

The Buckingham Navigator

Summer 2005

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

Work Party Dates for your Diary July to November

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

July	August	September	October	November
Thursday 7 th	Thursday 4 th	Thursday 1 st	Sunday 9 th	Thursday 10 th
Sunday 10 th	Sunday 14 th	Sunday 11 th	Thursday 13 th	Sunday 13 th
Thursday 21 st	Thursday 18 th	Thursday 15 th With HBOS	Thursday 27 th	Thursday 24 th
		Thursday 29 th	Saturday 29 th MADD	

Due to other commitments we will not be able to publish the next Navigator until December so we will combine the Autumn and Winter issue together.

Your contributions, articles, letters, general observations will help to make it more interesting. *Please send all contributions by 1 November 2005*, emailed, 3.5 floppy disc, typewritten or handwritten (in that order of preference) to Tony Collins 18 Skeats Wharf Pennyland Milton Keynes MK15 8AY (email address: collins.tony@bigfoot.com)

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

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.

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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

NEW BOOKS

Starlight

The new novel from canal author Geoffrey Lewis.

Geoffrey Lewis has departed from his usual story line of crime thrillers with this book by setting it against the backdrop of the South Oxford Canal. It is a tale of two young boys from different backgrounds who strike up an enduring friendship during the long hot summer of 1955.

Geoffrey Lewis has woven real characters from the days of commercial carrying into the story, which is set during the decline of working cargo traffic and also tries to show the prejudices that the working boatmen endured together with the old fashioned values of true friendship and loyalty so often absent in the modern world. A touch of humour and sadness made it compulsive reading and I made the mistake with this book of just "having a quick read" and found it difficult to put down, so much so I had to continue for the next few nights until finished.

It is available from Bookshops or by mail order from Steve Miles at SGM publishing, Cosgrove Wharf, Lock Lane Cosgrove MK19 7JR or phone 07792 497116, priced £6.99 plus £2.00P&P.

Tony Collins.

"James Brindley: The First Canal Engineer"

by Nick Corble

A FRESH LOOK AT JAMES BRINDLEY

Why is it that the exploits of Stephenson and Brunel are part of the history curriculum while the name of the man who laid down the basis for the first national transport system, James Brindley, is largely unknown. A new biography written by Nick Corble attempts to redress this imbalance. Published by Tempus Publishing, and called '*James Brindley: The First Canal Engineer*' the book takes a fresh look at Brindley's achievements and asks the bigger question of what might have happened if Brindley hadn't come along.

Most of us know about the more obvious examples of Brindley's legacy, the bridges, the aversion to locks, the triumphs of Barton and Harecastle, but perhaps less of us are aware of how close he came to failure. Nick describes the ups and downs of Brindley's career almost as if he was writing a thriller. He also focuses on Brindley's very human tale - how he was born into poverty, how he was barely literate and how he rose above all this to do things no one else thought were even possible.

The book also suggests that Brindley was the man who put the 'united' in United Kingdom.

In a compelling argument, Nick describes a Britain of parts, brimming with ideas and resources but unable to pull them together.

Brindley's canals not only kick-started the industrial revolution and set the country on its way to becoming the world's first modern superpower, but they also created a common experience and sense of nationhood.

Nick's previous book 'Walking on Water' about a journey down the spine of the waterways network established him as a fresh voice on the canals, and his work features regularly in Canal and Riverboat and other publications.

This book is a 'must read' for anyone with an interest in how the canal system came about and is illustrated with dozens of original photos, many of them in colour. The book is available from your local bookshop at £18.99 but Nick advises Buckingham Canal Society members that Amazon are offering a 30% discount.

Alternatively you can buy online through the publisher at www.tempus-publishing.com where the book is also offered at a discount.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We welcome all new members who have joined us since our last edition of The Navigator.

