



BASINGSTOKE CANAL BULLETIN

No. 8 August 2011

Volunteers continue with Lock 17 repairs

As previously reported, the Society volunteer work party returned to work on repairs to Lock 17 of the Deepcut flight last month. The lock walls are being repointed, with all soft and unstable bricks being replaced.



Here Dave Lunn is refilling a rather large hole created by the necessary removal of many original bricks loosened by water currents from the by-wash outlet opposite. Since the lock walls are many layers thick at the base and the damage was extensive, nearly 200 bricks were required for this repair alone. We hope to complete all that we can do to Lock 17 by late September.

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Progress with Term Contract agreement

The Society has been particularly disappointed with the delay that has occurred in the commencement of major structural repairs to the Canal, in particular to the Deepcut flight, now in its third year of closure. The reasons for the holdup were set out in the [last bulletin](#) and don't bear repeating, however, it was announced recently that Surrey County Council has, at last, signed the term contract (see right).

The latest we have on when work will actually start is still sometime in September, and will include the rebuilding all of the wing walls to locks 19, 20 and 25, and fixing the gates at lock 12.

A final approval for the work has to be given by Natural England, the agency that protects the Canal as a site of special scientific interest, and inevitably this too has been delayed.

Still, we are encouraged that Surrey councillors and officers are taking an interest in the Canal and have come along to see for themselves the state it is in.

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PUSHING THE BOAT OUT— pictured at the Maggie G at Bridge Barn, Cllr Linda Kemeny, Ian Brown, David Hodge, Michael Gammon, Rod Edbrooke, SCC countryside manager, and leader of Woking Borough Council Cllr John Kingsbury

Council plans canal 'renaissance'

SURREY County Council's deputy leader David Hodge is hoping urgent maintenance work on the Basingstoke Canal will lead to a renaissance of the waterway.

The Conservative member for Warlingham took a trip from Woodham to Mychett to see the state of the canal after Surrey County Council approved a two-year contract with Dyer and Butler to carry out engineering works.

Surrey County Councillor for St Johns and Brookwood Linda Kemeny and the director of the Basingstoke

Canal Authority Ian Brown joined the trip organised on the Maggie G boat by former councillor Michael Gammon.

The day began at Bridge Barn and the boat passed through St Johns Lock before heading to Woodham and returning to Bridge Barn.

Back on dry land, the party moved on to Brookwood to inspect the lock gates that will be refitted as part of the maintenance works.

It is hoped this part of the canal will become fully navigable once overgrown vegetation has been cleared and

it has been dredged. Cllr Hodge said: "I would love to see greater activity on our canal, which should be an attractive holiday and leisure venue as well as bringing jobs, homes and speciality businesses along its 32-mile length."

"I hope that our financial commitment over the next two years will be the start of a major renaissance of the canal."

The Basingstoke Canal is jointly owned by Surrey and Hampshire County Councils and Hampshire is supporting the contract.

(Reproduced from the Woking News and Mail with permission)

Future Navigation of the Canal

The impact of recent redundancies at the Basingstoke Canal Authority on navigation will start to become apparent, as Ian Brown, Canal Director, states in his recent Navigation report:



Now that the BCA team has been reduced and with one duty ranger on call and standby it will no longer be possible to meet and greet boats in the same way as we have done in the past. For some of you who are experienced boaters this may come as a blessing but it does pose a serious problem for us all.

Due to water level management requirements especially in the vicinity of the House Boats between locks 1 and 3, we have to caulk up the upper gates and ground paddle gear with damp woodchip to stem the flow and loss of water through them. The rangers normally do this by standing on the balance beam in the case of upper gates. The issue we now have is one of safe working and in relation to working at height. I would welcome your comments and views on this as we are desperately trying to find a solution to this. The Basingstoke Canal is one of few (if not the only one) that has this constant problem.

We now need to progress the previously discussed volunteer approach to managing the navigation. An open access policy with the Boating Clubs essentially managing the navigation and the BCA Team looking after the water level management side. In order for this to work we need your cooperation and commitment. Before we can do this the issues to be further discussed and resolved are:

- With a reduced ranger team and only one standby ranger on call, we will not be able to assist with the passage of boats at weekends or Bank Holidays at all.
- British Waterway padlocks can be used at the bottom and tops of all flights to allow access to visiting boats with a BW Key. Without caulking up the ground paddles and gates after passage, the risk of a flight quickly draining down is high and this would be a serious problem for the House Boats and be a total show stopper for the navigation.
- As we replace new gates an opportunity to improve their design and watertightness exists and the BCA working with our term contractor will pursue that approach. Also under investigation is the material and method of installation / fitting of ground paddles to see if improvements can be achieved in their use.
- Studies are underway to look at how best to manage back pumping and recycling of lost water on the Woodham, St John's Flights and Woking Pound.

Please check current navigation status with the Office 01252 370073 before any planned passage during the week. Please note that the BCA will not be able to manage the navigation and allow visiting boats at weekends or Bank Holidays from now on. This will mean that unless we can find satisfactory alternative arrangements to manage loss of water and maintain safe levels for the House Boats. The Woodham Lock Flight will remain closed outside normal working hours.

