

THE BUCKINGHAM NAVIGATOR

The Newsletter of Buckingham Canal Society

Registered Charity No. 1156662

Issue No. 104
Summer 2020



Featuring:

- **COVID-19 and How it's Affected Restoration**
- **An Extra Special Focus on Wildlife**
- **The Old Stratford Bridge or Tunnel Debate**



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Editorial

Welcome to the Summer 2020 edition of The Buckingham Navigator!

Well, much like yourselves, I never would have imagined we would find ourselves in such challenging times as these. COVID-19 has affected all of our lives, in so many different ways. Some more so than others. Here at BCS, work has almost ground to a halt, but as restrictions have gradually eased, individuals have been able to continue safely with minor tasks besides completing ongoing safety checks, which we are required to do. This has meant that there is somewhat less restoration work to report on in this issue. However, I do hope you enjoy this rather 'lighter' issue and its focus on canal wildlife.



Thank you to all the contributors. Cover photo of a Sand Martin © xpixel. Sand Martins are the least numerous of our three regular Hirundines that return to the UK each year, and have been seen at Bourton Meadow this Spring after an arduous and perilous journey from West Africa. See the full article on page 14. **Why not drop me an email about what you enjoyed in this issue, and furthermore, why not contribute ideas or articles for future editions (see page 29). In addition to our website, we now have a wide social media presence:**

Please visit our website at: www.buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Follow/Like us on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/buckinghamcanalsociety

Reach us on Twitter at: www.twitter.com/bcsocietyuk

Find us on Instagram at: www.instagram.com/buckinghamcanalsociety

Watch us on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/channel/UCUsImDM1ExIXiH2iW9zAJhg

Thank you, and please stay safe, save lives, and protect the NHS.

Ian Matson
Editor

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Restoration Site Update



© Terry Cavender

Social distancing along the towpath - Terry Cavender walking back along Cosgrove Marina with Colin Levett on 25th March.

The Spring That Never Sprung for BCS

Because of the work effort needed at Cosgrove to complete the bridge restoration, less work had been carried out at our other sites last year, and so a backlog of work has built up in some of these areas. At a project meeting in January, a decision was made to schedule in work at all sites this year. I would have taken on the task of running the work parties at Bourton Meadow and Hyde Lane's Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve, working with our own volunteers. We would also use the external organisations where we would have been able to get a large number of people on site and therefore clear large areas in a day.

Keeping an Eye on Bourton Meadow

One particular problem is at Bourton Meadow where the reeds we planted several years ago have started to spread right across the canal bed. If left unchecked, these would block the flow of water. Some reeds on the non towpath side are being kept as they have proved to be a great place for nesting birds, including Reed Warblers. The Sunday group of volunteers have been working hard at this site at the beginning of the year, and more hands would have been needed. One of our trustees who lives close to Bourton Meadow has been able to keep an eye on this site with his wife and clear any dangerous problems that might occur here.

Before the government's COVID-19 restrictions came into force, I had been getting a good response from all the companies who had joined us last year. 2019 saw the largest number of groups to have worked with us, with over fourteen external organisations sending employees to join our volunteers. Most of those were in the process of booking their days again this year when the restrictions commenced. I also had requests from three new companies who were eager to work with us this year, including Volkswagen who would have joined us at the end of April on a couple of days, bringing about thirty of their staff to work at Bourton Meadow. Of course with the way things are currently, this has all been put on hold. Volkswagen did make a very generous donation of £500 to BCS though, and we look forward to working with them, hopefully later in the year.

The Nature Reserve is Doing Blooming Well Thankyou

At our Hyde Lane site, we would normally be cutting back any overgrown hedges and strimming back the foliage at this time of year, but the good news is that where we gave the canal bank a very hard strim last year we had plenty of wild flower growing along the canal bank. This is particularly good news as this site is a nature reserve after all, as well as being part of the wider canal system, albeit currently isolated from it. We also have a wooden bridge waiting to be put in place across the stream when the restrictions are eased appropriately enough.

A couple of trees have recently fallen across the towpath in places. As the towpath forms part of the Ouse Valley Way, and is still open to the public, permission was given by the

Buckinghamshire County Council Rights of Way team for two of our trustees to cut back and remove any dangerous trees blocking the towpath.

I do hope to restart the practical task work parties at these two sites as soon as it is safe to do so.

Athina Beckett

Trustee, Volunteer Leader and Work Party Organiser

Strange Times Indeed

As I write this, its week three of the March/April COVID-19 restrictions and its been very strange. Whilst there are much bigger things to ponder than canal restoration, the trustees have a duty of care, a responsibility for sites to be safe, and Charity Commission regulations to comply with. So why is this not just a 'blank page'?

Collectively as trustees, we took the decision to stop all work parties, but specific tasks agreed with Canal & River Trust and other landowners have had to continue.

Bourton Meadow is in Safe Local Hands

Gerry and Ruth Millard live together in Linden Village and often walk the canal at Bourton Meadow. Naturally, they took on the monitoring of this section, checking for such things as obstructions to the path, water levels, fish in distress, pollution, and that the solar pump is working. These, amongst others, are all essential safety tasks that don't normally get much publicity. I am pleased to confirm their latest feedback was "all OK".

Minor Storm Damage is Dealt With at Hyde Lane

With no one living in the immediate vicinity and the fishing lake having been shut down, immediate access is a challenge. However, early on, Athina Beckett walked to the Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve and found a tree down at the lock. Gerry subsequently went to assess it a few days later and as I write this I await a pole saw from Canal & River Trust to be able to deal with it, along with a couple of challenges at Cosgrove. Whilst walking, Gerry was able to confirm a good outflow of water from the solar pump at the Hyde Lane site.