We hope to see some of you at Society events; if distance does not permit this, we hope you enjoy reading about our activities and thank you for your support. It would save the society postage if you would take future copies of the Navigator from the Internet, just send your email address to: info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

The Glass Workshop

Bob Martin The Artist in Glass.

For that unusual present of *Glass Animals, Birds, Galleons, Trees, Flowers and Dolls House* miniatures all made entirely by hand in coloured and opaque glass contact.

Mr & Mrs R J Martin

36 The Ridings

Desborough, Kettering

Northants NN14 2LP

01536 760165

Cosgrove

Narrow Boat Company

For that special day out for up to 12 people we are pleased to be able to offer DAY BOAT HIRE on a 30ft all steel narrow boat equipped with cooker, fridge, toilet, crockery and cutlery.

All complete with ample tuition before you go.

Cosgrove Narrowboat Company can be contacted at: Cosgrove Wharf, Lock Lane, Cosgrove, Northants MK19 7JR (01525 372853) or by e-mail: bookings@cosgrovenarrowboats.co.uk

Annual Boat Rally

This year the Society reverted to holding a rally at Cosgrove Lock Island over the weekend of Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th June in variably good weather. A small team brought in supplies and erected tents on the previous Friday and the opportunity was also taken on that day to make an early start with the lock ransom.

Saturdays events included a quiz during the day and the winners were David & Jan King of NB. Jappa.

On Saturday evening there was a real ale bar on board Elizabeth of Glamis courtesy of Richard Hyde, Cosgrove Narrow Boats and musical entertainment by John Dee.

Over both days, Athina Beckett set up her bric-a Brac stall and there was also a lock ransom, which kept Jonathon Brown and his helpers busy. David Seamen, the former England goalkeeper passed through the lock at the tiller of a Wyvern hire boat.

The Society's information stand was also set up on the lock island. On Sunday Tony Collins led the towpath walk that was open to the public. to the Old Locks nr the Iron Trunk.

The MK citizen took pictures over the weekend.

Overall a very enjoyable weekend and well worthwhile. It was good to see so-many

locals listening to the music in the evening and using the towpath during the day.

My thanks should be expressed to those who helped me on the rally committee, which included: Tony Collins & Pam Forrest; to those who helped with the site and lock ransom; to Mandy Morley who typed up the quiz devised by Pam Forrest. A special thanks to Richard and his crew for his donations from the boat trips and the bar takings, and to Steve Miles for his donations from book sales.

Thanks also to British waterways, Lee King and his team for help getting the site neat and tidy for the occasion. **Bill Upton.**

Extract from "Thornborough Past & Present"

Mr Frank Canvin of Thornborough who was born 1901 and died 1995, aged 94, worked on the canal with his uncle. They lived on and worked from Leckhampstead Wharf. They travelled mainly on the Grand Union Canal, and went as far afield as Oxford, London, and Coventry. There is a photograph of him on one of the family boats, taken in 1919, on page 147 of the WI book, *Within Living Memory*, along with some of his reminiscences of long ago.

I interviewed Mr Canvin for a contribution to the WI book, and among my notes are Frank was thirteen when he started work on the boats with his uncle and, although his grandfather was the first to have a steam-driven boat on the inland waterways, the boats which Frank worked on were always pulled along by a horse walking on the towpath. Coal was brought from Bedworth in Warwickshire to be kept at the Leckhampstead Wharf and sold around the district by his relation, Charlie Mellor, who was a coal merchant. Coal was 10d a cwt in 1914. Ash poles were cut in Wicken Woods, transported to the Wharf on a timber carriage to be taken by barge to Leicester and made into cotton reels. Bricks were transported from Gayton to build Thornton Hall. Life on the canals was busy, but when they stopped travelling at night, it sometimes gave Frank a chance to follow his interest in bell ringing in a number of different churches along the way.

Sent in by Bryan Egan. & reproduced by kind permission of Betty Bunce.

