



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 253 Spring 2017





Editorial

The canal is probably in a better state today than it has been since the restoration. Contractors are busy at work repairing the Dogmersfield slip and doing work all over the place. The water supply situation also seems to be improving.

It is therefore very ironic and sad that we find ourselves staring into a very uncertain future for the canal.

Cover Picture : The crew of Joan No.1 watching preparations for lifting out Fly at Ash Lock.
Photo: Roger Cansdale

As Philip Riley says in his Chairman's report, it is not entirely surprising that the Counties felt themselves unable to fund a transfer of ownership to the Canal & River Trust at this time. However, now is undoubtedly the time to do this, because otherwise all the good work and expense of the last few years will be dissipated by the inevitable processes of decay.

Unlike "Old Man River", canals do not just keep rolling on. Nature takes over the works of man with appalling rapidity if maintenance is neglected and with the current levels of funding, this is bound to happen.

Some means of taking the C&RT transfer process forward must be found before it is too late.

The Basingstoke Canal cannot be allowed to become the first restored canal to fail!

Chairman's report

The recent announcement by the County Councils that they are no longer pursuing their negotiations with the Canal & River Trust over the transfer of the canal came as a significant blow to us. Although not entirely unexpected, we had hoped that these discussions would enable the future of the canal to be secured on a sustainable basis.

The reason given by the Counties was that the value of the dowry that C&RT would require was 'unaffordable'. The Counties have subsequently confirmed to us that they intend to maintain the canal as a navigation but they are unclear, at this stage, on how this can be achieved given that all local authorities are under severe central government pressure to reduce their budgets. We are concerned that if, for example, another major repair of the type that is required at Dogmersfield Cutting (and this will be costing nearly £1M) there will be insufficient funding to carry out the work.

The Counties have also said that the income earned from the canal must be increased. This certainly accords with our suggestions, made over several years, that the opportunity to increase the income from the Canal Centre (mainly by upgrading the camp site) should be vigorously pursued. We also believe that the significant income generated from the house boats at Woodham, the rent from the café at Mytchett and the licence fee payable for the fibre optic cable beneath the towpath should be transferred into the BCA's budget and not, as is currently the case, paid into the SCC's central fund and lost to the canal.

Chairman's report

There also remains the thorny and unresolved issue of the failure by two of the District authorities to meet their agreed contributions to the revenue budget the bulk of which is need to pay the salaries of the BCA staff. Given that the canal is a highly regarded local amenity it is, in our view, entirely unacceptable that these contributions are not being met in full.

It is ironic that the breakdown of the C&RT negotiations comes at a time when the canal is probably in better shape than it has been since the re-opening 25 years ago. This is largely due to the efforts and commitment of the BCA and to the increasing numbers of volunteers who turn out regularly to work on the canal. As we know from bitter experience, if essential maintenance work is not undertaken, the canal will begin to deteriorate and it will cost far more to repair the structures in the future. In addition to this, it is important to keep up the momentum if the canal is to be kept secure and the risk of flooding minimized.

It is clear to us that there is very little scope for further cost reductions. The ranger force (the major cost) has already been reduced by nearly 50% and further reductions would have serious implications for water management. It is also obvious that even if revenues could broadly match expenditure this would not enable the cost of the capital works programme (on which the Counties have expended over £4M in recent years) to be funded. In my view this all points towards the Counties grasping the nettle and committing some of their considerable financial reserves towards funding the dowry required by the C&RT. Having said that, we are not privy to the sums of money on the table and we

must remember that, at County level, this is an election year so politics will inevitably play an important role in any decision.

Whatever the outcome of these difficult discussions, the Canal Society must remain fully committed to its central objective of ensuring that the navigation remains intact and that future generations will enjoy the hard won legacy which we have all labored so long to achieve. This is now a time for our leadership to be tested and I hope every member of the Society will join me in campaigning to ensure that the canal continues to prosper and to give so much enjoyment to all the communities that it serves.

Philip Riley
Chairman

Annual General Meeting

As Philip's report makes clear, the Canal faces an uncertain future yet again. It will need all the support it can get from the Society, which in turn needs the full support of its members.

Please demonstrate this by coming to our AGM on Saturday 20th May (details on p 21/2). We will also be having a talk from John Dodwell, who, as well as having a very long term interest in the Basingstoke Canal, is currently one of the trustees of the Canal & River Trust.