Cosgrove Has its Ups and Downs, in More Ways Than One

Chris Bent, Colin Levett, Gerry and myself have been taking it in turns to check Bridge No.1 and the construction compound whilst restoration has been shut down. Regrettably, we had a solar panel stolen in early March, followed by the attempted theft of a water pump. After discussion with local boaters, Cosgrove Marina and Canal & River Trust, we agreed to install some solar powered WiFi CCTV cameras. Once all the GDPR compliance was

in place, these were then put up by two of us whilst keeping to a safe social distance. These provide some good monitoring as the picture of our workboat Louise shows.

As agreed with Canal & River Trust, and following the theft and attempted theft, Chris and Colin have been doing some work to improve our storage, having got the second flat pack container to site and in place just before the restrictions came into force. This is enabling us to store more of the valuable equipment and materials securely. We look forward to getting on with our work as soon as current restrictions allow, and having the metal handrails in place on the bridge sides will be next on the task list when we resume.



Working 'downstairs', as many of us love to refer to the part under the bridge, we have made a few adjustments and stopped pumping out for the shutdown to save us from making frequent visits and to save on fuel for the pumps.

This brought about a few challenges in needing to rod through the pipe that connects the bridge void to the rewatered section. A good flow has been kept going, and this means lots of water in sections one and two, and also some in three. The increased water level has meant the few leaks have again become visible in the field. These are being remediated by sprinkling clay power/granules in the areas of the leaks in the expectation that this is carried into the small fissures and swells up in place. Otherwise we may be doing some micro trench work when we get back on site.

For those interested, the rule in section one that is fixed to the metal fence pin is set to the top of it at a navigation depth of 1.4m (4'8"). So, when we see the reading on it at 450mm (18"), this means it is 550mm (22") below navigation depth. As described previously, there is a monk's drain that acts like an overflow that is taking the extra water further on its journey to rehydrate section two. The last check showed this to be about 375mm (15") deep along to the bund by the oil pipeline, with water starting to percolate into the clay and then on through the pipe into section three.

We also have a tree fallen across the towpath near the oil pipeline and have asked Canal & River Trust for a pole saw to be hired out so that we can tackle this, along with another one which is at risk in addition to clearing the fallen tree at our Hyde Lane site as previously mentioned.

So, whilst we humans stay indoors, mother nature and gravity are doing some wonderful restoration tasks for us whilst we keep our social distances and monitor the safety and security of the sites as a whole.

Terry Cavender
Trustee and Executive Officer



©Terry Cavender

The void of Bridge No.1 shown here filled with water to the level of the interconnecting pipe to fill section 1.



©Terry Cavender

Before the COVID-19 restrictions came into force, Ruth Millard had been preparing more hedge planting at the top of the step at Bridge No.1.



© Terry Cavender

Section 2 of the Old Stratford Cut at Cosgrove at its new depth of around 375mm (15").

Do You Dig Canals?...We Do!



© Livia Fallarino

Work parties are held most Thursdays and the second Sunday of each month and are always friendly, welcoming and very rewarding. Additional construction/equipment work parties operate most Tuesdays and on the last Sunday of each month

If you would like to become involved, please contact me using my contact details on page 30.

In addition, work party dates can be found on page 29, and more detailed information about these and extra curricular dates can be found by visiting our work parties web page at:

www.buckinghamcanal.org.uk/events-and-news/work-parties/

Athina Beckett

Trustee, Volunteer Leader and Work Party Organiser

Health & Safety Refresher

Buckingham Canal Society (BCS) has a duty of care to its members, volunteers and the public to comply with the Health & Safety legislations in place.

BCS operates work parties under terms of Insurance provided through the Inland Waterways Association (IWA). As a part of this, we work within many of the principles and methods of Waterway Recovery Group (WRG).

You will always be given a Health and Safety (H&S) briefing for any work party. All work parties involving construction machinery, often referred to as plant, will require that you confirm you have watched the WRG Health & Safety video (via the link below) within the past 12 months.

The video contains important Health & Safety information that all new volunteers need to know. All volunteers are required to watch this video before they go on site in order to find out about WRG's on site Health & Safety.

This video is only an introduction to site safety, and does not remove the need for a volunteer to have a full briefing about a specific site/project.

For full details of the WRG Health & Safety policy and additional documentation and videos, please visit:

www.buckinghamcanal.org.uk/wrg-health-safety-video/

For more information about WRG please visit:

www.waterways.org.uk/wrg

The Spring Statement

Hi everyone, I hope you are all well and staying safe in these troubled times.

As you are aware, following our foreshortened and unique AGM, we are following government advice with regards to social distancing and activities as well as the guidelines issued by Canal & River Trust with regards specifically to volunteering. We have carried out essential safety work only as legally required by legislation. We now have working security cameras at Cosgrove, further reducing the need to visit to check on site safety as frequently as was initially necessary.

Looking forward, we have several significant challenges and opportunities facing us. Volunteering is unlikely to start, I feel, until we are well into summer. This can only be done if we have the funds for materials etc. With this in mind, could I ask everyone who has not yet renewed their membership and are intending to do so to please speak to the membership team who will facilitate this. Along with the membership, we would appreciate it if you would join us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. Please also visit our website regularly for updates and please encourage all of your friends to join in as well. All of this activity helps our Grants Officer Colin Levett immensely when applying for various grants, as it helps demonstrate support for the restoration of the Buckingham Canal.

You will all, I'm sure, be aware of the many cancelled events and gatherings over the next few months. We are hoping to have a social event once we can gather again and invite this year's AGM guest speaker along to carry out their presentation, whilst providing updates on activities and on the Society in general. The main purpose though, will be to socialise and meet up again after these tough times.

