



The Basingstoke
Canal Society

Basingstoke Canal News

No. 246 Summer 2015





May has been a good month. The Canal Society had a well attended Annual General Meeting, which heard a very encouraging report from Fiona Shipp, and a fortnight later the Late May Bank Holiday weekend passed without rain so that everyone was able to enjoy the boat rally and Magna Carta celebrations in Odiham to the full.

On the canal, the towpath was reopened after temporary repairs at Swan Bridge and Dogmersfield. Both sites, however, will have to close again when repairs to the navigation channel are finally carried out.

Cover Picture : King John on his Royal Barge, aka Owl & Pussycat, inspecting the visiting boats at the Magna Carta rally at Odiham
Photo: Roger Cansdale

The telemetry system to monitor water levels on the canal is going into action and should help the BCA to manage the water after what has been a pretty dry winter and spring. It will be interesting to see whether they can keep the locks open for business for a third year running.

On the personel front, the atmosphere in the Canal Centre seems much more cheerful these days and the relationship between the Canal Authority and the Canal Society is probably better than it has ever been. Fiona Shipp's ambition to create a "Canal that people compliment" is admirable.

There may however be shadows lurking in the background. With pressure on public finances, there is little doubt that the Counties would like to be relieved of the cost of running the canal, even though they recognise its value as a public amenity.

How they might try to do this remains to be seen. A transfer to the C&RT would seem logical, but could the Counties fund the necessary endowment?

What is clear is that there are likely to be exciting times ahead and that the Canal Society needs to be strong enough to make its voice heard over the next few critical years.

The only fly in the ointment is the Society itself with its ever-ageing membership. I fear that we are heading for one of our periodic crises with key people standing down from the Committee over the next couple of years.

We have weathered these in the past thanks to people joining the Committee as soon as they have become members of the Society. By coincidence, just as I was sitting down to write a rather pessimistic editorial, an email arrived from a new member offering to get involved with editing the newsletter, so we clearly need to make contact with new members or even try headhunting non-members for the Committee.

We did have a new members afternoon at the Canal Centre earlier in the year, but attendance was rather discouraging, so next time we'll try holding it on the *John Pinkerton* as an incentive to come.

However, to members new or old, we do need more people to actually do and manage things. You don't need to join the Committee; there are lots of non-Directors doing invaluable work, but we need more.

Why not give it a try?

Chairman's AGM report

We have heard some very upbeat reports from Fiona, Dick and Martin and I think what they had to say is indicative of a very positive spirit that flourishes both within the Society and between us and the Canal Authority. When I think back over the 24 years since the canal reopened I cannot recall a time when the relationship between the volunteers and the full time team has been in better heart. I very much welcome that as we can achieve so much more when we work together as a true partnership.

I would like to take my contribution to today's proceedings to look at the wider picture and to consider how we would like the canal to develop and prosper in the years to come. There is no doubt that the canal currently faces an uncertain future. It is well known that the County Councils, who own the canal, are keen to find a sustainable future for it which will involve reduced dependency on local authority funding. The results of the recent general election almost certainly mean that the canal budget, both in revenue and capital terms, will come under increasing pressure over the next five years as the District and County Councils see their support grants reduced.

We must remember that the County Councils do not have a statutory duty to look after the canal. They have no option but to maintain highways, provide social care and offer schooling, but they have no legally binding obligation to maintain the Basingstoke Canal. Over the last few years we have seen a very welcome increase in capital expenditure but it must be remembered that this was mainly driven by the need to keep the canal within its banks rather than to maintain it as a navigation.

This has meant that some priorities, such as the pressing need for dredging, have needed to take a back seat.

So where do we go from here? It is always difficult to establish how the key decision makers in the County Councils see the future of the canal. We do know that the Counties commissioned a consultants report (yes, another one!) late last year where the brief was to advise on the value of the canal to the community. As yet, we have not been shown the report although we actively participated in the consultations that took place during its preparation. We are told that the report confirms that the canal is highly valued by the local communities as an important amenity for a wide range of uses. This finding did not surprise us although it will hopefully serve to emphasize to the politicians and the officers in the local authorities that the canal is a much loved and well used local asset.

However, the fact that the canal is widely supported will not pay the bills. This inevitably leads to a debate about options to increase the commercial revenues generated by the canal, a greater volunteer input and the transfer of the canal into a so-called third sector organization which could have access to additional sources of funding.

Although we have always pressed the Canal Partnership to develop additional funding flows, the Basingstoke Canal is not unique in being a waterway which will almost certainly never pay its way. It is worth remembering that the Canal & River Trust (which has much more potential than the Basingstoke to generate commercial income through marinas, property holdings etc) only receives 20% of its total

Chairman's AGM report

income from boat licences. In the case of the Basingstoke, I believe that we will always be seeking ways to bridge the gap between revenues from boats, fishing, etc and the cost of maintaining the canal to a fully navigable standard.

With regard to volunteering, as you have seen, our own teams remain very active but I am doubtful whether, given the pressures on people's time, increasing regulation and the uplift in the retirement age, there will ever be sufficient volunteers to supplement the work of the BCA team. I should also add that we have been very pleased to see the substantial increase in the number of volunteers who work with the Canal Authority on weekdays – this is a very positive development which we can all applaud. I think it is a challenge for us all to suggest how we attract the next generation of volunteers to work on the canal.

