

The Buckingham Navigator

The newsletter of the Buckingham Canal Society
Registered Charity No: 1072924

EDITORIAL

I was walking through a department store today, with the sun shining outside (for once) when I turned round to see tinsel and fairy lights for sale! I can't believe it's that time already, where did the summer go? Well at least it's not just me that's confused, the weather seems to be unsure as well, with this week seeing us reaching for the woolly jumpers one day, then sweltering in our winter wardrobe when the sun came out the day after! Autumn may be upon us, but the bright, crisp mornings are ideal for walking, so why not come for a walk along the canal footpath to see the progress that the BCS volunteers have made?

Best wishes, GEORGINA SORRELL, EDITOR

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THE NAVIGATOR WINTER ISSUE

Please send in all contributions for the Winter issue by **Thursday 6th December 2007**, emailed, on CD, typewritten or handwritten (in that order of preference) to:

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(email address: georgina@sorrell.me.uk).

Disclaimer - The Committee of the Buckingham Canal society publishes the Buckingham Navigator and the views expressed in it are not necessarily those of the Society. Nothing printed herein may be construed as Society policy unless specifically stated. The society and its Committee accept no responsibility for any matter advertised in, or included in this newsletter.

CSV#
MAKE
A DIFFERENCE
DAY

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CSV Make a Difference Day on Saturday 26th October 2007 is the UK's biggest day of 'hands-on' volunteering, the only campaign that asks people to give time, not money.

Make a Difference Day is your opportunity to make friends, try out new things and share skills whilst helping the BCS with our restoration projects.

What's stopping you getting involved?

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GETTING IN TOUCH

There is a list of BCS Committee Members and others who are active in the Society on the back page. Please contact any member for details of the BCS activities, future events, sponsorship opportunities, membership details or any other matters.

ADVERTISING IN THE BUCKINGHAM NAVIGATOR

Advertisements are welcome in the Navigator to assist funding. Rates are as below. Payment is required before copy date. Cheques made payable to "Buckingham Canal Society". 33% reduction for 3 issues.

Whole Page:	£16.00	Quarter page:	£6.00
Half Page:	£10.00	Back page:	£22.00
Inserts:	£7.50		

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

The BCS annual festival was held over the weekend of 21st-22nd July at Cosgrove and unfortunately we picked the weekend the newspapers described as the 'monsoon weekend'! Despite the weather we still managed to hold a small event Saturday night with a barbecue and raffle and a big thanks goes to Peter Caswell who managed to rig up some music for us that evening. I would also like to thank everyone who turned up to help in spite of the weather and although funds were down on last year we still managed to raise £440. See Helen Preston's article below for a full account of the weekend!

In other news, considerable interest has been shown from some quarters into the possibility of a marina at Cosgrove which could also include the restoration of all or part of the canal up to the A5. This would be excellent news for the BCS as there is also the possibility of us getting a grant to restore Hyde Lane Lock. If both of these things were to happen this would really put us on the map!

I hope everybody was able to read the excellent four-page article in Canal Boat magazine, which told the story of the Buckingham Canal and mentioned the restoration work being done by us. If you missed it look for a July copy of Canal Boat. All this extra publicity should help to promote our cause and improve the case for full restoration of the Buckingham Arm.

Our bric-a-brac stall has been out and about at several local canal festivals and trade has been good so we now need more sales items. Please turn out your attics and cellars for suitable items to help us raise more funds. So far this year has been a good one for the society and there are plans afoot to erect two more interpretation boards along the canal route. Georgina Sorrell our Navigator editor also needs items for the next Navigator. So if you have a canal-related story to tell please send her the details.

ATHINA BECKETT
CHAIRMAN



A RARE MOMENT OF BLUE(ISH) SKIES – BCS MEMBERS ASK A PASSING BOAT FOR A RANSOM!

Floods don't foil the Festival

The Cosgrove Festival date at the end of July was carefully chosen to catch the holiday boaters in generous mood as they enjoyed the summer weather. We actually caught those intrepid boaters who were defying the floods and were so surprised to see that the Festival had gone ahead that they were just as generous!

Through the monsoon rains on Friday a stalwart group of volunteers battled to get protective tents erected. The rains eased somewhat later in the day but it was decided not to set out the Bric-a-Brac stall until Saturday morning (after our drenching experienced at Wendover!) There was little sleep aboard the Bonny Lassie, the chairman's boat, which was moored in the winding hole overnight, as the rising waters gushed through the overflow sluice and battered her. The nearby caravan site flooded and some holiday-makers had to be rescued by the fire service.

In the morning the flow down the canal caused by run-off from the River Tove made it almost impossible to open the lock gates and British Waterways closed the Stoke Bruerne locks, thus reducing the number of boats coming south. However the weather was showing modest improvement and a good number of members arrived to help work the lock and extract a "ransom" from those boaters that were braving the elements.

