

BRIDGE



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The monthly newsletter
published by the

The
Grantham Canal
Society

CHARITY No: 507337



Photo by Bob Pratley



This month's update from Mike Stone (Chairman)

A Happy New Year to all readers!

We all have much to look forward to in 2021 so do not let Tier 4 depress you. Many of us should receive a vaccination before Easter; GCS has already commenced enhancement work on the canal at sites in Rushcliffe; new volunteers are arriving following news of our extended work area; and the Society and the Management at The Castle have agreed that the work-site at Lock 14 can remain operational for Lock 13 restoration in the future!



Lock 13 - Stainwith Lock (Note the spelling!)

This year will be an opportunity to showcase how effective a voluntary canal society can be. We have enjoyed excellent support at the eastern end of the canal from Grantham and its local communities for many years.

Let's see if similar support is forthcoming from the communities at West Bridgford and in Rushcliffe. The active involvement already provided in Lady Bay, Gamston and Cropwell Bishop suggests it is.

To show Society commitment we are actively looking for a site on or near the canal that can be used as an operational work-base for the West end. **If you know of a possible location please contact us.**

The society needs access to plant, usually yellow machines and not green things that grow, so if you know of any that might be available please let the team know. For the society, which has varying needs, it is more effective to have occasional access than to rent such equipment.



Oh dear! Back to Lock-down again. Please stay safe; get your vaccinations and be ready for a time when we can receive visits from our supporters again.

2021 will get better!

Mike Stone



Support the IWA & become a member

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



Michael Beeby

It is sad to report an announcement received just prior to Christmas, of the passing of Michael Beeby of Rempstone after a short illness. He was just 3 days short of his 83rd birthday.

Michael was best known as a member of the firm of steam ploughing contractors Beeby Brothers and maintained a lifelong connection with the art of ploughing by steam. He was also instrumental in the founding of the now annual Rempstone Steam Rally, later County Show, which, thanks to his invitation, has been attended by the GCS exhibition team for several years.

In addition Michael was a long-time supporter of the Grantham Canal and regularly discussed Society restoration progress with me.

Sadly much of his skills and knowledge will be lost to several organisations and in particular to the Steam Plough Club of which he was a Vice President.

Mike Stone



**Left: Mike Beeby receiving the Steam Plough Cup from Chairman Mark Jones in 2019.
Right: Mike Beeby on the footplate of Mick Hammond's Fowler single 2269**

**Photos courtesy of
the Steam Plough
Club**

MORE FINISHING OFF & TIDYING UP



Extreme hedging!



& tree clearing

Bob eyes up the pilings at Lock 14 upper landing which was completed in December and Dave, Mark, Tony K & Martin build up the copings in bitterly cold weather early January.

What do the Rangers Do?

Unlike the constantly adapting situation with Covid - locking down then partially unlocking then locking down again - our Rangers keep on relentlessly plugging away at their job.

There's no doubt that our Work Teams have done some amazing work during the past year. Quite apart from rebuilding Locks, they have been busy removing weeds and reeds on our new boat Otter, building the Memory Wall at Lock 15, constantly attending to and adjusting leaking locks, installing several new benches, making a start clearing the Dry Section, preparations for building the new slipway and lots more that I cannot recall as there's so much they have done.

I am full of admiration for their dedication and ingenuity. In the words of the Sci-Fi film *Oblivion* "Are they an effective team?" You bet they are!

Well, I want all of our readers to know that the same applies to another group of extremely effective and dedicated team of volunteers, namely, **The Rangers**.

Here they are, well most of them anyway. Some are obviously too shy to send their photos:



Alex C



Anne B



Anne M



Bob H



Christine C



Colin A



David G



Doug S



Heather W



Hedley D



Hilary T



Jackie H



Karen C



Liz S



Maggie S



Norma V



Philip T



Rob C



Sandra B



Sarah M



Steve B



Steve H



Sue C



Tony J

What do the Rangers Do? (Continued)

They don't have visual projects to present to the world that our Work Teams have, although some do take part in those activities as well. However, they provide a much less visible range of duties but which are every bit as important.

They help the CRT to look after the whole of the 33 miles of canal. This is split up into 15 sections of varying length and also includes Denton Reservoir. Some of the Rangers have recently been recruited to help look after Knipton Reservoir also. Two of them are also Roving Rangers with no fixed sections. Rangers come in a wide range of ages and abilities, male and female. Some are couples and some individuals. No matter, they all do a really useful job of helping to keep our canal and towpath looking good. With all of this walking and cycling they are a pretty fit bunch.