I will now turn briefly to the options for the future. It has been said that the private sector built the waterways, the public sector rescued them and the third sector can be their future. In our case I think we can be eternally grateful for the foresight and commitment of Surrey and Hampshire County Councils in taking the canal into public ownership and partnering us in its restoration.

But times change. If the canal came on the market today it is almost certain that the Counties would not be willing to take it on. Given the current financial position, it is not surprising that the Counties are now looking at other ways of managing and financing the canal in the future. We must accept this although, as I have said, the County and District

Authorities should not harbour the illusion that all capital and revenue costs can be covered.

In March I was asked to give evidence to Surrey County Council's Environment & Transport Select Committee that was considering the future of the canal. This led to the formation of a Canal Task Group which will consider further evidence over the summer before preparing a report and making recommendations in the autumn. We are likely to be involved in this process although I cannot speculate on the outcome. In Hampshire, all its museums and galleries have been transferred to the Hampshire Cultural Trust, so that might provide an indication of the direction of travel being considered by the Counties.

Whatever happens, it is vitally important and obviously a 'no-brainer' that the canal should be kept as a single entity with one management team running it. Whilst all this activity is in train we shall continue to make the case for the protection and development of the canal as a fully functioning navigation.

Before I close I would like to thank the Committee for all its support over the last year. I would also like to thank all of you for your commitment to the canal and for your determination to secure its future.

We are now looking forward to our Magna Carta boat rally at Colt Hill next Sunday (which I hope you will all support) and to our 50th anniversary next year when we hope to have a special joint event with the Historic Narrow Boat Club at Brookwood – so we have much to look forward to.

Philip Riley

Canal Society AGM

The Canal Society's Annual General Meeting took place on 16th May, once again in the very pleasant Deepcut Village Hall. As last year, our Presidents, **Tim and Liz Dodwell**, took turns to chair the meeting.

After a brief welcome from **Philip Riley**, the Secretary, **Freddie Dawson**, gave apologies for absence and confirmed the acceptance of the minutes of the 2013 AGM. She then handed over to the Treasurer, **Guy Faller**, who presented the accounts for last year. *A summary of these is on page 10.*



The accounts for 2014 showed an income of £86,000 compared to £29,000 in 2013. Subscription income was steady and 3 bequests had been received during the year. The grants had mostly come courtesy of County Councillors and had been used to finance training and equipment. Thanks to the efforts of Graham and Doreen Hornsey in mastering the complicated new system, 2 year's worth of Gift Aid had been received. The Boat Company had had a great year, bringing in nearly £32,000, and the sale of the old *John Pinkerton* and a barge had netted a further £26,000. Other notable income had come from the sale of logs (£3,600) and talks about the canal (£960).

Expenditure was similar to 2013, apart from an increase for the Work Party and Projects, reflecting work done on the canal, and a reduction in postage thanks to a new arrangement with the printers.

The Balance Sheet looked very healthy and Guy was confident that the finances were adequate for future needs. A motion to accept the accounts was passed unanimously and the auditors were re-appointed.

The Secretary stated that 11 nominations had been received for the Committee, so the Board of Directors was unchanged from 2014.

There being no other business, the formal part of the AGM closed.

Liz Dodwell then introduced **Fiona Shipp**, the Canal Manager, who gave a very upbeat and encouraging report that was at the same time realistic about the canal's problems, both past and present.

She said that after many years of adverse comments about the canal, some of which were justified, they had started to get positive feedback from visiting boats:

"In case you haven't guessed, we've really enjoyed the Basingstoke. It was definitely the right decision to explore it and we highly recommend it to other boaters. Don't let the moaners discourage you!"

Narrowboat Pas Meche April 2015

"I spent two weeks on Basingstoke last summer, absolutely loved it,...."

Narrowboat Brindley Jan 2015

Canal Society AGM

Fiona said that in a way getting the canal reopened was an easy target. The target now was to have a “Canal that people compliment”.

She listed current BCA team work. The first item was the generation of a Work Programme to ensure that things didn't get forgotten. This was also a way of flagging up jobs for the various groups of volunteers.

Second item was to try to increase income from boating at the Canal Centre. They now had some unpowered boats there for hire and *Rosebud* was also in operation, largely crewed by Canal Society volunteers.

The sign boards on the canal that had become very tatty, were being replaced at major access points to the canal by a new design (*below*).



Also on the bankside, they were trying to develop a policy for memorial benches to ensure that these were maintained, and checks were being made on garden licences where residents were using canal land. A boat survey had been done to check licences and these measures had produced a substantial increase in income.

A break-in at the Canal Centre had resulted in the loss of some £10,000 of equipment, so

CCTV and improved security had been installed at the Canal Centre and the Ash Lock depot. The lease on the Deepcut workshop was being renewed and a general clear-out was taking place there.

To deal with emergencies, new stop planks had been purchased together with containers to house pumps. They now had a 6 inch pump as well as a 4 inch and a contractor, Kenward Groundworks, was on 24 hour standby to assist with any emergencies.

