

BRIDGE



OCTOBER

2020

The monthly newsletter
published by the

The
Grantham Canal
Society

CHARITY NO: 507337



Lock 14 - Kingston's Lock

**You won't be able to see this view for much longer as the lock will be filled soon!
We at the GCS take this view for granted - we're old hands now - and proud to have a seriously
capable and competent lock building team.**

Photo by Bob Terry



This month's update from Mike Stone (Chairman)

We now commence a busy period on the Grantham when the flying wildlife has ceased nesting. Jobs that are planned include: re-constructing the slipway at the depot; several specific issues at locks 16 to 18; continuing to clear the canal of hazards (weeds and other things) and establish the depth of water between Lock 18 and the A1; raising the level of Denton runoff weir; examining the non-navigable canal for blockages and leaks that cause potential water loss; keeping fingers crossed awaiting the outcome of recent funding bids; recruiting more volunteers; raising funds to replace income lost as a result of covid-19 during 2020 and, I almost forgot, completing Lock 14 reconstruction. Winter is always our best opportunity for major activity on the canal but sometimes the weather intervenes! Regrettably there is unlikely to be much opportunity for us to meet with our supporters in a formal situation but I hope those who enjoy the towpath will talk to the volunteers they meet.

To assist with our workload we need more volunteers - some people getting their hands dirty on the heavy work; some driving boats and recording navigable depths; several walking the towpath with well tuned eyes and ears looking for leaks; a few at home writing letters or funding applications to increase our income and a few planners and managers to deliver the projects. What role will you choose as your contribution? Time is short as the birds start nesting again in March!

By the time you read this the water might be trickling into Lock 14 now that the lads from CRT have installed both sets of gates. We should thank them all for their skill and expertise and we hope the gates serve the lock for many years to come.

Those of you who purchased memorial bricks will be pleased to know that they have been erected in the form of a bench seat at Lock 15. We had hoped to invite all to an opening event but unfortunately Covid-18 has once more interfered. We will be contacting you individually as long as we have an address. If your address has changed please contact Mary Noble so we can update our records.

As we reported last month we are concerned by the lack of water in the canal west of Hickling. At least two meetings have been held locally with CRT to discuss the issue. GCS have identified a number of leaks along the canal and have offered our help to CRT in providing repairs. Shortage of rain is not the cause but too many small leaks and a restricted water flow through the reeds and silt probably is. We will keep you informed.

Enjoy the autumn colours.

Mike Stone.



Support the IWA & become a member

<https://www.waterways.org.uk/account/register/>



The finishing touches at Lock 14



John, John & Lou concreting



John pointing the letterbox



CRT gate technicians



John, Mark & Lou fencing



John grouting around the paddle mechanism



Rod & Keith fitting the mitre boards



Landscaping

Many thanks to Bob Terry, Dave Cross & Jim Freeman for these photos

More work to do after the gates had been fitted



Photos by Jim (Posing!), Martin & Dave

Look what's been built at Lock 15



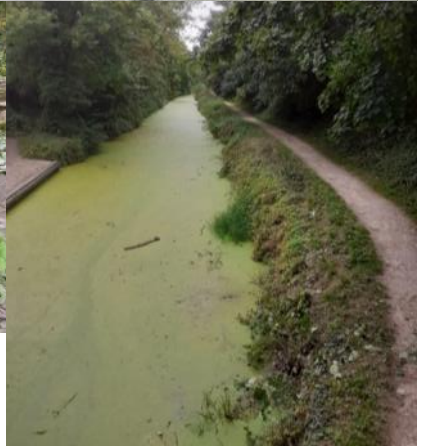
Work on the cut



OTTER IN ACTION (Many thanks Colin)



**Tree clearing, cygnets receiving instruction and
Harlaxton Drift trimmed to perfection!**
Many thanks to John C



My diary from the Isles of Scilly by James Faulconbridge September 2020

Following a week of stormy weather, rain showers and 55mph gusts here on St Martin's, we've come out the other side into a little more autumn sunshine! Since the last update in August, we've harvested the majority of the grape varieties on the vineyard with just the Orion – the main variety – left on the vines.

All of the grapes are picked by hand, with help from the previous owners as well as my parents who are over for the month. We have a crusher/de-stalker which rotates to gently break the skin of the grapes (without crushing the pips) and removes the stalks before the next stage which depends on the type of grape and the style of wine we are targeting. The grapes destined for a white wine are pressed to squeeze the juice out into a fermentation vessel where we add yeast and leave microbiology to take its course. The red however is a little



different – here we leave the crushed grapes in a covered fermentation tank for five days before the pressing. Fermentation starts here when the grapes are still 'on their skins' and the process allows the flavours, tannins and colour to be extracted. We have twelve vine varieties here and each is fermented individually before being blended (or not) in the spring to produce the final wines – so far we're most excited about the Siegerrebe which is a lovely aromatic grape whose character really comes through in the wine.



