



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 262 Spring 2019





Editorial

With the passing of Dieter Jebens and Paul Vine, whose writing skills played a vital part in launching the restoration of the canal, it really feels as if a chapter in the history of the Society, and indeed the canal, is closing.

in Committee meetings, there is little doubt that this process is going to be very beneficial in spreading the load and reducing the dependency on the relatively small number of Committee members. It also allows people who don't want the commitment of joining the Committee to make a contribution.

Cover Picture : Madame Butterfly passing the new moorings being constructed near Farnborough Road.

Photo: Roger Cansdale.

True, there are still a few people around from those early days half a century ago, and some are still involved with the canal, but the number of people who remember the derelict waterway of the 1960s is steadily and inevitably dwindling.

Further good news is the recognition in the recent Hampshire Countryside 'Volunteer of the Year' Awards of three people:

'Chairman's' Award to Lengthsmen Organiser Mike Gordon

'Volunteer Leader' Award to BCA Tuesday Work Party leader Steve Livesey-Bennett

'Volunteer of the Year - Special Recognition' Award to Ken Sankey

Congratulations to all of them!

This makes it all the more important to cultivate a new crop of members and educate the public about the threats that the canal still faces. Happily, our Internet team have been very busy stirring up interest via Facebook etc and once our new Society website is up and running with its online payment facility, we look forward to some of the 3500+ followers converting

And a final piece of good news is that the Environment Agency have at last decided to recognise the BCA as a *bona fide* Navigation Authority. The lack of recognition stemmed from the irregular transfer of ownership in 1870 which failed to pass the Statutory Undertaking conferred by the original Act of Parliament on to the new owner. This all came to light in 1913 when the Appeal Court decided that the then owner was not responsible for maintaining the canal. What it meant for the BCA a hundred years later was that they were being charged for Abstraction Licences by the EA for things that the C&RT would not have had to pay.

themselves into members.

The management of the Canal Society is also undergoing a bit of a transformation with the establishment of a number of sub-groups looking after things like Events, Marketing, Planning and Projects. This is something that Philip Riley has pushed for for years, but it is actually happening now, thanks to the efforts of Ken Sankey and others. Whilst it may be a bit worrying for the old brigade like me to hear managementspeak buzzwords floating around

Happily this is now resolved. All we need now is to find a way of helping the Counties to achieve a transfer of ownership to the C&RT.

Chairman's AGM report

This has been a year of mixed fortunes for the canal and for the Society.

This time last year the County Councils were in discussions with the Canal & River Trust over the proposal to transfer the canal to the Trust. Those negotiations continued throughout the summer and autumn but, before Christmas, we received the unwelcome news that the transfer was 'not viable' at the present time. Reading between the lines it became apparent that the capital sum required to move the canal over to the Trust could not be justified. Although we have not been privy to the amount involved, it is clear that the Counties were reluctant to face the political and financial consequences of the transfer. The Society has always taken the view that the C&RT is the most suitable 'home' for the canal – the Counties are, to some extent, reluctant owners and the Trust has the long term vision, and the technical and financial resources, to develop the canal as part of the national network.

The discussions with the Trust have produced two important consequences. Firstly the County Councils and the BCA have been encouraged to make a detailed assessment of the condition of the canal and to identify the real cost of maintaining it as a navigation. Secondly the review of the finances and operation of the canal has served to emphasize the need to generate increased revenue from the canal and to reduce its dependency on local authority support. We are therefore seeing a renewed interest in the promotion of revenue-earning projects and the first of these will be the upgrading of the camp-site at Mytchett. The Society has always taken the view that revenue generation is a key objective and we have

therefore invested our income in new facilities to attract greater use of the canal. These have included the new moorings at Farnborough Road (financed entirely by the Society and being built by Society volunteers) and the new wharf in Woking which is due to be formally opened on 31st May. Funding for these projects has come mainly from our very successful trip boat operations in Odiham and Woking. Income has also been generated from publications and sales (and I would particularly like to thank Denise and Verna for their running of the sales stand and Roger for writing such excellent booklets). Our Raft Race in Odiham last September was (despite my initial misgivings) a great success and we will be repeating the event this year.

The granting of the Queens Award for Voluntary Service gave a huge boost to our morale and we were very pleased that, on his request, the Duke of Kent personally presented the award at the ceremony in November. The award represents a very fitting tribute to all the efforts of our volunteers over the last 53 years.

Sadly some of the members who originally inspired and led the campaign to restore the canal have now passed on. Last month we received the news that Dieter Jebens had died after a long illness following a serious stroke. Dieter was a founder member of the Canal Society, co-authored *The Case for Restoration* which led to the acquisition of the canal by the County Councils in the early 1970s, edited the *BC News* for many years and was the Chairman of the Boat Company at one time. As all of us who knew him would agree, Dieter was a controversial character who did not hesitate to put forward a forthright opinion even if it went

Chairman's AGM report

against the accepted line. All organisations need someone to challenge conventional thinking and Dieter certainly did that for us. Last month we also heard of the death of Paul Vine. Paul wrote London's Lost Route to the Sea in 1965 and this was followed, two years later, by London's Lost Route to Basingstoke which inspired many people (including myself) to join the Society. There is no doubt that Paul's efforts in the 1960s, when canal restoration was hardly a popular subject, made a very significant contribution towards the rejuvenation of the wonderful network of inland waterways in the south east that we enjoy today. We also lost David Horwood, the Boat Company's Bookings Manager. David was an excellent example of a member who quietly got on with an essential task whose importance was only truly appreciated after he passed away. The strength of the Society has always rested on the willingness of members, like David, who give unstintingly of their time.

