



This month's update from Mike Stone (Chairman)

Spring has sprung and nature is displaying all its new shoots! Some we like including those which enhance the experience of visitors to the canal. Others are, at best a nuisance and some indeed a downright pest. Our volunteers treat each with the appropriate respect!



So now is the time to book your cruise along the waterway and experience the delights nature offers. There is a choice of 2, 3 or 4 hour trips at times which suit your group. Just look at the website and click on Boat Trips to see the availability calendar. All our crews have enjoyed 'refresher' training from Senior Skipper John Trigg and they are keen to get your party out onto the water. A great opportunity to have your own picnic whilst the glorious natural scenery travels slowly past!

The Society promised to provide volunteers with skills training in the use of construction plant. Our first weekend session was held at Stoke Bardolph courtesy of Severn Trent (the site & facilities) and the Waterways Recovery Group (trainers). There are now a number of GCS volunteers qualified to operate smaller 360 Excavators and 3 ton dump trucks. Further training opportunities will be announced in forthcoming issues of *Bridge*. Funding for the training has been met by grants and donations specifically targeted to promote individuals' skills development.



Please support our various public activity dates this spring by promoting them to your friends. There are several events over the Bank Holiday dates and they give everyone the opportunity to experience the canal and the Societies' work.

Thank you for your continuing support. *Mike Stone.*

RANGERS UPDATE

Our Rangers have been very busy over the winter months carrying out litter picking, monitoring the canal / towpath, and talking to members of the public who they meet on their travels. Between them they have spent almost 300 hours on the canal since the beginning of November! The major problems are still dog fouling and littering, although there has also been an arson attack on an abandoned caravan at Denton Wharf to deal with. Winter storms have seen a number of trees being brought down, but signs of spring are now very much in the air and we are now seeing more wildlife returning to the canal. The resident Kingfisher at Harlaxton keeps Ranger Chris Leech's camera busy!



As well as trying to bring some improvements to the dog fouling issue over the coming months, we will be seeking to persuade the Environment Agency to improve the section of canal at Trent Lock which is becoming very neglected. We will also be working with CRT to look at increasing the number of seats on the canal.

With new Rangers Chris Cobb and Elise Tiplady, and Frances Shawcross assisting Ranger Colin Fox, we now have 17 Rangers covering the entire canal. A number of Ranger sections are however quite long and we could always make use of extra help! If you would like to join the team by assisting one of our Rangers, or by becoming a Ranger yourself, please contact me at pdadford@yahoo.co.uk and I will be happy to talk to you about what is involved.

Paul Dadford, Head Ranger



Have you seen the bank between the towpath and the water from Woolsthorpe to the A1?
All the self-seeded saplings have gone and the aspect is much enhanced.
CRT contractors can now cut grass without any impediment.



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EASTER HOLIDAY

Narrowboat Trips

Sunday 5th & Monday 6th April
10am – 4.00pm

These short cruises allow you sufficient time to take in the character of this beautiful canal – whilst helping to support its upkeep and restoration.

Adults £3.00 Children £2.00

Where to find us: Trips depart from Lock 18, Nr. The Rutland Arms (Dirty Duck), Woolsthorpe by Belvoir, NG32 1NY

'Turn up and ride - spaces subject to availability'



NEW MEMBERSHIP CARDS



Watch out for your new membership card.
It comes with benefits which we will be listing later in the year.



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

bridge@cygnusweb.co.uk

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We are grateful to *The Village Link Magazine*, with a distribution to over 16,000 homes around Grantham each month, for offering Tony Jackson a full page of this A5 publication - to talk about the Grantham Canal! This will continue until Tony either runs out of things to say, he ceases to be remotely interesting, or the Village Link want the space for a fee paying customer.

The following is Tony's article from the March edition:

Treasured possessions...

There's gold in that there canal. Whoa! Before reaching for your Ladybird Book of Prospecting and making haste along the towpath - this is black gold; coal; fuel of the industrial revolution and the reason we have our treasured local amenity today - the Grantham Canal. Industry really took off in Grantham with the arrival of the railways, but the seeds were sown over 50 years earlier - with horse drawn boats hauling their 25–40 ton loads from the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire coalfields.

