



In this issue:

Chairman's Column	1
Events This Year	1
A Note from the Treasurer	1
Desilting at the Summit	1 & 2
Crofton Beam Engines	2
Coronavirus and Boating	2
Annual Lockage Report 2020	3
Wey & Arun Canal Trust Hedge Layers	3
Growing Support for the Basingstoke Canal Society	4
High Call-Out Figures	4

Events This Year

It appears that various clubs have begun organising some of their meetings over the internet using Zoom or similar software. This is probably a bit difficult for a small society such as ours. Also, it seems the Government's announcements about easing the lockdown is encouraging the planning of 'public' events such as rallies and the opening of attractions. In view of this, I hope to restart the Waterways Events item in the April Newsletter.

Peter Oates

A Note from the Treasurer

This month marks a year since the Society last met, and it doesn't look likely that we will be meeting in person any time soon. Last December I renewed the Society insurance policy covering us for the use of Chilworth Hall until December 2021, just in case.

I will be closing the books for the year ending 31 March 2021 at the end of this month. Last year the Committee decided to suspend membership subscriptions for 2020-2021. All member subscriptions paid for that year will be credited to the member and held in suspense until the Committee re-instates Annual Subscriptions. They will be shown in the Accounts as *Subscriptions Paid in Advance*.

Aelred Derbyshire

Chairman's Column

Dear Members and Friends,

Well, here we are, another month of lockdowns but according to our leader there is light at the end of the tunnel (and it's not a tunnel light!). We can look forward to freedom after June 21st he tells us. Hopefully - we will see.

It might mean that we can go boating again! And hopefully, for the members that want to, we will be able to get together again before Christmas.

At the moment the IWA Festival of Water at Worcester (which was cancelled last year) is still on. If so Angie and I are booked in with our boat *Liberty*. Then, maybe to the Black Country Museum late September for their bi-annual Historic Boat Gathering with *Purton*. Lets hope it takes place. The last one in 2019 was a tremendous weekend.

We were booked in for blacking and survey on *Liberty* during March, but I think that will have to be delayed.

Anyway I trust you are all well and for those of us of the right age have had their jab, we have.

Last month's Newsletter was another good un for Peter, the article from our Hong Kong Correspondent was again fascinating. I have read Suzi Wong!

As a family we had New Year 89/90 out there and used the Star Ferries considerably. The thing that struck us was the incessant chatter on board. I took a Video one of the times and when you play it back it is just a cacophony of sound, it was wonderful. We even went for dinner at a Chinese restaurant that was moored out in the harbour.

You might be pleased to know that I have nearly finished my fancy shelving unit for *Purton*.

Anyway look after yourselves and keep safe.

Alan and Angela

Desilting at the Summit

Volunteer Charlie Coxwell describes the process of desilting (dredging?) the Wey & Arun Canal at the Summit Level.

The canal alongside Dunsfold aerodrome on Dunsfold Park in Surrey had become very silted and in places the silt was above the water level. Historically, the canal had been seen as a convenient place to dump large concrete lumps

a long reach excavator, operating from the towpath. However, the canal is lined with many mature trees and the very limited working space prohibited such action. Hence the Trust purchased, from Land & Water Services Ltd, Pauline the 19-tonne dredger. Pauline was originally built in the 1960s and Land & Water had given her a considerable upgrade in 2003. Alongside the

dredger the Trust bought two barges and a tugboat.

When Pauline was launched into the summit section in February 2019, via a 250-tonne crane at Compasses Bridge, her first task was to dig her way to the Thruscott Slipway and the winding hole at Dunsfold Road. As the canal was so silted there was no room for the spoil barges to be used for spoil removal, so the spoil was piled on the adjacent towpath according to environmental guidelines. In May 2019 we arrived at the slipway.

Once at the slipway volunteer Andy Evans spent much time working on the 'business' end of Pauline, improving her running and better adapting her to our use. Brian Morgan and myself set to sorting out the



Desilting south of Compasses Bridge (Credit: Julian Nowell - 12 February 2020)

and soil waste, and several large trees had fallen across the canal that needed to be removed safely. The easiest way to clear such an area is usually via

(Continued on page 2)

Crofton Beam Engines

Crofton Beam Engines completes major Lottery funded project and receives further grant to help it steam again in 2021. Crofton Beam Engines, owned by the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust, has just completed a major £750,000 project to restore and protect its Grade 1 listed building, which houses the oldest working beam engine in the world that is still in its original location and capable of performing the task for which it was installed.

The project to tell "Our Crofton Story", which was supported by a grant of over £500,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, has also delivered new accessible and family friendly toilets and a disabled ramp to allow better access to the buildings; new interpretation panels throughout the site and video screens showing the engines in operation; and improved facilities around the grounds including additional picnic tables and cycle racks.

The project has also enabled the Trust to employ a Learning and Community Engagement Officer, who has started developing a programme to provide online resources and encourage school visits.