If anyone has any ideas for events they would like to see next year, then please let me know. I'm thinking of running a photography competition to help make more people aware of the Society and what is happening across all of our sites. This will also generate some exciting and hopefully novel new images.



©Terry Cavender

To finish on a high note, all sections of the Buckingham Canal at Cosgrove appear to be holding water well, with just the usual leaks which are being treated with bentonite to help slow them. Plans are afoot to carry out a towpath survey utilising a moisture detector and/or thermal imager to pinpoint the precise location of the leaks to allow a full fix. Lastly, here's a picture showing the good old days just before the restrictions.

Rob Morris
Trustee and Chairman

Cosgrove Canal Festival and Craft Fair is Sadly Cancelled

Given the continuing COVID-19 challenges, we have sadly taken the decision to cancel this year's Cosgrove Canal Festival and Craft Fair. This is due to practical difficulties with social distancing in both the village hall and along the towpath. We hope to run the main events in July 2021. It may be possible to run a smaller social event this October if circumstances allow, and we will review this over the summer.

Please contact our Treasurer Richard Dwight using his contact details on page 30 with your bank account details if you would like a refund, or even to confirm that you would like us to treat your payment as a donation.

On behalf of all the BCS trustees, we hope you stay well and we look forward to seeing you next year.

Terry Cavender

Trustee and Executive Officer

The Fastest AGM in the World, Ever?



© Richard Dwight

So, as COVID-19 social distancing started to come in to effect, we rang the Charity Commission who said, "you have to hold your AGM". So, after some head scratching, we chose to hold it outside in the fresh air at the normal venue of Buckingham Community Centre on Saturday 21st March. We commenced at 7.10pm and concluded all required formal business in a record breaking ten minutes by 7.20pm. Including four trustees, we had ten people in attendance, plus myself with Rob Morris on FaceTime (left).

Our thanks to the small band of folk who joined us, all keeping a safe distance from each other. We even sanitised the pen with wipes between each use, signing in on the makeshift trolley desk! We do hope to hold the normal social event in the autumn, depending on the status of COVID-19 restrictions.

Terry Cavender

Trustee and Executive Officer

The Best Trainee Drystone Wallers in the World, Ever?

We are planning on getting a LANTRA drystone walling instructor to work with a group of us on the lengths that form the walls at the sides of the ramps at Cosgrove's Bridge No.1 (right, showing the northeast wall). We anticipate four or five of us will become 'competent persons' so that we can in turn work with the students from both Northampton and Milton Keynes colleges in order to rebuild the drystone walls as part of the finishing touches to the bridge. It will also give the students some unusual competencies to evidence in their portfolios and CVs.



Terry Cavender
Trustee and Executive Officer

Cosgrove's Grade II Road Bridge Hit by a Vehicle, Yet Again



On Saturday the 25th April, the Grade II listed bridge (sometimes known as Ornamental, Samson's or Solomon's Bridge) that carries the main access road into Cosgrove was struck, allegedly at speed, by a car. As many of you will know, for those villagers living to the east of the bridge, this is the only means by which they can exit and enter their part of the village.

Nearby villagers quickly pulled the driver from the car, as they feared it would catch fire. He was later arrested by police who attended the scene. It has now been fenced off and work is in hand to arrange repairs. Alas, this is not the first time a bridge strike has happened at this location. In chatting with Canal & River Trust staff, repairs are estimated to be in the region of several tens of thousand of pounds. BCS have offered the use of workboat Louise, if she can help them.

Terry Cavender
Trustee and Executive Officer

The Spring Wildlife Report



Hoopoe © Ian Matson

A Little Insight Into My Local Wildlife

Before I get to the main Bourton Meadow wildlife report, I thought you might like an insight into what I've been up to and seeing in my part of the country. I do live in Surrey, but most of my key bird sightings have been made near to my work around Bordon in Hampshire. This year has been quite the year for me so far, for recording bird species in particular. As I write this, I have totalled 107 species to date, which isn't bad considering that everything slowed down in mid March.

Highlights for me so far have included:

Skulking **Dartford Warblers** seen on almost every occasion at any heath; **Woodlarks** displaying and singing their hearts out; one rare and extremely obliging **Hoopoe** (pictured above) known as The Hampshire Hoopoe, that spent around a month residing in a Horse Paddock; a thrifty **Peregrine**; strange looking **Spoonbills**; striking **Avocets**; a very illusive **Firecrest**; one very obliging yet mobile butcher bird, specifically speaking, the agile **Great Grey Shrike** (pictured below with a Bee); A **Pale Bellied Brent Goose**; stunning **Black-Necked Grebes**; **Whitethroats** teasing with their call and scratchy song in hedgerows everywhere; an unexpected **Marsh Tit**, found after many early mornings looking in a completely different location; **Cuckoo** males in 5 territories, including one with a broken voice that we've affectionately named Boris the Broken; churring **Nightjars** in two locations, signifying the onset of summer; and a tricky **Spotted Flycatcher** being my 107th.

I'm currently trying to pin down Garden Warbler which have been seen on Kingsley Common near to my place of work, and also the very rare Lesser Spotted Woodpecker close to the nearby Broxhead Common. Fingers crossed for the latter which I haven't seen for a great many years.

It's been great making more time to get out at the crack of dawn to head somewhere before work when evenings were still dark.



Great Grey Shrike © Ian Matson



Nuthatch © Ian Matson



Meadow Pipit © Ian Matson



Bullfinch male © Ian Matson

Briefly glimpsing our smallest bird, the illusive Firecrest, amongst the Ivy covered trunks in dense woodland before heading to the daytime job on a wet & wintry early March morning was worth all the effort indeed. Its song gave up its presence and my perseverance finally paid off.

