



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 257 Spring 2018





Editorial

It's been a very busy winter all round on the canal.

Contractors have surveyed and repaired the St John's flight and the Rangers have been working on locks elsewhere. Canal Society volunteers have been refitting the BCA's boat *Rosebud*, while others have been manning their patrol boat.

Cover Picture : Inspection of Greywell tunnel Photo: BCA
Inset: First ever sighting of a Greater Horseshoe bat in the tunnel. Photo: © Roy Champion.

The Society's work party have been repairing the work boat *Fly*, clearing the offside bank in Winchfield and are about to start work on installing new boat moorings near Farnborough Road.

The BCA run Tuesday volunteer group has also been out and doing bank clearance, weed removal etc, even in the most horrible weather sometimes.

All in all there is a great sense of everyone being partners in a great enterprise, which hopefully the Friends of the Basingstoke Canal initiative will help to promote.

There seems to be a real determination to make the transfer of ownership to the Canal & River Trust happen, but it will need all the friends and help it can get. Let's hope that this is also recognised by all the members of the Joint Management Committee and their fellow councillors.

Chairman's Report

Time for change

There are times when organizations such as ours need to look at the way they are operating and to consider whether a change of course is needed.

Ever since the Society was formed over 50 years ago, we have not wavered from our basic aim which is the restoration, preservation and development of the canal as a thriving navigation and as place to quietly enjoy the natural beauty of its environment. However, over that time, the way we pursue our objectives has changed radically.

In the early years, terms such as risk assessments, health and safety statements and data protection policies were unknown and I'm sure some would say that we got on very well with the job in hand without the need to concern ourselves with those issues.

In 1966, computers were virtually unknown outside the business community and mobile phones (which are essentially mobile computers today) had not even been invented. However, in today's world, all these things are a reality and the Society must adapt to embrace these developments and to make the most effective use of the new technology.

It is often remarked that the age profile of the Society is very much weighted towards the older generation and I think this is partly responsible for the fact that we have been slow to move with the times. I must put my hand up and admit that I have not been fully aware of

Chairman's report

the implications of these changes on the running of the Society and, for example, I was surprised recently to be told that many (maybe most) people under the age of 30 do not read newspapers, watch TV news or take much interest in what is reported and discussed in the mainstream media.

This has profound implications for us. Whereas the BC News, which incidentally continues to be a very professionally produced publication and is an immense credit to Roger Cansdale, has been the main organ of the Society since its original formation, there are now other ways of communicating not only with our members but also with the wider public.

This has become increasingly apparent from the work of Ken Sankey (who recently joined the Committee) and by a group of members who have been looking at ways of communicating our core message more effectively. This group has also been discussing other initiatives including recruiting new supporters through a Friends of the Canal scheme, developing our website and improving our relationships with other members of the Canal Partnership including, in particular, the six riparian districts.

This re-examination of the way we do things is timely as we must all recognize that if the current discussions between the Counties and the Canal & River Trust are to bear fruit we must present the canal as a vibrant, forward looking and well supported community asset. Could I therefore encourage you to support Ken and his team in the important work that they are doing.

Elsewhere in this edition of BC News the sad loss of Peter Coxhead has been reported. Peter was a tireless campaigner for the Basingstoke Canal, and working closely with Vic Trott, he pursued a vigorous initiative to bring about improvements to the canal in Woking town centre.

Sadly he will not see the imminent upgrading of the town wharf (adjacent to the WWF) or the new link bridge which will be built near to Chobham Road Bridge. It is only by relentless efforts to promote these projects that new facilities will be provided for canal users.

Peter also led the group that ran several successful events at the Bridge Barn and he was instrumental in starting and running the monthly talks in the Woking area which continue to provide an excellent programme and also bring members together in a convivial social atmosphere.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Maureen, Mark and Nicholas on their sad loss.

Notes for your diary:

Canal Society AGM, Saturday 19 May
Full details on page 15

Boat Company AGM, Friday 23 March
7.30pm, Canal Centre, Mytchett

Update on the Future of the

The title above may be a bit of an exaggeration, but I believe that there is an element of truth in it.

It has been obvious for many years that the age distribution of the Society's members is getting increasingly unfavourable, and the depressing number of obituaries in the BCN confirms this. What has been much less obvious is what to do about it.

Appeal to the younger generation is clearly the answer, but the means to achieve this has eluded us up till now. The 2006 Woking Canal Festival should have been a golden opportunity, but in fact hardly produced any new recruits, young or old. True, we do have a very welcome trickle of new members - 59 in the last year, but we shall need to do better if the Society is to have a real future.

At last, however, a way ahead may have been found, thanks to a spin-off from the Tuesday volunteers. These include many members of the Society as well as members of the general public wanting to do a bit for the canal. Ken Sankey, who is our latest recruit to the Society's Committee, is a regular on the Tuesday work parties and has been very active with the BCA in trying to integrate and promote the whole volunteer effort on the canal.