I would also like to mention the initiatives being pursued by Ken Sankey to modernize the Society. I would readily accept that I have probably served on the Committee for too long and those of us 'of a certain age' should now concentrate on passing the baton on to a new generation. Ken has focused on those issues which we had, quite frankly, neglected in recent years. I would refer particularly to the need to embrace the opportunities offered by social media. We should also be putting more effort into building our relationships with members of the Canal Partnership including, in particular, the District authorities. We need them to use their positions to promote the value of the canal, for example as important players in the 'health and well-being agenda' and to make

sure that the canal benefits from developments within the canal corridor. I'm pleased to say that we now have new teams who are looking at these aspects of our work and I'm very confident that they will succeed in raising the profile of the canal and attracting more support for it.

Can I conclude by thanking you, the members, once again for your continued support. It is as important as ever that the Society continues to promote the value of the canal and to safeguard it for generations to come.

Philip Riley

Thanks from Hants C.C.

On Wednesday 1st May a small group of us went to the Great Hall, Winchester. It was an evening presentation to recognise the value of the Volunteer and the vital work that is undertaken across the entire county. There are thousands of us doing a massive range of different tasks utilising a whole gamut of skills. Increasingly the bosses at County Hall are aware and extremely grateful. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that many a county service and facility would not be able to function without the input from volunteers.

In recognition of all the effort that you all put into the upkeep of the canal and towpath yours truly accepted the Chairman's Award.

Because it was simply not possible to invite every single Volunteer it was specifically requested that I tell you all about the award and thank you all for your much-appreciated efforts. Thank you.

Mike Gordon

Annual General meeting

The 42nd Annual General meeting of The Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society Ltd took place on 18th May, once again at the Deepcut Village Centre. With our Co-Presidents away in France, we had planned for Vice-President Robin Higgs to chair the meeting, but a hospital visit prevented him from doing so and our Chairman Philip Riley had to step in.

The usual approval of the minutes of the previous AGM, accounts and auditors took place. In contrast to the previous year, our accounts (*see page 6*) showed a loss of over £28,000, but this was attributable to the fact that a very large legacy had been received in 2017 and that a deliberate decision had been made to spend some of the Society's funds on a couple of significant projects - Crookham Wharf and the Farnborough Road meorings.

The Treasurer expressed his confidence in the Society's financial state being satisfactory for some years to come.

There followed the only potentially controversial moment of the meeting when a motion to amend the Society's subscription rates from 2020 was put forward:-

	New	Old
Adult individual	£15	£10
Joint/Household	£20	£12
Junior (under 18)	£0	£3
Senior citizen	-	£5
Senior couple	-	£7
Group	£30	£15
Life membership	£200	£120

The Treasurer pointed out that the last increase had been in 2003, since when the rate of inflation had totalled over 50%. The current

rates fell well short of covering the cost of servicing the membership in terms of the costs of printing, postage, insurance, auditors fees etc. The proposed rates were broadly in line with those of most other canal societies. He added that efforts were being made to put together a package of benefits for members, such as discounts on boat trips and meals at local pubs. He also pointed out that as well as the increases, it had been decided to offer free membership to those under 18 to encourage younger people to join.

Graham Hornsey felt that the increase for Senior Citizens from £5 to £15 would result in many such people resigning; he suggested that the increase should be graded. In reply, the Treasurer said that this had been considered but was felt to place too much work on the Membership Secretary and probably would still result in a loss of members due to the number of people who usually forgot to increase their payments when subs were raised. He hoped that members would understand that a £5 membership fee actually cost the Society money and was of no benefit to the Canal. Other people agreed with this point, although Peter Jones felt that it should be made clearer that there was no longer a Senior Citizen concessionary rate.

A show of hands showed one abstainer with everyone else approving the motion.

The new Board of Directors was then announced:

Janet Buckley, Roger Cansdale, Guy Faller, Dick King, Martin Leech, Ian Moore, Kevin Redway, Philip Riley, Jeff Hill, Ken Sankey, Neil Sutherland.

(Cont P7)

Society accounts for 2018

Summary of accounts for year ended 31 December 2018

Income and expenditure account

	2018 £	2017 £
Income		
Subscriptions	7,911	7,250
Donations - general	3,614	4,734
Bequests	0	48,428
Grants received	3,400	3,200
Gift Aid Recoveries	2,063	2,135
Income from subsidiaries	34,479	30,245
Fundraising income	1,806	2,875
Interest received	202	255
	<u>53,475</u>	<u>99,122</u>
Less expenditure		
Projects and working parties	(61,036)	(22,013)
Rallies and events	(1,696)	(1,012)
Newsletter	(5,439)	(5,354)
Postage, stationery and printing	(2,343)	(2,127)
Insurance	(5,845)	(5,451)
Sundries	(933)	(390)
Depreciation less profit on sale of asset	(1,940)	(1,407)
Accountant and professional fees	(1,910)	(1,800)
AGM and other governance costs	(391)	(312)
	<u>(81,533)</u>	<u>(39,866)</u>
Net income	<u>(28,058)</u>	<u>59,256</u>

Balance Sheet

Fixed assets		
Investment in subsidiary companies	101	101
Freehold land & buildings	86,054	50,412
Plant & equipment	5,744	7,684
Amounts due from subsidiary company		
Loans - JPCC	114,806	122,710
SHCC	1,591	2,142
Profit for year - subsidiaries	34,479	30,245
Other debtor	2,063	2,310
Cash at bank and in hand	174,485	230,322
Accrued expenses	(7,435)	(5,980)
Net assets	<u>411,887</u>	<u>439,945</u>
General fund	408,158	436,216
Restricted fund	3,729	3,729
Total funds	<u>411,887</u>	<u>439,945</u>

AGM

Terry Inskip and John Wall were standing down. The Chairman thanked Mrs Inskip for her work as the Company Secretary and for managing the Society's insurance matters and presented her with a token of the Society's appreciation. He mentioned that Mrs Celia Griffiths had volunteered to take over these roles but was currently in France. She would be co-opted onto the vacant seat on the Board when she returned.

