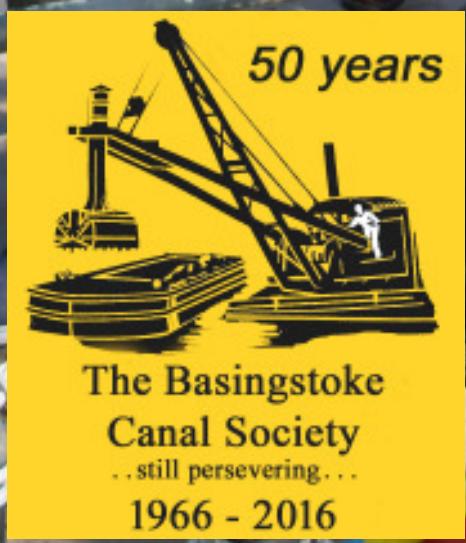




The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 251 Autumn 2016





Editorial

“1966 - 2016”

50 years eh? Where did it all go?

Perhaps more to the point, where will the next 50 years go?

I think I would be prepared to bet that the Basingstoke Canal will still be there, because it seems to have a remarkable ability to survive when many others were abandoned, but who will be running it?

Whoever it is, they probably won't have enough money and will need volunteer help, so the Canal Society will also need to survive.

I think we missed a bit of a trick at the Canal Festival by not having a better coordinated campaign to get more new members. We may get a few but it could have been dozens and dozens.

However, it isn't too late to capitalise on the success of the event, but we need someone with promotional and advertising skills to spearhead a recruitment drive.

Perhaps we should be thinking of hiring halls for some public meetings using the Society's films or a talk about the history of the canal, to attract potential new members.

Anybody fancy being our Recruitment Director?

*Cover Picture : The Society's 12 seater trip boat Kitty being named by Society president Liz Dodwell.
Photo: Roger Cansdale*

Chairman's Report

Now that the dust has settled on the Woking Canal Festival it is time to reflect on the outcome of the event and to consider its implications for the future.

There is no doubt that the Festival was a huge success. Everyone I spoke to over the two days and all the e-mails, comments and tweets that we have received since then are unanimous in their conclusions that the event was a very enjoyable occasion and that an extremely friendly atmosphere pervaded the celebrations.

In my view, the Festival offered a very appropriate way of marking the Society's 50th anniversary and it also enabled us to promote the canal to a wide section of the public.

The partnership with the Historic Narrow Boat Club undoubtedly made a significant contribution to the success of the Festival and I would like to thank Phil Prettyman (the HNBC Chairman) and his team for the excellent way in which they worked with us to plan, organize and manage the event.

My thanks are also due to our own teams who worked tirelessly to make sure that everything went according to plan. So many members were involved that it would be difficult to thank everyone personally but I think it is appropriate to single out two members who made an exceptional contribution. I refer to Dick King who took on the immense responsibility of leading the organizing team and Peter Harman who was the site manager. Both Dick and Peter quietly went about their business and produced a result of which we can all be proud.

Chairman's report

Thanks are also due to Woking Borough Council who provided an excellent site for the Festival and to the Basingstoke Canal Authority who went the extra mile (well, several extra miles in fact) to make sure that the historic boats were welcomed on to the canal and were able to navigate up to Woking and beyond.

So what conclusions should we draw from the Festival and what implications does it have for the future?

Well there is no doubt that the Festival has made a considerable impact on Woking. A busy canal in the centre of the town is an unfamiliar sight and we were encouraged by the many comments from local residents who were so pleased to see boats almost in their back yards.

Whether this interest in the canal will be sustainable is really down to us so we must redouble our efforts to put Woking on the canal map. This will involve pursuing our various Woking area projects which include an extension to the town wharf, better access between the towpath adjacent to Chobham Road bridge, the restoration of a historic barge (possibly in collaboration with The Lightbox) and the development of a boat basin near the town centre.

We also need to establish a local group to run a trip boat operation using our recently acquired trip boat, *Kitty*.

Looking to the longer term, and bearing in mind that the future of the canal is still very much in the melting pot, we also need to

harness the goodwill generated by the Festival to re-emphasize the message that the canal is highly valued as an amenity by the local community and its future, as a fully navigable waterway, must be secured. We can all play our part in this by regularly reminding local politicians and other community leaders that the Basingstoke Canal is a tremendous asset to Woking and is very worthy of protection and development as a local amenity.

Thanks again to everyone who was involved with the Festival. It was a memorable occasion and a fitting tribute to all the volunteers who have worked so hard over many years to make the canal the beautiful waterway that we see today.

Philip Riley

Wanted - Storage space

The Society has lots of stuff that needs careful storage - display panels, photos, books, sales items, archive material, etc. At present this occupies space in the homes and garages of a number of people.

