

The Buckingham Navigator

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

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Navigator. We are still without an Editor; the post has been advertised with all the local volunteer agencies but we would still welcome a BCS member to come forward and take over the editorship.

Best wishes, Athina

<p style="text-align: center;">IN THIS ISSUE</p> <p>Chairman's Chat Page 2 Why bother? Page 3 Bric-a-Brac Needed Page 5 Events Page 5 BBOWT Report Page 6 Work Party Report Page 6 Heritage Weekend Page 8 Lock Ransom Page 8 & 9 Contacts Page 10</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THE NAVIGATOR SUMMER ISSUE</p> <p>Please send in all contributions for the Autumn 2009 issue by 18th September, emailed, on CD, typewritten or handwritten (in that order of preference) to: Athina Beckett, 2 Staters Pound, Pennyland, Milton Keynes MK15 8AX (email: chairman@buckinghamcanal.org.uk)</p> <p><small>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.</small></p>	<p>Corporate Members</p> <p>Wyvern Shipping Co. Rothschild Road Linslade Leighton Buzzard LU7 2TF</p> <p>Nikon Optical UK. Ltd. 3 Tanners Drive Blakelands MK14 5BU</p> <p>Pauley Construction Ltd. The Avenue Broughton Manor Broughton MK10 9AA</p> <p>Taverners Boat Club Thrupp Wharf Cosgrove MK19 7JP</p> <p>Inland Waterways Association Northampton Branch</p> <p>If your business is interested in becoming a corporate member of the Buckingham Canal Society please contact the membership secretary.</p>												
<p>GETTING IN TOUCH</p> <p>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 BCS activities, future events, work party volunteering, sponsorship opportunities, membership details or any other matters.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ADVERTISING IN THE BUCKINGHAM NAVIGATOR</p> <p>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.</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Whole Page:</td> <td>£16.00</td> <td>Quarter page:</td> <td>£6.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Half Page:</td> <td>£10.00</td> <td>Back page:</td> <td>£22.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inserts:</td> <td>£7.50</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Whole Page:	£16.00	Quarter page:	£6.00	Half Page:	£10.00	Back page:	£22.00	Inserts:	£7.50		
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Chairman's Chat

Since I wrote my last report a lot has been happening to the BCS. On Sunday 12th April 16 members and friends had a day out on the Grand Union Canal aboard the St John Ambulance boat Mountbatten. As with our boat trip last year the weather was kind to us and the food prepared by Jonathan Brown was much appreciated and as well as being a great social event and funding raising day for the BCS we were also able to give a donation of £50 to St Johns towards the cost of a new boat for them.

On Sunday 3rd May Kingdom Tours 'Canals of Buckinghamshire' weekend trip included a visit to Hyde Lane Lock. With over 40 people on the tour this was excellent publicity for us. Steve Miles gave a talk on the history of the canal and I brought them up to date with the recent developments that had taken place on the lock. Kingdom Tours were kind enough to give a donation towards the cost of a feasibility study for the society.



Kingdom Tours visit to Hyde Lane Lock



On the subject of feasibility studies most of you will be aware that we have been fund raising for this for quite a time. We are now in talks with a firm of consultants who will hopefully be able to

carry out this study in the not too distant future. More details to follow.

The other exciting piece of news is that we are in negotiation with BBOWT (Berks, Bucks, Oxon Wildlife Trust) in connection with the BCS taking over the lease of the Nature Reserve. These talks are at an early stage but BBOWT are really pleased with the way their site has been run by us over the last three years and feel we are the right organisation to take over the lease. On a recent visit to the site by Mark Vallance the Area Manager, he particularly singled out the hedge-laying for special praise. So to those of you who worked on the hedge-laying project over the winter months, take heart your work is appreciated! Taking over a lease on a piece of land is an exciting new venture for us but the committee feels that we are at a stage to take on this responsibility. Again discussions are still at an early stage so more details to follow in future editions of Navigator.

