

# The Buckingham Navigator

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

## EDITORIAL

Firstly, I would like to apologise to all members for the lateness of this issue of the Navigator. Having taken over from Tony Collins in March/April I was fully intending to get the Spring issue published by mid-April. Unfortunately, April brought a car accident for myself, and an emergency back operation for my husband, both of which incidents have delayed all Navigator-related activity. However, I have now happily returned to my computer to prepare this issue, whilst my husband is recovering slowly, hoping that it won't be too long before he can return to the Sunday work parties for the BCS!

To briefly introduce myself, I have come to the Society through my full time job as a Volunteering Adviser, where I act as a brokerage service between the general public and organisations such as the BCS. I felt that I should 'practice what I preach' so decided to get involved with the BCS as I have edited newsletters in the past and was looking forward to a new challenge. Growing up near Brighton on the South Coast, I am more familiar with the sea than canals but I am keen to learn all about them from the wealth of knowledge held by the Committee, and through taking a holiday on a narrow boat later this year. This is where you, the members, come in. I am looking to add new features to the Navigator and invite you to let me know what you want to be reading about. Whether you have an idea for a new feature, a story you want to tell, or information or pictures you want to share with other members, please give me a call or send me an email (contact details can be found below).

I hope you enjoy this issue, and look forward to meeting some of you at the various events being held this summer. Best wishes,

GEORGINA SORRELL, EDITOR

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### THE NAVIGATOR SUMMER ISSUE

Please send in all contributions for the Summer issue by **14<sup>th</sup> June 2006**, emailed, on CD, 3.5 floppy disc, typewritten or handwritten (in that order of preference) to Georgina Sorrell Magnolia Cottage, 26 Forest Road, Hartwell, Northants NN7 2HE (email address: [georgina@sorrell.me.uk](mailto:georgina@sorrell.me.uk)).

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

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## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

I would first like to introduce myself because as from the BCS AGM in January I have taken over from Tony Collins as chairman of the Buckingham Canal Society. Most people will know me as the *Work Party Organiser*, a role I plan to keep as I enjoy the practical side of canal work.

First of all I would like to thank all our volunteers who make such a valuable contribution to the BCS both on the practical side and through committee work. I would like to welcome three new members onto the committee. I would also like to thank Milton Keynes and Northampton IWA for their kind donations to the society. Also Buckingham Council who gave us a donation towards the cost of reprinting our leaflets and the Buckingham Foundation who have given us a grant towards the purchase of a trimmer. There was an excellent photograph and article about the last item in the Buckingham Advertiser which I hope some of you may have seen.

We would also like to thank the 'Awards for All', lottery fund who have given us a grant for the purchase of a chainsaw and safety equipment and are funding one of our volunteers attending a chainsaw course. More about this item in the work part organiser's report. Our ex-chairman Tony Collins has also been busy and has managed to get us a grant from Milton Keynes Heritage Association for the re-design and printing of our BCS leaflets and these should be available shortly and the new display boards will be very useful for the various festivals we attend throughout the summer. Again, our thanks goes to Milton Keynes Heritage Association.

We have also just formed a new strategy group. This groups will decide some of the priorities for the BCS in the coming year and at the first meeting of the group there were three very strong contenders:

- To fund the restoration of Bridge No 1 at Cosgrove. The restoration of this bridge would open up half a mile of canal and be a wonderful heritage feature.

- A full engineering survey from Bridge No. 1 at Cosgrove up to the A5. This would be the first step in restoring this section of the canal.
- To fund a feasibility study of the whole canal. A full engineering study would cost in the region of £80,000 but most canal societies start with a smaller first survey which would cost in the region of £20,000.

On the advice of South Northampton Council, we have decided to opt for raising funds for a feasibility study as our priority for the coming months. The society has already raised half the amount required to commission the survey and the 'Awards for All' lottery fund have indicated that they might look favourably on a grant application towards the rest of the cost.

In this edition of the Navigator are details of the annual festival at Cosgrove which we hope you will support, along with your family and friends.

