

The Buckingham Navigator

The newsletter of the Buckingham Canal Society

Registered Charity No: 1072924

EDITORIAL

In this edition of the Autumn Navigator are reports and photographs from our very successful Lock Ransom Festival held at Cosgrove Lock in July and details about the Feasibility study which Halcrow will undertake for the society over the next few months. Plus our archive feature includes a very sad story about Deanshanger in 1930's.

Best wishes, Athina

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THE NAVIGATOR WINTER ISSUE

Please send in all contributions for the Winter 2009 issue by 30th December, 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)

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.

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Wyvern Shipping Co.
Rothschild Road
Linslade
Leighton Buzzard LU7 2TF

Nikon Optical UK. Ltd.
3 Tanners Drive
Blakelands MK14 5BU

Pauley Construction Ltd.
The Avenue
Broughton Manor
Broughton MK10 9AA

Taverners Boat Club
Thrupp Wharf
Cosgrove MK19 7JP

Inland Waterways Association
Northampton Branch

If your business is interested in becoming a corporate member of the Buckingham Canal Society please contact the membership secretary.

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 BCS activities, future events, work party volunteering, sponsorship opportunities, membership details or any other matters.

ADVERTISING IN THE BUCKINGHAM NAVIGATOR

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

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

Notice of Annual General Meeting and Society Social Evening

The 18th Annual General Meeting of the Buckingham Canal Society will be held on Saturday 30th January 2010, at the Community Centre, Cornwalls Meadow, Buckingham, commencing at 7:15pm.

Nominations for the committee or matters which you wish to be put before the meeting should be submitted to the secretary by 17th January 2010. Nomination forms are available from the secretary.

All interested parties are welcome to attend, but only current members are entitled to vote.

Following the formal part of the meeting there will be a social interval with refreshments of cheese and wine plus a slideshow and talk. The committee looks forward to meeting as many members as possible.

Helen Preston, Secretary
01280 821232 secretary@buckinghamcanal.org.uk
16 Mallard Drive, Buckingham, MK18 1GJ

Chairman's Chat

Our annual Lock Ransom Festival was held at Cosgrove Lock over the weekend of the 18th-19th July and proved to be our most successful one yet in spite of the rain on Sunday.

Those of you who attended will know that I managed to miss the whole event having caught swine flu. Therefore reports of the festival come from feedback from those who did attend. Saturday being a brilliant sunny day drew in extra people as the festival had been well signposted through the village and campsite.

This year there were more trade boats attending and these included the Cheese Boat, the Fudge Boat and return visits from Raymond and Nutfield. Also present were the honey stall and the Pump House Ladies Clog Morris Dancers. Our volunteers ran the cake stall, the bric-a-brac stall and the new 'pluck a duck' game, which proved very successful.

My thanks goes to all those who helped set up the site, donated cakes and bric-a-brac, ran the lock ransom and helped clear away on Sunday. Special thanks must go to **Peter Caswell** who

organised this year's event and did a marvellous job on behalf of the society and was responsible for a lot of the extra features at the festival. The good news is that over £1,200 was raised for the BCS.

Thanks also go to Nikon Optical who donated a camera for the raffle. This was won by Jonathan Brown who then proceeded to auction it off for the society therefore raising more money for us.

Our Heritage Walk on Sunday 13th September attracted 29 people. This is the largest number to attend one of our walks apart from when we held a joint one with the Ramblers. I had reced the walk a month earlier and everything looked fine. On the Friday before the walk I did a further recce to check everything was in place only to find the footpath at Bourton Meadow overgrown with stinging nettles. A big thanks goes to all those Sunday volunteers who helped strim the footpath before the walk started.

Back to the walk, meeting at the Old Goal in Buckingham, Helene Hill gave a talk on the importance of the canal to trade in Buckingham. I then led the group on a four-mile circular walk with a half way stop at the Mill House with Carolyn Cummings providing tea, scones and chocolate cake on her lawn which was very much appreciated by the walkers.