The next item on the agenda was the presentation of the Robin Higgs Award, sadly for the first time without Robin present to do it. This year Philip Riley presented it to Doreen and Graham Hornsey, both of whom had done a great deal of work for the Society.



Doreen had taken on the job of Membership Secretary in 2004 and would only be relinquishing it later this year. Graham had become the Treasurer in 2006 and carried on until 2013. He had also managed the now very successful Lengthsman Scheme.

After an auction of a framed Terry Harrison print of King's Head Bridge, that had been donated to the Society, raised £30, there was a refreshment break.

In lieu of a speaker, there was a showing of a film made by Tony Harmsworth in the 1960s of one of the last barge trips from Cox's Mill on the River Wey to the London Docks to bring back a load of wheat for the mill. This originally was silent but Tony had recently done a commentary that David Tonkinson had recorded and John Howe had added to the film. There was only time to show the trip to London and some of the loading, but the whole film will be shown at one of the Chobham meetings.

This was followed by Dick King's report on the boat operations. Despite some difficulties and unexpected costs, takings and profits were about 10% up on the previous year and Kitty was doing very well. Sadly, they had lost the JP's Bookings Manager David Horwood and were looking to put a small team in place to take on the job.

Dick reminded people that there was free cruise for Volunteers on the third Monday of every month up to September, starting at 7pm from Colt Hill.

Janet Buckley then gave a resumé of the Work Party's activities. The lowering of Crookham Wharf had been completed and the finished job had attracted many compliments. After some routine bank clearance activities, work had finally begun on the moorings at Farnborough Road. Despite the various underwater obstacles encountered (lorry tyre, lumps of masonry, a bicycle and a safe) most of the piles had been driven in before the deadline imposed by Natural England. Over 100m of deck was now in place (*see front cover photo*).

Janet ended by thanking the members of the Work Party for all their efforts. (*Cont P8*)



Above: Completed work on Crookham Wharf

The final item of the AGM was the Open Forum for members to ask questions about any matter that concerned them.

Q. Why does Surrey Heath Council not pay their full share of the Canal budget?

A. This appeared to be due to the personal animosity towards the Canal of a leading member of the Council. She had now retired and efforts would be renewed to rectify the situation.

Q. More of an observation - Friends of the Canal don't pay anything!

A. True, but it is hoped that when the website has been redesigned to allow online payment of subscriptions, some of them will convert to being Members. To encourage this, the scope of the bulletin will probably be reduced to make the Basingstoke Canal News more appealing as an incentive to joining.

Q. What sum of money would be needed as an endowment to allow the transfer of ownership of the Canal to the C&RT?

A. The Counties have not made this public, but it would be tens of millions.

Q. What progress has been made with the marina at Odiham?

A. It is a boat mooring, not a marina, and would be on the strip of land we bought between Galleon Marine and the Bypass Bridge. Ideally a wider strip would allow a better setup and we will be talking to the Parish Council which owns the land about this. A long term project!

Q. Reading Road Wharf car park is now Pay & Display. Who runs this?

A. It is run by Hart DC on behalf of the BCA. Last year the canal budget received about £3,000 from it. It is worth pointing out that most of the people who used to park there when it was free were not walking the canal but going to the shops or other local facilities.

The AGM closed with a vote of thanks proposed by David Millett for all the work done by the Society and its volunteers.

Events

MIKRON THEATRE VISIT 2019



Date: Saturday 22nd June 2019

Time: 7.30pm

Venue: Waterwitch garden, Colt Hill, London Road, Colt Hill, Odiham, RG29 1AL Tel: 01256 702778.

Show: 'ALL HANDS ON DECK', A Tale of Two Wrens.

'A love story between the Royal Navy and their loyal 'Jenny Wrens'

New WRNS recruits Ginger and Lily, are looking for wartime adventure. Lily wants to serve on dry land but Ginger is desperate to serve at sea - and the sailors can't believe their luck!

Our Wrens show pays tribute to all those wartime women who pushed the door to opportunity firmly open.

Full of dots, dashes, semaphore and song, Ginger and Lily find themselves in uncharted waters on a journey they'll never forget.'

Come along by car or boat and enjoy another Mikron masterpiece. Bar and food available. Bring garden chairs.

No tickets required. A cash collection will be taken after the show.

Make a diary note now so you do not miss the show.

For further information contact David Millet on 01252 617364, email: d.millett7@ntlworld.com or visit www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk

CHOBHAM TALKS

These will resume on Wednesday 16 October 2019 with a talk by Fiona Shipp, BCA Canal Manager about maintaining and enhancing the 32 miles of Canal from the River Wey Navigation to Greywell.

The programme for subsequent meetings will be advertised in the next issue of BC News and on the website.

