a clear need for a boat in Woking and observed that it was 54 years since he and his brother John had organised the first Woking rally.

He said that Philip Riley had thanked many people, but he also deserved thanks for the tremendous amount of effort that he put in.

Society Accounts for 2015

Summary of accounts for year ended 31 December 2015

Income and expenditure account

	2015 £	2014 £
Income		
Subscriptions	8,092	8,549
Donations - general	2,662	2,046
Bequests	8,000	3,100
Grants received	360	5,450
Gift Aid Recoveries	2,006	4,010
Income from subsidiaries	41,637	31,770
Income from sales of assets	0	26,000
Fundraising income	2,020	5,496
Interest received	551	532
	<u>65,328</u>	<u>86,954</u>
Less expenditure		
Projects and working parties	(17,358)	(27,908)
Newsletter	(4,096)	(3,736)
Postage, stationery and printing	(5,949)	(1,971)
Insurance	(4,961)	(4,717)
Depreciation less profit on sale of asset	(1,407)	(2,936)
Equipment maintenance	(4,223)	(2,291)
Rallies and events	(660)	(656)
Accountants' fee	(1,625)	(1,500)
Donations / sponsorships	(1,981)	(390)
Travel and subsistence	(87)	(35)
Other expenditure	(4,194)	(4,736)
	<u>(46,541)</u>	<u>(50,875)</u>
Net income	<u>18,787</u>	<u>36,079</u>

Balance Sheet

Fixed assets		
Investment in subsidiary companies	101	101
Freehold land & buildings	50,412	50,412
Plant & equipment	4,498	5,905
Amounts due from subsidiary company		
Loans - JPCC	133,111	133,896
SHCC	6,979	6,979
Profit for year - subsidiaries	41,637	7,672
Other debtor	2,006	4,122
Cash at bank and in hand	125,424	135,637
Accrued expenses	(3,015)	(2,358)
Net assets	<u>361,153</u>	<u>342,366</u>
General fund	357,424	333,285
Restricted fund	3,729	9,081
Designated fund	0	0
Total funds	<u>361,153</u>	<u>342,366</u>

Out and about



(Thanks to James Taylor for the photo)

Although it is disappointing that the repairs to the Dogmersfield slip did not take place this winter, the BCA's contractors and rangers have been far from idle.

One major piece of work was the relining of the western half of the Ash embankment with a bentonite blanket and clay; leaks had been noted in the embankment. Bentonite comes from volcanic ash and has various medicinal uses, but its value for the canal is that it swells when wet and forms an impervious layer. Unlike a layer of rubber that can be punctured by a boat hook, bentonite is self-sealing.

The Ash embankment's potential for causing

devastation if breached is one of the reasons that the canal rates as the number one risk to public safety in Surrey, so the other half will be relined next winter.

The inhabitants of Woking were surprised to see their length of canal emptying in March, but this was to enable repairs to be done to the culvert that takes the Rive Ditch under the canal at Horsell Common.

The canal was dammed at Monument and Skew Bridge and a huge amount of effort went into rescuing over a ton of fish from the canal before it was drained. These included an estimated 21,000 roach, a 5kg catfish, 4 eels,

on the canal

150 pike and 5 carp, including this magnificent specimen. The number of fish was a lot higher



than expected, which is good news for the general health of the canal, as is the fact that a lot less rubbish than expected was found.



Once drained (*above*), the culvert was replaced with a plastic pipe (*below*) and the canal was refilled.



Elsewhere repairs were done to the sills of Locks 18 and 19 at Deepcut, and Storm Katie in late March brought a couple of dozen trees down on the canal that had to be dealt with.



The BCA's dredger *Unity* has been used to remove trees in the past, but unfortunately is still out of action. The Society has offered to contribute to repairs when it is decided what these are to be.

BATS

Bat surveys in the Greywell tunnel are done every winter. The western end is more difficult to access, which may be why there is no report for January this year at that end.

Greywell Tunnel				
Survey date	Jan-15	Feb-15	Jan-16	Feb-16
Eastern end				
Natterer's bat	484	35	452	40
Daubenton's bat	44	6	20	4
Unidentified bat	1	0	2	0
Western end				
Natterer's bat	34	19		10
Daubenton's bat	4	4		0
Unidentified bat	0	0		0

Interesting that there seems to be a mass exodus from the eastern end in February, but less so from the Basingstoke end. Wonder how the temperature in the two parts compares?

