

The Buckingham Navigator

Winter 2005/06

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

Work Party Dates for your Diary December05, March 2006.

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

December		January		February		March	
Thursday	8th	Thursday	5th	Thursday	2nd	Thursday	2nd
Sunday	11th	Sunday	8th	Sunday	12th	Sunday	12th
Thursday	22nd	Thursday	19th	Thursday	16th	Thursday	16th
January 20 th -22 nd WRG BITM Visit						Thursday	30th
January 28th AGM & Talk by Neil Loudon on Hayes Boats							

For the NEW TIME and VENUE of the AGM see **PAGE 9**

This will be the last edition that I shall edit but for the next edition please *send all contributions by 1st March 2006*, 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) and I will pass them on to the new editor.

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

Raffle Tickets.

In conjunction with the MKCVO we are again this year selling raffle tickets to win as first prize a VW Beetle Convertible. As a fundraiser for the BCS this was a good source of revenue as we get 50p per ticket sold.

Tickets are available from all committee members at £1 each

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

BCS Progress Report

COSGROVE TO A5 SECTION

General description

The length of the section from Cosgrove junction to the A5 dual carriageway is approximately 1800 metres. The first 250 metres up to the site of bridge No 1 is in water and is used for moorings. The remainder of the section up to the A5 is dry except in periods of heavy rain when 300 to 600mm of water can be found for a short distance west of bridge 1. Undergrowth and trees and saplings had grown up in the bed over the years. These have been cleared by Buckingham Canal Society.

The towpath is mostly in a walkable condition but overgrown in places by encroaching trees and also the bank edge requires redefinition.

Structures comprise two field bridges, numbers 1 and 2, one run off sluice and one culvert carrying Dogsmouth Brook

There may also be a need for additional structures. There are two farm crossings which cross the bed by means of breaches in the embankment and these may need bridging ultimately, the bridge holes to be of the same gauge as bridges one and two.

Bridges one and two that were stone arched require to be rebuilt to their original outward appearance for heritage reasons. The bridge hole gauge is to be of original wide dimensions.

The roadways of all bridges will need to accommodate modern farm traffic.

As regards utility services, there is an oil pipeline (part of the Thames-Mersey oil pipeline), which is entrenched and capped at a safe distance under the canal bed according to the drawings. There are no electricity, telephone or water supply pipes under the bed according to the respective suppliers. There are two sewers that are subject to investigation.

Work done

The Society organizes working parties that operate three days a month, one Sunday and two Thursdays. The Sunday ones started in Spring 1993 and the weekday ones (originally on a Wednesday) in Spring 1998. Work is carried out from September to

March at Cosgrove and from April to August at Bourton and Wicken

To date the Society has cleared the Cosgrove length between bridge one and the A5 of trees, saplings and undergrowth. The encroachment has also been removed from the towpath. Small-scale repairs and corrective realignment of the towpath have also been carried out. This has resulted in an immediate benefit to the public by facilitating use of the towpath and enhancement of local amenity value. New seasonal growth requires cutting back annually.

The Society's own volunteers have been helped in this work from a number of visiting groups from the Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) including BITM WRG, ESSEX WRG, LONDON WRG and Kent and East Sussex WRG (KESCRG). In addition other visiting groups have worked alongside the Society's volunteers, including MK Venture Scouts and groups of cadets from RAF Halton.

The Society also engaged a contractor to carry out powered hedge trimming.

All work is carried out under the Health and Safety Policy of IWA and volunteers are covered under IWA insurance.

It will be noted that by working in the winter at Cosgrove, due account is taken of environmental considerations in that the bird nesting season is avoided. No chemicals or herbicides have been used.

Reason for restoration of Cosgrove section

Following on from the earlier general statement:

Improvement of visual amenities for local walkers and improvement of informal recreation

Improvement of habitat value will provide a physical demonstration of the improvement a restored canal can bring to a community and will also demonstrate the feasibility of restoration.

Possible uses

Among the possible uses are the following:

Extension of boating. Some boaters would find it a pleasant short diversion from the Grand Union Main line.

Provide more ready access to the shops and restaurants of Old Stratford and Stony Stratford for boaters.

Possible angling use.

Reconnection to the main line would bring additional revenue to British Waterways & would provide an opportunity for rationalising moorings and discourage extension of current linear moorings in line with the wishes of Cosgrove parish council.

Informal recreation as mentioned above could include opportunities for young people to learn the skills of boating, canoeing and rowing away from the busy main line.

Possible small-scale trip boat operation by the Society in collaboration with but not in competition with Cosgrove Narrow Boat Company, a short "there and back" as opposed to pre-booked cruises

Possibility of a marina, hire base or brokerage at a suitable place which would take pressure off linear moorings.

Ecological study

The Society had an ecological study carried on the Cosgrove length in April 2002 by professional experts.

