

### This month's update from Mike Stone (Chairman)

2015 is a New Year which looks to be one of the busiest in the recent history of the Society!

You may remember that I said in my December letter that following the grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund we need to commence the planning of the work. Well I had attended three planning meetings with CRT within the first two weeks of January! We all know what we wish to achieve but the planning process is complex and requires significant preparation



Supported by  
**The National Lottery**  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



to ensure that we make the best use of resources. Current tasks include detailed negotiations with land owners, so that we can access the sites; arrangements for accommodating visiting work parties; training of GCS volunteers in the operation of mechanical tools and plant; planning the structure and security of work-sites; clearance of vegetation prior to the bird nesting season; together with several minor, but just as essential, activities relating to the delivery of a successful project.

So there is work to be done both on and off the waterway.

No! We cannot leave everything to our professional colleagues in CRT! Society volunteers are a key part of the delivery process and we will need to make changes in our, previously relaxed, approach to project delivery. Please have a look elsewhere in this edition to see where you could help.

We must remember that our normal work has to continue on the existing length of canal. Weeds need clearing – the team restoring *Osberton* now have it in working order and are planning to repaint it during better weather; a further leak at Lock 17 still requires attention; *The Three Shires* cruising season starts on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April and some maintenance of the craft is required before operations commence; the silt at the A1 needs relocation to ensure the boat can wind (turn round) more easily; new skippers need to be trained to enlarge the team delivering the cruises which are critical to the society income.

Please publicise the cruising and work opportunities among your neighbours and colleagues; we always need to raise awareness of the society's work both on and off the canal.

We hosted a large group of visitors at Woolsthorpe Depot last week from the Canal & River Trust. They included the Chairman of the Trust and many of the charity's national Trustees together with several members of the CRT Board

including the Chief Executive. They walked from Locks 14 & 15 to Woolsthorpe where they saw several of our craft, the visible bit of the works undertaken on the Lock 17 headwall and the work on *Osberton*. After light refreshments, a presentation in the depot of the Project plans was given by Lucie Holmer in darkness due to a local power cut in the Woolsthorpe area.



All visitors said that this incident made the day even more memorable and that they found the GCS and the work of the society most interesting. CRT Directors consider our work to be a model operation and, if successful, a precursor for further joint activities between CRT and volunteer groups elsewhere on their network.

The days are getting longer but so is our work-load! How about you becoming an active volunteer?

Best wishes

*Mike Stone.*

Hundreds upon hundreds of illiterate, uncouth roughnecks, with little regard for the law, are rampaging through the Vale of Belvoir! The mania, which has gripped the country by storm, finally arriving in the Vale! Before dashing to lock up your daughters and hide under the stairs – you're too late! The year is 1793, and these are navigators (navvies), arrived in the area to build the Grantham Canal. The last time all hell let loose on this pastoral landscape, was around a 150 years earlier. On this occasion, villagers finding it prudent in keeping their heads down, discovering themselves betwixt opposing factions in the English Civil War.

And so, 'The Nottingham to Grantham Navigation Company', with £75,000 in the kitty from savvy investors, and a compulsory purchase order tucked in their belt, got their spades out and started to dig.

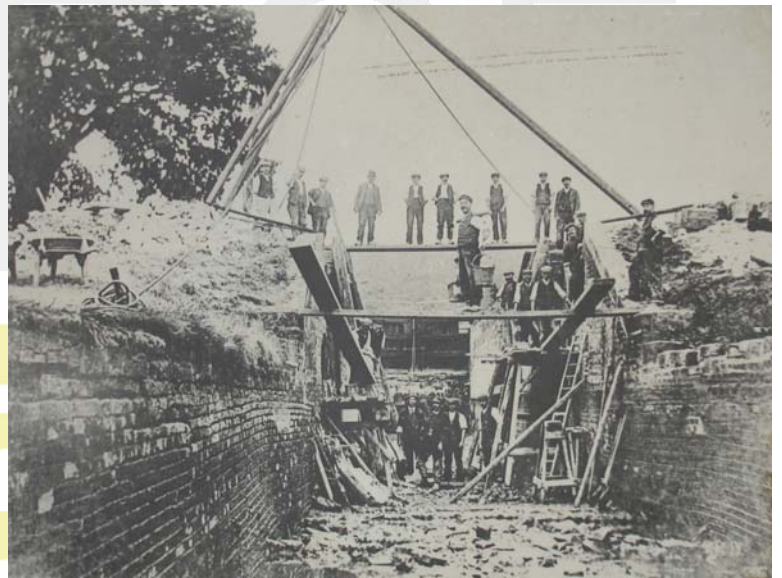
...and they dug, and they dug, for four years they dug, and they must have had really shiny spades at the end of it! The more skilled, building the locks and bridges, the warehouses and wharves. Lock keepers and their families needed somewhere to live – so cottages too were built. Nor must we forget those lovable providers of motive power – the horses, in need of their stables.

