

This month's update from Mike Stone
(Chairman)

EASTER GREETINGS

Easter greetings to all our readers from me and all Society officers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support for our work. Your contribution in whatever form it manifests – as volunteer effort, financial donation, support for your partner or as a Society member is greatly appreciated. Without it progress would be slower or cease altogether.

The Society will continue the work that started forty-eight years ago when it was formed by far sighted people who thought a community asset was better than a linear rubbish tip. They were right then and experience has shown that they still are today.

Thank you again
and enjoy Easter-

Mike Stone.

HELPERS NEEDED

On Easter Sunday and Monday at
the Carpenters' Shop.

Also help with the setting up on
Saturday 15th.

Cake bakers ... your assistance
please

Please contact: 01476 566578
so that 'jobs' can be allocated.

All proceeds go towards the restoration of
the Grantham Canal

DONATION

David Lyneham-Brown has received
a generous donation on behalf of the
Society from the Donald-Forrester
Trust towards the restoration of the
Woolsthorpe flight of locks. The Trust
was established in 1986 by
Gwyneth Forrester in memory of her
late husband Donald.

The Society is most grateful for this
and particularly as the Trust is not a
local one and is based south of the
River Thames.



BOAT TRIPS

Easter Sunday 16th April

B.H. Monday 17th April

10-30 - 4.00pm

Adults £3, Children £2

Displays in the Carpenter's
Shop, next to the Dirty Duck
where Tea, Coffee & Cakes
will be served.

NG32 1NY



The Inland
Waterways
Association

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 13th April 2017, 7:45pm

This meeting will conclude our
indoor programme and will be a visit
from Geoff Pursglove who will talk
about the Ashby Canal, which has
seen some restoration activity in
recent years.

Further information from:

nottsandderbys@waterways.org.uk



Lock 15
Photographed by Ian Wakefield

The GRANTHAM CANAL HERITAGE INITIATIVE



New work started on the lower off-side wing wall. The new brick/blockwork will be built up to the same height as the lock chamber walls, the void will be back-filled with earth/clay and topped off with crushed roadstone which will be the base for the quadrant for the lock gates.... and repeat on the near-side.



The near-side brickwork being tidied up before the new wall for the quadrant is started.

Many thanks to John Clark for these photos & text



The labyrinth of scaffolding inside lock 15

Photo by Ian Wakefield

Talks and Events Diary

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

2017 Bookings

- | | |
|--|--|
| Mon 10 th Apr 7.30 | Rangers' Meeting, Plough at Stathern |
| Tues 11 th Apr 2.00 | Talk: Barkston and Syston Cardiac Chat Group |
| Sat 15 th Apr 9.30 | Depot preparation for boat trip event |
| Sun & Mon 16 th & 17 th Apr | Easter Bank Holiday Boat Trips – volunteers needed for crew, refreshments, trip sales, etc. |
| Wed 19 th Apr 2.00 | Talk: Sage Cross Ladies Club |
| Sun 23 rd Apr 11.00-3.00 | Cotgrave Country Park Joint Meet and Greet Day and Reminiscence Day |
| Wed 26 th Apr 10.00 | Talk: Harrowby Lane, Methodist Church, Grantham |
| Thurs 27 th Apr 10.30 | Talk: Grantham Museum |
| Friday 28 th Apr 6.30 | Grantham Canal Heritage Initiative Project update and social, Woolsthorpe Depot and Dirty Duck |
| Sun & Mon 30 th Apr and 1 st May | Bank Holiday Boat Trips – volunteers needed for crew, refreshments, trip sales, etc. |
| Mon 1 st May | Denton Street Market, display in church volunteers welcome to man the display and sell guides |
| Wed 3 rd May 9.00 | School Assemblies Cliffdale Primary School |
| Frid 5 th May 10.00 | Oral History/Research Group Grantham Library |
| Sat 6 th May 5.00 – 8.00 | Information Stand at Morrisons, Gamston |
| Sun & Mon 28 th & 29 th May | Bank Holiday Boat Trips – volunteers needed for crew, refreshments, trip sales, etc. |
| Sat & Sun 3 rd & 4 th June | Grantham Steam and County Show |
| Sat 17 th June 11.00 – 4.00 | Cotgrave Festival |
| Sat 24 th June 11.00 – 5.00 | East Bridgford Village Show |
| Sun 25 th June 10.30 – 4.00 | Short Boat Trip Sunday |