Events

Canal to close for Farnborough Airshow

Farnborough International have asked that a small portion of the Canal between Eelmoor and Norris Bridges be closed during flying hours at this year's Farnborough Airshow. This is as a result of new safety regulations introduced following the Shoreham Airshow crash last year restricting low level flying. As a major event supporting the national economy Hampshire County Council and Basingstoke Canal Authority are happy to support Farnborough International so that they can comply with the new regulations brought into place following the CAA final report from their Civil Air Display Review.

A joint press release from Farnborough International and Hampshire County Council has now been issued on the Farnborough International website www.farnborough.com

Q: Where will the Canal be closed?

A: The Canal and towpath from a point just east of Eelmoor Bridge to a point just west of Norris Bridge will be closed as part of the Airshow perimeter during the hours of flying on 4 - 9 July (noon to approx. 4.30pm) and 11 - 17 July (noon to approx. 5.30pm).

Q: Why weren't Canal users consulted?

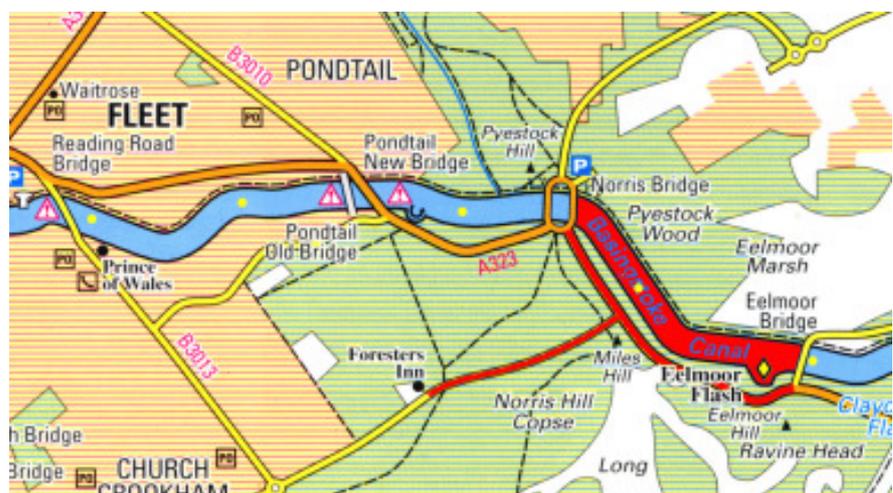
A: Farnborough International are reacting to changes in national safety regulations made by the Civil Aviation Authority which have only recently been finalised; it wasn't until April that we were aware that there would be an implication for the Canal, unfortunately that meant there was no time to conduct any form of consultation before the decision had to be made about this year's Airshow.

Q: Will I be able to stand on the towpath, or on a moored boat between Eelmoor and Norris Bridges to watch the flying displays?

A: No – the area will be secured by the Airshow's security team. Safety regulations mean that no-one is allowed in this area during the flying displays.

A section of the A323 Fleet to Aldershot road from its junction with Norris Hill Road and its junction Laffans Road will also be closed at the same times, together with a section of Aldershot Road from its junctions with the A323 Fleet Road and eastern boundary of The Forester public house.

Closed canal and road



Woking Canal Festival 6/7th August 2016

Provisional Programme

Saturday 6 August

- 10.00am Parade of boats - Canal
- 11.00am BCS Opening Ceremony - Stage
- 11.30am Fairground Organ
- 11.30am HNBC VIP boat trips - Canal
- 12.00pm Blazing Saddlers folk group
- 12.45pm Fairground Organ
- 1.00pm Thames Valley Morrismen
- 1.30pm Fairground Organ
- 1.45pm Punch & Judy
- 2.00pm HNBC Anniversary Event - HNBC marquee
- 3.00 pm HNBC Auction - HNBC marquee
- 2.15 pm Music - Stage
- 3.00pm Morris Dancing
- 3.15pm Uncle Charlie - Outside; If wet, BCS marquee
- 3.45pm Fairground Organ
- 4.00pm Nick Putz Circus Artist - Stage
- 4.30pm Close

- 5.30pm BCS Member's Private Event - BCS marquee (*see below*)

Sunday 7 August

- 10.00am Parade of boats - Canal
- 11.30am Fairground Organ - Outside
- 12.15pm Bourne Brass Band - Stage
- 1.00pm Rampant Roosters Morrismen
- 1.30pm Bourne Brass Band - Stage
- 2.15pm Morris Dancing - Outside
- 2.45pm Mikron Act 1 - HNBC marquee
- 2.45pm Circus Act - Outside
- 3.15pm Fairground Organ - Outside
- 3.30pm Morris Dancing - Outside
- Mikron Act 2 - HNBC marquee
- 4.00pm Johnathon - Circus Act
- 4.30pm Fairground Organ - Outside
- 4.45pm BCS Closing ceremony - Stage

12.30 to 4.00pm: Sat / Sun
Alternate HNBC 50th film show and BCS
Historical film show - Cinema Tent

Monday 8 August

Break-down and clear site.