Catching extensive views of my first Chiffchaff of the year (that's a 'spring is here' sign for me) on Farnham Heath in the early hours of a mid March morning, whilst watching secretive Dartford Warblers within a few metres was priceless! Unfortunately, the COVID-19 restrictions came in to force soon after, but luckily I can still walk into the countryside from my work and not bump into a single person.

One thing I have noticed is how much bolder the wildlife has been, with Roe Deer appearing more regularly on the Heaths, and the sound of birdsong becoming more vivid where they once competed with the noise of cars. Anyway, I've rambled on enough.

Bourton Meadow Springs Back to Life Once More

Local walkers Michael & Diane Hunt have sent us their first wildlife sightings report for 2020, taking in March and April. These ongoing reports especially illustrate the growing importance of Bourton Meadow as a key habitat for a number of important species of fauna and flora. If you refer back to Issue 102, you will see that last year we had breeding

Whitethroats, Reed Warblers and Reed Buntings all along the Bourton Meadow stretch of canal!



Chiffchaff © Yuriy Balagula

Michael said that on the 18th March we "just had a walk along the filled canal section and noted 12 Toads in residence". He went on to say that there were "plenty of Marsh Marigolds in flower and a Chiffchaff was singing nearby".



Whitethroat © Yuriy Balagula



Sand Martin © ImageBROKER.com

Mike also advised us that “with the Phragmites Reeds, a dense area needs to be left if possible, as the Reed Warbler, a summer visitor, needs them to breed in as they had used a patch in 2019”.

On 16th April, Mike and Diane took another walk along Bourton Meadow. “We had an exercise walk up and down the canal yesterday and noted a Sand Martin overhead on migration, and a singing Whitethroat - the first for 2020. This is a summer visitor from Africa”.

They also saw “a couple of resident Reed Buntings” and reported that the Marsh Marigolds (*Caltha palustris*) are looking superb this spring.

Please see Issue 101 & 102 for more detail on the various Warblers and the Reed Buntings that visited Bourton Meadow last year.

Over the period of their two visits through March and April, Michael & Diane recorded the following:

Amphibians: 12 Common Toads

Birds: 1 Sand Martin; 1 Whitethroat; 1 Chiffchaff; 2 Reed Buntings

Plants: Marsh Marigolds; Common Reeds



Reed Bunting male © Vitaly Ilyasov



Reed Bunting female © Ian Matson

It seems that we are already off to a promising start, with a singing male Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*) having returned from its winter residency in the south of the Sahara to join our resident Reed Buntings (*Emberiza schoeniclus*). As mentioned in previous reports, Whitethroats are very secretive, and are often given up by their call, a short buzz, sounding like 'chahr', which is not unlike a Dartford Warbler. However, the male will periodically rise to the top of its habitat (such as a hedgerow) with a short, fast and fairly considered song which is jangly and scratchy. His song becomes more drawn out when it lifts in a display a few feet above, a little like a Skylark in its aerial display manner. Unlike a Skylark, it is over in seconds.

If you get the chance, and when its safe to do so, acquaint yourself with the call and the song, find a fairly quiet countryside hedgerow (such as along our canal at Bourton Meadow) or a thicket of bramble on a woodland edge, and just listen. Give it time, and you'll find that patience really pays off with this species. You may not see it the first day, but you will learn that they rarely venture far, and you will likely see one on a subsequent visit. As the name suggests, its white throat coupled with its russett upper parts give it away. The similar Lesser Whitethroats have all grey uppers and are less common.

The Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) has a scientific name that more or less describes its preferred habit and song very well. The genus *Phylloscopus* is of greek origin. Disected, *phyllon* means leaf, and *skopeo* is to look for or to see. Quite apt as this is indeed a Leaf Warbler. The species *collybita* is a corruption of the greek *kollubistes*, which means a money changer, possibly referring to the jingling of coins to which its song has been likened to.

These birds are primarily summer visitors from the Mediterranean and south of the Sahara. They are also a scarce winter resident in the far south. Often heard and seldom seen, it's presence is given up by its short 'chiff-chaff' song, an unmistakeable and evenly spaced monosyllabic two to three pitch song. This is often the only way to seperate it from the less common, but almost identical Willow Warbler, whose song is very different. That said, I've heard the occassional Willow Warbler slip into Chiffchaff song mid-recital for a split second.

A very numerous UK breeder, it's not surprising to find Chiffchaff here at Bourton Meadow, as they prefer to breed in tall, open, deciduous and scrubby woodland, spinneys and copses. Listen, not even that carefully, and it's likely you will hear one, even in more built up areas!

The Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*) has a scientific name that is a little more simple in meaning. The genus (and species) *riparia* is a derivation of the Latin *riparius*, and actually means of the riverbank. A simple yet perfect description indeed. *Riparius* is itself derived from the Latin *ripa*, which in English is translated as riverbank.

These beautiful little birds are summer visitors from tropical West Africa. With around 100,000 pairs breeding annually here in the UK, they are by far the least populous of our three regular breeding Hirundine (Martins and Swallows) species, suffering two population crashes over the last 50 years due to droughts in their wintering grounds. They are the smallest of the European Hirundines, and are often seen with Swallows and House Martins feeding on insects over open water.

They nest gregariously in vertical sand or earth banks (and even artificial banks using breeze blocks and clay pipes), digging horizontal tunnels up to a metre deep. They have an average clutch of three or four eggs, and sometimes five, with usually two broods per year, with some having a third as late as August. Bourton Meadow is an ideal feeding area for Hirundines such as these, and perhaps somewhere nearby, they may be breeding!