Following some dredging, I went 'beachcombing' in the silt, and there, among the shells of snails and freshwater muscles with their iridescent, mother of pearl linings; lie, glistening in the sunlight; a lump of coal – fallen from a boat, maybe 200 years earlier! Such are my worldly possessions; this piece of coal figures quite highly amongst them. I hold this romantic image of boating families engaged in their steady daily plod along the canal – we'll do romance in the warmer weather.

Coal was so central to life in the late 18th century – particularly to town dwellers. You depended on it to keep warm, for cooking, doing your washing and to eat whilst pregnant. It was essential to industry in the working of iron and steel. Prior to the canal, transporting this precious commodity was at a hundredweight or so at a time, by packhorse or cart, over rough, sometimes impassable roads from the River Trent at Newark – including the ascent of the notorious Gonerby Hill!



Grantham Canal, Harlaxton Wharf.
Horse drawn narrowboats, William & Hannah,
at Harlaxton Wharf, C1910

Last month I promised you passion – brace yourself! Such was the attractiveness of transporting huge tonnages of coal more easily; essentially halving its price – over £40,000 was raised by subscription in the first 15 minutes! Let the digging commence!

The passion wasn't entirely universal. This was William Jessop's second attempt at securing Royal Assent for his Bill put before Parliament. One of the foremost canal engineers of his time, Jessop had to rethink his plans in order to appease his objectors. This required some innovative thinking and, some might say, an element of smoke and mirrors – more on this next month.

Restoring the Grantham Canal is one of Britain's biggest restoration projects – simply by becoming a member of the society, whether you have time to volunteer or not, helps us enormously – healthy membership numbers make it easier for us to obtain funding.

Visit www.granthamcanal.org



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

bridge@cygnusweb.co.uk

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**WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE FOLLOWING WHO HAVE MADE A DONATION TO THE SOCIETY
IN THE RECENT MONTHS**

Mr Mrs Altham
H & K McCallum

Mr & Mrs S Swann
B.Long

AM Lymn(in Memory of G Harrison)
Grahame Dickinson(Training Donation)

H Fletcher
Mrs Scott

COBI to Fight Alien Invader

(By Tony Pitman)

Himalayan Balsam (*I.grandulifera*) is becoming a widespread weed menace, to waterways including banksides. As an alien weed species, it has no natural competitors to prevent the growth of up to 3 mt. stalks, covered with attractive pink upside- down bell, shaped flowers, colonising complete banks, choking, and destroying native plant life.

Propagation is very rapid due the method of self- seeding, effected in the Autumn, by seed pods exploding, and firing seeds over a 4/5 mt area. A common name of the plant is "policeman`s helmet."

Out breaks have occurred in Nottinghamshire - the river Leen in Basford and Bulwell, and possibly The Erewash.

COBI an organisation supported by (DEFRA and CRT), who specialises in controlling foreign pest and weed outbreaks, by Natural(or Biological) systems using living organisms, has been carrying out research over 10 yrs, and is intending to carry out field trials with a natural asian fungus which attacks Himalayan balsam.

The rust (puccinia), which destroys HB, is to be implanted in to 10 HM plants which will be introduced in 5 regions of the UK, under strict biological control. COBI, is very aware of the hazards of introducing foreign species into Europe, and the potential controversy.



Himalayan Balsam flowers



Himalayan Balsam on waterway bankside

The Environment Agency estimate the traditional eradication of the present affected areas in the UK, would cost £300M.

Note if in any plants are seen in June or July on the Grantham please let Tony Pitman know.

One of the other nasties Water Fern, which covers the canal in a reddish brown blanket was seen in very small quantities at the upper spill weir end on L12 Woolsthorpe Bottom on 27 March.

References:www.cobi.org - www.capm.org.uk



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



Talks and Events Update for March

I always say I will talk to 4 or 400. The **NHS retirement group** was a small group, but quality if not quantity and included at least one Bridge reader. Thanks for their generous donation.

I went back in time to the Iron Age to talk to **Melton Mowbray Group of Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust**, but their donation also goes into the Canal Society coffers and they have invited me back to talk about the canal next year.