As well as the grapes, we've been busy pressing apples to make apple juice and cider. We have a number of trees here on the vineyard, and islanders with orchards or individual trees bring their apples down too. We have some local specialities such as the Scilly Pearl, as well as others which started life much closer to our own roots in the midlands, such as Bramley which originated in Southwell and the Newton Wonder from Kings Newton. Some are pressed as single variety juices whilst others make an 'Island Mix'. The juice is

mostly sold through our honesty box on the vineyard gate to thirsty walkers walking past and exploring the coastline. The honesty stall is a prominent feature of the islands with the most impressive example being Middletown Barn Cooperative where a range of local artists and producers sell their wares on a purely trust-based system. It's one of the things which makes this place quite so special!

www.stmartinsvineyard.co.uk



After the trip to York and close to the end of the season I planned one more trip up the Erewash Canal with a GCRS crew including Mike Mitchell and Ken Brockway. The weather was good and the route through Long Eaton was interesting because of the mile by mile commentary by Mike M. I liked the bit through Sandiacre and then it tends to get quite industrial with the big Stanton Plant on both sides. Not much evidence of the Nutbrook Canal but the Derby was still traceable at the Lock cottage junction. The closer we got to Langley Mill saw a big increase in weed and items dumped in the canal which caused prop clearance issues from time to time. It was a pleasure to pass through the rebuilt first lock of the Cromford and the Swingbridge then into the crystal clear water of the Nottm canal Great Northern Basin. Before it got dark I took the opportunity to check over the boat and with the clear water I could see a problem with the prop, further inspection found the cotter pin missing and the cone nut on its last thread, a few more miles would have seen the prop and nut disappear onto the canal bed. All tightened up and a new cotter fitted enabled us to retire to the pub where we met several ECP&DA members to share the night with, plenty of restoration stories to talk about.



The next morning for our return trip saw a complete change in the weather, heavy rain and strong winds. We started with rain gear on and the hood up and managed until we got to a low bridge near Sandiacre, there was some metal brackets under the arch which caught on the hood and tore a large cut so down came the hood which meant the cockpit and rear seats were all awash with rain and mud. Pressing on we were close to Long Eaton and had pulled in to set a lock, Ken and Mike worked the lock and I held the boat ropes, they opened the gates, I jumped aboard and put the boat into gear when there was a loud bang and the engine stopped, it restarted but the boat shook violently and so I shut down and threw the ropes back so they could pull me into the lock chamber. While they worked the lock I wound up the Z drive only to find one blade of the prop sheared off. Luckily I had a spare prop aboard and after the change restarted the engine, engaged drive but still a lot of vibration, further investigation revealed an engine mount had sheared and all we could do was to tie it back together with rope and try again. Still some vibration but we made it home at a reduced speed and were all very wet and fed up by then. I decided to trailer the boat back to my home at Arnold for the last time and spend the winter putting all the damage back to good order. I also made the decision to replace the petrol engine with a diesel. An advert in a local newspaper described a Perkins 4099 at Ilkeston for sale, I went to check and was disappointed to find it was all in bits but complete. It was cheap so I took the risk and spent the winter stripping and replacing all the worn parts.

With the boat at home I was able to crane the old engine out and re-glass some new engine bearers into place and fit the rebuilt Perkins engine. This engine had a glow plug for cold starting mounted in the air intake manifold and a tiny diesel tank to allow burning fuel to be sucked into the pistons. With a fully charged battery and all pipes and wiring connected the fuel was bled through and a start up tried. Plenty of noise but no firing so I tried an old trick of pumping petrol into the air intake with the engine cranking, suddenly it backfired and spat burning fuel into the bilges, this started a fire on the newly glassed engine bearers. Luckily I had a fire extinguisher on board and quickly put out the fire. The engine eventually started and ran ok and in the Spring we re-launched the boat for the 1976 season. The engine continued to be difficult to start from cold but somehow we managed the season until the winter floods saw the marina at Shardlow overwhelmed by water and my boat was one that got away. More on that next time.

Flora & Fauna along the Grantham Canal by James Faulconbridge



October – Comma butterfly

One species of butterfly which people are still photographing along the canal in October is the comma which can be seen sunning itself among clusters of blackberries, basking and feeding up before finding somewhere safe to hibernate through the winter.