On Saturday 16th May we were invited to attend Deanshanger Historical Society's' tenth anniversary at the local community centre. Steve Miles for the BCS had given a talk to the group on their first anniversary so they felt it appropriate for us to be there on their tenth!. Deanshanger residents were all very enthusiastic about the canal and most were sorry about it's passing. Several older residents told us stories about the canal and showed us photos of the canal in water. The original route through Deanshanger has all but disappeared under new housing but because of the interest shown by the residents the suggestion has been put forward that an arm into Deanshanger could be included in the future plans for the restoration of the canal.



BCS at Deanshanger Historical Society's Open Day

Those of you who live in or near Buckingham may have noticed the new BCS Banner displayed by the Market Square. Buckingham

Town Council have given us permission to display the banner on the first weekends of each month in June, July and August. All marvellous publicity for the Society!

Over the weekend of 17th-19th July we are holding our annual Lock Ransom weekend at Cosgrove Lock. We will be setting up from Friday lunchtime so help with putting up tents etc would be much appreciated. It is also a chance to meet and get to know other members of the society.

This year the festival is planned to be bigger and better than previous ones with a lot more boats attending and more games and activities for everyone. We hope as many of you as possible will attend and bring family and friends and help with the fund raising.

Lastly don't forget our **'Heritage Walk' on Sunday 13th September**, which includes a cup of tea!

Athina Beckett (Chairman)

Why bother.... and mapping the elephant?

Once again, Athina has metaphorically twisted my arm and asked me to write a few words for the newsletter. For those who are new or just forgotten, I am Terry Cavender and have become involved with the BCS since October last year. For my previous introductory ramblings, please see the **Why bother** bit in the spring edition of The Navigator. Meanwhile, read on for thoughts about feasibility studies, digital mapping and surveying.

Did you go and vote? We all have a wonderful habit of preaching democracy to those countries we consider undemocratic, and then only ever voting for the apathy party by not exercising our right in local elections. I have a personal ethos that says I can only allow myself to complain about politicians if I participate at whatever level. And because I did vote, I believe can go and contribute and probably will complain - but hopefully constructively whilst encouraging them to support the canal restoration!

Recently Athina unearthed a memo from an engineer to the inspector of the canal written in 1960 as to the state of repairs needed or work to decommission. Alas we all know they took the latter option. However, the information in that document, along with several other snapshots of

the canal status, form an invaluable background. This is useful not only for the historical and heritage aspects, but hopefully can be layered with each of the other snapshots to form a full set of records that can be used to support and progress the restoration work.

Being a bit of what many will call a technological geek, I had a look around and found some FREE (yes there still are free things in this world!) software that could help in this quest to pull all these records together. It's called Quo and gives us the ability to do lots of clever things with maps. So what, I hear you cry! Well, I think that one of the main parts of the feasibility study is to know where the canal is, down to each bend and bump as well as the state of each feature such as locks, bridges, culverts etc. (let's call them assets). Once you know where they are and supplement that with public rights of way, ownership of land, responsible local or national authorities etc, you stand a fighting chance that when the consultant does the feasibility study they will have hopefully 70% of the raw ingredients. They can then bake the feasibility study cake and hopefully it will cost less to cook it all up.

The maps can be zoomed in and out and printed and.... whatever you want really.

You can also interface it with something called a GPS logger. This uses the same technology as car satnavs to pinpoint where you are but also gives you height. The accuracy of the one I have is within a couple of metres and works down to six or ten digit map references. When you use it in anger, you can for example walk along the towpath for a distance and it will record each footstep. This can then be loaded onto the PC running the Quo software and produce a pretty coloured track of where you went. You can as you walk along press the button and log any features such as collapsed bank, fence post, gate etc and then display these points on the map.

The clever bit then comes in adding value to those features by say attaching a digital photo of the gate, collapsed bridge, keep off the grass sign or whatever it may be.

Below are some sample screens just showing the map of the bridge at Little Hill Farm. These are all at differing levels of zoom and detail including aerial photography.

