

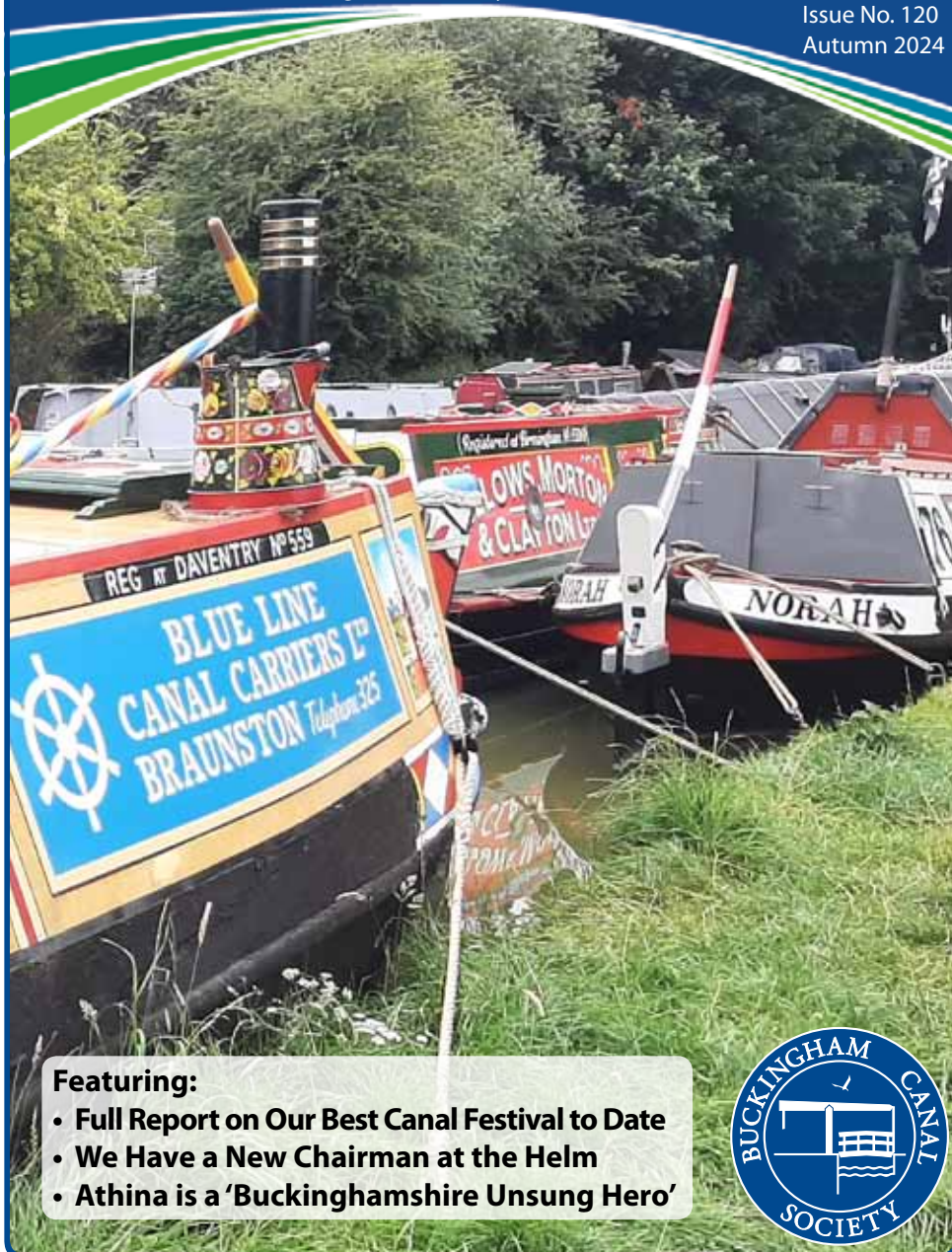
THE BUCKINGHAM NAVIGATOR

The Newsletter of Buckingham Canal Society

Registered Charity No. 1156662

Issue No. 120

Autumn 2024



Featuring:

- Full Report on Our Best Canal Festival to Date
- We Have a New Chairman at the Helm
- Athina is a 'Buckinghamshire Unsung Hero'



Cosgrove Marina

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Mick and Shirley are pleased to support the restoration of the Buckingham Canal.

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Buckingham Canal Society's work to restore the waterway to Buckingham

Please re-use this publication which incorporates a variety of information about some of our activities, to promote the work of the Buckingham Canal Society to a friend / neighbour / colleague / relative or other interested people.

Editorial



Welcome to the Autumn 2024 edition of The Buckingham Navigator.

Gerry Millard 1954-2024

On behalf Buckingham Canal Society, I am very sad to report the passing of one of our long time volunteers, Gerry Millard - Trustee and Construction Manager for our Society. He died peacefully in hospital early in the morning of 2nd October after suffering from various medical problems for some months. He will be greatly missed, especially for his mechanical and electrical skills and for his wonderful personality. It was always a pleasure to have him on our work parties and as harbour master at the Cosgrove Canal Festival. There will be a full obituary published in the next edition of The Buckingham Navigator.

Cover photo of some of the many trading narrowboats at the 2024 Cosgrove Canal Festival & Craft Fair © Alan Mynard. **See page 14 for the full report.** Thank you to all the contributors.

