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2017

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

A very Happy New Year to everyone!

Holidays are over and now the Society gets down to business to prepare for the coming year. There is serious work to be done before Easter between Woolsthorpe and the A1. Our dredger *Mudlark* is targeting to remove weed at various locations aided by our weed-boat *Osberton*. Tree branches need lopping or fallen ones removing from the channel and this task usually requires the use of *Centauri* to clear the rubbish. (See photos page 5). A GCS team is endeavouring to find the source of the leak at Lock 17 – not the easiest task and so far they have only discovered boulders surrounded by water! The CRT contractor has repaired the drop-chamber and the leak at Lock 18. Whilst you weren't looking a false roof has been installed over the office area at the depot; if someone could fit a door the office might now become warm enough to sit in during winter! There is still an accessible toilet to be installed which will benefit everyone! Of course team associated with The Three Shires trip-boat are honing their navigation skills and preparing the craft for another busy season. The GCS towpath Rangers are out in all weathers enjoying beautiful but sometimes lonely walks at this time of year. Oh! I nearly forgot to mention that the walls of Lock 15 reached their full height on December 12<sup>th</sup> when the last brick was laid. Well done to all those who helped us reach this milestone!

So where do you, our reader, fit in? Could you volunteer occasionally? Might you arrange a quiz night or help on a stall to raise some funds?

Perhaps you could encourage a few friends to club together for a boat trip? Do you know of a school leaver who might benefit from a period of work experience as a volunteer (future employers value this highly)? Perhaps a donation to the society would be more appropriate to your circumstances. From time to time I am asked what happens to monies raised. I can assure everyone that whatever is contributed by whatever means everything goes to the maintenance and improvement of the Grantham Canal. All volunteers give their time and effort freely for the benefit of the wider community. We describe them as priceless! All donations and cash raised are used to support their work.

So what are the next milestones? As I mentioned above there are more tasks to fulfil at the depot; more towpath Rangers are needed to build relationships with local communities; volunteers required to train as crews to give pleasure trips from Easter to October; and above all volunteers to help run the administration of the Society. Based on the previous speed of progress I would anticipate the reconstruction work at Lock 15 being completed by May. Thereafter site restoration will need to be undertaken and there are some innovative ideas for ecological development of the lock area. So we then start at Lock 14 for a similar restoration programme although this lock is in an even worse state than Lock 15. We need more excavator drivers for dredging works so plant training will need to be delivered to another group of recruits – do you fancy putting yourself forward?

And now a personal announcement from me. At a meeting of the Society committee last evening I confirmed

my announcement last year that I wished to reduce my time commitment as Executive Chairman / General Manager. I still feel able to participate and can contribute but only as a Non-Executive Chairman which would relieve me of the day-to-day running of the Society. There are many able and experienced members in the Society who are more than capable of managing the daily activity necessary to maintaining a thriving organisation. Your committee are discussing ways to meet this change and ensure the Society continues to develop and continues to move forward and extend the navigable canal all the way to the River Trent.

*Mike Stone.*



### NOTTS & DERBY BRANCH

**Public meetings. Non IWA members will be very welcome to attend.**

**Meetings 7.45 pm at the Poppy & Pint, Pierrepont Road, West Bridgford, NG2-5DX**

### Thursday 12th January 2017, 7:45pm

For our first meeting of 2017 we will be joined by Stephen Flinders, whose talk is entitled *Stanton - Gone but not Forgotten* - a history of Stanton ironworks from the 1840s onwards. The Stanton Ironworks used to stand beside the Erewash canal and the now derelict Nutbrook Canal.

### Thursday 9th February 2017, 7:45pm

Our Branch AGM, followed by a talk. Speaker and subject to be confirmed

Further information from:  
[nottsandderbys@waterways.org.uk](mailto:nottsandderbys@waterways.org.uk)

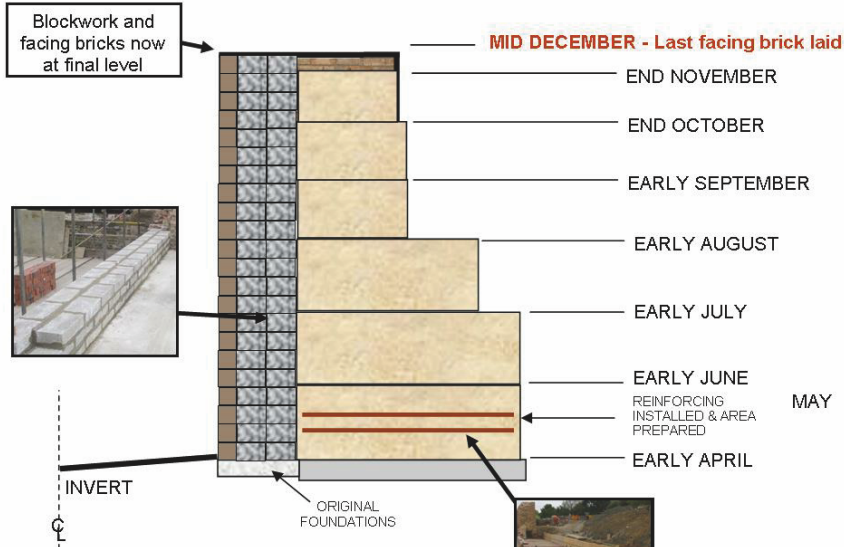


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# The GRANTHAM CANAL HERITAGE INITIATIVE