We have been hoping to carry out a feasibility study of the whole canal for some time and thanks to a grant of £1,000 from the IWA Restoration Committee and other very generous donations from Northants IWA, Milton Keynes IWA and Buckingham Town Council and our own fund raising efforts this can now go ahead with Halcrow carrying out the study later this year. This will be similar to one carried out for the Uttoxeter Canal Society by Halcrow. This is a very important step for the society especially with Buckingham Town Council showing considerable interest in the canal.

Our members who have been updating the 1994 survey of the canal are doing some of the research work for this study. This has now been partly completed and Terry Cavender is organising digital mapping sessions of the whole of the canal with meetings being held on the third Thursday of the month in Thornborough. Contact Terry for more information

Some dates for your diary are **Saturday 31st October** when we are again taking part in 'Make a Difference Day' We will be working at the

BBOWT Nature Reserve and everyone taking part will receive a certificate. For more information see my 'Work Party Organisers' report.

A long way ahead but put this date in your diary; our AGM will be on **Saturday 30th January at Buckingham Community Centre.**

Athina Beckett (Chairman)



Pump House Ladies Clog Morris dancers



Volunteers Manning the Locks



Jane Caswell & Benita Wilson on the cake stall



Festival Organiser Peter Caswell presents camera donated by Nikon to Vernon Draper

Report from Festival Organiser - Peter Caswell

'Boats are on the move heading for Cosgrove'. This might have been the whisper going up and down the towing path of the Grand Union Canal in July as it was time again for Buckingham Canal Society's Lock Ransom Weekend.

It was supported by more boats than ever with four trade boats booked in, historic boats Raymond and Nutfield in attendance and more than twelve boats of members, friends and last but not least members of Taverners Boat Club who had generously offered to support the event and helped with ensuring everyone was moored in their right place, with fund raising and even a Clog Morris dancing display.

As seems the norm now for the Lock Ransom Weekend, it rained. This meant more pressure on setting up on Saturday as little was able to be done on Friday because of the rain in the afternoon and early evening, but Saturday was a beautiful day and after an early start the site was soon busy with particular interest being shown in the cake stall which did a brisk trade all day.

The 'Pluck A Duck' stall also proved very successful with prizes rapidly disappearing as the punters took advantage of 'Every Ticket Wins A Prize', and the Bric-a-Brac stall, which never ceases to amaze at the amount of takings, was well browsed keeping those looking after it very busy.

A stall displaying natural products from bees including candles, honey and cordials did a brisk trade on Saturday. On Sunday it was substituted with a similar stall including a display case showing bees at work, but in complete contrast to Saturday the temperature was up and down (more down than up) and they had to be covered at times to protect them from the elements.

Boat traffic passing through the lock was less than previous years, the reason unknown, but the majority of those that did were, as always, generous to our cause and donated kindly towards restoration funds.

Raffle tickets for a 'Prize Raffle' were sold throughout the day with some superb prizes on offer courtesy of BCS members, Nikon UK Ltd. and Body Matters of Buckingham.

Everyone was kept busy and as the day drew to a close it had proved to be a very successful day financially as well as promoting the cause, and those very few members who indulge in such things were looking forward to the bar on Elizabeth of Glamis, courtesy of Cosgrove Narrowboat Company, opening.

An alternative to the usual Bring Your Own BBQ (which was a wise decision in view of the number of people in attendance) a 'Chips and Something' supper was enjoyed by all in the evening despite a little hiccup, as the chips arrived in bulk, not with each meal, and we were not prepared for serving them up with the fish and pies etc. and some quick improvisation was needed to ensure everyone got their share.

A rain shower or two did not dampen spirits, a mixture of music was played throughout the evening, a raffle took place with a plethora of prizes, and a few tinctures were taken and everyone retired to bed completely cream crackered, looking forward to a good nights rest ready for Sunday.

As mentioned briefly above Sunday was a disaster, the rain returned with a vengeance. Rearrangement of the site took place to provide cover to the Bric-a Brac stall but despite all the

efforts there was no one to browse the goods, covers were on and off the stalls all day, the people stayed away. In the afternoon the draw took place for the 'Prize Raffle' and a soaked team were glad to be packing up.

Despite the bad start on Friday and appalling weather on Sunday all the traders and helpers said how much they had enjoyed the weekend and want to come back next year.