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 X at: www.twitter.com/bcsocietyuk

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

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Ian Matson
Editor

In This Issue

- | | |
|---|---|
| 4 Restoration Site Update | 26 Funders |
| 9 Health & Safety Refresher | 26 Patrons, Partners & Supporters |
| 10 Buckingham Canal Society News | 27 Corporate Members |
| 14 The Cosgrove Canal Festival & Craft Fair | 27 Corporate & External Volunteer Groups |
| 18 Why Bother? It's All Change! | 28 Future Events |
| 20 The 2024 Braunston Rally Review | 28 Win Big with Buckinghamshire Lottery |
| 25 Our Publicity & Recycling Stall Needs You | 29 Work Party Dates 2024/2025 |
| 25 Buckingham Canal Society Craft Group | 29 Next Navigator |
| | 30 Contact the Committee |

Restoration Site Update



Up.

©Terry Cavender

Overcoming Frustrating Drainage Challenges at Cosgrove

Since the last issue of The Buckingham Navigator, progress has been slow but steady. Our main focus has been at the land drain site (**opposite**) where we are installing a water capture chamber (**below**). Some (possibly forty) years ago the local farmer installed land drains to take away water which flowed into his field from springs by the road leading into Cosgrove village. The drains joined up into a single pipe which was cut through the canal bed, destroying the clay lining, which will have to be reinstated to make the canal watertight once again. The pipe has degraded and broken, and our repairs will include the construction of a chamber to capture the water which can then be pumped up into the canal as an extra water supply. The surplus water will cascade into a second chamber and escape down the existing exit channel on its way to the brook.

Progress on digging the foundations for the chamber has been hampered by the very wet weather which has turned the site into a quagmire. This is only now drying out, allowing access for our Hitachi 16 tonne excavator. We have piled the towpath side to stabilise the bank where we will be installing the chamber, and hopefully work on the foundations can be started soon. Meanwhile on the main line and around Bridge No.1, much work has been done preparing the soil and planting up the towpath-side planters and verges with bedding plants, shrubs and trees.



© Steve Morley

Another frustration with the land drain project has been ongoing problems with the fuel system on the excavator, which has involved complete removal, cleaning and re-fitting of the fuel tank and entire fuel supply system to the engine, mechanical and electronic. Our 'resident' mechanics have experience in car and boat maintenance, but the 360 degree excavator has turned out to be a whole new learning experience. Meanwhile, work has also been needed on Blue, our three tonne JCB, including replacing the engine mounts, which has considerably reduced the engine vibration when operating.

Having at first thought there was not much to report, when you take in to account my other articles in Buckingham Canal Society News on pages 12 & 13, we have actually carried out a lot of new works and essential maintenance whilst accomplishing a great deal more too! **We always welcome new volunteers to our Tuesday and Thursday work parties, and as you can see we offer a variety of tasks to suit all interests and abilities. Please see page 9 for more details.**

Steve Morley
Trustee

Keeping Bourton Meadow Trim and Proper

Work continues at Bourton Meadow on alternative Thursdays and on the second Sunday of each month. The bench seats have all been painted in black and white to make them stand out better and also match Canal & River Trust colours. Multi-utility network provider GTC supplied a team of volunteers (**below**) to assist in this task on 4th July. The areas around the seats have been cleared as well.



The hedgerow has also been trimmed back and the towpath has been strimmed down to Lock Meadow Cottage. The area on the offside has also been cleared to allow passage with wheelbarrows down this side of the canal and allow us access to our bonfire site there.



The weeds in the bed of the canal (**right, on 9th May**) have unfortunately also continued to grow, but as the weather has warmed up somewhat, more volunteers have offered to don some waders and venture into the canal bed to remove these unwanted plants. This has proved to be the easiest way of clearing most of the unwanted vegetation. Several organisations including KAM Project Consultants Ltd (**opposite, bottom**) and Bibby Financial Services Ltd (**below and overleaf**) assisted with the vegetation control on 9th May and 6th June respectively.

The broken fence at the far end of the site by Lock Meadow Cottage has now been repaired. We are also hoping to erect some new fencing at the top end to stop walkers using the offside of the canal as a public footpath, which of course it isn't.





We have had a lot of extra help from corporate volunteer groups this year, helping at Bourton Meadow and our Cosgrove sites. So far this year we have had bookings from twenty-six corporate groups including the aforementioned Bibby Financial Services Ltd (**above**), but of note, we've had six groups coming from Santander and a further three from Network Rail too! We have also hosted a volunteer from one of the corporate groups who has certainly travelled the furthest that we know of. He travelled over from Northern Ireland, leaving his house at 5 o'clock in the morning to join us on a work party! Can anyone beat this record?

Access to the Nature Reserve at Hyde Lane Still an Issue

Unfortunately, we still don't have access to this site with tools and equipment because of the actions of a local farmer. Therefore this site has become even more overgrown than in my previous report.

Complaints have already started now on social media about the state of the Ouse Valley Walk of which The Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve at Hyde Lane is a part of. However, this could work in our favour if enough people complain, meaning that maybe something can be done to allow us to work again at the Hyde Lane site in the future.

I am always looking for more volunteers to help at all of our sites, so if any of the above interests you then please do get in touch. See page 9 for details.

Athina Beckett

Trustee, Volunteer Leader and Work Party Organiser

Do You Dig Canals?...We Do!



Work parties are now held every Tuesday, Thursday and the second Sunday of each month and are always friendly, welcoming and very rewarding. Most Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as the second Sunday of each month will take place at Cosgrove. Some of the other dates will be at Bourton Meadow or Hyde Lane.

Further information 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/

If you would like to become involved, please contact either myself or Terry using our contact details on page 30.

