



This month's update from Mike Stone (Chairman)

The Heritage Lottery Fund has announced that they have awarded £830,800 to CRT following their application for the Grantham Canal Waterway Heritage Initiative. We are now planning the project to enable Locks 15 & 14 to be restored using volunteer labour. The Society will need more active volunteers with a range of skills if we are to successfully get those locks working again. Just think of the number people required on a construction site; there's the security person on the gate, guys in the office dealing with the paper-work, plant operators, bricklayers, labourers, foremen (or women), shift-managers, tea-makers, etc. We will need all of these plus somebody to recruit all these volunteers. If you know anyone young or old with time to spare why not encourage them to come to us. Young people will benefit from the chance to learn a trade or skill that may stand them in good stead in a future search for employment.

The season of goodwill certainly prevails amongst members of the Society. We bid for a weed-boat at auction and despite not being the highest bid were awarded the craft! Then with only a few days in which to pay generous individuals found funds to meet our commitment. Gundel Transport helped by moving it from Rugeley to Woolsthorpe and the GCS Engineering team set to work. I understand, even though the craft had been sunk during its previous ownership, the engine is now running. Is the society poorer by about £8,000 or richer now it can cut weed? I leave you to judge. You will have seen that we have launched an appeal which has so far raised £5,000 towards the target of £8,000! I offer our thanks to all who have contributed and encourage you all to support this project.

The small team working on the head-walls at Lock 17 have now re-pointed all the brickwork – even that below mud level! Many bricks were apparently held in by fresh air and were far too easily removed. Water as ever will find a way but lack of mortar really helps it get through more quickly! Minor work is in-hand behind the ladders at Lock 18 which, when completed, will enable the pound to be re-watered. Will we have stopped the leaks? You, like us, will have to wait and see!

So winter is here and we have seen the first frosts, the trees now bare of leaves, water in the cut cold and uninviting and the bird song restricted to the short daylight hours. Soon the days will get longer, bulbs will show their leaves above the ground, buds will appear on the trees and before we know it spring will be here again! Before that happens the volunteers have much to do. Self-sown saplings need removing, overhanging vegetation cut and burnt, weeds cut – yes that's why we bought it – and any site that needs clearing should be completed before the birds start nesting again. So when you sit in your cosy room warming yourself by the fire please think of the volunteers who are out in the weather doing all the jobs that must be completed before March. Their work makes your walk, cycle or run along the towpath so much more enjoyable and ensures that the waterway retains its character for another year. Why not venture out and join a working party or when walking your dog become a canal ranger? You can help look after the canal in your area and ensure it will have a future purpose in the lives of others.

Thank you for your continued support for our Society.

*I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas
 and a Happy New Year.*



Mike Stone.




The Events Team represented the society at three events this month.

Rosemary was invited along to Melton Field Workers Group on Wed 3rd Dec, to present a talk about the Iron Age. You may wonder what on earth the Iron Age has to do with the canal? Whatever subject Rosemary speaks on, and she has a few up her sleeve – the proceeds are always donated to the society!



As always, I tag along as her unglamorous assistant. It was in this role, that I accompanied her to Cotgrave U3A History Group, where we gave our more familiar canal talk. Some interesting questions followed, which included the usual concerns about the amount of weed in the canal – and what are ‘we’ doing about the dry section...

On Fri 12th, we took the information Stand along to a packed Conservation Evening in Waltham on the Wolds Village Hall. Among the eminent speakers, was Dr. Bruno Broughton, who gave a talk about the ecological benefits of a maintained Grantham Canal.

It was reassuring to know, that so many people have an interest in the ecology of the Vale of Belvoir. We are grateful to the Vale of Belvoir Barn Owl Trust for putting on this excellent event, and for recognising the importance of the canal, and its role as a wildlife corridor through the vale.

On behalf of the Events Team, may I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy & healthy New Year!

A big thank you to all those who have helped us throughout the year!

...and if you're wondering what other talks Rosemary can deliver to raise funds for the society: Clothes of the Cut, Bess of Hardwick, Cooking in Pre-history – and the two I've already mentioned – the Iron Age, and the canal talk; entitled 'Into Another World'

The Oilrag



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The Case for Maintenance and Conservation

The Conservation Evening organised by member Don Pritchett on Friday 12th December created opportunities for people to talk to Events Team and consider signing up with us and to hear a number of interesting speakers, not least of which was Dr Bruno Broughton, Fellow of the Institute of Fisheries Management on 'The Ecological Benefits of a Maintained Grantham Canal.'

Dr Broughton pointed out that most still water is man-made and the natural world, being subject to perpetual change the canal will not necessarily maintain itself. He said he was staggered by the change over 10 years, from a state of open water with a rich flora and fauna to what sections of the canal have become today. Natural progression leads to shallower water and encroachment by marshy plants, alder and willow, leading to swampy conditions and finally to dry land.

He expressed concern that the Ecological Impact Study on the Canal Corridor of 2006/7 did not include a fish survey. He advocated the involvement of children in fishing and the study of aquatic life, so Bottesford Anglers work with youngsters and Grantham Canal Learning Team's canal dipping forays into schools, seem to be going in the right direction there. Talking to him afterwards, I pointed out the abundance of fish seen from the boats on the navigable section of the canal.

Dr Broughton has a website if anyone fancies 'googling' for him.

And Bats: Another speaker of particular interest was Jenny Harris of Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group. I spoke to her afterwards about the feasibility of a **Bat Walk around Hickling** to find evidence of the daubenton's bats that are said to frequent that area. Anyone fancy arranging this for the Spring/Summer? It could finish up at The Plough, Hickling, perhaps. Jenny can be contacted on 01572 755274 jharris@lrwt.org.uk

Are there other people out there who could organise little events and social gatherings where members can get together?

Seasons Greetings

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SSSI DREDGING



Photo's courtesy of Tony Pitman who tells us that Land and Water went on site w/c 1st Dec starting at the eastern side of Redmile Mill Br 53.