



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal Bulletin

No. 42 SEPTEMBER 2019



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John Pinkerton
Canal Cruises

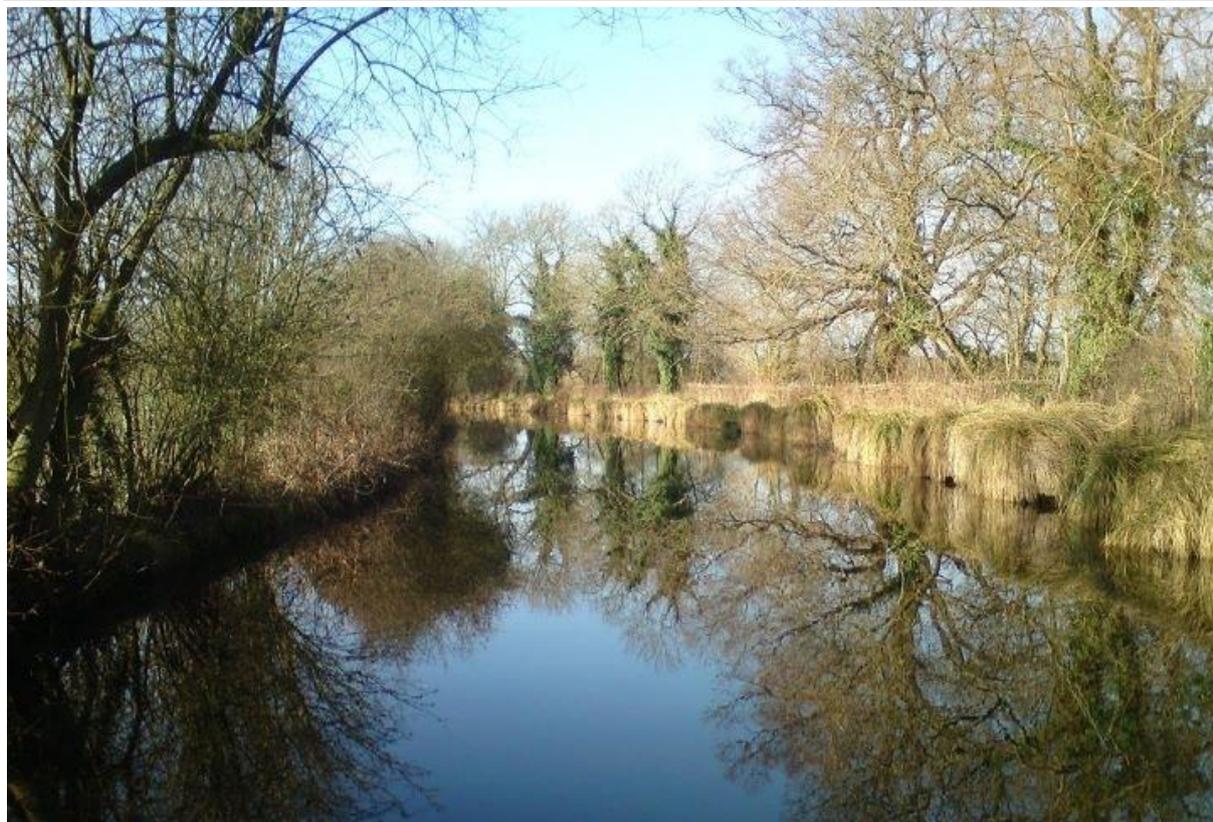
We start off this September Bulletin with hearty congratulations to the *Boatyard Buoy* (right) for winning the Odiham Raft Race in fine style.



As always there's a lot to report about the canal. Here are some of the highlights in this issue:

- How you can help the Canal
- Raft Race thrills and spills
- The Mayor cruises aboard *Kitty*
- A new children's book inspired by our canal
- Keeping the embankments in good shape
- Lengthsmen and Patrol Boat: 'the eyes and ears of the canal'
- History: plans to link up with the Kennet and Avon Canal

Your Support Needed For The Canal



It's only too easy to take our beautiful canal for granted. In reality it needs continual upkeep. With council budgets tight it becomes all the more important for us as individuals and communities to lend a hand. One of our guiding principles is to help the canal thrive, and the Society is actively looking at projects to help develop the canal for the benefit of the community.

We will tell you more about them as we go forward.

It is fantastic that we now have over 5,500 people receiving the Bulletin or following us on social media (and we want more!). Now we want to maximise the benefit for the canal by encouraging as many people as possible to become Society members or volunteers because, to be frank, we need to raise money to fund these projects.