All this building required cart loads of bricks. It seemed sensible to make these on site, where you needed them most – a brickworks was established by the side of the canal at Woolsthorpe, where a flight of seven locks, some bridges, a couple of cottages, stables, and a maintenance yard were required.

There's many a cottage in the area built of 'Woolsthorpe Brick' – and until Mr. Bosch, or whoever, invented the hammer drill – it was a devil of a job drilling into them, as I discovered, as an apprentice electrician in the '60s!

With Jackson being the most common name in Lincolnshire, beating the Taylors into second place. It wouldn't be at all surprising to have two Village Link contributors with that name, would it? And with the same Christian name? Suspicion really becomes aroused, however, when one appears and the other doesn't...

Even rocking horses need a rest sometimes, so I suggested to Wendy I could perhaps share one of my other passions – and with fat chance of secreting Dolly Parton past the Scrutiny Committee – I elected the safer option – the good ol' canal! I don't seem to have any photos of the canal being built – but this one's fabulous - Willis's Lock (17) at Woolsthorpe, undergoing some repair work in 1890.



[www.granthamcanal.org](http://www.granthamcanal.org) Follow us on Twitter



**Paula Hunt, Secretary at Louth Navigation Trust, has asked if we would circulate this.**

**Louth Navigation Trust have an e-petition with the government to allow them to restore the canal and overcome ownership issues.**

**It only takes a minute to sign online. The link to the petition is -**

**<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/70914>**



Your comments, news items or photos are always very welcome  
To contact us please send your email to:

[bridge@cygnusweb.co.uk](mailto:bridge@cygnusweb.co.uk)

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## Woolsthorpe Top Lock (L18)

As it's 20 years since this lock, along with locks 16 & 17 were restored, and we're about to embark on the restoration of more locks in this flight – I thought we'd have a look at Lock 18 in particular – as this has the most colourful of histories...

Having climbed steadily out of the Trent Valley to reach Cropwell Top Lock (L11), the canal hugs the 150ft contour for 20 miles, before reaching the bottom of the Woolsthorpe Flight.

We then work through these seven locks to reach the highest point on the canal – Woolsthorpe Top Lock (L18). From here it's a level run into Grantham - we're on the Summit Pound.

We are now approximately 140 ft above the level of the River Trent. I say approximately, because the 'rivet counters' will be fidgeting in their seats at this – partly because the level of the Trent was raised a couple of feet after the canal was built – so technically, we're somewhere around 138 ft.

Most of the canal was 4 feet deep as built, the Summit Pound being 5 feet. This is because the Summit Pound also assists Denton Reservoir in providing the volume of water required to feed the Woolsthorpe Flight.

Every time you use a lock, thousands of gallons of water sally fourth on their journey towards the Trent, so it's important to have an adequate supply - also good reason to restore the canal back into Grantham – as this will provide the designed capacity.

Woolsthorpe top lock impounds around 5 miles of water. As it stands at the moment, this lock is probably one of the best locks on the whole canal system. It hasn't always been that way!

I don't know much about the lock's history before the days of the Grantham Canal Society, other than the offside wall was faced with blue bricks - an indicator of repair work done whilst the canal was in railway ownership. Clearly there had been issues with this in the past.

Lock 18, had suffered the same fate as all the others – gates were removed/rotted, and concrete weirs were installed at the top (high end) of each lock, in order to maintain the minimum of two feet of water stipulated in the closure act - providing water for agriculture.

From its inception in 1969, the society embarked upon 20 years of negotiation with British Waterways (funny how things seem to go in 20 year cycles on this flight) – this doggedness eventually paid off, and the society was given permission to begin restoration. Much work was carried out in the 1990s, but I've picked out Lock 18.



Earwig & Three Shires working thro L18: Society boats working through the fully restored lock 18



Lock 18 from railway embankment: It's worth remembering what's been achieved. This is Lock 18 in the 1960s, taken from the now removed railway embankment, which at one time blocked the canal

British Waterways were very supportive at this time, supplying everything from cranes to quoins.

The concrete weir was removed, brickwork repaired and the mammoth task of casting new coping stones undertaken. New gates were fitted - only they weren't new. They were secondhand, coming from Misterton on the Chesterfield Canal and Thorne. Although serviceable at the time, it is one of the reasons we've needed to replace them sooner than we might have done. By the mid 1990s, we had three serviceable locks at Woolsthorpe! The society held the National Trailboat Festival to celebrate their opening. By 2007, having almost recovered – we had another.