## ILLUSTRATION SHOWING THE PROCESS OF REBUILDING LOCK 15



This is the offside view of the lock. Heavy duty concrete blocks are laid first and faced with 'Birtley Olde English' bricks - these will be seen from the inside of the lock. Specialist concrete is then poured at each suitable level with the width of pour reducing nearest the top.

January 2017

### A MOMENTOUS EVENT

In mid December Richard Caunt laid the final facing brick marking a significant point in the restoration of Lock 15



Grateful thanks to John Clark for these photos and update info.

## Talks and Events Diary

*If you can help out with any events, please contact Rosemary on [communityandevents@granthamcanal.org](mailto:communityandevents@granthamcanal.org) or 07971173069*

### 2017

**Mon 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 7.00pm**

**Discovery Day and Event Planning Meeting**

5, High Street, Harlaxton

**Mon 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 7.30** Rangers' Meeting, The Plough, Stathern

**Fri 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 8.00**

Talk: Faraday Ladies, Grantham

**Wed 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2.00**

Talk: St. Anne's, Radcliffe on Trent

**Mon 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 10.00**

Talk: Bracebridge Heath U3A

**Tues 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 7.30**

Talk: Radcliffe on Trent Methodis Ladies Tuesday Group

**Sat 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 10.00 - 4.00**

Grantham Museum 'Do Something New Event' recruiting and networking opportunity - help welcome

**Tues 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 12.00**

Talk: Radcliffe on Trent Probus

**Mon 20<sup>th</sup> Mar 12.45**

Talk: Grantham Rotary, Urban Hotel, Grantham

**Tues 28<sup>th</sup> Mar 2.00**

Talk: Keyworth U3A

**Sun & Mon 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Apr** Bank holiday short boat trips - volunteers needed for crew, refreshments, trip sales, etc.

**Wed 19<sup>th</sup> Apr 2.00**

Talk: Sage Cross Ladies Club

**Tues 14<sup>th</sup> Nov 2.00**

Talk: Ascension Ladies Fellowship

**Wed 15<sup>th</sup> Nov 2.00**

Talk: East Leake Local History Society



Your comments, news items or photos are always very welcome

To contact us please send your email to:

[bridge@granthamcanal.org](mailto:bridge@granthamcanal.org)



## The Story of the Seat

Many will be familiar with the green seat between Locks 17 and 18 at Woolsthorpe.

This is a memorial to Mike Mitchell, past chairman of the Grantham Canal Society. Mike was one of the movers and shakers in the canal world. He, along with others, fought against proposed coal mining in the Vale of Belvoir over 30 years ago. If this mining had gone ahead, the resultant subsidence would have spelled disaster for the canal.

In periods of disillusionment in the early days of our canal's restoration movement – Mike held faith.

Not only did Mike support the Grantham Canal Society and its endeavours, he was also instrumental in getting the historic Anderton Boat Lift restored. It was returning from a meeting in connection with this, he tragically lost his life in a road accident, 20 years ago this January.

His memorial seat is well placed, not only is this a delightful spot to while away a moment or two on one of the more comfortable seats along the canal – its position is appropriate, being placed at the old railway embankment.

Today we walk or cycle along the towpath at this location without giving it another thought. A little over 20 years ago, you would have needed to climb the stile, clamber up, and then down the

steep sides of this disused railway embankment which was blocking the canal.

Seeing the removal of this embankment was one of Mike's greatest joys. When I tell you that something like 600 tons of stone, concrete, rubble and soil each day, was dug away and removed from site over a period of three weeks – this was no mean task!

In recognition of this anniversary of Mike's untimely death, I gave the area around the seat a bit of a spruce up. Whilst doing this, it struck me this would be an ideal spot for a bit of wildflower planting?

I chalked this work down to my canal ranger duties. If you have a love of the canal, why not consider joining our rangers? You could be allocated a length of canal to look after – litter picking etc. Some of the busier stretches require more than one ranger. Why not adopt a seat or one of the small car parks along the canal and make it just that little bit more special for our visitors? Information about all the diverse volunteering opportunities can be found on our website [www.granthamcanal.org](http://www.granthamcanal.org)

*Tony Jackson*



## Community and Events Update

### Happy New Year

Thanks to those who have been in touch following our plea for support in December Bridge. You and any others who are interested in helping are invited to a 2017 Discovery Day and Events planning meeting on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January at 7.00 p.m. at 5 High Street, Harlaxton (the Depot might be a bit cold). An idea of numbers would be useful for catering.