The new telemetry system to monitor water levels and flow in the canal was being installed and would greatly enhance their ability to control the canal's resources. Rangers would be able to check levels using their smart phones.

Like the Basingstoke, the Regents Canal had had problems with speeding cyclists and the C&RT had kindly agreed to share their “Share the Space, Drop your Pace” campaign with the BCA. This had been launched in Woking on 15th May. (*See page 18*)

The BCA had discovered that Hampshire County Council had a narrow boat that was used for educational purposes. It was currently on the K&A and they were trying to get it onto the Basingstoke to do school trips (*Below*).



Canal Society AGM

Fiona then went on to list some of the challenges that they currently faced.

The first of these was a rogue swan that was terrorising boats near Claycart Flash! (*Below*)



Debris that prevented lock gates opening fully was a problem that would hopefully get better as boat passages flushed it out. The rangers' efforts to deal with debris had helped to improve the canal's reputation and appreciative comments had been received.

The BCA was aware of the need for dredging and money had been identified for this. At first it would probably just be spot dredging to deal with particularly shallow areas.

Weed was a problem in Woking and Sheerwater, but not as bad as last year, mostly thanks to the efforts of volunteers. A trial was to be done below Lock 1 where spraying would be done to try to kill the Hydrocotyle.

Efforts also continued to control other alien invaders such as the Signal crayfish, Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam.

Fiona listed some of the improvements being made. Although boat licence fees had been

increased in line with those elsewhere on the canals, they were making efforts to increase navigation times. They were now in a position where boats were able to move on two lock flights somewhere every day of the week.

Booking procedures had been made easier, and licences for visiting boats were available at Thames Lock on the River Wey. Licences for unpowered boats could be bought online.

3 sets of lock gates would be installed this year and this would get things back onto a regular pattern of replacement.

The new moorings at the Canal Centre were now three quarters taken.

In conclusion, Fiona said that they would be lost without the volunteers. The lengthsman scheme was invaluable in providing information about the canal and regular meetings were held with both Mike Gordon, its organiser, and with the Canal Society's Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

In reply to questions, Fiona said that the towpath at Swan Cutting was being repaired; they knew that dredging was needed, but there were legal issues with the neighbouring householders that had to be resolved.

The towpath at Dogmersfield had been made safe and was open again until 31st October, when work to repair the navigation channel would begin.

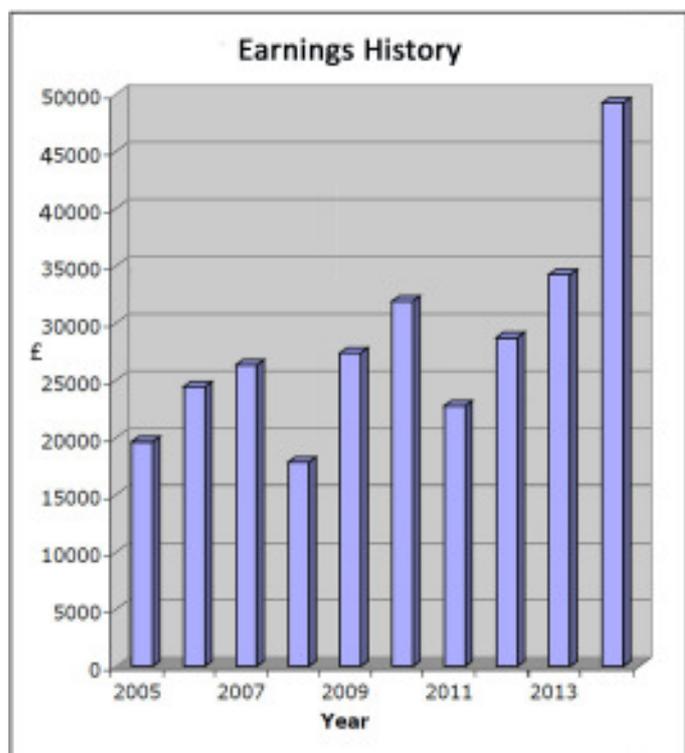
Fiona was warmly thanked for an excellent presentation and the meeting then turned to the Robin Higgs Award.

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This year the award went to the Canal Society's archivist, **David Tonkinson**, in recognition of the work he had done to catalogue the Society's collection of photos, videos and other archives as well as interviewing some of its members, including Robin himself. David pronounced himself "gobsmacked"!



This was followed by a report from **Dick King** on the *John Pinkerton's* year, which he described as fantastic.



Charters were up 14%, theme trips 100% and over 6000 passengers were carried for the first time. At times both the old and new boats were operating simultaneously in order to do the Aairshow trips. Earnings of £48,000 had been made on a turnover of £66,000.

Dick expressed his thanks especially to David Horwood for doing all the bookings and to Steve James for mastering the mysteries of double entry computerised book keeping. He also thanked the maintainers, and John Ross for the splendid decorative painting of the new boat.

The crewing situation was relatively healthy, but Dick appealed for some more younger handymen to help with maintenance. He finally reminded everyone about the members' cruises that left Colt Hill at 7.30pm on the first Monday of the month; the last would be on 5th October. The trips were free, but people should book to avoid disappointment.