The comma's open wings are a rich orange with black markings and noticeably waved and scalloped edges. This comes into its own when the comma closes its wings – the dark brown colouration on the underside combined with the irregular wing-shape makes it wonderfully camouflaged amongst the leaves, especially during hibernation when it is at its most vulnerable. If you look carefully, you can see a little white marking on the underside of the wings roughly in the shape of a 'c' – this is where the butterfly gets its common name of comma, as well as its latin name of *Polygonia c-album* (album meaning white).

The comma has a remarkable recent history in the UK – hops are one of the main larval food plants and the comma suffered serious declines in the mid-nineteenth century, thought to be down to the reduction in hop farming. However the butterfly adapted to the common nettle as the primary food plant for caterpillars and has since experienced a dramatic resurgence in the last 40 years to make it one of the most common and widespread butterflies in the UK.

Look out for this butterfly feeding on some of its favourite nectar sources such as thistles and knapweeds which are common along the towpath.

HEDGEHOG WELFARE



Did you know that a quarter of Britain's native mammals are at risk of extinction, a report warns, hedgehogs are included in the list as "in danger of disappearing".

The Red List for British Mammals shows 11 of our 47 native species are at risk.

It has been a difficult summer for hedgehogs and us at Hedgehog Welfare. The long dry spells have left many hogs thin, dehydrated, cold and infected by parasites. We took in a record numbers, but some were too far gone to save. Many did not have the fat reserves needed to pull through. It's always distressing to see a hedgehog in such a state, and we do try our best to save them. No matter how many times you see them helpless it always gets to you. But we fight on. Our plans are progressing to register Hedgehog Welfare as a charity.

There is a lot of paperwork coming and going to solicitors so, hopefully, it might be done by Christmas.

Our work this year has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown - and so have our finances. We are setting up a new way people can support us on a regular basis. You can make a standing order to "Friends of Hedgehog Welfare" for a minimum monthly donation of £2.00 - the price of a coffee.

Janet Peto

ANOTHER ADVENTURE IN MEADOW PIPIT

10 miles in 12 months

By Polly



Yes, we're still on the Chesterfield Canal and have just realised that we have moved all of 10 miles in the last 12 months, compared to the 300 miles we travelled last year. Our plans for this year had been to spend the winter on the Chessie, and then travel to Sheffield via Doncaster, up to Pocklington (near York) over the Leeds Liverpool as far as the Rufford Branch, across the Ribble Estuary onto the Lancaster Canal up to Carnforth and back and then come back down the Shropshire Union visiting Chester on the way. The dreaded Coronavirus put paid to all of that.

We were just outside West Stockwith Basin, where the Chesterfield Canal joins the River Trent, when lockdown was announced (well – we were in the very friendly West Stockwith Yacht Club bar to be precise) and Meadow Pipit was moored next to the towpath. Ian, my partner is an asthma sufferer so is high risk, and CRT kindly granted us a 12 week overstay where we were moored. Normally we would have had to move after 14 days, but this was all rather academic anyway as all boat movement other than for essential journeys (filling up with water, etc) was banned during lockdown. Graham who is moored with us (aka Clayworth Coal Express (see my article in the July edition of Bridge for further details)) with his Apple pie that he has just made. Obviously it had to be tasted to make sure it was worthy of being photographed; I was chief taster and it passed the quality control test!



To begin with it all seemed a bit surreal, but we enjoyed being cocooned in the safety of our boat, and waving through the windows to the passers-by walking up and down the towpath, which became increasingly busy. The only problem was that when we needed to leave the boat for any reason we had 200 yards of towpath to negotiate in either direction and it wasn't wide enough to be able to social distance effectively; the best tactic was to wait until it was empty and make a dash for the end hopefully getting there before anyone else came the other way, which more often than not they did.

After a couple of weeks we needed to make our essential journey into the basin itself to fill up with water, where there was a lot more room. We decided that to go back onto the towpath probably wasn't an "essential Journey", so we stayed put in the basin for the rest of lockdown and eventually until July.



Although it was frustrating not being able to cruise as planned, we gradually adjusted to our new static lifestyle. We found a lady running a lovely outside vegetable stall in the village and a butcher in the next village of Misterton which was

10 miles in 12 months *(Continued)*

only a 20 minute walk away. We got to know the other liveabords in the basin and – to their amazement – we managed to secure a weekly Asda delivery to the boat even though we didn't have an address other than "Narrowboat Meadow Pipit, West Stockwith Basin, opposite the Waterside Pub". The delivery drivers seemed to really enjoy delivering to a narrowboat; it was a new experience for most of them, and we were soon including items for other boaters in our weekly order.