This is unsatisfactory from several angles, but the cost of hiring enough space from one of the local facilities, such as Yellow Box, would be at least £2000 a year.

Does anyone have any better ideas? We are talking of something the about the size of a garage, dry, preferably warmish to avoid condensation, secure and accessible.

Suggestions to me please.

Roger Cansdale

Woking Canal



Above: Boats of the HNBC queuing to come up the canal below Lock 1 (*Photo: Phil Hardyman*)

If you didn't go to the Woking Canal Festival, you really missed a treat! Fabulous weather throughout the weekend saw hundreds, if not thousands of people enjoying the sight of nearly 50 narrowboats lining the towpath from Chertsey Rd Bridge to Chobham Rd Bridge.

Brookhouse Common also proved to be a very pleasant venue for the event, with plenty of room for a wide variety of stalls and the various entertainments, and all within easy walking distance of the town centre.

One of the most satisfying aspects was the enthusiasm for the canal expressed by the Historic Narrow Boat Club. They were very impressed by the BCA rangers (donning a dry suit to jump into a lock to clear debris from behind the gates obviously made a big impression!). Very well done to Fiona Shipp

and all her team. The welcome that the HNBC boats received from the general public was also a surprise - they said that it was the friendliest canal they had ever been on.

Well done everyone for helping to dispell the myth of cold unfriendly southerners!

The HNBC made a huge contribution to the success of the 50th celebrations and really showed that the Basingstoke Canal is very much open for business. Many of their boats went all the way up to King John's castle either before or after the festival.

Dick King and Peter Harman worked their socks off in the run-up to the event and deserve enormous credit, as do the dozens of volunteers who turned out over the weekend. Thanks to everyone!

Festival 2016

The event

After an introduction from Society Chairman Philip Riley, the Mayor of Woking, Cllr Anne Murray welcomed everyone to the event on the Saturday morning.

Right: Richard Parry, Cllr Anne Murray and Philip Riley

The festival was then formally opened by Richard Parry, the Chief Executive of the Canal & River Trust, a possible future guardian of the Basingstoke Canal. Although Richard did not make any direct reference to this, he did say that the C&RT recognised a responsibility to help all waterways, whatever their ownership.

Once the formalities were complete, everything relaxed and the programme of entertainment began. This included music from various sources, Morris dancing and Punch & Judy, a magic show, a juggler and unicyclist to keep the children happy.

Meanwhile, on the canal, boats paraded up to Arthur's Bridge and back, a very impressive sight.

At the end of the Saturday, the HNBC held an auction of "canal and boating paraphernalia" and the Canal Society hosted its 50th Anniversary Party in its marquee.

Sunday followed a similar pattern but with the addition of a performance by the Mikron Theatre Company in the afternoon.



Right:
Richard
Parry
hoisting the
Society's
flag to open
the festival.



Throughout the weekend, the Society's cinema tent showed some of Arthur Dungate's films of restoration in the 1980s and the 1991 reopening, together with some historic narrow boat films. These all attracted surprisingly large audiences; perhaps we should show them again more widely.

Woking Canal



Above: Nearing the end of a long weekend on the Sunday afternoon, but with the children's entertainers still going strong.

The Canal Society would like to acknowledge the generosity and support for the Woking Canal Festival from the following organisations:

Woking Borough Council
Basingstoke Canal Authority
Surrey County Council
Historic Narrow Boat Club
Byfleet Boat Club

Radiotrade, Basingstoke
Petrofac, Woking
Horsell Scouts
Eagle Radio Trust
Wey Radio

A special thank you to the 60-odd Society members who gave up their time to help set-up on Friday, steward on Saturday & Sunday, or help break-down on Monday.

Thanks to the crews who operated *Kitty* during the most busy boating time that Woking has probably ever seen.

Without all their help, the Festival would simply not have happened. The occasion was well supported by the public, so thank you for being part of it. Hope you managed to see some of the action as well.

Thanks & regards

Dick King

Festival 2016

Right: Nice to see a lot of familiar old faces at the Society's 50th Anniversary party.



Above: Society Presidents Liz and Tim Dodwell in their 1991 Re-opening T-shirts opening the proceedings at the Society's 50th anniversary party. They had hired Accessible Boating's *Madame Butterfly* as floating accomodation for the festival and had many members of their family staying on board to enjoy the event.



Above: Long time Work Party member Brian Smith cutting the cake.

Woking Canal

Right: Some of over 500 visitors to Beatty's traditional cabin. The boat came all the way from Liverpool, some 340 miles, starting in June.



Left: HNBC Chairman Phil Prettyman conducting the club's auction of assorted canalia.

Right: The morning boat parade leaving Spanton's Wharf. The boats went up to turn at Arthur's Bridge before returning.