Need for feasibility study

After the considerable amount of tree and scrub clearance that has been done by the Society, the stage has now approached where it will be necessary to initiate action to deal with the civil engineering aspects of the Cosgrove section.

Before further action can be taken, BW require a feasibility study to be undertaken to examine the safety and integrity of the bed and embankment especially the high embankment over Dogsmouth Brook.

The study will need to examine geotechnical and structural elements, Water supply and drainage, environmental considerations and Town and Country Planning requirements.

Whilst the core of the study will require the services of paid professionals, there will be some tasks that can be undertaken by the voluntary sector, under professional guidance that will help to conserve costs especially where timescale is not critical.

Costs of feasibility study

The feasibility study will have to be paid for by the Society, as BW has no funds for this section of the canal.

The Society is currently examining-possible sources of funding for the study.

BOURTON

General description

This section is approximately 480m in length and is in private ownership. It is adjacent to the Buckingham Relief Road and Ouse Valley Walk. The latter runs along the towpath.

There are no major structures. There is a small spill weir of historical interest. The towpath edge is in good condition. The bed was overgrown with trees and scrub until recently. The general form of the bed is good and requires hardly any dredging but possibly some local repair, as a result of tree stump removal. The end near the lock cottage will require sealing prior to development of a diversion. It will be necessary to resolve the water supply situation.

Work done

The Society holds working parties, which are augmented by visiting groups from WRG and others from time to time.

Most of the trees and scrub have now been cleared, a few remain to be dealt with. Annual re-growth of light vegetation is also cleared.

The spill weir, which was dilapidated and unsafe, was demolished and has been rebuilt by the Society.

The culverts leading to the river have been extended to give a wider roadway width above them to cater for modern farm machinery. The landowner will resurface the roadway.

Reason for restoration

In addition to the general reasons for restoring the canal stated earlier, restoration of this section is strategically important due to its being at the Buckingham end of the canal.

The Society is encouraged by the willing and active support of the landowner.

Improvement of visual amenity for the locality and for walkers using the adjacent Ouse Valley Walk

It could create worthwhile fishing rights
Improvement of habitat value.

Separates the footpath (and dogs) from adjacent meadowland and any stock therein

Will provide, at the Buckingham end, a physical demonstration of the improvement a restored canal can bring to a community and will also demonstrate the feasibility of restoration.

Wicken, Little Hill Farm

General description

This section is approximately 1600 metres in length and is in private ownership.

There is one hump-backed access bridge over the canal that is in fair condition. It needs brickwork repointing and refurbishment of its road surface. There is also the site of a lift bridge. Its deck is missing.

Work done

The bed and towpath was heavily overgrown with trees and scrub until BCS started clearance in 2004. This work is continuing. Work has started on refurbishing the bridge.

Under the generous sponsorship of HBOS, the Society has installed a new wooden access gate to the site.

The Society has also received practical help from WRG-BITM and from staff of HBOS.

Reason for restoration

Apart from the longer-term aims and reasons for restoration stated earlier, this section is in a very attractive setting.

Improvement of visual amenity for the locality

It could create worthwhile fishing rights
Improvement of habitat value.

Will provide a further physical demonstration of the improvement a restored canal can bring to a locality and will also demonstrate the feasibility of restoration.

The Society is also encouraged by the willing cooperation of the landowner.

BBOWT Nature Reserve

BCS is to cooperate with the Wildlife Trust to maintain the nature reserve around the canal and restore the disused lock number one.

This section is approximately 1200m in length and is in the private ownership of BBOWT. It is situated near the reservoir west of Thornton.

There is one major structure; lock number 1
The Ouse valley walk runs along the towpath that is currently overgrown in places. This canal length is in some water with reeds and deep mud. Side pools are desirable to enhance wildlife habitat.

WU.BCS.

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**

Chairman's Column

It is with sadness that I have to report the death of our archivist, Sylvia Mead.

Sylvia died peacefully at her home on 8th October and was buried at St James Church New Bradwell. Myself, Diana & Athina attended the funeral on the Society's behalf and we were most pleased to see that the church was full to capacity by relatives and friends she had made over the years. A rather nice touch was the playing of the hymns by "The New Bradwell Silver Band" that had always been a favourite of hers.

As a newcomer to Milton Keynes I didn't realise that Sylvia was such a keen local historian, born & bred in New Bradwell she had spent many years collecting photos and documents of local people and places over the centuries.

These she had compiled into seven books including "New Bradwell", The Unique Community, "A Century of Life in New Bradwell" and "Bradwell Old and New".

Ray Bellchamber, city historian, who wrote the forward to one of her books said it's amazing how she had manage to amass such a tremendous amount of photographs and documents, her books have made a real impact on local people.