Basingstoke Canal Future

At the beginning of December last year, Surrey County Council's Economic Prosperity, Environment and Highway Board produced the long-awaited report on the Future Management Options for the Basingstoke Canal. The first sections of the report provide an introduction and background to the study, with which members of the Society will mostly be familiar and which, for reasons of space, have been omitted here. The important part starts here:

11. The Canal is a very extensive and significant civil engineering structure. Limited capital investment in the past led to deterioration of the asset which previously resulted in part of the Canal being closed for public safety reasons. Since 2012 both SCC and HCC have allocated £2m each to address some of the backlog of repairs. It is the risk associated with potential breaches of the canal that places a very significant liability upon the canal owners.

12. It is recognised that there is still an arrears of maintenance with a current estimated capital liability of £6m. Without further capital investment or annualised maintenance and replacement costs for the assets the arrears are likely to increase over time.

13. The aim and objective, on which the final option appraisal is to be based, is to identify the most cost effective and sustainable option for the future level of accessibility and long term management of the Canal which:

- Supports the safe operation and maintenance of the canal
- Provides a positive and critical drainage function
- Enables opportunities for income generation/investment
- Enables levels of community use and benefit
- Maintains the current conservation status of the Sites of Special
- Scientific Interest and wider environmental benefits
- Provides benefits to the local economy

14. A report was commissioned of JBA Consulting, a specialist waterway consultant to identify potential new models for management or alternative ownership. Eleven options were assessed, four options remained for more detailed consideration:

- Option 1 – Minimum Intervention, manage risk and statutory duty
- Option 2 – Status Quo, targeted maintenance
- Option 3 – Investment in Assets, steady state model, with capital investment
- Option 4 – Transfer Asset to Canal and Rivers Trust, with dowry payment to the trust.

Management Options

15. A joint project team was formed to undertake analysis on each of the four options, this team comprised of representatives from, Countryside, Asset Management (Engineering), Finance, Property and Legal. The team focused on the outcomes, costs, risks and liabilities of each option.

16. In parallel with this work, due diligence was undertaken with the Canal and Rivers Trust. This has focused on bringing the canal into a 'steady state' and has identified that there is a backlog of capital works. In addition there would be an increased level of annual operating costs to maintain the Canal at a steady state. As a consequence the CRT would require a very significant dowry payment based on their assessment of the overall cost.

17. The potential implications for each of these options were set out in an options framework, a summary of this is set out below.

18. Option 1 – Minimum Intervention, manage risk and statutory duty.

Whilst this might in the short term be the most cost effective it does not ensure a sustainable future for the Canal. Focusing activities on risk and statutory duty would lead to a rapid decline in the assets and character of the Canal, the loss of recreation usage and health and wellbeing benefits. Not maintaining the SSSI status would leave both organisations at risk of prosecution and there would be a loss of current and future income streams. This option would also jeopardise a potential future transfer to a third party.

19. Option 2 – Status Quo, targeted maintenance.

In the medium to long term this could lead to the decline in both the asset structure and the character of the Canal unless further significant injections of capital were received. There is a short term risk of partners withdrawing their funding given financial pressures for all funding organisations. This option allows the use of local knowledge and experience to manage the Canal with the best use of the resources available. In the short to medium term this would retain the assets and character of the Canal with the ability to increase income generation of activities on and around the canal to reduce pressure on the revenue budget.

20. Option 3 – Investment in Assets, steady state with capital investment.

This offers a sustainable future for the canal, but the capital investment required both to bring the canal to a 'steady state', maintain it at that level and invest in development to increase income generation, requires very significant additional funds to be made available. Both Councils would have to consider the affordability consequences of this option given their financial constraints and an assessment of spending priorities.

21. Option 4 – Transfer Asset, Canal and Rivers Trust, with dowry

This offers a sustainable future for the Canal with an organisation that has canal management as its core business. Initial due diligence has identified that there is a backlog of capital works

Future management Options

and increased annual maintenance costs. This would require a very significant dowry payment to the trust by both Councils which is currently unaffordable. Both organisations continue to be engaged with the CRT and maintain a good relationship should any potential future transfer be possible.

22. Finally, it is necessary to test whether there are any other wider opportunities for acquisition or management of the Canal which have not been covered by the options described above. Therefore Property Services have been commissioned to undertake a background commercial assessment. The outcome of this will be shared with the Basingstoke Canal Task Group who will update the Board.