Thanks to Mark Griffiths and Bob Jervis for photos.



Festival 2016

Right: The HNBC stand attracted a lot of public interest.



Left: HNBC 50th Anniversary cake complete with celebration plaque, one of which was given to the Canal Society and will be displayed on *Kitty*.

Right: There were continuous streams of people viewing the boats from the towpath including *Cassiopeia* here, built in 1935 by Harland & Wolff of Woolwich for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company.



Spanton's wharf



History was repeated in Woking at around 9am on Friday 8th August 2016. A cargo of sawn oak timber was loaded into the historic working boat RENFREW for transportation by canal and river to the Midlands. This was the first timber cargo loaded or unloaded at this site since 1949.

Spanton's Wharf, where the Mayor of Woking welcomed the Basingstoke Canal re-opening boat parade 25 years ago, and the site of Spanton's Timber Yard, is immediately east of the Chertsey Road canal bridge. This year it was adjacent to the Woking Canal Festival, where on the 6th and 7th August local canal enthusiasts and historic canal boat owners celebrated 50 years of the Basingstoke Canal Society, 50 years of the Historic Narrow Boat Club and 25 years since the canal re-opened.

The timber loaded was sawn into 50mm slabs from two giant 10 metre long oak logs, of 750mm diameter, at Honeysuckle Bottom Sawmill, near East Horsley, Surrey. It had been imported from France, and is to be used for the restoration of wooden working narrow boats in Braunston, near Rugby. The timber will be transported by canal and river, via the Basingstoke Canal, Rivers Wey and Thames, and the Oxford Canal, in the hold of the working narrow boat RENFREW. It will then be seasoned for a couple of years before being sawn to size, steamed in a steam box made of steel barrels, and bent onto the frames of a boat.

RENFREW was built in Northwich in 1936 at the Yarwood's works, for the newly formed Grand Union Canal Carrying Company. A large fleet of motor and unpowered narrow boats

in use again

were built 80 years ago to carry cargoes on the widened canal route from London to Birmingham. RENFREW is 80 years old this year, and has been in working trim all its life.

The wooden boats being restored in Braunston are:

1. LUCY, built in 1951, a butty whose last commercial loads in 1970 were coal from Atherstone to London, towed by the same RENFREW which will bring its new timbers from Woking.
2. CLENT, the last wooden motor narrow boat built at Rickmansworth for the Fellows, Morton and Clayton company in 1948. This is its second restoration after being raised from the bottom of a salt flash in Cheshire in 1979.
3. JAMES LOADER, a wooden tug from Birmingham, built in 1946 for Leonard Lee Ltd to tow strings of open day boats from coalfields to power stations and industry on the extensive Birmingham Canal Navigations. The tug has visited the Basingstoke Canal three times in the last 15 years, and is brother to the CHRISTOPHER JAMES.

The last load received at Spanton's was 50 tons of timber carried in the "Gwendoline", 20 standards from SS "Salvas" in Surrey Docks, on 27th June 1949 (when I was 14 days old).

Peter Boyce (age 67)
Owner and steerer of RENFREW

James Loader

As mentioned, the JAMES LOADER has been on the Basingstoke several times and had quite a bit of work done on its hull in the Deepcut dry dock in 2006 (*below*).



Three years later, the tug came to the rescue when the Woodham houseboat *Dragonfly* needed to go to the dry dock at Pyrford marina on the River Wey for some welding.



Above: The *James Loader* about to take *Dragonfly* in tow.
(Thanks to Julia Jacs for the photo)

Early days of the

From Flo Fleming

Dear Mr. Cansdale,

I see from the ‘Basingstoke Canal News’ that the 50th anniversary of the S&HCS is to be celebrated in August. I can’t believe it is 50 years since my then husband Jim Woolgar and I moved to Brookwood because the house backed onto a canal. Disappointed to see it was derelict, he said ‘We’ll start a Society to save it’ and promptly put a letter* in the local paper asking anyone interested to contact him.

Surprisingly one of the letters was from a councillor wishing us luck but he didn’t think we’d get anywhere. Following on from the other interested enquiries that he received, the original meeting at our house took place. These were from Dave Gerry, Dieter Jebens, Robert Harris, Les Harris, (no relation to Robert) Dick Snell and I think Paul Dyson (but he may have come a little later.)

Robin Higgs soon came to register his support and was full of enthusiasm and eager to get started. Tim Dodwell came to introduce himself at this time as he was already involved with the canal and it is now so fitting to see that both he and his wife Liz are now presidents. Dick Snell stated he definitely didn’t want to be on the committee. He offered practical help and proved to be amazingly good at persuading people to join us once the public meetings got going.