Firstly there is the national map town level at about 1:250 000:



Then the 1:25 000 OS map level



Then the aerial photography view:



Then the aerial photography zoomed in:



Copyrights:



and



For those who want to know, there is the ability to add any level of mapping at any level of zoom from scales of 1:5,000,000 through to about 1:100.

As some of you will know, a small group of BCS members have met and, as I write, are planning on undertaking a pilot piece of this work with the agreement of the BCS committee. I am going to propose we call it The Elephant Project (elephants are very big and the saying goes you cant eat it all at once and have to do so bit by bit – plus I am large and turning grey!)

This will involve a fair bit of walking up and down the canal as well as reading various documents held in the archives in order to glean all the information we can about each of the assets on the canal. We will then need to pull it all together and enter it into the mapping tool and the database. It's not as frightening as it seems but as the electricity board always say, many hands make light work. Or put another way HELP!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (please, as in come and help us!)

We anticipate 'doing' some outdoor walking and recording on various evenings and odd bits of the weekend. Previous experience is not necessary although please do shout if you have some relevant skills to offer including typing up the list of notes from the walk or using MS Excel or MS Access. As some of you know by now, I am always willing to come up with an opinion but hopefully equally as willing to listen to others suggestions. To this end, we also plan to meet regularly-ish at the Two Brewers in

Thornborough where Andy (the landlord) is very receptive to us using his electricity for laptop PC as well as buying his rather good beer. This will hopefully be about once every month or so to join up all the bits of activity we have done around the elephant and work out which leg of the elephant we need to put on the bar-b-que next!

If you are interested in the software or helping with the mapping and audit further then please either email me directly at terry.cavender@btinternet.com or get in touch via Athina.

And to finish.... Recently some friends of ours were due to renew their wedding vows and had invited us to go along. Whilst getting ready to travel down to Bournemouth for this, my 7 year old daughter was sat at the table and asked what was going to happen. I started by asking her if she understood what vows are and she replied: "Of course daddy. I am 7 years old and I know them all... A, E, I, O, U".

I am sure I will dine out for many years on that wonderfully simplistic view of life. Oh to be 7 again.

Terry Cavender

Work Party Dates For Your Diary July-September

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

July	August	September
Thursday 2 nd	Sunday 9 th	Thursday 10 th
Sunday 12 th	Thursday 13 th	Sunday 13 th
Thursday 16 th	Thursday 27 th	Thursday 24 th
Thursday 30 th		

Cakes Needed

At last years' Cosgrove Festival we ran a cake stall for the first time and this proved to be very successful as we sold out! We plan to do the same this year but need more cakes. If you can make or bring a cake along on the 18th or 19th July to the Lock Ransom weekend at Cosgrove it would be much appreciated.

Bric-a-Brac Needed

Our sales stall has been doing excellent busy work at the various canal festival we have attended this year, but stocks are running low and we need to replenish. So if you can help with good quality bric-a-brac and books please contact Athina Beckett on 01908 661217 or email chairman@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Events

Saturday 4th July
Lionhearts Open Day – BCS Bric-a-Brac Stall

17th-19th July
BCS Lock Ransom Festival at Cosgrove
Details on page 9

Saturday 25th July
Linslade Canal Festival
Tiddenfoot Waterside Park
Linslade
BCS Bric-a-Brac Stall - Volunteers Needed

Sunday 13th September
BCS and Old Gaol Museum Heritage Walk
Meet 2:30pm
See "Heritage Weekend" article.

IWA Events

29th-31st August
IWA National Festival & Boat Show
Redhill Marina, Ratcliffe-on-Soar NG11 0EB

8th September
IWA Northampton Branch Meeting 8:00pm
The Walnut Tree
Station Rd
Blisworth
NN7 3DS
(speaker to be announced)

IWA National AGM 10:00am
Council Chamber
Milton Keynes Borough Council
1 Saxon Gate East
Central Milton Keynes MK9 3EJ

28th September
IWA Milton Keynes Branch 7:45pm
The Pavilion Community Sports Club
Worrelle Avenue
Middleton
Milton Keynes Village MK10 9AD
topic: WRG and the Droitwich Canals restoration
Martin Ludgate

BBOWT Report

Polecats pop up at College Lake

Rare polecats have been spotted at the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust's (BBOWT) College Lake Nature Reserve near Tring in Buckinghamshire.