After a break for refreshments, **Martin Leech** reported on the activities of the Society's Work Party and visiting groups. These included:-

Regular Society Work Party (leader: *Kevin Redway*)

- The usual scrub, overhanging tree and other clearance
- Clearance of logs from Dogmersfield landslip
- Colt Hill Barn Refurbishment – Phase 2
- Moving a barge to the River Wey for disposal
- Refurbishment of path over Western tunnel portal

Canal Society AGM

Visiting Work Parties

(Waterway Recovery Group)

- Deepcut Lock Works (Lock 28)
- Bank clearance near Wharfenden Lake
- Brookwood Country Park landing stage and towpath works

Society Engineering Team (*leader: John Wharf*)

- BCA Weedcutter return to service and maintenance
- BCA patrol boat refurbishment (ongoing)

In recent weeks, the towpath and car park at Colt Hill had been resurfaced and a good deal of tidying up had been done at King John's Castle in preparation for the Magna Carta weekend.

Martin said that it had given him great pleasure to put the report together, demonstrating the range of work undertaken. He showed a great many photos including this one of the Alan Flight, almost invisible under the mound of rhododendron cuttings.



The Work Party's current jobs list included

- Magna Carta Rally preparations
- Completion of Lock 28 works
- Clearance of rhododendrons near Wharfenden Lake

- Refurbishment of Fly II workboat
- Landing stages at Farnborough Road/Runways End
- Resume hydrocotyle weed removal, Woking
- Continue with BCA patrol boat refurbishment

Other possible tasks for the future included redevelopment of the currently very scruffy Ash Wharf frontage, a small boat basin at Colt Hill and the Last 5 Miles Footpath.

Martin thanked the members of the Work Party for all their efforts and in return, Janet Buckley thanked Martin for all his organisational work.

The Society's Chairman, **Philip Riley**, wound up the meeting with his report (*see page 3*). He described the current relationship between the Society and the Canal Authority as the best since the canal reopened. He speculated on the possible future for the canal, given the difficult financial times being faced by the County Councils, and the need for the Society to continue to press the case for navigation.

During the ensuing Open Forum, the point was made that the Counties surely had a legal duty to maintain the canal for drainage purposes. Philip agreed but pointed out that this could be done without navigation being possible. It was suggested that the C&RT was struggling to maintain its present waterways let alone take on the Basingstoke, but Philip said that they would only take it on if it was in first class condition and if it had an endowment large enough to generate enough income to pay for its future maintenance.

A very interesting AGM finally closed at 5pm.

Society Accounts for 2014

Summary of accounts for the year ending 31st December 2014

Income and expenditure account		2014	2013
		£	£
Income			
	Subscriptions	8,549	7,648
	Donations - general	2,046	3,410
	Bequests	3,100	1,000
	Grants received	5,450	2,050
	Gift Aid Recoveries	4,010	0
	Income from subsidiaries	31,770	13,272
	Income from sales of assets	26,000	0
	200 Club profit	669	474
	Other fundraising income	4,827	300
	Interest received	532	1,325
		86,954	29,478
Less expenditure			
	Projects and working parties	(27,908)	(21,184)
	Newsletter	(3,736)	(3,460)
	Postage, stationery and printing	(1,971)	(4,022)
	Insurance	(4,717)	(4,864)
	Depreciation less profit on sale of asset	(2,936)	(2,866)
	Equipment maintenance	(2,291)	(1,153)
	Rallies and events	(656)	(741)
	Accountants' fee	(1,500)	(1,910)
	Donations / sponsorships	(390)	(93)
	Travel and subsistence	(35)	(42)
	Other expenditure	(4,736)	(4,717)
		(50,875)	(45,053)
Net (deficit) / income		36,079	(15,574)
Balance Sheet			
Fixed assets			
	Investment in subsidiary companies	101	101
	Freehold land & buildings	50,412	50,412
	Plant & equipment	5,905	5,405
Amounts due from subsidiary company			
	Loans - JPCC	133,896	148,550
	SHCC	6,979	8,000
	Profit for year - subsidiaries	7,672	9,672
Other debtor		4,122	-
Cash at bank and in hand		135,637	87,752
Accrued expenses		(2,358)	(3,605)
Net assets		342,366	306,287
General fund		333,285	222,453
Restricted fund		9,081	9,081
Designated fund		0	74,753
Total funds		342,366	306,287

Events

Mikron Theatre

Date: Thursday 16th July 2015

Time: 7.30 pm

Venue: The Fox and Hounds,

71 Crookham Road, Fleet, GU51 5NP

Show: **'ONE of EACH' - A Savoury Tale of Fish and Chips**

Sir Caspian Delamere is a man on a mission, to find the finest Fish and Chips in Britain. He's narrowed it down to two seaside vendors - finalists for his GOLDEN FISH-FORK award.

By coincidence The Pickled Egg and The Silver Darling are rival establishments run by twins, Roderick and Annette Whale. Which portion will prevail? Rod's old fashioned, homely style? Or Nettie's high-tech twist on tradition?