Conclusions:

23. Option 1 – Minimum Intervention, this does not meet the key objective to find a sustainable future for the Canal

24. Option 3 – Investment in the Asset and Option 4 – Transfer to the Canal and Rivers Trust, these options are currently considered to be unaffordable.

25. The preferred option is Option 2 – Status Quo, the current management and operation of the Canal allows the Councils to best manage the benefits to the local community, environment and wider economy of the two local authority areas. Whilst recognising that funding is vulnerable this option currently best meets the aims and objectives of the two Councils.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Economic Prosperity, Environment and Highways Board:

- a. Support ongoing collaboration with Hampshire County Council in the development of a business case around the preferred option.
- b. Supports further discussion and consultation with Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee together with other key stakeholders as part of that ongoing work.
- c. Hold a Task Group meeting in early 2017 to report the outcome of the market viability assessment.

Next steps

Development of a business case (to include the outcome of the background commercial assessment) for consideration in mid-2017.

No real surprise, given the state of the Counties' finances, but no real solution either. Unless some means of finding the money to allow a transfer of ownership to the Canal & River Trust is found, there will be another crisis and another options review in 10 year's time.

Moves at Ash Loack



When Chris Lynas spotted the crane at Ash Lock, his interest in industrial archaeology was stirred and he decided to investigate further. When he did so, however, he became even more interested in the Society's old tug *Pledge*, which has been sitting in the yard there for about 20 years. He made enquiries and was directed to the Canal Society.

He expressed an interest in getting the tug operational again, so a deal was struck under which the Society paid to transport it to his yard in Farnham where he would do the refurbishment in exchange for the right to drive it on the canal on occasions.

To make the most of the crane hire, the opportunity was taken to remove the Society's work boat *Fly* from the water to allow it to be inspected, repaired where necessary and modified to allow an outboard motor to be fitted.

A chilly but dry Saturday morning in January saw the Work Party turned out in force at the Ash Lock yard. The tug was lifted and put on the low-loader without any great difficulty and taken off to Wrecclisham (*above*). While that was going on, the yard was tidied up in to make room for the work boat.

Lifting this out presented more of a problem as care had to be taken to avoid the lorry standing on the spot where a well was said to exist. After moving the crane twice it was third time lucky and the boat is now in position for work to begin.

The first job will be to remove the concrete in the bottom of the boat to enable the hull to be inspected. Large amounts of welding may be needed, but as the boat only cost us £1, it will still be good value.

More photos on the cover pages.

Society Work Party

During this quarter the weekend work parties have been using the flat bed barge *Beth* attached to *Alan Flight* to clear the offside vegetation overgrowth along the normal John Pinkerton Cruising routes. The boats being above the Dogmersfield land slip which closed the canal



at that point there was no other choice, but it was also the lengths requested by the JP crews.

We started at the Barley Mow, and with the help of the new owner of the cottage we cleared the bridge (*see picture above*) and then worked upstream from there. One of the contractor's jobs while working on the land slip was to replace the culvert 140m upstream of the Barley Mow Bridge so this had to be cleared while we could access it. Our clearance work was facilitated by the owner of the Thatched Cottage who allowed us to use their bonfire site for burning all the off cut material and mooring our boats there between work parties. Working

with the two boats, sometimes detached but usually in tandem we were able to cut and collect far more material before having to migrate to the bonfire site.

By Christmas we felt we had cleared enough of the worst overgrowth between the Barley Mow and Stacey's Bridge so we moved down to Colt Hill to start the New Year clearing the winding hole and the JP mooring approaches. The winding hole had a couple of trees that had fallen down, the one early this year could not be touched when it collapsed as a moorhen decided it was a nice safe place to build a nest. Who says the work party cannot walk on water! - see picture below.



It is not all hard work we have had some significant bonfires (*see picture opposite*) along the way as a means of disposing of all the brushwood and wet wood out of the canal. All reasonable log size timber we collect and after work party personnel have had some as perks, we disposed of the rest by selling for suitable donations along the way.

activities by Duncan Paine

After clearing odd bits on the way up the canal from Colt Hill, we then decided to hit the length from the North Warnborough lift bridge to Odiham Castle. This section was getting very narrow as the vegetation encroaches from the off bank while the reeds encroach from the towpath side. It doesn't seem that long ago that a WRG party cleared it all for us, but it was probably 4-5 years ago. However, on the day before the work party, getting the boats from Colt Hill to the lift bridge was a big effort as we had to break the ice manually at times as it was up to an inch thick in places.