The BCA has been using social media for some time to promote the canal using Facebook and Twitter as well as their our website. The Society also has a website, but Facebook and Twitter have remained a mystery as far as most of the Committee were concerned. D Trump's twittering isn't much of an inspiration.

The Tuesday volunteers however have people who are au fait with these things and with Ken's encouragement have now set up a Facebook page for the Society. You can find it at www.facebook.com/basingstokecs.

It is being run by Ian Syms who has been professionally involved with the use of Facebook for promotional and commercial purposes. The page does of course need to be regularly refreshed with news and stories to maintain peoples' interest, so Martin, I and others have been feeding items to Ian.

He in turn has been feeding back to us information about what success, or otherwise, the page is having in attracting interest in the canal.

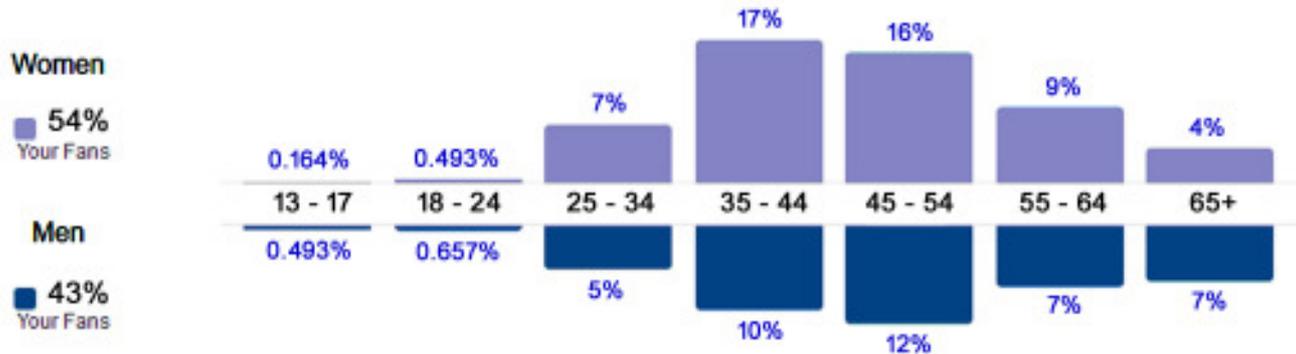
At the last count after only a couple of months, more than 1000 people have said that they like the page and over 1100 are following it. This is very encouraging, but even better is who they are.

Facebook collects an impressive (or horrifying if you are an old fogey like me) amount of information about its followers, which can be made available to its account holders. In the commercial world, they can use this information to focus advertising etc. For us, it provides an opportunity to see who is interested in the canal.

As the chart opposite shows, the demographic of our followers is very encouraging. Well over half of them are between the ages of 35 and 55. We don't have age data for our members because the membership form never asked for it, but many of them have been members for

Basingstoke Canal Society

Aggregated demographic data about the people who like your Page based on the age and gender information they provide in their user profiles.



30 or 40 years, so it is pretty clear that the likely peak in the distribution lies well to the right of this! Interesting also is the fact that more women than men appear to be interested, but this could also be because more women than men use Facebook. Nevertheless, we do seem to be making contact with an age group that seemed to be evading us.

Facebook also tells us where they are. 99.9%, not surprisingly are in the UK and speak English; what the odd speakers of Lithuanian, Bulgarian and Vietnamese make of it all is anyone's guess. The largest UK centre of interest is London but probably reflects the fact that many of the groups we are now linked to cover different geographic areas and have generic interests that includes canals, boating, environment and exercise.

In the canal's catchment area, Fleet has 146 fans, Woking 97, Farnborough 73, Basingstoke 53, Hook 47, Aldershot 45, Camberley 27, Odiham 24 and Ash Vale 22. Is the relatively poor showing in Camberley a symptom of or a cause for Surrey Heath Council's poor support for the canal?

Ken's group has taken a further step by setting up a Friends of the Canal scheme. How does this differ from being a member of the Canal

Society you may ask. Well, for a start it is free and very easy to do - just click on a button on the Society's webpage. This gives us an email address and in return the Friend will receive the Basingstoke Canal Bulletin.

As many people will be aware, this has been going for some years as a quick means of contacting people with news of upcoming events etc. It has been amended now to be the means of contacting the Friends of the canal. Although the content will be very similar, it will now include news of the Tuesday work party and other volunteer things not specifically to do with the Society.

We hope that many of the Friends may in turn be encouraged to become members of the Canal Society. The major inducement would to be the opportunity to be a member of a group that over the years has exerted considerable influence on the affairs of the canal, not least by encouraging and helping the Counties to go for full restoration 50 years ago. We are also drawing a list of up a few other ideas to encourage Friends to join.

All very exciting and a great credit to Ken and his team for setting the ball rolling. Members can become Friends too, so why not click on the button now and swell the numbers?

Future of the Basingstoke

Peter Walker, Acquisitions Manager of the Canal & River Trust was invited to give a presentation to the November meeting of the Joint Management Committee.