The financial contribution made to the Society's restoration fund was in excess of £1200 (a record), quite an achievement and if the weather had been favourable on Sunday who knows what may have been achieved.

If you were not able to make it this year then make a note in your diary for next year 23rd - 25th July and as the event grows more help will be needed, so if you think you can help please do contact any committee member.

Thanks to all those who made the event such a success, the donations from traders, the donations of raffle prizes and those who helped over the weekend. As this has been written two months after the event my apologies to anyone who should have been mentioned and who has not.

Peter Caswell

Work Party Organiser's Report

The work parties returned to the BBOWT Nature Reserve in September, the summer months having been spent at Little Hill Farm. Here we have been splitting into two groups with one group clearing the re-growth and strimming the canal bed, this year it has been a clean sweep, the canal banks having been cleared from Mount Mill Farm up to the Thornton Road. The second group have been working on the bridge with most of the re-pointing work completed on the lower levels leaving only the more difficult to reach work for next year.

This summer we have had a lot of help from local companies and youth groups. Return visits have been made by Northants Youth Services, HBOS Bank (Aylesbury), Mercedes and the Open University. Two new companies joining us this year were Mars Horsecare (Wolverton) and the Co-op.



Mars Horsecare volunteers at Little Hill Farm



Open University volunteers at Little Hill Farm



Northants Youth Service Volunteers at Little Hill Farm

Back at the BBOWT Nature Reserve we are continuing with the hedge-laying. Whilst not canal restoration, this work is improving the appearance of the canal and bringing praise from the general public. We will also be teaching hedge-laying so if anyone wishes to learn please join one of our work parties or contact me. Advertising the hedge-laying has been bringing us new volunteers. The other work planned for this site is to complete the rebuilding of the steps by the lock and remove more of the reeds, which are blocking the canal bed at present.

Over the weekend of **17th-18th October BITM WRG** will be assisting us particularly with the work on the lock. Again any of our volunteers would be very welcome to join for all or part of this weekend. This would be a chance to meet new people and learn new skills.

On **Saturday 31st October** we are again taking part in '**Make a Difference Day**'. This is a nationwide volunteering event, the idea being to encourage people who don't usually volunteer to have a go or for those who do volunteer to try something different. If you were thinking about joining us but have held back this would be a good time to take the plunge as there should be several new people on site. Again if you haven't been for a while this would be a chance to get back into the system again. We want to encourage as many new people as possible to join us so do tell your family and friends. Volunteers must be sixteen or over unless accompanied by an adult and everyone taking part will receive a certificate.

If you haven't been before, the entrance to the BBOWT Nature Reserve is a farm gate on the south side of the A422 at Foscote, about a mile East of the Buckingham Ring Road roundabout. On the other side of the road is a large pylon and a brown sign for Winslow Auctions. We meet at 10:00am by the farm gate. The gate will be locked shortly afterwards, so please don't be late.

If you need any more information about any of the above please email or ring me.

Athina Beckett
Work Party Organiser



Volunteers working on bridge at Little Hill Farm



Nigel Preston re-pointing bridge at Little Hill Farm

Work Party Dates For Your Diary July-September

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

November	December	January
Thursday 5 th	Thursday 3 rd	Sunday 10 th
Sunday 8 th	Sunday 13 th	Thursday 14 th
Thursday 19 th	Thursday 17 th	Thursday 28 th
	Thursday 31 st	

Events

23rd-25th October

IWA Milton Keynes Canal Clean Up

Friday 12 noon Start Fenny Lock

Saturday 9:30am Start Br 83, Woolstones

Sunday 9:30am Start Br 72 New Bradwell

Monday 26th October

IWA Milton Keynes Branch 7:45pm

Milton Keynes Village Pavillion

Worrelle Avenue

Middleton

Milton Keynes MK10 9AD

Talk: Roses and Castles

Saturday 31st October

BCS 'Make a Difference Day' 10:00am

BBOWT Nature Reserve

Tuesday 10th November 8:00pm

IWA Northants Branch

The Walnut Tree Inn

21 Station Road

Blisworth NN7 3DS

Pleasures of the Thames

Magic Lantern Show

Monday 23rd November 7:45pm

IWA Milton Keynes

Venue see above

Canal Holidays fifty years Ago

Monday 7th December 7:45pm

IWA Milton Keynes Branch

Venue: see above

MK Branch Christmas Social – ticket event

Tuesday 8th December 8:00pm

IWA Northants branch

Venue: see above

Social Evening and Quiz

Tuesday 12th January 8:00pm

IWA Northants Branch

Venue: see above

The Story of Panama

Monday 25th January 7:45pm

Venue: see above

Donald Bailey and his Bridge

Saturday 30th January 7:15pm

BCS AGM

Buckingham Community Centre

Thornborough's Artificial Waterway

As if Thornborough didn't have enough water already with its brooks, streams and the Great Ouse, our forefathers decided more than 200 years that what was needed was an artificial waterway too. So at the turn of the 19th century, it was one of many villages to benefit from the cutting of the Buckingham Arm Canal, a cul-de-sac of the Grand Union Canal.

That was in 1801, but within a century it had largely fallen into disrepair, was leaking in some places and was no longer navigable in others. It was finally decommissioned in the 1960s - but it's making a comeback today.

Anybody enjoying the Thornborough Circular Walk cannot fail to have noticed the restoration project going in the woods alongside Hyde Lane Lakes at the northern boundary of the parish.

This is a work in progress to reinstate Hyde Lane Lock on the old canal, which once carried horse-drawn barge traffic from Old Stratford into the heart of Buckingham. Long before railways had been invented, a 9¼-mile stretch was dug out by navvies in just eight months.

It was officially opened on May 1st 1801 by the Marquis of Buckingham, who with the town committee sailed into the Buckingham Basin to the sound of the town band, and provided free beer to the populace. The age of heavy haulage had arrived!

The late 1700s were marked by 'canalmania', and foremost among its proponents was the aptly-named Duke of Bridgewater, who together with his engineer James Brindley, was responsible for many of the new waterways. His monument stands on the edge of his estate at Ashridge, looking over the Vale of Aylesbury and Tring Reservoirs, the highest-point of the Grand Union Canal, which was started in 1793 and still runs the 137 miles from London to Birmingham.

It was a year later, in March 1794, that the Company of the Proprietors of Grand Junction Canal - as it was then called - obtained an Act of Parliament allowing them to "cut a navigable canal through the parishes of Deanhanger, Passenham, Wickenham, Calverton, Beachampton, Thornton, Leckhampstead, Thornborough, Foscote, Maids Moreton and Bourton."

With mills all along its length and seasonal flooding, the canalisation of the River Great Ouse was never an option, so the company planned the route closely following the river, with basins, two locks, 28 bridges, an aqueduct carrying the canal over the brook at Cattleford, and loading wharves.

The 1794 Act - an original copy of which I gave to the Buckingham Canal Society several years ago - specifically refers to wharves at Leckhampstead Road and Thornton Manor. Thornton Manor, the property of Thomas Shepherd Esq, was one of the few residential properties to which the canal came close, and the company was obliged "to pen in and keep up the water to prevent leakage."

No towpath was permitted on the Mansion House side of the canal, and the Act ordered that the towpath was to be "gravelled and kept in good order and condition, and that no stones, timber, dung nor materials whatsoever be placed on such towing path or on the side of the bank thereof."

Mr Shepherd was also given permission to use pleasure boats free of navigation and lock charges, and to "draw water from the canal at

Thornton three times a year for the purpose of taking and catching eels."

The navigators – the labourers who cut the narrow width canal – arrived in September 1800, and were aided in their work by what was said to have been a particularly mild winter.

Great economic benefits were forecast to boost the loyal and ancient borough of Buckingham - which after 600 years lost its county town status to Aylesbury in 1529 - and for almost sixty years it was a great success. Coal, slate, bricks, gravel and sand, together with imported produce direct from the London Docks, were brought into the town. In return, barges carried hay and straw back to London for the city's horses. Steve Miles, in his brief history of the canal at www.buckinghamcanal.org.uk cites trade on the Old Stratford Arm reaching 20,000 tons per year.