Athina Beckett

Trustee, Volunteer Leader and Work Party Organiser

Health & Safety Refresher

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

Buckingham Canal Society operates work parties under terms of Insurance provided through the Inland Waterways Association. As a part of this, we work within many of the principles and methods of Waterway Recovery Group.

You will always be given a Health & Safety 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 Waterway Recovery Group's Health & Safety video (via the link below) within the past twelve months.

Waterway Recovery Group's Health & Safety video contains important Health & Safety information that all new volunteers need to know. All volunteers are required to watch the Waterway Recovery Group Health & Safety video before they go on site. Please watch the video to find out about Waterway Recovery Group'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 Waterway Recovery Group's Health & Safety policy along with additional documentation and other important videos, please visit:

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

For more information about Waterway Recovery Group, please visit:

www.waterways.org.uk/wrg

Buckingham Canal Society News

Athina is Our Very Own Buckinghamshire's Unsung Hero



© Marion Mason

By special invitation from Countess Howe, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire (**left, middle with myself and my partner Jonathan**), I received a special invitation to attend a Garden Party on Saturday 13th July to celebrate Buckinghamshire's Unsung Heroes. I joined about 250 other unsung heroes of the county at this event. For me, it was a very special honour to be invited to this event and to be counted as one of Buckinghamshire's Unsung Heroes.

The garden party was held at Penn House in Penn Street Village, Amersham which is the home of Countess Howe. The Penn House Estate has been passed down through a direct family line since the Middle Ages.

Meeting with some of the other 250 guests, it was clear we were all from

very different backgrounds carrying out voluntary work in a wide variety of different areas. I met someone who was running an acting school for people with hearing problems, I also chatted to a gentleman ex-teacher who had a OBE for his voluntary work, and engaged with many other people involved in a wide variety of charity work in the community.

I was able to promote the work of our Society, including working with children that are taking part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, as well as our latest project involving the The Conservation Volunteer's Green Gym which went down well in this setting. I also made a very useful new contact with one of the Deputy Lord-Lieutenants of Buckinghamshire, who lives in Winslow and knows the Buckingham Canal well. They hope to attend our Annual General Meeting next year, so all in all a very positive event.

I have no idea who nominated me for this award, but a very big thank you goes to them for a very enjoyable day which helped to promote the Society and the work we are doing. A win win situation all round I'd say. Guests were entertained by Amersham Band, one of the UK's finest Championship level brass bands, and was really enjoyed by all.

Spread the Word About Our Green Gym

Details about our Green Gym project (part of a wider initiative by The Conservation Volunteers) have now been sent out to all the local volunteer groups, and Milton Keynes Park Trust has offered to promote it for us on their website too. We also plan to carry out a new market campaign to promote the Green Gym in the near future and hopefully attract more new volunteers. A poster giving details about the Green Gym is available, and anyone who can display it in their local area would help our cause immensely by promoting it to the public.



Athina Beckett

Trustee, Volunteer Leader and Work Party Organiser

A Distant Memory of Little Hill Farm for All the Senses

In the 1950s & '60s, the farmer of Little Hill Farm was Johnny Marchant, and what a nice (though very reserved) person he was. My father, Dick Walker, had the fishing of a mile of the River Great Ouse and the canal, and as a family we spent a good deal of time there.

The canal was pretty silted up in those days, so little, if any fishing went on there. But the bridge I remember particularly well, as my elder brother pointed out the rope marks from the days when the narrowboats were pulled by horsepower. I wonder if they're still there? A less pleasant recollection is of finding a dead sheep in the canal, bloated, and smelling absolutely awful!

Simon Walker

Local Resident

Procurements and Disposals

Some worthwhile equipment has been recently acquired. We have purchased a small launch-type boat which, when motorised will be used to transport materials and personnel along the canal. This is becoming more of an issue as work sites become progressively distant from the Cosgrove Junction. A mobile site office has been installed at the Bridge No.2 compound; necessary as we progress from Bridge No.1. This will provide a working base and welfare facilities for volunteers. We have also taken delivery of an aluminium walkway which can be placed across the lock for access when crossing the gates is not practicable.

One notable departure however has been the workboat Perseverance. With both Louise and Diana having dredging capabilities, it was felt that an additional vessel, especially a wide beam, was excessive. She has departed for a new life on the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation.

We Do Love and Appreciate Your Donations



We have had a generous donation of a John Deere ride-on tractor mower (**left, as demonstrated by Terry Cavender**) which has already allowed us to speedily cut the towpath grass before our Festival. It will be destined to operate along the Buckingham Arm.

Canal restoration is often full of opportunities. We have retrieved surplus brick from a builder, broken roof tiles from a local house which was being re-roofed, and a bewildering assortment of materials from a boater

near Stoke Bruerne. All these will, or have been put to good use; for example the broken roof tiles have created a firm base for repairing a collapsed towpath.

It's Been an Eventful Summer Season

By way of an alternative activity, Buckingham Canal Society joined forces with Inland Waterways Association and Canal & River Trust to host the annual National Restoration Conference, this year held at Northampton University. This is an opportunity to hear speakers from various restoration-related organisations on current issues, as well as break-out sessions where societies from around the country can share views and ideas.

We have also taken our Society information stand to the Fellows, Morton & Clayton Ltd Rally & Canal Festival at Braunston to publicise our aims and activities, setting up next to our friends from the Waterway Recovery Group.

Pride of place at Braunston was our own Diana (**right**), which had been invited to lead the historic boat parade by our benefactor Tim Coghlan (**right, farthest right**).

