

**REPORT TO THE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
2nd NOVEMBER 2016**

1. Work Parties

Since the last JMC report, the regular Society work party has continued with the refurbishment of the water and waste disposal facility at Bridge Barn, and was ready to use (though not quite completed) by the Woking Canal Festival. The interior has been refitted and a reinforced door installed, the water tap moved to a lockable external cupboard, and the new walled enclosure for waste bins etc built and painted (*below*).



The team has also undertaken some below-waterline maintenance of a Society workboat and a mud barge.

The Society engineering team has in the meantime been working on a major refurbishment of one of the BCA's workboats. The rotted wooden deck and the large amount of mud that had accumulated underneath have been cleared, the metalwork painted and a new wooden deck installed (*see below*). Work is currently going on to refurbish the cabin, including replacement of a corroded inner hull. When this job is completed, it is planned to carry out a similar upgrade to the other BCA workboat.



Since the last JMC report the Society volunteers have undertaken 180 man days effort towards the Canal, or £13K equivalent value in kind.

2. Woking Canal Festival

One of the most successful events on the canal for many years was held at Brookhouse Common in Woking on 6/7 August. The event was organized to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of The Basingstoke Canal Society and the 25th anniversary of the re-opening of the canal following its restoration. The Woking Festival was a joint event with the Historic Narrowboat Club which is also celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2016. The sight of nearly 50 boats, including over 30 historic craft moored on the canal between Chobham and Chersey Road bridges, made a wonderful spectacle which was enjoyed by a large number of visitors to the event (*see below*). There is no doubt that the Festival provided an excellent platform to promote the canal and to encourage support particularly in the Woking area. Our thanks are due to the BCA who went the extra mile to make sure that all the visiting boats were welcomed on to the canal and were able to navigate to Woking and further west into Hampshire. We are also grateful to our Canal Partners, Woking Borough Council, who prepared the site for us and contributed in numerous other ways towards the success of the event.



3. Kitty

The Woking Canal Festival provided a welcome opportunity to introduce our newly acquired trip boat, Kitty, on to the canal, and we used the event to hold a naming ceremony, carried out by Society co-president Liz Dodwell (*see below*). During the Festival, Kitty was kept very busy running trips for the public and showing them the unique collection of historic boats from the water. The Society is currently working on plans to use Kitty for trips on the Woking pound probably using the mooring at Bedser bridge. It is hoped that this operation will help to promote the value of the canal to the communities in Woking.



4. Tow path

The Society continues to receive comments from the public about the excessive vegetation growth along the towpath particularly at the western end of the canal. We have reports from cyclists and walkers who find the growth of nettles and briars seriously affects their enjoyment of the waterway. Hopefully the purchase by the BCA of the new grass cutter and the increasing use of volunteers trained in the use of trimmers will begin to address this problem but the Society feels that the C&RT policy known as the ‘Veg Pledge’ should be adopted as a maintenance objective on the Basingstoke Canal. This would require that the vegetation between the towpath and the canal should be cut to 3” each year and that the hedges and other areas on the non-canal side of the towpath should be trimmed to a similar extent.

5. Swan Cutting



Having previously reported to the JMC on the increasing difficulty of navigating Swan Cutting in North Warnborough, the Society is looking forward to meeting the County Council’s engineers and consultants in order to identify an appropriate way of dealing with this problem. Whilst we recognize that a solution will involve potentially difficult land ownership issues, engineering challenges and funding difficulties the fact remains that, in the absence of a repair being undertaken at Swan Cutting, the ability for larger boats to navigate beyond Colt Hill will be prejudiced. In our view this is an important matter which should be dealt with as a priority.

Philip Riley
Chairman

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