50th Anniversary Party

Members of the Canal Society are cordially invited to the 50th Anniversary party at 5.30 on the Saturday. To help us with catering, please let Dick King know you are coming (wcf2016@btinternet or 01730 264178). *Those who do this will receive a free copy of our souvenir booklet on arrival.*

Please note that there is NO on-site parking and visitors are encouraged to use public transport.

We are hoping to operate our new 12-seat trip boat at the event and we need people to help with this. In the long run we shall need not just crew, but also administration and maintenance. At the festival we will need people to organise the passengers.

Again, please contact Dick.

Pinkerton's progress

Dick King writes in Pinkerton's Progress:

Thanks to the stalwart team of Duncan Paine, George Rhoades, Dave Foster, Chris Hunter and Martin Leech, and their long-suffering 'other-halves', JP was ready to complete the March practice and training sessions on time. Those at the AGM will have seen that besides painting the deck top, the water tank compartment was refurbished to overcome the problems from last season, safety steps installed from the well deck, and all windows removed and refurbished. Other suggestions were taken up to enhance the passenger experience and comfort. Galley additions include an extra bottle chiller and the introduction of a sales system to enable a more accurate stock control.

It was most gratifying to see so many willing volunteers prepared to help put JP through the dry-dock work of bottom scrubbing and painting. Thanks go to Tim Cadle and his crew who transited JP before and afterwards; I hope the extra training for the new skippers proves beneficial. Special thanks to the helpers, many of whom did several days: Duncan Paine, Phil Hardyman, Steve James, Ken Sankey, Chris Guthrie, Alan Norris, Curt Slater, Julia Jacs, Roger Gough, and Cheryl Richards. A job very well done.

The annual MCA review of JP's passenger licence and the out-of-water inspection have both been completed, and we can look forward to another busy season.

An Online Booking System has been introduced so that clients can book online for public and theme trips. This system is working well having collected £760 in the first two weeks. This will greatly reduce the workload of David Horwood,

Bookings Manager, who can now concentrate mainly on charter bookings. There is also a Voucher Scheme running in parallel but the Company does not receive that money until the voucher is used.

The position of Maintenance Manager is still vacant and more volunteers to join the Committee would be very welcome.

The S&HCC Ltd. and JPCC Ltd Committee members are as follows:

Dick King* (Chair, Roster Manager & Website), Tim Cadle* (Vice Chair, Training Manager & Health and Safety), Penny Cadle (Publicity & Website), Trevor Carter (Uniforms), Mark Griffiths, Jeff Hill (Refuelling & PBA Rep.), David Horwood* (Bookings Manager), Steve James* (Company Secretary & Treasurer), David Lloydlangston* (Quartermaster & Bar Licensee), Graham Nicholson (Roster Manager), ***Vacant*** (Maintenance Manager).

(* indicates a Director):

By chance we heard of a Fresher's Afternoon for recently retired folk organised in Farnham for early March. Penny Cadle and Graham Nicholson together with other Society members manned a stand.

The response was incredible, and following that, Tim organised a taster cruise inviting as many people as possible. We now have around 25 names of volunteers, many of whom have confirmed their interest. They will start appearing on crew rosters during May, so please give them the usual warm JP welcome, and help them learn the ropes.

Lengthsmen

Mike Gordon writes to his team:

April saw the Lengthsmen scheme grow to 43 active volunteers. We are now well represented in all areas over the 52 Km length. Even the difficult bit between Ash lock and Norris Bridge (Army Town) has two new Lengthsmen out on a regular basis. As you will have already noticed, I often tempt you with extra curricular activities. Some are pleasant and not necessarily within the remit of the Lengthsman Scheme, like a day out on a work boat, while other tasks such as flushing the public water taps are more tedious but perhaps more important. These requests are from the BCA in general and tend to be easy but time consuming. The thing is, whatever we can manage to do is something less for the rangers to be concerned with. To move a work boat and fish out flotsam and jetsam along the way is a pleasant day out on the water for us and it can save the rangers 10 - 12 man hours. Equally, flushing the taps to comply with the latest public health directives is a simple job that saves the rangers masses of time and effort. This is the effectiveness of the Lengthsman scheme right down to your simple tow path walk. Being observant and doing a little bit of housework means a ranger doesn't have to do it and can concentrate on more serious big jobs.