The photos to the right show the canal above the lift bridge taken before in late autumn when we arrived and after as we were packing up for the day.

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 during the winter we should be having a number of large bonfires. Off bank



clearance will continue until the bird nesting season curtails the work and we will then take on other canal improvement / repair work.

While we had *Alan Flight* up near the Castle the BCA borrowed it to do a survey of the state of the tunnel, the bat population and check for any infections in the bats.

Finally, some time ago somebody borrowed a hedge trimmer from the work party and has not returned it. Whoever this was could they please return it, contact Kevin Redway or Janet Buckley, (details on page 23) or quietly put it back in the barn.



Volunteers - We need you!!

Volunteering has been integral part of the canal for many years and we wouldn't have a working canal today if it wasn't for the dedication and determination of those people to see it through. In difficult financial times this support becomes ever more essential to our continued future. Many of you already volunteer but maybe there's a few who have thought about it but didn't really know how to find out more.

Well here is your guide....

BCA and BCS have been working on a joint project to advertise volunteering opportunities on the canal and have developed a new leaflet to help advertise these. If you would like to help hand these out please let us know and we can let you have some.

Many opportunities are available for people to volunteer at the Basingstoke Canal; both on the canal and at the Canal Visitor Centre in Mytchett. Whether you have specialist skills to offer or have a general interest there will be plenty for you to get involved in.

As a volunteer you will have the chance to work alongside qualified and experienced staff. We recognise the wealth of skills, knowledge, ideas and enthusiasm that volunteers have to offer and welcome people of all abilities to become part of the team. We rely on volunteers to help out with duties that help the Canal meet its objectives, so any activity you become involved in will help in many ways.

Canal Centre and Events

If you enjoy meeting people, then working at the Canal Centre would be perfect for you. Jobs include:

- Helping run the shop – Covering the reception
- Administration - Answering the phone, database entry
- Grounds/campsite maintenance – Mowing, planting and weeding
- Building maintenance – Painting
- Help run events held at the Centre – Santa Cruises or boat rallies



Free tea and coffee and the occasional piece of cake provided!

by Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager



Boating

The perfect way to get to see the canal. We have a variety of sizes and types of boats ranging from trip boats and work boats to a patrol boat. We are looking for potential skippers and crew members. It's not just driving the boats, we are also looking for people that can help maintain the boats. The following is a list of boats which are reliant on volunteers:

Rosebud – small trip boat operating public trips and chartered cruises from April – September. Based in Mytchett, Rosebud is also used for events held on the canal.

Kitty - small trip boat operating public trips and chartered cruises from Woking from summer 2017

John Pinkerton 2 – Large narrow boat running public boat trips, chartered cruises and events. Based at Colt Hill, Odiham.

Patrol boat – This is a small boat patrolling sections of the canal, checking licences, handing out information and offering a warm and welcoming smile to all canal users (*right*).

Working boats – This includes our weedcutter and both the Canal Authority and Canal Society work boats.

Accessible boating – These 2 canal based charities run 3 different boats providing a service for people with disabilities, based in Woking and in Colt Hill, Odiham.

Take out your own boat – use your own kayak or canoe or rowing boat to help us keep the canal clear of rubbish and debris and make your home patch look great.



Lengthsmen

This is perfect for those that like to take regular walks. This is a joint scheme organised by the Canal Authority and Canal Society where a volunteer is given a small section of the canal to monitor on a weekly basis. The lengthsmen responsibilities include:

- Litter picking
- Identifying and reporting problems

Additionally opportunities to get involved in towpath campaigns such as 'share your space drop your pace'

Volunteers

Canal Maintenance work parties

If you enjoy getting physical and being part of a hard working and dedicated team then working on one of our work parties is ideal for you!

There are two Canal maintenance parties working on the canal. The first is organised by the Canal Authority and meet up weekly on Tuesdays to carry out essential seasonal work. Work includes:

- Clearing vegetation
- Painting canal lock gates
- Removing invasive species
- Litter picking
- Conservation projects
- Towpath repairs

When you have gained experience and if you are interested, you may be trained to enable you to:

- Use push and ride on mowers to cut grass at the canal centre or canal locks.
- Use hedge trimmers or strimmers.
- Help with work on board one of our work boats.

