



BASINGSTOKE CANAL BULLETIN

No. 9 September/October 2011

Peter Redway Memorial Work Party



There was a burst of activity on the Canal recently when around 90 visiting volunteers attended a “dig” in memory of former Society chairman Peter Redway - see page 2. Above, working at Lock 1 mooring

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Term Contractor starts work – at last....

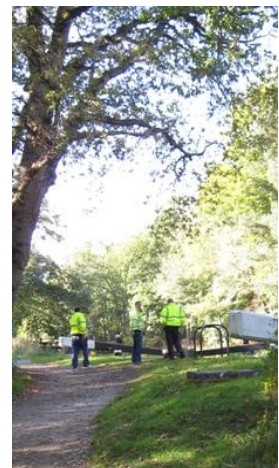
After a considerable delay, we are pleased to see that the term contractor appointed by Surrey and Hampshire County Councils, Dyer and Butler, has now started work on the Canal, at the start of what we hope will be a period of activity where some significant improvements will be made to the navigation. D&B had to start on some emergency repairs to a leaking bank in Woking. However, fixing the Deepcut flight has been the priority of course and they moved in there this week, at last (18th October). Top of the list will be major structural repairs to locks 19, 20 and 25 plus fitting of several sets of lock gates, including to Lock 12 at Brookwood.

It is hoped that sufficient will have been done at Deepcut such that the Canal is fully navigable by the end of May of next year, when the Society proposes to hold a festival at Frimley Park to celebrate the 21st birthday of the completion of restoration in 1991. However if unexpected problems or bad weather hold up proceedings, then we may have to rethink. The Society’s work party has been asked if it can contribute to the repairs to the Deepcut flight.

This may not be the end of it however. A further closure of Deepcut may be necessary later in 2012 to complete the repairs.



Above – Bank repair at Woking;
Left - plant delivered to Lock 17.
Right – Lock 20 being inspected by D&B



Visiting Work Party of the Waterway Recovery Group

We were pleased to welcome a large work party from the Waterway Recovery Group (WRG), who chose to visit the Basingstoke Canal for their annual reunion and in memory of our late chairman Peter Redway. Around 90 WRG volunteers turned up for the weekend (along with 18 or so from the Society), and worked on 10 jobs at 8 sites spread over 30 miles of the canal. As you can imagine, it was a logistical nightmare ensuring that the right people, plant, tools (and keys!) were in the right place at the right time - as was finding accommodation for the whole team. A few glitches had to be sorted, for example, finding a mislaid brush cutter (*seen in use on Ash Embankment, right*). However we think Pete would have been pleased with what was achieved, which included brickwork repairs, tree felling, scrub and overhanging tree clearance, towpath enhancement, fence construction, bollard installation, work on a lock landing, and bank washout (“dog-hole”) repairs.



I would particularly like to thank the Dave “Moose” Hearnden and Maria from WRG, and Verna Smith,

Kevin Redway, Nigel Searle, David Junkisen and Duncan Paine from the Society for all their work behind the scenes preparing for this event. For a [full report of the WRG reunion weekend in pictures](#) please see [click here](#), and for [local newspaper coverage of the event](#), please [click here](#).

Martin Leech

Society Regular Volunteer Work Party

The Society work party has continued repointing Lock 17 during September and this will be completed at our final session there on **22nd/23rd October**. (For a map of the location, see [here](#) - access to the canal is through the tunnel). The next work parties will take place on **12th/13th and 26th/27th November**, however at this stage it has not been agreed what will be done next. There are a number of jobs that were not completed during the Peter Redway memorial “dig” (see above), and we need to decide which work is the most urgent to follow up. Not least of these is to mount the “Redway Lock” commemorative stone at Lock 11 at St John’s, which will be formally unveiled at the earliest opportunity. However the following jobs will require our attention sometime: finishing the Lock 1 landing, repairs to brickwork at Crookham Wharf and (the highest priority for the BCA) laying roadstone along the around 500m or so of towpath near Norris Bridge near Farnborough – that is in addition to the proposed improvements around the Zebon Copse bridge that was previously planned.