Dave Gerry became chairman, Jim Woolgar secretary, Les Harris in charge of equipment setting up at public meetings and Dieter Jebens who worked in publicity and made a great job of publicising everything we did. I became minutes secretary and dealt with membership

and the money side although I was useless as treasurer and managed to persuade Robert (I think) to take it on, although I may be wrong about this. Thus the S & H Canal Society was founded. I think we would have preferred to call it the Basingstoke Canal Society but we felt it might be confused with the then current canal ownership.

Meetings were held at our house because it dealt with the problem of us having to find baby sitters. As my husband worked away from home all week I dealt with a great deal of visitors and many phone calls. How I would have loved a mobile phone then. Phone calls came mainly in the evenings and while putting the girls to bed, I was continually having to run up & downstairs to answer the phone. They both thought it was a great game!

Every month a news sheet had to be sent out to make sure everyone interested knew what was happening. I used a 1912 Gestetner which was awful as well as time consuming. The copies were smudged and not in the least professional which thankfully brought June Sparey (now Green) on the scene. She was a newspaper reporter and offered much needed help. As membership increased I have a memory of the pair of us sorting out the sheets and putting them in addressed envelopes as an evening entertainment.

Sometimes the lounge was packed with poly bags waiting for a jumble sale. Sometimes I gave talks to various small groups since I was available during the day time. Occasionally I met councillors. Some long suffering wives and especially my next door neighbour played their part baby sitting. People also came to the door to enquire and sometimes to join, but not

Canal Society

all were friendly! One woman complained that she had come the day before and the office was closed (because I was out!). I had one schoolboy who, as soon as I opened the door, barged in because he wanted to complain. I threw him out, pointing out this was actually my home.

The Society took over my life but it was fun and successful. Dick Snell years later sent me a photograph of me in our rowing boat sitting with a pail on top of Dick's van to collect money during the Fleet carnival parade (right). I expect 'elf 'n safety' would have something to say about that now! I have photos of the protest cruise to the bottom lock where it entered from the River Wey and others of me looking filthy in the bottom of a derelict lock heaving big lumps of rock out.

They were full busy days but inevitably as with so many societies our marriage failed and I left the scene in capable

hands in August 1970. My final activity was producing a daily newsletter for boaters at the 1970 rally on the River Wey at Guildford to publicise the Basingstoke canal.

Best wishes for the next 50 years!

Flo Fleming



* *The letter (23 August 1966)*

Sir,

Having spent a few days of my holiday walking the length of the Basingstoke Canal, I am wondering if the local people appreciate what an amenity they have on their doorsteps. It would appear that many are apathetic and treat it as a convenient rubbish dump; however I know that several people are interested in its possible restoration - although at the moment, due to vandalism and the canal Company's lack of finance, it is still deteriorating. I feel the time is ripe to form a Basingstoke Canal Restoration Society so that a start could be made removing debris and clearing the towpath. Perhaps it might even be possible to re-open it for navigation.

If anyone is interested perhaps they would be kind enough to write (enclosing a stamped addressed envelope) and a possible meeting can be arranged if there is sufficient interest.

Yours faithfully

EJ Woolgar

HNBC's Warbler & Clover



above Lock 15

Photo: **Andy Attwell**



More recollections

From David Gerry

Please good readers remember that memoirs are very personal and someone standing beside the writer when the event occurred will have different memories that may not be exactly the same as the writer's. Or a different emphasis may be put on the the event.

During the summer of 1966 a gentleman by the name of Jim Woolgar wrote to several national papers and magazines. He recounted that he had spent a week's holiday walking the length of the Basingstoke Canal and had found it very beautiful but badly neglected, and ripe for restoration. Jim appealed to any readers who felt as he did to get in touch.

I wrote to him expressing my interest along with a number of others, one of whom was the late Harold Jackson who told Jim that I might be useful and giving Jim my home address. Which of course Jim already had .

Harold was secretary of the Fleet and Crookham Amenity Society and he and I served on their committee and had led a work party of like minded members during the summer of 1966, on a litter pick along the canal between the Gelvert Stream and Malthouse bridge. It was only a small group and consisted of the late Ron Jesse and his son David, Harold, and Stephen Gerry (my eldest son) and myself. We shifted a mountain of rubbish which the old Fleet council collected on Monday mornings.

Later, when Harold Jackson retired from the RAE, he joined the "John Pinkerton" crew. Ron Jesse of course, when restoration got under way, became part of the very small team restoring the steam dredger to working order,

and without which, restoration would have taken much longer and cost much more.

Jim Woolgar invited a small group to his house in Brookwood one evening to talk about the way forward. The group included Jim's then wife Flo, Tim Dodwell (now the society's President), Paul Dyson, Dieter Jebens, whose mighty pen shifted a great deal of mud from the canal, Robert Harris, Dick Snell, John White (who worked on the river Wey), Les Harris, a Mr Robinson who did not appear again, and myself. It was agreed that a society should be formed and that Jim would be the secretary and Flo would be the treasurer (in case we ever got any money).