Their story is covered by unscrupulous journalist Meriel Hacker, and she is after a scoop. So what will she do when she hooks a much bigger fish than she ever expected...?

Set sail with Mikron for a savoury tale about the British National Dish.

Who better than Mikron to present this story?

Come along by boat, car, cycle or on foot and enjoy another Mikron masterpiece. The Society always looks forward to their visit and sponsors the show, so a good attendance will be appreciated. Bring folding chairs, rugs or just sit on the grass. Alternative back-up in case of rain. Make a diary note now so you do not miss the show. Collection on exit.

Bar and food available. Ring Caroline or Graham Dale on 01252 663686 for reservations

50th Anniversary 2016

Next year will mark the Canal Society's half centenary. To celebrate, we intend to organise a boat rally at the Brookwood Country Park in August, in conjunction with the Historic Narrowboat Club, who also have their 50th anniversary in 2016.

This will be a very significant event and will take a good deal of organising. If it is left to the Committee to do everything, it will, quite simply, not take place. We need to form a small team of people this year to project manage and run it.

If you would like to be a part of what should be a very memorable event, please contact Philip Riley as soon as possible (01256 702109 or wincombecottage2@gmail.com).

**Don't leave it to somebody else -
*the somebody else is you!***

or visit www.foxandhoundsgcc.co.uk for details.

This is the 44th year of touring by canal and river in their 1936 built ex Grand Union Canal Company narrowboat 'Tyseley'. The company relies on various grants and collections at their shows to continue touring each year playing to local audiences, many of whom probably do not visit ordinary theatres.

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

Odiham Magna

The rally at Colt Hill, Odiham, on 24th May, organised by the Canal Society and the Boating Club, was very successful. It was probably specially enjoyable for the visiting boaters because of the other Magna Carta celebration events in the town over the Late May Bank Holiday weekend. Over 20 boats made their way to Odiham.

Below: Freddie Dawson in *Athai*, looking very smart in its new paint scheme.



King John himself appeared and was invited to judge the assembled boats. He first walked down the towpath and then boarded David Ward's *Owl & Pussycat* to see them from the water (see cover photo). The trophy for the Best Presented Boat went to the Hardiman's *Water Lily*, for the Furthest Travelled Boat by Water to the Fletcher's *API Wanderer* (below)



and for the Furthest Travelled Trail Boat to the Mitchell's *Lady Selsey*.

API Wanderer had come 167 miles from Warwickshire, fulfilling a long-standing ambition of its owners to "do" the Basingstoke, and they seemed to have enjoyed themselves. The steam launch *Lady Selsey*, a regular at Fox & Hounds rallies, had come 60 miles from Selsey.



On the Saturday evening there was an informal gathering of the boaters with snacks and beer provided by the Canal Society, and our President, Liz Dodwell, led a sing-song with her guitar until night fell. She had had the foresight to issue song sheets so there was no excuse for not knowing the words.



On the Sunday there was more music. First to perform was the band above from Sourdeval,

Carta rally

Odiham's twin town in France. We then had assorted Morris dancing and brass bands for the rest of the day.

One of the problems for the organisers of the Magna Carta event was the relative inaccessibility of King John's castle at North Warnborough. The only direct transport to the castle was by canal with the *John Pinkerton* and Accessible Boating's *Madame Butterfly* and *Dawn* running a shuttle service. Most of the boats at the rally also paid a visit to the castle at some time over the weekend.



The land side of the boat rally saw some 10 stands ringing the green behind the wharf at Colt Hill. Bacon butties, hamburgers and tea and coffee were provided by a very hard working lady in one, while essential lubrication was to be had from the stand of the excellent Andwell Brewery; their King John ale went down very nicely!

The Basingstoke Canal interest was represented by stands from the Canal Authority, the Canal Society, Accessible Boating, and the local IWA branch. The Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust was also there. John Ross with his painting and



his boat *Elizabeth Rose* (above) and Dick and Alison Snell selling off their remaining stock of fenders promoted traditional canal crafts. It was also nice to see our friends from the Wey & Arun Canal Trust and to hear about their plans for the future.

Galleon Marine is of course on the other side of the canal from all this activity, but they solved the problem of getting would-be ice cream buyers to their shop by means of an improvised floating bridge. A quick ring on the bell and in seconds they were wafted across the canal!

Down at North Warnborough, the



old castle and its surroundings were looking very good thanks to the work of the Society's Work Party and the BCA's Tuesday volunteers, who had tidied up the paths and cut back the

Magna Carta rally



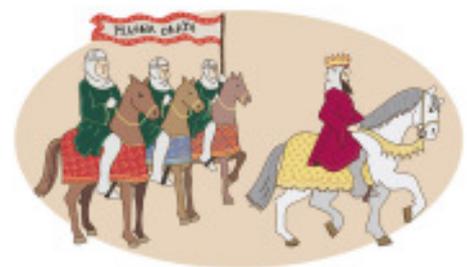
All in all it was a very successful weekend and thanks are due to Philip Riley, Jan and Frank Byrnes and the rest of the team who organised and ran it and those who turned out to erect and dismantle the marquee and gazebos, to stand around for hours managing the car parking, and do all the other things that have to be done on these occasions.

shrubbery so that the castle was actually visible.