The talks diary continues to fill up and we already have invitations to some events, but are unwilling to commit yet without a team, including people willing and able to erect and take down the gazebo and information stand. The team's efforts have recruited new members and volunteers to continue the work of the society's maintenance and restoration work, promoted The Three Shires trip boat and raised funds and awareness.

Raising awareness with the younger generation should start to see some activity now some of us have official clearance to work with children. I am awaiting further information from Canal and River Trust Education Leader. Looking forward to a productive turnout on 16<sup>th</sup> January and another successful year of getting the message out there.

*Rosemary*

[communityandevents@granthamcanal.org](mailto:communityandevents@granthamcanal.org)

**07971 173069  
or 01476 978896**

## THE WAY IT WAS

There are two more sites that I was involved with, the first being at Mackley's bridge No.25. After the hump back bridge was demolished a new flat bridge was built close by to straighten out the road, this left a small area of land that was the original highway up to the old bridge abutments. It was easy to construct, part of the old road used as the car park and the slope cleared, reseeded and simple seats installed. Once again the maintenance was taken over by B.W.

The second site turned out to be a waste of time for the Society volunteers, it was at Bottesford bridge No.55, once again on the opposite side to the towpath and original wharf. A small triangle plot with only footpath access from the road above. I had been approached by the then BW canal Forman and we met on site and was shown a copy of their land deeds and we agreed a design plan and access, layout etc. I did receive a letter confirming this. On the first weekend a Loughborough Uni. team of volunteers swelled our ranks and we began by clearing the site and rebuilding the boundary hedge, a small car park and footpath was to be built from the road above. Everything went well until early afternoon when a tractor and trailer stopped on the bridge and the driver enquired as to who was in charge. I met him and explained what we were doing and he told me it was his land and we were to stop immediately, I showed him my letter but he was not impressed so went off to collect his own deeds. He was back within the hour and was quite angry that we were still there so after a look at his plans I decided to stop all work and

advised the team to pack up. I went off to phone the BW Forman who luckily was at home and he advised me to clear the site until ownership could be proven. Some weeks later I visited the site to find it had been ploughed and a crop planted. I never did receive an apology from BW but luckily we found an alternative job so the weekend was not completely wasted. I know several more sites have been created since I left, like Harlaxton, Cropwell, Cotgrave, and Hickling so I hope these and the others are being used and maintained.

*Mike Atherley.*



**Scrub bashing at Bottesford Cutting & Wharf during 1970's**

## Flora & Fauna along the Grantham Canal by James Faulconbridge

### Winter Wildflowers

Happy New Year! From the 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> January each year, the Botanical Society of the British Isles – the BSBI – runs a New Year Plant Hunt where anybody, regardless of knowledge or ability, is invited to spend up to three hours hunting for wildflowers in bloom. I went out on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January and found 30 different species flowering around Grantham many of them can also be spotted along the canal bank.

White dead-nettle is frequently found in the deep midwinter, although their flowering peaks are in autumn and spring which coincides nicely with the queen bumblebee flight period, one of their key pollinators.

Many of the 'weedy' species have evolved to grow in transient opportunities where they quickly germinate, grow, flower and set seed. Species such as wood avens, hedge mustard and dandelion can all be found in flower along the Canal, especially in areas of higher disturbance such as just beside the towpath.

Tree flowers are frequently early including hazel, alder and willow catkins and even the occasional blackthorn can begin to flower in January.

Then there are those species which require a very close look to even realise they are flowering – the petty spurge for example has tiny little green flowers within its leaves which don't draw much attention to themselves, but are certainly apparent to their pollinators! Keep a keen eye and see what you can spot, and why not get involved next year? Search 'BSBI New Year Plant Hunt' for more information!



This is a collage of 30 species found flowering around Grantham on 2nd January

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**Our grateful thanks to the following  
who have recently made a donation to  
the Society:**

Mr Mrs Altham, Mike Shepherd,  
Laura Field and John Dodwell

## EXCEPTIONAL WATERWAY MAINTENANCE!



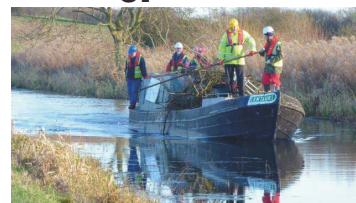
The GCS volunteer out in force with both  
'Osberton' and 'Mudlark' weed bashing and  
'Centauri' returning with some of the spoils  
of a satisfying day's work!  
Many thanks to Dave Cross & John Clark for these  
photos



## VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES



**WEEKDAYS AT LOCK 15  
or**



**SATURDAYS WITH ONE OF  
OUR WORKPARTIES**

If you can spare some time to  
join one of our teams then  
please email

[volunteer@granthamcanal.org](mailto:volunteer@granthamcanal.org)

or

[lan.wakefield@granthamcanal.org](mailto:lan.wakefield@granthamcanal.org)



"Peaceful" beside the Grantham  
From Mark Ingram's walk

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