Diana carried the VIP party, acting as a platform for the opening ceremony. Whilst there, Diana benefitted from having her hull shot blasted and re-blacked in the dry dock (**below**). Thanks are due to Tim for this and his generous donation to our Society funds.



© Steve Morley



© Terry Cavender

Diana was taken to Braunston and back, push-towed by tug Shoveler, which is on loan from Canal & River Trust. The tug has also been used to take a hopper to Fenny Stratford for use at the annual Milton Keynes Inland Waterways Association canal clean-up (Diana also attended) and to take Perseverance to Willowbridge Marina for craning onto road transport for her onward journey to Chelmsford.

Team Building, It's What We Do

We have built up a network of local organisations and corporate groups who send employees for their activity/team building events. We are able to provide a range of suitable activities to our mutual benefit. Highlights have included NHBC using Tirfor winches to remove tree stumps from the canal bed, Santander getting stuck into vegetation management and clearing the Bridge No.2 compound, and BRI (UK) Ltd re-organising the compound to accommodate the site office. Furthermore, Network Rail and Mitie Group Plc worked at the narrows and prepared for our festival, whilst WD-40 Company Ltd carried out massive vegetation clearance at Bridge No.1 (**right**). We have also provided practical work experience for students from Milton Keynes College.

Steve Morley
Trustee



© Steve Morley

The Cosgrove Canal Festival & Craft Fair

A Weekend of Festivities By the Canal

After almost twelve months of planning and chatting and scheduling, we finally had the opportunity of welcoming several boaters to the span of water between the Iron Trunk Aqueduct and Lock 21 of Cosgrove for another exciting weekend of boaters, families and crafts. Some boaters were able to show up a full three days ahead of schedule while others arrived a few hours before the 20th of July. In the end, we had a fantastic turnout.



Cosgrove Canal Festival - A Roaring Success

The annual Cosgrove Canal Festival & Craft Fair returned with a splash on the 20th and 21st of July, transforming the stretch of the Grand Union Canal between the Iron Trunk Aqueduct and Lock 21 into a vibrant hub of activity. The festival drew crowds of all ages to enjoy the canalside atmosphere. Families flocked to the event to soak up the sun, explore the wares on display, and indulge in a variety of delicious ice cream, food and drink.

Variety to Go Round



Regular attendees like The Beer Boat Company **(left)**, Wonders of Wool, and Friends of Raymond were again highlights, their familiar boats adding to the festival's charm. Meanwhile, vendors like Star Crafts **(page 16, top)**, Kay's Canal Art **(opposite, bottom left)**, and Beanie Boat **(above)** etc showcased their exquisite handcrafted items, tempting visitors with unique treasures.

At the Buckingham Canal Society information tent (right), volunteers were able to show interested participants the work so far, as different information boards were on display to take the people on a journey along the Buckingham Arm of the canal. There was a wooden bridge on the table where kids and adults practiced their engineering skills as they tried to assemble the different parts to make a sturdy structure. The Society's Publicity & Recycling stall (above) had a few wares on display and a lucky dip that kept kids coming.



© Alan Mynard



© Alan Mynard

As the sun began to set on Saturday, Daisy's Bakin Butty (left) stepped up to provide a much needed boost to the boat crews, offering delicious treats to help them unwind and prepare for the final day of festivities. Beyond the canal, the Cosgrove Village Hall was a hive of creativity, with a diverse range of crafts on display. From intricate woodworks and stunning paintings to one-of-a-kind jewellery, there was something to delight every taste.

To add to the festival's ambiance, the talented Rivermouse (right), a folklore musical group, and Gracenotes, an acapella ensemble, provided captivating vocal performances, enchanting the audience with their music.



© Alan Mynard



© Alan Mynard



© Alan Mynard



© Alan Mynard



© Alan Mynard



© Alan Mynard

Goodbyes Are Often the Hardest

As the sun began its downward descent on the second day of the festival, people were still strolling along the towpath for a last view, a final purchase, or one more drink. There were smiles everywhere. It appeared as though we needed more time. Later that evening, stalls were packed up and goods were stowed away, hopefully to be set up again twelve months from now. The Cosgrove Canal Festival & Craft Fair has once again proven itself to be a cherished community event, bringing joy and excitement to all who attended.

Edima Inwang

Trustee and Marketing Manager



© Alan Mynard

The New Traders & Artisans Were Craftily Refreshing

As part of the Cosgrove Canal Festival, the craft fair was again held in the village hall. This year Sharron had managed to fit in a few more stalls, so there were even more items to choose from, as can be seen in these photos of the well-presented goods. As well as the usual hand-made and home-crafted items produced by our talented



artisan favourites, this year for the first time we had an illustrative-style watercolour portrait artist. The professionalism and camaraderie of the stallholders made for a lot of chatter and laughter over the two days, adding to the fun atmosphere and general success of the fair. There were a number of enquiries about the date of the next such event too.

This year we had a new team doing the catering. That first time is always difficult, not really knowing what to expect. Each year the number attending is different, as is the popular food choice of the day. For the stallholders the days started at 09.30 with bacon or sausage baps, much appreciated by all.

The opening time for both days was 10.00, but it wasn't until just after 11.00 that the steady flow of visitors started and never really stopped. The general feeling was that there were more visitors this year, and by mid Saturday afternoon the kitchen was beginning to run out of cakes, so we knew they were doing something right. It did mean a late night back home for the catering team, baking more for the Sunday.