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

bridge@granthamcanal.org



Community and Events Update

Good turnout for the **Events Team Training** day. Thanks for all who stepped forward. Chris Cobb still needs people to commit to helping with events, especially able bodies for setting up and taking down, but the odd hour helps too.

Contact: c_j_cobb@msn.com

Discovery Day planning team have continued to meet regularly.

Contact: iansimmons@icloud.com with ideas and offers of help in planning, preparation and commitments to help on **Sunday October 8th**.

Education update: Claire Cavendish of CRT is now better and catching up with arrangements for Water Safety training in schools. I have also been invited to give assemblies to a local primary school to explain why we need bricks for the Lock Restoration. If anyone has contacts with schools along the canal corridor which might welcome this sort of thing. Let Rosemary know

communityandevents@granthamcanal.org

Oral History and Research Group:

three of us met at Grantham Library to look at information and records they have there, including a fascinating bank of old photos. We were able to amend some of their labelling. We'll meet there again on **Friday 5th April 10.00**.

Please join us and we can plan some more oral history interviews.

Ranger Charles cook has negotiated with Morrisons at Gamston to have an information display on Saturday 6th May and 29th July. Thanks Charles - effective efforts beyond the towpath.

Rosemary

communityandevents@granthamcanal.org

**07971 173069
or 01476 978896**

LITTER PICK

An organised litter pick took place on the morning of Saturday 11 March along the Grantham Canal from the start of the canal at the River Trent to the vicinity of Morrison Supermarket at Gamston.

25 large black bags of litter were collected by the participants, mainly from the canal and towpath but also from the grass verge along Radcliffe Road and the rear of Morrison's near the canal. The filled black bags were collected by Streetwise on the following Monday.

The participants who gave up their time comprised two families from the Lady Bay area (including 4 children, one aged 5 & 3/4), one family from Sneinton and another family from West Bridgford who live near the canal. See attached photo.

The event was organised by Charles Cook, a volunteer Canal Ranger for the Grantham Canal Society. After a good morning's work by all the participants they were treated to a well earned snack at Morrison's Supermarket. The treat was kindly arranged by Morrison's Community Champion Liz Beddall.

The Grantham Canal Society extend their gratitude to the work done by the team of volunteers who did a great job in cleaning up the litter, to Morrison's Community Champion Liz Beddall and to Streetwise for collecting the 25 bags of rubbish.

*Charles R Cook
Grantham Canal Ranger*



ALL GCS ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

For all of you actively involved in GCS Teams we have arranged a communication /social which you are invited to attend.

As one of the means to improve communications and feedback in the society I propose to have a meeting every 4 months in the depot followed by a buffet at the Dirty Duck.

The first one will be held on **Friday April 28th**. Meet at the depot 18:00 for 18:30 and we will be into the Dirty Duck around 19:30. Updates from GCS, and from CRT re the lock 15 project followed by Q&A session

I want us to celebrate to our progress with the GCHI project, the role/ achievements of GCS volunteers and how we can move forward as a team

So if you are part of the lock 15 squad, involved with the Three Shires, canal track maintainers, rangers, social and community eventers, Bridge editor, Discovery Dayers, etc. you are all welcome. Several of the society officers will be present so you can question them on issues of your particular interest. Stay as long as you like into the evening.

BUT please let us know if you are coming. Reply YES to this email or email me directly on david.lyneham-brown@ntlworld.com so I can organise the eats.

Look forward to seeing you on the 28th.

