

This month's update from Mike Stone (Chairman)

Have you noticed how you can go for several weeks with little or nothing happening and then suddenly everything hits you at once?

That's what has happened to the Society in recent weeks!

The maintenance team were working steadily on removing the leaks above Lock 17 and other members were undertaking planned tasks when BANG!

Some people were already very involved with the production of our new Canal Guide when CRT announced the sale of more equipment including a weed-boat; the Heritage lottery Fund committee decided to visit and inspect both CRT staff, GCS volunteers and the site of Locks 15 to 12; our friends in the military who offered to help us with moving a swing bridge at Bardney decided a reconnaissance visit was needed; Leicestershire highways Department came to see a couple of lowered bridges; there was a meeting re the development of a business strategy for the canal and a housing development alongside the canal started to be progressed.

A very big "THANK YOU" to all who have responded, at very short notice, to the weed boat appeal. The craft has so far cost GCS about £7,000 but it will be one of our most useful assets for both ourselves and our angling colleagues. By the time you read this it should be safely at Woolsthorpe where our engineering team can put it into first class order. In addition thanks are due to Gundel Transport for their generous help with transport.



A similar weed boat on the Grantham

We hope the HLF team went home taking a positive view of the project to restore the locks; the military confirmed that they could undertake the work, with the help of a CRT crane barge, to remove the swing-bridge; Leicestershire's report on the bridges is still awaited; and the GCP, CRT and the society know where to go with a strategy document. The housing development is less positive as money promised to the society previously under S 106 payments appears to have been hi-jacked by Nottinghamshire CC for footpath developments! More work to do on this one!

Of course we had the Society AGM this month and we welcome Steve Swann, who has transformed our advertising and PR, to the committee.

Now a negative comment; at a recent meeting I attended it became obvious the society membership numbers – not active volunteers - are well below those of some other restoration societies. The GCS needs to address this problem as a matter of urgency as, I have been informed, grant funding bodies will consider the figure very carefully before awarding grants. Yes we knew that but what I did not know was that other societies have well into thousands of members. Action is required quickly to improve our membership numbers and I appeal to you all to help enrol neighbours, friends, people who are users of our towpath and those who wish to see a linear and very rural park in the Vale of Belvoir.

What of the new guide? It is completed and the copy has been sent to the publishers Harper Collins this week to meet our deadline. Thanks are due to Steve Swann and a few dedicated helpers who have sourced material and scoured the text for errors. I am sure you will like it and, more importantly, it will be bought by the public be they cyclists, walkers, fishermen, naturalists or even boaters who enjoy the Grantham Canal.

Will we all now get a period for rest and consolidation? I doubt it!

Mike Stone.

Paul & Jan Dadford walk The Grantham ... Part 2

There were a few clouds, but the sun was shining through. The scenery along this part of the walk was stunning, with some beautiful plants, flowers and trees.

At around 11.30 we passed the halfway marker between Grantham and Nottingham and, knowing that there was still around 16 miles until the end of the walk, I wondered if we would ever be able to get to the end. Our pace had slowed a little and we were both feeling tired. We persevered and were rewarded at 1pm with a cold refreshing drink and a tasty baguette at the



Plough Inn in Hickling.

After an hour's rest with still no sign of the promised rain, we pressed on, praying that the weather would hold.

With about another 5 miles to go I was beginning to become worried about getting blisters on my feet as they were starting to get quite sore. We pressed on, still collecting the survey data and enjoying the peacefulness of the canal. With about a mile to go it was becoming painful to walk. After struggling on to Highbury House, our B&B for the night in Cropwell Bishop, it finally started to rain.

I was glad we had made it and it was great to be able to sit down and rest our weary feet. Paul discovered that he had got a small blister, but my feet appeared to be OK. After a couple of hours rest we needed to have some dinner, and the lady at the B&B recommend The Plough in

the next village, just a 10 minute walk away. Normally a 10 minute walk would be no problem, but after walking about 25 miles in the last 2 days and with Paul's sore foot, it was a monumental task to get there. A very nice meal, a few glasses of wine and a relaxing evening were in store before heading back to the B&B to sleep soundly.

Bright and early on Saturday morning, after a wonderful full English breakfast, we were ready to start the last 9 miles of the walk. We were both feeling the pain of the day before, but were determined to finish. We were still in the dry section of the canal and it was lovely to arrive at



Joshuas Lock (Lock 8) to find water in the canal once more. Our pace was a lot slower than before, but with every mile past we passed we could begin to taste victory. The closer we got to Nottingham the slower we were walking, but we couldn't give up after having come so far and, at 12.35, almost 4 hours after leaving the B&B, we made it to the end at Trent Lock!

It had been a great 3 days with some beautiful scenery, unspoiled by the weather, and we had collected lots of useful data for the GCS as well as taking some lovely photos along the way. However, it wasn't quite over yet as we still had to get to the bus station in order to get the bus back home to Oakham. With Paul's foot very sore and mine aching too, there was still another 2 miles to go, the longest 2 miles of the whole walk!

That night we celebrated our success at Greetham Valley with friends and family, and even with our aching limbs and sore feet we were still able to dance the night away!!

Terry Davies is a registered distributor

Terry has arranged that he will receive 50 copies of Towpath Talk and he will distribute these on the last Saturday of the month at the workforce volunteer meeting.

If you would like a copy then either email Terry at terence.d@ntlworld.com or phone him on **01476 419104**



NOTTS & DERBY BRANCH
Next Meeting Friday 19th December 2014; 7-45pm

This will be our Christmas Social
with the traditional sharing buffet.

BEST CAPTION (From last months edition)



We've had a great day, but I seem to have lost the horse.

Pete Skerratt

“Deliberate” Mistake!?

Last month Judith Poore took a superb picture of *Mudlark* being towed by *Centauri*. However the caption didn't quite say that ... maybe wishful thinking that *Earwig* was a powered vessel. But if you didn't see it you missed out on the prize!



Events Round Up

The National Hedgelaying Championships were held at Hough on the Hill this year, and we were invited to go along with the stand. I must admit, I thought it a bit odd, when Rosemary said we were going to this, but there was a good selection of conservation stands there. Some interesting conversations were had - and our very supportive, Mayor and Mayoress of Grantham dropped by again!

I can't say I saw much hedgelaying over the weekend, but on the way out, I did notice the host landowner's long hedge lined driveway looked a good deal tidier! I wonder if they'd consider holding the event at my humble abode next year?

Due to the usual Ministry ineptitude, we spent 8 days, sitting in our tiny boat cabin in Grantham Basin, waiting for orders.



Rosemary made good use of our time whilst waiting - knitting scarves for the war effort. Whilst I, conscious of the 'dwindling income', made regular visits to find work 'on the bank'.

The canal basin, in this instance was a shop unit in the George Centre in Grantham, where we had been invited to represent the part the canal played in WW1.

Rosemary, was involved in setting up the whole exhibition, not just our bit, which was a representation of a narrowboat back cabin.

It was a well attended exhibition, and beneficial for us to get into the centre of town, reaching people we otherwise might not.

We did get an afternoon's respite, when we presented Grantham U3A History Group, with our 'Into Another World' canal talk. The title for this, incidentally, came from Mr. Simmons, whose mother, as a 14 year old, worked on the canals of the region in the early 20th C - and told her son, that going on the Grantham Canal, was 'like going into another world'.

The evening of Thursday 20th November, saw us giving a presentation to the Vale of Belvoir Rotary Club, where we, dressed in our usual early 20th C boatman and woman's costume, sat on the head table (yep, they fed us as well), feeling like a couple of gypsies, amongst the more conservatively attired.

A visit to Year 4 at St. Mary's RC Primary School in Grantham, just about rounds up this months activities of the Event's Team. It was nice to return to my old school - only to find, in my 50 year's absence, they've gone an' done away with the inkwells, spelling redundancy for that messiest of occupations, the Ink Monitor! Sadly, I was never considered responsible enough for that job...

The Oilrag

Co-operation work with CRT

Repaired sign for Clark's Bridge replaced by GCS on 15th November.

Many thanks to Dave Cross for details



CORRECTION!

In edition 54 we stated that Les Reid's grandfather was Oliver Willis, he was not. Les just visited him.

Our apologies for any offence this error may have caused.

Ed



Talks and Events in December (and onwards!)

<u>Date & Time</u>	<u>Event & Venue</u>
Monday 8th December	Talk: Cotgrave U3A – venue to be confirmed
Friday 12th December	Information stand at Conservation Evening at Waltham on the Wolds. See below.
2015 bookings	
Tuesday 10th February	Talk: Rutland Vintage Tractor & Engine Club, Melton
Tuesday 17th February	Talk: Bingham Ladies Evening Guild
Monday 2nd March	Talk: Retirement Group, Grantham
Wednesday 25th March	Talk: Grantham 88 Probus
Tuesday 7th July	Guided Walk: Bingham Ladies Evening Guild
Tuesday 14th July	Talk: Burton Joyce U3A
Wednesday 12th August	Talk: Lenton Local History Society
Wednesday 16th September	Talk: Laxton History Group

This is an abbreviated notice regarding this event:

The Vale of Belvoir Barn Owl Conservation Group presents a

CONSERVATION EVENING

FRIDAY 12th DECEMBER 2014

VILLAGE HALL, WALTHAM ON THE WOLDS, LE14 4AG

Only 30 minutes from Loughborough, 45 minutes from Leicester and Nottingham and only one hour from Lincoln.

Illustrated talks;

The sparrowhawk

The ecological benefits of a maintained Grantham Canal

Dr Bruno Broughton, BSc, (Hons), PhD, FIFM, C.Env. Bruno is a Fellow of the Institute of Fisheries Management. One of the country's leading fisheries consultant will present the case for why a maintained Grantham Canal which meanders from Grantham through Leicestershire to Nottingham provides an improved ecology compared with no maintenance.

Lincolnshire and Vale of Belvoir peregrine falcons

Using bat detectors, Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group (LRBG)

Display stands with information on;

- *Bumblebee conservation and the best garden plants for bees,*
- *East Midlands Butterfly Conservation with information on the grizzled skipper*
- *conservation plan that will improve the biodiversity along the 5 miles of disused railway line from Bottesford to Stathern in Leicestershire,*
- *Supplementary winter farmland bird feeding and the option to include within*
- *environmental stewardship schemes,*
- *Muston Meadows National Nature Reserve,*
- *Grantham Canal Society,*
- *Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group,*
- *Vale of Belvoir Barn Owl Conservation Group.*

Open from 6-45 p.m. First talk 7-30 p.m. Intermission 8-15 p.m. to 9 p.m. Formal closure 9-45 p.m. informal time to 10-30 p.m.

Tickets only £6-00 reserved in advance please by either telephone 01949 844319 or email valebarnowls@hotmail.co.uk Please contact us if a student discount is required.

Proceeds after expenses will be used by the Vale of Belvoir Barn Owl Conservation Group for conservation work.