I would like to welcome Georgina Sorrell who has just taken over as editor of the Navigator. She would love to have your articles and ideas for the next edition of the Navigator.

We also have a new person taking over our Archive after the very sad death of Sylvia Mead. Her name is Denise Corbett and we welcome her to the Buckingham Canal Society.

**ATHINA BECKETT**

## EVENTS

### **Cosgrove Lock Ransom Weekend 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> July 2006**

You might think that it is a little early to mention but once again we will be holding our annual festival at Cosgrove Lock in July and as the next edition of the Navigator will not be published until the beginning of July I thought you might like an early warning and put the dates in your diary.

This year the festival will be **free** to boaters and hopefully encourage more to attend. The main part of the festival will be on Saturday and Sunday but I am hoping that some of you will be free and could be there on Friday afternoon as we have to erect tents and may have to trim the grass around the site and at the lock. For those attending on Friday we will be going for a meal in the evening at the Barley Mow pub and make it a social event for helpers.

On Saturday and Sunday there will be boat trips run by Cosgrove Narrowboats who will also be operating the bar on Friday and Saturday evenings. The boat trips will operate at 2, 3, and 4pm on both days. There will also be a bric-a-brac stall available on both days with plenty to sell.

Saturday evening is a 'bring your own food' barbecue but food can be ordered and delivered to site from Deanshanger Pizza and Kebab house. There will also be music on Saturday night plus a social evening.

We want to encourage all boaters and non-boaters to attend and bring family and friends as this is our main fundraising event of the year. The lock ransom part takes place between 10am and 6pm so again volunteers are needed to man the lock and collect the funds but above all this is a social event to be enjoyed by one and all. For more information contact Athina on 01908 661217 or email [athinabec@aol.com](mailto:athinabec@aol.com)

## OTHER EVENTS

### **IWA MILTON KEYNES**

All meetings are held at Bletchley Rugby Club, Manor Fields, Bletchley at 7.45pm.

Events from April 2006 onwards have yet to be posted. Check their website <http://mkiwa.users.btopenworld.com> for updates or contact Roy Cleverly on 01908 367928.

### **IWA NORTHAMPTON**

During the summer, informal branch get-togethers are held at The Wharf Inn, Cornhill Lane, Bugbrooke.

Events from May 2006 onwards have yet to be posted. Check their website [http://www.waterways.org.uk/branch\\_new/northampton/web](http://www.waterways.org.uk/branch_new/northampton/web) for updates or contact Graham Treagus on 01604 870515.

## **Cosgrove Narrowboat Company**

*Quality Boats, Quality Service And A Crew  
That Take A Pride In Ensuring Your Trip Is  
Full Of Happy Memories.*



### **Boat trips on the historic Grand Union Canal:**

*Private charter, corporate events, educational &  
youth groups, public trips and day boat hire*

*In our traditional narrowboats 'Elizabeth of  
Glamis' & 'Skylark'*

For more information please visit:

[www.cosgrovenarrowboats.co.uk](http://www.cosgrovenarrowboats.co.uk)

or telephone:

01525 372853 or 07973 915652

Cosgrove Wharf, Lock Lane, Cosgrove,  
Milton Keynes. MK19 7JR

## WORK PARTY ORGANISER'S REPORT

Our work parties are going well with more volunteers coming to help us. We have now stopped work at our new site at the BBOWT Nature Reserve because of the bird nesting season but BBOWT are very pleased with our efforts and have asked us to manage this site for them. Whilst out walking the other day at the nature reserve I met a lady and she said how much better the nature reserve was looking so our efforts are being appreciated!

We have now moved back to our site at Little Hill Farm and have been helped again by HBOS volunteers as part of their employer volunteering scheme. They are doing a once a month visit on the last Thursday of each month from March to September. We are now starting to clear the tree stumps from the site and doing some repair work to the bridge. We have also spent three work parties down at Home Farm (our 4<sup>th</sup> site), clearing the re-growth from the canal bed. This is the site we hope to have in water by September when we can return to the nature reserve.