One lone polecat was first seen poking its head out of its burrow at the beginning of May, but to the delight of everyone on site, it appears that the population has expanded and baby polecat kits have been seen! This is the **first confirmed record of breeding polecats in Bucks**. The news spread like wildfire and even Simon King, who was trying to no avail, to film Polecats in North Wales for BBC's Springwatch, had to drive through the night to come to College Lake to film these Polecats.

Polecats have long, brown cylindrical bodies, and blunt faces with very recognisable white and brown markings around their eyes, making them look like bandits. Numbers seriously declined in the early 20th century, reaching their lowest ebb in the 1950s. They were considered to be a pest of game and poultry and were persecuted.

Threats continue today with accidental trappings, road deaths and cross-breeding with escaped ferrets which have much paler coats. However, polecats have been undergoing a recent recovery and can be found in rural Wales and parts of England including Cheshire, Avon and Leicestershire.

Polecats set up home in wooded habitats, along riverbanks or even in farm buildings, so the woodland area at College Lake Nature Reserve is a perfect spot. Once a former chalk quarry, College Lake has been transformed by the hard work of staff and volunteers into a thriving wildlife haven supporting over 1,000 species including many wading and migrating birds. There's lots to do on site, with wildlife walks around the lake, marsh and woodlands, and hides from which to watch wildlife. There are also wetland and geology discovery centres.

As part of an ongoing plan to make this one of Bucks premier visitor sites, and thanks to funding from Biffaward and the Heritage Lottery Fund, a new car park has recently been built, proper toilets installed and a new barn has been provided for educational visits and refreshments on Sundays. Plans for a visitor centre on site are also now well underway... watch this space!

BBOWT's College Lake Nature Reserve is open every day except Mondays, 10am-5pm, with late opening Thursday until 8pm. For more information or directions visit www.bbowt.org.uk.

Phillip Smith 1922 - 2009

An appreciation by Michael J. Freeman

Phillip Smith was a quiet man much respected by those who knew him. Like most of the people reading this I knew Phil because of his love for - and support of - the environment. He was a member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Inland Waterways Association, The Buckingham Canal Society and the National Trust. Phillip and his wife Rose were guides at the National Trust property at Steeple Claydon for a number of years.

Whilst I was just five or six years old, Phillip was piloting bombers over Germany during the Second World War - (an event which I had the good fortune to be little affected by). Phillip was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his Service during this time. His wartime experiences were something that he kept to himself - no doubt due to their nature and his lack of self-promotion.

After the war Phillip wanted to make a difference and decided to join the Civil Service where he rose to senior managerial positions. He was awarded the OBE for his services to the country. In his private life he was already involved with water and navigation - having a boat on the Thames.

It was only at the end of his career that Phil and Rose moved to Milton Keynes. This was where I met them both - as Phillip and I had joined the fledgling Milton Keynes Branch of the IWA. Phillip was Social Secretary of the branch committee organising the speakers for the branch meeting. I was initially involved as magazine editor during the time of preparation for the 1984 IWA National Rally.

Eventually I became branch chairman for IWA (Milton Keynes) and during the Regional Chairman's Meetings the idea of trying to reinstate the Buckingham Arm was germinated. When the BCS was formed Phillip felt we were worthy of his support and joined - giving invaluable assistance in representing the society at a public inquiry into gravel extraction at Mount Mill Farm, where part of the canal was a grade two-listed structure.

Whilst I was chairman of IWA MK he was a great help to me in unravelling a very difficult situation. However it was not a simple case and Phillip studied the minutes from the time of the formation of IWA MK. There was a sensible solution, which I was very happy with but was unacceptable to the committee so they had to find a new chairman.