Becoming a member is a great way for people to help, and it comes with the following benefits:

Becoming a Society member:

- Directly supporting the upkeep of the canal and our work
- Discounted tickets on Society trip boats
- Free trip on the *John Pinkerton II* trip boat on Members Evenings
- Quarterly newsletter by post or email
- *Additional benefits to be unveiled soon!*

The cost is £15 per adult or £20 per household, and it's FREE to juniors under 18 to help get the next generation on board.

We are currently developing a new website where you will be able to join the Society online, with exclusive access to a new members-only area. In the meantime, you can print and return a [membership form here](#).

Becoming a volunteer:

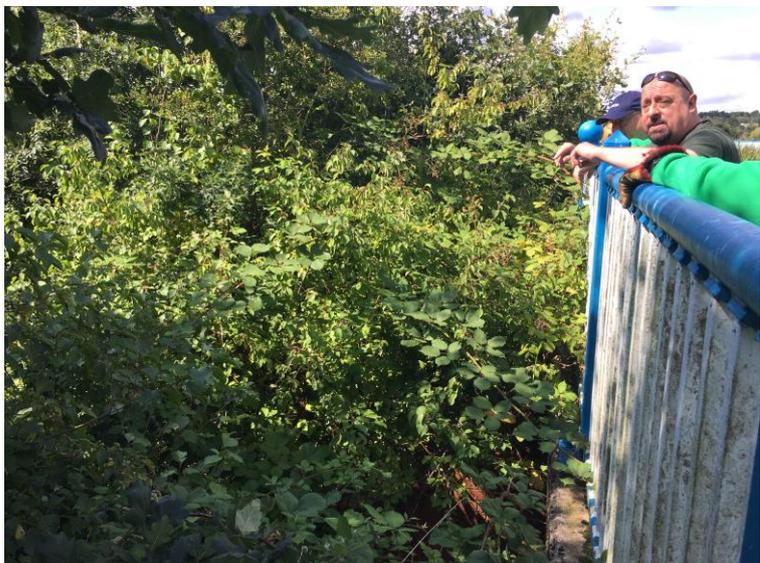
Our 240+ volunteers will tell you that getting stuck in on the Canal (usually not literally!) is both fun and rewarding. While we continue to look for people to help with crewing our trip boats, work parties and for lengthsmen, **we particularly need help in the following areas:**

- Event planning and organising
- Marketing and promotions
- Journalism and liaising with the press
- Fundraising experience including obtaining sponsorship and making grant applications
- Trip boat bookings

Find out more about [how to become a volunteer here](#) or contact volunteer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk or call 07850 652769.

Recent Works At Ash Embankment

The Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA) faces many challenges in looking after our canal, including controlling the water levels and ensuring that the banks along the canal are not breached. A good example of such protective work is the recent activity at Ash embankment where volunteers cut back a significant amount of trees and undergrowth to ensure that water could flow without obstruction from this pound in times of high water (*see the 'before' and 'after' photos, right and below*).





Ash embankment sluice tends to be our least-used sluice, particularly in the summer months. It had become overgrown and needed vegetation removing. It also made sense to clear other vegetation from the vicinity at the same time to slow future regrowth. Reeds had also grown up in front of one of the sluice paddles and needed digging out – sluices allow us to open up paddles to lower water levels on sections of the canal if there is an issue that requires us to reduce water levels quickly.

We also cleared back the access steps to allow us access to the Aqueduct, this being an access which may be required in the case of an emergency where we might need to isolate the aqueduct over the A331.

Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager

The 'Eyes And Ears' Of The Canal: Lengthsmen And The Patrol Boat

Did you know that there are over 60 'lengthsmen' who regularly walk and 'check' a local length of canal?

Every one of the 32 'lengths' has at least two lengthsmen and some have as many as six! In some areas in the west, we have a few on a waiting list. However, we have vacancies in the east section: West Byfleet up to Mytchett.

The introduction of a uniform and ID badge has made a huge positive difference and the public is approaching us more easily. Many thanks to the Society for funding the uniform.

This current level of cover makes us an effective force. Our simple jobs like litter picking and dog poo control mean that the canal towpath has never been cleaner or tidier. We don't have a litter problem because we are on top of it. Yes, we have a few trouble spots but we target them and sort it. No fuss, job done.

Increasingly we are doing light pruning and perhaps the real worth of the lengthsmen scheme is after a storm. A "call to arms" is issued and the lengthsmen get out to do a special damage report. After the two major storms of last winter, we were able to cover over 50% of the canal within 12 hours with the rest being completed within 24 hours. That's a powerful response and enables the rangers to get straight out to the urgent jobs without wasting valuable time.