If you are interested in helping on the Canal, trying your hand at laying bricks etc and don’t mind getting a bit dirty – and to find out what we have decided our work programme will be for the next few months, please email Janet Buckley at workparty@basingstoke-canal.org.uk or call her on 01252 620787.

“Situations Vacant”

It has become clear that there are many jobs in support of the Canal that need to be done, but which the Society committee has neither the time nor expertise to do. It has therefore been agreed that we will try to recruit some [professional volunteers](#) from the wider public who would be willing to donate their time and skills and take on these tasks. We are currently looking to identify individuals who may be interested in the following:

- A [Planning Specialist](#), who will monitor building and other developments adjacent to the waterway and promote the Society’s ideas for the improvements to the Canal with the relevant authorities; and
- A [Project Manager](#), with probably a civil or water engineering background to take forward a proposed water back-pumping (recycling) scheme at Brookwood.

If either of these [roles](#) might appeal to you, please get in contact with the Society chairman, Philip Riley, at chairman@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

Proposed Bridge near the WWF new headquarters site at Brewery Road, Woking



The proposed bridge, called the Bedser Bridge, which is to replace that currently crossing the Canal at Brewery Road (near the Light Box) has met with some criticism from the general public. Not only has the cost and design of the [bridge and its long sweeping cycle ramp](#) met with disapproval, the extra height required to allow level access to the WWF building will, some say, cause problems for prams and wheelchairs. As a result, Woking BC have extended the period in which to comment to 5pm on **Friday 28th October**. Both the Society and the Guildford and Reading branch of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) have objected on the grounds that the bridge will be too high and the design is not

in keeping with the general canal environment. To register your opinions about the bridge proposal, you can [sign a petition seeking for the bridge to be lowered](#) (but hurry as the closing date for this is **Friday 21st October**), and you can [respond to the council proposals directly](#).

Wanted: Documents and Photographs for the Canal Archive

Our newly appointed archivist, David Tonkinson (see the [Autumn edition](#) of the [Basingstoke Canal News](#)), has been making good progress with sorting and indexing our considerable archive of material (stored at the Canal Centre, in many filing cabinets and cupboards), which chronicles the history of the Canal over many years.

We are aware that there could be enthusiasts out there in possession of stashes of documents, photographs etc relating to the Canal, and so we would like to find out who has these collections and what they contain, so David can add the details to the archive index. Maybe these collections could be donated to the Society archive. So, if you are in possession of any materials that you think might be of general interest, can we persuade you to provide David with the details? He can be contacted at archivist@basingstoke-canal.org.uk.

Open Access to the Canal

The Canal Directors last navigation report (see [last bulletin](#)) stating that access to the Canal via Lock 1 could be limited over weekends and bank holidays in future because of a reduction in his ranger staff set off some alarm bells. It has been common practice for rangers to escort boats entering and leaving the Canal in order to caulk up (with sawdust) the lock gates and paddles, to ensure water levels are preserved for the house boats situated along the Woodham flight. With reduced staff on call during these periods, it will not be possible for two rangers (required for safety reasons) to be present to do the caulking up.

It has long been recognised that tying up ranger resource in this way is not an effective use of their time (and now is more critical), and the whole process of having to book passages into and out of the Canal during limited periods is perceived as “boater unfriendly”. As a consequence, a working party involving the BCA, the Society, the IWA, the Basingstoke Canal Boat Club, and the house boat owners will be looking at ways of making the Canal more accessible to visitors and managing water levels appropriately, while reducing the dependence on the duty rangers. We will report in the Bulletin and [Basingstoke Canal News](#) when progress has been made.