They have a long list of duties. We ask them to take regular walks or cycle rides along their section and report any of the following:

- Significant changes to the water level and water quality
- Obstructions in the waterway
- Environmental issues, such as pollution, tree diseases, invasive species etc.
- The condition of the towpath and obstructions, littering, dog fouling or fly tipping
- Incidents of vandalism or graffiti
- Problems with bridges, locks, embankments, fishing platforms, fences, gates, waste bins, signs etc. that may need attention
- If that's not enough we also ask their assistance to:
 - Help us carry out occasional surveys of canal and towpath users
 - Pick up litter along the towpath and dispose of it safely
 - Trim back some of the vegetation which occasionally obstructs the towpath
- Organise litter-picking and bank clear-ups and maintenance with the support of our [maintenance teams](#)
- Hand out leaflets and talk to canal users about the canal, the environment and our work
- Let us know about any local ideas or opinions that we should be considering
- Help us recruit new members to the GCS
- Help our Events Team with promotional and fund raising activities
- Work with our Learning Team to encourage local schools and community groups to get involved in our promotional and educational activities and help us run them if possible
- Keep a record of the time spent acting as a Canal Ranger including to and from site
- Come along to regular Canal Ranger meetings and social events

One has to admire the way all of our volunteers have continued carrying out their duties throughout these difficult times. Thankfully, even during lockdowns, Rangers have been able to continue their volunteer work by combining it with their allowed exercise.

The GCS is very fortunate to have such dedicated volunteers. With such an **Effective Team**, there can be no doubt that they will get this canal of ours fully navigable.

Ranger Rob



2 of our Earlsfield Rangers

WHY DO CANAL BOATS KEEP RIGHT WHEN PASSING?

During the Coronavirus lockdowns Tony Jarrow has provided some fascinating accounts of how Streets in Cropwell Bishop came to be named. These historical accounts can be found on the Cropwell Bishop Plan web site: <https://cropwellbishopplan.co.uk/>

A recent article about Kinoulton Road (Article 22) describes the history of the 'Roving' Bridge over the canal (Bridge 22) and the various canal side Gypsum mills and workings in the 1920's (Now the Lime Kiln industrial Estate).

This article got me thinking about how horse drawn barges would operate. Whilst the Roving bridge would avoid the need for the horse to be unhitched when the tow path changed sides, I wondered how a horse towed barge would pass one travelling in the opposite direction. Tony Jarrow found from a Google search that:

The rope they used was quite a long one, and it was made of cotton, which happens to be denser than water. When two boats met, the one crew allowed their rope to go slack, causing it to sink to the bottom of the canal. The second horse stepped over the slack rope, the second boat floated over it, and then both boats continued on their way.



An example of a Roving Bridge - not on the Grantham Canal



Passengers enjoy a leisurely boat trip along the Kennet and Avon Canal. Photo courtesy of Kennet Horse Boat Company

WHY DO CANAL BOATS KEEP RIGHT WHEN PASSING? (*Continued*)

This is fine, but for it to work, the 'outside' boat and 'outside' horse must dip their rope so that the 'inside' boat and 'inside' horse can pass over. This is only possible if the barges pass by keeping right, whilst the horses pass in the conventional way by keeping left. (If the barges kept to the left, like the horses, whichever rope was slackened, the rope of the remaining pulled barge would catch either on the first barge or its horse!)

This could possibly be the origin of the 'keeping right when passing' convention for canal barges (and other boats). The only reference I could find on the internet suggested that when passing a fully laden barge, an empty barge should drop its tow line and go around the laden barge. This would mean passing to either left or right depending on which side the tow path was!

There is another reason to keep right, which I did find on the internet. The person steering the barge would generally be right handed and holding the tiller in the right hand would put him/her on the left hand side of the boat thus having better visibility for boats passing port to port (ie keeping to the right)

Thank goodness we now have engines on our boats, but were the horses more environmentally acceptable?

Any other suggestions as to why our boats keep right when passing?

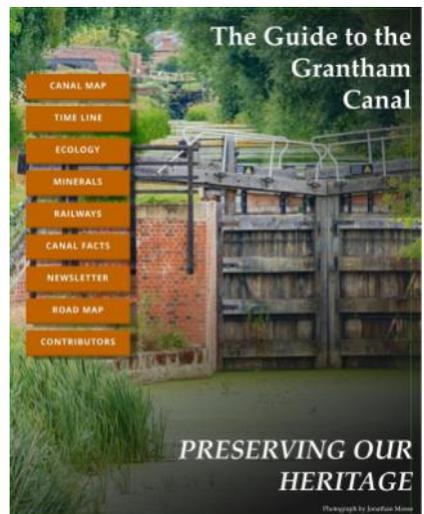
John Greenwood

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

You can search the guide for details about the canal together with interactive maps which, when clicked, enable both past & present photos to be viewed.