There were no big dramas in the hall, unlike up on the canalside where a person and their possessions fell in, with some of it not able to be recovered (children, eh!). By 16.00



on Sunday we closed and started packing up after another busy and tiring weekend. A few stalwarts stayed on for another ninety minutes to clear away all the tables, clean the floors and leave it all spick and span.

Richard Dwight
Trustee and Treasurer

Why Bother? It's All Change!

Well, here we go again. We need to educate a new set of MPs as to what a canal is and why we are bothering to restore it. So why bother talking to MPs you might ask?

For this edition, Steve Morley has written some excellent coverage of restoration activities at Cosgrove, and others have contributed too as you will see throughout newsletter. So, I thought I would look around for a meander through some strategic and local politics.

New Chairman

But before we go there, I must thank Paul Rodgers for agreeing to take on the role of Chairman for Buckingham Canal Society. Since Rob Morris stepped down, we have been sharing the load between some of the trustees. Now Paul has agreed to step in this is helping us become more structured in our trustee workload. Paul was former Chairman of Inland Waterways Association and has many years of commercial experience as a business leader. I am sure he will do a fuller introduction in a future edition of our newsletter.

As Paul comes up to speed over the summer, I am also taking a small step sideways from the day-to-day restoration at Cosgrove on medical advice and Steve Morley will now be fully leading the Cosgrove work parties. This is for several reasons, being my foot health, my day job, and the need to herd the politicians to help us make Buckingham Canal Society as successful as ever and hopefully more so!

The New MPs, aka Four Bites of the Cherry and the APPGs

We have a new constituency boundary of Buckingham and Bletchley and a new MP for it. The MPs for North Milton Keynes and Central Milton Keynes are also new, as is the MP for West Northamptonshire. So, we need to help them to help us by introducing them to the wonderful values of the waterway and how our restoration extends and exploits those benefits.

The APPGs are the All-Party Parliamentary Groups, and there is one such group targeting waterways. Its pre-election chairman lost his seat, so it's all change there too. As well as representing Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust, Canal & River Trust and Inland Waterways Association, I will lobby our new MPs on behalf of Buckingham Canal Society to come along and join the APPG for the Waterways. Previously this has successfully enabled various topics to be raised as adjournment debates in Parliament. By guiding the local MPs to align with government policy outcomes through the waterways, the group of us that are undertaking the lobbying believe we can enable acceleration of the restoration work.

Universal Studios Theme Park

Uh? What's he on about now? Well, Universal Studios want to build a theme park in the UK between Milton Keynes and Bedford. That's funny, since the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust want to build a canal between these two locations. Hmmm! Maybe there are some synergies? Oh yes, many. "But that's not Buckingham" I hear you say. Indeed. But the value of the Trust's concept is it extends the 'Ouse Valley Blue Green Park'

(working title) from the market town of Buckingham, through the City of Milton Keynes to the market town of Bedford. This will become a thirty-mile corridor of biodiversity and wellbeing as well as for flood betterment and drought mitigation. Now that’s a national infrastructure scale project that aligns with manifesto commitments! Watch this space.

What Do the M1 at J13, the A421 and the A5 Have in Common?

Part of Universal’s billions of pounds will form changes to the M1 at J13 and also the A421 which will both incorporate a navigable passage for the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway. That will mean that around 50% of the waterway structure will then be in place. The Universal team have demonstrated to the civil servants in Whitehall that the payback from VAT alone for the road changes is around two years.

I am optimistic that our canal crossing channel under the A5 will be aligned with these facilitations of waterways, even though the funding is a different pot. So, I hope you had a good summer and let’s now see how we can help our new MP’s bother about how good canal restoration is.

Who Does What?

The trustees have had a review and we have divided up the running of Buckingham Canal Society into various portfolios of work/remits. Here is the table showing these and who leads it etc. This is fluid and can change depending upon people’s circumstances as well as external factors.

Derin Adegun	Business Planning; Social Media
Athina Beckett	Work Parties - Conservation; Volunteer Contact and Corporate Groups; Talks; IWA Branch Liaison; Community Engagement and Events
Terry Cavender	Partnerships and Political Lobbying; Planning and Permits; Training and Competencies; IWA-WRG Liaison and HLP Restoration
Richard Dwight	Insurance; Finance; Membership; Minutes
Edima Inwang	Digital (Website, Social Media and Shop); Marketing, Brand and Identity; Community Engagement and Events; Newsletter; Membership
Ruth Millard	Grants; Horticulture; Biodiversity and Environmental
Mandy Morley	Safeguarding; Wellbeing/Mental Health; Newsletter
Steve Morley	Work Parties - Construction; Biodiversity and Environmental; Horticulture; Health & Safety; Community Engagement and Events
Paul Rodgers	Governance; Strategy; Roles

Fancy helping us out? Then please do contact the appropriate trustee for a chat using their contact details on page 30.

Terry Cavender
Trustee and Executive Officer

The 2024 Braunston Rally Review



The 20th Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally Remains as Popular as Ever

Despite so many other events going on nationally, including the European Cup, and just down the road the Silverstone Grand Prix - and not to mention either the then impending General Election, or the poor weather forecast for the Sunday - this year's Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally remained as popular and successful as ever.

Held in its traditional slot over the last weekend in June, a total of seventy-four historic narrowboats attended, versus eighty-two last year. Originally there were eighty-four booked in for this year, but with the boats coming from all corners of the waterways, there were some unforeseen emergency stoppages to contend with, as well as mechanical problems - perhaps to be expected with these old canal leviathans.