Right up until shortly before her death Sylvia was still enjoying local history and had in fact planned to help the society even more by taking on the role of Navigator editor and I am sure from the questions she asked me at our last meeting in the summer that she was also planning a book on the Buckingham Canal. She will be a sad loss for both to both New Bradwell and the Canal Society.

You will see that I have included in this issue a full progress report that Bill Upton completed recently which was written mainly for release to any potential sponsor or outside enquiry's we might get from interested parties but as it goes into the efforts and achievements of the committee and work party members in some detail I thought that now would be a good time to circulate to BCS members generally, after all those of us on the committee and work party's know what is going on but unless you have time to attend the AGM I appreciate it's more difficult for members to

catch up with our progress. I will try in the next couple of months to include some photographs on our website of the sites we are currently working at.

Way back in the summer Athina nominated Peter Breen as a candidate for an award for "commitment" at the "Year of the Volunteer" ceremony in October at Aylesbury. Peter has been attending work parties for as long as Athina has been organiser and in spite of previous Heart by-pass operations and all that goes with that he has seldom missed a working group. I am pleased to say that Peter was accepted for an award and Athina and I accompanied him to the Judges Lodgings at Aylesbury where The Countess Howe SSStj DL presented him his medal. After the ceremony we spent a pleasant hour enjoying the refreshments and talking with some of the distinguished guests about our work on the Buckingham canal restoration.

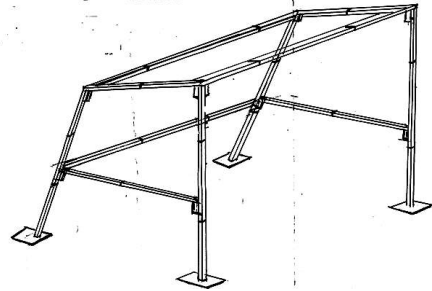
TC.

For Sale

2 Wheel Sack trolley £5.00

.....
Frame Tent with Blue Cover £25.00

Approx 8ft wide, 6ft deep, 7ft high at the front sloping to about 6ft high at the rear



.....
Allen Scythe.

We have 2 Allen scythes to sell; one is complete and in working order although a service would not come amiss, the other is missing some parts and the engine seized, wheels and tyres are with it so it would be useful as spares. We have a parts list and manual and it seems that parts are still available. **£125.00 the pair.**

**For more details contact Tony Collins
01908 604731**

Other events

IWA MILTON KEYNES

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

Monday 23rd January. 2006

The Magnificent Seven with Graham Fisher MBE. Boater, Writer, & Broadcaster.

Monday 27th February.

AGM and "Canal Inquisition, with Alan Holmes. Canalside Project Officer, Milton Keynes.

Monday 27th March.

Waterways Relic's, One off's & Oddities, with Michael Stevens, IWA Luminary.

See their website for further details or contact: Roy Cleverly
01908 367928.

IWA NORTHAMPTON

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

Tuesday 13th December

Christmas quiz and social
More details in November issue of Endeavour, their website or contact Graham Treagus: 01604-870515.

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

By Aiden Ridge

(Continued from last issue)

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 house is still the same and has not changed much but the farm has been altered quite a bit since then. From the road bridge at Thornton a waterfall can be seen when looking in the direction of Buckingham. This was a part of the 'hydro electric system' installed to generate electricity for the big house nearby. I do not know the date for this, but water built up behind this weir and some of the water was channelled for some 2 to 3 hundred yards to

a small brick building that housed a turbine and a generator. This was about half way between the road bridge and the weir. The electricity was used to power the lights in the mansion, which is now Thornton College. The cost of installing this system must have been considerable and I suspect that Colonel Harris was wealthy and able to afford such things as electricity, generated 'on site' as it were. The other houses in Thornton relied on candles and oil lamps. There was no electricity in Home Farm when my mother lived there.

The machine in the turbine house was checked in the evenings by Mr Atkins, who lived in a cottage in Thornton. He told of one night seeing a ghost in the twilight after leaving the engine house. I do not know whether this is true or not, but Mum and Gran were of the opinion that he would not imagine or invent such a story. I did meet Mr Atkins as pop went to see him on one of our trips to Thornton and I recall he showed us a sheet of hardboard that was at that time a 'new' material for doing jobs around the house. He demonstrated how well it would bend and how flexible it was. Pop was seemingly surprised and amazed at this but would be very unlikely to use anything like it. At Leckhampstead Wharf the bridge over the canal was as originally built, with a hump and a slope down to the section of road between this bridge and the 'White Bridge' as we called it, which spans the river. I believe that there was a ford here at one time and no bridge, as at Thornton. This road floods at rainy times and is not very high above river level. The canal bridge was quite a roller coaster ride as when a motor bike at what seemed like a slow speed went over it, I also felt as though the bike would take off and do a ski jump. The same could be said for the river bridge but this bridge was not quite so bad in this respect.