Volunteer's reflection

As the hard hats were handed out we began to wonder just what we had let ourselves in for and as we walked across the field it became all too apparent. On one side of a small bridge there was obviously a towpath, nicely cleared and perfect for a relaxing country stroll. On the other side our challenge, 40 years of tree growth, brambles and weeds waiting to be cleared. It was impossible to believe that a towpath existed let alone that we could make any impression on the tangled mass in just one day, but undaunted we took up our tools and let battle commence.

Armed with new saws and loppers, which had been bought using a grant from the HBOS Foundation, we attacked the jungle. There were a few cries of 'ouch' as the brambles fought back but as the bonfire roared into life we all pulled together as a team cutting, clearing and burning and within a short space of time we could already start to see a difference.

Whilst we worked the members of the Buckingham Canal Society explained how the canal had finally been abandoned in the 1960's after being unused for many years prior to that and how ownership of much of the land had actually been returned to the farmers along the canal's route. The Society is now working with these farmers to restore sections of the canal with the long-term aim of reopening the whole stretch from Buckingham to Cosgrove.

By lunchtime we were starting to flag slightly but with a rest, plenty of food and the arrival of two more volunteers we started again with renewed energy. We became even more adventurous as the afternoon wore on, not just clearing brambles and weeds but sawing down trees that had grown up along the towpath over the years. Fortunately, we didn't have to dig out the stumps, as the Canal Society will use a winch to remove them at a later date.

As we approached the end of the afternoon we all felt pretty shattered but the evidence of our labours was clear to see and what had been a jungle just 6 hours before now looked like a towpath.

It was amazing just how much we had managed to clear in one day.

We all agreed that we had definitely made a difference, had thoroughly enjoyed ourselves in the process and would be more than willing to do it all again. The members of the Canal Society also seemed very pleased with our efforts.

There is however still a lot more to be cleared and the Community Partnerships Team hope to work with the Canal Society to arrange another day in September.

Cilla Christmas.

Aylesbury Community Partnerships Team

OTHER IMPORTANT EVENTS

IWA MILTON KEYNES

(All meetings are held at Bletchley Rugby Club, Manor Fields, Bletchley, 7:45pm).

Monday 26th September

Getting away with Murder, by Leo McNeir
Waterways crime writer.

For further details contact: Roy Cleverly
01908 367928

IWA NORTHAMPTON

(Meetings during the winter are held at the Blisworth Coaching Inn, Station Road, Blisworth, 8.00 pm)

See their website for more details. or contact
Graham Treagus: 01604-870515

Saturday 30th July

Linslade Canal Festival

Tiddenfoot Park, Mentmore Road Linslade

Saturday 6th - Sunday 7th August

Displays and Models on Willen Lake in Support of the Bedford & Miltern Keynes Waterway.

Saturday August 27th-29th

IWA National Festival and Boat Show.
Preston Brook.

Chairman's Column

Due to our plans for 2006 and possible further involvement in the redevelopment at our family business Diana and I have told the committee that we will not be standing for re-election at the end of this year.

We have tried to give as much notice as possible so as to give plenty of time for a new Chairman and committee members to be found.

Unfortunately Lyn Simmons who recently took over as Navigator Editor has had to resign for health and family reasons, I will carry on until the end of the year as editor but please note the Autumn & Winter issue will be combined and will not be published until December. I will happily show whoever takes over as editor if they wish and Navigator is all set up now ready for copy. Len barrows will continue to put it on the website once the editions are completed and it is a job that is very satisfying to see the end product when its completed.

Bill Upton has also said that he will not be able to carry on as Secretary after the end of this year, which is the reason for Bill's notice in this issue. Help in all directions is urgently being sort and we would welcome a call from anyone who would be able to spare time to keep the momentum going. My thanks to all who helped at the Boat Rally, Wendover, Crick & Blisworth where after a great effort considerable funds were raised.

Tony Collins.