Now for the really good news the BCS have received two grants for equipment. The first is from the Buckingham Foundation where we received a £500 grant towards the cost of the purchase of a trimmer, which is effectively a strimmer on wheels. As we now have four sites to maintain and some of our work party volunteers find using a strimmer a little tiring, I thought a trimmer would be easier to use.

There was a lovely article about us the Buckingham Advertiser plus a photograph showing the presentation of the cheque, It was a very cold, damp day with snow forecast so I was very concerned about volunteers turning up for the work party and the presentation, but eight brave souls made it to the site and into the newspaper!

The second grant was from the 'Awards for All' letter fund and was for the purchase of a chainsaw plus all the safety equipment needed and to cover the cost of a four day training course for one of our volunteers to attend and gain the necessary qualifications.

The chainsaw will only be used on fallen trees or where it would be very difficult to clear areas using handsaws.

Once again I would welcome anybody who hasn't tried it to come along on one of our work party days and see what we are doing. You don't have to be amazingly fit just enjoy working outside with a friendly group of people. For more information about the work parties ring me on 01908 661217 or email me on [athinabec@aol.com](mailto:athinabec@aol.com)

**ATHINA BECKETT**  
**WORK PARTY ORGANISER**

## WORK PARTY DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### May-July 2006

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

<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>
Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup>
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup>
Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Thursday 20 <sup>th</sup>

## CREW WANTED

Milton Keynes IWA have been asked to move Jubilee a 60ft narrowboat from Marsworth near Tring to Cosgrove between the 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> August. I have suggestion that Buckingham Canal Society volunteers might like a day out on the canal rather than just restoring it. Jubilee can take up to 12 people so if anyone is interested in helping to crew the boat (you don't have to be experienced) could they contact me on 01908 661217 or email me at [Athinabec@aol.com](mailto:Athinabec@aol.com)

## **SOCIETY NOTICES**

### **Farewell Jottings**

Those of you who were at the AGM will know that Diana and I had planned to stand down from the Committee after January 2006 but we would both like to thank all who have given us help and guidance over the past five years, both with canal restoration and cruising tips.

Other pressures made us decide on this move but we are not leaving Milton Keynes and will remain members of the society, but not on the committee.

### **TONY & DIANA COLLINS**

#### **Raffle Tickets**

Diana Collins reports that the MKCF raffle has helped raise a further £110 for funds so a big thank you to all who bought or sold tickets. The car was won by Lynn Tompkins from Dunstable (the ticket was not sold by us). No doubt Athina will be after you for help again nearer the time for this year's raffle when it takes place!

#### **Annual General Meeting**

The 13<sup>th</sup> annual general meeting of the Buckingham Canal Society was held on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> January at the Community Centre, Buckingham. The meeting was well attended by approximately 40 members. There was a cheese and wine party afterwards, which was followed by an interesting talk by Mr Neil Loudon of Milton Keynes Heritage Association on Hayes Boats that were built in Stony Stratford until 1922.

#### **Calling all volunteers!**

The society are looking for people to join existing volunteers in the following roles:

- Manning the publicity stand
- Providing administrative assistance
- Helping out at the work parties

Additionally, due to an increasing workload, and pressure of other personal and business interests, the Society's Committee is looking for a volunteer to act as Publicity Co-ordinator.

The society is also short of storage space, ideally in the Milton Keynes area.

If you think you may be able to help with any of the above (or have other talents you could offer) please see one of the committee members or contact the secretary.

#### **Old Liquid Measure**

For those of you who are involved in rewatering old canals the following may be of interest:

- 1 Tun = 2 Pipes = 3 Puncheons
- 1 Pipe or Butt = 2 Hogsheads = 4 Barrels = 126 gallons
- 1 Puncheon = 2 Tierces = 84 Gallons
- 2 Hogshead = 2 Barrels = 63 Gallons
- 1 Tierce = 42 Gallons
- 1 Barrel = 31.5 Gallons

With acknowledgement to *The Machinery Handbook*

#### **Advertisement - NarrowBoat Magazine**

NarrowBoat is the new quarterly magazine devoted to exploring the history and heritage of Britain's waterways. Published by *Waterways World*, the magazine will comprise of regular features including:

- Famous Fleets – canal carrying companies
- The Complete History of – your favourite canals
- Waterway Art – roses, castles and much more
- Picturing the Past – exploring old photographs
- A Broader Outlook – not just narrowboats
- A Place in History – sites that are still there to visit
- Genealogy – tracing your boating ancestors
- Canals that never were
- Accessing Archives – practical advice
- Readers' Queries Resolved
- Preserving our Heritage – historic buildings under threat

If you are interested in subscribing, you can do so by phone on 01283 742970.

## **River and Canal at Thornborough and Thornton in the 50s and 60s**

By Aiden Ridge (Continued from last issue)

The canal became more and more overgrown with rushes and reeds, till there was a small amount of water visible in the middle. At Leckhamstead Wharf on the Buckingham side of the bridge there was a 'winding hole' and to me this looked like a swimming pool. I was tempted to swim in it, but my dad would warn me against this because it was a canal, and seemed unsafe for swimming. The river was ok though, but probably much deeper in places.

As the 1960s came, the canal was grown up with rushes and seemed to be forgotten about. In 1960-61 I would walk from Thornborough to the A422 on some Saturdays, to catch the bus to Wolverton. This involved crossing the canal and river bridges. The bus which went from Oxford to Bedford, would stop at Leckhamsted turn, and the timetable listed it as a stop. Steam trains were still mainly in charge on the main line, and I would sit on the station or by the main canal, and wait for the trains with other boys who were train-spotters. A return ticket for a child from Wolverton to Bletchley cost 9d (or just under 4p), so that was another trip, to see what was in Bletchley loco shed.

Time went on and the canal dried up. This was when it was officially closed, as I did not know then what was happening. The rushes and reeds disappeared and grass and weeds took their place. No one ever mentioned the canal, it seemed as though it never existed. There were two rusty diamond-shaped signs at Leckhamsted Wharf Bridge which vanished, presumably when the bridge was filled in. I can't remember the wording but they warned against heavy vehicles crossing the bridge. I think the weight restriction was 5 tons, but not sure about that.

In the early 60s I started working at Wolverton Railway works, and had a motor-bike. This meant I could travel about and get to places which I had never seen before. Some days I would go across the bridges at Thornton, and then turn right towards Old Stratford on the A422. This meant crossing

the canal twice, one at Thornton and again just before Deanshanger. The A422 bridge was still intact and the road raised for the canal bridge then and the A422 curved its way through the village. I remember the canal and the A422 were parallel approaching Old Stratford, before the new roundabout was built. What appeared to be a couple of derelict boats seemed to lie in the canal, but I never stopped to take a closer look, unfortunately.

At Old Stratford the canal crossed below the A5, and one day I happened to be at Old Stratford but I can't remember why. Perhaps seeing friends from work, but I discovered what appeared to be a tunnel. I walked into this tunnel, and suddenly it dawned on me that I was walking along the canal as the towpath was also in the tunnel (I think). There seemed to be no trace of water, just large lumps of stone and brick and concrete, making walking difficult. Perhaps someone used the tunnel as a dump, a convenient way of getting rid of builders' waste, who knows?

**AIDEN RIDGE**

### **Ancestor Enquiry**

I am descended from two families of canal boatmen who were from Buckinghamshire. I am interested in finding out more and wondered if you had any references to them in your archives.

I know the Wise family had a boat called 'Swindle' in 1881. At that time Samuel Wise (born Milton Keynes? 1812, his wife Esther (born Minsley Bucks 1821) and their son Matthew (born Fenny Stratford 1853) were plying the boat on the canal.

The other branch of my family were called Frank/s. I know they were based around Old Stratford, Bucks. as my Gr. grandmother was born there in 1863/4. By 1881 Mary Franks was widowed aged 40 but still had a boat and moved coal from Coventry.

If you cannot help thank you for taking the time to read this. I'll keep searching.

Best regards, Martyn Harris

**Patron Tim Boswell MP**

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2 Staters Pound, Pennyland, Milton Keynes, MK15 8AX  
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