Patrol boat.

Most of you will know that since January I have been involved in getting the BCA's new patrol boat out on regular inspection trips. It has not been easy or straight forward with a lot of directives and new regulations to be tackled. One of which was the new requirement that any person in charge of it, or indeed any work boat must be qualified, even if there are no passengers involved. I have just completed the

RYA course and am now a qualified skipper. So, along with the skippers already taking out 'Rosebud' we'll be taking out the Patrol boat. Whereas Rosebud goes out single handed with just the skipper, the patrol boat needs a volunteer crew of at least one.



I know already that a number of you have expressed an interest in crewing and taking the chance of enjoying trips out on the water. I can now invite you to take the next step and come along for a familiarisation trip to see first hand what it's like and chat over what is involved. For the month of May I will try and make the patrol boat available most days so please feel free to get back to me as soon as possible with a couple of convenient dates and times. At the moment we can accommodate most days and times including early evening. Trips will be about 60-90 minutes and limited to a skipper and five. Exciting times are ahead!

Do please come along and get to know the boat. We intend patrolling the entire navigable canal so there is a chance for everyone, regardless of where your length is, to be involved. Absolutely no obligation. (I should make it clear that this is not within the lengthsman scheme but a volunteer role with the BCA.)

If you would like more info or chat about this exciting new development please feel free to contact me. 07941654965.

Mike Gordon

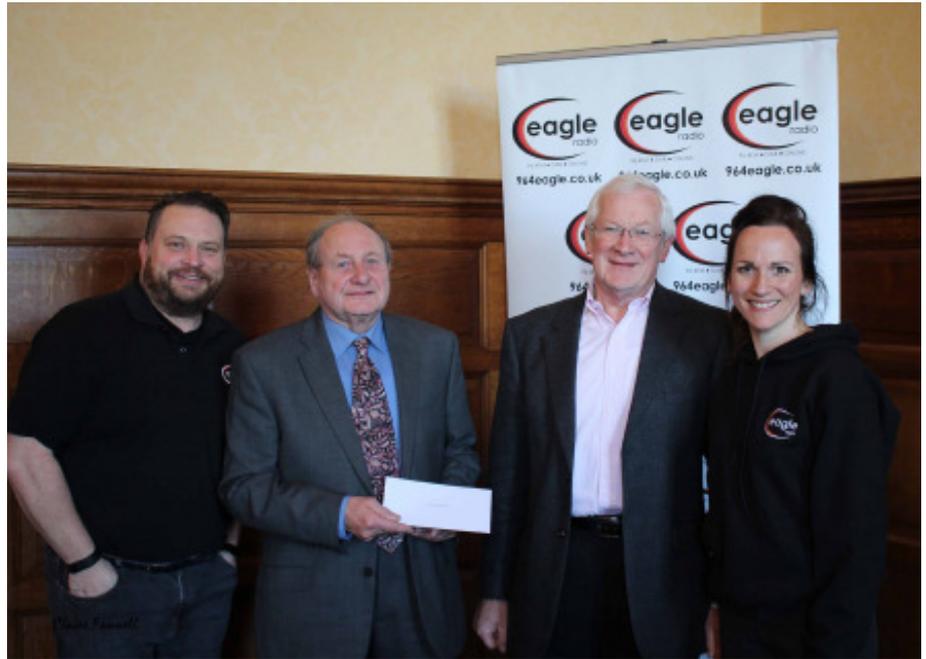
Eagle Radio grant

Eagle Radio grant

Peter Gordon and Breakfast Bev from “The Peter Gordon Breakfast Show” on Eagle Radio with Dick King and Philip Riley at the handover of a £500 cheque from the Eagle Radio Trust to help pay for the Woking Canal Festival.

Many thanks to Eagle Radio!

Photo by Claire Funnell



From Professor J A Davis MD FRCP F RCPCH

Dear Sir,

As a member of your society, I was interested to read the article on King John’s castle in your winter issue. Though I am now resident in Cambridge, I spent my childhood in Crookham and have fond memories of the canal, which my father, Major H E Davis, played a considerable part in preserving as a public amenity and which we used as a playground. I and my brother discovered the castle when exploring the environment of the canal before the war (I am now 92 years old) and used it to stage the mock battles that boys delight in; I always playing the part of John ~ my Christian name. In those days the site was overgrown with brambles and brushwood. I might add that my maternal ancestors on one side of my mother’s family came from North Warnborough and may even have taken part in the castle’s defence when besieged by the King of France.