Raymond, the restored working-boat, was moored nearby and visitors were invited

aboard to inspect her. Business at the stall was slow but steady and spirits remained high. There was initially little demand for evening outdoor socialising and the live musicians cancelled due to the weather but it actually remained dry for the evening and a hardy group of members enjoyed a friendly barbecue and a toe-tapping range of music courtesy of Peter Caswell.

On Sunday BW reopened Stoke Bruerne and business picked up, making the efforts of the weekend well worth it.

HELEN PRESTON

EVENTS

CSV# MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY

Saturday 27 October

The Buckingham Canal is taking part in 'Make a Difference Day' on Saturday 27th October. This is a nation wide volunteering day to encourage people to get involved and have a go at volunteering.

This year we will be working at the Beds, Bucks, Oxon Nature Reserve which is situated off the A422 road to Buckingham. Look for the balloons on gatepost or ring Athina for directions. We meet at 10.00am and should finish at 3pm. All volunteers will receive a certificate for taking part.

So come at make a difference on the '27th'!

For further details and directions contact Athina Beckett on 01908 661217

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES

Just a quick note to give you all advance notice that the Buckingham Canal Society Annual General Meeting is scheduled to take place on Saturday 26 January 2008. More details to come in the Winter issue.

IWA MILTON KEYNES

Monthly social meetings are held on the 4th Monday of each month at Milton Keynes

Village Pavilion Community Sports Club. The current schedule of meetings is:

Monday 22 October

'The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canals'
- Ray Haydon, M&B Canals Trust

Monday 26 November

'Building Wooden Boats'
- Jeremy Bates, Master Craftsman, Bates Boatyard.

Monday 10 December

Branch Christmas Social
- Pre-booked event, contact Rodney Evans

Check their website

<http://mkiwa.users.btopenworld.com> for updates or Rodney Evans, Social Secretary on 01908 376449 or Rodwen@scythia.fsnet.co.uk

IWA NORTHAMPTON

Branch Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 8pm. Members and non-members welcome. During the winter, branch meetings are held at the Walnut Tree, Blisworth, 21 Station Road, Blisworth, NN7 3DS.

For more information, check their website: <http://northampton.waterways.org.uk/diary.htm> for updates or contact Graham Treagus on 01604 870515.



TEAMWORK – MEMBERS WORKING HARD TOGETHER TO OPERATE THE LOCKS

A MEDWAY ADVENTURE

The plan...

Like most narrow boat owners we spend a few weeks each summer on our crowded

canals with the occasional excursion onto the rivers. One of our favourite runs is the three hours or so from Teddington to Limehouse in central London on the tidal river Thames. So a note in the NABO [National Association of Boat Owners] magazine last autumn that they were organising a trip to the Medway was immediately appealing. A little further down the tidal river and a right turn into the Medway, the garden of England, hop fields and oust houses.

The reality...

The reality of the trip began in the spring when we got some more details. We already have VHF radio and normal river safety equipment like an anchor and life jackets but more purchases were made, insurance was confirmed and our boat registered with the Coastguards. Also at this point I had a look at the charts and literature to see what was involved in more detail, the passage for small craft has been well written up which was a great help.

The first thing I discovered was that it is a lot further than I thought, 50 to 60 miles! The trip should take about 10 hours to the tidal lock near Maidstone. The theory is that you leave London at about high tide and have the tide with you all the way down the Thames to the entrance to the Medway at Sheerness. Arriving here at low tide one has the rising tide to help you up the Medway to the tidal lock at Maidstone. In order to achieve this, low water needs to be somewhere around the middle of the day giving 'windows' of opportunity about every two weeks. An additional requirement for narrow boats is that the wind is below 10 miles per hour as they do not take too kindly to any significant waves. Now we had detailed arrangements, dates and windows of opportunity. The theory was to go down to the Medway in early June spend two weeks exploring the non tidal river and return two weeks later.

The adventure...

For us the adventure really started in Oxford where we were held up for nearly a week because of the state of the river. We then did some pretty long days to reach

Limehouse on schedule to find the first two days of our window were not available due to the wind. So the five boats on the trip hung around Bow Lock waiting for the right conditions, with us finally getting away on a Saturday, the last day my son Adrian was available to help us! Faced with a ten-hour trip with only two crew, we played safe by getting a third person. We had an uneventful ride down the Thames although we lost a bit of time. Below Tilbury we had to ride the bow waves of bigger ships and luckily only one boat shipped a little water over the front! We dropped Adrian off at Rochester and for the last 2½ hours of the 12½ trip there was just Margaret and myself so the tidal lock at Allington was a very welcomed sight.

We stayed at Allington for 3 nights before following the other boats up the river. The next night we spent in Maidstone which has a nice water front and is only about ½ an hour up river. After Allington there are 10 unmanned locks on the river and about 19 miles of navigation. The locks are double gated and 18 feet or so wide which is great because you can use one gate without scraping the sides of the boat. The gates are big, yet open reasonably well but the worm paddle gear is heavy to say the least. We stopped another couple of nights on the way up to the head of the navigation at Tonbridge, teaming up with one of the other boats for the return to the Maidstone Allington area.

The Medway River was a bit of a disappointment for various reasons, including the limited length and fairly heavy locks. There are one or two narrow boats on the navigation but mainly river and some deep sea boats. Typically on a weekday we would see only two or three moving boats but there were dozens moored up many of which turned out at the weekends. Mooring was as big a problem at weekends if not worse than on most rivers. Most disappointing was that the navigation is tree lined for about 12 miles and only then can the rolling Kent lands be seen for the last few miles towards Tonbridge. There were a few converted oust houses but as for hops we understand these are now nearly all imported, and I saw a few traditional market

gardens when walking for a paper one morning.

For various reasons the planned window to return was not suitable mainly because of the winds. We moored up at Allington for a few days, a good mooring with very helpful lockkeepers and a popular pub nearby. The village is about a mile's walk but Maidstone was only half an hour by boat, there was also a trip boat doing the run.

On the Thursday two of Margaret's sisters from America joined us and we headed back up the river. We went about half way up the navigation in a couple of stages through 3 locks, where there was another nice mooring. We then returned to Allington for the next return window to get back up to London. Again we waited several days for the wind to drop and finally got away on a Sunday morning just a month and a day after arriving.

The lower Medway in the early morning was a real joy. We had a good trip back although the clouds were threatening and the winds increasing as we approached London in the late afternoon. This time we navigated round the Isle of Dogs and locked into Limehouse in just short of 13 hours. Unfortunately we were unable to explore as we had a 6.00 am lock the next day to get back to Teddington and so ended our adventure to the Medway.

The conclusion...

A tidal trip comes with responsibilities but there was a reward in terms of a new navigation. We would perhaps not have bothered if it was a destination already accessible from the system but looking back, a great experience with many happy memories in spite of the frustrations which were not helped by the weather. We would not have missed this opportunity but it will be a year or two before we do it again!

RICHARD WADDY

WORK PARTY ORGANISER'S REPORT

On the 2nd August the Thursday work party volunteers returned to the site at Little Hill Farm and found that they now had a 'canal in water'! This came as a surprise as two

weeks earlier the bed had been completely dry and there had a bonfire in the middle of the canal bed! We think it was because of the extra rainfall two weeks earlier and it filled the part of the canal bed where it had been cleared by our volunteers. We now hope that the canal will remain in water until winter and into the spring. The repairs to the bridge at Little Hill Farm are also going well. The 'bricklayers' are now working on their third side of the bridge. We then have only to complete the refurbishing of two wing walls and then it is just the re-pointing work to complete the restoration of the bridge.

In October at the Nature Reserve the lock chamber needs to be completely cleared as we are hoping to start the restoration work on the lock by next year. We shall be staying at the Nature Reserve until the middle of March. If time allows we will also be clearing some of the rushes from the canal bed to make a through channel to the part of the canal bed which is still in water.

There have been a lot of encouraging comments from the public who walk along the footpath by the canal and they have been impressed by how much the site has improved since our volunteers have been working there. We always welcome new volunteers and visitors to the site so please contact me as this can also be arranged.

ATHINA BECKETT
WORK PARTY ORGANISER

WORK PARTY DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

November 2007 - January 2008

*Please note: For more information contact
Athina Beckett on 01908 661217*

<i>November</i>	<i>December</i>	<i>January</i>
Thursday 8 th	Thursday 6 th	Thursday 3 rd
Sunday 11 th	Sunday 9 th	Sunday 13 th
Thursday 22 nd	Thursday 20 th	Thursday 17 th
		Thursday 31 st

SOCIETY NOTICES

It Pays to Advertise in the Navigator

The BCS purchased two Allan Scythes (1950's grass cutting machines) about four

years ago hoping to use them on our work parties but unfortunately they proved to be too big and balky for our use. Two years ago Tony Collins advertised them for sale in the Navigator and on Ebay. He received a few replies but nothing came of it.

Two years later he received an e-mail from a gentleman who lives in Stoke-On-Trent who had 'googled' Allan Scythe into his computer and came up with Tony's two year old advert in the Navigator. This gentleman is the proud owner of two Allan Scythes!

Bric-a-Brac Needed!



RAISING FUNDS FOR THE SOCIETY - THE BRIC-A-BRAC STALL AT THE CANAL LOCK RANSOM

The BCS sales stall is now in need of good quality bric-a-brac as our sales have gone well recently. Contact Athina for collection. We also need small items that can be used in a boys and girls lucky dip as prizes.



The canal 'in water'!

The photos above and below were taken by Jeff Peters, one of our Thursday volunteers at Little Hill Farm on Thursday 2nd August.

So while the 'monsoon' was bad news for people living in Oxford and Gloucester it was good news for the BCS as the section in the photos was completely dry before the 'flood'.



Patron Tim Boswell MP

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