Years ago I used to survey breeding Sand Martins for three solid seasons at Rutland Water, and so I love to see them return as I have this year, near to where I work. Being similar in many ways to House Martins, the key features are the grey (not black) upper parts, the lack of a conspicuous white rump, and the presence of a grey collar. When it is safe to do so, watch out for these low level and agile flyers over open water, especially on warm sunny days. You won't be disappointed with their antics!

Finally, we also had a report of a Grass Snake (pictured below) making use of Bourton Meadow's swimming facilities on 12th April, much to the delight of onlookers.

Hopefully we will see more and more wildlife records for Bourton Meadow in the coming months, despite COVID-19 restrictions, and who knows, something rare or unexpected too! The Society wishes to thank Michael & Diane Hunt for their contribution, which was forwarded to Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT).

When it is safe, and the appropriate COVID-19 restrictions have been eased or lifted, please let us know of any wildlife sightings along any stretch along the entirety of the Buckingham Canal, be it restored or not. You can send your records to myself or any of the trustees using our contact details on pages 30 and 31. For further details about BBOWT, please visit: www.bbowl.org.uk.

Ian Matson
Editor



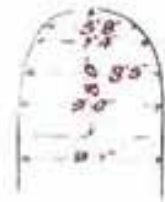
Grass Snake © Richard Winnett

Where the Canal Crosses Old Stratford

When Is a Canal Bridge Not a Canal Bridge?...



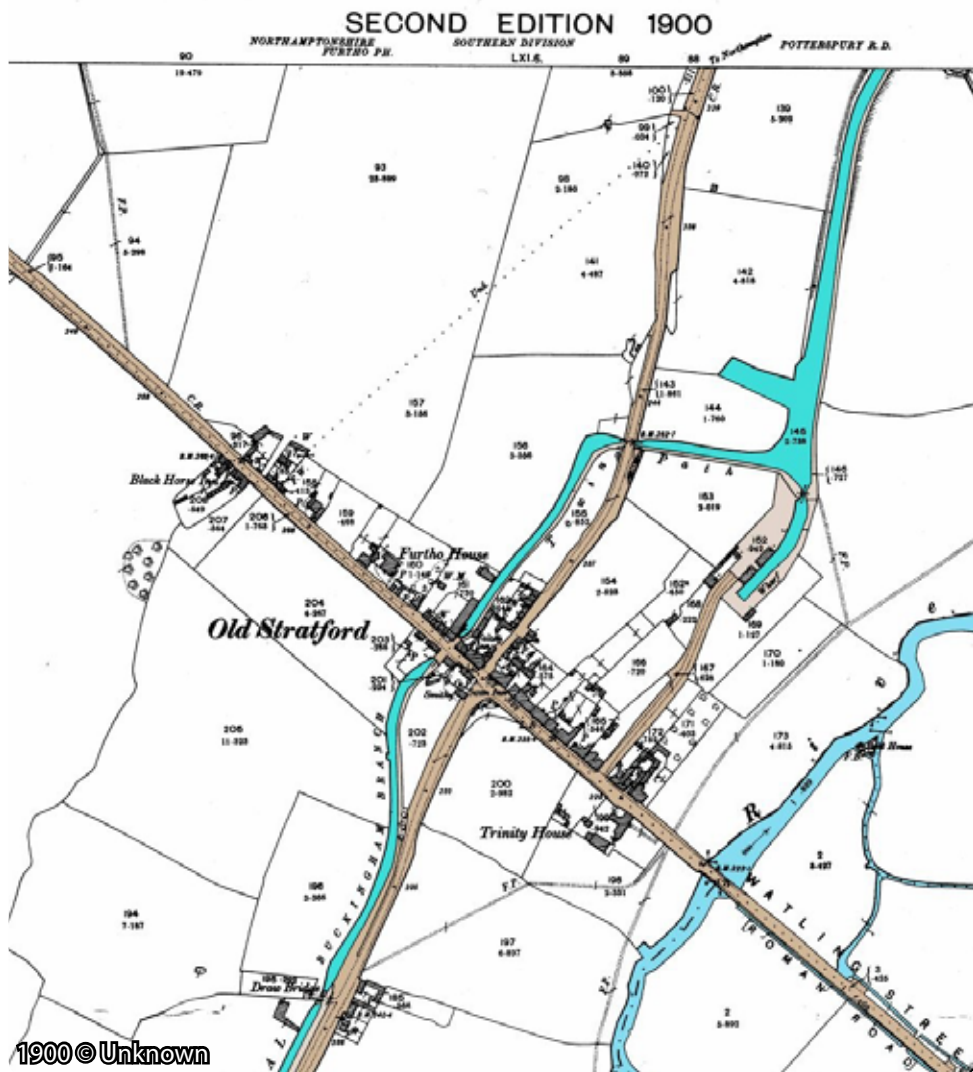
When is a tunnel a bridge? Good question! Officially, the Towcester Road crossing (above) is Bridge No.2 (of the Buckingham Arm). But it has also been referred to as a tunnel. In our archive collection we have copies of some letters to and from the Grand Junction Canal Company from around 1927 where it is referred to as 'Bridge 2', not a tunnel. On the other hand, in Canal & River Trust records (held at Ellesmere Port) there is a document entitled 'Grand Junction Canal - Measurements of bridges, Northampton and Buckingham Arms' which has diagrams of all the bridges. We cannot be sure when this document dates from, but it must be before 1929 when the canal became known as The Grand Union. In this document, No 2 bridge is also referred to as 'Old Stratford tunnel' (right).



No 2 (Old Stratford tunnel) PR

Pre 1929 © Unknown

My take on it would be that it's a tunnel because it does not have a towpath through it. Horses would have had to be unhitched and taken over the top, and the boat manhandled through.