Yours faithfully

John A Davis



King John’s castle at last year’s Magna Carta celebrations.

Ramblers walks

Canal Walks

In celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the reopening of the Basingstoke Canal, Woking & District Ramblers has organised a series of walks along the Basingstoke Canal towpath that are focussed on the upcoming Woking Canal Festival. From Tuesday 2nd August to Thursday 11th, six walks will cover 32 miles of towpath from Greywell Tunnel (eastern portal) in the west to the Wey Navigation in the east. The walks on Saturday August 6th and Sunday 7th will both arrive from opposite directions at the Canal Festival site, where all walkers are encouraged to stay on for lunchtime refreshments and see the historic narrowboats plus other attractions. All other walks both start and end at the train stations shown. These walks are open for anyone to join and are free of charge.

Further details, including the precise meeting points at each of the **train stations** listed below, can be found on the Woking & District Ramblers website at:

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/woking-district>.

For any questions email:

info@wokingramblers.org

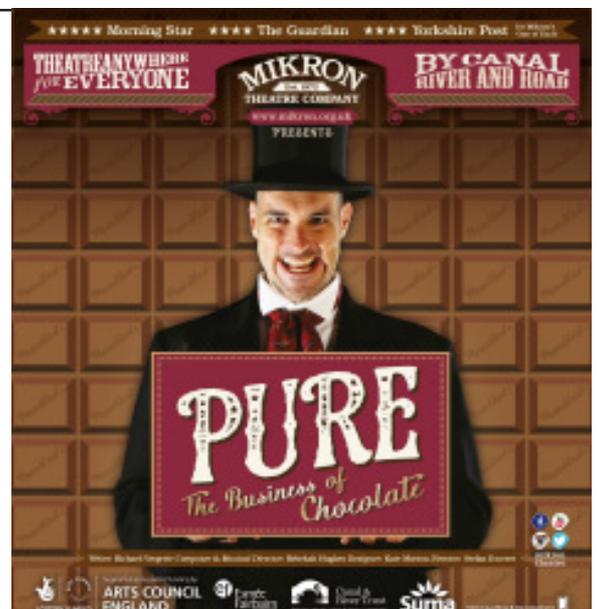
- Tuesday August 2: Start 10:30 at Hook. End at Winchfield. Total walk distance 9 miles
- Thursday August 4: Start 10:30 at Winchfield. End at Fleet. Total walk distance 10 miles
- Saturday August 6: Start 10:30 at Brookwood. End at Woking Canal Festival. Total walk distance 4 miles
- Sunday August 7: Start 10:30 at Byfleet & New Haw. End at Woking Canal Festival. Total walk distance 5 miles
- Tuesday August 9: Start 10:30 at Fleet. End at Ash Vale. Total walk distance 8 miles
- Thursday August 11: Start 10:30 at Ash Vale. End at Brookwood. Total walk distance 6 miles

Please note that the start times shown are actual walk departure times.

Mikron Theatre

Please note that there will not be the usual performance by the Mikron Theatre Company in Fleet this year. Instead, they will be performing at the Woking Canal Festival on Sunday 7th August. The performance will start at 2.45 in the Canal Society's marquee. There will be a break before the second half begins at 3.30. There will be the usual collection.

The show is called PURE - The story of Chocolate.



Letters

Dear Editor,

Your chairman writes in the spring Basingstoke Canal News that Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council are now taking an interest in a footpath linking Greywell to the former canal terminus in the town centre. This is good news.

Your chairman also writes that there is no prospect of restoring the canal as far as the original terminus. I disagree. That was the original aim of the Canal Society. More important, there are those who call the Basingstoke a failed restoration as it doesn't get the use partly because it ends in the middle of nowhere.

When I think of those restorations which have restored through lost town centres – Rochdale at Rochdale and Huddersfield Narrow at Slaithwaite, not to mention Wilts and Berks Canal Society now thinking that because of rapidly changing urban land use, they could restore part of the Swindon route – I am disappointed.

New routes can be discovered, parallel tunnels can be built, motorways can be undercut (see Rochdale again). Difficult it may be, expensive it certainly will be but I feel the Basingstoke restoration is insecure financially and operationally unless it has an attractive destination to lure visitors to use the canal in numbers.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Handford

Our Chairman, Philip Riley, has written a lengthy reply disagreeing with Michael, for which, unfortunately we don't have room here. I too feel that the cost of restoring the line to

Basingstoke would be better spent at the moment in providing an endowment for future maintenance that might persuade the C&RT to take over the canal.

Dear Roger,

I was fortunate to be around when the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society came into being, and found myself involved, as a founder member, amid the hectic days of numerous public meetings expounding the possibilities of restoration of the Basingstoke Canal.

One of our very first 'official' working parties in the 1960s was at Ash Vale barge-yard when the Society took over the lease as a base for future operations. I helped with tidying up the site which had not been used for many years. I was fortunate to be able to keep my fibreglass canoe there in the 'loft' of the old workshop. With friends we would foray out along the canal; it was ideal with a draught of only 3 inches, which enabled us to explore further than most others. I also helped set up the machinery group as a focus point for obtaining and repairing suitable equipment for any future restoration requirements.

Amongst the rubbish being cleared from the site, I found a small cast iron plate, in a very rusty condition, which I subsequently restored. The raised inscription on it was C.P. W.A.B. C&N 1896. It was some time before I found out what these letters meant. Again, I was fortunate to know the 'Oracle' – Tony Harmsworth, who appeared as the only person with 'the knowledge'. He told me it was an identification plate off one of the old barges when this newly formed company took over the Basingstoke

Letters

Canal. It stood for The Company of Proprietors of The Woking, Aldershot & Basingstoke Canal & Navigation 1896. He knew that the canal ownership and the navigation rights were



classed as separate entities but in reality were never disconnected.

Fast forward to the present day and during one of my meanderings around a local collectors' fair in Farnham, I was totally amazed to find another similar cast iron plate amongst the eclectic array of items for sale. The vendor had no idea where it came from; it was just among some miscellaneous metal plates offered for sale. This plate was also marked with a raised inscription, but this time the lettering was C.P. B.C.N. 1794.

This was indeed a 'chance in a million' find as it was an original barge identification of ownership for The Company of Proprietors of the Basingstoke Canal Navigation 1794. Of course this is the year the canal was officially declared open for navigation.

I have subsequently spoken to some of my more knowledgeable friends and none would have recognised this plate if they had seen it for sale, as they were not aware of its true significance.

I believe that I was really lucky to be one of the very few people able to identify this historic plate and 'save' both of them from obscurity. As far as I am aware, I now possess the only two examples of these identification plates still extant.

It was a very rewarding discovery to enhance my 50th year of Basingstoke Canal membership.

Yours truly

Howard Diamond

Dear Roger,

When I moved from Surrey to Oxfordshire, I cancelled most of my previous connections with local affairs – but not my membership of the Canal Society. When the Basingstoke Canal News arrives, I sit down and read it from cover to cover, remembering happy times on working parties when my children were small – they are now in their fifties! Any many enjoyable evenings on the Pinkerton; I reckon I was quite a good barmaid - & helmsman, come to that. Here in Oxfordshire the only canal contact I have is to walk my dog along the towpath of the sadly silted remains of the canal near Wantage. I wonder if there are any plans to restore it. Maybe the local people here should visit the Basingstoke and see what can be achieved. I shall think of you all when the Farnborough Airshow is on.

Good wishes to the Canal team.

Sincerely

Ann Barnes

Ann might be glad to know that there is indeed a Wilts & Berks Trust restoring her canal. More information at www.wbct.org.uk/

Canal in trouble

“Can the Basingstoke Canal be saved for the public?”

Sir,

Every resident along the thirty-seven miles of the Basingstoke Canal must hear with dismay of the probability of its being allowed to run dry and then converted into building sites and market gardens. Without a doubt, however, this will happen and the Canal will cease to exist unless some very active steps are immediately taken for its preservation. Already negotiations have taken place between the mortgagee and some of the local authorities with a view of the latter being allowed to pull down the bridges, throw them into the canal and make flat roads across the bed.

We have been so accustomed to look upon this lovely water-way as one of the permanent beauties and attractions of the localities through which it passes that I do not think it had occurred to any of us that the charming walks along its lovely towpath, the delightful boating trips, the excellent coarse fishing, the shady spots for picnics, and the miles of skating in winter, might some day be denied to us.

There are many other beautiful watercourses, but I do not know of any other equally charming stretch of water in the country where the public have uninterrupted access to the towpath for thirty-seven miles.