The fields next to the castle were a medieval encampment manned by a host of re-enactment enthusiasts. Talking to them, it was clear that these were no mere weirdos who liked dressing up, but real enthusiasts who were extremely knowledgeable about their particular field of interest. Most of them seemed to be living in authentic medieval style in their tents for the weekend and cooking over open fires, but fortunately the weather was reasonably good.



Above: “Sir Philip of Broad Oak”, Canal Sociey Chairman, entering into the spirit of the event, with James Taylor, the Canal Strategic Manager.



Towpaths re-opened

James Taylor, the Canal's Strategic Manager reports:

As you may be aware, Surrey and Hampshire County Councils are investing significantly in the Canal's assets. We are now in the third year of a 4 year programme.

A great deal of the Hampshire proportion of the funding is now tied up with the repairs to the Dogmersfield landslip, a situation which is becoming ever more complex. I am pleased to say that following works on the bulk of the slope carried out by the adjoining landowner last winter and some minor works on Canal land at the foot of the slope we were able to reopen the towpath for the summer on May Day. *(See photo on back cover)*

Further works to reinstate the channel and stabilise the foot of the slope are planned to commence in November – when the towpath and navigation will have to close to the public for safety reasons. As part of the contract to repair the landslip the same contractor will be replacing Barley Mow culvert. This means that the navigation will be closed between Staceys Bridge and the winding hole north of Blacksmith Bridge for at least 8-10 weeks this winter.

We have done a temporary fix on the towpath at Swan Bridge in North Warnborough, but the engineering solutions for the Canal channel look both complicated and expensive. River &



Above: River & Canal Services repairing the towpath near Swan Bridge, North Warnborough

Canal Services will be carrying out some repairs to Eastrop House and Crookham Cottages Embankments shortly to stem leaks which have worsened; no navigation or towpath closures are expected for these works.

In Surrey we will be doing over 1000m of repairs to Frimley Lodge embankment between the Canal Centre and Frimley Lodge Park where the embankment crest (towpath at this point) has eroded significantly – this is due to commence shortly. The towpath will close whilst the section of bank opposite the Canal Centre is repaired with a diversion over the Canal Centre swing bridge and Mytchett Place Road.

Works to Hermitage Weir will take place later in the summer, whilst further lock structures, Ash Embankment and a culvert in Woking are being planned for the winter.

Ash Wharf -

The Ash Wharf area has never been particularly attractive, as this old photo from the early years of the 20th century shows.

I also well remember the first time the *John Pinkerton* managed to escape from Hampshire, back in 1984. We got as far as Ash Wharf and found the basin full of bits of polystyrene foam and other rubbish that had overflowed from the dustbins behind the shops (*below*).



Things are a bit better today (*below*), but the rear view of buildings and wheelie bins is still a fairly unwelcoming prospect for a visiting boater. The piling along water's edge is also in need of attention and the canal needs dredging there to enable boats to get alongside.



This is all a great pity, since Ash Wharf is one of the places where people ought to be attracted to for shopping etc, and a few years ago the Council did quite a lot of work to make the bank

Eyesore or asset?

next to the main road look attractive after the road bridge was rebuilt.



The Society has an ambition to do something to improve the situation and recently a local resident, Luke Martin, produced the excellent visual above of how a redeveloped wharf might look. The buildings are still there, of course, but separated by a hedge so that it all becomes a pleasant place to moor a boat or to sit and watch the canal.

To make this all happen will not be straightforward. There are questions about who owns the land and who is responsible for the drainage of the site, and local residents will have to be persuaded to support the idea.

What we need is someone to take on the job of project managing this scheme. This does not mean that we necessarily need a qualified project manager. What we do need is someone interested in improving the local environment, who is willing to spend time talking to the BCA, local councillors and residents, scratching about in local land records and generally taking it under their wing and running with it. They could perhaps head up a small group if several people were interested - many hands make light work.

If this appeals to you, please contact Phil Riley or Martin Leech (chairman@basingstoke-canal.org.uk or vice-chairman@basingstoke-canal.org.uk)

Share your Space

Basingstoke Canal

**share the space
drop your pace**

- Pedestrians have priority**
- Be courteous to others
Be careful and Slow Down**
- Keep dogs under control
and clean up after them**

Contact Us:
Basingstoke Canal Authority
01252 370073 www.basingstoke-canal.co.uk

GIVE WAY TO
Cyclists and runners
give way to pedestrians

DISMOUNT
All cyclists to dismount
and give way at bridges

DO NOT BLOCK THE PATH
Pay attention and
don't block the towpath

The towpath is a Greenway, which is a shared use route where pedestrians have priority. It is a great place to walk, jog or cycle as you enjoy the heritage, charm and tranquility of our historic waterway.

Supported by

TRAVEL SMART
SURREY

**share the space
drop your pace**
Basingstoke Canal Authority

Sponsored by
Basingstoke Canal
Canal & River Trust

It's hard to avoid the temptation to say "We told you so", but the Canal Society always had reservations about the decision to allow Sustrans to resurface the towpath through Woking for cycling.