The Milton Keynes Heritage Association (MKHA) website includes a page where you will find a brief description and some history of the bridge/tunnel at: www.mkheritage.co.uk/os/doc/canal/c1.html

Alan Mynard
Website Administrator and Archivist

...When It's a Garden Shed of Course!



Date unknown © Unknown



1968 © Unknown

You will have read the article from our Archivist, Alan Mynard, about the Old Stratford 'bridge/tunnel'. I can report that the tunnel is still there under part of what is now called Towcester Road (formerly Watling Street/the old A5) in Old Stratford. It is situated at the crossroads with the London, Cosgrove and Deanshanger Roads, close to the corner shop on the southwest side and adjoins a tall grey stone house at No2 Towcester Road (above left, right and below) on the northeast side. A few years ago this house was up for sale and the lady who bought it found she had also purchased part of the Buckingham Canal, the aforementioned tunnel under the Towcester Road road.

A while ago when out walking with friends, I called upon the lady who owns the house at No2, and she was delighted to show us the old canal 'tunnel', which is no longer in water. So what do you do with an old canal tunnel? Well, this lady now uses it as her garden shed! The image on the right shows the 'tunnel' filled in, date unknown. As some of you will know, I also give some fascinating talks on behalf of BCS, and this is one of the stories I tell about our canal.



Date unknown © Unknown

Athina Beckett

Trustee, Volunteer Leader and Work Party Organiser

Meet the Volunteer

The Best Job I've Ever Had!

I'm Steve Morley, and my connection with BCS goes back a long way, to the 'early days' when founding member Mike Freeman was Chairman, and for a time I was Secretary of the Society. We had some success in clearing the line between the first two bridges, but progress was slow and other interests prevailed, especially with the monthly visits to work on active restoration sites with Waterway Recovery Group, and the occasional week long canal camp. All this involved a range of skills including hedge laying, operating plant, bricklaying and such like.



In September 2018, London Waterway Recovery Group visited the Buckingham Canal, and I went along as part of that group. The work involved laying the brick pads to take the steel beams for the bridge deck. At that time I was in the process of retiring from paid work, and before long I joined the BCS weekday work parties. At my first work party we were finishing off the brickwork of the second pad, and I joined in with this effort. After about a quarter of an hour, Gerry Millard uttered the immortal words, "You know your way round a trowel, are you a professional?" I replied that I wasn't and had only been trained by Waterway Recovery Group. It appeared that my competence at least met with local approval!



Since then I have become part of the regular bricklaying team, but I'm still conscious that there is a lot to learn and I am willing to take advice from others more knowledgeable than I, especially when it comes to setting out new work. Neither am I afraid to take down any work which has 'gone horribly wrong' if necessary, which has resulted in slow progress at times. However, we have been blessed with a mild winter and only a few days where it has been too cold to lay bricks with the traditional lime mortar we are using. My bricklaying may not be the neatest in the world, but I hope it passes muster. I am constantly striving to improve it as time goes on. After all, if the original work lasted for 200 years, I would like to think that mine will do the same.

It hasn't of course, all been brickwork, as there are many varied activities involved in restoring a canal. Materials have to be got to site, which can involve driving a dumper through the village and the farm to gain access to the towpath. The work compound constantly needs attention, with sorting and stacking the materials and moving them to where they are needed. Then there was the expedition to fetch workboat Louise from Brentford and the return of the tug to Braunston afterwards. With the courtesy of Canal & River Trust I have been on a pole saw and chipper training course to enable me to use this equipment on the Buckingham Arm. This has all taken place in the company of a friendly and helpful group of people under Terry's charismatic leadership. All this has come to a sudden stop in these difficult times, but I am looking forward to getting back to work at the best job I have ever had in my career!

Steve Morley
Volunteer

Shopping at Supports BCS

Amazon Smile is a simple and automatic way for you to support our Society every time you shop, at no further cost to you. When you shop at www.smile.amazon.co.uk, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as at www.amazon.co.uk, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to Buckingham Canal Society, your selected charity. So smile at our restoration work and please choose to support us so that one day, we will finally have something greater to smile about...a fully restored Buckingham Canal for all to enjoy!

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BCS Craft Group

As well as involving yourself in one of our work parties, attending our Society's Project Group, or even being part of our Committee, another way of helping BCS to raise funds is to join our Craft Group. Our group has gone from strength to strength, and would normally have met on the last Thursday of each month at 7.30pm either at my house in Pennyland, Milton Keynes or in Stony Stratford where we make rag rugs that can be sold on our Publicity & Recycling Stall.



However, because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, I have had no choice but to cancel these popular meetings for the foreseeable future. Members can continue the work of the BCS Craft Group by continuing to produce the rag rugs to sell on our Publicity & Recycling Stall. These rugs raise much needed funds for the Society. In fact, with the social restrictions in place, this has proved to be one of the tasks I am able to spend a lot more time on now, and with that I have produced several rag rugs for sale along with other members of the group.

We are a very friendly group and would welcome other like minded people interested in learning or teaching new crafts, or to simply join us (when current restrictions are appropriately eased) for a very pleasant and sociable evening and discuss the various crafts that interest you.

Retailing at only £25 each, our sales of rag rugs that are made by the group have continued to go well, and we are now taking commissions. To keep this work going, what we will still need after the current restrictions are eased are more old materials such as coloured T shirts (bright colours and black preferred). T-shirts are the most popular material, so if anyone has any unwanted ones, then please do keep them safe and save them for us. I will hopefully be able to arrange to collect them sometimes, but only when it will be safer to do so.