Nominally the towpath is private property, but in practice the public have had free access to it. In summer they have rowed on the water and picnicked on the banks, in winter they have skated on it, while the local anglers have had good sport out of it. As soon as the first bridge is pulled down and thrown into the canal all this will be lost to the public for ever.

If anything is to be done to stay this devastating act of vandalism immediate steps must be taken. Will anyone who has at heart the preservation to us and our children of one of the loveliest lengths of water in the country communicate with me without delay so that we can make some effort to retain it?”

The above letter from E. Southgate Tay is reproduced from the Hampshire Observer of 28th October 1911.

The photo below of Lock 8 was taken in March, 1911 and one can see where Mr Tay’s concerns were coming from.



The canal was owned by a Dorset land-owner, William Carter, but it was being used as a basis for a scam involving the sale of multiple shares in the worthless London & South Western Canal Company by swindlers Horatio Bottomley and Ernest Hoolley. Fortunately the Army took the canal over in 1914 and put at least the lower part back in order. Carter sold the canal to Alec Harmsworth in 1923.

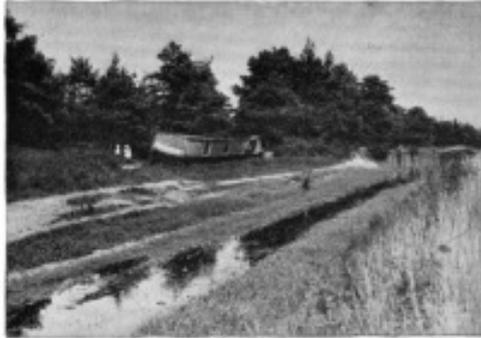
The page opposite dates from the previous attempt to sell the canal at auction in 1904. It didn’t sell, but William Carter bought it the next year apparently because he thought it must be good value because it was so cheap (£10,000). He soon discovered his mistake!

one hundred years ago

766

The Bystander, September 7, 1904

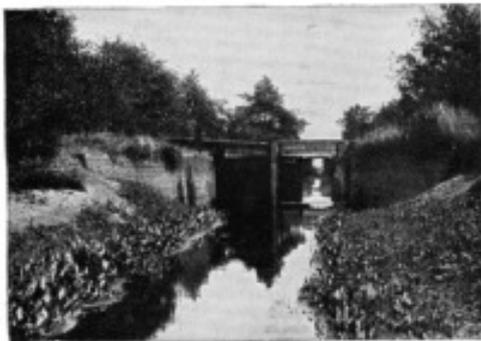
A Canal up for Auction



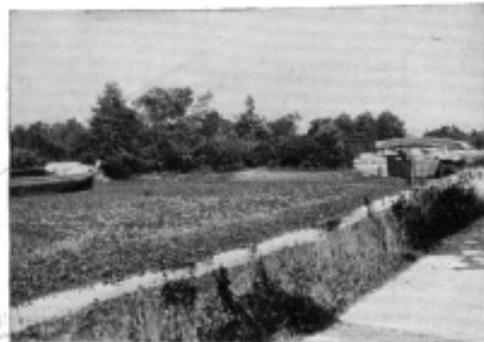
Children playing in the bed of the canal near Alton



Lock-keeper's House, near Brookwood



Old lock near Wesleyan Mission, between Brookwood and Aldershot



The lock near Bisley Camp—canal nearly dry



A shady spot near Bisley



An old stone bridge over the canal near Aldershot



The canal crosses over the L & S.W.R. near Aldershot (North Camp)



Two of the old canal boats in ruins near North Camp, Aldershot

(The Basingstoke and Aldershot Canal, which is to be sold by auction shortly, is thirty-seven miles long, and runs through some of the prettiest scenery of Hampshire and Surrey. It joins the river Wey, and so runs down to London—a distance of seventy miles in all. It has been allowed to go to ruin lately, and the canal bed is very nearly dry in places.)