Name and logo for New Waterways Charity Announced

Many will have seen that the name and logo that British Waterways will adopt when it transfers to the third sector has been [announced](#). It doesn't look as if these have gone down well in some quarters. Why was it not called the British Waterways Trust, or Canals and Rivers Trust, some have asked. The new logo, amalgamating the arch of the back of a swan with that of a bridge, is said to imply “a haven for people and nature” (though some bright spark remarked that this might have been inspired more by a box of matches). However, to some it suggests too much of an emphasis on wildlife to the exclusion of navigation (or as one of our committee members stated: “Pity it doesn't show a boat”), and others would have preferred to keep the old, and equally cleverly designed, BW logo. A [progress report](#) by the transition trustees of CRT is now available ([“First Decisions, Early Thoughts and Statements of Intent”](#)).



Society Committee Membership

We still have **1 vacancy remaining** on the committee of the Canal Society. 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.**

Report from the Basingstoke Canal Authority



Pete Bickford, John Curtis, Paul Hope and Peter Munt have all now left the BCA having taken voluntary redundancy, and I am sure you will all join the remaining ranger team in wishing them all the best in their future endeavours. Those of us left are of course noticing their absence.

A large limb came down in the St John's flight partially blocking the canal as well as total blockage below lock 4 by an oak tree, then two weeks later by a limb! Another oak fell across the canal below Lock 1, and the top of an oak snapped out and landed in the middle of the canal in Crookham. At Aldershot, an impressive 3 stemmed oak split like a peeled banana sending one tree right across the canal, which although appearing to block the navigation completely was squeezed passed by a hire boat at speed, despite reservations from rangers. All trees were cleared by the ranger team within 2 days of notification, most within 1.



Broken limb at St Johns

Thanks to a volunteer event with Aspire* earlier this year, the car-park and slipway at Farnborough road was improved, two seats and a picnic bench installed as well as the reinstatement of the barrier. Unfortunately some users of the slipway on finding it padlocked smash their way in and we have made repairs to this barrier on three occasions already. The padlock uses a BWB key available for £5 from the canal centre or online suppliers....please spread the word! Also a new interpretation board has been installed, paid for by Aspire.

Andy Loader has forged ahead with the installation of the new winding gear on the Woodham and St. Johns flights. In Surrey, Chris Healy has completed the last towpath cut of the season, now looking well maintained. However the growth of Floating Pennywort (*hydrocotyle*) must be removed to keep the navigation clear.

The Hampshire section cut has been in part completed by rangers from Yateley Common in return for excavator works carried out on their sites by Andy Foster and James Emmett, including the creation of a new pond in Zebon Copse. We will be tackling overhanging branches on the off-side of the navigation in the Surrey section and between Tundry Pond and Ash Lock in Hampshire. This operation takes three rangers, which with the reduction in staff numbers may prove challenging, particularly as two rangers are currently needed at any given time to escort boats through locks. The ranger team are all keen to see the plan to allow open access boating led by volunteers come to fruition and would encourage anyone reading this to get involved.

Our work experience student from Merrist Wood College, Dan Roper, has joined the team one day a week and has been helping with mowing, strimming, clearing trees, as well as offside trimming in Woking.

At the time of writing (second week in October) the water levels are low across the whole canal. The Hampshire pound is currently 160mm below weir level. Rangers are regularly checking the North Warnborough, Norris and Farnborough Road sluices to ensure they are not leaking and of course Ash Lock is being opened at 09:00 and locked at 17:00. The Woking pound is lower than any of us have seen before and we are trying to balance the levels for the Woodham houseboats as best we can. The St. Johns flight is also low and we are monitoring daily in the hope that we will not have to carry out a fish rescue. *James Emmett, BCA Ranger*
**Aspire is a defence contractor supporting soldiers based at Aldershot - Ed*

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](#)
 - **16th November 2011** - Roger Squires – “Waterways of South Holland”
 - **21st December 2011** - Richard Thomas – “The Gunpowder Plot”
 - **18th January 2012** - Chris Witts – “My Life on the River Severn”

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. Apologies for no September edition, but it has been a busy time, and I did want to report news of progress at Deepcut.

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