In latter years Phillip was afflicted with diabetes, which greatly reduced his mobility due to its effects on his legs. Not being a quitter he managed to be self sufficient for a long time having hand controls fitted to his car and finding ways of coping in the home and garden. Despite his lack of mobility Phillip continued to support the IWA in finding speakers for some time and remained a member of BCS.

Phillip was a caring family man and very shortly before he passed away he had seen his granddaughter's child which was no doubt a great pleasure for him. He fell asleep and then into a coma from which he did not recover.

He will be missed by all who knew him and our thoughts must be with his wife Rose and the rest of his family at this time.

Michael J Freeman
12th April 2009

Pam Forrest

Pam Forrest has decided to step down at our Archivist because of health reasons. The BCS would like to thank Pam for all the help she has given us over the years. Pam has helped on the Bric-a-Brac stall, sold raffles tickets for us at Milton Keynes Community raffle and has attended volunteer recruitment days on our behalf. She also served on the BCS committee for a while only giving up again when her health prevented her from attending meetings. She has successfully run our Achieve for several years and when her health permits Pam has stated she is willing to continue her work with the BCS helping out at canal festivals etc.

Again I would like to thank Pam for all her work on behalf of the BCS.

The BCS does now have a new Archivist Ros Woodford who is planning to hold 'open days' for anyone interested in looking through the Archive which can be a fascinating experience.

Anyone interested in seeing the Archive should contact Ros directly.

Athina Beckett
Chairman

Work Party Organiser's Report

Our work parties have returned to Little Hill Farm where there is a choice of work. Volunteers have been continuing with the restoration work needed on the bridge. Taking advantage of the fact that the water level is very low this year a group of volunteers constructed a platform under the arch of the bridge on Sunday 10th May. This has allowed us to work under the bridge and refurbishment of one side of the brickwork is almost complete and work should be starting on the second side shortly.

Another group of volunteers has cutback the over hanging branches and trimmed the footpath and canal bank up to the boundary with Mount Mill Farm. They have also completed one section of the canal footpath on the other side of the bridge heading towards Thornton Road. The winding hole next to the bridge has been cleared and we have been uncovering a stone structure next to the bridge thought to be part of a wharf.

1st-7th June was National Volunteering Week so we gained extra help from two groups. On Tuesday 2nd June Mars Horsecare from Old Wolverton joined us and on Thursday 4th June Northampton Youth Action Services also spent the day with us. With the help of these two groups a lot of extra work was achieved and several of the people who attended were interested in joining our regular work parties.

This year we have had several enquiries from companies wanting to join us for the day with the Open University and HBOS Bank visiting us in July.

As well as the practical work on site we are also going to try our hand at 'digital' mapping' (see Terry Cavender's article). A survey was carried out by the BCS in 1994 and we now plan to update it. Again anyone interested in this type of work should contact Terry or myself.

The numbers of volunteers has increased this year both on Sundays and on Thursdays but new volunteers are always welcome. For those of you who haven't yet tried the work parties they are a great way of getting to know other volunteers and we always welcome visitors.

Little Hill Farm is on private land so if people want to see the work being done at this site please email me and I will try and arrange a visit.

The dates of work parties for the next 3 months work parties are listed on page 5 of this edition of Navigator.

Athina Beckett
Work Party Organiser



Letters

Strange Animal Seen at Hyde Lane

Another great read this month. With reference to the article "Mysterious sightings at Hyde Lane Lock", Whipsnade Zoo has loads of Capybara roaming around within the park. They are not caged so it would not take much for them to make a bid for freedom. So maybe Helen is right, who knows?

Regards
Jeff Abrams

Heritage Weekend

BCS and Old Gaol Museum Walk

Sunday 13th September at 2:30pm

Meeting at Old Gaol Museum
Market Hill
Buckingham
MK18 1JX

Directions to event – Car Parking is in Cornwalls Meadow: from east (A422) take Town Centre and turn left at the Grand Junction pub, from south (A413) and west (A422) take Town Centre into Market Square, pass the Old Gaol Museum on the left and turn right into car park opposite the bus stand. From the car park return to Market Square and meet outside west entrance to the museum.

