



BASINGSTOKE CANAL NEWS

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***In this issue:* Conservation Management Plan accepted**



Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society Ltd

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Editorial



One of the most contentious issues on the Basingstoke since it re-opened has been the delicate balance between navigation/recreation and conservation. Almost the whole canal was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Conservation Management Plan was drawn up. This has been due for revision for some years and Ian Brown spent probably more hours than he cares to remember redrafting it. In the end Dr John Eaton was roped in to do the job and his efforts finally met with success when the plan was accepted at the last JMC meeting and forwarded to Natural England for its approval.

The Society supported its acceptance but with a number of reservations that were to be minuted.

One of the major concerns was the stated aim of reducing shading of the canal by trees to 10% of its current level in order to promote the revival of the aquatic plant life. Our objections arose from several reasons, some aesthetic, but mostly practical. Even though the aim would not involve chopping down 90% of the trees lining the banks, just pruning them would be a colossal and enormously expensive job. It was also feared that it would provoke a very adverse public reaction. We suggested that a 50% reduction would be more achievable and would return things to about the level when the canal re-opened.

Speaking personally, I think that this would be a very good thing from several points of view.

I have been crewing the John Pinkerton for over 30 years and have observed the canal becoming more and more overgrown. Going from Odiham to Barley Mow in the summer is like going down a long green tunnel and the view for the passengers is, to say the least, monotonous. I have also been asked by Waterways World magazine to do an article with Then and Now pictures. There are lots of nice old photos, and many of the features in them still exist but you can't see them now because of the trees in the way. In many areas the canal could be made to look much more attractive by sensitively moving the tree line back a bit from the water's edge. If this is done (and the tree stumps killed to prevent re-growth), it leaves space for wild flowers like the daffodils that were suddenly visible in the Dogmersfield cutting when that was done.

The other point is that there has been no real management of the trees for at least 50 years and many of the species

that have grown up, such as alders and silver birch, are not particularly long lived. They will be dying and falling into the canal in increasing numbers if nothing is done. We have also had several very large oak and beech trees keeling over in the last few years and it's only a matter of time before one of these causes a major breach, as happened in 1968.

Whether it will help the aquatic plants is anyone's guess. I have a nasty suspicion that the state that NE is trying to conserve was an un-natural phase that existed while the canal was reverting from a navigable waterway to a dried up ditch. I would love to see the water as clear again as it used to be, but it may be impossible to restore the species diversity in the channel even if tree shading is reduced. I hope I'm wrong, but I think that Peter Redway's suggestion of off-line reserves in places like Great Bottom Flash and Mytchett Lake ought to be pursued as an insurance.

* * * * *

It was a relief to hear Surrey County Council confirm at the JMC meeting that they had money in this year's budget to pay for the repairs to Deepcut landslip and the Lock 15 bypass and wing wall. I gather that drawings have been prepared and a contractor selected, so all that is needed is for the county to actually let the contract.

Could we please remind them that we would like the work to be completed in this financial year, not merely to have the contract let. We are planning a boat rally at the end of May and to make it viable, it is essential that visiting boats have the possibility of navigating the whole canal.

I don't think it would be an overstatement to say that the credibility of the canal as a navigation hangs on getting this work done, not to say the credibility of the County Council as the owner of it.

Over to you Surrey!

* * * * *

On a more cheerful note, Christmas is coming!

Our Sales Manager has put together a bargain offer on the back page of this newsletter, so help us to sell out the book so that Dieter and I can get on with the next one!

And if you know anyone organising a childrens' party, Denise still has a large number of Dinky-type models of the Society's old Transit van that she would dearly like to see the back of - make her an offer.

Thanks to everyone for their support for the canal in 2008, have a very happy Christmas and let's all keep our fingers crossed for a better year for the Basingstoke in 2009.

Cover Picture: Autumn boating - Leo // at Arthur's Bridge.
Photo: Roger Cansdale

Chairman's Page

Conservation

At the time of writing this report, the clocks have been put back and shorter days are the norm. The year has almost passed, and what a busy year it has been, the revised Conservation Management Plan has occupied a significant amount of our time. Looking back, history may record that 2008 has been a year of consolidation and an improving climate of change in the fortunes of the canal - A glimmer of hope in achieving a sustainable working navigable waterway, one which caters for all interests and activities.

We do not have a magic wand, change has to be achieved through dedicated effort and commitment, the first change is the Conservation Management Plan.

Roger has written a more comprehensive report on the Joint Management Committee meeting providing background to these comments (*see page 5*).

The Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the canal has been endorsed by the Joint Management Committee; the final version will be assented by Natural England. Three draft versions of the plan, with responses from ourselves and IWA moved the CMP from a potentially restrictive document to a version that recognises a living working waterway best serves the needs of all users.

The CMP seeks to reverse a decline in the quality of the SSSI. A number of possibilities for the decline have been identified; the prime cause is tree shading, reducing sunlight and aquatic plant growth, and marginal vegetation as bank protection also reduces.

Surveys on tree shading indicate that approximately 47% of the canal channel was shaded in the 1980's, post restoration evaluation. Today, with aerial photography, it is estimated that 80% of tree shading of the channel exists.

The Society and IWA have lobbied that an interim target for tree shading reduction over the next 10 years should be 50% with project planning and results monitored by the Conservation Steering Group. We consider this is a more practical target than the reduction to 10% tree shading contained in the consultation papers.

The conception of a scorched earth policy would be wrong, a number of factors influence the tree policy. Dead, dangerous or dying trees need to be removed for public safety, trees endangering the structure of the canal also need to be removed on safety grounds, an example is trees on embankments and adjacent to lock structures, damage and possible flooding can result from fallen trees in these locations.

Tree surveys have identified these trees and this information will prioritise locations and timing of the safety work. Other

projects will consider the merits of tree management as a means of reducing shading of the channel, and branch removal, crown reduction and thinning will all contribute to the improvement of the SSSI.

The other side of the coin is navigation; over the consultation periods we have retained boat movements at 1200, unchanged from the initial conservation plans of 1990's. We have accepted a speed restriction for a year on boats moving through a dredged section of the canal, and have also agreed not to hold boat rallies on a section recently dredged.

The concept of dedicated moorings, avoiding sensitive regeneration localities is accepted, and also from the ecology side is an acceptance of off-line reserves for plant regeneration. We have achieved a recognition that ecological recovery and increased navigation activity are possible. The Conservation Steering Group analysis on recovering SSSI status will also review boat movements and navigation activity.

We have offered to assist in constructing off line reserves, thus improving ecology but also recognising a potential pay back for successful results.

I consider we have an agreement which enables the canal to move towards a sustainable future, providing value for all the involved parties.

Towpath Work

The towpath works in Woking and St. Johns have completed this year's project. Planning application for next year's phase has been submitted for approval.

The undergrowth removal reverted to the original standards prior to the BCA budgets being reduced. The contrast is stark but given next spring bank side growth will regenerate.

The results for users are not so positive. Cyclists are now two abreast and move faster, so any member with towpath access should beware when exiting onto the towpath; increased usage as a regulator is not the full answer.

Surfacing material used has a place in urban localities, but consideration of a change in material for the more rural parts of the canal is, in my opinion, desirable.

In closing, my best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to you all, also my thanks for your support over the past year. 2009 will undoubtedly provide new challenges for your committee to consider.

Have a very Happy Christmas.

Peter Redway

Work Party

Work Boat and Tug

With dredging operations suspended for the summer, and conditions improving for painting, we concentrated on refurbishment of our workboat. Welding work on the cabin and internal bulkheads was followed with primer, undercoat and gloss paint, and our second Tug has also received attention and is now a nice multi-colour.