Peter Walker

Responsibilities

- Waterway transfers / acquisitions
- Restoration – strategic overview
- Environment Agency Navigations transfer
- Getting the best deal for the waterways from HS2
- Working with third parties wishing to undertake works that can affect the Trust

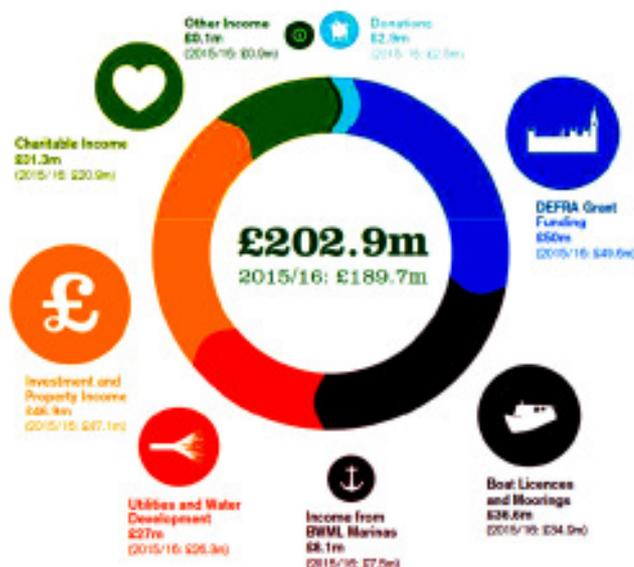
The Canal & River Trust was formed in July 2012:

- “To protect, manage and improve the nation’s canals and river navigations for the millions who enjoy them”.
- Transfer of waterways and associated public assets (and people) to third sector – largest ever.
- New governance to involve users and other interested bodies.
- Underpinned by 15 year contract / grant agreement with Government.
- Cross-party support - and at heart of new ‘localism’ agenda.
- 2,000 miles of historic canals and river navigations, plus several docks, 72 reservoirs in England & Wales.
- Over 2,700 listed structures – more than anyone bar the National Trust and Church of England:
- Locks, bridges, aqueducts, cuttings, embankments, tunnels, culverts.
- World Heritage Sites/ Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- Environment – 63 SSSIs, SACs.
- Water ‘assets’.
- Our Archives and Collection.
- Our property ‘endowment’.

Contract with Government

- Requires the Trust to meet certain conditions in return for commitment to 15 years of grant funding :
- ‘Principal Asset’ condition –the key waterway structures
- Flood-related assets condition
- Towpath condition
- Demonstrate Asset Management ‘best practice’
- Manage property endowment commercially
- Regular contact and reporting
- Renegotiation in 2022

Income



Canal Update, JMC

The Basingstoke Canal

Background - Our Charitable Objects

2.1 To preserve, protect, operate and manage Inland Waterways for public benefit: 2.1.1 for navigation; 2.1.2 for walking on towpaths; and 2.1.2 for recreation or other leisure-time pursuits of the Public in the interests of their health and social welfare.

Background - The Trust's Drivers for the Transfer

- A truly national organisation: increasing our ownership of the England and Wales Inland waterways – currently we own c 65% of these.
- A secure future for the canal: The Trust is its natural 'home', with our focus on, and capability to, manage the inland waterway navigations for the benefit of users and the public.
- A larger integrated network under one managing body: potential cost efficiencies and new income generation potential, e.g. fundraising, and volunteering.
- Expansion into an area where we don't currently have a presence.
- Greater community involvement: more local focus, more local 'ownership'.
- **But - any waterway taken on by the Trust needs to be adequately funded.**

What we can offer

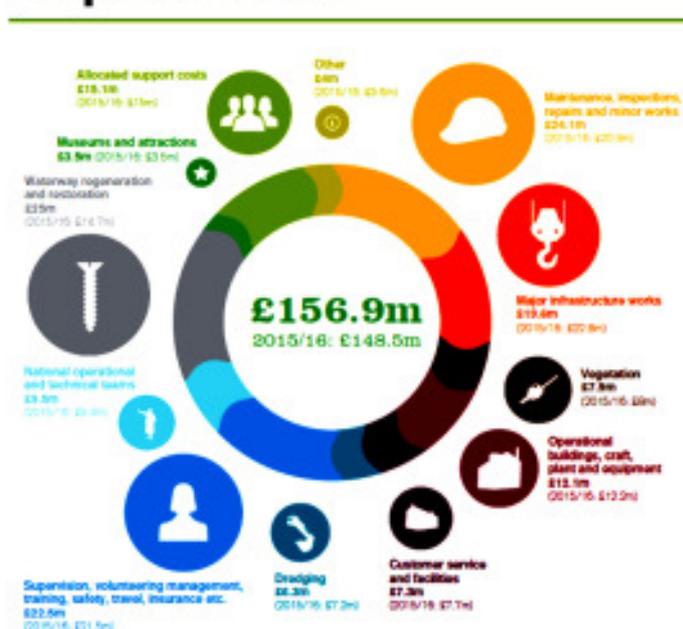
- A secure future for the waterway in an organisation dedicated to not just managing >2000 miles of waterways but to exploiting their potential to transform places and enrich lives.
- Developing the ongoing relationships with volunteer groups and key stakeholders.
- Promotion & marketing – open days, live broadcasts etc.
- Commercial expertise in income generating activities.