The average numbers attending the rallies over the post-COVID years represent about a third of the entire fleet of historic narrowboats now surviving on the waterways in reasonable-to-good order - only about 250 versus the 35,000 modern narrowboats. This emphasises the fleets' historic importance - almost an endangered species - and also the vital roles that museums, canal societies and private owners perform in their preservation for the future. It is rewarding for the Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rallies, that we believe that some two thirds of that fleet have now attended at some time over the years we have held them, and that it continues to inspire new restoration projects.

The latest seen at this year's rally was the former GUCC's Town Class Bristol. Its encouragingly young owner Darren brought it to the rally for the first time, arriving just in time, following its restoration at the nearby Warwickshire Fly Boat boatyard. The boat was again 'Bristol fashion' - though still in undercoat, the proper topcoat of paint, in the full glory of the Colours of the Cut, still to come.

On the good-news side, the Coventry Canal Society's working narrowboat Panther was at last able to rejoin the fleet, having failed to attend the two previous rallies due to various problems, and thus also for two seasons to carry out its important work on the clean ups on the Coventry Canal.

Most disappointingly for this year was the absence again of President, the last surviving coal-fired steam narrowboat. The problems of building a new steam boiler to modern standards have at last been resolved and reconstruction is now underway. It is hoped that the boat will be back in steam by the end of this year, and fully restored in time to lead the parade at the 2025 Rally. If so, music legend and steam enthusiast Pete Waterman will be on board to open that year's Rally - something he has been waiting patiently to do since 2020. They say that good things come to those who wait - so fingers crossed.

The annual Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rallies remain by far and away the largest gathering of these historic narrowboats anywhere on the inland waterways, and the best place for gongoozlers to be seen in great numbers, of which there were about 5,000 attending the rally, coming from all parts of the UK and abroad.

President, with its buttly Kildare were to have been the stars of the Rally, leading the opening parade, with actor and canal enthusiast Sir David Suchet (of Poirot fame) at the helm. Then by something of a double whammy, David had an unforeseen change at short notice to his current filming schedule, and had to cancel coming - for the first time since he has been involved with our many waterway events since 1999.

Instead, by way of Plan B, his wife Lady Sheila, herself a great canal enthusiast with David since the 1970s and now co-Vice President of the Inland Waterways Association, accepted our invitation to do the honours on the Buckingham Canal Society's 'Diana the Dredger', which had already been scheduled to attend the Rally for publicity purposes. David had presented it to the Buckingham Canal Society in October 2023 in memory of my late wife Diana, who had died of cancer in 2014. Given Sheila would be seen on a dredger, she put her designer clothes to one side and opted for the sort of overalls that replicated the WWII Idle Women's working clothes (**right**), plus a boatman's red scarf I gave her, and a with cap loaned to her by David.



The opening took the now well established format of the chosen boat - in this case the somewhat unusual 'Diana the Dredger' - leading the 'Parade of Boats'. It entered the marina from the canal under the famous Horseley Ironworks bridge (**page 20**) to a recording on the public address of Bernard Cribbins' early 1960s hit - 'Hole In The Ground', and its famous refrain "Don't dig here, dig it elsewhere", which many bystanders joined in to. 'The Arrival of the Queen of Sheila' was also accompanied by a peel of bells from Braunston Church - 'the Cathedral of the Canals', and fine music from Daventry Brass.



As Sheila passed under the entrance bridge, she declared the Rally open, which she did with great theatrical aplomb - she is after all a retired great actress in her own right.

'Di the Digger' - as she has come to be called - then only made a short venture to her allocated mooring on the old Oxford Arm with Buckingham Canal

Society's multitasking CEO Terry Cavender. From here, Sheila visited the various stands taken by a number of canal societies, where she presented cheques to them from the Rally, the largest of which was £1,000 given to Buckingham Canal Society (**above**). In all some £5,000 was donated to canal and local causes.

Meanwhile the Braunston based pair of historic boats, the Nutfield & Raymond, which had followed 'Di the Digger' in, then led the traditional parade through the marina and round to the Braunston Turn and back (**right**). In the Raymond's hold were a number of celebrity guests, including Richard Parry,



CEO of Canal & River Trust, and Tony Hales OBE, retired Chairman of Canal & River Trust. Tony still continues his passion for the waterways and has attended every Rally since 2009, and hopes to continue doing so for as long as he can.

An hour before the Rally's formal opening, Pete Waterman unveiled the Red Wheel plaque that Braunston Marina had recently been awarded by the National Transport Trust largely on his recommendation. Present were several members of the National Transport Trust,

including Jerry Swift, its Deputy Chairman, and also the Canal & River Trust CEO Richard Parry. The plaque (**right**) had been fixed on the wall of the former engine shop, facing the marina entrance, where it can be well seen. It is held that the engine shop was built by the Women's Land Army during WWII.



© Victoria Jane Photography

The Guild of Waterways Artists were again provided with their own marquee, sponsored by Braunston Marina, and ten of its members had their works on display, including the great canal artist Dusty Miller. At the end of the rally, Dusty presented myself, on behalf of Braunston Marina, with a large painting he had made of Braunston Bottom Lock in its working days (**below, left**).

A recently rediscovered photograph (**below, right**) by the late Harry Arnold of the same scene was taken only about three years later, when much of the carrying fleet was in the process of being abandoned. Compare the scene to today's Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rallies, with many of those abandoned boats now restored, and some even carrying again!



© Tim Coghlan



© Harry Arnold/Waterways Images

The rally is also billed as a canal festival - in the fine tradition of the first Inland Waterways Association Rally held at Market Harborough in 1950, inspired by its co-founder Robert Aickman. Entertainments included the canal-travelling Alarum Theatre, with their new show, a bitter-sweet comedy with songs about working women of the canals, and the tough lives they had led.