Purchase of a new outboard engine has been made, and its commissioning trip was on our small work boat, moving clay for Deepcut (*Right. Photo by Duncan Paine*).

Deepcut Lock 22

The work at lock 22, started by the Summer Camps, has been progressed by Society volunteers, visiting groups (from restoration days), WRG, KESCRG and Newbury Working Party.

Unstable greensand complicates the normal construction requirements, so all excavations need to be stabilised for safety reasons. Ground water and seepage require pumping, increasing ineffective time.

Progress has been achieved with the offside lower wing wall now re-constructed (*Below*), a more robust structure than the previous wall. Voids under both flank and return walls have been underpinned and the towpath side lower wing wall has also been stabilised, avoiding the need for re-construction.



The pile and timber extension of the towpath side wing wall is scheduled for removal and an extended wing wall will be constructed. Towpath diversions have been provided for access and site safety fencing. Work on the extended wing wall has commenced.

To provide a feel for the commitment of the volunteers, the project has mixed and placed some 27 cubic meters of reinforced concrete and 38 cubic meters of pre-mix concrete,

also reinforced. The wall construction has so far involved 20sq. meters of block work and a similar content of brick work. 30 tonne of clay will be required for wing wall backfill and has been transported by water to above the lock.



All materials have to be transported along the towpath from the nearest road access, and water for construction is by bowser, filling at lock 28.

Future Work

On completion of the Lock 22 work we will continue with the Brookwood reed bed project. The footpath construction over the western portal of Greywell Tunnel has consent for a February start with completion before the nesting season.

Progress on these projects will influence the actual dates for work.

Working Party Details

DATE	LEADER	LOCATION
6- 7 Dec	PR/DJ/DL	Lock 22
13-14 Dec	PR/DJ/DL	TBC Lock 22
27-28 Dec	PR/DJ/DL	TBC Lock 22
10-11 Jan	KESCRG	Brookwood
10-11 Jan	DJ/DL/KR	Lock 22
TBA	WPG	Lock 22/Brookwood
24-25 Jan	PR/DJ/DL/KR	Lock 22
7 – 8 Feb	PR/DJ/DL	Lock 22/Greywell
21-22 Feb	PR/DJ/DL/KR	Greywell
7 – 8 Mar	PR/DJ/DL/KR	Greywell
21-22 Mar	PR/DJ/DL	Greywell or Brookwood

Contact Numbers

PR - Peter Redway	01483 721710
DJ - Dave Junkisen	0208 941 0685
DL - Dave Lunn	01483 771294
KR - Kevin Redway	01483 722206

Peter Redway

JMC meeting

The autumn meeting of the JMC took place, as usual, in the Canal Centre at Mytchett. David Munro was in the Chair, but Ian Brown was absent as he was recovering from an operation (good to report that this all went well).

As usual, David invited questions from the public before the meeting proper began. Phil Riley, the Society's Vice-Chairman raised the matter of the houseboats at Woodham, which he described as a form of anarchy. A photo of one spectacularly inappropriate "boat" that had been installed without any sort of planning permission or compliance with boat regulations was passed round (*Below*).



Phillip urged the County, Runnymede and the BCA to work together to resolve the problem. In reply, Rose Younger, from Surrey County Council, said that a long meeting with the owners had already taken place. There was legal precedent that chalets built on pontoons could not be classed as houseboats and new rules were being introduced as the leases were renegotiated. There was to be a meeting with Runnymede Planning Department soon. David Munro asked for a report for the next JMC meeting.

A man from Woking Council reported that the pollution problem at Brookwood, caused by creosote leaching into the canal from an ex-timber treatment yard, was being tackled. Although the original polluter had gone into liquidation, the current owner of the land had agreed to take responsibility. An oil interceptor is being installed to keep contamination out of the canal while the soil is cleaned up.

Davis Millett then asked whether any long term policy had been put in place to prevent a recurrence of the prolonged closure caused by the bridge works earlier this year. It was reported that this was ongoing due to Ian Brown's illness, but that it would be part of the Strategic Management Plan.

The meeting itself then began, with approval of the Conservation Management Plan the main topic. One of the most contentious issues in the draft plan prepared by Dr John Eaton was the aim to reduce tree shading to 10% of the

current level, but it was stated that it was not the intention to remove large swathes of trees.

Peter Redway gave the Society's response to the CMP. He said that the Society recognised that the latest draft went a long way to meeting the comments made on earlier versions, supported its acceptance and offered to assist with measures to aid the recovery of the SSSI. However, the Society still had a number of reservations about issues in the CMP that had not been dealt with and he asked that these should be formally minuted by the JMC.

The first was reduction of tree shading. It was the opinion of the Canal Society and the IWA that the 10% target was going to be very emotive and would be badly interpreted by the public. It would also be impractical; 50% might be achievable but not 10. The Society accepted that trees might need to be removed for safety reasons in some areas, but felt that the whole issue needed to be closely managed and carefully explained to the public.

The second was the matter of recreation and financial viability. Ian Brown as Canal Director was charged with improving the canal's income. One way of doing this was by increasing the number of boats using it. There was nothing in the CMP about this. The Society wanted the recovery plan to include not only a review of progress but also an assessment of the possibility of increasing the allowable levels of boating as the condition of the SSSI improved. If water supplies were secured, the Society would like to have the option to use any one of seven sites previously used for boat rallies as and when appropriate, without exceeding the boat passage numbers.

Carole Mortimer, on behalf of Natural England, said that they hoped to give assent to the rallies in the first year, assess any impact on the canal, and then produce a best practice guide to go in the CMP. Thereafter no assents should be needed as long as this was adhered to. Peter Redway welcomed this proposal. The intention was to hold the 2009 Brookwood rally on the less sensitive north bank. He also highlighted the Society's initiative in establishing the reed bed at the back of Hermitage flash with funding from HSBC.

Peter's comments seemed to be accepted and the draft CMP was approved and would be submitted to Natural England for their approval.

Discussion of more general canal matters then ensued. Michael Gammon said he was disappointed by the remark in the Canal Director's report that he was not proposing any new restrictions on boating. He would have liked to see encouragement for boating, particularly by youngsters. John Tickle from Hampshire CC agreed and said that the BCA would take this on board. *Continued on page 11*

Plans for the Basingstoke

Future Strategic Direction and Business Plan for the Basingstoke Canal

Next item to be drafted and presented to the Basingstoke Canal Joint Advisory Group and Management Committee in February and March 2009 is the 'Strategic Direction and Business Plan' for the canal's future management. This specific document will be underpinned by four operational action plans.

These four key plans are now coming together and completed first, is the Conservation Management Plan that has now been agreed by the Canal's Joint Management Committee at its October 2008 meeting. The canal has long been recognised as a very rich habitat for wildlife, attracting botanists and wildlife enthusiasts from far and wide. What makes it unique is the changing quality of the water; from very alkaline as it rises from natural springs in the chalky Hampshire Hills, to a much more acidic base as it runs downstream into Surrey. This makes the canal an ideal habitat for a rich and diverse variety of aquatic flora and fauna, with more types of aquatic plant recorded than any other waterway in Britain. These plants provide a home for up to 25 species of dragonfly. For these reasons, most of the canal (with the exception of the stretch through Woking Town Centre, which is recognised and certified as a conservation area), has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by Natural England.

This SSSI status provides special protection for the whole canal, but also places a number of important obligations on the BCA and the joint County Council owners to enhance and protect the high ecological value. The BCA has established a Conservation Working Party and Steering Group that will work closely with Natural England and the Environment Agency, the Wildlife Trusts, IWA, Canal Angling Association and the Surrey and Hants Canal Society to ensure best practice is carried out in balance with the various recreational and income generation demands and opportunities on the canal.

The plan was arrived at after almost three years of painstaking and careful work in close consultation with all major stakeholder interest groups. To arrive at the final draft, Dr John Eaton, a consultant ecologist specialising in waterway ecology based at the University of Liverpool, was commissioned by the BCA. You may remember that John has long been associated with the Basingstoke Canal and worked with the previous canal directors contributing to previous plans.

Working closely with Natural England and the Environment Agency, John has developed a Conservation Management Plan, replacing both the 1994 Basingstoke Canal SSSI Management Plan and the 1991 Post Restoration Management Plan to provide for a combined management

document. It was the aim of the Plan to contain the best practice available to ensure the SSSI is preserved in balance with increasing recreational demands. In the course of drafting the plan, both the Canal Society and the IWA have been involved in detailed consultation and several key concerns have now been addressed within the final plan.

Despite previous careful management a noticeable decline in the value of the SSSI has been noted in recent years. The reasons are many fold, however the key issues that need urgent addressing are:

- over shading from trees
- high levels of sediment caused by leaf litter
- the direct impact of a variety of invasive alien species of plants and animals
- concerns over water quality
- potential water pollution
- water supply and retention
- aging structure

These all combine to reduce the Canal Authority's ability to maintain and enhance the demand for recreational use, whilst preserving the high ecological and SSSI value. One of the more sensitive and troubling concerns that was commonly shared by many was the matter of tree shading and how the new plan proposes to deal with it?

Let me reassure you all on this point: firstly, the BCA through a policy agreed and confirmed by the Conservation Steering Group and approved by the Joint Management Committee will provide a clear framework within which the necessary and selective maintenance of all trees will be undertaken. As such it seeks to achieve an appropriate balance between the needs of safety, conservation and amenity values. In short, this means being realistic and responsible in the way we shall attempt to arrive at the target set in the plan.

My own view is that over time we shall aim for an overall fifty percent reduction of tree shading along the banks of the canal, concentrating on the worst affected places where clear ecological gains are most evident. The need to remove dead, dying and diseased specimens is self explanatory and these will be dealt with as a matter of good practice, as will trees that pose an immediate safety risk to the canal's structural integrity or neighbouring properties.

In all cases, the BCA will work closely with the local authority tree officers and adopted planning regulation will be adhered to. The authority also intends to replace trees where appropriate with suitable native specimens.

I shall have the draft 'Tree Management Policy' posted on our web site (<http://www.basingstoke-canal.co.uk>), so you

- Ian Brown, Canal Director

can view and download it there, or pop into the canal visitor centre for a copy.

During this winter, I shall be working closely with Mike Dawson, Head of Countryside for Surrey County Council to draw up the next plan, the 'Service Level Plan'. This will set out the management of the canal on a day to day basis and will form the basis for the Service Level Agreements agreed and held between the riparian local authorities, the BCA and the two joint County Council owners of the canal. This plan will refer to a number of operational policy documents such as the 'Emergency Response Plan', Business Continuity Plan', 'Health and Safety' and 'Customer Care and Quality Assurance'

Also, we aim to present the 'Recreational Development Plan' for the development and continued management of the Canal Centre at Mytchett. This action plan will look specifically at income generation, improved moorings, boat facilities and the building of a slip-way that is fit for the purpose. Overall, it will look at setting out the assessment of the recreational potential of the whole canal, plans and programmes to realise enhanced community use, boating both private and commercial, angling and towpath access use.

Last but not least will be the 'Asset Management Plan' setting out the assessment of the canal's structures and planned programmes for the management, restorative repairs and preservation of the banks, lock structures and other assets, more importantly the means for funding these over a sustainable period of time.

The latter plan will largely be born out of the full condition survey now currently underway; this will tell us the exact condition that the canal is currently in and inform as to the best future maintenance practices needed.

The BCA now aims to have the 'Strategic Plan' agreed at the next JAG/JMC spring meetings and this will refer back to the documents setting out the preferred options appraisal as agreed by the JMC in 2007. This plan once approved will cover the period of management from 2009 to 2014. During this time a separate programme of work will be undertaken to look at the potential viability for establishing a Trust to run the canal.

My concerns at present for the future are mainly to do with continued funding from the local authority partners. This has now been blighted by the current economic crisis facing us all, where clearly money is going to be very tight. Ironically this has come at a time when we are about to finally establish the future plans for the canal. Please do keep talking to your local, regional and county elected councillors about the importance of our canal and its sustained future dependence on their council's support!

Other matters 'to book' are about increased perception that the canal is deteriorating to the extent that boating will not be a viable future option. Nothing could be further from the truth as far as I am concerned and indeed to coin a phrase often used in the past by the pioneer restoring parties, "use it or lose it" must still be the buzz word.

Confidence is the problem and I do realise this but before we can restore confidence in boating on the Basingstoke Canal we must bring the structure into good order. This is what my ranger teams and I are now focused on. The crucial support from both the joint owners of the canal and the key stakeholders, including the S&HCS, so far is 100% - let's please keep it that way! I am very heartened by the way the volunteering parties continue to work well with my rangers and this is an aspect that I shall continue to enhance in the future.

I was personally very pleased that the Basingstoke Canal Boating Club managed to survive its recent upheaval and judging by the very successful rally held at the Fox & Hounds on the canal this year, it is as strong as ever - long may that continue.

As part of quality assurance, service level performance indicators and staff individual planning performance are now firmly established and adopted throughout the County Countryside Service and integral to the BCA as part of that service, so my team will give total commitment to the task before them. Provided that we continue to get adequate funding and your support we will achieve all that is or soon will be in the canal's Strategic Direction and Business Plan.

The big picture is about clarity of vision, a shared vision, not just mine that will help me to lead the canal into a secure future for generations to enjoy. In its recent service review, Hampshire's Recreation and Heritage, of which the Countryside Service is part and consequently the BCA from an employment perspective, the following quoted text is very relevant: "change is a constant and our structure and ways of working will need to continue to evolve in the future".

If you are still wondering what boxes we need to tick as far as community support is concerned, it's Community Health and Wellbeing. The canal can obviously play an important on-the-door-step role in a most positive natural way but it will not come free or without a great deal of effort and continued commitment from all concerned. It almost goes without saying that in a time of economic gloom we need our natural open spaces more than ever!

Thank you for reading and your continued support. Together we can look forward to enjoying the Basingstoke Canal and I am very excited about these future plans and cannot wait to share more with you very soon!

Ian Brown

Events

Brookwood Boat Rally, 23-24th May 2009

The Brookwood Boat Rally is being organised over next year's Late May Bank Holiday to promote boating on the Basingstoke Canal after nearly 2 years of closures due to structural problems.

A maximum of 80 boats will be cruising to the Brookwood Country Park, near St. John's, where the 2006 IWA Campaign Rally was held. Next year's event will be lower key, aimed at the boaters rather than the public, so some entertainment will be provided for the boaters over the weekend, but there will not be any great attempt to attract spectators.

A limited number of boats will continue cruising to Greywell over the following week, where hopefully they will be joined by some trail boats. We are planning to hold a landside event at Colt Hill over the following weekend, May 30-31st.

Both the Byfleet Boat Club (BBC) and the Basingstoke Canal Boating Club (BCBC) have offered support, and the BCA is also keen to promote the events.