Timescale

- Councils wish to complete the transfer by 2022.
- We would like it to happen sooner.

The full presentation can be found on the SCC website as an attachment to the minutes at https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/documents/s42936/17_11_30_Basingstoke_Canal_JMC.pdf

Expenditure



Inspecting Our Canal

Inspections

Daily	Canal water levels
Weekly	Volunteer Length Inspection (Lengthsmen) Supplementary Embankment Inspection Mytchett Lake Reservoir Surveillance Inspection
Monthly	Supplementary Embankment Inspection Record levels in Piezo monitors on Mytchett Lake
6 Monthly	Length Inspection along towpath
Annually	General Inspections of Locks Embankments Cuttings Weirs & Sluices Canal Bridges that are listed structures Pumping Systems
Biannually	Detailed Inspection of Tree Stock
Every 3 years	Basic Formal Inspection of Tree Stock
Every 5 years	Principal Inspections of Locks Aqueducts
5+ years (10-20 years)	Principal Inspections of Embankments Cuttings Weirs & Sluices Culverts Canal Channel Basic Formal Inspection of Tree Stock

You may well have heard BCA talk about inspections and principle inspections, but do you really know what these are? Well here is your quick guide to Canal Inspections. The table above shows what inspections happen on what frequency.

Inspections can be a time consuming draw on our limited staff resources and expensive to carry out where we need to buy in additional expertise. However inspections are not just done for the sake of ticking some boxes.

Inspections in their many forms are what keep the canal in good working order and the surrounding population safe from breach or flood or falling trees.

Inspections aim to;

- Identify potential high risk areas
- Put in place a system of monitoring at a frequency appropriate to the level of severity
- Monitor change and allow remedial works to be planned and funded

by Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager

- If needs be, react quickly to a changing situation
- Prevent issues from getting out of hand allowing them to be dealt with in a more controlled and safe way.
- Reduce expenditure on safety issues by prevention. A planned repair is always much cheaper than an emergency repair.

Inspections Leading to Action

All inspections are recorded. Any issues resulting from inspections are reported to a line manager for further assessment and, if needed, action is then taken; this might be an emergency repair or simply increasing the level of inspection frequency to monitor a situation more closely.

I can give some good examples:

The first signs of the Dogmersfield landslip were first spotted by a Lengthsman while out on his section of canal. The report through to the office resulted in Rangers visiting the site immediately to assess the situation and well you know what happened after that! On a more day-to-day level the simple reporting of trollies and bikes in the canal can help us prevent boats from grounding or becoming damaged.

Inspection of embankments has on several occasions led to finding small leaks. These have then been able to be dealt with swiftly to prevent them becoming worse. Regular inspection of Crookham Silt Dump embankment more recently has led to further investigation by engineers and temporary works by Rangers to stem these leaks. Further work is now being planned in for next year to provide a longer term solution, perhaps in a similar way to the works undertaken in 2016 and 2017 on

Ash embankment, which suffered from similar problems.

Although we know roughly that lock gates have a 25 year lifespan, each gate deteriorates differently depending on many circumstances. Towards the end of a gate's life the annual lock inspection will allow us to determine which gates will need replacing the following winter and other smaller maintenance works.

The Principle Inspection (or major detailed) that has just happened in St Johns lock flight led directly to a list of required works. Being more planned and armed with information already gathered from annual inspections, money was able to be allocated and a contractor put in place ready to carry out works immediately as soon as each lock inspection was complete (*See typical repair schedule on p 11*). This new way of working is meaning that we are able to be more efficient and react quicker. Previously Principle Inspections would be carried out on all locks in one year, a long wait would then start for the final reports and months later a list of work would gradually emerge that there wasn't funding for. By breaking the surveys up into a rolling programme over a number of years we are better able to deal with the resulting works, physically and financially.

Level of Risk Must be Considered

Inspections take into consideration the level of risk. For example all embankments are categorised based on the height of the embankment. Thus an issue on a higher (category 5) embankment with a (consequence of failure) will be treated as a far higher priority than a low embankment in a more rural area with less to be affected if it failed.

Programmes of work from inspections do not always need doing immediately and again works will be categorised on their urgency, trees being a good example of this. The canal is divided up into high, medium and low priority trees for inspection. This determines how often they are inspected. The resulting work is then split up into 5 categories of priority that determine how quickly they are dealt with. This might be as quickly as within 24hrs or as long as 3 years for maintenance works. Again this allows us to plan ahead and ensure funding is in place while ensuring that high risk items are dealt with within an appropriately quick timescale.