To All Society Members

Part of our agreement with the Heritage Lottery Fund is that we help them assess the effectiveness of our Lock 14/15 project and to this purpose they have asked us to complete a short survey.

This includes the volunteer programme and how it has worked. At this stage in the project they wish to collect baseline information from the GCS membership.

Given the generosity of the HLF could I ask you all to complete the survey - it is only 4 questions and our help/ co-operation will stand us in good stead when we seek funding for future projects.

To access the survey click on:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/THMGQ5H>

then complete and send. Any problem you encounter please let me know on david.lyneham-brown@ntlworld.com

I hope not to hear from you!

Thanks for your efforts

David Lyneham-Brown



Your comments, news items or photos are always very welcome

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THE WAY IT WAS

No doubt those of you who walk the towpaths or cruise the canals will be familiar with the large variety of mileposts usually set well back on the towpath side. These were installed so that the canal owners and boat operators could agree toll charges based on distance travelled. Here on the Grantham they were installed by the Great Northern Railway at 1/4 mile intervals and are made of cast iron. If there were any prior to this as far as I know, no trace has ever been found. Ours are near identical to the ones on the old Nottingham Canal. Out of the ground they stand 42" tall, weigh well over 1cwt and have Miles from the Trent cast on the leg. The mileage numbers were separate and fitted to a zinc plate which was riveted onto the face. They also had a large foot which kept them stable and reduced easy removal.



Photo c/o Mark Ingram

Right from the start our odd job man and painter Fred Marsh, started to trace these and bridge plates, then cleaned and painted them blue and yellow, the British Waterways colours at that time. Many were missing, presumably stolen, and others had the numbers rotted off so Fred hand painted new info where necessary. During the quiet period we decided to try to trace the missing ones and

lift the partially buried or leaning ones so borrowed a metal detector and set about the marathon task. Some were found, buried by dredging's, some set back on the old boundary point and some smashed in pieces by we think flail cutters. In the end it was decided to remove all the faulty ones and reset them at mile and half mile intervals, all those with original numbers or 1/4 miles were left in situ. It was a massive task digging out the posts, they would not budge until the last spade of earth had exposed the foot and lifting that weight into the Landrover was a two person job.

At home I wire brushed them, primed and repainted them black and white with new mile numbers traced on from car number plate size letters. We managed to reset them at mile and half mile intervals with a few 1/4 mile ones filling the gaps. Fred had walked the complete length with a measuring wheel to make sure the location points were correct.

It was decided to buy/have made ten new posts to fill in some of the gaps and John Marshall found a foundry at Newark who could cast them. They had to make a wooden pattern, which was expensive, and add an extra Bridge logo to distinguish them from the originals but otherwise were identical to the originals. Its a pity we didn't concrete in the replaced ones as I believe some have been stolen. Garland Grylls our first Chairman, came up with an idea and design of interpretation signs to be installed at road crossing points etc. They were made of GRP with the map of the canal and distance, direction and finger location on the face. The lecterns were box steel tube. We installed these over a period of months and again had to go back to concrete some, one being removed the same day as we installed it. Again I believe most are still in situ. Fred continued making dummy bridge plates and signs where possible and a lot of new signs are being installed as development continues.

Mike Atherley

Tracks

through Grantham The Woolsthorpe Branch

Following on from Mike Atherley's article last month I was contacted by John Clayson from "Tracks through Grantham." He expressed interest in Mike's article as they have produced a series of three pages describing and illustrating a walk along the Woolsthorpe Branch railway as it is today, with historical references at appropriate points.

It is most interesting with superb photos, well worth visiting their website.

Ed.

Just click the link below:

<http://www.tracksthroughgrantham.uk/recording-the-railway/railways-rediscovered/the-woolsthorpe-branch/>



On Saturday 9th September 1961 the Railway Correspondence & Travel Society (RCTS) East Midlands Branch arranged a Rail Tour from Nottingham along the Woolsthorpe Branch. Here the special train has just passed under the road bridge near Stenwith.