The society was to be called the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society. We really wanted to call it the Basingstoke Canal Society, but Tim, whose mother in law was the late Joan Marshal who had managed the Canal for a period in the 1950's advised against that, saying that the owner of the canal would not like the name and if we were to work with him we should avoid upsetting him at that early stage. One of the group said why not call it the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society because that had been the name of one of the companies that had owned the canal in the 1800's. We all agreed. When we talked about the date for the next meeting Tim said he would not get involved in the new society because he was known to the canal's owner and it would not be helpful to SHCS to have him on board.

During the winter of 1966/7 the foundation committee became increasingly frustrated because Jim's efforts to have a sensible dialogue with the canal's owner, Sidney Cooke, were

of early days

unsuccessful. It was decided that we would hold a public meeting in the old Brookwood Village hall (I suspect an ex MOD building of WW1 vintage.) It has now been replaced with a nice new permanent structure. Les Harris said he would make a display stand for Photos, books and literature and Dick Snell supplied some absolutely fabulous photos.

The meeting was a huge success, the hall was filled and several prominent people attended including the then MP for Aldershot, Eric Errington, and Derek Sylvester a prominent councillor from Fleet council. Both were very supportive. We decided which committee members should speak on various topics about the canal. I said that we had to have a chairman and one of the committee said we have one, and as I was completely unaware of who it was I said “Who” and got the reply “You”; and that, in a rather an undemocratic way was how I became the first chairman of the society. Les Harris was to be my vice chairman.

Paul Dyson moved to the USA several years latter and became very active in the railway preservation movement there. Robert Harris wrote a book about Canals and their Architecture which of course included several references and photos of our canal. And when he later moved to the west country he became active in the society set up to try to restore the Bude Canal.

David Gerry
(Chairman SHCS 1966-1974. Canal Manager Hampshire 1974-1989, Canal Manger whole Canal 1989-1994.)



It didn't take the newly formed Society long to start doing some serious exploration of the canal, as this photo taken in 1967 by Dieter Jebens of David Gerry 1000 yards into the Greywell tunnel shows. Sidney Cooke would probably not have approved!



Above: Les Harris and David Gerry at the Society's 40th anniversary party in 2006.

It was very nice to see David again at our 50th party. Before this started, he gave a very interesting talk about the role of weirs in controlling water levels on the canal and the importance of their size and positioning.

Kitty's progress



As reported in the last BCN, the Society has bought a 12-seat passenger boat from the Chichester Canal Society. After delivery by road to the River Wey, the boat, then named *Egremont*, went to TLC at Byfleet, where it was craned out for hull inspection, minor welding and blacking. After a few days, it was back in the water and up the Basingstoke to Ash Lock, where painting of the upper works and general tidying up was done in time to go back down to Woking for the Canal festival.

There our Co-President Liz Dodwell renamed the boat *Kitty* (*see cover*) after a horse that worked on the canal in the 1940s and '50s and also used to draw their family caravan. *Kitty* ran public trips over the Festival weekend and raised £170 in fares (£1 for adults, kids free).

Kitty will be going back to Ash Lock for the winter for further work before, hopefully, starting regular public trips in Woking next Easter. However, this will depend on a number of factors.

A suitable mooring needs to be identified with somewhere for crews to park their cars. This isn't easy to find in Woking but we have offers and ideas.

The main thing we need though is people to set up a group to operate the boat. Again, we have had quite a few expressions of interest, but more would be very welcome.

Please contact Martin Leech (01276-452754).

Egremont

The following is an edited version of an article that appeared in the Chichester Canal Society's journal detailing Kitty's early history.

HOW EGREMONT WAS ACQUIRED

When my idea of a tripboat was first proposed in 1989 it had a very cautious reception from the then chairman, John Cooper, who thought that a large boat going up and down the canal would drive away the fishermen. As the income from the fishermen was a major proportion of our annual £6000 income and we operated every year with an overdraft, it certainly was a risk.

However, as at that time I was Vice Chair of Chichester Age Concern and my job involved teaching disabled youngsters, I was very conscious that the pleasures of the canal were unable to be enjoyed by a lot of people. I was very fortunate in being elected Mayor of Chichester in 1990 and it was an opportunity to raise the money for a boat as a Mayoral charity. The Canal Society (as we were then known) also took on extra fund raising activities. In contrast to our present income the amount raised was very meagre but the search started for a suitable boat; it had to have access for disabled and infirm elderly people.