BCS Membership

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT

Thank you very much to those members who paid their 2016 subscriptions promptly. Unfortunately, we still have quite a large number of members who have not yet paid the subs due on 1st March. If you have not yet paid and wish to remain a member would you kindly let me have your payment as soon as possible or advise me if you no longer wish to belong to the Society. The amounts due are shown below. Adult £10, Family £12, Senior £5, Senior (pair) £7, Group £15.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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

Harry & Liz Glover of Frensham
Robert & Jane Stansbury of Farnham
Mary Clarke of Whitley Bay

Neal & Cheryl Foster of Alton
Kevin Gillard of Hartley Wintney
Christopher Jones of Tongham
Craig Erlebach of Ash Vale
David Sayce of Reigate
Peter Johnson of Farnham
Stephen Samuel of Farnham
Neil & Beverly Taylor of Farnham
Kevin Gidney of Epsom
Cathy Hill of Fleet
Alan & Angie Rose of Southampton
David Rowe of Bracknell
Peter Cutler of Alresford
Curtis Slater of Farnham
Steve Monks of Sherfield on Loddon
Nigel Powers of Farnborough
Peter & Terry Inskip of Ash Vale
Celia Chapple of Woking

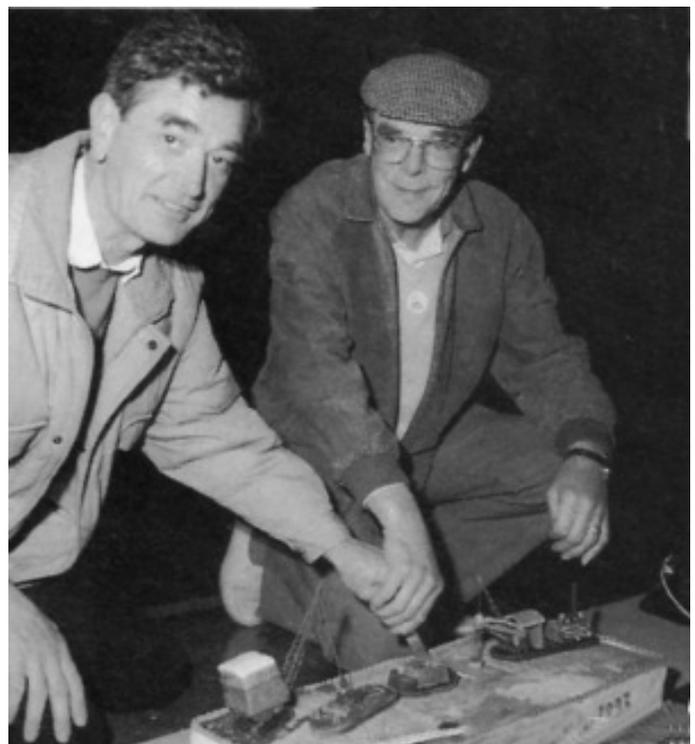
*Doreen Hornsey
Membership Secretary*

Peter Caiger

Older members of the Society will be saddened to hear of the death of Peter Caiger.

If not one of the actual founder members of the Society, he was certainly active from the very early days and was the Social Secretary in 1971. He subsequently joined the steam dredger group and was for many years the 'Saturday Driver' of *Perseverance*. It was fitting that he shared the honour of making the final grab with Ian Edwards at Pondtail in 1992.

At his funeral the Basingstoke Canal Society was named as one of the charities to donate to and his brother, son and daughter-in-law very kindly sent the Society a donation of £150 in his memory. We send them our thanks and condolences.



Peter Caiger (right) helping to cut the cake at the dredger's farewell party

BCS information



The Bulletin is now up to Issue 27.

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 July 2016

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.*

Editorial Team: **Editor:** Roger Cansdale* 29 Knoill Road, Fleet, Hants GU51 4PT
01252-678608

e-mail: roger.cansdale@ntlworld.com

Presidents: Tim & Elizabeth Dodwell

Chairman: Philip Riley*

Vice-Chairman: Martin Leech*

Hon. Secretary: Freddie Dawson*

Hon. Treasurer: Guy Faller*

The officers of the Canal Society may be contacted by e-mail via the Society's website at

www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk/directory.htm
or by telephone on 0796-4357442

Membership Secretary: Doreen Hornsey
Working Party Information: Janet Buckley*
Trip Boat Manager: Dick King*
Trip Boat Bookings: David Horwood
Events Organiser: Vacant
Sales Manager & Mail Order Sales: Denise Smith
Exhibitions Manager: John Ross
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Archivist: Rev David Tonkinson
Chobham talks: Malcolm Brickwood
Director: Verna Smith*
Director: Kevin Redway*
Director: Jeff Hill*
Director: John Wall*
Director: Stuart Black*

General Canal Society contact number: 0796-4357442

Basingstoke Canal Authority

Canal Centre, Mytchett Place Road, Mytchett, Surrey GU16 6DD

01252-370073

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

Kitty's cabin



The cabin of the Society's new small trip boat Kitty looking forward (above) and aft (below)