Photograph taken by Humphrey Platts.

'The way it was' 2006

Mike Atherley's great account, in the last 'Bridge', of the removal of the Woolsthorpe railway embankment, coupled with Anne Moulcher's classic 'before & after' photographs, 'got the old grey matter going'. Especially with so many recent recruits to the cause, it may be of interest to put that achievement in context and refer to some others.

The near 50-year history of the conservation and restoration of the Grantham Canal may appear to have been one of 'Stop & Go' or 'Slow, Slow, Quick, Quick, Slow' – with the 'Stops' and 'Slows' frustratingly exceeding the rest!

Until the current spectacular restoration of the Woolsthorpe Flight, the removal of the Woolsthorpe Embankment was arguably the most dramatic improvement – but others have included the replacement of Casthorpe Bridge, the dredging of Hickling Basin and installation of new swing bridges, and lock and bridge restoration within Cotgrave Country Park.

In between these 'Gos' and 'Quicks' have been equally important defensive battles to keep the Canal intact and our dream alive – often fought by a very few, dedicated volunteers, to whom we all owe a great deal. [E.g. who remembers the years spent fighting the plans for the Vale of Belvoir Coalfield – which would have ruined the '20-mile Pound'?]

Fortunately, 2007 was one of our 'Go' or 'Quick' years, which directly contributed to the current healthy, navigable state of the 5-mile A1 to Woolsthorpe length. It may be difficult for more recent members to believe but, by the mid-2000s, the Harlaxton Cutting was (once again) impassable to any boats but could be easily crossed by wild animals, using some massive fallen trees! A joint GCS / 'Bit in the Middle' Waterway Recovery Group weekend in February 2006 had made a good start at clearing vegetation above the water line but the channel was silted up and numerous large trees were waiting their turn to fall across the Canal.

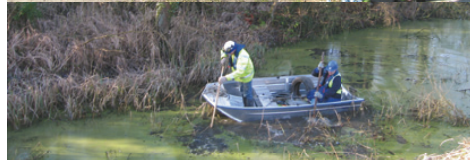
Here's a brief photographic record of that weekend and conditions in the Cutting of 2006. A fuller account of its 2007 transformation will follow ...



Harlaxton Cutting prior to the arrival of the volunteers



The "official" launch of the GCS's new aluminium workboat



Getting the hang of it



Making progress!



"Tea up!"



A well-earned lunch!



The future generations we're doing it all for.

Peter Stone

(Secretary, Grantham Canal Partnership 2004-12)



Your comments, news items or photos are always very welcome

To contact us please send your email to:

bridge@granthamcanal.org



CHARITY NO: 507337

Wildlife Plague – Mink



American Mink

For a number years The Society has been aware of the presence of mink along the canal from anecdotal evidence of sightings by fishermen and walkers, dead mink were found in the Woolsthorpe area a couple of years ago.

The Environment Committee have had concerns with a possible increase in sightings for some time. The destructive effect on canal wildlife, particularly reported by the Rushcliffe B.C. environmental manager, with fish death along the Cotgrave section.

This was highlighted by one of our rangers finding two part eaten carp in the adjacent Gamston location late 2015. As a keen fisherman he had also been concerned at the shortage of prey for the pike who inhabit that canal section. Two University environment students had volunteered, in Spring 2016, to undertake some canal surveys so it was decided to ask them to check presence and possible trap locations of mink, using rafts, in the Cotgrave stretch. Regrettably circumstances arose which prevented the students undertaking the project.

A little later, a similar mink survey was initiated by Nottingham Trent University (Brackenhurst) - Dr A Uzal, which over the last few months has been collating data using rafts, and will have some information later in the year.

If successful it may be possible to develop proposals to alleviate the problem if significant numbers are found.



Mink tracks near lock 15

NOTE: American Mink have bred in the Wild since around 1950. Dark brown fur, possible white markings under lower lip. Length approx. 45 cm, a dreadful scourge of wildlife. By comparison an otter, with similar looks, is double the size, at a metre in length with no lower white facial markings. With any sightings please tell GCS Rangers who regularly patrol the towpath.