ODIHAM RAFT RACE

The second Odiham Raft Race will be taking place on Sunday 1st September. The course will start and finish at Colt Hill with a turning point near Lodge Copse Bridge.

How about a Canal Society entry this year?

Unity restored!



Above: Pete Phillips, John Abbott and John Wharf with the BCA's newly refurbished dredger.

Last year the BCS engineering team were asked to investigate the refurbishment and certification of the BCA dredger “Unity” which had sat unused for four years outside the dry dock at Deepcut having failed its PUWER (Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations) inspection. The failure certificate cited three items needing attention before a certificate could be issued and the certificate also stated that these had to be addressed before further use.

The items were as follows:-

- 1 The main slew ring had excessive backlash.
- 2 The safe load indicator was inoperative.
- 3 The starboard stabilising leg collapsed under load.

The first item had the most potential to be difficult to address but when the team were given a demonstration by ranger Andy Foster of the dredger in action, we were of the opinion that the slewing and its brake were satisfactory and, despite an extensive search, we were unable to establish any regulation regarding acceptable limits for backlash. It was decided to gamble on a different inspector having a different interpretation of acceptable limits and in any case, delving into that part of the hydraulic system was deemed to be beyond the capability of the small team.

Item 2 was found to be not actually required on the dredger so it was removed and therefore exempt from inspection.

BCA dredger back in action

Item 3 was resolved using invaluable advice from Jim Hughes, the owner of Kingsley Hydraulics in Guildford, who made several visits to the dredger at no cost to the project. He suggested inserting extra hydraulic check valves in each of the two leg rams and supplied the parts needed (*Below*). The modification was entirely successful and the legs were found to stay in either the upper or lower positions.



Having carried out the above repairs and repainted the boat to smarten it up, an inspection was arranged and on 20th May the dredger was given a clean bill of health and a certificate was promised in about a week.

Another boat safety certificate is also required which will require a few minor modifications but which are in hand and should be completed in about three weeks when the dredger will once again be fully operational. Thanks are due to the other team members, Bill Mitchell, John Abbott and Pete Phillips.

John Wharf

This is a great piece of work by the Society's boat building team in getting this essential piece of maintenance kit back in action, at a cost of less than £1000, which compared very favourably with the provisional budget set aside by the BCA.

This latest piece of teamwork reflects great credit on both John and his team for doing this and previous jobs such as the weed-cutter, and on the BCA for having the faith, based on this previous experience, to let them have a go at such an expensive piece of equipment.

The team has also worked on the small boat that was donated to the canal by the Boy's Brigade in Fleet a few years ago. There was originally a plan to turn Bumblebee, as it was named by the Boys Brigade, into an ice cream selling boat based at Mytchett, but it proved difficult to find a suitable refrigerator.

It is now to be based at Odiham for use as a mini patrol boat and will be labelled as such. It will also be available for use by the Society and will be kept on the Society's mooring at Colt Hill with the battery and electric outboard in the barn. Mike Gordon will be managing it.



Above: Bumblebee awaiting transfer to Colt Hill.

Earlier this year I was walking my dog along the Basingstoke Canal towpath near Odiham when I came across some distinctive animal droppings indicating that we are lucky enough to have an otter using the canal.

Otters are rare but widespread, now found throughout most of the country but absent from parts of central and southern England, the Isle of Man, the Isles of Scilly and the Channel Islands. There were no recent confirmed records of otter on the canal near Odiham, although I have since heard of a couple of possible sightings, so this is really good news.

The elusive otter is one of our top predators, feeding mainly on fish (particularly eels and salmonids), waterbirds, amphibians and crustaceans. The otter is a large, powerful mammal, with grey-brown fur, a broad snout, and a pale chest and throat. They are well suited to a life on the water as they have webbed feet, dense fur to keep them warm, and can close their ears and nose when underwater.

People sometimes confuse a sighting of an American mink for an otter. Otters can be distinguished from mink by their much larger size and broader face.

Why was I looking at animal poo? While I would have loved to see the otter itself, sometimes wildlife is hard to spot. Seeing the signs of otters is far easier than seeing the

animals themselves. Otters produce droppings known as 'spraints', which are left in prominent places along riverbanks, on rocks or under bridges to mark out their territories. Once you know what you're looking for they can be quite distinctive when you see them.

Otter spraints are usually dark greenish, slimy and full of fish bones, scales and crayfish parts. The 'scats' of American mink are smaller, black, and often contain fur, feathers and bones and are long and twisted in shape, with tapered



Above: Otter

Below: Mink





Above: Otter spraint found under Colt Hill Bridge in March this year.

ends. Fresh otter poo smells like jasmine tea, while mink poo has a much less pleasant odour.

Always be careful when inspecting animal droppings and don't touch them with your bare hands as droppings can carry bacteria and disease, there's usually a handy stick somewhere nearby that can be used to prod, poke, and break apart droppings for further inspection.

How you can help

You can help us to build a complete and current picture of species distribution across Hampshire by sending in a record every time you see an amphibian, reptile, mammal or plant. If you are lucky enough to spot an otter or otter signs then please contact the mammal recorder HMGRecorder@hiwwt.org.uk giving details including:

- Your name.
- The date of the observation.
- The precise location (include a postcode and also a grid reference if possible, e.g. SU123456)
- The species seen (use the scientific name if known).
- Additional details such as quantity, alive/dead, adult/juvenile, will also be useful.

For information on how to submit records for other wildlife and also how to register for Living Record if you would like to become a regular recorder please visit our website <https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/wildlife/submit-species-records> .

By becoming a member of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust your money will help look after the wildlife and wild places in your area, and support the Trust in their work to inspire people about nature.

Amanda Ingham

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Photos of the otter and mink courtesy of Darin Smith

Woking Town Wharf opened



The newly built extension to the Town Wharf in Woking was opened on 31st May by the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Saj Hussain and his wife. The work was largely funded by Woking Borough Council, with a substantial contribution from the Canal Society. Rob Locatelli's River and Canal Services Company did the work.

Before inviting Cllr Hussain to cut the ceremonial ribbon (*above*), Society Chairman Philip Riley recorded the pioneering work to develop this area of the canal by Society members Peter Coxhead and Vic Trott, both of whom were sadly no longer with us.

A new sign board had also been erected, giving some of the history of this area with some historic photos from the Canal Society's archives (*right*).

Among those present were local MP, Jonathan Lord and Cllrs Chitra Rana (Goldsworth Park), Ayesha Azad (Heathlands) and Colin Kemp (Horsell West).

After viewing the local boats that had come for the occasion, everyone went to the Lightbox for tea and cakes courtesy of River and Canal Services.



Volunteers

From the Canal Management report to the JMC, emphasising the vital role of volunteers:

- The Patrol Boat carried out 51 Patrols of the canal this last year covering all areas between lock 28 and the castle, fully skippered and crewed by volunteers. As well as clearing litter and tree debris they are also the eyes and ears of the water, checking boat licences and acting as a mobile information source for the public.
- A new 'mini' Patrol boat (called Bumblebee) is being set up and will be based in Odiham allowing more frequent checks through this busy area of the Canal. This will utilise a small boat that was kindly donated by Fleet Boys Brigade a few years ago. This boat will also be volunteer led.
- The Workboat based in Woking is now kitted out for volunteers and carried out over 10 independent volunteer led trips last year clearing hydrocotyle, and rubbish and carrying out minor works through this area which included a full clean and de-weed of the lock gates and chambers through the Woodham lock flight.
- 30 volunteers regularly attending every Tuesday. This group is now full and running a waiting list. This group spent the winter tackling towpath side vegetation cutting throughout the canal. Deepcut lock flight and Deepcut cutting in particular were "blitzed" with over 8 weeks spent in these areas, clearing back the vegetation through the lock flight and re-coppicing the side of the cutting.
- Volunteer numbers for 2018-19 BCA and BCS were 23,982 hrs. This is the equivalent to £239,820 (using HLF standard rate of £50/day for unskilled volunteers, based on them working a 5 hour day) In reality many

of our volunteers are now carrying out skilled roles so this could be seen as an underestimate. (*This represents an almost 50% extra contribution to the Canal's budget!*)

- Two canal volunteers were presented with awards (as well as many others being nominated) at the recent HCC Volunteer Award Celebration. Mike Gordon (Head Lengthsmen and Boat Manager for Rosebud and Patrol Boat as well as Lead Skipper) won the coveted Chairman's Award. Ken Sankey (Tuesday volunteer member, Volunteer leader and committee member for the BCS) received special recognition (runner up) for the Volunteer of the Year Award. Our Canal Ranger - Steve Livsey-Bennett also received a special recognition (runner up) for the Volunteer Leader Award.



Mike



Steve



Ken

Memories of the Canal

I lived in a house called Medonte along the Aldershot Road in Fleet where now stands a Close of houses bearing its name. Opposite was my good friend Ed whose house backed onto the canal where, in the freedom that children had in those days, we spent most of our time. We played and patrolled mainly between the bridges at Pondtail and Reading Road South, but as Ed's grandfather was a bailiff we frequently ventured as far as the cottage at Pyestock, passing by the NGTE pumping station and under the Bailey bridge. This was our playground from 5 years old upwards and we took for granted the treasures this area held.

plant and insect life. Shoals and shoals of perch and roach would dart incessantly up and down clearly visible below the surface. Tench would on summer days roll lazily just across by the far bank, while pike would lurk beside the lily pads ready to ambush unwary fish. Tiddlers and tadpoles were abundant, and we were often treated to the sight of grass snakes taking to the cool waters, and the occasional adder taking a drink on the bank by the reeds, or a slow worm with young hiding under a rusty piece of tin.

It sounds idyllic: it was.

Right: The original Norris Bridge and the Army girder bridge in 1956.



It was a paradise of varied wildlife and flora that is unimaginable today. At that time all the land on the opposite side to the towpath was marshy and undeveloped. There were no houses for most of Velmead Road which was an unmade, potholed track from Pondtail - just the Gasworks Manager's house stood there. I believe it was this reeded wetland which acted as a natural filtration bed that created the crystal clear water that supported so many fish, frogs, snakes, birds and the wide variety of

In about 1960 the area along Velmead Road started to be developed for housing. The marshy ground was drained and it was probably not realised at the time what a devastating effect that would have on the habitat. As a teenager I moved to Pondtail and spent less time there, but the towpath was a constant shortcut between home and the Command Baths at Aldershot, or an occasional expedition towards Crookham Village and the monastery near Dogmersfield. Is the swing

in the 1950s to early 1960s

bridge still there? As teenagers a bike ride to King John's Castle near Warnborough was great fun and always a fascination to see the canal pass just a few feet above the river.

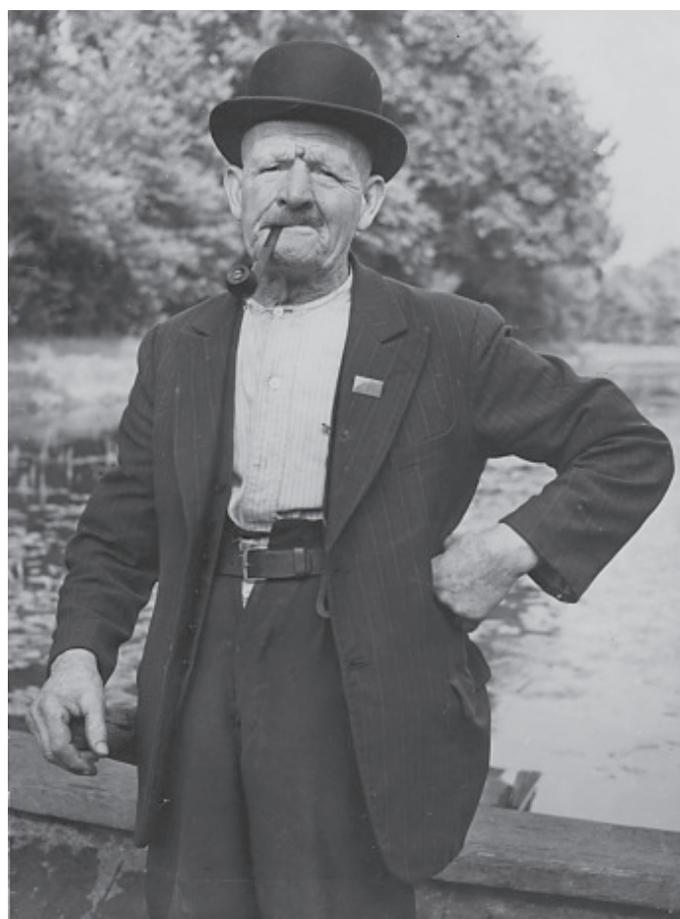
My Father was foreman for the Hartley Wintney Rural District Council at the time and one night was called out because a brick culvert beneath the embanked section had given way and flooded the fields below. Throughout the night they had to sandbag the bridges either end but the Deeps were no more than a trickle when I arrived there the following morning. With many other volunteers we rescued hundreds of fish, collecting them in tin baths and carrying them beyond the bridges to the depleted waters. Many sadly had already died. What astounded most of us that day was the immense size of many of the fish - record breakers, far larger than seasoned anglers had thought existed, or even told tales about, let alone ever caught. Old Mark was the bailiff there at the time and he was devastated by this tragedy.

My employment took me away to the other side of Hampshire but when I returned to Fleet in the early 1970s I was horrified to see the Canal reduced to a mere trickle with supermarket trollies, bicycles and other detritus in the mud where once had been a thriving habitat. I wept. I had taken my children to see what I had expected to be a place of natural wonder and explain my joyful appreciation of my own childhood excitement and education, only to be faced with the criminal neglect by an uncaring society. Thank goodness that your organisation is helping to retrieve some of its magic but for me it can never fully restore its former beauty. There used to be a sign near Pondtail warning users of the towpath to adhere

to the strict byelaws "by order of Miss Joan Marshall". Such a pity it was ignored.

I have long ago moved away from the area but occasionally detour through Memory Lane - Tweseldown, the heathlands around Crookham and Aldershot, Laffans Plain - but most of all the Basingstoke Canal was my Heaven as a boy, not fully appreciated then. I hope you don't mind these ramblings but unless you had been there then it is impossible to imagine..... The pictures in my mind remain as vibrant as though it were yesterday.

Andrew Leishman



*Above: "Old Mark" Hicks,
Basingstoke Canal worker 1884 - 1966*

Obituaries - Paul Vine

Paul was the last surviving member of the group of people who in 1972 agreed to become Vice-Presidents of the Canal Society. He played a key role in its formation thanks to his “London’s Lost Route to Basingstoke”, which was the spur for many people’s interest in the canal.

Paul was educated at Charterhouse school and then spent two years National Service in the Army, encountering the Basingstoke Canal for the first time in Aldershot. He then went to Lincoln College, Oxford where he read mediaeval and modern languages. He also obtained a Blue for athletics and is still the holder of the British 220yd hurdles record.

After working in insurance for three years, he joined the AA, where he had the enviable job of going round assessing hotels and their dining rooms. He then joined the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and was sent to Addis Ababa as an advisor to the Ethiopian Tourist Organisation. Subsequent tourism oriented postings included the Seychelles, Barbados and Jamaica.

However, one of Paul’s chief interests was the waterways of Southern England. He had first met the Wey & Arun as a boy and this was the subject of his first book, “London’s Lost Route to the Sea”, published in 1965. Three years later “London’s Lost Route to Basingstoke” came out. Its last paragraph recorded the formation of the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society, and a few months later the Society published “Basingstoke Canal - The Case for Restoration”.



Paul took a keen interest in the Society’s activities and the photo above shows him in 1969 knocking a last ceremonial “golden” nail into a pair of lock gates built by Tony Harmsworth and his father for the Canal Society. These were duly offered to the New Basingstoke Canal Company and rejected by them as “not possibly fitting in with the arrangements that are envisaged for Ash Lock”. The gates were stored under water for another 10 years before finally being installed.

Paul went on to write several other books about lost southern navigations, including London’s Lost Routes to Portsmouth and Midhurst, and the Royal Military Canal. He also published three books of historic photos of the waterways of Surrey, Kent & East Sussex, and Hampshire, and “Pleasure Boating in the Victorian Era”.

Paul was married twice and had four children by his first wife. He married his second wife, Kay in 1992 and she was his constant companion in his later years. We send them all our thanks for Paul’s contribution to the continued existence of the Basingstoke Canal and our condolences.

Obituaries - Dieter Jebens

By a sad coincidence we have lost another Vice-president whose pen contributed hugely to the restoration of the canal.

Hannes Dietrich Jebens, Dieter to his friends, had a difficult start to life, being born to an English mother and German father in Berlin in 1939. It probably wasn't much fun then either going to school in England in 1946, speaking only German and having lost his father in the war.

This experience probably accounted for the occasional brief episodes in later life when his usual pleasant self was replaced by a rather contrary and difficult alter ego. However, it says much for Dieter's real character that his funeral was attended by both his ex-wives, relatives from Germany and friends who he had known since his youth.

Dieter was one of the people who responded to Jim Woolgar's 1966 letter in the Farnham Herald suggesting that something might be done about restoring the derelict Basingstoke Canal. Dieter was working in PR and advertising and was a natural candidate to do publicity. Over the next two years, he put together the booklet "Basingstoke Canal – The case for Restoration", published in August 1968, which helped to persuade the County Councils to take over the canal.

Once restoration began Dieter provided the essential communications link with the volunteers via the Newsletter. David Gerry, who was the Canal Society's original chairman, summed up Dieter's contribution rather well. He said "On occasions when I was



Dieter receiving the Robin Higgs Award in 2012

managing the canal and out meeting the volunteers, Dieter would come along and one or two volunteers would pass comments such as "Look at him poncing about with his camera and notebook, needs to do some of the real work". To which I would always reply that Dieter is a wordsmith and he shifts as much mud with his pen as any other volunteer with a shovel. The Pen is sometimes mightier than the shovel or bricklayers trowel."

Dieter was the Boat Company's Secretary for some years and briefly its Chairman. He was also Vice-Chairman of the Canal Society from 1999 to 2005. He edited several books about the canal, including "Basingstoke Canal Restoration", the commemorative booklet for the re-opening and the guide to the canal, now in its third edition. He also did a book of photos for Tempus Publishing called simply "Basingstoke Canal".

Dieter suffered a serious stroke in 2003 which left him in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. This made half his house in Farnham inaccessible to him and he eventually moved to a flat in Crookhan overlooking the canal.

Dieter Jebens

Initially he was able to get out of his chair and walk a few steps. This enabled him to get in a car and attend a few events, including the Society's 2012 AGM where he was awarded the Robin Higgs Trophy. His sister Jutta also managed to get him to the Society's 50th Anniversary Rally in Woking in 2016.

The last few years were very difficult for him and being totally reliant on carers must have been awful for someone as independent as him.

Dieter will be greatly missed but he left a lot to remember him by and I suspect that people will still be using his Guide to the Basingstoke Canal in 50 years time!

Again, our condolences go to Jutta, his daughter Kate and granddaughters Scarlet and Poppy, and his many other friends and relatives.

Kathryn Dodington

Kathryn has accepted an invitation to become a Vice-President of the Canal Society.

Kathryn never did anything by halves, so not long after joining the Society she was on the JP's crew list and within a couple of years was editing the BC News (I am still using the template she designed and the software that she passed on) and on the Committee. She lived next to the canal in Brookwood, bought a boat and was also Commodore of the Byfleet Boat Club for a term.

Her really big contribution to the canal came when she invited one of the BCA's rangers, Chris Healy, in for a coffee one morning. From their conversation emerged the idea of a regular week-day work group. Initially this consisted of members of the Brookwood WI, but it soon expanded to the current Tuesday Work Party, which makes a huge contribution to keeping the canal looking cared-for. It has also provided the source of a great many of the people currently injecting some vigour into the Canal Society.



In recognition of all this, in 2013 Kathryn was another recipient of the Robin Higgs Trophy.

Kathryn moved to a house next to the lock in Stoke Bruerne and soon started working in the museum there and crewing the C&RT's historic working boat *Sculptor*.

We are delighted that Kathryn maintains her interest in the Basingstoke and look forward to a long and active association with her as a Vice-President and link to the C&RT.

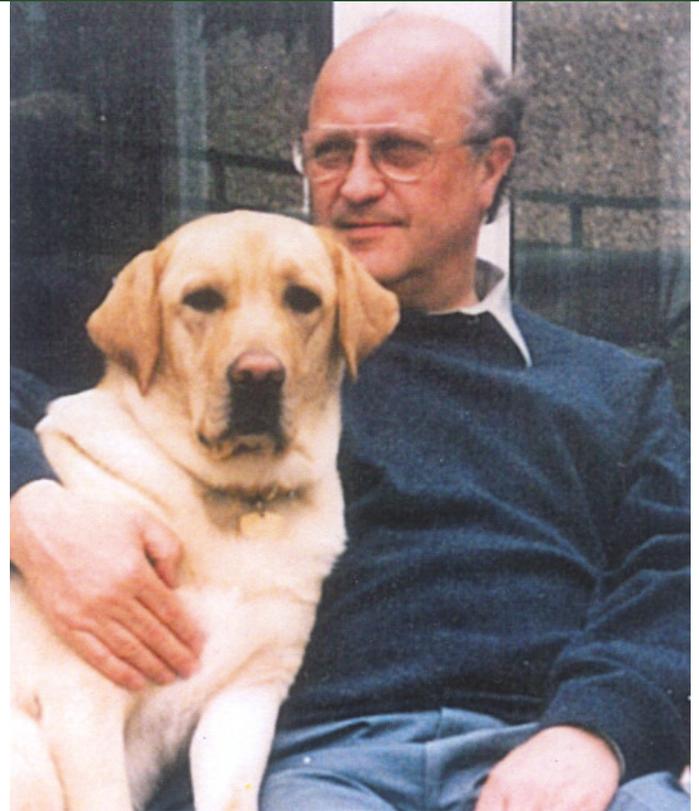
Obituary - David Horwood

David was born in Hampstead. He did his two years National Service in REME, and after qualifying as an accountant, worked in the brewing trade, retiring in 1999. For a further 12 years he administered the Licensed Victuallers' Pension Fund, and was also Treasurer of the Epsom / Dorking Branch of the Alzheimer's Society, amongst other charities.

He started boating early by floating model boats in the ponds created by bomb craters near his home. He progressed to skiffs aged 12, and later hired narrow boats to explore various canals. Then bitten by the bug, he bought a sail cruiser on the South Coast.

When he married Jo, and the family moved inland, he bought a 56ft narrowboat, based at Pyrford. They moved to Hook in 2011, and he rapidly became involved with the Canal Society, and the John Pinkerton as a crew member.

Within the family, David was renowned for volunteering to support his favourite charities whenever they came knocking on his door. So it was that when Marion Gough retired as JP Booking Manager at the end of 2012, JPCC came knocking, and he carefully said he would think about it. But another challenge to help a charity in need proved irresistible.



David worked tirelessly to reproduce the booking system on the internet, replacing pen and paper; many hours were spent patiently dealing with customers' enquiries for charters, and solving the riddles created by the public trip web booking system. He provided a professional but also personal service, once picking up a passenger from Colt Hill and driving her to Barley Mow after she'd missed the departure. He was a true gentleman, a friend to all, with never a cross word. He will be sadly missed by all crew.

Wanted - JP Booking Manager

The Boat Company is in urgent need of a replacement (or replacements) for David Horwood. A small team would take some of the pressure off and make holidays easier to manage.

If you feel you could help, please contact Dick King as soon as possible (01730 264178 or wheelers.farm@btinternet.com).

They are also looking for help with maintenance of the boat.

BCS Membership

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT

Dear Members

My thanks to all the members who have paid their subs for 2019 and special thanks for all those who generously included a donation. If you have not paid your subs and wish to remain members, please let me have your payment as soon as possible. The amounts due are as follows:

Adult £10, Family £12, Single OAP £5, Two OAPs £7, Group £15

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

Graham & Carol Bennett of Odiham
Ken Mooney of Fleet

Celia Griffiths of Farnborough
Nick Silvester of Camberley
John Plympton of Farnham
Ian Montgomery of East Yorkshire
Sharon Thackeray of Frimley Green
James Marshall of Church Crookham
Brian Bullock of Boxhill
William Pescod of Church Crookham
Richard Harwood of Woking
Judy Coleman of Church Crookham
Dennis & Shirlene Taylor of Church Crookham
Steven Davis of Woking
Susan & Chris Conry of Camberley
Bob Derham of Long Sutton

Kind regards
Doreen Hornsey
Membership Secretary

Changes are coming!

The Society's website is currently being re-designed. The major innovation will be the facility to pay subscriptions, make donations to the Society and pay for books etc online. The re-design is costing a significant amount of money, but it has become clear that this online payment facility is now essential, because most people nowadays, particularly the younger generation, no longer have cheque books. Hopefully the change will encourage some of the 3500+ followers of our webpage to become members of the Society.

Books

Due to rising costs of postage and packing, we are having to raise the cost of ordering all the books published by the Canal Society to £3.75 including p&p.

200 Club winners

February

Mr J Meredith £40
Mr J T Carter £15
Mrs J B Keep £10
Mrs Y A Chappell £10

April

Mr J P M H Evelyn £40
Mr A Hocking £15
Mr J T Lyddon £10
Mr K A Astley £10

BCS information



The Bulletin is now up to Issue 40.

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.

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Editorial Team: **Editor:** Roger Cansdale* 29 Knoll Road, Fleet, Hants GU51 4PT 01252-678608
e-mail: roger.cansdale@ntlworld.com

Presidents: Tim & Elizabeth Dodwell
Chairman: Philip Riley*
Vice-Chairman: Martin Leech*
Hon. Secretary: Celia Griffiths*
Hon. Treasurer: Guy Faller*

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

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

Membership Secretary: Doreen Hornsey
Working Party Information: Janet Buckley*
Trip Boat Manager: Dick King*
Trip Boat Bookings: *Vacant*
Sales Manager & Mail Order Sales: Denise Smith
Events Manager: Terry Inskip
Website Manager: Craig Shanks
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Chobham talks: Graham Deavin & Alan Norris
Director: Ken Sankey
Director: Ian Moore*
Director: Jeff Hill*
Director: Kevin Redway*
Director: Neil Sutherland*

General Canal Society contact number: 07768 410920

Basingstoke Canal Authority

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

01252-370073

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

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

Woking Town Wharf



Above: People gathering for the official opening of Woking Town Wharf, built by Rob Locatelli's River and Canal Services Company. Rob is centre foreground in shorts.