Timber, building materials and goods destined for Thornborough were unloaded at Leckhampstead Wharf, hauled across Toti's Bridge over the Ouse, and then up and over Sand Hill into the village.

All was fine until the arrival of the railways; when the Bletchley to Banbury line opened in the 1850s, larger loads could be carried to and from Buckingham more quickly. At the same time, the canal was silting up from the Buckingham end, not helped by Buckingham Corporation's decision to dump the town's sewage into the final stretch of canal into the town.

By the turn of the 20th century it was no longer navigable throughout its length, although coal and chemicals were still being brought up from Old Stratford as far as Leckhampstead Wharf; Thornborough miller Frank Taylor recalled helping Colonel Harris unload coal destined for Thornton Manor during World War 2.

It was officially abandoned by British Waterways in 1964, and since then it has been built over at either end, by the Buckingham Ring Road and by the A5 dual carriageway at Old Stratford.

Undeterred, Buckingham Canal Society is forging ahead with plans laid down at its formation in 1993 to eventually reopen most of the canal for navigation; much of the canal bed remains intact, although many bridges have long gone. Volunteers have done sterling work, and part of the BCS's current five-year plan is to get a basin established at Bourton Meadow and to re-water a stretch of the canal.

There is also an imaginative scheme currently being assessed by a consortium of local authorities, together with the Environment Agency, to use the restored canal as a flood storage reservoir, carrying away water which would otherwise flood Buckingham; how practicable this would be remains to be seen, but BCS is seeking funding opportunities through Bucks County Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council grants for a £46,000 feasibility study.

To get a picture of how it once was, take the public footpath from Thornborough over to Hyde Lane Lakes; enough work has been done to the lock itself, and enough silt and weed cleared out of the canal and its feeders, to see what it would have looked like in the early 1800s.

For the time being, your imagination will have to provide the narrow boats being pulled along by working horses, but in time, the Buckingham Arm Canal could be navigable once more.

MARK COLE
Thornborough Mill

Wishful Thinking or Free Advertising?

We had our boat, *Woodlander*, repainted this spring and decided that as Buckingham residents we were entitled to paint Buckingham on the side! On our travels this summer it has created a significant amount of interest from other boaters and also from passing walkers. As a result we have given out a number of promotional leaflets spreading the word about the Buckingham Arm.

Nigel and Helen Preston



Payment of Subs

Come late November you will be receiving your subscription renewal notifications. In the past this has involved you sending us a cheque, and repeating the process every year. To make life easier, we decided it might be worth offering you the option of setting up a standing order, or alternatively offering the facility to make payment through online banking. After all we are now well into the 21st century so I thought, why not. It won't suit everyone so we're perfectly happy to continue accepting cheques, unlike most places these days it has to be said.

Information will be coming through with your renewal letter next month. However if you'd like details in advance please drop me an email at treasurer@buckinghamcanal.org.uk and I'll gladly send them through.

It might also give you the opportunity to put one over the postal workers if their threatened strike comes off.

Vernon Draper

New Members Welcome

Jo Hearn
George Harlock
and a welcome back to Mike Freeman
founding member of the BCS, ex chairman
and secretary.

Wildlife Trust wins major grant to save 'local rainforest'

The **Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)** has won a major funding grant to support the conservation of chalk grasslands in the Chilterns. The Chilterns were singled out as one of nine areas of rare conservation value in the UK by WREN's new **Biodiversity Action Fund**. The £198,166 grant will contribute towards a three-year project managed by BBOWT in 13 nature reserves across the Chilterns. The reserves span from College Lake, near Tring (Bucks) in the north, down to Hartslock, near Goring (Oxon) in the south. It is the only project selected for funding by WREN in the whole of the South East region. Philippa Lyons, BBOWT's Chief Executive, highlighted the importance of the grant; "WREN's grant will be a tremendous boost to our efforts to save a wide range of threatened wildlife, much of which only occurs on chalk grassland."

Chalk grassland is said to be Europe's equivalent of the rainforest with the variety of grassland found in the Chilterns being especially wildlife-rich. It supports as many as 40 plant species per square metre, as well as many rare insects and molluscs.