The second work party is held on alternate weekends and is organised and run by the Canal Society and is normally more project based work. The Canal Society is always looking for project managers and engineers. Work includes:

- New mooring construction
- Lock repairs
- Towpath renovation
- Brickwork and plumbing

Other Opportunities

We have volunteers working with us on other projects at the moment such as



Above: Towpath repairs

Below: Setting new mooring bollards at Mytchett Lake.



- We need you!!

- Telemetry
- Boat refurbishment
- Map archiving
- Looking after our lock model in the visitor centre
- Boat rally organising
- Social media

Do your bit simply by joining the Canal Society or encourage a friend to!

The Canal Society has played an essential part in the history of the canal from leading the restoration in the 1970s – 1980s to helping safeguard the future of the canal. There are a variety of ways of supporting the canal through the Canal Society. Don't know whether a particular volunteering role would suit you? Why not find out by joining one of the monthly evening cruises on the *John Pinkerton*, when representatives of many of the activities can provide more details, and answer your questions.

This introductory trip is provided FREE for your convenience. All that is asked is that you pre-book on-line, or telephone the booking line. This will confirm your place, as numbers are limited for each trip. Similarly, those organisation representatives attending are requested to book prior to the trip.

On-line booking: johnpinkerton.co.uk/booking
Booking by telephone: 01256 765889

Dates for the 2017 season are:

Mon 10th April 7.00pm, Mon 8th May 7.30pm, Mon 5th June 7.30pm, Mon 3rd July 7.30pm
Mon 7th August 7.30pm, Mon 4th September 7.30pm, Mon 2nd October 7.00pm

All trips leave from Colt Hill wharf, Odiham, RG29 1AL, and last approx 2½ hours. Good nearby parking. The galley will be open for bar and light refreshments.

We have developed a new system to administer volunteers. To make it easier, for all opportunities you simply contact the BCA office at the canal centre initially and we will chat to you and find out a bit about what you would like to do and send you out a pack with further information for you to consider the opportunities. Once you have had a chance to consider what you might like to do we will put you in touch with the right people and ensure you are looked after.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

The BCA Team

Winter works on the canal



Above: Towpath closed and pontoons and boats being readied at Barley Mow.

Happy New Year to everyone! As predicted previously we are in the midst of another feverishly busy winter of repair works on the Basingstoke Canal – here is the latest update:

Dyer & Butler have now arrived on site at Dogmersfield to carry out the repairs to the landslip. They have set up their compound at Barley Mow Car Park, and instigated a towpath closure between Chatter Alley and Blacksmiths Bridge. There is a limited amount of public parking, but the slipway is now closed.

There is now no public access between these points for the duration of the works, which will last until at least Easter. Please do not attempt to access the worksite for your own safety, or trespass on private land to get round the barriers.

A diversion route for pedestrians will be posted on site shortly – this will be the same as in previous closures via the footpath passing Dogmersfield Church.

The navigation will also close to all vessels in the next few days for the duration of the landslip works – this includes all canoes, rowing boats and small craft. The contractor will be erecting signs to this effect which will initiate the closure. The initial closure is, heading upstream, from the winding hole upstream of Blacksmiths Bridge to the winding hole just downstream of Barley Mow. This will be extended further upstream to Baseley's Bridge for the duration of the repairs to Barley Mow Culvert which are expected to take place in February.

by James Taylor, Canal Strategic Manager

If you need to be one side or other of this closure now is your last chance to move your boat!

Elsewhere we aren't idle either!

Parts of the Deepcut and Brookwood flights are now drained for Surrey County Council's engineers to carry out Principle Inspections on the lock structures – its amazing how quickly 5 years comes around! Whilst they are drained contractors will be carrying out repairs to any major defects found – Kenward Groundworks and Irvine Grenson will be undertaking these works. Therefore there is no need to worry if you see these sections of Canal empty.

The important works to reline Ash Embankment to prevent leaks are now complete; the Canal is refilled and both canal and towpath are open. Kenward Groundworks completed this 2 weeks ahead of schedule, finishing up before Christmas.

Tree Safety Works are now being undertaken along the whole of the Canal – picking up the remaining safety items picked up by our arboriculture inspectors. Poulson Plant & Agriculture are doing the works in Surrey, and

Charterhouse Tree Care are doing the works in Hampshire. There are no long term closures required for these works but please obey the instructions of the ground crews to ensure everyone's safety.