Crick review. BCS

It is said that time flies when ones having fun so we must have enjoyed ourselves immensely over the last 12 months as the May Bank Holiday was Crick Boat Show time again. The Bucks Canal Society had its stand in the Barlow's marquee but as last year the pitch was very small and cramped. Tony Collins has suggested to the organisers that a single pitch be enlarged by a couple of feet for future shows. The two big improvements for this year's event were not one but TWO disabled toilets within the

show village and mobility scooters available to hire throughout the weekend.

Although our stand was compact and bijou it looked pleasing to the eye and somehow we managed to display our wares well. The ubiquitous lolly-pop game proved as popular as ever, society merchandise, second hand books, videos, DVD's and cassettes sold steadily and Steve Miles sold his Geoffrey Lewis books in large numbers. A very successful show for his novels indeed. Helen Calvert (our chairman's Granddaughter) sold her hand painted miniature Ducks and a lot of interest in the Society was shown with many people taking away our leaflet. Hopefully this will result in new members swelling our ranks.

As a PR exercise Crick is an important show for us, there are many Society's vying for the public's patronage and we need to be "in their faces" to maintain our profile in the canal restoration race.

For those of us manning (and womanising) the stand two aspects of the show will stick in our minds. The weather, no, except for the Bank Holiday Monday morning it was fine, hot and sunny but also WINDY especially on the Saturday. The BCS space was up against one end of the marquee and the wall acted like a sail. So strong was the wind that the "sail" would tip over our table even when fully laden with the books etc. Whichever one of us was sitting closest to the table became table monitor who duties were to hold on and keep it upright at all cost. Had we been on the high seas we'd have been cruising at a good 25 knots but as it was it was quite exhausting work holding down the stand against the strength of the wind. *(All of the boats doing the "Try-a-boat" run had similar problems that day and at one time nearly decided to stop the trips as the wind was so strong. Good job it decreased just in time. TC)*

The second memorable event was the aerobatic and wing walking display. Two Tiger Moths and very plucky wing-walkers performed their most spectacular and death defying stunts right over the show site at very low levels/ breathtaking! The Show wasn't bad either.

Pam Forrest.

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

I was born at Thornborough in 1946 and lived there until 1977/8. In 1950 I vaguely remember a couple of events; my first car journey of any distance, and Aggie burning her house down on New Years Eve. As a result of the fire she died and is buried in the churchyard at Thornborough. Agnes Holden Butcher is the name that marks the spot where she is buried in Thornborough churchyard.

Aggie lived next door to Charlie and Mrs Mellor and they shared the same house in Back Street. The house was divided into two and a door that connected the two dwellings was permanently locked or fixed shut in some manner. I remember Aggie telling me off for standing in puddles of water without Wellington boots in the 'rainy season'.

Even at that age I had an interest in water and perhaps that was the start of something that I am still trying to do today, get the water back into the canal and see it flowing again.

Charlie and Mrs. Mellor continued to live in the house, and after Aggie's home was repaired, it was lived in, I think, by a Nellie Palmer.

Gran often mentioned that Mrs Mellor's health, which was not very good at times, had had a hard time at Leckhampstead Wharf humping bags of coal. I do not know whether Mrs Mellor lived there, or whether Charlie did the same type of work. I would like more information about this. Perhaps someone reading this could help.

In 1952/3 the roads at Thornborough were dug up and a sewage system put in the village. This was quite a major operation at the time. As a small boy I was keen to see what was going on and watch the machinery and men carrying out this great task. Before the sewage system, cesspits and buckets were used in the village. The school at Thornborough had large metal buckets in the toilets, which had to be emptied regularly, but these were replaced at that time with flush toilets, the builders asking the older boys to help carry the cast iron cisterns etc, to where they were needed. The village was improved a great deal by this work, as before this the village pond and streams were used by some people as a sewer and a notice was in Bridge Street warning residents on the severe penalties of dumping 'foul matter' in the waterway.