There will be a talk on the canal's influence on Buckingham, a guided walk, seeking out the canal route and landmarks, to Moreton Mill House. Wear stout footwear. **Teas available at Mill House.** The walk is approximately 4 miles. Contact Athina Beckett: 01908 661217 or Old Gaol: 01280 823020.



Wharf House

Lock Ransom by Boat

For those attending the BCS Lock Ransom weekend at Cosgrove by boat and who would like to reserve a mooring, please contact Peter Caswell by 26th June on 01908 282589 or 07702 668924. It has been suggested that a donation of £5 per boat would be appreciated, to cover the extra events being provided this year. This would seem to be the going rate as this was the fee charged for boats attending the Stoke Bruerne festival in June.

Buckingham Canal Society

Lock Ransom Weekend

17th -19th July 2009



An Update On Our Lock Ransom Weekend



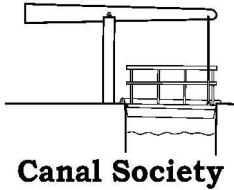
PLANNED ATTRACTIONS

- ❖ Historic Narrowboats Raymond & Nutfield return
- ❖ 'The Cheese Boat' selling a range of delicious cheeses
- ❖ 'The Fudge Boat' - loosen your belt and enjoy!
- ❖ Information on The Buckingham Canal
- ❖ Bric-a-Brac Stall
- ❖ Prize Quiz & Game Stalls
- ❖ Cake Stall – Tea & Coffee
- ❖ Saturday night only - BBQ (bring your own) & Music
- ❖ Limited reserved moorings available – watch our website www.buckinghamcanal.org.uk for details or contact Peter - see details below. (A donation will be suggested for moorings)

Our Lock Ransom Weekend is one of our major fund raising events. Last year was one of our best ever so we want to make this year's event at least as good.

We are still in need of someone to organise a tombola stall; to take over the publicity of the event; to put up posters around Cosgrove village.

If you can help with any of these tasks or offer general help then please contact Peter Caswell on 01908 282589 Mobile 07702 668924 or email peter.caswell@buckinghamcanal.org.uk



Committee 2009

Chairman/Work Party Organiser - Athina Beckett 2 Staters Pound, Pennyland, Milton Keynes MK15 8AX chairman@buckinghamcanal.org.uk	01908 661217 Mobile 07721 319404
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Charity Commission Officer - Don Allison 30 St John Street, Newport Pagnell MK16 8HJ donallison@btinternet.com	01908 610564
Membership Secretary - Jane Caswell 96 Gaddesden Crescent, Wavendon Gate, Milton Keynes MK7 7SQ membership@buckinghamcanal.org.uk	01908 282589
Peter Caswell 96 Gaddesden Crescent, Wavendon Gate, Milton Keynes MK7 7SQ peter.caswell@buckinghamcanal.org.uk	01908 282589 Mobile 07702 668924
Hélène Hill Cockfield House, Stowe Rise, Buckingham MK18 1HU helene.hill@buckinghamcanal.org.uk	01280 813133
Bill Upton 18 Elmers Park, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK3 6DJ	01908 647317
Archivist - Ros Woodford 7 Hoylake Close, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK3 7RH archivist@buckinghamcanal.org.uk	01908 376895

Other Activities (non committee)

Website - Len Barrows info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk	
Rally Facilities Officer - Richard Hyde Cosgrove Narrowboat Company, Cosgrove Wharf, Lock Lane, Cosgrove MK19 7JR	07973 915652
Editor, " <i>The Buckingham Navigator</i> " - Vacancy	
Talks & Slideshows - Steve Morley 33 Hambleton Grove, Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes MK4 2JS	01908 520090

Committee members can also be contacted by post:
c/o 16 Mallard Drive, Buckingham, MK18 1GJ or by email: info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk