



Basingstoke Canal Bulletin

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Monitoring Water The Hi-tech Way



Hampshire and Surrey County Councils have agreed to fund a [new water monitoring system](#) for the Canal. Thought to be the first implementation of its type in the UK and based on “Internet of Things” technology, the system will allow checking of water levels and flows at several locations remotely, and also automatic control of the pumps at Woodham, St John’s and Frimley. The data will be accessible online to the general public. John How (*above right*), a water engineer and member of the Society and the IWA, has led the project, and with contractor [Aquamatix](#), is looking for **suggestions for a name for the system**. Please send your ideas to the [bulletin editor](#).

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Work Party Activities

Society Regular Work Party

Quite a lot has been done since the last bulletin was published (but admittedly that was a while ago), so much so, the workparty activities warrant their own [report](#) (including log clearance at the Dogmersfield landslip, *right*).

Society Engineering Team

Following their success with the restoration of the [BCA's weedcutter](#), the Society engineering team, led by John Wharf, has agreed to take on another restoration project. The BCA have a small patrol boat, which has been kept for many years in the mouth of the



Greywell tunnel (*left*). Having a wooden body, it has deteriorated significantly, though the fibreglass hull is sound. It was also recently broken into, resulting in some superficial damage. We have been asked by the BCA to restore this boat so it can be brought back into use by rangers for day-to-day tasks. Work on it will start shortly at Ash Lock.

BCA Work Party

The regular Tuesday workparty, under the leadership of rangers Chris Healy and Alex Foy, has continued to undertake a lot of good work this year. Jobs have included more lock gate painting, litter picking, and scrub clearance amongst others. [Alex \(right\) explains in an interview](#) the importance of the volunteer contribution to the Canal.



Visiting WRG Work Party At Brookwood Country Park

A group from the [Waterway Recovery Group](#) (WRG) visited the Canal for a busy week in August and September to undertake [works in Brookwood Country Park](#). Hosted by the Society, they built an extension to the landing stage on the park side, and paved about 800m of towpath on the opposite bank (*right*). We thank the team, led by Adrian Crow, for their hard work in Brookwood and look forward to their return during 2015. The Society's contribution to these works was around £15000 for plant, materials and for the workparty's accommodation and expenses.

WRG have been visiting the Canal since the 1970's, and played an important role during its restoration.



Dogmersfield Landslip Repair Works Have Commenced



Many will be aware of the fact that the bank slipped at Dogmersfield following the very heavy rains during the Spring of 2013, which resulted in a temporary closure and then subsequent restrictions on navigation which remain in force.

You will be pleased to hear that an agreement has been struck with the owner of the surrounding land on how the repairs will be done, and that [construction work has now started](#). The hope is that the works will be completed by Easter 2015 however, while the navigation will be open until January, the towpath will have to remain closed for the duration.

Duckweed In Woking

It looks horrible, it sometimes smells, it can be a navigation hazard, and it brings the Canal into disrepute. So it has been said about the duckweed that has accumulated in the Woking pound this summer following a mild winter, as it has for many years. Our Woking lengthsman tell us it is the most complained about aspect of the Canal by towpath users, and it is not hard to understand why. Lock 6 was particularly affected (*right*), where the weed backed up behind the upper gates and in the chamber in a gloopy mass over 1m deep.

The Society has raised the issue with the Conservation Management Group, a committee that is responsible for ensuring that the Canal is being managed appropriately to maintain its SSSI status, and counts a consultant ecologist and representatives from Natural England and the Environment Agency amongst its number. This committee has agreed to undertake some actions which will hopefully lead to the reduction of this pervasive weed – though needless to say the results may not be seen for some time to come. Duckweed apparently thrives on several factors; a lot of leaf fall, water that is slow flowing or stationary, low boat movements and (as we believe is the case in Woking) as a result of build-up of nutrients found in “grey water”, for example the output of washing machines, defective septic tanks and the like, discharged into the Canal. So this is where attention will be focussed first.



John Pinkerton News



John Pinkerton Canal Cruises

Once again, the JP2 is undergoing winter maintenance, following another very successful cruising season, resulting in another bumper financial return for the Canal. In addition to the very popular “theme” cruises that were run from Colt Hill in Odiham, including Jazz and Ale, the “Old Thatch” garden cruise, Pirates and Halloween, the boat operation again provided a taxi for visitors to the [Farnborough Air Show](#) this year. However it was not our new boat but the old John Pinkerton (“JP1”) that could be seen at Runway's End in July. Because of the restrictions to navigation at the Dogmersfield landslip it was not possible to get the JP2 through, so the prospective purchaser of the JP1 allowed the Society to hang on to the boat until the show had finished, after which he took it off the Basingstoke (*right*). [The Society finally said goodbye to the JP1 in August](#), and it has started a new life on the Kennet and Avon Canal at Hungerford.

The schedules for [public](#) and [charter trips for 2015](#) will be shortly announced, and a new brochure with all the details of these will be soon published.