It certainly made a huge improvement for all users and saved Surrey County Council a lot of money, both of which are very welcome, but it was not long before our fears of conflicts between speeding cyclists and other users were confirmed. Young people on bikes tend to go as fast as they are able. I know because I used to and if there is a notice stating the time to the next location, you try to beat it.

Happily, those signs were removed, but there were still problems, which were shared by the

Regent's Canal in London. The C&RT started a campaign called "Share the Space, Drop your Pace", and agreed to the BCA using it as well.

It was launched in Woking on Friday 15th May by Lynda Kemeny, currently Vice-Chairman of the Canal's Joint Management Committee. *(Thanks to Paul Drane for the photos)*



Drop your Pace

Dozens of campaign leaflets, water bottles and wrist bands were handed out (*Below left*), and not just to cyclists but also other speedy users of the towpath (*Below right*)



As can be seen from the campaign leaflet on the page opposite, the emphasis is on everyone sharing the towpath and having consideration for other users. Although walkers have priority,

they too should pay attention and not block the towpath.



Let's hope that the campaign has the desired effect. Well done to the BCA for taking this initiative and thanks to the C&RT for the use of their material.

Barbara Durley

Those who knew her will be saddened to hear that Barbara Durley died recently.

Barbara, her husband Clive and son Nigel were all very involved with the restoration years of the canal. Clive was one of the gang who started the trip boat operation and initially acted as both Booking Manager and Crew Organiser, so Barbara had to put up with her telephone being permanently occupied. Clive and Barbara also helped to run the Sales stand at events and assisted the Hedgers with the job of stuffing newsletters into envelopes.

We send our condolences to Clive and his family.



Above: Barbara and Clive being presented with a Terry Harrison painting in 1988 when they left the area to move to Fordingbridge.

Mystery solved

The strange hut over the canal near Swan Bridge in North Warnborough, pictured in the last issue, is a mystery no more:

My friend, who spent his boyhood living by the bridge, can remember the structure and confirms that it was for recording flow in the canal. I believe the instrument was called "A Thames Recorder", a similar construction is believed to have been in the River Whitewater downstream of the aqueduct.

David Gerry

Dear Roger,

No doubt you will have heard by now, but the "Loo" in the canal at North Warnborough was a water flow measuring gauge.

The Mid Southern Water Co applied for a new Act to sink another well at Greywell in 1927. My grandfather objected and it was agreed to measure the canal flow for 3 years before the new pumps started up in 1931. The flow meter was installed at Water Co expense and the readings taken by both parties.

Compensation was to be paid if the flow diminished after start up. It was all rather inconclusive as the flow did not appear to be affected, but there was a gradual decline in flow up to 1948 when readings were discontinued.

The readings did form the basis of the contract to supply water to Power Jets Ltd, later NGTE (*National Gas Turbine Establishment*) at Pyestock in 1948.

Regards

Tony Harmsworth

A third bit of history came in this letter:

Dear Roger,

I have seen the item "CRT Photo Archive" in the Spring issue of BCN which reminded me that we had some views of the canal in our collection which included the questionable structure.

I now enclose one of the views which shows a party from the Railway Enthusiasts' Club making use of what Joan Marshall described as a "boarding station" on 27th September 1958. We regularly made horse-hauled trips on the canal which, as they became more popular, involved connecting buses and through tickets by rail from Waterloo and Surbiton.



In case you are interested I enclose a copy of my list which includes a section on the Basingstoke Canal.

Yours sincerely

Hugh Davies

Thanks to all who wrote, and particularly to Hugh for permission to print the photo. It looks like the famous Mark Hicks in the boat; he would have been 84 at the time.

Letters

Dear Mr Cansdale,

The Guild had a most enjoyable trip on the John Pinkerton yesterday afternoon. The crew were charming and helped all our members on board. The journey to and from King John's castle was pure delight in peace and quiet amongst lovely scenery – we even saw some deer in the fields. After your talk on the “battle” to have the canal in working order, the Guild felt very privileged to be on the canal.

It was lovely to meet you last week and we did appreciate your kindness in helping to put the tables away after your talk.

With kind regards from the members of the Guild.

Una Webberley
Farnham Afternoon Townswomen's Guild

The Guild gave the Society a very generous donation of £100 for the talk I did, so it's nice to know that they enjoyed their trip on the JP.

If you know of any group or organisation that is looking for a speaker, please feel free to pass my contact details on to them:

Roger Cansdale
Phone: 01252 678608
Email: roger.cansdale@ntlworld.com

I do several talks about the history of the Basingstoke Canal with emphasis on the people involved (“Heroes & Villains”), the Western End, the Army, the volunteers or the basic history. They last between 60 and 75 minutes and I just ask for a donation to the Society.

In the article about the aqueduct inspection in the previous issue of the BC News, I mentioned that we were puzzled by the position of the weir and the alignment of the gates that are raised from the bottom of the channel to seal it off. As usual, Tony Harmsworth knows the answers:

Dear Roger,

STOP GATES ON ASH EMBANKMENT

The new weir was sited some way from the aqueduct as it had to be built and operated before the embankment could be cut through for the new road. This weir controlled water levels from the works to Lock 28 during construction.

