

BASINGSTOKE CANAL JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE CANAL SOCIETY REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2007

INTRODUCTION

As reported at our last meeting, the St Johns Back Pump project is operational, reinstatement of the towpath has since been completed. A mix of work has been achieved this summer, which includes design of the next phase of the water supply, also a start on refurbishment of our workboat.

Working with Canal Rangers, joint working parties have been replacing upper lock gates. This is cost effective and the joint approach has generated a better “team spirit” between the volunteers and Rangers. .

1.0 WORKING PARTIES

1.1 ST JOHNS BACKPUMPING

An enhanced towpath specification was agreed for the reinstatement work at St Johns. The 800 metres of towpath have been levelled where required and a Limestone Dust surface applied, compacted with a vibrating roller.

Heavy rains curtailed work on the first weekend as the dust turned to slurry and quickly became UN-workable, the second weekend, being dry and sunny enabled a good walking surface to be achieved. The new specification should provide better access for disabled and also reduce the incidence of broken windows along this section of the canal

1.2 LOCK14

The fitting of upper gates to lock 14 was a joint project with BCA Rangers and Society volunteers, a number of boats, Belfast Girl, the Society Work Boat plus a Tug and Barge moved up the canal from St. Johns to Deepcut. Brookwood was the first stop when. Ranger constructed upper gates were collected from above lock 15 and transported to lock 14, Rangers with volunteers, assisting on Belfast Girl then removed the old gates and fitted the replacements. Stop planks were installed and the Rangers completed the final fitting of the gates.

The old gates were the transported to Deepcut in the dredger hopper as the fleet continued upstream.

1.3 DEEPCUT

The heavy rain in August 2006 caused a landslide in Deepcut Cutting; this resulted in closure of the towpath and Navigation. In March this year, “Belfast Girl“, operated by the owner was commissioned to clear the Deepcut Channel by the BCA. The Society also supported this operation with Tug and Barges for transportation of the silt.

Rangers and Society volunteers provided a joint effort to unload the silt using lock 28 as a wharf. The silt was transported to a storage site for drying out

The Navigation re-opened and boats were able to attend the Bridge Barn Rally.

It is deplorable that the work required to stabilise the Cutting side has not yet been authorised, towpath users are diverted via the vehicle access into lock 28. Many “ vote with their feet” and climb or push through the barriers; a very grey area should an accident result. The issue should be examined and remedial work initiated, The County carries its own insurance and should strongly consider its position in this respect.

1.4 BROOKWOOD WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

The design of a Pumping system for re-cycling water at the Brookwood locks is well advanced. Towpath levels have been taken, exploratory excavations carried out and data recorded, the Project Plan and method statements are being drafted. We have commissioned Faber Maunsell to evaluate our proposals and prepare engineering drawings for construction and inclusion in the Project Plan, these drawings are expected within days.

It is intended to launch the Project this month and apply for funding this autumn.

1.5 STAN KNIGHT MEMORIAL SEAT

A seat in memory of Stan Knight, purchased by his family has been erected on the canal bank at Zephon Common Swing Bridge, a favourite spot of Stan's. Stan was a keen supporter of the canal over many years, being a Society member and active Boats for the Handicapped Committee member in addition to his Parish Council work and more formal activities.

1.6. TRAINING WEEKEND

Working Party Volunteers attended a Training Weekend in Warwickshire run by the Waterway Recovery Group. Training and Certificates in First Aid and Machine operation were awarded. We were successful in one of our volunteers being qualified as an assessor; this enables us to train our volunteers on Excavators and smaller Dump Trucks.

These qualifications are recognised throughout the Waterway Restoration movement and a requirement of our insurers.

1.7 WORK BOAT

Our workboat is now in Ash Lock Depot and has been Grit blasted and primed prior to renovation work continuing. Modifications will include the fitting of an engine and drive with renovation of the crew accommodation and equipment prior to re-launch.

1.8 LOCKS 2 AND 3 WOODHAM

Volunteers and Rangers have again joined forces in joint working parties. With the society agreement for the use of Belfast Girl, volunteers moved the dredger from the River Thames onto the Basingstoke; this was on a Friday.

On Saturday the combined teams changed the upper gates on lock 3 and moved backward to lock 2.

An early start on Sunday enabled the upper gates on lock 2 to be changed and stop planks fitted by lunchtime. The Rangers made the site safe and after lunch our volunteers commenced the return journey to the Thames and commercial work on the Monday.

This was a fantastic achievement by all involved; Rangers will complete the final fitting of the gates.

The canal should be re-opened within the working week.

1.9 FUTURE PROGRAMME

Volunteers will be working on the Woking section of the canal during the autumn. Clearing reed growth and spot dredging as required. Disposal location for silt has not yet been confirmed. Agreement with the BCA and Natural England is required.

The St Johns and Hermitage sections are shallow in places and silt from this section can be used to create the shallows for SSI enhancement at Hermitage flash. Details have to be agreed prior to work commencing.

2.0 RESOURCES

Volunteer details for the period March 2007 to September 2007

SHCS WORK PARTIES 135 days

Total Volunteer Days 135 days

Note, Visiting group's attendance is limited this summer as we are between projects. The winter programme will increase numbers of visiting groups to the Basingstoke.

3.0 FINANCE

3.1 CONTRIBUTIONS

Society direct costs Jan 2007 – September 2007

Fuel - Vehicles + Machines	£ 1,400	
Work Parties	£ 1,2441	
Back Pumping (St Johns)	£ see accruals	
Consultants Fees	£ see accruals	
Accruals	£ 4,660	(St Johns £ 1,160, Consultants Fees £3,500)
Insurance	£ 966	
Maintenance	£ 1,242	£ 20,709

Contribution in kind March 2007 to September 2007

135 Volunteer days at £50 per day	£ 6,750
Total Contributions	£ 27,459

3.2 BACKPUMPING

Fund-raising for the Brookwood Pumping Project will commence the autumn with the launch of our Project Plan. Our Consultants report, estimates and construction drawings will be included in these Documents.

Additional sources of funding are essential if we are to achieve a start in the summer 2008, applications To HLF, Landfill Site Operators, Charitable Trusts and Local authorities are anticipated.

4.0 LOCK 2 – Effluent Seepage

When working on lock 2 upper gate replacements, I noticed an overflow of sewage from an Inspection chamber adjacent to the sanitary disposal point on the side of lock 2.

The escaping effluent was seeping across the lock side and also into the Bye wash ditch Between the lock and the school playing fields.

Urgent remedial work is required to clear pipes and ensure satisfactory disposal of the Houseboat sewage discharge.

I understand that Surrey County Council are aware of this health hazard and potential Degradation of the SSSI.

Can members be assured that remedial work is completed?

Note Since writing this report, a society volunteer and a Houseboat resident have cleared tree roots from the Houseboat system in Fullbrook School playing field. A check on the overall performance of the Drainage is advisable.

Peter Redway
Chair SHCS September 2007