As the weather improved we got brave and started to go out exploring on foot; we found that along the side of the River Trent there were wide flood defences where we could walk with plenty of room to distance from anyone else that we came across.



Often the flood defences took us alongside the gardens of houses backing on to the river; it was fascinating seeing the different ways in which people enjoyed their gardens as the weather improved – hot tubs, swimming pools, croquet matches - and one garden that we could see on the far bank of the river even had what looks like a genuine anti-aircraft gun in it!

One particular fascination that I found was looking out for Aegirs. We experienced a small one on the River Nene before crossing the Wash last year, but they often occur on the River Trent too. This is a tidal wave that comes up a river when the flood tide meets the current of the river flowing towards it; it only ever happens on spring tides, which are the high tides that occur when there is a full or new moon. I did some research and discovered that the perfect conditions for an aegir to occur on the River Trent are a spring tide (essential), a west wind – the stronger the better (to hold back the tide so that when it finally reaches the river it does so in a rush) and low barometric pressure. There are only a few days in each month that spring tides occur, and although it is possible to calculate the approximate time the aegir might occur this can vary by a couple of hours each way. To my delight, in June, there were a few days when a possible aegir was predicted to hit West Stockwith in the early evening



10 miles in 12 months *(Continued)*

– what better excuse to go and sit by the river with a glass of wine and wait? I spent three happy evenings pursuing my new favourite pastime and was delighted to see other people on the opposite bank of the river obviously doing the same. The only slight disappointment was that the aegirs themselves were a bit of a damp squib. I only saw two – well, one to be precise – the first made a bit of a slamming noise against the lock gates but wasn't visible on the surface of the water at all, and the second was just a few ripples on the surface of the river, but never mind it was there and I saw it! I have since learnt that the biggest aegirs occur at the equinoxes in March and September, so I might have to have another go.

Finally in July we left the basin but decided to stay on the relatively quiet Chesterfield Canal, not cruising far and being careful to wash our hands thoroughly after going through any locks and avoiding touching more than is necessary. We have been pottering up and down the canal, spending time with new boating friends that we have made since being here and we are currently moored back at Ranby, which is about 10 miles from West Stockwith, with two other boats, and a fourth boat may be coming to join us too. During the fine summer evenings we enjoyed a lot of barbeques and social evenings with other boaters sitting outside our boats observing the social distancing rules; since the weather has started to get cooler we are still managing to have our social evenings outside, but instead they involve putting on thermals, wrapping up warm and sitting round a fire pit.



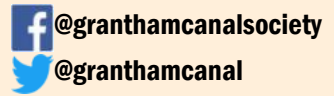
Now we are stuck because one of the two locks at Misterton which is between us and the Trent has been damaged; the problem seems quite serious and may take a while to repair and even need new lock gates. The other Misterton Lock is scheduled to be closed from mid November until Christmas as part of CRT's winter stoppages programme, so unless the first lock can be repaired before mid November we will be here at least until after Christmas.

Thank you Polly for stepping to the breach at the 11th hour and recounting your lockdown experience as Liveboards. A really good read!

Ed

#Trending

By *Tony Jackson*



Finding a goat on the rampage isn't an everyday occurrence while walking the towpath! It does happen – no kidding! This one, taking a liking to Peter's cagoule, wasn't at all gruff. Peter assured us it did find its way home – it knew where to goato ;-)



Okay, having milked the goat story; although, given more time, I'd have liked to have fitted 'battering ram' in somewhere...



Facebook follower Annie, captured here in full flow, with Spot leading the way. They were utilising the towpath in doing their bit in this year's Race For Life. Cancer Research UK being a very worthy cause.

Over on Twitter, sisters Vicky and Ginny were running their 'Virtual London Marathon' along the towpath – receiving much encouragement from other towpath users!

I wonder how much the Grantham Canal towpath has raised for charity over the years?

My short series on Facebook covering non-native invasive species got off to a slow start, but the invertebrates post reached 1260 people eventually.





**Some screen shots from the video of the top gates being fitted at Lock 14.
Filmed by Sea Lane Media Ltd (Aerial photos & video) www.sealanemedia.co.uk**

Who Paints the Mileposts?

Whenever that particular question is asked the answer is always "Oh, Fred does those". But more likely these days the answer is "Well, Fred used to do them". Needless to say that many of the mileposts are now in need of some TLC.