Tony Ollerton, our then key dredging man in charge of tugs and excavators spotted a house boat for sale at Islington, London on the Grand Union Canal. It had a sliding front roof which we planned to use as access for disabled. The boat was purchased for less than £2000 but as it did not have an engine it had to be towed through London, past the bird aviary at Regents Park, past Little Venice and to an outer London

slipway for transportation by Tony's brother's boat transport lorry back to Chichester.

The domestic innards of the boat were quickly disposed of and plans were made for its conversion. The old adage of the best laid plans of mice and men came into play and we quickly realised that the sliding roof idea would not work. That caused quite a headache and an expensive alternative was proposed to extend the rear deck and have the main access from there. Grants of cash were obtained from the Local Councils and a member Brian Palmer, organised financial support, £800 plus a five year support from The Royal Gardens Hotel Bognor Regis if we painted the boat in the Hotel colours of Green and Yellow. Some exceptional fine boat fitting out by some volunteers saw the boat finally in the water.

We then started running trips and asking for donations. Enquiries established that an operating licence was required from the Local District Council; as they had never been asked for such an item it took a little time to sort out. As I was a qualified RYA sailing instructor, I knew the rudiments of a boat operator training course and quickly set one up. Certificates were duly issued by the District Council and we were in business. The trips became very popular, plus the now established Father Christmas and Easter Bunny activities and we had a demand for a bigger boat to take coach parties. That is another story but the old houseboat from the London Canal is still going strong and carries on the history of the canal with the founders name (Lord) Egremont.

Jim Payne

Hopefully it will have many more years on the Basingstoke under its new name.

Letters

Dear Roger,

50th Anniversary Celebrations A Grand Day Out

With apologies to Wallace and Gromit but it was just that – a Grand Day Out – how could I not be enticed by the shared 50th Anniversary of two organisations to which I belong – Basingstoke Canal Society and Historic Narrowboat Club.

And what a grand day it was – there was a very special atmosphere of quiet reflection and, after all these years, a job well done. All the members of HNBC to whom I spoke were delighted with the canal and the welcome from the BCA, BCS and, probably most importantly, the people who live alongside the canal and who were, I understand, delighted to see the canal being used.

A stroke of genius, in my view, to ask Richard Parry to open the event and in much the same vein it was, for me, great to see all those wonderful friends with whom I forged such good relationships over my years of close involvement with the canal.

Perhaps a time to reflect (but not for too long) on excellent progress recently but also a time to reflect on those who did so much who couldn't be at Woking for all sorts of reasons – I hope they were watching from wherever they are sharing in the pride that everyone involved in the success of the event should feel.

Kind Regards



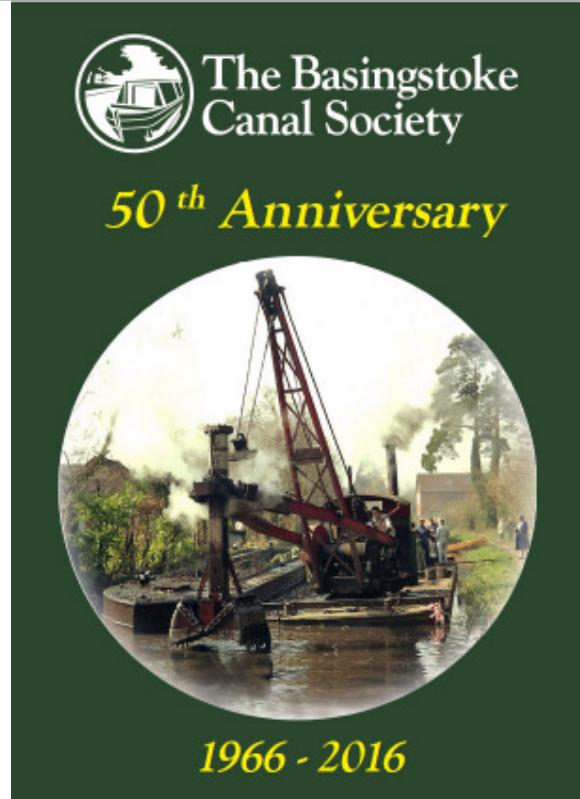
Kathryn Dodington

50th Anniversary booklet

Society members who attended the anniversary party at the Woking Canal Festival received a free copy of our 50th Anniversary booklet recalling our first half century. They will also be available for sale on the *John Pinkerton* and at the autumn Chobham meetings.

However, if none of these options fits, you too can have one for £2.50 by contacting Denise Smith; her contact details are on page 23.

She also has some of the anniversary mugs and coasters with her rather nice 50th logo on them (*see front cover*).



Chobham talks

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

This programme of meetings will start at 8pm on the third Wednesday of the month (October to April). Raffle and retiring collection. Coffee/tea and biscuits will available during the interval. Non-members and friends are very welcome.