Even though the sewage system was working at last, Gran would still be very angry if she thought that I had been anywhere near the pond and in contact with the 'foul water' which was in it!

The streams, which flow through the village, join the Claydon Brook near the Twins, which is where the River Ouse and the Claydon Brook merge. The river was part of the Thornborough sewage disposal system.

I do not recall when I first saw the river at Thornton, but it was most likely when I went there with Pop on a fishing trip. He would go fishing in the river and take me along. The canal being nearby was another place to fish and the towpath made it easy to sit on the bank or under the bridge at Thornton or Leckhampstead Wharf. The bridges at Thornton were built of an iron lattice girder construction, and adjacent to it was the original stone bridge that carried the road over the canal before the three iron bridges were built to do this. To cross the river there was a ford and the road was at a much lower level, the only bridge being over the canal. This bridge has seen c150 years of disuse but still stands and can be seen from the road quite easily.

Pop was familiar with Thornton as he was a tenant farmer there until 1941. The Landlord was Colonel Harris who occupied the large house that is now Thornton College. Home Farm is still the same and the house has not changed much but the farm has been altered quite a bit since then.

Aidan Ridge.

To be continued.

Canalside House for Sale

**Piled Mooring for full length Boat
Total 130ft Offside Canal**

**Detached, 4 beds
Cloakroom, En-suite
Double garage**

New Bradwell, Milton Keynes (N)

**Contact Marie or Vernon Draper
01908 312239**

Help Wanted

Due to an increasing workload, and pressure of other personal and business interests, the Society's Committee needs help urgently.

We are looking for people to act in the following capacities (one person may manage more than one role)

Chairman
Society Secretary
Newsletter Editor
Publicity Co-ordinator

In addition we need **people to...**

Man the publicity stand
Provide administrative assistance
Join the work parties

We are 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.

Contact: Mr. W. Upton, Tel: 01908 647317
Buckingham Canal Society
Registered Charity No. 1072924

**Patron Tim Boswell MP
Committee.**

Chairman. Tony Collins
18 Skeats Wharf Pennyland Milton Keynes MK15 8AY 01908 604731
info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Secretary. Bill Upton
18 Elmers Park Bletchley Milton Keynes MK3 6DJ 01908 647317

Work Party Organiser. Athina Beckett
2 Staters Pound Pennyland Milton Keynes MK15 8AX 01908 661217

Treasurer. Vernon Draper
12 Chipperfield Close New Bradwell Milton Keynes MK13 0EP 01908 312239

Steve Miles
Cosgrove Wharf, Lock Lane Cosgrove Milton Keynes MK19 7JR 07792 497116

Helene Hill
Cockfield House Stowe Rise Buckingham MK18 1HU 01280 813133

Diana Collins
18 Skeats Wharf Pennyland Milton Keynes MK15 8AY 01908 604731

Pam Forrest
72 Portishead Drive Tattenhoe Milton Keynes MK4 3FN 01908 504017

Peter Caswell
96 Gaddesden Crescent Wavendon gate Milton Keynes MK7 7SQ 01908 282589

Other Activities (non committee)

Navigator Editor. Tony Collins
18 Skeats Wharf Pennyland Milton Keynes MK15 8AY 01908 604731
info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Archivist. Sylvia Mead.
16 Bradvue Crescent Bradville Milton Keynes MK13 7AJ

Membership Secretary. Steve Morley.
33 Hambleton Grove Emerson Valley Milton Keynes MK4 2JS 01908 520090

Promotional Activities. Mandy & Steve Morley.
33 Hambleton Grove Emerson Valley Milton Keynes MK4 2JS 01908 520090

Website Design. Jeremy Cooper. www.olio.demon.co.uk

Website Maintenance. Len Barrows. info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Rally Facility Officer. Richard Hyde.
Cosgrove Narrowboat Company, Cosgrove Wharf, Lock Lane, Cosgrove, MK19 7JR 07973 915652

Committee members can be contacted by email: info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk