

The Buckingham Navigator

The Newsletter of The Buckingham Canal Society

Registered Charity No. 1072924



A word from the Editor...

Following in the wake of a slew of profitable and successful events, the Lock Ransom at Cosgrove, the recruitment drive in Buckingham Market Square and the most recent work parties to name a few, the Society is setting its sights on a major milestone this autumn - the build up to the first official re-watering of the Canal! The ideas for promotion and development are coming thick and fast and a healthy programme of upcoming work parties and team building days look set to give us the best possible chance of making those ideas a reality. Here on the waterways autumn is well into its stride and the temptation to light the stove in the evenings gets stronger every day! Coming through the lock at Cosgrove recently, a jam of several overly keen boaters caused a good humoured jostling in front of us for the now open lock just behind us. Having lost the battle for the lock, one boater remarked across the noise of both our engines as we passed:

"If only we could go down the arm to Buckingham instead!"

Here's hoping he'll get his chance soon!

Toby Tottle



Spreading the Word! BCS recruits thirty new members in Buckingham on 11th September.

Getting in Touch!

To get in touch with the society, or to contribute to the Navigator, please refer to the list of contact details on pages 11 & 12.

In This Issue:

Work Party Reports

Chairman Athina Beckett recounts the tireless efforts & the most recent successes of the BCS work parties.

Wanted!

The society is looking for someone with artistic skills, do you know the right person for the job?

The Road Less Travelled

Bob Martin's 1965 diary recalls his adventure in the undergrowth of the Buckingham Canal.

Make a Difference Day!

The society is again participating in the national M.A.D.D. - Find out how you can join in this year!

A New Social Event for Your Calendar!

Terry Cavender breaks the news of a new society social event, find out where, when & why!

AND MORE!

plus: chairman's chat, work party dates & upcoming special events!

Chairman's Chat

We are delighted to announce that John Bercow, MP for Buckingham and Speaker of the House of Commons, has agreed to become a patron of the society. He joins Tim Boswell, now Lord Boswell of Aynho, as one of our patrons.

We are arranging a site visit for John and several Buckinghamshire Councillors to show them the canal on Saturday 2nd October. This visit will cover three of our sites, Hyde Lane Lock, Little Hill Farm and Bourton Meadow.

We have also recently met with Buckinghamshire County Councillors and we have agreed to establish a formal partnership with them. This will help us when applying for grants as well as keeping the canal and its restoration in the forefront of the Council's agenda.

Since my last report our annual Lock Ransom Festival at Cosgrove (pictured below) has been and gone, it proved to be our most successful yet, raising over £1,200. This year



we were lucky with the weather and a warm evening helped us enjoy a fish and chip supper. This year there were more trade stalls and boats attending the festival and these included regulars like the Cheese Boat, the Fudge Boat and the Chandlery Boat, not to mention the working boats Raymond and Nutfield. Volunteers ran the cake stall, the bric-a-brac stall and the 'pluck a duck' game again proved very successful.

My thanks go 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 again organised this year's event and did a marvellous job on behalf of the society.

Plans are also in hand to re-water the section of canal at Bourton Meadow. With help from Roger Leishman of the Wendover Arm Trust we have established that planning permission isn't needed to re-water this site and we have been in touch with local contractors obtaining quotations for the work required. As this section of canal doesn't hold water the whole section will need to be relined, of course that sort of work doesn't come cheap! Fundraising for this project is being investigated at present.

We have also decided to organise some social evenings over the winter months with the idea of giving people who don't come on the work parties the chance of meeting other members. It will be a Friday evening, meeting at the Two Brewers in Thornborough at 8pm. Contact Terry Cavender or see page 11 for details.

I am pleased to welcome thirty new members to the society as a result of a recruitment drive in Buckingham on the 11th September!

For the National Heritage Weekend we organised a walk on Sunday 12th September, which again proved to be very popular with 24 people and a dog in attendance!

A long way ahead but put this date in your diary; **our AGM will be on Saturday 29th January at Buckingham Community Centre.**

**Athina Beckett
Chairman**

Local community working with
Buckingham Canal Society and local
government to deliver restored waterway vision

Hot
Off
The
Press

John Bercow becomes patron of Buckingham Canal Society



Buckingham, Bucks, July 2010: The Rt Hon John Bercow, MP for Buckingham, has become the patron of the Buckingham Canal Society. At a meeting with the Society and Buckinghamshire County Council, John said **"I am delighted to become the patron of the Buckingham Canal Society. I have been very impressed with the vision of the canal restoration. It has many potential benefits that it can bring to Buckingham and the Ouse Valley both from economic, environmental and potential flood management perspectives. Local residents and councillors have come together and are driving this through both the Buckingham Canal Society and the Buckingham Local Area Forum, demonstrating the best practices of the community working together with the support of local government. This project will clearly benefit all the communities it touches both in collaboration that it brings and the end result of a restored waterway."**

Buckinghamshire County Council formalise partnership with the Buckingham Canal Society

September 2010: Buckinghamshire County Council have formed a partnership with the Buckingham Canal Society in order to help progress the society's aim to restore the canal. The partnership is aimed to leverage mutual benefit for both organisations without any direct incremental costs being incurred by either and has been arranged with the help and support of Mark Bailey who is the Natural Environment Team Manager.

David Polhill, chairman of Buckinghamshire County Council said **"I have long been a supporter of the canal restoration project and this is a positive step towards restoration. Local residents and councillors have come together and are driving this through both the Buckingham Canal Society and the Buckingham Local Area Forum. There are many potential benefits that the project can bring to Buckingham and the Ouse Valley ranging from economic, environmental and potential flood management perspectives."**

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WANTED !

BCS needs an

Artist or Architect

We are approaching the stage where we will be able to get water in the section of the canal at Bourton Meadow (the Buckingham end) and as part of what we are doing we would like some artistic impressions. These will be used to share the vision with various statutory bodies as well as the general public in the area.

As a guide, the kind of images we're looking for would be similar to this:



For more information please contact Terry Cavender: 01280 860316

Work Party Organiser's Report

Autumn 2010

The work has gone extremely well at Little Hill Farm and we have completed the work on the outside of the eastern side of the bridge. We only have the upper part of the west side of the bridge to re-point next year as well as the more difficult work of restoring under the arch of the bridge.

As you may have read in my 'Chairman's Chat' column John Bercow has now become a patron of the society and will be visiting the site in October, in preparation for which we were completing the bridge work, clearing the winding hole and trying to make the site look its best for the visit.



This year we have again had several very successful visits from companies fulfilling 'team building' days with us, including two visits from the Open University and one from Santander. With extra people on site we have been able to clear large sections of the towpath and keep the hedges in order as well as progressing the restoration work on the bridge. The work parties will soon be returning to the BBOWT Nature Reserve once the work at the Bourton Meadow site is completed.



Usually at this site we strim the canal bed and the near side of the bank twice a year to keep it looking like a 'proper' canal but this year we have been asking local companies to give quotations for the re-lining of this section of canal which we hope to have in water shortly! This has meant

extra work on site as we now have to clear the canal bed completely so that a 'levels' survey can be carried out. A group of fifteen people from the Open University did a grand job working on this site in August and our own volunteers hope to complete this work by the end of September.

Back at the BBOWT Nature Reserve we plan to continuing with the hedge-laying. Whilst not canal restoration per se, 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. Further work planned for this site includes deepening the canal bed and removing some of the reeds on the far side of the lock so that there is a clear passage of water in this section of canal. We have completed the rebuilding of the steps on the far side of the lock and are planning to start the re-building work on the steps next to the footpath shortly.

For those who helped plant over a hundred saplings last March the good news is most of them have survived, thanks in no small part to the efforts of several members who carried out watering sessions throughout the summer.

As always if any member or friend would like to visit the site please contact me as this can be arranged. You can either view the site as a visitor or join our volunteers - which brings with it the advantage of allowing you to meet new people and learn new skills.

Athina Beckett
Work Party Organiser

Why Bother? by Terry Cavender

Drawing & Painting the Town!

Having found a few moments it was time to pen a few words for the newsletter. For those who are new or have just forgotten, I am Terry Cavender and I have been involved with the BCS since October 2008. My previous ramblings can be found in various editions of The Navigator. Meanwhile, read on for thoughts about feasibility studies, joined up thinking, mapping and surveying...

The 'Outline Feasibility Study' by Halcrow confirmed that the canal CAN be restored. Partnership meetings with South Northants Council led us to exploring issues around the need for planning permission and what (if any) other approvals are needed to put a canal back together and in water. One positive point is that the original Act of Parliament that enabled the canal in 1794 is still active and has never been repealed. This gives us a 'local or private act' which sets a precedent in many ways for what we can do. Some of the work will still be subject to other approvals as to how it is done but in general; the Act still gives us the ability to get it done. Discussion with the planning authorities and Environment Agency are still ongoing to clarify the necessary depth (of paperwork, not the canal!) A number of strategy sessions have now been scheduled to develop all the strands of activity into a cohesive framework which will hopefully channel all of our efforts into creating some channels full of water!