I don't think I have ever met Fred and I have no idea just how many years he spent painting these mileposts, nor indeed how many he must have painted, but this "Forth Bridge" type task was very much appreciated but is now very much missed.

One of the residents of Long Clawson contacted our Social Media guru, Tony Jackson, and asked if she could repaint the mileposts near where she lived. "Of course you can" was the reply "But you have to use the correct paint".

So the CRT was contacted and they advised that she would need to use black and white "Hammerite Smooth direct to Rust" paint. With a bit of pleading they agreed to provide the GCS with a couple of 2.5 Litre cans. Brilliant, just what we need.

The Rangers were consulted if they would like to paint mileposts on their sections and quite a few would like to. Whilst our Rangers are a very active group of people, not all of them are physically capable of carrying out this work.

So, how to distribute the paint? It is impractical to expect anyone to carry two 2.5 Litre tins for a mile or two down a towpath so it was decided to obtain some more practically sized tins. It was decided that 125 millilitre (ml) tins would be ideal. Where does one obtain brand new empty paint tins? B&Q? Wickes? Screw Fix? Johnsons Paints? Dulux? No, believe it or not they don't have any empty tins; only full ones. That does seem a little odd. Whatever, but someone must supply them with empty tins!

The internet came to the rescue like the cavalry charging across a dusty plain. A company was found who actually manufacture paint tins and lots of other similar things and, unbelievably, in this country too. When they were told that the 125ml paint tins were for mileposts on a 220 year old canal they kindly obliged by supplying 16 of them free of charge, complete with matching lids, would you believe.

All one had to do then was decant from the 2.5 Litre tins to the smaller ones with the minimum of waste. Thus, 8 tins of white and 8 tins of black were filled, lidded and labelled ready for use. The label attached to the tins stated H&S guidance, the paint manufacturer, and the names of the providers of the paint and the tins. There's plenty of paint left and the tins will be returned for re-filling so if anyone would like to have a go please get in touch with the contact below.

The GCS would like to express gratitude to the suppliers of the paint and tins and also to Fred for the years he spent painting the mileposts:

Paint supplied by Gareth Carter, Volunteer Coordinator with the Canal & River Trust.

125 ml tins and lids supplied by Richard Knott, Associate Director Sales and Business Development at Messrs. RLM Packaging Ltd of Kingston upon Hull.

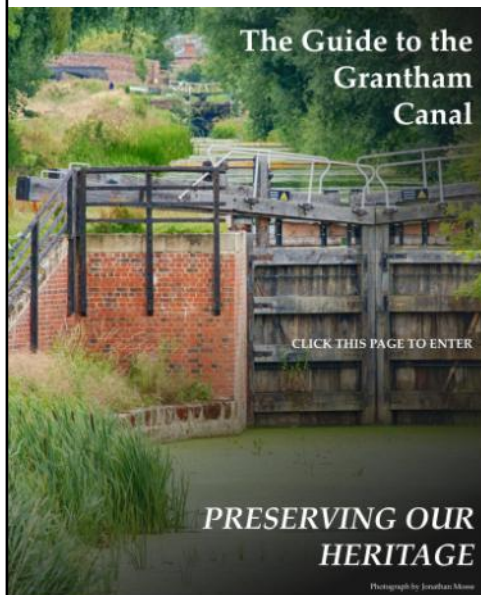


Headranger Rob

This is our new on-line guide to the Grantham Canal.

After entering the guide there are interactive maps which, when clicked, enable both past & present photos to be viewed together with a whole host of interesting detail.

Give it a try: <http://www.gcsguide.org>



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The Grantham Canal

As the Canal is 33 miles long we have divided it up into five sections below.



Click on the section of map above that you wish to view and it will open a straight line representation of the canal. There you will find photos of present day views and some from our archive.

Click any photo for a larger view - sometimes shown

Those with a rounded edge, when clicked, provide a lot more detail.



Click the portrait of William Jessop to view a time line of the canal's rise, fall and restoration.



Click the above for acknowledgements and feedback



Click the above to view a Google Map for the area of the canal



So as to balance the Bottom gates on the front cover here are the Top gates being fitted

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

Jane Imrie, Julie Baum, Margaret Leighton, Mary Noble, John Dodwell, Tony Osbond, Val Taylor, Tony Binch, David Roper, J Platts, John & Sheila Cooke, Heritage Open Day donations, Colin Warrington, Anonymous, Anne Earl, Jeremy Lee, Ros Church, M Burnett, John Clark, John Sentence, Jo & Tim Altham, John Leach, Hamish & Kate Mccallum