With my two roles as Lengthsman Organiser and BCA boat crew Rota Manager, I am uniquely placed to use the info from the Lengthsmen to get the Patrol Boat out and sort a problem with



the minimum of delay as well as being able to effectively target problem hot spots. I also work closely with my colleague Mark Gaines. The combined efforts are really making a difference – and we now also have the new mini patrol boat *Bumblebee* based at Odiham.

Many lengthsman go on to join the boat crews or work parties – a fine example of us all working together for the benefit of the canal. **If you are interested in being involved in any way please contact volunteer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk or call 07850 652769.**

Mike Gordon, Senior Lengthsman

Woking Mayor Cruises Aboard Kitty

The Mayor of Woking, Cllr Beryl Hunwicks, with some of her team from Woking Borough Council, enjoyed a cruise on *Kitty*, Woking's own trip boat. She was hosted by the Co-Vice-Chairman of the Society, Ken Sankey.



Cllr Hunwicks with Ian Moore (Kitty trip boat manager) and crew member Ian Sutherland.

For a number of years, the Canal Society and Woking Council have been working together to capitalise on our wonderful canal. In May, the Deputy Mayor officially opened the new Woking Town Wharf and soon work will begin on a new fully accessible pedestrian crossover

bridge at Chobham Road. We have also worked with the charity Friends of the Children of Chernobyl to provide special trips for the visiting children from Belarus. The Canal Society regularly collaborates with Woking Borough Council on events such as the Living Well Programme, Party in the Park, The Food and Drink Festival and Heritage Open Days via the Lightbox.



Members of the Woking BC team with Ken Sankey (right)

The Mayor commented as she disembarked: “What a great way to spend an hour or so, relaxing on *Kitty*. We saw plenty of wildlife and got a completely new perspective on Woking, looking out from the canal. What a fantastic asset it is, and I can understand why 1,800 passengers have enjoyed cruising along this green corridor this year alone”.

Kitty cruises from the Woking Town Wharf take place every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday during the summer and is a brilliant opportunity to slow down and enjoy Woking from a different angle. For [more details and to book a trip](#), see [here](#).

(Also, don't forget our sister boat the [John Pinkerton II at Odiham](#) in Hampshire which being a bigger boat will have carried over 5000 passengers this year. Again ideal both for charters and public trips - and we plan to have Spotter Sheets for youngsters to track the wildlife next year).

Annual Odiham Raft Race 2019

A crowd of about 1000 came to Odiham in early September to cheer on the paddlers in this year's Raft Race.



The race started and finished at Colt Hill, the route going down to Lodge Farm Bridge and then back. With eleven teams entered, the crowd was entertained by some good-natured barging and splashing at the start-line, and the race proceeded in the spirit of friendly competition.

The *Boatyard Buoy*s Chris and Quinn (*front-page photo*), won in just over 31 minutes, with *In Deep Ship* second and the *Badder Belles*, third (*see photo above*).

Thanks go to all of the other competitors for making it such a fantastic occasion including the non-finishers whose raft started falling apart as they launched from the wharf!

Rumour has it that one of the boats lost two bottles of rather nice gin at Colt Hill Wharf. One was salvaged using feet as location devices but there is a bounty for someone when the canal eventually gets dredged.

The competitors all received medals from Lord Malmesbury and the *Boatyard Buoy*s were awarded the winners' cup.

The crowd were treated to an impressive display of paddling skills by members of the Basingstoke and Deane Canoe Club whose clubhouse is adjacent to the Wharf. The Canoe Club also accompanied the rafts on the race to provide safety cover – many thanks to them for that.

Huge thanks also go to the organising committee and especially to Arthur and Karen at Galleon Marine Boatyard who did a lot of the hard work. Thanks also to the official timekeeper David Harris and commentator Jim Goodman.



Lord Malmesbury and Angela McFarland, Chair of Odiham Parish Council

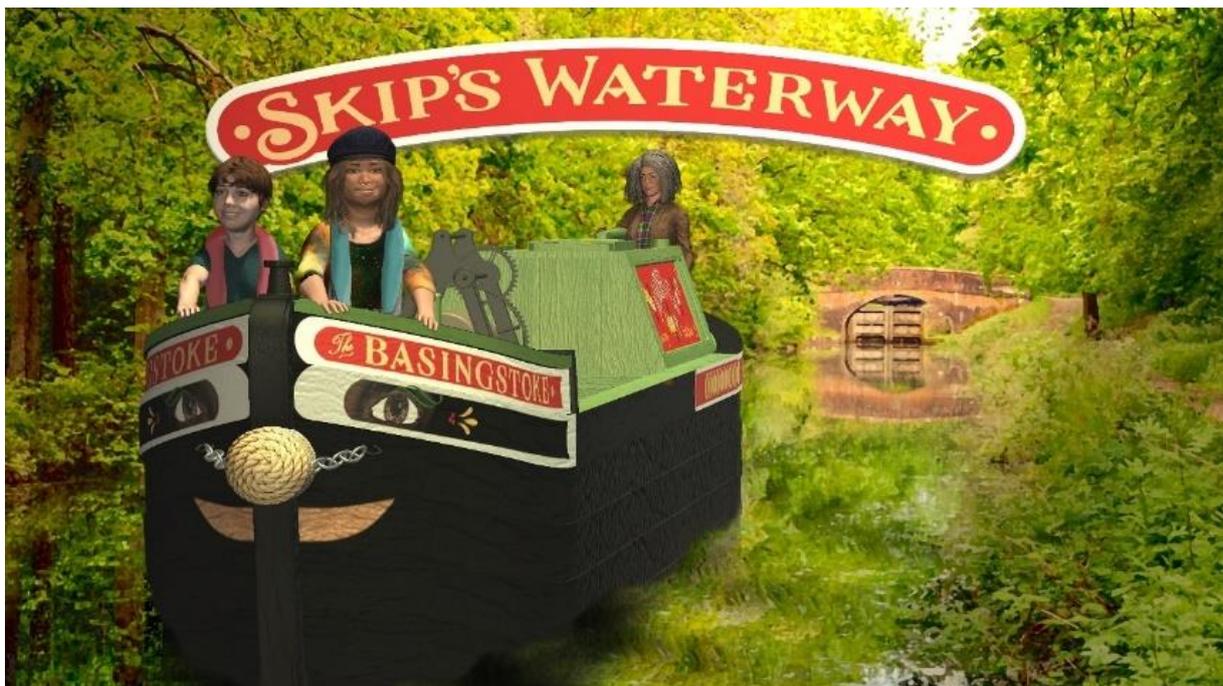
Basingstoke Canal Inspires New Children's Story

One of our very own volunteers, Jenny Pateman, has written a children's story featuring our Canal.

Jenny volunteers in the social media team and is also an editor right here on the Canal Bulletin.

She says: "My hope is to encourage more families to visit and enjoy the Canal as mine does, and to raise money to help preserve this beautiful green space for future generations".

The book is called *Skip's Waterway* and it's aimed at children who love finding out how things work – aged 5 and up. There are colourful illustrations on every page, many featuring the canal, and some based on historical photographs of the [events that inspired the book](#).



Jenny has already created the story and illustrations **but now she needs *your* help to get the book printed, hopefully in time for Christmas.**

You can support the project by making an advance order for the book on her [Kickstarter page](#). This will help raise the funds to get it printed (*backers pay nothing until the funding goal is met and the book goes to print*).

A donation from the Kickstarter will also go to the Canal Society.

[To learn more and to order your copy](#), go [here](#).

Jenny says she hopes the book will be the first in a series she writes based on true stories from the Basingstoke and other canals.