19th October 2016. **Dr Roger Squires** **'The Regents Canal - History and an Overview of the Canal Today'**

The Regents Canal links Little Venice [Paddington] to the Thames at Limehouse. When it opened in 1820 it completed a back route around London to the Docks. As with so many canal schemes, costs were far in excess of budgets. The first section was opened in 1816 [200 years ago this year, on 12th August]. It was also hit by fraud. Only after more money was gained through a Government Loan was the Company able to complete the project. Once open, the canal was a success. Traffic remained on the canal until the 1970's, after which the decision was made to 'single' the double locks and substitute spill weirs in the second lock chambers. This enabled the removal of the Lock Keepers. Today the canal is even busier than in its commercial era, with large numbers of 'continuous cruisers' lining its towpath.

16th November 2016. **Nick Pollard** **'The Thames Bridges, Staines to Kingston'**

Following Nick's visit to us last season, this talk will explore the history of each bridge, including all the different structures which have been built at each site over the centuries.



These range from the original Roman bridge at Staines to the new Walton Bridge opened in 2013. The story features disputes, collapses and world famous artists. Nick Pollard is the Chairman of Sunbury and Shepperton Local History Society and author of 'The History of Walton Bridge.'

21st December 2016. **Ron & Myra Glover** **'A Watery Canadian Adventure - Cruising Around the Islands of Vancouver'**

In 2013 Ron & Myra, who have given several previous talks, had a change from cruising around Europe in their own boat. They flew across the Atlantic to Canada and hired a 40 foot cruiser in order to explore the waterways and islands around Vancouver. They navigated rivers and creeks and visited the islands to sample the local way of life.

Further information at
<http://www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk> or
contact Malcolm Brickwood at
chobham.talks@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

Mark Coxhead operates a free email reminder service. Reminder emails are sent about a week prior. To be included on the list please contact
[Mark Coxhead](mailto:Mark.Coxhead@coxhead.org.uk) at mark@coxhead.org.uk

Society Work

After last period's work parties up at Deepcut, cutting back the heavily overgrown rhododendrons and tidying up the storage area above the dry dock, the work party turned its attention to the Elsan point by Bridge Barn in Woking (*below*).



This had been 'modified' by the pleasant local residents so that the waste bin area had been cleared by burning which had also damaged the roof. The wooden water point box had also disappeared, as had the tap, just leaving a broken pipe. It was felt that this all needed to be in full working order by the time of the rally at Woking in early August.

We have removed the roof and replaced it with new timber and felt. The water point has been rebuilt in brick with a new metal door. The tap has been replaced and a new drain installed and



linked into the sewer. The concreted area for the waste bins has been significantly enlarged and a concrete block wall built in place of the wooden fence and rendered to make it more difficult for the locals to burn down or even to get the wheelie bins out and floated in the canal.



We have previously removed a large industrial bin out of the canal in that area (*above*).

The weather was not always the best over the period especially when we needed to build walls or do rendering, so we had to build our own "tent" to allow us to continue working (*below*).



Party report

from Duncan Paine

The Elsan disposal bowl had been damaged and has been replaced together with improvements to the taps and plumbing inside the building, and a solar powered PIR light has been fitted. Finally a new metal door has been installed into the building and metal gates put into the refuse area at the back.



All the rendering on the new walls and the building has been painted green as required by the BCA (*above, all complete but the gate*). I have no doubt the locals will decide they now have a new area for graffiti, but we've tried.

We installed a new notice board for the canal as supplied by the BCA a short distance from the Elsan point (*above right*).

After that the volunteers have been helping in various ways to set up and run the 50th anniversary rally.

An auxiliary weekday work party removed the trees that had come down at the end of the Colt Hill barn waterfront and disposed of the residue using workboat Fly II (*right*).

It was very nice to see that at this, and during the whole period we had a few new volunteers



turn out to help. All volunteers are welcome and we would ask anyone with time and effort available to contact the team and come along for a few hours. The work suits all ages and you just do what you can to help and maybe learn a new skill, such as brick laying. Where professional training is required, the Society pays for attendance at appropriate courses. If you are interested, please contact workparty@basingstoke-canal.org.uk



Canal trouble in

Mark Coxhead has been trawling through old newspapers and has found some cautionary tales from the murky years of the late 19th century following the demise of the original Canal Company. The canal fell into the hands of a series of owners, who have been charitably described as "speculative". In fact several of them were clearly crooks and went to prison, but none of them was terribly interested in the canal other than as a means of extracting money from gullible investors.

Article from Surrey Advertiser – 20th September 1880

SERIOUS ACCIDENT ON THE SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY.

