

### REPORT TO JMC OCTOBER 2014

#### 1. Recent work on the canal

In September the Society organized a very successful work camp on the canal when 20 volunteers from the Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) spent a week working in the Brookwood Country Park area. The existing wooden landing stage at the Country Park was extended and around 800m of towpath was re-surfaced. The volunteers came from all over the country and many of them used part of their annual holidays to work on the canal. The Society is particularly grateful to Hampshire County Council for making the Runways End Activity Centre available to accommodate the work party.



*Extended landing stage (right of centre) and resurfaced towpath (left) at Brookwood Country Park*

The Society's own volunteers have continued to undertake weed cutting in the Woking area using the BCA's weedcutter (below) which the Society has renovated at its expense. The use of volunteers for this work has produced considerable savings for the owners of the canal. We have calculated that the volunteer time spent to date would have cost the BCA around £7K at commercial rates, which already exceeds the cost of renovation and repairs.

The work party is now removing the remaining logs from the area adjacent to the Dogmersfield slip in readiness for the repair work to be carried out this winter. So far about £1200 has been raised towards the Canal from the sale of logs, with many more to be disposed of.

Work on the Society's barn at Colt Hill (which is used as the operating base for the John Pinkerton trip boat) was finally completed in the summer. The Society has also offered to repair a permissive footpath in Dark Wood, Greywell for the Earl of Malmesbury. This path



provides an important link between the bridleway over Greywell Tunnel and the towpath leading westwards towards Basingstoke.



*Removing hydrocotyle weed from the Canal in Woking*



*Removal of logs from the Dogmersfield landslip*



## 2. Canal Society volunteer inputs

Since the June meeting of the JMC, Society work parties and visiting groups (including two WRG volunteer workcamps) have undertaken around 280 man-days work or approximately £22K Equivalent Value in Kind (EVIK). The Society has also invested around £15K of its charitable funds in the purchase of materials and the hiring of plant and equipment for the works undertaken by WRG at Brookwood Country Park, and £1.5K on improvement works at Lock 28. A further £1K approx. has been spent on weedcutter operational maintenance.

## 3. John Pinkerton Canal Cruises

At the beginning of August, the original *John Pinkerton*, which had given 37 years of excellent service (during which it earned over £ $\frac{3}{4}$ m all of which has been re-invested into the canal) finally left the Basingstoke for a new career on the Kennet & Avon Canal.



*The John Pinkerton finally leaving the Canal*

Between Easter and mid-September, the *John Pinkerton II* has operated 120 private charters giving the opportunity for over 3800 passengers to enjoy the tranquility of the Basingstoke Canal. Public trips have again proved popular, boosted by a variety of themed trips including fancy dress for children, Jazz & Ale for adults, and a cruise to the Old Thatch NGS Open Day. These have raised the passenger numbers by a further 1450, making a total of 5250 so far this year.

The Dogsmersfield landslip forced us to retain JP1 to run the bi-annual July Air Show charters, and we made further use of it to invite councillors, from the wards through which the canal runs, to view the canal from a different perspective.

The *John Pinkerton II* is operated by a crew of four, all members of the Society. This represents a volunteering effort of over 2000 man-hours so far during 2014, raising funds dedicated solely to the maintenance and improvement of the Basingstoke Canal.

#### 4. Planning

The Canal Society has repeatedly urged the JMC to use its influence with the riparian districts to ensure that the canal derives tangible benefits from new developments on adjoining land. This is especially important at the present time given the unprecedented number of developments which are coming through the pipeline. The introduction of Neighbourhood Plans provides a further opportunity to secure some additional value for the canal. However, to date, the Canal Partnership has failed to obtain any tangible results despite the fact that the Canal Society has cited several examples of success in these initiatives on other waterways. We can only record our considerable disappointment that important opportunities continue to be missed.

#### 5. Milestones Museum

The Canal Society has now arranged for a display of the history of the canal to be included in the exhibits at the Milestones Museum in Basingstoke. The arrival of the canal in Basingstoke in the last decade of the eighteenth century marked a step change in the transport network of north Hampshire. The new display records this important development in the history of the town and its surrounding area and rectifies a long standing omission in the story of local transport.



*Society member John Ross, who with Roger Cansdale assembled the Milestones display*

Philip Riley  
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The Basingstoke Canal Society