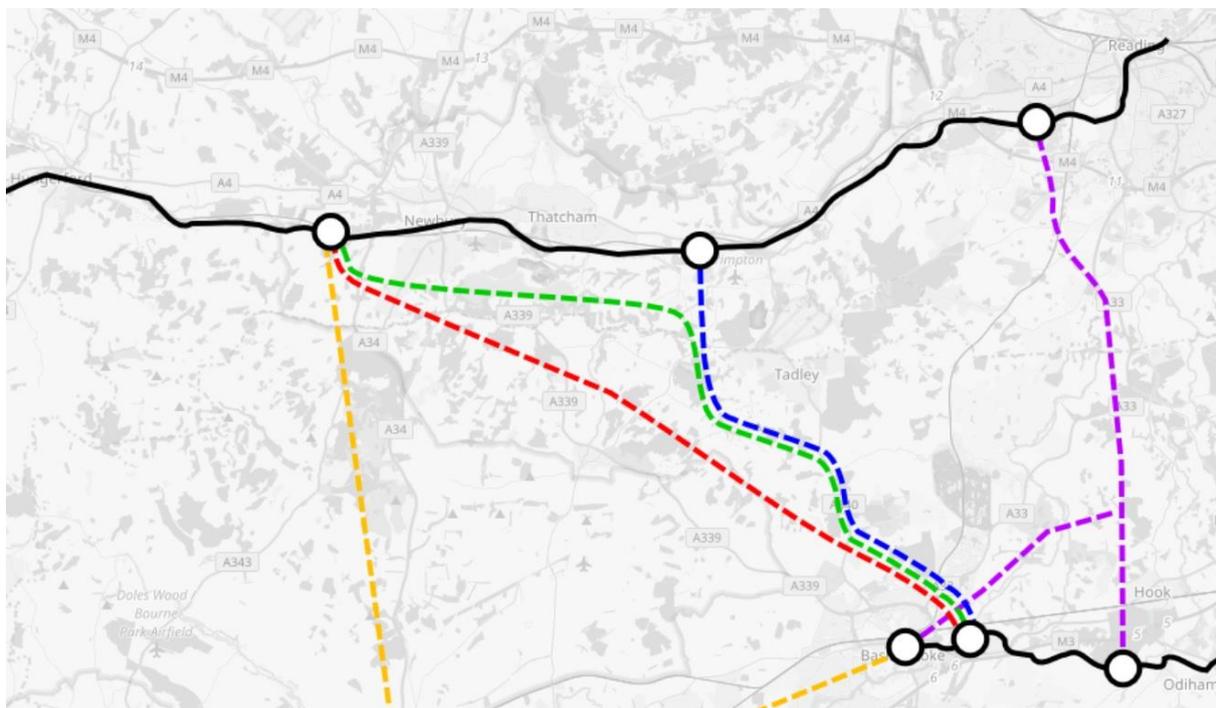
Go to [Skip's Waterway Facebook page here](#), and for more information, email skipswaterway@gmail.com.

The 'Berks And Hants Canal' (Perhaps For The Future..?)

The so-called Berks and Hants Canal was first proposed in the 1790s to connect the [Kennet and Avon Canal](#) to the Basingstoke Canal, which had both recently been completed. It was incorporated as the Berkshire and Hampshire Junction Canal Company, but alas, the link canal was never built.

However, aspirations for a link canal never quite disappeared and various schemes have been proposed over time (*see map below; source Wikipedia*). Two hundred years after the first proposal, interest was reignited when the Basingstoke Canal was restored and reopened in 1991. There was concern then was that without a big objective, the Basingstoke Canal Society might fade away.

Society historian, Roger Cansdale, recalls: 'I suggested in the [Basingstoke Canal News](#) that perhaps we should be promoting a new canal to link to the K&A. We did think of spending some money on a professional survey but because of other priorities it went on the back burner. It would be great to do but very expensive, unless it could be piggy-backed onto some other project such as a new satellite town between Basingstoke and Reading. There is also the matter of land ownership to consider.



- Kennet and Avon Canal (to the north), Basingstoke Canal (to the south-east)
- 1794 proposal (Old Basing to Hamstead Marshall)
- 1810 proposal (Basingstoke to Fullerton, with a branch from Whitchurch to Hamstead Marshall)
- 1810 proposal (Old Basing to Hamstead Marshall, via Tadley and Brimpton)
- 1824 proposal (Old Basing to Midgham)
- 20th century proposal (Greywell to Burghfield, with a branch to Basingstoke avoiding the fallen Greywell Tunnel)

“Indeed some years ago a Society Member Roger Reed did some work showing several alternative routes with a junction with the Basingstoke probably near the winding hole west of King John's castle and a connection to the K&A via the Foudry Brook which goes under the M4 in a culvert big enough to take a boat. The bit in between would depend on whether places like the Wellington Country Park would see a canal as an asset or not. The overall length would be less than 20 miles and it would need about 16 locks (all downhill from the Basingstoke). An arm heading back into Basingstoke would be possible and could provide a source of water from the Chineham sewage works.

“It won't happen in my lifetime, but definitely something to remember as it would provide a wonderful cruising ring and give easy access from Odiham to Oxford, Bath and Bristol.”

Although the [last 5 miles of the Canal](#) today is un-navigable beyond the fallen Greywell Tunnel, the Society continues to support the idea of a canal linking to the K&A. However, rather than a route via Tadley, a due-north canal connecting Greywell with the Kennet and Avon between Burghfield and Southcote Locks is suggested.

Enjoy A Spectacular Autumn

Thanks for reading, we hope you have enjoyed this issue.

Now get out there and enjoy this beautiful season – the 225th autumn – on our wonderful canal. Don't forget to bring along your friends and relatives. And please do tell them that they too can help keep the canal fabulous by becoming a [Friend](#), [Member](#) or [Volunteer](#).

Thanks for your support.

Ken Sankey, Editor

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