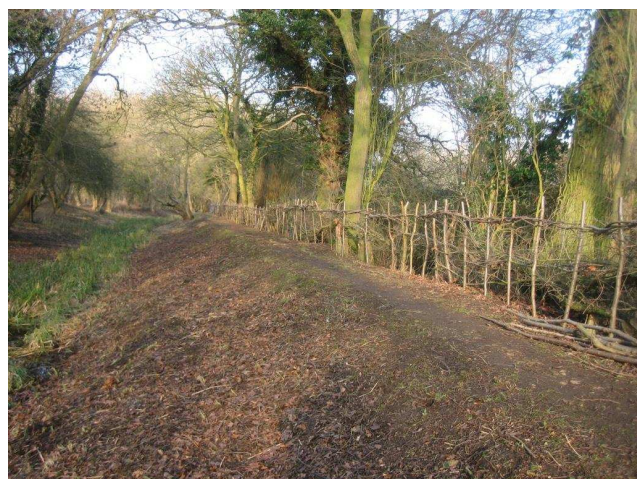
But the grasslands are under continuing threat; an estimated 80% have been destroyed in the past 60 years, largely due to changing agricultural practices. General neglect continues, along with specific challenges, such as the availability of grazing stock. In addition to protecting wildlife, BBOWT also aims to educate and inspire local landowners to take action to help preserve this important national wildlife treasure. The project will establish BBOWT's 13 Chilterns nature reserves as demonstration sites that will highlight how chalk grassland can be managed and restored and show just what a stunning habitat it can be.

A number of the nature reserves that will benefit are home to rare wildlife species. Most are designated as being nationally important for their wildlife and the project will be run in conjunction with Natural England, the government's conservation advisors. Hartslock Nature Reserve, near Goring in Oxon, home to the Adonis blue butterfly, small blue butterfly, lady orchid and monkey orchid (which is only found on two other sites in the whole of the UK) will benefit from the project. Dancersend Nature Reserve, near Aylesbury in Bucks, will benefit from efforts to restore new areas of grassland for important species such as the Duke of Burgundy butterfly, Chiltern gentian and glow worm.

The majority of these wonderful reserves are open for the public to visit and see the stunning wildflowers and other wildlife that they offer.

Report from Mark Vallance of BBOWT

Hedge laying, January 2009



The Canal

The reflections of Edna Bathe

The canal was like a vital artery that threaded its way through our village and onwards to the nearby town of Buckingham, bringing with it much needed life, hope and pleasure, to everyone young or old.

It was always fascinating, and a delight, to see the beautifully decorated horse-drawn barges as they made their way along the quietly moving waters of the canal to bring coal to the various wharves along its way.

The bargees were always friendly people, though often grimy from the dusty coal, their many children eager to see new faces and their passive shire-horses would plod slowly along the towpath to the encouragement of their owners, after negotiating the various wooden draw-bridges and hump-backed bridges that span the waterway.

Like so many, as a child I remember all the fun we had learning how to swim in the muddy waters just outside the village of Northfields. Then, when the frosts came, how we all enjoyed countless hours of skating on the frozen waters of this very same canal.

I felt the magnetism of the various species of fish that swam silently beneath the surface of the water as I waited patiently trying to catch them in a net. I felt the delight of the extraordinary array of wildlife that lived, though some times hidden away from sight, such as voles, mice, frogs, spiders, snails and moths, butterflies, linnets, warblers and thrush. The beautiful array of grasses, rushes, irises and hyssop – all thriving along the banks.

All these wonderful things, I perceived with pleasure and was saddened by the march of progress that removed them from our midst.

* * * * *

And now, read of the heroism shown by Edna as a very young child, along with her brothers and two Deanshanger workmen.

A Tragic Day I Will Always Remember

January 18th 1936 is a day I shall always remember. For several weeks the weather had been disturbingly cold, with considerable falls of snow and temperatures well below freezing.

However, on this particular day it was a little less cold so our enthusiasm for adventure increased. It was about mid-morning when my brothers Frank and Arthur and I were preparing to go outside to play. After putting on our warmest clothes, we set off to slide on the icy roads. Soon we tired of this game and decided to make our way to the frozen canal. Because of the severe weather during the month of January the barges had not come and all was quiet. A thick layer of ice had gradually formed on the surface of the water much to the delight of skaters.

As the three of us looked down from the hump-backed bridge, the white sparkling ice looked so inviting. Pushing and shoving each other in eager anticipation, we scrambled down the red stone steps leading to the canal pathway. In our excitement we failed to notice that there were no other children playing there. Perhaps, it was too early for them? Squealing with delight, we each had a super time sliding up and down. With no thoughts of time or safety, we were unaware of the lurking dangers that were silently creeping up on us.

Suddenly a young boy, Royston Hall, called cheerily to us from the pathway before joining us on the opposite side of the canal, and when the four of us started to slide again strange vibrations were felt under our feet. Terrifying creaking and cracking sounds were heard. In a very short time Royston had disappeared under the thinning ice. Immediately my brother Frank tried to pull him out of the freezing cold water, but he slipped further under the canopy of ice. My brother made desperate attempts to save him, but each time he failed. By this time my brother was in imminent danger of drowning so, without hesitation and without fear, I went to his aid. This unfortunately proved too much for a four-year-old girl like myself, so my other brother Arthur made a courageous attempt to save all three of us. At that crucial moment two men, who were working at the nearby farm, came to our assistance after being alerted by Mr Johnson, who swept the roads. He was waving his sweeping brush and shouting over the wall of the bridge to attract the attention of the men. By that time much of the ice had broken and the two men were able to rescue my brothers and I. The little boy Royston was also brought out of the water, but all attempts to revive him failed. He was found to be wearing Wellington boots and these had acted as weights when filled with water. During the weeks that followed, pneumonia kept the three of us in our beds.

As winter changed into spring, celebrations were planned to mark the "Merry Month of May" and were to take place on the village green. The celebrations included the crowning of the May Queen and dancing around a multi-coloured Maypole. A surprise for my brothers and I was also included. Amid all the excitement of the afternoon we were asked to stand on a specially prepared table. We were then each proudly presented with a certificate on behalf of The Royal Humane Society. This presentation was in recognition of the bravery that we each had shown on that dreadful morning.

Unbeknown to us, the people of the village wanted to show their special appreciation of the efforts that my brother Frank had made trying to save the young boy. A medal and a watch had been engraved to commemorate his gallant attempts, and these were also presented to him on that same occasion. The two men, Mr Church and Mr Godfrey, were also presented with similar certificates for their outstanding bravery, and to that we added our own profound thanks. I believe I was, at that time, the youngest person to be given such an award by The Royal Humane Society. That horrendous day in January certainly taught us a lesson we would never forget. The appreciation and affection shown to us on that day in May helped to dispel some of the nightmares we suffered.

See over for a press cutting from the local newspaper of 22 May 1936, and a copy of the certificate awarded to Edna Davis.

DROWNING RESCUE EFFORTS

PRESENTATION OF TESTIMONIALS

CORONER'S PRAISE

During an interval in the May Day festivities at Deanshanger on Saturday, Royal Humane Society certificates were presented to five people living in the village.

All the recipients had taken a gallant, but ineffectual part in attempting the rescue of a five-years-old boy named Royston Hall, who was drowned in the canal in January.

Mr. W. E. Whitton, the coroner from the Tewkesbury District, made the presentations, and was introduced by Captain A. Canvin, the local magistrate.

Mr. Whitton explained that on January 18 the little boy named Hall attempted to cross some fragile ice in order to play with some companions. First of all Harold Frank Davis attempted a rescue, but the ice broke and let him in. His sister Edna, aged two and a half years, went to his assistance, and they were both struggling in the icy water when another brother, Arthur Reginald Davis, aged eight, also got into difficulties when he tried to get them out. Eventually, their cries brought John Henry Godfrey, who with the aid of a pole, rescued the Davis's, and finally James Church dived in fully clothed into the frozen water and found the body of Hall.

CERTIFICATES' PRAISE

Such an act of bravery by these children and men, said the Coroner, deserved recognition, and on the suggestion of Mr. R. L. C. Ridgway, he thought it proper to report the facts to the Royal Humane Society, who had awarded the five testimonials.

The first of the parchments was handed to Harold Frank Davis. On this it was stated that "at personal risk he went to the rescue of a child who was unfortunately drowned and whose life he gallantly attempted to save." The Coroner remarked that it would be nice to hang up in his dwelling that other people might see that he had done something to be proud of.

The little girl Edna's certificate was for having gone to the rescue of her brother, who was in imminent danger of drowning, and whose life she courageously attempted to save.

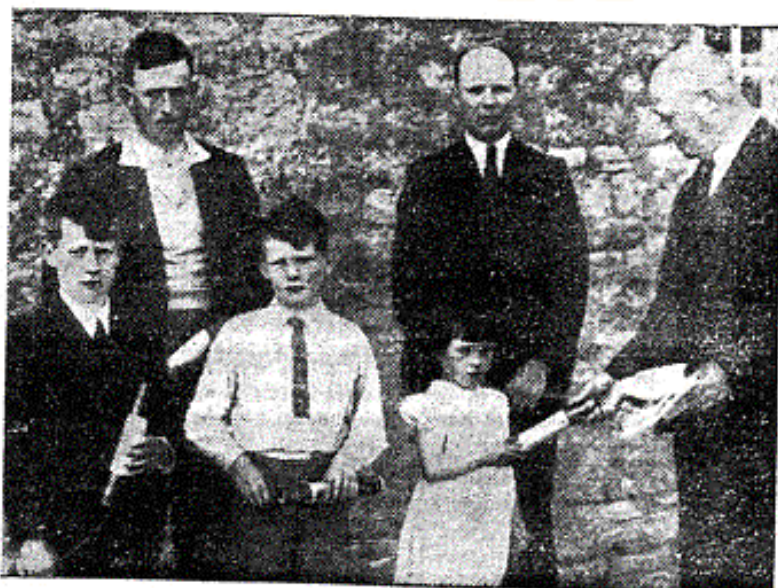
Then came the turn of Arthur Reginald Davis. His certificate recorded the fact that "he had gone to the rescue of two persons, his brother and sister, who were in imminent danger of drowning, and one of whom he gallantly saved in attempting to rescue the other."

"DID YOUR BIT"

Of John Godfrey, Mr. Whitton remarked, "You did your bit. You went to the rescue of a boy who was in imminent danger, and whose life you gallantly saved. You pulled Frank out."

The last to receive a certificate was James Church. The Coroner pointed out that this man had to dive twice in frozen water to find the body of Hall.

In conclusion, Mr. Whitton expressed his thanks to Mr. Ridgway for suggesting to him that he should report the facts to the Society.



MR. W. E. WHITTON, Coroner for South Northants, presenting Royal Humane Society certificates to five Deanshanger residents who made a gallant but vain attempt to save a five-years-old boy who was drowned in the canal. The children are (left to right): Harold Davis, Arthur Davis, and Edna Davis, and the adults Mr. John Godfrey and Mr. James Church.



Royal Humane Society

INSTITUTED 1774.

Supported by Voluntary Contributions.

PATRON
His Majesty the King

VICE PATRON
H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, K.C., &c.

PRESIDENT
H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, K.G. &c.

A Meeting of the Committee of the Royal Humane Society
held at WATERGATE HOUSE, YORK BUILDINGS, ADELPHI, W.C.2.
on the 17th day of February 1936

Present James H. Blackwood Esq. *in the Chair*

In the Presence of
That the Honorary Secretaries of the Society submitted
in Parchment the following given to
Edna Davis
for having on the 18th January 1936 gone to the rescue of her brother
Harold who was in imminent danger of drowning in the Grand
Union Canal at Deanshanger, Northants, and whose life she
courageously attempted to save.

James H. Blackwood
 Secretary.

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

Treasurer - **Vernon Draper**
 12 Chipperfield Close, New Bradwell, Milton Keynes MK13 0EP
 treasurer@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

01908 312239
 Mobile 07961 302039

Secretary – **Helen Preston**
 16 Mallard Drive, Buckingham MK18 1GJ
 secretary@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

01280 821232

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, "*The Buckingham Navigator*" - 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