There's never an easy way of breaking bad news, so here goes – after the festival – a really nasty crack appeared in the offside wall of our lock 18 – might fall down at any moment kind of nasty.

*Continued .....*

... Continuation

I'm conscious of this write up becoming rather long – so fast forwarding – the Inland Waterways Association came to the rescue with funds, and that wall was extensively rebuilt – still using the old gates. These gates have now been replaced – with new ones this time!

I'm not writing from memory – I wasn't involved at the time, but I'm fully aware I've skimmed over all this – having made no mention of the thousands of hours of negotiation, anguish, some jubilation, the sludge, the cold, aching backs and limbs, vandals...

Some reading this will have been involved, given their pound of flesh and bowed out gracefully. One or two love sludge so much, they can't keep away, some, sadly, are no longer with us.

We didn't do it all with our own bare hands – we had help from other organisations and individuals who make up the roll of honour - but I've purposely avoided attempting to name them all, as this is a sure way of finding one's self being removed from people's Christmas list...

I'd like to raise a glass to all those who have gone before us – thank you for your trail blazing and perseverance!

.....but, fear not, there's still plenty left to do, and not all volunteering opportunities involve sludge – check out 'Volunteer' on the website – get in touch, get involved, let's get this job done, so we can start something else...

No time to help? No problem! Simply by becoming a member of the society, you support those who are able volunteer their time. Healthy membership numbers help us enormously when applying for funding – go to 'Join us' on the website. – rope your friends and neighbours in!

British Waterways no longer exist – it's the turn of the Canal and River Trust to hold the title deeds in their biscuit tin – they are very supportive of our aims – join with us in this new era of optimism.

The Oilrag



Grantham Canal Society boats moored between restored locks 17 & 18



The Inland  
Waterways  
Association

## NOTTS & DERBY BRANCH

**Next Meeting Friday 20th February 7.45 pm**

AGM. This doesn't take up the whole evening so there will be a short illustrated talk by regular visitor, John Wilkinson. John's topic this time will be 'The Canals of Burgundy'.

### Kinoulton Swifts

In 2011 we installed 10 swift nest boxes in the tower of St. Luke's Church, Kinoulton, as part of a project to increase biodiversity in the churchyard. A cottage used by swifts in the past had been re-roofed, leaving the birds with nowhere to nest and we were incredibly lucky that some of these "evicted" swifts reacted rapidly to our CD of swift calls and started circling the church tower. Just one pair occupied a box that first summer and, to our absolute delight, raised two young. By the second season we had a camera installed and were able to watch the same pair raise another two youngsters, and by our fourth summer (2014) we had three breeding pairs on camera. We now have 20 nest boxes and hope that the breeding pairs will gradually increase to produce a sustainable colony so that we can continue to enjoy the screaming, fly-pasts of these amazing birds around the rooftops of Kinoulton.

Kinoulton church is open every day so please pop in between mid-May and early August to see whether our swifts have returned.

Carol Collins [carol.w.collins@talk21.com](mailto:carol.w.collins@talk21.com) 01949 81798



TV screen showing a swift nest with one egg



TV screen showing two chicks nearly ready to fledge.



Your comments, news items or photos are always very welcome  
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# HAVE YOU CONSIDERED VOLUNTEERING ?

**YOUR QUESTION:** "WHAT COULD I DO?"

**OUR REPLY:** "WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO .... YOU COULD WORK FROM HOME, OR BE OUT IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE IF YOU PREFER THAT?"

**YOUR QUESTION:** "HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD I OFFER IN A YEAR?"

**OUR REPLY:** "A FEW HOURS, A DAY, A FEW DAYS, A DAY A MONTH, A DAY A WEEK?"

**WE ARE FLEXIBLE TO MEET YOUR AVAILABILITY.**

**WHY NOT TALK TO US ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES?**

WE NEED RESOURCES OF THE HUMAN KIND:

- ONE KEY AREA IS ADMINISTRATION. THIS CAN BE UNDERTAKEN FROM HOME AS LONG AS THE VOLUNTEER HAS ELECTRONIC MEANS OF COMMUNICATION. *MAYBE YOU?*
- THE PROJECT NEEDS VOLUNTEERS TO UNDERTAKE GROUND CLEARANCE, WATER DIVERSION, SITE PREPARATION, DEMOLITION AND RE-BUILDING OF LOCKS. *OR IS THIS YOU?*
- DO YOU LIKE MEETING PEOPLE? WE NEED A RECEPTION PERSON TO WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS. *COULD YOU DO THIS?*

THESE ARE A FEW IDEAS WHERE INPUT FROM YOU COULD MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE TO THE SOCIETY AND THE ENJOYMENT OF EVERYONE.