Other News

All Change at Galleon Marine

After 15 years as proprietors of the Galleon Marine boat hire operation at Odiham, Jim and Jan Peile have decided to sell up and move on. Jim and Jan have been great friends to the Society and supporters of the Canal, and we wish them well. [Meet the new team who have taken over](#), with whom the Society has already built a good relationship.

SSSI Status Change

Following some work undertaken by Dr John Eaton of the Conservation Management Group which, amongst other things identified that a section of canal in Fleet previously devoid of aquatic plants had shown signs of recolonisation by *milfoil*, he has concluded that the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status of the Canal should be promoted to *Unfavourable Recovering* overall (from its previous condition of *Unfavourable Declining*). This is regarded as very good news for the Canal. The JMC has agreed that an application should be to Natural England for a formal reclassification based on this report.



Reapplication for abstraction licences for back-pumping schemes

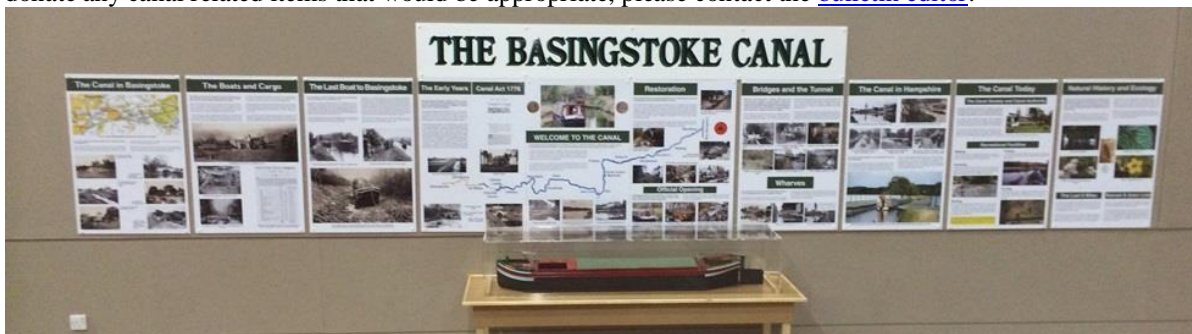


In addition to the water monitoring (telemetry) project, the Water Strategy Group under John How's leadership has been looking at renewal of the water abstraction licences for the two back-pumping schemes on the Canal, which both expire in March 2015. A while ago, the team did a lot of preparatory work in order to secure from the Environment Agency the doubling of the existing allowed abstraction rate at the Woodham pump (*left*) to 3.4 million litres per day. Given that there is perceived to be "stress" on the water supply in Southern England, it was envisaged that the renewal would not be so straight-forward, however the EA have invited us to reapply, and have

indicated that no further justifications will needed for this to be successful. It will certainly be more good news for the Canal if the licences are approved: it means that the eastern end of the Canal should have adequate water for navigation for the next 10 years, even accounting for anticipated pressures on water supply generally.

Canal Exhibit at Milestones, Basingstoke

Ever since it was opened, the excellent [Milestones living history museum at Basingstoke](#) has conspicuously omitted any reference to the Basingstoke Canal. Strange you might think. So thought the Society, and a long-running project has been underway to put this right. After a couple of years of consultation between Society chairman Philip Riley, Roger Cansdale and John Ross and Milestones staff, a plan was eventually agreed. The result is the exhibit below, put together by Roger and John. Duncan Payne built the display table for the model of [Alec Harmsworth's Basingstoke](#), made by his grandson Tony. It is planned to add further artifacts to the display – though it has to be said that the Society has access to very few of these. If any readers would like to donate any canal related items that would be appropriate, please contact the [bulletin editor](#).



Forthcoming Events

- [Invitation to all Volunteers: Tree Management Workshop](#) - Thursday 27th November at 7pm at the Canal Centre. Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager, and Jon Green, Senior Ranger, are giving a talk on the many aspects of management and care of the tree stock on the Canal they contend with.
- [2014/15 Chobham Illustrated Talks Season](#)
The current season of talks held at [The Parish Pavilion in Chobham](#) will continue with the following:
 - **Wednesday 17th December at 8pm – Richard Thomas** – ‘A day in the life of a Thames Tug’
 - **Wednesday 21st January 2015 at 8pm – John Gibson** – ‘The National Trust and the Wey Navigations’For more details of this and other talks, see the [Talks page](#).

Editors Comments...

Apologies for the lack of a bulletin over the last few months. I realise this is totally contrary to the original intent of this publication, that is, to appear frequently, but it has to be said that being able to produce one of these every month was pretty well a non-runner from the start. With a holiday break and other things to do and, at one time not a lot to report, well, need I say more...

I would appreciate contributions from readers, so please send to me, the [bulletin editor](#), any short articles about the Canal you may have, with accompanying photos if possible. Also I am always happy to hear any comments on the bulletin, or anything else Canal related.

Martin Leech

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