Give it a try:

<https://www.gcsguide.org>



My diary from the Isles of Scilly by James Faulconbridge January 2021

If I had been writing this only a week ago, it would be as one of the 2,200 people in the country to be in Tier 1 as the Isles of Scilly were separated from Cornwall and left alone in the lowest category when everybody else moved up. However with the imposition of a National Lockdown, we've joined the rest of the country in terms of restrictions!

Christmas day on the island was idyllic before the lockdown – calm, sunny and mild as we walked down to the island pub at lunchtime and back along the coast in the afternoon. The peace was rather short lived however – Storm Bella on Boxing Day brought winds gusting 80mph and whilst the yurt stood solid, but it was difficult to believe when the roof shook and lifted throughout the night! Luckily we kept the polytunnels too – whilst the summers here are generally warm and still, the winters can be wet, wild and very windy.



The vineyard itself is dormant and, whilst we wait for more seaweed to wash up in the next storm, it's received little attention in the last month. Instead we've turned our attentions to construction - busy building the walls and roof of the shepherd's hut in the tractor barn, as well as preparing for some more renovation works to help insulate the shop and winery. It's been nice to have a change of pace, and a new challenge too. We also spent a few days before Christmas helping out packing scented narcissi and bouquets at Scilly Flowers – they send out some of the earliest UK grown daffodils each year thanks to the warm, frost-free location here on Scilly. Do take a look at their website (www.scillyflowers.co.uk) if you're looking to send a bouquet to someone special during lockdown.



One of the most exciting recent events has been the arrival of whales around the islands – up to seven humpback whales have been spotted off the coast including a pair who frequently swam between the islands and could be seen off the inter-island boats. These were joined briefly by the second largest whales in the world – fin whales – which we saw distantly (and briefly) off the eastern tip of St Martin's. Along with the more regular harbour porpoises and common dolphins, and a minke whale which sadly washed up dead by the quay after several days at sea, it's been quite a month for cetaceans!

HUNTING FOR LEAKS



There are numerous leaks along the canal but tracing them is extremely difficult. Possibly even more challenging is finding a way to fix them - even temporarily.

The Grantham Canal Water Restoration Group who represent Parish, Borough and County Councils around the canal, work with The Grantham Canal Society, wildlife, sporting and commercial groups and local residents to encourage the Canal and River Trust **'To restore water levels in the Grantham Canal as far as Wilde's Bridge, 26'.**

There are also leaky gate problems to be sorted especially at Lock 17



BIRD BOXES GALORE



From Pallets to Bird Boxes

A group of our volunteers felt it would be a good idea to start a project to reuse as much of the wood from redundant pallets as possible, with a wider view to help the birds along the canal. Imogen Wilde, CRT's Ecologist, has been advising on the designs to suit which species etc., and will also be advising on positioning the boxes. She plans to record their location and arrange monitoring. *(There are also plans for Owl boxes, bat bots and hedgehog homes for the future)*

We have concentrated on 3 species. Bluetit/Coaltit, these have the smallest front hole size 25mm. House Sparrow these have a larger front hole size 32mm and Robins have the more open front.

This is a joint effort to help the wildlife along the canal. We hope this will encourage others to do the same in their neighbourhood and help protect some of our endangered species.

Photos by Phil Wright

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



Bridge January – Mandarin duck

One of these jazzy little ducks has been spotted along the canal from Hickling Basin in December – the mandarin certainly sets itself apart from the usual waterfowl flocks with its impressive plumage! The photograph posted on twitter was a male – with the orange plumes on the cheeks and sails on their backs. The females are brown and comparatively drab in colouration – similar to the sexual dimorphism of more familiar ducks such as the mallard.

One thing which sets these ducks apart from their native counterparts is their habit of nesting in holes in trees – often high up and sometimes some distance from the water. You might have seen the footage of mandarin ducklings leaving the nest on Springwatch in 2018 – the sight of ducklings leaping out is just as you would imagine and it's well worth a watch online!

As you might expect, the mandarin isn't a native of these shores but was introduced from the Far East, where it can still be found in China, Japan, Korea and parts of Russia. The origin of the wild populations is unknown – it could be escapees from ornamental ponds or intentional introductions – but they were recorded from the 1930's onwards and are now well established in the UK, especially in the south-east but also across Wales and the north of England. Fortunately, they are not thought to pose any threat to native wildlife so the 8,000 strong population can be enjoyed as extravagant interlopers to brighten up a winter's day!