In a similar way we are now trying to begin sorting out a backlog of towpath repair works where erosion has caused the edge of the towpath to collapse. We have over 500 of these issues outstanding on the canal currently which are monitored in our 6 month length inspections by the Canal Rangers. These issues have now been categorized into 3 levels depending on their level of urgency and the most urgent are being worked on. The first tranche of these works was started last spring and the next stage is about to be started. As we already know the number and length of those remaining (mostly lower priority) we can already start planning the first lot of these for next year and allocating money appropriately.

In 2012 and 2013 we surveyed all of the culverts which pass under the Canal – in many cases they were “jetted” clean of silt and debris during the inspection to allow water to move freely under the canal in these areas. As a result it was discovered some culverts needed significant work and this is what led to the major works on several culverts, including

those at Tundry Bank, Barley Mow and just downstream of Spanton’s Wharf

Planning Ahead Is Good

By planning ahead we can time works better and also reduce the time that the canal is not available to boating.

So as you hopefully see, Inspections are an important part of maintaining the canal, planning financially for the future and keeping our canal asset in a good working and safe condition for all to enjoy. It doesn’t stop random incidents from happening - it always seems to be the tree that looks most healthy that ends up falling over! However it does reduce incidents which can reasonably be predicted due to poor asset or tree condition and directly increases safety for all.



Above. Contractors at work on Lock 9. As well as the brickwork repairs, the gates have been replanked.

Our Canal

The inspections are formally reported with photos where appropriate and are used to draw up repair schedules like the following:

Lock 7 repair schedule. Prepared 11th December 2017

1. Upper surface of coping TPS immediately upstream of fixed ladder; indent in stone presents potential trip hazard; cut key and infill with sand/cement mortar.
2. TPS* steps downstream of lock chamber; retaining walls to both sides alongside third step from bottom; repair cracking and refix copings on one side.
3. Cobbled revetment adjoining steps; clean off heavy moss growth.
4. Footbridge; replace all 6 intermediate rails.
5. OS* lower quadrant; jet wash.
6. OS upper quadrant; jetwash.
7. Upper stop plank groove OS upstream edge bent; straighten and renew pointing as required.
8. TPS upper wing wall, either side of by-pass inlet aperture; repoint approx. 2m².
9. TPS upper wing wall; between stop plank groove and stone corner pier to gate recess; repointing required.
10. TPS vertical joint between stone corner pier and upper gate recess; repoint.
11. By OS upper gate; ballast like material in gate well preventing operation; to be cleared.
12. Upstream end of OS wing wall, intersection with steel sheet piling; excavate behind wall and fill void with puddle clay.
13. OS chamber wall jet wash throughout as required; repoint recessed joints.
14. OS lower gate recess, vertical joint with stone corner pier; repoint following deep mortar loss; also jet wash to remove weed growth.
15. OS downstream end of chamber wall (coincides with downstream end of brick bridge); timber pegs have been driven into wall; remove pegs and repair brickwork.
16. Chamber floor downstream of lower gates; remove large pieces of loose concrete.
17. TPS downstream of lower gates around by-pass outlet; repoint where mortar loss has occurred – approx. 2m².
18. TPS chamber wall from invert level to 1.2m above invert; jetwash entire chamber length and repoint following significant mortar loss.
19. Chamber floor; clear chamber of general detritus – approx. 15m³.

* TPS = Towpath side, OS = Offside.

Similar schedules were drawn up for all the St John's locks and the work has now all been completed and the flight refilled.

Weedcutting



The weedcutter can fish some surprising things out of the canal, as Nigel Searle reports:

I'd noticed when I'd walked by the rear of the Goldsworth Road industrial estate between the Step Bridge & Arthur's Bridge in Woking earlier that there was what appeared to be a tent or similar floating in the canal and assumed that it had been blown in during the recent high winds. As with a lot of things that are found in the canal it turned out to be an 'iceberg' with far more going on beneath the surface than was apparent from what was floating above.

Initially we thought it was just one bike, but it soon became clear that it was four (one road & three off road.) Although these were all fairly lightweight machines it's a good thing they hadn't been chained together, as it was awkward enough getting them out individually even with the aid of the weed-cutter's hydraulic power to lift them as they were interlocked & tangled in the tent's fabric. Is the recovery of four bikes in one hit a new record?

The handlebars on all the bikes are positioned at right angles to the norm, probably to aid storage or transport. Sadly, the tent, which was a lightweight type with a flexible frame, did not survive its encounter with the weed-cutter's rake. I doubt we'll ever get to hear the full story.

Fiona Shipp had contacted the police and had already agreed to meet us at Bridge Barn (probably believing that the police wouldn't be interested and that they'd need to be moved off the canal by the BCA). After moving them over to the towpath side (we'd pulled them out on the off-bank behind the Goldsworth Rd Industrial Estate) we then shifted them up to Bridge Barn.