The river was a place I would go to often as a boy. I did some fishing and swimming and the weir at Thornton seemed like a 'beach' with swimmers, sunbathers and picnickers etc. It was not a public place but no one seemed to care. I do not think people are allowed to do this now as there is a notice in place to say that only members of the

Angling Association are allowed. In any case people are probably otherwise occupied now and the place seems deserted, compared to the 50s and 60s.

A farmer, Mr Humphreys, lived in Leckhampstead Wharf at the time and his milking barn was on the right hand side when looking from the bridge up towards the A422, and I think the building is still there but derelict. I was down at the bridge one day with Mickey Burchett, a lad who lived in Thornborough and who like to explore new places as I did. I stood on the bridge and looked down and Mickey was standing on the towpath picking apples from a tree overhanging the towpath. After a short time Mr Humphrey's appeared from his cowshed and ran towards us raging and shouting. Mickey panicked and ran under the bridge and up the bank onto the road and disappeared. I decided to stay where I was and Mr Humphrey's approached. I said that I had nothing to do with the apple picking as I was on the bridge just watching. He agreed with me and asked me "who was that person". I told him that we were from Thornborough and he said that he did not want to seem him there again. It seemed that we were always near the river or the canal as that was the place we wanted to go to have fun, explore, swim, fish or just roam about.

Aiden Ridge.

Thanks Aiden, If you have any more stories or photo's to go with this article please let me have them. TC

Work Part Organisers report

Saturday 29th October was **'Make a Difference Day'** as most of you who have taken part before it is a nationwide volunteering day being a chance for people who don't normally volunteer to have a go and a chance for people who do volunteer to try something different.

This year we chose to work at the BBOWT Nature Reserve that is based around the disused Buckingham Canal near Fosote. It's a very beautiful site to work on being next to a fishing lake and part of the north Ouse Valley walk but not the easiest place to access by road!

Buckingham Angling Society loaned us a key to their car park and Chairman Tony Collins and two other society members arrived early and laid a trail of orange balloons from the car park to the nature reserve much to the interest of fishermen!

Once on site we decided to make the main focus of the day the lock that was very overgrown and most of the brickwork hardly visible. We were very lucky in having a lovely sunny day for our work and 23 people turned up to help including several new members who were interested in helping again.

Part of the work included strimming around the seating area that had become very overgrown with stinging nettles and we also cleared about a quarter of a mile of canal west of the lock chamber.

By the end of the day we had cleared most of the ivy and brambles from the lock chamber and removed several large fallen trees from the bottom of the lock.

This was the first time we had worked at the BBOWT Reserve and a important step for the BCS as the relationship between us and BBOWT hadn't always been that positive. They had not been too keen on the restoration of the canal but we have now reached an agreement with them, they have our help in preserving the nature reserve and are now happy to see the canal restored on their land.

This is a beautiful area for walkers and we hope that the work we are doing in clearing away unwanted scrub and fallen trees from the canal bed and making it look like a canal again will increase the public interest in the restoration of the whole of the Buckingham Canal.

We are hoping to run more work parties at the BBOWT Reserve in the not too distant future. Anybody who would like to help can contact Athina Beckett on 01908 661217.

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 or Vice Chairman

Society Secretary

Newsletter Editor

Publicity Co-ordinator

Archivist

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: 0 1908 647317

Buckingham Canal Society
Registered Charity No. 1072924

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The thirteenth annual general meeting of the Buckingham Canal Society will be held on **Saturday 28 January 2006**, at the Community Centre, Cornwalls Meadow, Buckingham, commencing at the **new time of 7pm**

As always, all interested parties are welcome to attend, but only current members are entitled to vote.

AGENDA Commencing 7:00pm

1. To receive apologies for absence.
2. To confirm the minutes of the previous AGM.
3. Matters arising from the minutes.
4. To receive a report from the Treasurer and to receive the accounts for the year ended 30th November 2006.
5. To receive a report from the Secretary
6. To receive a report from the Membership Secretary.
7. To receive a report from the Working Party organiser
8. To appoint the auditor
9. Election of Officers and Committee Members
10. Subscription rates for the year to January 2006
11. Any other business.

NOMINATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE

According to the constitution, nominations should be in the hands of the Secretary 14 days before the AGM. We would welcome additional members. There is work for willing hands!

RESOLUTIONS TO THE MEETING

Any resolution you wish to be discussed at the meeting must be notified in writing to the Secretary 14 days before the meeting.

Note: The Secretary's address is 18 Elmers Park, Old Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK3 6DJ.

7:30pm

The formal part of the meeting will be followed by a ½ hour break for refreshments and cheese and wine during which committee members will be on hand to answer questions or talk about ideas you may have.

8:00pm

Talk on Hayes Boats by Neil Loudon

W Upton.
Hon.Secretary.

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)

Archivist **Position Open**

Navigator Editor. **Position Open**

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***