Grantham Probus 88 were an august group of over 60 gentlemen including a certain Mr Ralph Poore and their chairman is also a member. (It made a change to speak to a group entirely of gentlemen -Tony likes the ladies' groups.)

March 28th & 29th was Discover Lincolnshire Weekend. We managed to get publicity for an exhibition, guided walk and short boat trips onto the Lincolnshire Tourist Board website. On the Saturday there was a brilliant gathering of members and work party. Our internal communications system brought a couple of new volunteers along and we managed some useful networking. A trickle of people visited as a result of finding out about it on the Grantham Matters website, for which we are grateful. Another couple picked up a leaflet at Easton Walled Gardens. We think we know who was responsible for that, the same lady who presented us with a mountain of delicious baking before going up to crew the boat. Inclement weather, especially on Sunday meant it was eventually deemed unfit for boating – or indeed sitting in a camper van to direct members of the public, it didn't half rock! So how did we manage to pot over £100? Grateful thanks to the bakers and tea makers and the public and members who gave generous donations to sample delicious home baking. As well as the usual exhibition of old photos and society activities, we were able to display the new equipment for canal dipping to work with schools and community groups or use at canal-side events. This includes a trolley for transporting inhabited canal water to safe locations for study. Certain members of the work party cast green eyes on it, but they can keep their muddy hands off – much as I admire them and their invaluable efforts, this is important in our efforts to inspire the next generation.

Rosemary Gibson



Our thanks to John Bannister for his photographic observations.



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

bridge@cygnusweb.co.uk

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Talks and Events Diary

If you can help out with any events, please contact Rosemary on communityandevents@granthamcanal.org or 07971173069

2015 Bookings

Date & Time

Sun & Mon 5th & 6th April

Tuesday 14th April

Sat 2nd May

Mon 4th May

Sat & Sun 9th & 10th May

Friday 15th May evening

Saturday 16th May

Sun & Mon 24th & 25th May

Tony and Rosemary are away in June if you can represent the society with the information stand at any of the following events, please contact Rosemary on the above email or telephone.

Saturday 13th June

Sat & Sun 20th & 21st June

Tuesday 7th July

Saturday 11th July

Tuesday 14th July 7.30

Tuesday 21st July 2.00

Tuesday 28th July 7.30

Wednesday 12th August

Sun & Mon August 30th & 31st

Sat & Sun 12th & 13th Sept

Wednesday 16th September

Sunday 11th Octber

Monday 14th December

Event & Venue

Easter Bank Holiday Short Boat Trips at Woolsthorpe

Talk: Saint John's Ladies, Grantham

Railway and Canal History Society AGM in Grantham to include a visit to Woolsthorpe with displays and boat trips to be arranged

May Bank Holiday Short Boat Trips at Woolsthorpe

Nottinghamshire County Show, Newark Showground.

Visit to Woolsthorpe Locks and Carpenter's Shop by Notts / Derbys Branch of IWA to include light refreshments.

Vale of Belvoir Machinery Group Tractor Run calling at Hickling Basin – Hickling Warehouse will be open for display and canal dipping 10.00-4.00

Bank Holiday Short Boat Trips at Woolsthorpe

Bingham Town Fair

Grantham Carnival

Guided Walk: Bingham Ladies Evening Guild

Radcliffe Carnival

Talk: Kinoulton WI

Talk: Burton Joyce U3A nb change of date

Exhibition and talk at Hickling

Talk: Lenton Local History Society

Bank Holiday Short Boat Trips at Woolsthorpe

Harby Country Show, Canal Farm, Harby

Talk: Laxton History Group

Discovery Day 2015

Talk: Ashby Canal Association

2016 Bookings

Tuesday 12th January

Wednesday 17th February

* there are also several other talks on the Iron Age booked in for 2015 – let me know if you are interested.

Monday 14th March

Talk: Hougham and Marston Local History Society

Iron Age talk for Harlaxton WI. Open meeting – canal society members particularly welcome – proceeds for GCS Funds

Talk: Melton Mowbray branch Leics & Rutland Wildlife Trust



waterway
recovery
group



FOLLOW US

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.



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

bridge@cygnusweb.co.uk

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