The Ranger team and Canal Society Volunteer team have been carrying out off-side cutting throughout the Hampshire Pound – this is catching up with quite a backlog. The Ranger team will then move to replacing lock gates at Locks 7 and 22 in early March.

Finally, we are expecting Land & Water to start doing bank protection works at a number of key sites in Woking, Mytchett, Fleet, Crookham and Winchfield during March and April. We are not expecting that the navigation will close for these works; but widebeam craft may struggle to pass their pontoon mounted excavator at the Crookham and Winchfield sites – a further update will follow when we have more details of this work.

Once again apologies for the volume of works this winter – but I am sure you will agree that the Canal is beginning to look much better than it has in a long while as a result of all of the attention.

Canal Quiz

Early December saw the Southampton Canal Society host their annual Canal Quiz at Chilworth Village Hall and for the second year running, the Basingstoke Canal Society entered a team consisting (from the left) Penny Cadle, Tim Cadle, Jeff Hill and Dave Wedd. Again for the second year running, we came last although

the losing margin was smaller than in 2015, only 1½ points. The winners once again were the Salisbury Canal Society and they have the honour of setting next year's quiz. The other teams involved were the Southampton Canal Society and the local IWA branch.

Reminiscences of dredging

I recently attended a lecture in Yeovil and was delighted to find that the first person I saw was Roger Caesley, who must have joined the Canal Society at about the same time as me, over 40 years ago. He started reminiscing and the result is the following reminder of life in those pre-H&S days. Editor

My involvement with the canal started one afternoon in the wardroom of HMS ARK ROYAL, not the latest ship to have that name but her predecessor, the 55,000 ton fixed wing carrier. I was shortly to finish my time as one of the engineer officers in 809 Squadron, who operated Ark's Buccaneers and my next appointment was to RAE, Farnborough. I had been to Farnborough before and knew that, for a bachelor, No1 RAF Officers mess was rather dull, especially at weekends. Before going back on watch I was idly scanning Waterways World and there was an article on the restoration of the Basingstoke Canal and in particular the steam dredger. It looked most interesting and, if I could get involved, would be something to do in the winter months when there was no sailing.

I found the dredger at Colt Hill and met Ian Cripps who was leading the team. My offer to help was quickly accepted. My first job was chipping rust from the inside of the side pontoons with an air powered nail gun. Once the hull was sorted we moved onto getting the boiler ready for its inspection and pressure test and also rebuilding the crane. The last job was to sort out the steam grab, which was a fearsome bit of kit that would bite into the mud with considerable force. After work those of us with no homes to go to and some who did, would adjourn to the New Inn by the bridge. It was very different from the current push

establishment. It was run by two old ladies and was basically the front room of their house. The beer was kept in barrels somewhere in the back yard and there were a few bottles of spirits behind the bar. The open fire and the easy chairs made it a very comfortable place to relax after a hard day's work on the dredger and they didn't mind that we weren't their best dressed customers (we were often their only customers).

One of the topics that was often discussed was how we were going to handle and dispose of the mud that the dredger would dig up. Each grab of either the bucket or the steam grab, was close to a cubic yard of mud and it took less than a minute. The task was to get the mud from the dredger to the fields alongside the canal where some of the local land owners had agreed we could dump it. As well as discussions in the pub, we also had a small engineering working group that, I think, Dave Gerry chaired. One of the members was Stan Mellor who came up with the idea of using a narrow gauge railway. This used equipment recovered from a sewage farm. Having laid the track along the tow path to the dump site a gantry using old telegraph poles etc was built out into the field. The trucks had a tipping mechanism so it was then easy to empty them.



the canal and how the Society

This worked and had the advantage that the dump site could be both ahead and astern of the dredger. The only trouble was that, even though passing loops were constructed where the tow path was wide enough, it was quite slow even with the little engine that Stan acquired. Also I dread to think what health and safety would say now about the working on the gantry tipping tons of mud onto the field.

