



BASINGSTOKE CANAL BULLETIN

No. 2 December 2010


From the Editor

Concern has been expressed that the venerable [Basingstoke Canal News \(BCN\)](#) may be replaced by this bulletin over time. Please rest assured that this is not our intent. The purpose of the bulletin is to bring to you news of the Canal in a relatively timely fashion, while the BCN carries more in depth and diverse articles, letters and comments and is published in print every quarter (and in colour via email) to members only. The two publications will continue to be complementary. Click [here](#) to join the Society to receive the BCN and to find out more about Society membership.

We apologise if you did not receive the first bulletin initially via email. We found that a few email addresses in the membership database were incorrect, and these have been put right where known and you should have been forwarded the bulletin. Please use the sign-up links on the right to register your correct email address with us.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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Structural repairs

Work has started on the structural repairs in Hampshire, as reported in the [first SHCS bulletin](#). The BCA warned of a closure and draining down between Ash lock and Ash Wharf to allow inspection of the Ash embankment. However a subsequent Navigation update thankfully indicated that the closure would not be necessary. Both Surrey and Hampshire county councils are working on an appropriate solution as the BCA continues to monitor the situation.

Weekly inspections by HCC engineers have identified a leakage in the area of Poulter's Bridge, which warrants a high priority repair (and was found after the list of work to be completed by March 2011 was drawn up). Draining off 150mm of water has stopped the leak, but further draining of the Canal between Chequers and Poulter's Bridges will be necessary for the repair. The HCC and BCA are working to sort the situation as quickly as possible to minimise impact upon navigation. The Society certainly hopes they are successful, because such closures can seriously affect commercial operators on the Canal especially in these straitened times.

The recent weather has resulted in inevitable delays. It now seems very unlikely that the scheduled repairs to the Deepcut locks 19 and 20 will start before the New Year. That said, the Society remains concerned about the inordinately long period of time it seems to have taken to place contracts to get work done on the Canal. "A targeted repair programme, spending allocated capital is all that is required." says Peter Redway, SHCS Chairman. "Is this too much to expect for a unique leisure and recreation amenity? Both County Councils need to identify fast track procedures and use them for the benefit of the Canal repairs thus avoiding any claw back of allocated capital money."

For more about the work underway and recently completed, please see the [Basingstoke Canal News](#).

Towpath State

This is the heavily used towpath between Frimley Park and the Canal Centre. The bank has been badly eroded, mainly by dogs jumping in and out. Unless the Canal Authority can find the money to repair it - and contributions from some Local Authorities do fall short - it looks as if this section will inevitably have to be closed!

Gareth Jones



Volunteering News

Lock 17

Volunteers working on Lock 17 were on schedule for a December completion of the Upper Wing Wall repairs, having started in June this year. Health and Safety paperwork was submitted in May, and since then Canal Management Reports have confirmed our volunteers were classed as (unpaid) contractors. Assumptions that this status provided some autonomy in our works proved wrong when a County Review Committee decreed (*much to our astonishment – Ed*) we had to cease work on Lock 17. The efforts by Society and Officers to achieve a resumption of work are commended, but the reasons have not been explained and questions such as “What went wrong?” and “What do we (the Society) need to do now, if anything?” still have not been addressed at the time of writing. The message from the Society to the County Councils is that if the County Councils want more volunteers, this is not the way to go about it!

Peter Redway



What the Belfast Girl fished out of the Wey Navigation..

See the [BCN](#) for photos of what the SHCS workparty on the *Belfast Girl* dredger had to remove from the Wey Navigation and also the Basingstoke Canal on a weed clearance run to Woking in preparation for the Illuminated parade.

Working Party Dates

The regular SHCS working party meets every second and fourth weekend of the month (ie every two weeks mostly). The plan for weekend working had to be hastily changed because of the block on Lock 17 (the previous bulletin was out of date as soon as it was published!), and recently the weather has been a factor too. It currently looks like this for the next few weeks (correct as of Thursday 9th December):

- 11th/12th December - Lock 17
- 8th/9th January – Brookwood Cleanup* (Brookwood local residents’ association)
- 15th/16th January 2011 – Western End clearing (visiting group [Newbury Working Party group](#))
- 22nd/23rd January – Western End clearing (visiting group [“Bit In The Middle” WRG](#))
- February/March 2011 – Runway’s End

*If you are a Brookwood resident or visitor and would like to help with the cleanup of the Canal in that area in January, then please contact the team leader Kathryn Doddington at brookwood.cleanup@gmail.com.