If you have any old T-shirts, or if you would like to attend when it is safe to reinstate the meetings, please get in touch using my contact details on page 30.

Athina Beckett

Trustee, Volunteer Leader and Work Party Organiser

Our Publicity & Recycling Stall Needs You

Our Publicity & Recycling Stall would normally be out and about throughout the year attending canal festivals and village events, while raising funds for the Society. However, with the current restrictions in place surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, many forthcoming events have been affected. This means that since the beginning of the pandemic, and as this issue goes to print, this year's events (based ONLY on those listed below) have been postponed or cancelled up to and including June, with some beyond.

Please can I ask that you reach me using my contact details on page 30 to find out whether or not any attendances at forthcoming events (either listed below or not) are still planned, albeit tentatively, for the remainder of the year.

Most events this year are looking increasingly unlikely, but if and when appropriate restrictions are lifted and suitable safety measures are put in place, if anyone fancies a change of scene, we will readily welcome new people to come along and give a helping hand in running the stall. It's really good fun and you'll also get the chance to attend a wide variety of canal festivals and local events whilst helping to raise funds for BCS to restore the Buckingham Canal. So why not come along and help us make a difference. You won't regret it.

To try and tempt you, these are the festivals and events that we attended last year.

- *Bicester Vintage Tractor Club in February*
- *Our own AGM in March*
- *Buckingham Spring Fair in April*
- *Stony Stratford Riverside Fair in June*
- *Milton Keynes Festival of History in June*
- *Braunston & Historic Narrowboat Rally & Canal Festival in June*
- *Our own Cosgrove Canal Festival & Craft Fair in July*
- *Linslade Canal Festival in July*
- *The Festival of Water at Waltham Abbey in August*
- *Braunston Waterways Literary Festival in September*
- *Buckingham Christmas Parade & Community Fair in December*

We would normally be in need of items to sell on the stall, including books, games and other canal related items which can raise funds for BCS. However, until we can begin attending events again, sadly we cannot accept any more items. If people would like to donate items when it is safer to do so at future events, we will gladly accept them.

If you do have any good quality bric-a-brac that you would like to donate to us in the future, or if you would like to give us a hand on the stall at any time when the current restrictions are eased, please get in touch with me using my contact details on page 30 for the latest updates and arrangements.

Athina Beckett

Trustee, Volunteer Leader and Work Party Organiser

Funders

We are very grateful for the financial support from all of our funders. Listed below in chronological order, beginning with the latest, are our most recent funders:

- The National Lottery Community Fund
- Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) - New Homes Bonus Micro Grant Scheme
- The Rank Foundation
- The Radcliffe Trust
- The Foyle Foundation
- South Northamptonshire Council Community Event Fund
- Milton Keynes Heritage Association (MKHA)
- Tesco - Bags of Help (Buckingham)
- The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust
- MJ Camp Charitable Foundation
- Buckingham Town Council
- Alpkitt Foundation
- DHL UK Foundation - Match It!
- Co-op - Local Community Fund
- Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust (VAHT) - Thriving Communities Fund
- Rectory Homes
- Postcode Local Trust
- Northamptonshire Community Foundation - David Laing Family Fund

Patrons, Partners & Supporters

We are very grateful for the continued support of our patron:

- Lord Boswell of Aynho

We have formal partnerships with the following:

- Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC)
- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)
- Buckingham Town Council
- Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC)
- Canal & River Trust (CRT)
- Deanshanger Parish Council
- Environment Agency (EA)
- Inland Waterways Association (IWA) Corporate Member
- Northamptonshire County Council (NCC)
- South Northamptonshire District Council

We are very grateful for the ongoing support of:

- Inland Waterways Association (IWA) Milton Keynes Branch
- Inland Waterways Association (IWA) Northampton Branch
- Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) and their regional volunteers

We have been recognised by the following:

- Cosgrove Parish Council
- Foscote Parish Meeting
- Maids Moreton Parish Council
- Old Stratford Parish Council
- Thornborough Parish Council
- Thornton Parish Meeting

Corporate Members

Braunston Marina



Lionhearts Cruising Club



Taverners Boat Club



The Wyvern Shipping Co Ltd



Inland Waterways Association Northampton Branch

We Support:



Corporate & External Volunteer Groups

We are very grateful to all of the organisations that have ever assisted us with their volunteer groups. Listed below in chronological order, beginning with the latest, are our most recent attendees:

- Santander
- Network Rail
- The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW)
- Kent & East Sussex Canal Restoration Group (KESCRG)
- McAfee
- Eddyfi Technologies - TSC
- Vinci Technology Centre UK
- London Waterway Recovery Group (LWRG)
- Milton Keynes College
- Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) - Bit In The Middle (BITM)
- Computacentre
- Stowe House
- Stowe School
- Trees for Cities
- Argos
- Network Rail - Bletchley Maintenance
- Virgin Money UK
- Mayflex UK
- Community Payback - Buckingham
- Waitrose
- The MacIntyre Charity - Green Genies
- The Parks Trust Young Explorers
- NHBC
- G4S Secure Training Centre - Milton Keynes
- Tech Mahindra
- The Woburn Hotel
- Hewitson Moorhead
- Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) - Forestry
- Tearle & Carver - Chartered Accountants & Business Advisors

Work Party Dates 2020/2021

July Thursday 9th Sunday 12th Thursday 23rd	August Thursday 6th Sunday 9th Thursday 20th	September Thursday 3rd Sunday 13th Thursday 24th	October Thursday 1st Sunday 4th Thursday 15th Thursday 29th
November Sunday 8th Thursday 12th Thursday 26th	December Thursday 10th Sunday 13th Thursday 17th	January Thursday 7th Sunday 12th Sunday 26th	February Thursday 4th Sunday 9th Thursday 14th Thursday 18th
March Sunday 4th Sunday 14th Thursday 18th	April Thursday 1st Sunday 5th Thursday 15th Thursday 29th	May Sunday 9th Thursday 13th Thursday 27th	June Thursday 10th Sunday 13th Thursday 24th

**DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC,
WORK PARTY DATES ARE CANCELLED
UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE
FOR UPDATES, PLEASE CHECK WITH OUR
WORK PARTY ORGANISER ATHINA BECKETT**

COVID-19 and BCS Work Party and Event Cancellations

In light of government restrictions imposed from 24th March 2020, we have and are cancelling all work parties and events until further notice.