The stop gates were not really meant to protect the aqueduct but to isolate both sections of the embankment. The embankment was considered the greatest risk of failure. The gates were arranged so as to be self-acting in case of failure of either end of the embankment. They could, as recently found, be used to isolate the aqueduct for inspection.

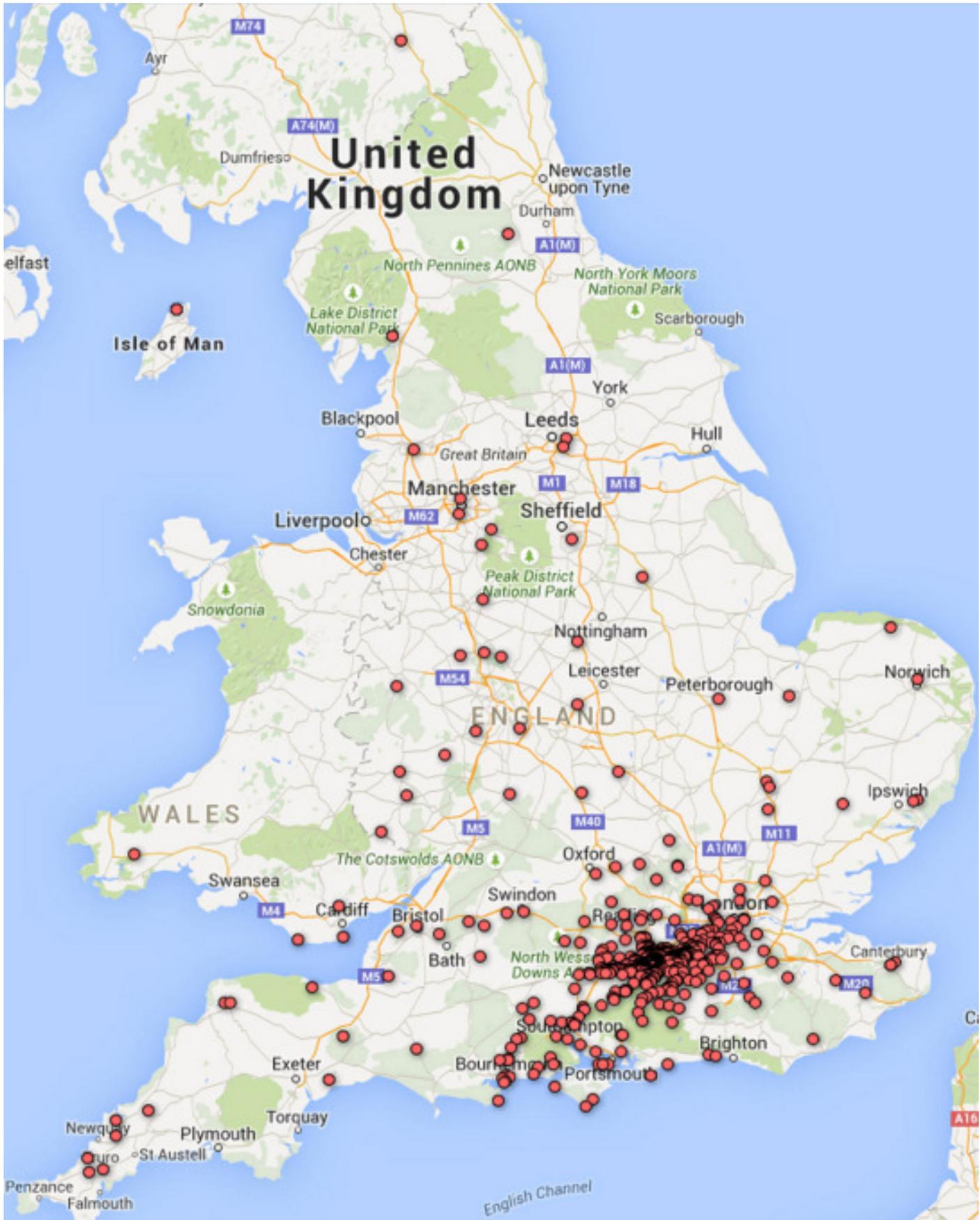
Incidentally, the aqueduct maintenance manual states that the structure should be drained every 4 years and the plastic lining replaced every 10 years!

Regards

Tony Harmsworth

I believe that replacement of the plastic lining is now scheduled to take place some time.

BCS Membership



In addition to our members in the UK, we also have 1 in Portugal, 2 in Germany, 1 in Ohio, USA and 1 in Vietnam. *Hello World!*

BCS information



The Bulletin is now up to Issue 25.

If you want to keep up with the latest news about the canal, please send your e-mail address to

membership@basingstoke-canal.org.uk

To join the Society, please contact the Membership Secretary, Mrs Doreen Hornsey, whose contact details are below.

The annual subscription is Adults £10, Junior £3, OAP £5, Family £12, 2 OAP £7, and Group £15, payable on March 1st each year.

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Dogmersfield towpath reopened