Rather unexpectedly, the police arrived before Fiona who was coming from the Canal Centre. The police arranged for a van to collect them and the remains of the tent and subsequently contacted John Wharf with an incident number; they said that they'd most likely end up being auctioned if the owners couldn't be traced.

Fly



Having finished with the police, as she'd never experienced it before, we took Fiona for a spin on the weed-cutter and demonstrated removal of a clump of Hydrocotyle upstream of the Parley Drive Bridge before returning her to Bridge Barn. (See <https://www.facebook.com/basingstokecanal/videos/18798423387248141> for Fiona's video)

John and I have been out again and John was also out with Ranger Andy Foster, clearing and cutting outside the WWF HQ before the ducks and moorhens start nesting (or even thinking about it...) in preparation for the wharf extension work.

Happy Ending: The canal now looks remarkably weed-free at Woking Quay and the bikes have apparently been reunited with their owner, who was very grateful. They were blown into the canal by the storm.

Despite the winter weather, work on refurbishing the hull of the Society's work boat *Fly* has continued.

Two Army surplus frame tents have been purchased to make life a bit more pleasant. Kev reports that the bow section is nearly finished and attention is turning to the stern. The bottom plate ("like a colander!") has been cut out, so the next job is to replace this and add mountings for an outboard motor.

Work on any modifications to the newly acquired work boat *Jim Douglas* will not start until *Fly* is operational. However, it is intended to use *Jim*, with its galley and toilet, as a base when the Work Party begin the installation of the moorings at Farnborough Road.

The moorings will be known as the Holland Moorings in memory of those whose bequest to the Society will pay for them.

BBC CountryFile

People may have seen our former newsletter editor and Committee member, Kathryn Dodington on a recent edition of BBC's Country-File. This is how it happened:



The phone call was along these lines; 'You are related to an 'Idle Woman', you can steer *Sculptor* and you volunteer for the Trust and my reply was along the lines of 'not really, yes and yes'.

The Canal & River Trust were looking for a volunteer who had a direct association with one of the trainees (you see they are not 'Idle Women') and could steer a former working boat, so in reality they had game, set and match with me.

My aunt - in reality my mother's cousin, Daphne March, operated the *Heather Bell* during the war and it was her idea for women to crew working boats on the Grand Union canal to help release men for the war effort and to prove that women can do just about anything. Although the name 'Idle Women' has stuck the ladies were known as 'trainees' with 'Idle Women' name coming after the war when Susan Woolfitt wrote her book 'Idle Women'.

So, I was the Trust's prime candidate to work with BBC CountryFile to help produce a small bit of film for the Remembrance Day broadcast of the programme. We also had the company of

Kate Saffin and Heather Wastie of Alarum Theatre.

To cut to the chase everything was agreed in principle and we arranged a day to 'walk the patch' – in reality the top four locks of the Stoke Bruerne flight and to take a look at *Sculptor* which lies outside the Museum in Stoke Bruerne. Everything was agreed in pretty quick order and filming was planned for a week later on 26-October.

We met at 08:45 and go down the first four locks into the 'thick' of Stoke Bruerne, wind (it's the first place you can wind a full-length boat) and come back up the same four locks. Our presenter was to be Ellie Harrison (*Above left with Kathryn aboard Sculptor*).

In reality, we went down four locks into the 'thick' of Stoke Bruerne, back to the Museum, then winded outside the tunnel, back down into the 'thick' and then back again – my interview took place just below Lock 15 on the lock waiting moorings as, due to the Canal & River Trust winter moorings being in the Stoke Bruerne 'long pound' this year there was nowhere else suitable. Things were a little bit difficult because it was half term week in Northamptonshire and just about everyone visiting Stoke Bruerne wanted a slice of the action.

We knew there had been about eight hours of filming which would result in about 8 minutes of broadcast film but we didn't know what would be broadcast. The end result was very good, I thought, and went down well with the historic boat movement who can be very critical at times.

Society Annual General Meeting

NOTICE is hereby given that the Fortieth Annual General Meeting of the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society will be held on Saturday 19th May 2018 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 20th May 2017.
3. To approve the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2017.
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 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 2018

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.

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 Richard Davenport of the Maidenhead Waterways Restoration Group.

AGM Notes:

- a) *This Notice is issued from Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA.*
- 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.*



Events

Mikron Theatre

The previously annual visit from the Mikron Theatre company did not take place last year, because the Fox & Hounds' management was not interested and the Fleet Football Club had decided to stop hiring out their hall, which had previously used in bad weather.

This year, David Millett has arranged for the performance to take place in the garden of the Water Witch at Colt Hill, Odiham on Friday 6th July, starting at 7.30pm.

This year's show will be 'REVOLTING WOMEN', which tells the Suffrage story through the eyes of a less well known Pankhurst, Sylvia, who fought for the vote alongside working women in the East End. Sylvia meets Lettie and they push together to Parliament, to bend the ear of the Cabinet.



According to the Mikron website, the show is full of political satire, song and more suffrage societies than you can shake a stick at, and unravels a contentious and momentous movement in history!