Mud was also sold as, when it dried out, it made very good top soil. There was one story of the crew arriving in their 3 ton tipper lorry at a very nice house in the stockbroker belt. The gentleman of the house had laid out a couple of plastic bags in front of the double garage. He had then departed for his round of golf leaving his wife in charge and his sports car in the garage. The lorry crew did point out that



A number of other ideas were tried including a mud slinger (*above*) designed to spray the mud out onto the field and do away with the need for the gantry. Unfortunately, a major portion of the mud was sprayed in every other direction to the discomfort of those loading it.

they were delivering 3 tons of mud with the consistency of porridge but she was insistent that her husband had been adamant that it had to be dumped on the plastic bags. Having collected payment, the load was tipped on the designated spot. As they drove away the mud

became the proud owners of

was creeping like some primeval animal towards the open garage door and the flash wheels there within. Unfortunately, history does not record the reaction of the husband on his return from golf.

The obvious answer to the mud problem was to use the dredged canal to float the mud to the dump sites. A barge was obtained from a disused gravel working and a second was located in a scrap yard near Portsmouth and purchased. The gravel pit also provided two tugs, which were refurbished with funding kindly provided by Johnsons Wax, manufacturers of Cherry Blossom Boot Polish. However, the problem was that having got the mud in the barge to the dump site there then needed to be a way to get it onto the field. Ideas of conveyor belts and the dreaded mud slinger were discussed but the answer had to be to take

it out the same way as it had got in, with a grab bucket.

By that time I had moved out of No1 RAF Officers Mess and into a flat in Fleet. Another of the volunteers, Roger Thomas, worked in Fleet at County Tractors. I cannot remember whether it was he or I who notice that in the garden of a house in Connaught Road was a small Ruston Bucyrus dragline complete with bucket. The house was rather uncared for and was on the market. Some surreptitious digging revealed that it had been owned by an old lady who had died. Her only relative was her son who had acquired the dragline with the intention of using the jib as the basis of an astronomical telescope. How he intended to do this and which of the stars he hoped to see from a garden overhung with trees and blinded by street lights, was unclear. He was not around



a Ruston Bucyrus Dragline

to ask as he was a long term resident of a mental hospital. The estate agent was also not too keen on the dragline as it was not something that many of his clients would think of as an asset to a suburban dwelling.

Roger and I agreed that it would be ideal for unloading barges so one evening after work, armed with a couple of heavy duty batteries courtesy of County Tractors and a can of diesel, we went to investigate. The Ruston had a three cylinder Gardner engine, which looked, after we had cleared some of the leaves out of the cab, in reasonable condition. There was some fuel in the tank but we added the can full we had brought and checked the oil and water in the radiator, both of which looked fine.

As there seemed nothing to lose, we connected our batteries and pressed the starter. After a couple of turns she started and ran remarkably sweetly. The next thing was to check if she would move. Roger had some experience of tracked tractors so jumped on the driver's seat. Moving the levers got the desired response. This was too good to be true and if we had been sensible we should probably have quit at this point. However, it was a light dry evening so why not at least take her to the road.

The gap between the house and its neighbour looked wide enough and she must have been driven in. So off we trundled. Having reached the road it looked all very quiet as the rush hour was over, so having got that far we thought that if we could get her to Reading Wharf, which is at the end of Connaught Road, she would be on Canal land and maybe nobody would notice that she was no longer in the back garden. We also suspected that the estate agent would heave a sigh of relief.

The trip down Connaught Road was taken very slowly, we didn't want to scratch any parked cars, and contact with a dragline might mean the damage would be more than a scratch. Crossing Reading Road South was interesting but we arrived safely at the wharf. Having removed the battery and secured her as best we could, we retired to the pub for a well-earned beer.

As far as I am aware nothing was ever said about the missing dragline. The Royal Engineers were asked to move her to Colt Hill, which they kindly did. By this time the dredger was near North Warnborough and the dump site was in a field between there and Colt Hill. So a suitable spot was found and she was driven up the tow path to where she could unload the barges.

By then my time at the RAE was coming to an end and I was off back to sea, though this time not in a 55,000 ton aircraft carrier but in a 55 foot long yacht on the Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race.

The Society actually owned two, or possibly three, draglines at one time or another and the fate of the Ruston seems to have been lost in the mists of time. There was certainly a Priestman and possibly also a Smith's machine. If anyone can enlighten us further about their history, please let us know.

Roger Caesley is now living in Somerset and is still working in the aviation world and still messing about with boats.

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 up to and including April. Raffle and retiring collection.

Coffee/tea and biscuits will available during the interval. Non-members and friends are very welcome.

15th March 2017

Carolyn Haynes: History of Bursledon Brickworks

The only Victorian steam driven brickworks left in the country, the Brickworks at Bursledon are an amazing survivor. All the original buildings and machinery are still there and for some reason, although the owners operated them from the age of the horse right through to the age of cheap flights, they didn't update their works. The talk gives a history of the brickworks, why they are so important and what we hope their future will be.

19th April 2017

Graham MacKenzie: SS Shieldhall - 61 years and counting

Taking the history of "Shieldhall" and considering its daily toil in a working life from 1955 to 1985 and then into preservation bringing the story up to date with information regarding our grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2013.

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



Above: Eling Tide Mill was the subject of February's talk by David Plunkett.

Canal Society AGM

NOTICE is hereby given that the Fortieth Annual General Meeting of the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society will be held on Saturday 20th May 2017 in the Deepcut Village Centre, Swordsman's Road, Deepcut GU16 6TB, commencing at 2 p.m.

The formal Agenda for the meeting is as follows:-

1. To hear apologies for absence.
2. To confirm the minutes of the Thirty Ninth AGM held on 14th May 2016.
3. To approve the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2016.
4. To appoint the Independent Accountants.
5. To elect or confirm the appointment of the members of the Board of Directors (Executive Committee).
6. To consider a motion to change the Society's subscription rates to Adult £15, Family £20 and Corporate £30 minimum, as from 2018.
7. To transact any other business relative to the Annual General Meeting of the Society.

By order of the Board of Directors

Terry Inskip, Honorary Secretary

29th February 2017

Following the formal business of the AGM there will be reports from the Chairmen of the Canal Society and Boat Company, presentation of the Robin Higgs Award and a talk by John Dodwell, Trustee of the Canal & River Trust.

AGM Notes:

- a) *This Notice is issued from the Honorary Secretary's address at 40 Hutton Road, Ash Vale, Aldershot GU12 5HA.*
- b) *Every member of the Society who is entitled to vote at a General Meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy, who need not be a member, to attend and vote in his/her stead. Forms of Proxy can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary.*
- c) *Only paid-up members are entitled to attend and vote at the meeting.*
- d) *Copies of the Accounts can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary prior to the AGM upon receipt of an SAE. In accordance with normal practice the Accounts, when approved, will be published in summary in the Basingstoke Canal News.*
- e) *Nomination forms for the election of the Board of Directors can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary.*

Subscriptions

It is over ten years since the Society's subscription rates were last changed and it was felt to be time for a review. This revealed that our rates are not very different from those of most other canal societies, but that they were over-complicated.

Our proposal now is for a modest increase in fees but with far fewer different rates. This will ensure that the subscriptions do cover the costs of membership, such as printing and postage costs of the BC News.

BCS Membership

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT

Dear Members

The 2017 Membership subscriptions are due on 1st March. If you pay by cash or cheque you will receive a reminder letter. I would appreciate it if you could send me your subs together with the details slip on the letter as promptly as possible. As I am sure you will appreciate, it is time consuming and costly to have to send out reminders.

Thank you for your cooperation and your support.

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

Chris May of Yateley
Ian Dunne of Cove
Matthew Vale of Fleet
Paul West of Winchester
Alex Delbridge of North Wanborough
Robin Labram of Fleet
Paul Edwards of Horsell
Peter Kenaghan of Crookham Village

Doreen Hornsey
Membership Secretary

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

Basingstoke Canal documents etc

Storage of documents and stuff about the Canal continues to be an issue, with much of it probably currently being held in members' homes and garages, possibly of historic interest and worthy of being archived if and when we have space to do it.

To assess the scale of the problem, members are requested to send details (ie. What is held and how much space it occupies) to the Secretary, Terry Inskip (email: Secretary@basingstoke-canal.org.uk).

AGM Venue

The Deepcut Village Centre is again the venue for our AGM. It is not hard to find and there will be signs off the main Deepcut Bridge Road.

Turn off onto Newfoundland Road, follow this round, turn left when you come to Cyprus Road and then immediately left into Crimea Road. The hall and ample parking is on the right.



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.

Date for next copy 30th April 2017

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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**

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

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

Busy morning at Ash Lock



The Society's old tug *Pledge* about to leave the Ash Lock depot for its new temporary home, while the work boat *Fly* comes out onto the bank for some repair and modification work.