**PLEASE CONTACT TONY JACKSON IF YOU WISH TO TALK ABOUT VOLUNTEERING.**

**TONY'S EMAIL:**

**ANTHONYKJACKSON@BTOPENWORLD.COM**



Your comments, news items or photos are always very welcome  
To contact us please send your email to:

[bridge@cygnusweb.co.uk](mailto:bridge@cygnusweb.co.uk)

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## Some good photos this month!



2 photo's by Ralph P

(Left)  
The frozen canal on a bright & crisp day

(Below)  
The growing fleet moored in the pound between locks 17 & 18



Filling lock 17

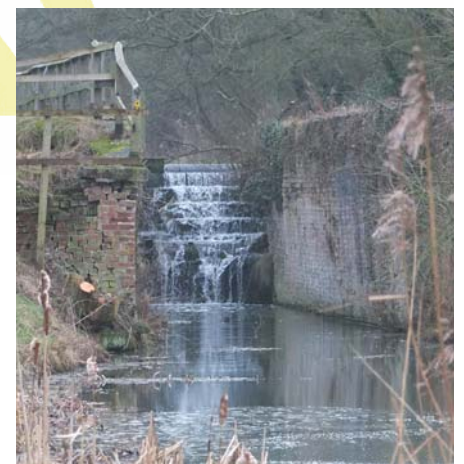
Photographed by John Clark



A group of Canal & River Trust Directors and National Trustees inspecting Kingston's Lock (lock 14)



'Osberton' undergoing extensive TLC by GCS volunteers and well admired by CRT & the Trustees



The poorly state of Woolthorpe Middle Lock (lock 15), as everyone saw it on the day



**WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE  
FOLLOWING WHO HAVE MADE A  
DONATION TO THE SOCIETY  
INCLUDING THOSE WHO  
CONTRIBUTED TO THE PURCHASE  
AND RESTORATION OF OSBERTON,  
OUR NEW WEED-CUTTER BOAT.**

C & J Wiseman; Jeremy Bullock; Mr & Mrs Altham; Owen Rushby; JL & VG Odell; Mr MP Wiggins;  
Mr & Mrs Altham; Mark Hubbard; D Cross; S Harbidge; Mike Gladwell; Mary Noble; Mike Wiggins;  
Ralph Bellamy; Gordon Wallis; Tony Pitman; Ian Wakefield; JM Spooner; Mr & Mrs Carberry;  
Mr & Mrs O'Dea; D Broome; I & M McCracken; W & M Frankland; Mrs M Pettman; Mrs Snowden;  
J C Dodwell; Mrs Hobbins; Kenneth Laing; John Clark; Dave Walker; Christine Harbidge; John Trigg;  
Sally Anderton; David Moretti; John Robinson; Michael Scorrer; Sassan Panahinejad; Antonia Browne;  
Deborah Grigg; Russell Hamer; Jane Grylls; Charles Francis; Peter Reader; Eric Foxley; Luke Walker;  
Paul Jackson; Jonathan Mosse; Godfrey Owen; Mervyn Squires; Neale Taylor; Dean Allen; Robert Bullock;  
John Kingston; Edwin Pettipher;  
Lloyds Bank Foundation Fund; Fern Charity Enterprises; Kevin Gundel; Andy Stephens

## Talks and Events for 2015

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May

Saturday & Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> May

Saturday & Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> June

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> July

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July 7.30

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September

Talk: Rutland Vintage Tractor & Engine Club, Melton

Rangers' Meeting The Plough at Stathern

Talk: Bingham Ladies Evening Guild

Talk: Retirement Group, Grantham

Talk: Grantham 88 Probus

Railway and Canal History Scty AGM in Grantham

Nottinghamshire County Show, Newark Showground

Grantham Carnival **Help Needed - contact**  
[communityandevents@granthamcanal.org](mailto:communityandevents@granthamcanal.org)

Guided Walk: Bingham Ladies Evening Guild

Talk: Burton Joyce U3A

Talk: Kinoulton WI

Talk: Lenton Local History Society

Talk: Laxton History Group

Talk: Laxton History Group



**Don't forget to follow us on Twitter for all the latest gossip!**

**Also please visit our Facebook page "The Three Shires" where you  
can find dates for short trips and items of general interest.**



**HAVE YOU BOOKED YOUR 2, 3 or 4 HOUR CRUISE ON "THE THREE SHIRES" YET?**

Why not check out our website for availability [www.granthamcanal.org](http://www.granthamcanal.org)



Your comments, news items or photos are always very welcome

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