Ian Brown, Canal Director

*If boats cannot access the Canal at weekends or Bank Holidays, this will have a very serious impact upon the viability of the Canal and, in the opinion of at least one Society committee member, would effectively close it. Between the BCA and volunteer groups, a sustainable scheme **must** be found before next season to assist the passage of boats through the Woodham flight when they are likely to be used the most – Ed.*

Work on the Canal

Regular Volunteer Work Party

Work will continue on Lock 17 during August and September (see above). The next work parties will take place on **27th/28th August, 10th/11th September and 24th/25th September**. (For a map of the location, see [here](#) - access to the canal is through the tunnel). When Lock 17 has been completed, we will be doing a number of jobs around the Zebon Common swing bridge near Crookham, including new moorings, bank repairs and work on the bridge itself.

However, one job to be completed first will be the mounting of a commemorative stone at Lock 11 at St John's, which is to be called "Redway Lock", to reflect the significant contribution Peter Redway and his family, particularly Margurite and Kevin, have made to the Basingstoke. The stone will be formally unveiled in October.

If you are interested in helping on the Canal, trying your hand at laying bricks and don't mind getting a bit dirty, then please email Janet Buckley at workparty@basingstoke-canal.org.uk or call her on 01252 620787.

Replacement Winding Gear

The BCA have started a programme of winding gear replacement along the length of the Canal starting at Lock 1. Obviously with 29 locks, this will take some time to complete.

The reason for this activity is inevitably health and safety. As can be seen, the user will wind the paddles in a direction parallel to the canal, rather than at 90 degrees to it, so substantially reducing the risk of falling in if the windlass slips.

*Right:
New
winding
gear
recently
fitted at
Lock 1*



Other News

Society Committee Membership

We have been pleased to welcome another new member to the committee, John Wall. John has been a long-time member of the Society, and is a Hampshire County councillor (representing Farnborough South). As a result, there is now **1 vacancy** remaining. We are continuing to seek interested individuals who would be like to be considered for this position. **If you would like to become more involved with the Society and think you could contribute as a committee member and manage a few meetings a year, please email the Society's secretary Gareth Jones at secretary@basingstoke-canal.org.uk or phone him on 01252-690024.**

Lengthsmen Scheme reinstated but more help is needed

Following the appeal for members to offer themselves as lengthsmen in the [March Bulletin](#), a number of members came forward and have now commenced their activities relating to their chosen stretch of the canal. These activities are primarily to act as "the eyes and ears" of the canal by regularly walking or cycling along one or more lengths of roughly 1 mile, keeping an eye on the waterway itself and the adjacent canal land and its boundaries with adjoining land and reporting anything that might need attention. This might cover fallen trees, dumping of material, a water leak, towpath erosion or anti-social behaviour. Some may wish to get further involved by clearing litter and keeping back the vegetation on the towpath.

There are still some parts of the canal not covered by the existing or new lengthsmen. These are from the River Wey junction to Lock 6, from Monument Bridge to Lock 7, and from Pirbright Bridge to Lock 22. Further west, no-one is currently keeping an eye on the stretch from the A331 aqueduct to Claycart Bridge, and from Chequers Bridge to Double Bridge. If anyone would like to help fill a gap by becoming a lengthsmen in one of these areas, please contact the co-ordinator, Graham Hornsey, on 01252 623591 or by email at treasurer@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.
Graham Hornsey, Senior Lengthsman

We thank all those who have responded and have volunteered to become lengthsmen – Ed.

Water levels in the Hampshire pound

A report was received from the Basingstoke Canal Authority that there had been an unprecedented drop in water level in the Hampshire pound at the end of July within a short space of time, falling from 3½” (90mm) to 8” (210mm) below datum. This was apparently caused by a boater accidentally leaving the paddles open at Ash Lock, and as a result the BCA had to close the lock to allow the water level to recover. A week or so later the level had risen an inch or two, and passage through the lock was again permitted with time restrictions. The level has risen again at the time of writing, following the recent rain, however a further closure of Ash Lock may be necessary should it fall once more. The [John Pinkerton](#) trip boat operation was fortunately not seriously affected.



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New look Basingstoke Canal News

Watch out for the new-look [Basingstoke Canal News](#) (left), the [Autumn edition](#) of which will be [published shortly](#). After consultation with the readership and with printers, it was agreed that our printed newsletter would henceforth appear in a more “handy” A5 format, and also in colour.

If you would like to receive printed copies of the Basingstoke Canal News, which is published quarterly, then [click here to become a Society member](#). I am sure the BCN editor, Roger Cansdale, would like to hear any comments you have about the new format, at editor@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

Forthcoming events

Here are some dates for your diary:

- The 2011/12 season of the *Chobham Social Meetings* will recommence in October and run through to April. These take place The Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road, Chobham, at **8pm** on the **third Wednesday** of the month. Non members and friends are very welcome. Refreshments will be available at the interval. Please call David Millett on 01252 617364 for more information. For a map and for more details about the talks, please refer to the [BCN](#)
 - **19th October 2011** - Adrian Softley – “Boat and Barge Building at Honey Street”
 - **16th November 2011** - Roger Squires – “Waterways of South Holland”

Have your say..

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

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