Whenever there are any changes to the imposed restrictions, we will review this situation and make a decision based on government and CRT advice as to if and when to resume our activities. We will keep you informed at regular intervals.

The BCS trustees will continue working in the background with electronic meetings etc., ensuring we are ready to continue when able. A very small number of volunteers will be undertaking essential safety related, pre-arranged tasks, to ensure the safety of our sites. This will be pre agreed with CRT and other relevant authorities.

This decision was not taken lightly by the BCS trustees, but for the safety of our volunteers and the country as a whole, we believe this is the right course of action. We recognise this is a very challenging time for everyone. If any of you need to chat, then you are welcome to call any of the trustees. Please stay safe and well. We look forward to seeing you at future sessions.

Terry Cavender

Trustee and Executive Officer

Future Events

CANCELLED: Saturday 20th July - Sunday 21st July

The Buckingham Canal Society's 26th annual Cosgrove Canal Festival & Craft Fair
Cosgrove Lock, Lock Lane, Cosgrove, Milton Keynes, Northamptonshire MK19 7JH

As always, extra help will be needed to begin setting up the festival on Friday 18th and Friday 19th July, and also to dismantle everything at the end of the festival on Sunday 21st July. I want to thank everybody who helped last year, but we do need your help again this year. There will be a great variety of tasks for everybody. We will need assistance with activities including but not restricted to the following: Baking cakes for the Cake Stall; Serving drinks in the Village Hall; Working in the Games Stall; The Lock Ransom, whereby fishing will be used to open the lock gates.

Whether you can spare a couple of hours for a while, or all help would be much appreciated as this is a big opportunity where you can reach out to the public to show our current and future plans and projects. If you haven't been involved before, it's a chance to meet up with the volunteers. You can also invite your family as along with the event for that. Promising to be a very enjoyable weekend. I would be really well pleased to see the boaters on Saturday evening for a fish & chip supper. I would be really well pleased to see the boaters on Saturday evening for a fish & chip supper. I would be really well pleased to see the boaters on Saturday evening for a fish & chip supper.

So that we can get an idea of the volunteers and the days you will be available to help with the festival, please contact either myself - Athina Beckett, or Ian Matson, at Cosgrove Lock using either of our contact details on page 3. You can also book a stall, boat mooring or fish & chip supper. Further details can also be found by visiting: www.buckinghamcanalsociety.org.uk/events-and-news/annual-festival/.

Next Navigator

So we are nearing the end of another issue of the Navigator and I am sure many of you are eager for more. You can be part of what appears in the next issue. There are regular items from the committee but there is space assigned to YOU, our valued members, for your submissions. I am also always very interested to hear what you think of the newsletter and comments are most welcome!

Please submit all contributions for Issue 105 (Autumn 2020) by the 1st August 2020 via email, CD, or typed/handwritten letter (in that order of preference) to:

editor@buckinghamcanal.org.uk or

Ian Matson, 63 Almers Road, Lyne, Chertsey, Surrey, KT16 0BH

Advertising with us We welcome advertisements 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	Quarter Page:	£6	Back Page:	£22
Half Page:	£10	Inserts:	£7.50		

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Trustee

We are interested to hear from people who would like to join us as trustees.



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Illustrated Talks & Presentations

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Cosgrove Festival Team

events@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Finance Manager

This position is currently vacant

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Buckingham Canal Society, Aylesbury Canal Society.



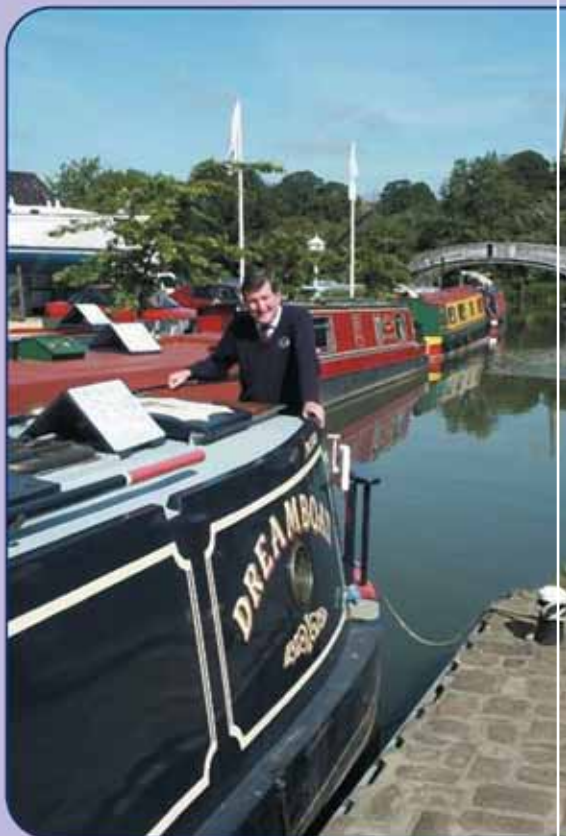
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