**Peoples Trust
for
Endangered
Species**



Encouraging Hedgehogs

The best way to provide a nesting option for hedgehogs is by creating a natural feature, such as a compost heap or log pile, as this has the added benefit of encouraging insect prey too. Artificial hedgehog houses (or hibernacula) are also used by hedgehogs and can be really fun to make.

If you leave a messy patch in a quiet undisturbed area of your garden, then hedgehogs might make their own nest there either to hibernate in or to rear their young. In our case it could be either bank but possibly it will be more undisturbed opposite bank to towpath.

However, if you want to improve your chances of having a resident hedgehog you could either buy or make them a home.

Phil W

Dig this!

**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, bridges, a couple of cottages, stables, and a maintenance yard were required. Other brickworks were also established along the route.

There’s many a cottage in the area built of ‘Woolsthorpe Brick’ – and until Mr. Bosch came along with his hammer drill – it was a devil of a job drilling into some of the particularly hard baked bricks, as I discovered, as an apprentice electrician in the swinging sixties!

Tony Jackson

#Trending

By *Tony Jackson*



A sprinkling of snow brings out the child in us; thoughts of when winters were winters, and snow would be level with tops of hedges – if yer old enough!

The winter of '63 was such a winter. Hollowing out drifts to form palatial snow caves, I was occupied for what seemed weeks on end – it was weeks on end! In West Bridgford, these teens were not letting the opportunity of a frozen canal to pass them by! This picture reaching over 4,380 people on Facebook, prompting a few 'I was there' or 'I did that' comments!



As the sun sets on 2020, and good riddance, here's wishing us all a more promising new year, blessed with good health and happiness – maybe a boat ride or two eh?



Thank you to Facebook follower Tom for this sunset over Muston Gorse bridge



DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN "GIVE AS YOU LIVE" AND DONATE TO THE GRANTHAM CANAL SOCIETY BY DOING... NOTHING MUCH? YOU SIMPLY BUY YOUR GOODS THROUGH THE GIVE AS YOU LIVE WEBSITE OR APP AND SIT BACK AND LET GOOD THINGS HAPPEN! SO FAR, OVER £12,000 HAS BEEN RAISED THIS WAY FOR THE GCS - WOW!



ANOTHER WAY TO HELP IS BY USING AMAZON'S SMILE OPTION: SHOP AT SMILE.AMAZON.CO.UK AND AMAZON WILL DONATE 0.5% OF THE PRICE OF ELIGIBLE PURCHASES TO YOUR FAVOURITE CHARITABLE ORGANISATION, AT NO COST TO YOU. WITH CHRISTMAS SHOPPING ON THE HORIZON, PERHAPS GRANTHAM CANAL SOCIETY COULD BENEFIT A LITTLE TOO... IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR DIFFICULTIES, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE GRANTHAM CANAL SOCIETY?

Why not join the 8 new members we gained on Discovery Day?

It doesn't matter if you live miles away or don't wish to actively volunteer - you will be supporting our efforts

THE COST IS MODEST!
The annual subscription rates are as follows:

Single Adult:£20
Family:£30
Under 18/Over 60: ..£15



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

Margaret Leighton, Phil Bulmer,
John Dodwell, Tony Osbond,
Susan Christian, Jane Grylls,
Tony Binch, Community Books,
Mary Noble,
Alan Geeson, Jeremy Lee,
John Sentence, Jo & Tim Altham

WINTER

The
Grantham Canal
Society

2020

**WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING
NEW MEMBERS**

**Mr D Allinson, Mr C Prescott, Mr T Barney, Mr R Brackenbury, Mr R Clark,
Mrs A Holloway, Mrs M Need, Mr K Otter, Mr R Gittings, Mr D Glover,
Dr M & Mrs J M Kennerley, Mr M Ling, Mr D Lyman, Mrs J L Machin,
Dr R Millman, Mr D E J & Mrs J Pike, Mr T Rowbotham
Mr D Cox, Ms J A Dodd, Mr T Pownall, Mr S & Mrs L Sugden,
Mr S Whittaker, Mr J & Mrs S Besson, Mr J Christen,
Mr P & Mrs V Cunningham, Mr E Holden, Mr M J Locker,
Mr P & Mrs J Walker, Ms V Willan, Mr P Wright, Mr J Cork, Mr M Holman,
Ms A Mather, Mr G Archer**



The end of a good day's work!