Down the Drain...



BCS has responded to a consultation document issued by the environment Agency which looks at medium to long term flood management of the whole of the Ouse Valley from The Wash right the way back to Turweston which is upstream of Buckingham). We are also actively participating in the Buckingham local Area Forum Flooding Sub-Group which has been reformed with Buckinghamshire County Council and a number of local Parish/Town Councils with a view to exploring the use of balancing lakes along the Ouse Valley. Hopefully we can use these as a source of water for the canal as we progress.

Forging Links

An important part of moving the restoration forward is to establish partnerships with a number of public bodies and other organisations. The process of formalising our existing partnerships with BW, IWA and MK Heritage are all in hand. Work is also underway with South Northants Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council to follow on from the formal partnership we now have with Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC). The BCC partnership has already enabled us to utilise a contractor's licence for OS data which has enabled us to use the grant money we were awarded for the mapping project to move to a deeper level of detail than we had originally hoped for.

Granted!

BCS was recently awarded £4500 from the Grassroots Grants fund via the Buckinghamshire Community Foundation for which we are immensely grateful. The money is targeted at improving our understanding of the land, boundaries, covenants, hydrography and other similar data so that we have it to support discussions and consultations. The money has also funded additional mapping data and equipment as well as safety equipment for working on or near the road.

HELP!



As many of you will already know, BCS members have been revisiting and surveying sections of the canal. I use the word 'surveying' in multiple connotations! Some of the surveys have been of the check the state of the path, fences, hedgerow, rights of way and counting rabbit holes variety. Others have been of the full blown staff and surveyor's level kind as discussed above, we have even been painting some of the bushes and manhole covers! This work is ongoing and we would welcome anyone that wants to come and help with The Elephant Project (elephants are very big and the saying goes you can't eat it all at once and have to do so bit by bit – plus I am large and turning grey!)

Different aspects of the work range from a fair bit of walking up and down the canal through to reading various documents held in the archives in order to glean all the information we can about each of the assets on the course of 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!

And to finish...

A man was walking along the towpath when he saw a narrow boat preparing to moor up. The helmsman jumped off the stern, rope in hand, with an extremely fat seabird under his arm. He was followed by an attractive woman with nice blonde hair wearing a designer jacket, but from the waist down she was wearing a scruffy black skirt, striped woollen socks and shoes with squared-off ends.

A second woman stepped off the boat, but this one wore a black pointed hat, her face had a large hooked nose and chin. Around her shoulders was a tatty black cloak but surprisingly her outfit was completed by expensive jeans and a pair of bright pink cros.

The boater then proceeded to wrap the rope around the seabird and the first woman grabbed hold of its legs. She then took the hand of the second woman who in turn clung onto a bollard.

"That's a funny way to tie your boat up," said the walker

"Oh no, it's a standard naval knot," replied the boater. "A round tern and two half witches!"



MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY!

On **Saturday 30th October** we are taking part in 'Make a Difference Day' again!

This is a nationwide volunteering event, the idea being to encourage people to volunteer and do something different. If you were thinking about joining us but have held back this would be a great time to take the plunge as there should be several new people on site. Also 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.

Future Events

Friday 1st – Sunday 3rd October

Stoke Bruerne Village at War

Details: Jenny Copeland 01327 340492

Saturday 2nd October

Visit of John Bercow MP & Buckingham Counsellors

to Buckingham Canal

Details Terry Cavender 01280 860316

Tuesday 12th October 8pm

IWA Northampton – Talk: Up the Mac – Roger Butler

Walnut Tree Pub, Blisworth

Friday 15th – Sunday 17th October

MK IWA Canal Clean Up

Details Peter Caswell 01908 282589

Monday 25th October 7.45

IWA MK Talk Wetlands Wildlife

MK Village Pavillion

Saturday 30th October 10.00

Make a Difference Day

Buckingham Canal, BBOWT Nature Reserve

Details Athina Beckett 01908 661217

Tuesday 9th November 8pm

IWA Northampton Talk – China's Grand Canal – Liam Darcy-Brown

Walnut Tree, Blisworth

Friday 19th November 8pm

BCS Pub Social Evening

Details Terry Cavender

Monday 22nd November 7.45

IWA MK Talk: North West Passage – Ian Fletcher
MK Village Pavilion

Monday 6th December 7.45

IWA MK Christmas Social pre-booked event

Sunday 11th December 5pm onwards

Stoke Bruerne Illuminated Boats & Carol Singing

Friday 21st January 8pm

BCS Pub Social Evening

Details Terry Cavender

Saturday 29th January 2011

Buckingham Canal Society AGM

Buckingham Community Centre

The Road Less Travelled

In 1965 Bob Martin explored the hidden course of the Buckingham Canal on foot between Cosgrove and Buckingham itself. Hitchhiking when the route was impassable, he charted his journey on a route long since abandoned...

DOWN THE MAIN LINE... FROM BRIDGE 69

I scramble down the bank into the cutting near Wolverton and walk in the direction of bridge 68. Here I am forced to climb back onto the road and take the footpath over to a nearby church and then walk below the embankment which carries the main line to the aqueduct.

Here I am searching for the flight of five locks that carried the canal down to the Ouse and up again the other side by another set of five. There is not much to see, so I can presume the locks were either dismantled (at least on the south side) or buried by the embankment.

I climb the embankment, but not being on the towpath side I find it impossible to cross the Ouse. Through the embankment below is a tunnel for pedestrians with a gate at one end. Luckily for me it is unlocked, saving me a circuitous journey back into Wolverton. All is peaceful and quiet at Cosgrove Lock and since joining the canal I haven't seen a single person. I cross the lock and push on towards Old Stratford...

APPROACHING OLD STRATFORD WHARVES

Only a hundred yards of the Buckingham Arm is navigable here, so at least it makes an excellent mooring! From here it is silted completely up, at the first bridge wooden piling has shut off what water had previously got through from the main line. The bridge being of stone it is deeply scoured with rope marks, made many years ago.

The trees grow down close to the towpath and make the going a little difficult but after the next bridge a clear path exists to Old Stratford. I pass a sluice and milepost number one before reaching it over several stiles. An old narrow boat lies on the "hold-out" side, it is in an advanced stage of rot.

I can't follow the line of the canal into Old Stratford to its termination as that part now lies in someone's back garden! There still remains the site of a swing bridge, the actual bridge having disappeared, but a date still remains, stamped on the brickwork - this, I suppose, was the last date major repairs were completed - 1913. Crossing a recreation ground I look over a wall to find an old wharf house in the same back garden into which the canal runs and the foundations of another. I make my way back to the narrow section of the branch.



THROUGH THE WILDERNESS...

I struggled through the hawthorn bushes that now grow on the towpath between Old Stratford Wharves and Towcester road bridge, before clambering down into the canal bed which, despite still holding a little water, was much easier than the previous route. Had I gone via the towpath under the road bridge I would have had to bend double as it is so low. Even here I only make it through to the Watling Street Bridge with extreme difficulty as garden fences encroach well onto the old towpath.

At Old Stratford there is a coal wharf still in existence and a wharf house, although nowadays the coal comes by road. The Watling Street Bridge has no towpath and at one time went beneath a house making the passage beneath the building about fifty yards long – I suppose this brings it into the category of a tunnel! From the west end it looks quite picturesque but when you get to the east end the going is far harder and rubbish has been dumped here. I am stopped by water too deep to traverse at this time.

I walk back to Watling Street and onto the Buckingham Road where two decaying narrow boats lay side by side, sunk in the canal. A new housing estate and a road have encroached on the canal here.

At Littlehill Farm the farmer has had the canal dredged, blocked off and uses it now as a reservoir. Near Thornton I reach the sixth milepost and then the modern Thornton Road bridge.

...TO BUCKINGHAM WHARF

The remains of lift bridges are here, only the platform is left with handrails and the hinges are stamped "G.J.C.Co.". Bridge number "21" the only one left on the whole length of this arm, is close by. After Leckhampstead Bridge a long stretch of the canal is overgrown with giant rushes about eight or nine feet tall, approaching Hyde Lane Lock No.1. The lock is a narrow one and from what is left of the gates, I deduce it had double tail gates and a single head gate.

Opposite the towpath is a large lake which I suppose supplied the lower part of the canal, but is level with the pound above the lock. A pump is working here, I suppose some Water Board has use for the water left here. At Maids Moreton Mill (the ruins of it) the Ouse runs off the canal. Buckingham Lock has the decaying remains of lock gates and the dates of last major repairs - 1878 and 1891. Leaving the lock the going is difficult but I soon come to open fields where the path then suddenly becomes very easy to follow as it is joined by a path from an allotment ground. Once again the main road comes in close and you have to take to it to reach Buckingham Wharf as the towpath is impassable. The Wharf is fast being filled in and a petrol station is being built on part of it, although a wharf house still stands.

The bus service from here to Wolverton is very poor - there being one that arrives in Wolverton ten minutes after the London train leaves, the earlier one gets you back some three hours beforehand. As it was, I was very lucky with lifts!

R. J. Martin

BCS Committee

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Rt Hon John Bercow MP
Lord Boswell of Aynho

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Toby Tottle - **e:** editor@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

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Membership Secretary

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Milton Keynes MK7 7SQ

Committee members can also be
contacted by post c/o:

16 Mallard Drive,
Buckingham,
MK18 1GJ

or:
e: info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk



October

Thursday 7th
Sunday 10th
Thursday 21st**
Sunday 24th*

November

Thursday 4th
Sunday 14th
Thursday 18th**
Sunday 28th*

December

Thursday 2nd
Sunday 12th
Thursday 16th**
Sunday 26th
Thursday 30th

Meeting at 10am.

**For site details
contact Athina Beckett:**

tel: 01908 661217

e: chairman@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

*** Survey Walk**

**** Survey Discussion**

submissions

Handwritten or typed, we're always keen to receive contributions to the newsletter.

Articles, photographs, reminiscences, ideas for the future; anything! Please send all submissions (**by 13th December 2010 for inclusion in the Winter 2010 Issue**) to either of the following:

by email: editor@buckinghamcanal.org.uk
on paper: The Editor, 22 Woodward Place, Loughton Lodge,
Milton Keynes, MK8 9LG.

Welcome!

Due to the success of the recent recruitment drive in Buckingham and the Lock Ransom weekend at Cosgrove, the society is proud to welcome the following new members onboard!

Stuart Cummins
Les Rice
John Collinge
Pearl Lewis
Ray & Jayne Robinson
Julie & Andy
Alan & Jan Andrews
Chris Durham & Patricia Titmas
Fiona & Rob West
Andy Timms
Chris Jolly
Linda Marsh
Martin Laughlin
Jim & Mary Stenhouse
Andy Plumbly
Alan Wand
K Poole & J Wright
Roland & Christine Smith
Sharon Crawford
James Burke & Erin Sadler
Darren Pryde
Jenny Rudd & Family
Gavin & Sue Jones
Lyn & Kevin Robinson
Rick Sharpe
Mr & Mrs Ian Mellor
Roland & Janet Carrington
Mike Smith
Brian & Christine Peplow
C.D. Mullineux
D.S. Johnson
Janet Cobham
Derek Parmenter

Ardley
Greens Norton
Bancroft
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Blisworth
Bletchley
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Buckingham
Buckingham
Maids Moreton
Buckingham
Milton Keynes
Milton Keynes
Buckingham
Akeley
Buckingham
Thornton
Buckingham
Tingewick

Fancy a Natter?

We are reshaping the Thursday get together and from September we will meet third Fridays on the odd months and third Thursdays on the even months. The purpose is now broader than just the mapping and we hope to make it a regular social and open topic discussion about the canal restoration progress. We are happy to move venue if folk want, or happy to meet at Thornborough as we have been. Please contact Terry for venue suggestions (see page 11).

Corporate Members

Wyvern Shipping Co.

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Leighton Buzzard, LU7 2TF



Nikon Optical UK Ltd.

3 Tanners Drive
Blakelands, MK14 5BU



Taverners Boat Club

Thrupp Wharf
Cosgrove, MK19 7JP



IWA

Northampton Branch



October: Thursday 21st

November: Friday 19th

December: Thursday 23rd

January: Friday 21st

February: Thursday 17th

March: Friday 18th

April: Thursday 21st

May: Friday 20th



Advertising in The Buckingham Navigator

Advertisements are welcome in The Navigator in order to assist funding.

Rates are as below. Payment is required before copy date.

Cheques are to be made payable to "Buckingham Canal Society".

33% reduction for 3 issues.

Whole Page - £16

Half Page - £10

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Quarter Page - £6

Back Page - £22

If your business is interested in becoming a corporate member of the Buckingham Canal Society please contact the membership secretary directly. Details can be found on page 12.