The rally's resident music-impresario Janul has for some years now, produced the amazing musicians she finds each year for the beer tent - a mini-Glastonbury, without the mud. On the Saturday, children were entertained by Professor Diamond's Punch & Judy Show.



The winning historic narrowboat for this year's 'Nurser Award Buckby Can for the Best in Show as voted by the historic narrowboat owners', was the magnificently restored Emu (**left**) and the work undertaken by Michael Pinnock. The boat was built for Fellows, Morton & Clayton by Yarwoods in 1926, and fitted with one of the new Bolinder semi-diesel engines - the boat is now only two

years from its centenary. Michael acquired it in 2009, and fully restored it to carrying condition. It has been operating as a fuel boat in the London area ever since. As well as that Buckby Can, to be held for a year, Michael also received £250 worth of Midland Chandlers vouchers, generously sponsored by them.

On the Sunday evening, to close the event, the rally sponsored a candle-lit choral concert of Renaissance music by Fiori Musicali. The venue was across the meadows from Braunston at the ancient church of Wolfamcote. This was to raise awareness of this redundant church and the funds needed for its preservation.

Braunston Marina will be hosting the event again next year on the same last weekend in June 2025, hopefully with Pete Waterman opening it on the restored President and its buttie Kildare. Here's hoping we see you there. The Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally is sponsored by Braunston Marina and Towpath Talk, and is supported by Canal & River Trust.

And finally...a photo of some gazing gongoozlers (**below**). The canal outside the marina was packed three and sometime five deep with brightly coloured former working boats - a wondrous sight to behold!

Tim Coghlan

Managing Director, Braunston Marina



Our Publicity & Recycling Stall Needs You

Help! We Need MORE Help!

For over ten years my partner Jonathan Brown and I have run what was once called the Buckingham Canal Society Bric-a-Brac Stall. Now known as our Publicity & Recycling Stall for some time, we trade at various canal festivals and other local events. Prior to COVID-19, we had managed to raise something in the region of £2,000 a year by the end of 2019 for the Society!

Unfortunately, through illness my partner is no longer able to erect the gazebo needed at most events or lift heavy objects. I am now asking for extra help to set up the stall and gazebo at local festivals where we can promote the work of our Society.

You wouldn't need to be available all of the day, but perhaps to just help me out at the beginning and the end of the event. The other advantage is that by becoming a helper, you would be able to get into the festivals and events free of charge!

If anyone is thinking they could help out, or if you have any good quality bric-a-brac that you would like to donate, please contact me to discuss this further using my contact details on page 30.



© Jonathan Brown

Athina Beckett

Trustee, Volunteer Leader and Work Party Organiser

Buckingham Canal Society Craft Group



©Edima Inwang

Our craft group still isn't meeting, but I still continue to make the rag rugs which I am hoping to sell at the many planned visits to canal festivals and events throughout the coming year. These are sold on our Society stall for £25 each, raising much needed funds for us.

If any members have any unused or old T-shirts which are not wanted, then please get in touch with me using my contact details on page 34. They can still be used to make even more rag rugs.

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:

- Co-op - Local Community Fund
- Heart of Bucks Community Foundation - Veolia Water Technologies Fund
- Buckingham & Villages Community Board
- The Woodroffe Benton Foundation
- Heart of Bucks Community Foundation - B P Collins Fund
- The Skinners' Company - The Lady Neville Charity
- Waitrose & Partners
- Moto in the Community Trust
- Arnold Clark Community Fund
- The National Lottery Awards for All England
- Heart of Bucks Community Foundation for Buckinghamshire - Bucks Coronavirus Stabilisation Fund
- HDH Wills Charitable Trust - Martin Wills Wildlife Maintenance Fund
- Buckinghamshire Council - Local Authority Discretionary Grant
- Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust - Thriving Communities Fund

Patrons, Partners & Supporters

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

- Lord Boswell of Aynho
- Lord & Lady Scott of Foscote

We have formal partnerships with the following:

- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Buckingham Town Council
- Canal & River Trust
- Deanshanger Parish Council
- Environment Agency
- Inland Waterways Association - Corporate Member
- The Conservation Volunteers
- West Northamptonshire Council

We are very grateful for the ongoing support of:

- Inland Waterways Association - Milton Keynes Branch
- Inland Waterways Association - Northampton Branch
- Waterway Recovery Group 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:

- NHBC
- Network Rail
- WD-40 Company Ltd
- GTC
- Santander
- Bibby Financial Services Ltd
- BRI (UK) Ltd
- KAM Project Consultants Ltd
- Biffa
- Audi UK
- Senceive Ltd
- Studio B2
- The British Standards Institution
- Mitie Group plc
- The Coca-Cola Company
- Galliford Try Holdings plc
- BayWa r.e. UK Ltd
- Cranfield University
- Ingram Micro
- Cummins
- Arriva UK Bus - Procurement
- HSBC UK Bank plc
- British Telecommunications plc
- The Royal Latin School
- Milton Keynes College
- Sava
- Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles
- Waterway Recovery Group - Bit in the Middle
- Kent & East Sussex Canal Restoration Group
- Waterway Recovery Group -London
- RS Components
- Marsh LLC
- Hallam Land Management Ltd

Future Events

Tuesday 12th November 2.30pm

IWA Northampton

Talk: Lighting the Touch Paper
- Kate Saffin

The Boat Inn, Bridge Road, Stoke Bruerne,
Nr Towcester, Northants, NN12 7SB

Details:

www.waterways.org.uk/northampton

Thursday 21st November 7.45pm

IWA Milton Keynes

Talk: Canal Architecture
- Annie Roberts

Bletchley Conservative Club,
105-111 Queensway, Bletchley,
Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK2 2DN.