We need more working party volunteers. Do please come and join us! In particular, we urgently need a team leader to run a second regular working party, to share the load with our existing volunteers and to carry out a variety of essential tasks on the Canal. If you think you have what it takes, then please email the working party organiser [Peter Redway](#) or call him on 01483 721710.

Other News

Illuminated Boat Procession

A very successful Illuminated Boats Procession organised by SHCS and [Byfleet Boat Club](#) was held on 27th November. We had a delightful trip up the canal on a very cold but bright day with no issues apart from some leaves and one bicycle in lock 6. Ten boats from Byfleet Boat Club took part with *Aqua Vitae* being declared the winner, *Gabriel* 2nd and *Leo II* third. The return to the Wey on Sunday again was great with no issues and a gin clear sky apart from the cold - it was perishingly cold - we were well practiced in the art of ice-breaking by the time we arrived back on the river Wey. Many thanks from the boaters to the organisers and to the SHCS Work party who did a great job of ensuring the canal was clear for us.

Kathryn Doddington



Leo II watched by onlookers at the Illuminated Procession at Woking

Aldershot Urban Extension

The Society has been taking a very close interest in the proposals to redevelop the former Parachute Depot, between the A325 and Queens Avenue in Aldershot, for housing. The development site has canal frontage and we have suggested to the three developers short-listed to submit tenders that the canal could be incorporated into the new housing area. This would offer the opportunity to provide some canal-related facilities and could also create a 'honey pot' where local people could relax and enjoy the canal. The final decision on the tenders is due to be made in March 2011 and the Society has offered to work with the successful bidder to produce a master plan for the site where 4500 houses are to be built. *Philip Riley*

John Pinkerton

The Society trip boat [John Pinkerton](#) has now completed the last trip of the season and has been moved to the Canal Centre at Mytchett for the start of its annual maintenance program. Following a thorough repainting of the whole of the boat last winter, this autumn will see both the inside and outside of the boat just being painted where necessary and probably the public address system checked thoroughly after one or two problems this season. Next spring, the main item on the agenda will be an "out of water" check to assess the state of the external surface of the hull with regard to rust and corrosion. This will be done in the dry dock at Deepcut, probably during February, with a Maritime and Coastguard Agency inspector. He will go over the hull in detail and hopefully pass the boat for another two years' operation before the next inspection. Subject to any Canal closures, we hope to have the boat back, in top condition, to Odiham in March 2011 for crew refresher training and the start of the season in April. *Peter Wright*

If you feel that you might have the skills for plumbing, electrical, or keeping technical records to help the maintenance team at any time of year, or if you have any questions about the JP, please email [Peter Wright](#) or phone 01344 772461. As predicted, the JP turned in its most profitable year to date, raising around £30,000 on over 200 trips. Many thanks to the hard work by Pete's team, the volunteer crews, crew organisers and maintenance team which made this possible.

New SHCS Vice-President

We would like to welcome Jonathan Lord, recently elected Conservative MP for Woking, who has agreed to become a Society vice-president.

Forthcoming events

Here are some dates for your diary:

- Chobham Social Meetings at The Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road, Chobham, take place at **8pm** on the third Wednesday of the month. Non members and friends are very welcome. Please call David Millett on 01252 617364 for more information. For a map and for more details about the talks, please refer to the [BCN](#)
 - **15th December 2010** - Patrick Moss - 'The Somersetshire Coal Canal'
 - **19th January 2011** - Liam D'Arcy Brown - 'The Grand Canal of China'
 - **16th February 2011** - Roger Squires - 'The Suez Canal - Past and Present'

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Have your say..

Please send any feedback you may have about this bulletin to the [bulletin editor](#). The copy date for bulletin articles is the **last day of each month**. Publication (if it occurs) will take place approximately in the middle of the following month.