Odiham Raft Race

The idea for a raft race on the canal in Odiham came from Parish Councillor David Stewart, who has been doing most of the organising, including being successful in getting approval from Natural England!

The Society has agreed to run the event, which will be covered by our insurance. The intention is that teams will start from Lodge Copse Bridge and make their way down to Colt Hill.

The event will take place on Sunday 2nd September.

What has yet to be decided is what sort of bank-side entertainment at Colt Hill will be provided.

Phillip Riley has so far been representing the Society, but he is keen to get other members involved. It is certain that people will be needed on the day to help with marshalling, but help with the organisation of the day is also needed.

Another opportunity to help the Society! Please contact Phillip (01256 702109).

Chobham Talks

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

The meetings will start at 8pm on the third Wednesday of the month, December through April inclusive.

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

Non-members and friends are very welcome.

21st March 2018 *Deborah Wheeler* **“Whitchurch Silk Mill”**

Join us for a guided tour of a Georgian silk weaving water mill, see, hear and feel its fascinating history and beautiful fabrics.

18th April 2018 *Neil Owen* **“Canal & River Trust. Engineering a 200 Year Old Infrastructure”**

The presentation will discuss the way in which Canal & River Trust are managing their Engineering Assets, including future improvement and the implication on the possible adoptions of Waterway managed by other Navigation Authorities.

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 at mark@coxhead.org.uk



HELP!

Due to pressure from his several other interests, Malcolm Brickwood has stepped down as talks organiser, but he has already booked the speakers for the 2018/19 season.

We are looking for a replacement for him.

As Malcolm has done at least half the job for next year, all that will be necessary then will be to liaise with the speakers to make sure they turn up and that we provide any necessary equipment for them.

For the following year a bit more effort will be needed, to find speakers. However, there is no shortage of advice within the Society and Malcolm has a list of past speakers to avoid repetition.

The Chobham talks are very well supported (about 50 people at the last one), so this is an important role that needs to be taken up.

Please, think about this and if you are one of our newer members, please don't be shy about coming forward! Contact anyone on the Committee (see page 23).

The Battle of Pondtail

The Canal Society was formed in the autumn of 1966 and within 6 months it found itself embroiled in its second major battle.

The first came about when the Society's approach to the New Basingstoke Canal Company about clearing the towpath was rebuffed. Prosecution for trespass was threatened and the company also objected to the Society using Basingstoke Canal in its name; hence the name Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society. Sid Cooke's plan was to fill in parts of the canal for building land and he wanted no interference. Nevertheless, the Society continued to campaign for a take-over of the canal by the County Councils.

However, the following spring, the Society found itself in conflict with Hampshire County Council, when HCC announced its intention to put a second bridge across the canal at Pondtail, Fleet. This was to allow the road from Aldershot to run straight up into King's Road without having to do a dogleg over the old, rather narrow bridge (*Below in 1948*).

This would not have been a problem had they not also decided to leave only 4ft 6in headroom above the water level. In 1952, the County had bought all the bridges from Pondtail to Up Nately from the Canal Company for £15,000 (presumably because they rightly didn't trust it to keep them properly maintained), together with an agreed right to lower them to 4ft 6in.

The Canal Society lodged immediate objections, but the County was adamant. Their engineers had assessed the Deepcut flight of locks as being beyond economic repair and so their view was that the canal would never again be used by anything bigger than a canoe or rowing boat, for which 4ft 6in would be adequate.

Letters went back and forth until on 3rd May 1967, the Clerk of the County Council wrote a letter to David Gerry, the Society's then Chairman, that was clearly intended to put an end to the argument:



or how the canal was saved by a good lunch

“The County Council purchased from the owners of the Canal in 1952 the right to lower any bridges from and including Pondtail Bridge, Fleet, to Greywell to 4ft 6in above water level. Reading Road Bridge, Fleet, was lowered to approximately 4ft 6in in 1953 and the present proposal is to lower Pondtail Bridge to the same height as Reading Road Bridge.

The County Council has nothing further to add to the correspondence...”

David did, however, have something to add and it must have given him great pleasure to type this the following day:

“I thank you for your letter of 3rd May, and am delighted that the new bridge will be the same height as Reading Road Bridge.

With respect, however, may I point out that Reading Road Bridge is approximately 6 feet above water level. May we therefore have your assurance that any vessel able to pass under Reading Road Bridge, will also be able to pass under the new Pondtail Bridge. Once we have this assurance, you may then be confident that we will not pester you again on this subject.”

This assurance came a few days later, together with the excuse that the datum was the highest possible water level. A subsequent letter from the County Surveyor stated that the clearance between the towpath and the bridge would be 5ft 4in, so this datum would put the towpath 10 inches under water – not a happy, or particularly likely situation.

The real mystery is how Mrs Marshall, the General Manager of the canal in 1952, managed

to get Reading Road Bridge built at 6 feet and preserve the navigation we have today. I asked David Gerry if he knew and he said that the story was that she took the site foreman out for a good lunch.