Details:

www.waterways.org.uk/miltonkeynes

Tuesday 10th December 2.30pm

IWA Northampton

**Talk: The Myths and Misconceptions of
the History of Canal Folk Art**
- Baroness Kay Andrews

The Boat Inn, Bridge Road, Stoke Bruerne,
Nr Towcester, Northants, NN12 7SB

Details:

www.waterways.org.uk/northampton

Getting the Word Out There About Events in Your Area

If any members know of events or festivals they think might be of interest to other Buckingham Canal Society members, please get in touch. **Could you please forward the details on to me using my contact details on page 30, and I will include them in this listing.**

Athina Beckett

**Trustee, Volunteer Leader and Work
Party Organiser**



Former working narrowboats at the
2024 Fellows, Morton & Clayton Ltd
Rally & Canal Festival
Saturday 29th June at Braunston Marina
© Alan Mynard

Work Party Dates 2024/2025

October

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 13th

November

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 10th

December

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 8th

January

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 12th

February

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 9th

March

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 9th

April

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 13th

May

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 11th

June

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 8th

July

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 13th

August

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 10th

September

Every Tuesday
Every Thursday
Sunday 14th

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 121 (Winter 2024) by the 1st November 2024 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

Contact the Committee

Derin Adegun

Trustee

9 Chestnut Cottages,
Mitre Street, Buckingham
Bucks, MK18 1RU

07584 731135

derin.adegun@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

**Athina Beckett**

*Trustee, Volunteer Leader and
Work Party Organiser*

2 Staters Pound, Pennyland,
Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK15 8AX

01908 661217 / 07721 319404

athina.beckett@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

**Terry Cavender**

Trustee and Executive Officer

7 Buckingham Road, Akeley,
Bucks, MK18 5HL

01280 860316

07976 629440

terry.cavender@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

**Richard Dwight**

Trustee and Treasurer

34 Hazell Park,
Amersham,
Bucks, HP7 9AB

01494 728611

treasurer@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

**Edima Inwang**

Trustee and Marketing Manager

129 North Ninth Street,
Milton Keynes,
Bucks, MK9 3AW

07596 033295

edima.inwang@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

**Ruth Millard**

Trustee



ruth.millard@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Mandy Morley

Trustee

33 Hambleton Grove,
Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes,
Bucks, MK4 2JS

01908-520090

mandy.morley@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

**Steve Morley**

Trustee

33 Hambleton Grove,
Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes,
Bucks, MK4 2JS

01908-520090

steve.morley@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

**Paul Rodgers**

Trustee and Chairman

Windyridge, Paines Hill,
Steeple Aston, Bicester,
Oxon, OX25 4SQ

07785 592695

paul.rodgers@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

**Trustee**

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





Other Key Contacts

Registered Address/General Enquiries

Buckingham Canal Society
c/o 2 Staters Pound,
Pennyland, Milton Keynes,
Bucks, MK15 8AX
info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Jean Beddard

Membership Secretary
5 Staters Pound, Pennyland,
Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK15 8AX
01908 674447
membership@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Ian Matson

Editor
63 Almnors Road, Lyne, Chertsey,
Surrey, KT16 0BH
07793 451958
ian.matson@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Alan Mynard

Website Administrator and Archivist
Milton Keynes, Bucks
alan.mynard@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Keith Rawlings

Structural Engineer
Dryden, Rock Lane,
Leighton Buzzard, Beds, LU7 2QQ
07415 461917
keith.rawlings@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Illustrated Talks & Presentations

talks@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

Cosgrove Festival Team

events@buckinghamcanal.org.uk

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Buckingham Canal Society, Aylesbury Canal Society.



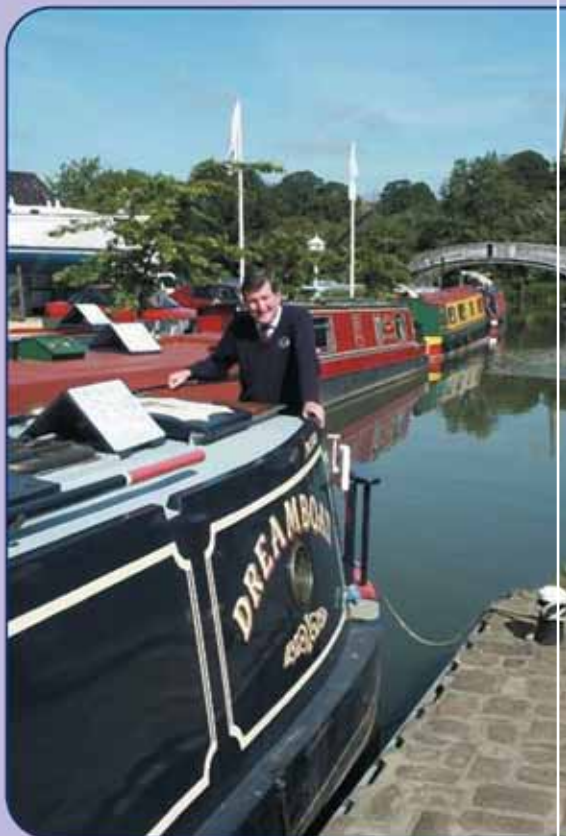
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