Unfortunately the Basingstoke Canal currently has a negative image in the minds of many boaters, due to difficulties with water supply, closure at short notice, restrictive lock operating, and problems with obtaining licences when travelling from afar. We want to show all the boaters that the Basingstoke is not only the most beautiful waterway in Britain, but the most friendly. We are working closely with



Above: Brookwood 2006 rally

the BCA to ensure that the paperwork aspects are simple and would like to have some volunteers to help with the locks at Woodham and St. Johns on May 21st, 22nd and 23rd. We would also like some help with the Brookwood and Deepcut locks on May 25th and June 1st. The BCBC has offered to co-ordinate the Brookwood and Deepcut flights and the BBC will do the same for the Woodham and St. Johns flights.

If you can help with the locks or volunteering in any way for these events please contact Verna Smith on 01252 517622, address on back cover.

Radio Wey coming your way on 87.9MHz

Martin Clarke is an ex-member of the Canal Society who now works as a presenter on Radio Wey. This started as Hospital Radio Wey based at St. Peter's Hospital in Chertsey, but is now in the process of changing to a Community Radio Station.

In preparation for this they are recording jingles and other connecting links, and Martin has done one giving a plug for the Canal Society. There is also a nice bit about the Society on their website www.radiowey.co.uk.

Martin plays "Something for the Weekend", 2 hours of classic rock music from 9 to 11pm on Fridays. Requests please to studio@radiowey.co.uk or if you want to contact Martin directly to martin@radiowey.co.uk.

Perhaps we might even get some younger members this way. Thanks Martin for thinking of us!



Events

CHOBHAM SOCIAL MEETINGS

This season's talks began with an excellent talk about the Panama Canal by Roger Squires. The venue is still the Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road, Chobham. The meetings will start at 8pm on the third Wednesday of the month. See map right for their exact location. Coffee/tea and biscuits will be available during the interval. Non members and friends are very welcome.

Wednesday 19th November 2008
Graham Mackenzie - **'The Steamship Shieldhall'**

Graham Mackenzie is the Managing Director of Solent Steam Packet (Services) Limited, the trading company that operates the Shieldhall, the UK's largest operational preserved passenger/cargo heritage steamship which is based at the Eastern Docks in Southampton. He will talk on the history, preservation and operation of the ship which is used for public cruises in the Solent and beyond during the summer.

Wednesday 17th December 2008
George Fleming - **'The Royal Military Canal - Folly or Fieldcraft'**

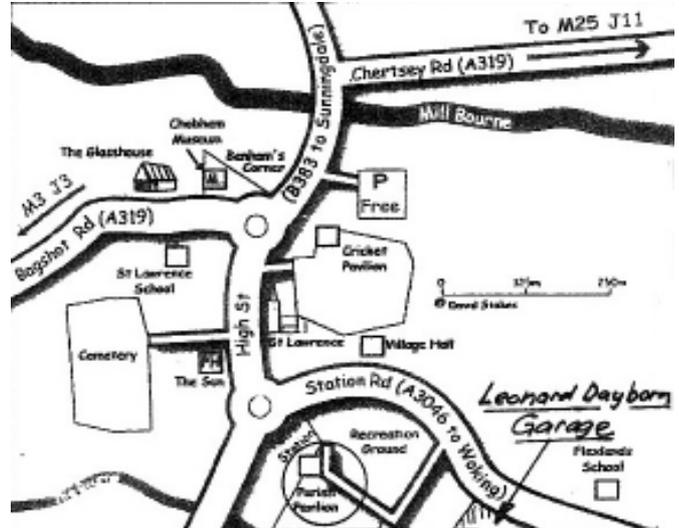
George Fleming makes a welcome return visit to talk about the Royal Military Canal in Romney Marsh in Kent. Since it was constructed it has had a bad press and has been described variously as a failure or a white elephant. George Fleming disagrees strongly.....

Wednesday 21st January 2009
Runnalls Davis - **'The River Severn from Stourport to the Sea'**

One of our popular speakers, Runnalls Davis will be returning to talk about a journey along the River Severn which, from its upper limit of navigation at Stourport, flows gently (usually) for seventy miles through wooded valleys, passing the historic cities and towns of Worcester, Tewkesbury and Gloucester, to the port of Sharpness. His presentation will include the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal.

Wednesday 18th February 2009
Robin Higgs - **'Of Puffers, Ferries and Islands - A Scottish Tale'**

From the Crinan Canal to Jura and beyond by the last coal fired steam 'Clyde Puffer', and by coach, car and ferry to the Hebrides. Robin, our former Chairman, will be returning to regale us with his illustrated story of his holiday on 'VIC 32', a historic 65 year old Clyde trading vessel restored to its former glory to enable steam and shipping enthusiasts to have a holiday with a difference.



Wednesday 18th March 2009
Richard Thomas - **'The Highland Canals'**

Another of our popular speakers, Richard Thomas will be returning to talk about the Highland Canals. The presentation comprises a passage along the Crinan and Caledonian Canals in Scotland. The Crinan is the 9 mile short-cut across Argyll and the Caledonian is the 60 mile journey through the Great Glen linking the North Sea with the Atlantic and including Loch Ness. Both canals are surrounded by stunning scenery.

Wednesday 15th April 2009

For further information on this talks programme please contact David Millett on 01252 617364 or email: d.millett7@ntlworld.com

2009 calendar

If you live in Fleet and are looking for a 2009 calendar, the Fleet Business Partnership has a nice one featuring four pictures of the canal. It should be available in December from shops in Fleet including the photographer's "CapturedMoment" run by Kevin Whibley, the man behind the calendar and the competition that produced the pictures for it. The calendar carries a bit of advertising but that means it will only cost about £1.

Fox & Hounds Rally



Above: *Lady Selsey*, *Elizabeth Rose*, *Lizzzee* and *Senta*

The reinvigorated Basingstoke Canal Boating Club succeeded in holding their traditional rally at the Fox & Hounds in Fleet in the middle of September and somebody must have approved because the sun shone all day!

Ian Brown, Canal Director, presented the prizes after judging the boats. Best presented Steam Boat was Trevor and Gina Jenkins' *Lizzzee* (right), Furthest Travelled was Richard and Evelyne Mitchell's *Lady Selsey* (46 miles from Selsey), and Best Presented Boat was John Ross's *Elizabeth Rose*.



Live entertainment was provided by the ladies of the Fleet Morris and the sales stands did good business.

Left: Jan and Frank Byrnes, organisers of the event, enjoy a well earned drink while John Ross and Ray Carnell discuss *Elizabeth Rose*. The beautifully painted boat, with its passengers Rosie & Jim, was a source of fascination for many children who came along. Perhaps they will be our waterway enthusiasts of the future.

Well done Jan and the rest of the BCBC Committee and thanks to the visitors for their support.



Out and about



Volunteers needed!

In addition to the Work Groups that Pete Redway organises, there are other opportunities to help the Society and the Canal.

John Pinkerton winter maintenance

Winter maintenance work has begun on the *John Pinkerton*. Most of this takes place at the Canal Centre at Mytchett, with the odd sortie to the dry dock. Painting and ensuring that everything is in order for the annual MCA inspection are the main activities.

If you would like to help with this vital work - the *JP* is still the Society's chief source of income - please contact Peter Phillips on 01 189 326373 or email PPhill7046@aol.com.

They work on Mondays each week.

Fleet Work Group

For some time Graham Hornsey and David Millett have been doing odd bits of work along the towpath in Fleet and Crookham, as and when something needed doing that the Rangers probably weren't going to get round to because of higher priority calls on their time.

Graham and David wonder if there are any other Hampshire residents who would care to join them. The sort of work they have done in the past has been aimed at keeping up the appearance of the canal e.g. removal of overhanging or fallen branches and litter picking. With more available effort no doubt more interesting and ambitious jobs could be tackled.

Graham Hornsey is already the lengthsman organiser and he is happy to act as a point of contact. If you are interested in lending a hand, please give him a ring on 01252 623591 or e-mail grador@totalise.co.uk.

JMC meeting - continued from page 5

Service Level Agreements had been established with a number of local authorities. Surrey Heath would be meeting to discuss theirs, but the Runnymede councillor said that they could not pay their contribution. He suggested though that some payment in kind might be arranged. Cllr Chapman pointed out that wages could not be paid that way and Cllr Gurden said that it was almost a moral issue. It was essential to regard the canal as a single entity and make a commitment—you couldn't support one bit and not another.

A contract was to be let soon for the survey of the canal that would form the basis of the Asset Management Plan.

Surrey CC stated that they had money in this year's budget to do the repair work on the landslip at Deepcut and the

collapsed bypass and wing wall at lock 15.

The towpath improvements in Woking were judged to be very successful and it was hoped to find money to extend the work.

The BCA intended to produce a Recreational Development Plan to add to all the others (CMP, AMP, etc). It would include the promotion of boating and building of new slipways.

After presentation of the accounts the meeting wound up. Peter Redway invited members of the JMC to take a trip on the canal on the *John Pinkerton* after the next meeting in the spring.

Book review

Waterside Pubs by Mike Lucas

Published by Waterways World, price £14.99
160 pages, 147 colour photos and 26 maps.

We've all had days on canal holidays when it rained and you dropped the windlass in the canal and then discovered that you'd forgotten to bring a tin opener, corkscrew or some other vital piece of equipment. In these circumstances, I wonder how many marriages have been saved by the timely appearance of a good pub?

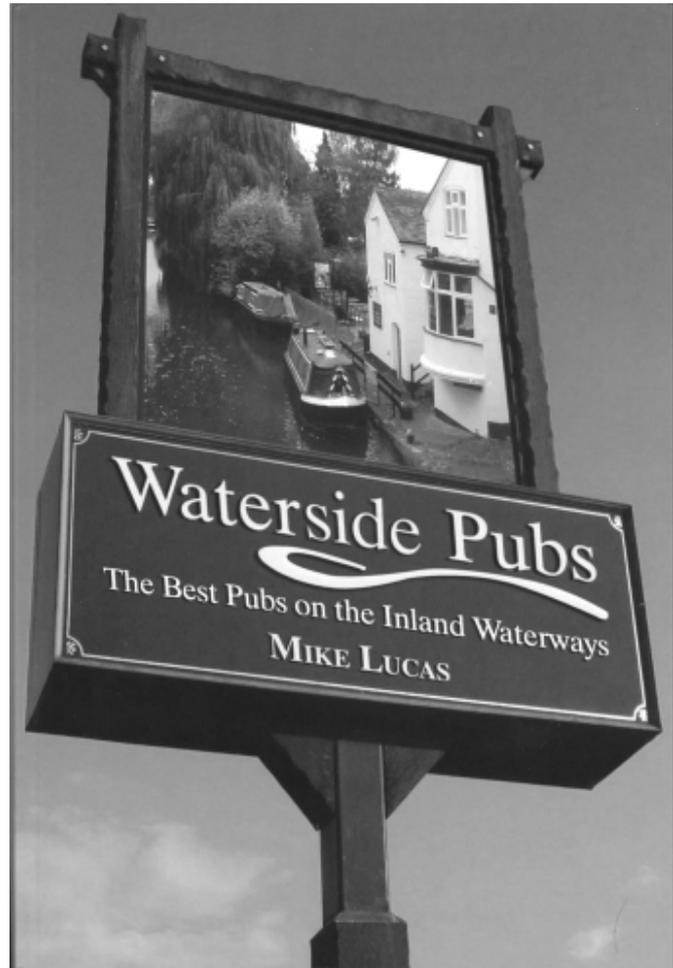
Those who have experience of such things take the precaution of planning their cruise so as to ensure that the appearance of a pub is not left to chance. The usual canal guides all identify the pubs, but they don't have much to say about them.

Waterways World's new publication aims to rectify this and who better to write it than a man who has spent over 30 years wandering the network as an itinerant thespian?

Of course in a book of this size one cannot hope to cover every canalside pub, so this is Mike Lucas's top 150, and they stretch from Skipton in the north to London and Exeter in the south. Nothing on the Basingstoke, but the Anchor at Pyrford Lock on the Wey gets an honourable mention.

There is a danger in writing about pubs that their character can change almost overnight when a new landlord takes over. Mike's book does not restrict itself to details of beers and food, that may change, but also gives an overall impression of the pub, its surroundings, including the canal, and its history. There are some excellent photos as well as maps.

Just the thing to curl up with on a winter's evening and plan next year's cruise, or maybe just a day out to have an enjoyable lunch and watch the boats go by.



While we are on the subject of pubs, the George and Lobster pub in Crookham Village has changed hands recently. I dropped a letter in to the new owner suggesting that it would be a good idea to change its daft present name back to the historical Chequers. I have not had any reply, but perhaps if other people had a go, we might succeed.

SHCS 200 Club

Thank you all for your support this year and the lucky winners for the second half of the year are listed here. The membership form for 2009 should be included in this issue. PLEASE can 200 Club members with existing standing orders still complete a membership form otherwise we may send winnings to the wrong address.

Jim Johnstone

August	
Mr J Meredith	£78
Mr DA Webber	£38
Mr M Coxhead	£19
Mr R Melville	£19

October	
Mrs G Browne	£78
Mr P Lattey	£38
Mr M Coxhead	£19
Mr T Williams	£19

December	
Mr R Jenner	£78
Mr & Mrs Redway	£38
Mrs P Jenkins	£19
Mrs J Tyrrell	£19

Letters

Dear Roger,

Sad to read about *Perseverance* and her demise. I spent along with the dredger crew around about eighteen years looking after her. Remembering her condition when I last worked on her, I remember the boiler was just about at the end of its working life, with both tube plates badly wasted, heavy pitting to the internal plates and all mud doors badly wasted. The smoke box end was also rotten.

The crane wasn't in too bad a condition. The running gear had been renovated over the years, a new kingpost fitted during my time by Ron Jessie, who also had the jib straightened when I bent it. The hull was thin in places and one of the pontoons was cracking at a point towards the front

Whilst a nice idea to restore her to full in-steam working order, I can't really see the practicality of doing so unless she was going back into restoration dredging work. The picture that comes to mind as a working exhibition is of picking up buckets of silt and dumping it back into the canal. An awful lot of work and financial outlay to achieve this!

It's a pity that *Perseverance* could not have been kept at an undercover location near the canal, preserved as a non-working monument to the work she achieved towards the restoration of the Canal. After all she is part of the Basingstoke

Canal's history.

Yours sincerely

Brian Bane

Nice to hear from Brian and I suspect that he is right about the practicality of returning the dredger to steam.

With the currently increasing emphasis on health and safety, I have a feeling that trying to use a steam powered dredger for restoration dredging would be a very tall order and would probably cost a fortune in paying for the time of umpteen inspectors to survey the hull, the boiler, the crane and the crew, not to mention the tugs, barges and dragline.

Various suggestions for possible local homes for Perseverance have been made, such as the Milestones Museum in Basingstoke or the Hollycombe House Steam Museum at Liphook. Milestones would be an appropriate location but unfortunately they don't have room for anything about the canal at present so it seems unlikely that the could accomodate 70ft of dredger. Hollycombe House do operate steam engines, but whether they would be interested I don't know. Does anyone have any contacts there?

Sara Murray

Sara is one of the new rangers recruited this year. She took a degree at Sparsholt College near Winchester and has a BSc in wildlife management. She spent the next seven years working for a conservation trust in Dorset looking after reptiles and amphibians, before deciding that she needed to broaden her experience a bit. She says that she has always had a liking for water and so when she saw the canal ranger job advertised, she put in for it. From several dozen applicants, she and Chris Healey were successful.

Sara says that she enjoys the outdoor aspects of the job most, but I gather from Ian Brown that she rewrote the BCA's health and safety procedures in her first week with them, so although she says she doesn't like office work, she is clearly capable of doing it.

She comes over as being very bright and enthusiastic. She was certainly cheerful company when she and Jon Green escorted Kathryn Dodington's *Leo II* through the St John's locks recently and we look forward to meeting her again.



Wartime defences on the

When the John Pinkerton does trips past Tundry Pond, passengers are often surprised by the odd lumps of concrete on the banks. This article by Tim Denton of the Pillbox Study Group explains how they came to be there and why.

Walking Basingstoke Canal's towpath between Crookham Wharf and Winchfield you cannot fail to notice surviving relics of World War 2. Pillboxes positioned at the edge of the woods, tall concrete domed pipes beside the canal bank and concrete slabs set into the pathway are among those still visible.

Most passers-by will not give them a second thought, or have any knowledge of their relevance in history. So with this small article I will try to give an explanation and description of their importance and why for future generations their survival and preservation is necessary for this country's historical past.

May 1940 saw the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk, and with the German victory and capitulation of France it was feared that the United Kingdom would be invaded by Hitler's forces. A well planned operation to be known as Sea Lion had already been drawn up by the Nazi High Command and preparations and practise for this were already under way in the French Channel ports.

The Commander in Chief of Home Forces, General Sir Edmund Ironside, ordered Army commands to survey the English countryside to make a detailed plan to build defence lines to delay any land invasion. His idea was to protect London and the Midlands with a heavily fortified main GHQ Line divided by series of command and smaller stop lines. The lines relied on natural obstacles like rivers, canals, high ground and marshes together with rail embankments and cuttings. Where there were no suitable obstacles, anti tank ditches were dug or lines of concrete cubes were constructed. "Anti tank islands" were set up at key nodal points on the road system to deny the invader use of these routes, for example the Reading and Basingstoke.

By June 1940 the plan was complete and was finally approved by Churchill and his Chiefs of Staff in Whitehall.

In what was to become the largest construction project ever undertaken in the UK, thousands of pillboxes, gun emplacements and anti-tank obstacles were built across the country under the command of the ministry department known as Fortifications and Works, which was a branch of the War Office. Royal Engineers aided by local builders, council contractors and even unemployed men were drafted in to help with the labour.

Construction of the GHQ Line started in June 1940 and continued throughout the summer and into 1941. Teams of men toiled under extreme conditions for long hours, building materials were in short supply and sometimes local improvisation and adaptation on site was required. Fear of

Luftwaffe aerial reconnaissance was always present so sites had to be camouflaged very carefully during and after construction.

Pillbox construction started with a concrete base or float, the outer and inner walls were built up with a single course of bricks. Between the inner and outer brick shuttering concrete was poured making a solid core, the walls varied in thickness from 24 inches for bullet proof, to 42-in on shellproof defences.

Pillbox walls were additionally reinforced during the concrete pouring with thick metal rods. A central interior brick Y or X shape wall was built to help prevent entering bullets or shell splinters killing or injuring the occupants of the defence.



The concrete rectangular weapon loopholes (*Left*) were normally made elsewhere by a mould cast process then delivered to the relevant site; a supplier of these was the Southern railway works at Ashford in Kent. Finally the

roof was built to various thicknesses according to specification. The use of corrugated iron sheeting as a platform for the roof building can be seen in many of the pillboxes beside the canal, in others wood was used as shuttering.

If the Germans had overcome the first line of defences along the south coast known as the "Coastal Crust", they would have been delayed by various inland stop lines before coming up against the main GHQ defence Line. The GHQ Line stretched from the north Somerset coast and Bristol Channel, through Somerset, Wiltshire and into Berkshire. From Reading the line known as "Line A" crossed into Hampshire at Bramshill travelling through wood and farmland to eventually meet the Basingstoke Canal at Winchfield, close to Swans Farm in Bagwell Lane.

Line A continued across Dogmersfield Park then east along the canal to find its way to Bowling Alley, Crondall via Coxmoor Wood and Bowenhurst. Skirting Ewshot village (which was heavily defended due to its proximity to Crookham Barracks) the line weaved south of Farnham past Crondall to join the River Wey following it through the Surrey countryside to Elstead. The defence line continued its River Wey route to Godalming, Shalford, and then Dorking by following the North Downs Way. From Dorking the defence line continued along the course of the River Mole to Betchworth and beyond into the Kent countryside eventually joining the Thames Estuary at Hoo near Chatham.

Basingstoke Canal

The main sections of the Basingstoke Canal's WW2 defences are located at Crookham Wharf, Blacksmiths Bridge and close to Sprats Hatch Bridge at Winchfield, where today they can still be appreciated and on the whole are still complete.

According to surviving records the canal defence came under two sectors; Sector 2 ran to Tundry Pond and came under the command of Brigadier Clark DSO with a mixed detachment of men from the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry as well as a battalion of men from the Royal Berks Regiment. Sector 3 ran from Blacksmiths Bridge to Farnham and was to be held by troops from the 2nd New Zealand Division under the Commander of New Zealand Forces.



Plan of GHQ Line A WW2 defences beside the Basingstoke Canal at Winchfield

GHQ Line A joins the Canal above Swans Farm at Winchfield, where the first pillbox can be found facing west away from the canal beside the footpath above the canal embankment close to Sandy Hill Bridge (*Below*). This hexagonal pillbox is known as a Type 22 or FW3/22 was built to shellproof specification with 42" thick walls.



Inside it has a Y shaped wall dividing its internal firing points; this was to provide some protection from entering bullets ricocheting around. The main weapons used in these defences would have been the Bren machine gun along with the standard 303 rifle. Externally the roof line is angled off

to give some deflection from incoming shells. On the outer walls the cast loopholes still have metal shutters; these were for protection from flamethrowers and could be quickly pulled shut from inside by an attached wire. Eighteen pillboxes of this design survive in good condition between Murrell Green and the canal embankment at Tundry Pond.

Between the areas of Sprats Hatch Bridge to Bazeley's Bridge there are three more identical examples, one covered in ivy sits on the inaccessible side of canal, facing towards Sprats Hatch Bridge; this defence has iron bars protruding from its roof to support additional camouflage material.

Another FW3/22 can be found facing Sprats Hatch Bridge from a field beside the footpath near the Old Rectory. A final example sits well back from the Canal in the adjacent field's hedgerow between the Rectory pillbox and Sprats Hatch Bridge; these three cleverly spaced defences would have covered a large area of open ground approaching the canal.

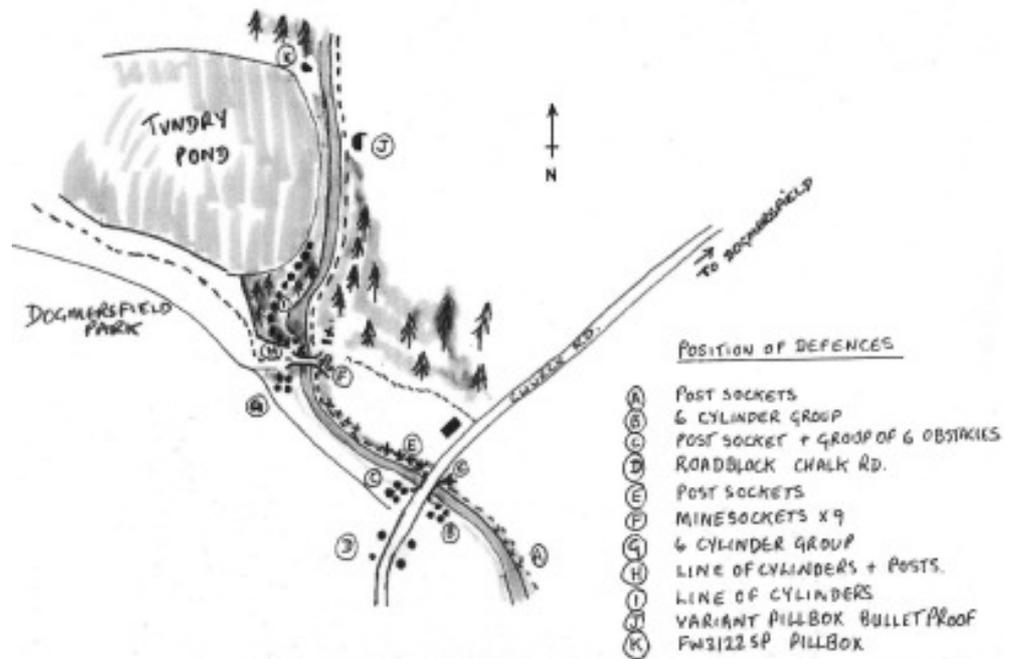
GHQ Line A departs at Sprats Hatch Bridge closing the loop in Canal to meet it again at Tundry Ponds embankment near Blacksmiths Bridge. A solitary Type 22 stands at the bottom of Sprats Hatch Lane at the junction of where a machine-cut anti-tank ditch ran from the canal bridge across Dogmersfield Park to the edge

WW2 Defences

of Tundry Pond, no evidence of this ditch survives today.

From the edge of Tundry Pond the WW2 defences become very interesting and still survive intact. A single shellproof Type 22 stands below the canal embankment close to where a line of over 40 large concrete pipe cylinders run from the edge of the pond below the bank through a small copse to the edge of Blacksmith Bridge (*Below left*), the gap here was closed by wooden posts embedded in concrete in the canal bank, three of these posts still survive.

The line of concrete pipe cylinders sit on substantial bases of poured concrete, these were considered to be a formidable defence against enemy tanks.



GHQ Line A WW2 defences at Tundry Pond, Blacksmith's Bridge, towpath, Double Bridge and Chalky Lane, Dogmersfield



Several cylinders grouped together have scaffold tube running through the centres for attachment of a hawser cable, the cable was to be used to help block the bed of the canal, in 1940 it must be remembered that the canal was in disrepair and that the water level would have been lower than today.

Set into the surface of Blacksmiths Bridge is a rare surviving arrangement of anti-tank mine sockets (*Above right*). The concrete sockets would have accommodated the Mark 5 Spider mine which would have had sufficient explosive force to disable a tracked or light armoured vehicle. They are arranged in a pattern to enable maximum coverage across the bridges width. When not in use the sockets were filled with a wooden plug, when in use the mine and socket would



have been suitably hidden from view by a covering of soil, grass or similar.

During early 2008 thanks to Canal Rangers Andy and Paul we uncovered six further sockets to add to the three already visible in the path surface. A similar arrangement of mine sockets can still be seen close to the canal Bailey bridge at Ash Vale Station. On the east side of the bridge is an unusual arrangement of six cylinders grouped close in pairs. I believe these are in place should a tracked vehicle attempted to avoid the bridge and drive along the bank of the canal, this arrangement would most probably been strengthened with a ditch and concertina wire.

Part 2 of this article in the BCN Spring issue.

Big day for B&DCC



Above: Janella Mansell of the Basingstoke and Deane Canoe Club with James Arbuthnot, MP

On Saturday 8th November Mr James Arbuthnot (MP for North East Hampshire) presented Sport England ClubMark and Canoe England Top Community Club certificates to Basingstoke and Deane Canoe Club. The presentation was made at Colt Hill Wharf on the Basingstoke Canal, where the Club has recently been granted planning permission to build a clubhouse.

Mr Arbuthnot congratulated the Club on their achievement of ClubMark and then enthusiastically participated in a short Canadian trip along the canal. ClubMark and Top Club require the Club to meet criteria in four categories: activities, coaching, duty of care / ethics and club management. By gaining this accreditation sports clubs can demonstrate to parents that they meet national standards in key areas such as coaching and child protection.

The award was received on behalf of the Club by Peter Mansell, the Club's Youth Officer who said, "ClubMark is an important milestone in the development of the Club. We are now looking forward to the challenge of building a clubhouse at Colt Hill which will significantly enhance the quality of canoe and kayak coaching that the Club can offer". The Club runs an introductory programme for children every year based on the highly effective Canoe England PaddlePower programme.

The Club has met on the Basingstoke Canal at Colt Hill each summer since it was formed in 1987. In 1994 a half acre small holding between the canal and the public car park at

Colt Hill came up for sale and the Club was able to purchase it a year later. After a number of false starts, interest in a club house took shape in autumn 2005 and the prospect of significant funding from the Sport England Community Club Development Programme (CCDP) was a real incentive. But at a more practical level two factors were crucial: firstly that Canoe England had a framework agreement with S&P Architects who had experience of sporting and leisure facilities at a price that was just about achievable; secondly a mixture of grants and loans from Hampshire Playing Fields Association, the Four Lanes Trust (a local charity) and from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. Planning permission was granted in June 2008.

The prospect of the club house at Colt Hill is great news for the Club and for other paddlers in North Hampshire, where the Basingstoke Canal is the only waterway where access is permitted. Facilities will include changing rooms, showers and WCs. For the Club's enthusiastic team of coaches a boat store will mean more time using their skills on the water and less on the logistics of arranging transportation of canoes and kayaks to the Canal.

For more information on the Basingstoke and Deane Canoe Club please visit www.badpaddlers.org.

Thanks to Peter Mansell for this article.

- # On a recent cycle trip along the towpath from Fleet to the junction of the canal with the River Wey Navigation it was disturbing to see what is going on with regards to the houseboats situated above and below Lock 2. One houseboat has had a second storey built (we understand without planning permission) and two new steel hulls have been built and launched into the canal with the obvious intention of building living accommodation on them. Now is the time for Surrey County Council and Runnymede Borough Council to get to grips with the situation before it gets completely out of hand. The recent meeting of the Canal Joint Management Committee was advised that SCC are now taking proper action and it is not before time.
- # This cycle ride brought home the contrasting conditions of various sections of the towpath, some being excellent and some needing urgent attention. The newly constructed first section of the Sustrans (Sustainable Transport) section in Woking is now excellent for both walking and cycling providing the cyclists do not speed and they give way to pedestrians. It is also now very suitable for wheelchair users. The awarding of Cycling Town status by Cycling England and the grant of £1.2M towards cycling initiatives over three years (providing the local authorities put in matching funding) will enable the full eight mile section from Pirbright Bridge to the River Wey Navigation to be upgraded. Woking is the only town in the south east to be granted Cycling Demonstration Town status. However, sections in Rushmoor and at Deepcut need early attention, although Rushmoor have upgraded one section in their area very successfully.
- # Congratulations to the reformed Basingstoke Canal Boating Club on a very successful small boating rally at the Fox and Hounds in Fleet in September. Although the number of boats attending was lower than usual, a few steam boats added to the colour and interest on a gloriously sunny day. On the towpath were various stalls including the Society sales stand. Luckily, due to the wet summer, the water levels on the Hampshire section held up well and all boats operating at this end of the canal were able to operate as usual.
- # Some members will remember David Dare who very successfully operated a pair of hotel boats, Rose and Castle, around the country and based them in the winter at the Canal Centre. In 2001 cruising along the Oxford Canal he called in at Lower Heyford and discovered that the hire boat base was for sale. Within two weeks the deal had been done and he has been expanding the business ever since. He now has sixteen holiday narrowboats and four day boats for hire and is starting a new base at Radcot on the River Thames. He is also about to take a lease on the BW yard at Thrupp and will base six day boats there. As well as creating a bistro at Lower Heyford he undertakes boat building and repairs in the wet dock and dry dock and now fits out the interiors for the revived Wilderness boat building business.
- # Good to see that the Tea Room at the Canal Centre at Mytchett opened at last this summer and is proving very popular in drawing the public back to the grounds to use the trip boats, rowing boats and canoes, and the shop. This is the main centre for the canal and increasing use is being made of the large field for camping and caravanning plus the regular car boot sales. The Basingstoke Canal Canoe Club has expanded rapidly since basing itself there and their boat shed now has about 120 canoes of all types and sizes inside, owned by members and the club.
- # By the time you read this the local riparian authorities along the canal will be in the middle of their funding and budget discussions for the 2009-10 financial year both overall and for the canal in particular. It was to be hoped that the Service Level Agreements would all be in place but discussions are still taking place with some borough councils where funding has always fallen short such as Surrey Heath and Runnymede. In Hart it is proposed to bring the parishes into the equation and meetings are taking place to find an appropriate formula based on population in the respective parishes. At the time of writing there is some disagreement on the way forward but hopefully this can be resolved. Riparian parish councillors had a trip on the 'John Pinkerton' in September from Colt Hill to King John's Castle. In spite of the pouring rain they disembarked to view the completed work at the castle.
- # The local press has reported a leaking sewer pipe that crosses the canal by the houses in the approaches to Deepcut cutting. Apparently it serves some properties at Frimhurst on the opposite side of the canal, but, as it is privately owned, it is not the responsibility of South East Water to repair. The pipe has become corroded with age and leaks into the canal after stormy weather. As the Environment Agency have responsibility for water courses, surely they can take action to enforce the private owner to repair it or undertake the work themselves and take legal action to claim the money back.

From Society Newsletters No. 82 November-December 1978 and No. 83. January-February 1979

- # The 'John Pinkerton' has had a remarkable first season of cruises on the canal having netted a £4,250 profit. This was in only twenty four weeks since it was named by Lord Montagu on the 20th. May and has justified all the hopes that it would be a great ambassador for the canal. The total profit is about equal to the total annual income of the Society from members' subscriptions.
- # The Society committee has welcomed Surrey County Council's draft proposals covering recreation, landscape, conservation and management of their section of the canal, and has expressed the hope that the Council will take action over Tree preservation Orders which are felt to be essential for the protection of trees, especially in the urban areas of the canal. The Society also seeks an assurance that reference to closure of the canal would be for emergency or essential maintenance only. The committee also considers swimming might be permitted where suitable, away from the main navigation channel!
- # At the request of Hampshire and Surrey County Councils, the Committee has submitted a 109-page recommendation for setting up a Trust to be responsible for the completion of the restoration and to run the Basingstoke Canal in the future. In a covering letter the Society summarises the advantages of an autonomous management to manage the canal as an entity so simplifying administration, avoiding staff duplication and minimising overall operating costs. It would also encourage more charitable donations. In addition voluntary input would be increased.
- # Operation Ash Embankment was a great success as huge bonfires blazed as more than 60 volunteers cleared small trees and dense undergrowth from the bed of the canal. The half mile long embankment has been dry since 1968 when it was breached during the September floods and a dam was built across the head of Ash Lock. The aim is to clear the whole bed along the embankment, dredge a 100 yard section, and refill it with water to act as a test section. No date has yet been fixed for the repair of the breach itself.
- # After 15 months' work, members of Crookham Village Association celebrated the completion of repairs to Poulter's Bridge, Crookham Village. To mark the occasion, Hampshire County Council's Recreation Committee's chairman, Councillor Maurice Jones unveiled a commemorative plaque and was given a £50 cheque as a donation towards the canal's restoration funds.
- # A 40ft pontoon with a Whitlock excavator mounted at one end, powered by a 3-cylinder Lister diesel engine, has started dredging a small section at the Hampshire end of the canal. The machine, loaned by our member John Heathers, a technical representative for County Commercial Cars of Fleet, is something of an experiment, and the 'Backacter' has so far cleared the restricted passage through Swan Cutting. The idea was to work in clearing bridge holes in advance of our steam dredger 'Perseverance', which cannot work where headroom is restricted.
- # A derelict army swimming pool found in the woods at Deepcut, adjacent to Lock 28, has been ingeniously converted by Job Creation workers into a covered workshop for building lock gates. Originally it was intended to fill the pool, built in the 1930s, and use it for storing completed lock gates to keep them wet until required. Our JCP Co-ordinator, Frank Jones, having learnt to build lock gates with timber from SCC, decided to act on a suggestion from Ray Stedman, Surrey's Countryside Officer, to convert the pool for its new use.
- # Two new employment grants have been made by the Manpower Services Commission to the Society to provide jobs on the canal for unemployed people. Full time work for 15 young people and for the existing supervisory team has been authorised for the whole of 1979, under the Project-based Work Experience Scheme with a grant of £86,231. An additional grant of £49,669 has been made to provide work for a further 15 unemployed people, aged 19 and over, under the Short Term Employment Programme. Frank Jones will continue to be the Co-ordinator and who has been responsible for the last two years' schemes which have resulted in the restoration of seven lock chambers on the Deepcut 14 flight at Pirbright.
- # Hampshire County Council has completed the dredging of the 3-mile section of the canal between Farnborough Road and Pondtail bridges early in December. Within twenty-four hours of completion, the rains came down helping to fill the section with water which now makes an impressive and attractive sight. Silt dumped alongside both banks should be covered with vegetation during the spring and summer months.
- # Funds raised from operating the 'John Pinkerton' trip boat are to be used for re-building Broad Oak Bridge near Odiham. Initially £4,000 will be spent on replacing the existing temporary metal girders with concrete beams which will form the basic structure for future reconstruction. Eventually it is planned to demolish the footbridge built alongside the original brick bridge which became unsafe and was closed in 1968.

SHCS notes

General Canal Society contact number: 0796-4357442

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS OFFER

1 Basingstoke Canal book by Dieter Jebens and Roger Cansdale plus 2 packs of 12 Christmas cards (Snowy bridge and Illuminated boats at Woking), all for a bundle price of £10-00 plus £2-00 p&p a bargain, saving at least £5.

Order now to avoid disappointment from Denise Smith on 01252 517779 or post cheque, payable to S.H.C.S. Ltd, to Sales Manager, 48 Maple Close, Avondale, Ash Vale, Surrey GU12 5JZ .



Anyone interested in joining the Society should contact the Membership Secretary, Mrs Doreen Hornsey, whose contact details are listed 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 31st January 2009

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