If Reading Road, Pondtail and Farnborough Road Bridges had all been built with 4ft 6in clearance, it seems doubtful whether the Counties would ever have agreed to the canal being restored as a navigation – the cost of raising the bridges would have been too great.

A very far-sighted and persuasive lady! She died just over 20 years ago, having had the pleasure of attending the re-opening of her canal in 1991.



Above: Mrs Marshall with Kitty in about 1950

Farewell

Peter Coxhead

Robin Higgs gave the following eulogy at Peter's funeral:

As Chairman of the SHCS throughout the restoration of the Basingstoke Canal, which followed on from the years of campaigning to save it, I had the good fortune of having people like Peter, with their expertise, taking an interest, joining us and getting involved. Certainly canal restoration in the late 60's and early 70's was a fairly new phenomenon, and there was a lot of convincing to be done.

At that time we needed to build up teams to work with the various Authorities and communities along the 30 mile length of canal, and this is where Peter could and did play a valuable part, particularly on planning matters.

Peter joined the Canal Society in May 1972, at a public meeting held in St. John's Church Hall in West Byfleet, the family then, as now, living in Pyrford. After joining, and often working with Vic Trott, another dedicated campaigner, he took on much of the campaign responsibility for the Woking end, particularly as I said, in planning matters.

Peter's enthusiasm and commitment to undertake various roles in our campaigning, lead to him becoming involved in a wide range of activities. Many of these roles necessitated a close working relationship with the Society Board, so Peter joined it as a Director, at one time becoming the Vice Chairman, being motivated I am sure, by seeing the canal coming back to life again, something very close to his heart. As part of all this he became



Woking Events Committee Chairman, which amongst other things, meant him taking a leading role in the very enjoyable Bridge Barn Boat Rallies held at Easter, showing local people what a valuable amenity the canal is. Also for a while he became a crew member of the society's extremely successful John Pinkerton trip boat at the western end of the canal, one of our main fund raising activities.

For a considerable time too, Peter was Woking Talks organiser, then in the building on the site of what is now the Light Box, and when ultimately we had to move, Peter was very keen and largely instrumental in us coming to Chobham, where he had already set up in business, and where to this day we still hold our meetings. In all this, Peter was supported by his family, Maureen at the meetings, and Mark now continuing as a keen working party

Farewell



Above: Peter on his last working party with his son Mark and old friends Robin Higgs, Brian Smith and Pablo Haworth

volunteer, to all of whom, together with other family members, our thoughts go out. So in remembering Peter here today, and particularly from all his Canal Society friends for whom I

speak, we can commemorate and be thankful for the very valuable part that Peter played in the success story of the Basingstoke Canal. Peter was simply, one of life's gentlemen.

Ken Thornber

It was sad to hear of the death of Cllr Ken Thornber, one-time leader of Hampshire County Council. He was a strong supporter of the canal and is seen here with Philip Riley on the occasion of the official opening of the barn at Colt Hill, which the Society purchased from Hampshire County Council.



BCS Membership

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT

Dear Members

It will soon be time to pay your 2018 subscriptions which are due on 1st March. If you pay by cash or cheque you will receive a letter reminding you that your subs are due. We would be grateful if you could pay as soon as possible and, if you are able to add a donation to the Society, it would be much appreciated. If you pay by Bankers Order or direct to our bank, may I please advise you of our current membership fees which are as follows:

Adult: £10, Family £12, OAP £5, 2OAP £7, Group £15.

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

JCA Pitt of Camberley
Anne Hordley of Farnborough
David Urbani of Farnham
Simon Starbuck of Chineham
Niels Robert & Joe Dakin & Joley of Farnborough
Graham Bleach of Camberley
Andrew Parker of Fleet
Tristen Hedley of Woking
Gren Gale of Brookwood
Graham Corser of Camberley

Kind regards

Doreen Hornsey
Membership Secretary

John Ross

Sad to say that John Ross has told us that he finally decided that he must stand down as our Exhibitions Manager due to ill health. He has suffered from back problems for many years and has had several operations that have failed to do much to relieve the pain.

As well as designing and setting up the Society's displays for many events, including the permanent one at Milestones museum in Basingstoke, John has often featured as an attraction at events with his wonderfully painted dinghy *Elizabeth Rose*, which never failed to delight the public.

He is also an extremely skilled signwriter and painter in the canal tradition. One of his last



jobs for the Society was painting the *John Pinkerton II*. How he did it with a bad back doesn't bear thinking about.

We are very grateful to John for all he has done for the Society and wish him well for the future. Needless to say, we are now looking for a new Exhibitions Manager.

BCS information



The Bulletin is now up to Issue 32.

If you want to keep up with the latest news about the canal, please click on the Friends button on the Society

website at www.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 2018

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

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Tunnel inspection



Structural inspection and bat counting party about to enter Greywell tunnel on board the Canal Society's work boat "Alan Flight".