Tony Pitman

After the success with fundraising with Sainsburys at Grantham the GCS has started working



with Morrisons at Gamston, very much the other end of the canal

At this time we are staging a presence in the store on May 6th between 5 to 8pm and Saturday July 29th between 9am and 1 pm, both Saturdays

This is being organised by Charles Cook, our canal ranger on section one.

I you can assist him on either of these dates please contact him on

charles.r.cook@btinternet.com

PLEASE REMEMBER DURING THIS DRY SPELL, HEDGEHOGS WILL LOOKING FOR WATER, SO MANY DIE EACH YEAR FROM DEHYDRATION. PLEASE ENSURE THAT A DISH OF CLEAN WATER (SOMETHING LIKE A 5"-8" PLANT POT SAUCER IS PERFECT) IS LEFT OUT FOR THEM EVERY NIGHT. IT WILL DRY UP DURING THE DAY SO PLEASE ENSURE THAT WATER IS AVAILABLE FOR THE HEDGEHOGS OVER NIGHT.

Flora & Fauna along the Grantham Canal by James Faulconbridge

April – Grass snake

We have three species of native snakes in the UK and April is the time of year when the warmer days bring them out of hibernation. The rarest species is the smooth snake – generally found in sandy conditions and dry heaths – far from the Grantham Canal.

The commonest species is the grass snake and these certainly make their home along the towpath. Amphibians such as toads, frogs and newts play a prominent role in their diet and they will often be found associated with water – another common name for this species is the 'water snake'. Grass snakes are not venomous and will only bite if cornered as a last resort – they are more likely to play dead than they are to attack. An adult female can be a metre long, with the smaller males usually being around half this size. The yellow 'collar' behind the head of a grass snake is one of the easiest way to confirm identity.

Adders are our only venomous species of snake but they are very patchily distributed in the midlands. They are found in heathlands, woodlands and moors and the last confirmed record near the Grantham Canal was over 40 years ago. The adder has a distinctive zig-zagged pattern along their back – very different to the barred grass snake.

If you see a snake along the Canal, it's almost certainly a grass snake and will be happiest slithering quietly away.



Grass Snake

Getting in the Spirit at Woolsthorpe

One of our members, tired of seeing the area around Woolsthorpe Bridge looking so unloved – set to and cleared this litter strewn patch brambly patch – adding some native Primroses too!



Just around the corner, at the Mike Mitchell Memorial Seat, one of our rangers has planted Primroses and Violets – shame, that within hours, someone thought it would be further enhanced with a soft drinks cup.



So, in the spirit of 'Just Do It', if you have a particular grot spot where you visit regularly, and keep thinking someone should do something – could that someone be you?

If you do any planting – please use only native wild flowers. A good source for these is Naturescape at Langar:

<https://www.naturescape.co.uk/>

You might even consider becoming a Canal Ranger? We can allocate you a length of canal to keep litter free and report any issues. Some of our existing rangers, who have busy stretches, are often happy to receive some help! You may simply want to adopt a small area – perhaps around a seat, or one of the small car parking areas?

You'll find more information about becoming a Canal Ranger and the many other ways in which you can offer support by becoming a volunteer on our website:

<http://www.granthamcanal.org/v/>

Tony Jackson

We need a couple of volunteers to erect the gazebo at Cotgrave on Sunday 23rd April and take it down later in the day. Chris Cobb has broken a bone in his hand and isn't able to do it, but he will be at the stand. Contact Mary 01476 566578



Machine training



Workparty return Lock 18

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

or

lan.wakefield@granthamcanal.org

Lock 17 leak sealed by GCS volunteers

Centauri fully loaded at Denton



Volunteer update & photos by Ian Wakefield



Your comments, news items or photos are always very welcome

To contact us please send your email to:

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The
Grantham Canal
Society
CHARITY NO: 507337