A GOODS TRAIN THROWN OFF THE LINE

CURZON BRIDGE

On Tuesday morning there was an accident on the London and South-Western Railway between Brookwood and Farnborough, and about two miles from the former, which, however, was happily unattended without loss of life, though much damage was done to the rolling stock. At a portion of the line nearer the Aldershot junction, and close to Curzon Bridge, the Basingstoke Canal and the railway run parallel, and the canal being on a higher level they are separated by a brick wall 12 feet high, and 300 or 400 yards long. The canal is being cleaned out, and in order to render the operations practicable was dammed up at this part. On Monday night the rain was very heavy, and, it is supposed, caused the canal embankment to give way. Nearly 40 yards of the wall was broken down by the sudden rush of water, and

the debris fell on to the up line, whilst the rails for some little distance were covered with about nine inches of water.

About half-past one the 5.15pm up goods train from Yeovil, made up of an engine, two guards' vans and upwards of thirty trucks, laden with general goods, one cattle truck, carrying some eight or nine beasts, came along, and the night being very dark, the engine ran right into the fallen brickwork, being lifted bodily from the metals and sent on to the embankment, where is rested on its side. Twenty of the trucks, with one of the guards vans, were also thrown off the rails.

There were in charge of the train Tom Franklin, the driver, Harry Willey, the fireman, and a guard, but fortunately none of them were seriously injured, though they had as might be expected, a wonderfully narrow escape. The guard was much shaken, and the fireman was only saved by his comrade, from being killed who pulled him away just in time from the side on which the engine fell. The beasts were quite uninjured, and a staging having been erected, they walked out of their van and were taken to Woking. Both lines were blocked, and the wreckage was complete, broken trucks being strewn about in all directions; but singularly enough, the metals sustained little damage. A goods train had passed safely on the same line only twenty minutes previously, and then all was apparently in order.

The photo opposite shows a view from Curzon Bridge of the probable site of the breach. The arrow marks the edge of the canal, which, as can be seen, is only yards from the railway line. A good job that nowadays the BCA take water level monitoring very seriously.

the 19th Century



Article from Surrey Advertiser – 6th December 1881

ALDERSHOT: BURSTING OF THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL

At one o'clock on Monday morning a serious breach in the banks of the Basingstoke Canal occurred, through which the water, much swollen by the late heavy rains, rushed with great velocity. The breach is situated at a point about two miles below Aldershot, where the stream runs on an embankment 50 feet in height, and as the surrounding country is extremely flat the damage will probably be very considerable.

A dam was speedily constructed lower down at Ash, thus confining the loss of water to a length of half a mile only, namely between Aldershot

Lock and the newly constructed dam. The width of the breach is 60 feet, and the channel washed away for quarter of a mile to a depth of 40 feet. The water, rushing over the towpath, made for Aldershot New-town with a great roar, and the place soon became inundated. Fortunately the torrent escaped through a culvert running under the canal, and found vent in the meadows, which were covered as far as the North camp. No loss of life is reported, but £1000 or £1500 will be required to make good the damage.

Sounds like a forerunner of the 1968 breech in the Ash Embankment; this winter's relining programme was clearly a wise precaution.

Mark has found two further reports of breeches which will appear in the next BC News.

BCS Membership

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT

I have recently sent out reminders to those members who have not paid their 2016 subs which were due on 1st March. I have heard from quite a few members and received their overdue payments, so my thanks to them. Unfortunately there are still quite a lot of members who have not responded and I will therefore have to assume that they no longer wish to belong to the Society. It is always sad to lose members so if you have overlooked your payment please contact me as soon as possible. The payments due are set out 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:

Celia Chapple of Woking
Elizabeth Wood of Byfleet
Michael Nielsen of Woking
Martin Dovey of Farnham
Janina Cieciora of Brookwood
Marie Hanlan of Petworth
David Hush of Crowthorne
Tony Saunders of Farnborough
Thomas Brzostowski of Camberley
Jenny Tyte of Frimley
Jill Mayhew of Windlesham
Colin Thorp of Bramley
Cameron Brown of Wisley
Chris Evans of Weybridge
Trevor Pollit of Guildford
Mr & Mrs Smith of Knaphill
John Wickenden of Camberley
Paul Marais of Woking
Christine Hogg of London
Richard Trueman of Greywell

Doreen Hornsey
Membership Secretary

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

200 Club

Here is the latest batch of 200 Club winners:

February

Mr R Malcolm £37
Mr R Cobley £18
Mr A Stumpf £10
Mrs J Hunter £10

April

Mr A Stumpf £37
Mrs G Browne £18
Mr A Hocking £10
Mr G Nicholson £10

June

Mr M Leech £37
Mr JT Lyddon £18
Mrs V Vine £10
Mr R Reed £10

Regards

Jim Johnstone

BCS information



The Bulletin is now up to Issue 29.

If you want to keep up with the latest news about the canal, please send your e-mail address to

membership@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

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

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

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'TENCH' at Bedser Bridge