Because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Crofton site was only open for a limited period in 2020, and the engines were not steamed. This has had a major impact on revenue. The Trust is therefore very grateful to the Wolfson Foundation, which also supported the major project, for a further grant of £35,000 to help mitigate the impact of Covid-19 in 2020, and move ahead into 2021.

Plans are already in place for steaming to recommence at Easter 2021. Chris Bolt, Trust Treasurer and Project Manager for the final stages of the major project said: "Today is a major milestone for the Trust. Despite the impact of Covid-19 in 2020, Crofton Beam Engines has a secure future



thanks to the work completed as part of the major Lottery-funded project and the additional funding we have been able to raise. The grant from the Wolfson Foundation is a vote of confidence in the whole Crofton team and the unique heritage of the site."

Further enquiries to: Chris Bolt (07766 756408)

Staying Covid-19 Secure in 2021

The Pumping Station, station grounds and Pay & Display car park will OPEN during Easter 2021 (Non Steaming) and will then reopen again for May Bank Holiday.

Provisionally from May 2021 there may be steaming days, but please check the website and our social media for updates. If you'd like to contact us with any questions please either telephone: 01672 870300 or e-mail: crofton@katrust.org.uk (Crofton Beam Engine Website).

Coronavirus and Boating

The Canal & River Trust has updated its guidance to boaters following the Government announcement regarding the roadmap out of lockdown. It has issued the following statement:

All navigation in England and Wales should remain limited to essential use only. We are closely monitoring the guidance and will confirm any update on cruising as soon as we can.

Boaters who are not currently occupying their boat should not take short overnight breaks on their boat during the period. Those living aboard are advised to limit their navigation, moving only a minimal amount to access essential facilities or services when necessary. Please moor considerately.

Boat licence terms and conditions regarding moving every 14 days will be suspended until the restrictions come to an end. If you have any questions, please contact your licence support officer.

How does the Government's roadmap apply to boating?

We believe that the Government's roadmap applies to boating in England in the following ways – please note that this is subject to further confirmation.

Desilting the Summit (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

welfare cabin where the wooden interior showed signs of rot. We removed her ballast and worked on the internal rust from her steel hull. She was then given a repaint, the ballast replaced and her welfare cabin refurbished.

Clearance work started again in early January 2020, and yet again we were forced to use the towpath to pile spoil. With the aid of several Dredging Team members, Pauline was kept working for five days a week, throughout January, February and March. Teams worked in twos for safety – one drives, while the other waits for their turn – but also because after 45-60 minutes of concentrated work a break is needed.

As with many other working parties, Covid halted all work in late March 2020. On returning from lockdown the opportunity was taken to paint

There is no change until **Step 1 part 2**, potentially from **March 29**, when it is anticipated that the official stay at home order will end but people will be encouraged to stay local.

Limited local boat movement may be possible but you should avoid travelling if your boat is not located close to where you live and only those living aboard are permitted to make an overnight stay.

In **Step 2**, from no earlier than **April 12**, holiday lets are expected to reopen. We believe that at this point cruising can be done freely and overnight stays on boats and holiday hire boating will be allowed, as long as you are one household or support bubble. The boat movement suspension will be lifted (with boats required again to move every 14 days).

In **Step 3**, from no earlier than **May 17**, indoor mixing on your boat will be allowed with up to six people or, if it is more people, two households.

CRT is awaiting further guidance on advice for Wales.

[Towpath Talk - 23 February 2021](#)

the external cabin and deck area. Now almost complete, cabin hatches have now been modified with a view of keeping the rain from entering! So far it looks as if we have been successful.

We are hopeful that sufficient spoil has been removed to enable the spoil barges to be used alongside the dredger when dredging is again permitted to continue. Canal depth now mostly varies between 1 to 2 feet, so spoil removal barges will initially only be partly filled. It is anticipated that several passes will be required before full clearance is achieved.

The barges will be emptied at the Thircutt slipway, with the nutrient-rich spoil being placed somewhere on the business park subject to agreement with Dunsfold Park for future use in landscaping.

Gill Davies, 23 November 2020 - <https://weyarun.org.uk/blog>

Annual Lockage Report 2020

CRT have published their Annual Lockage Report for 2020 which shows how many times locks were used across the charity's 2,000 miles of waterways. As Covid-19 lockdown restrictions interrupted boaters usual cruising patterns for much of the year, the report charts an unprecedented drop in use.

The report compares 2020's lock use with the previous year. It details a 32.9% reduction across 172 comparison sites.

The year saw distinct phases of use. In the week before the first lockdown in March, there were around 3,500 weekly lock counts: during lockdown this reduced to below 1,000. Post-lockdown numbers bounced back and from early July numbers soared, as boaters were able to cruise freely and hire boat firms recorded heavy bookings, with many people choosing staycations. Lockages stayed at over 12,000 lockages per week for most of the summer, with a peak of 13,700 lockages in mid-August.

Hillmorton Locks 2&3 (twinned locks) on the Oxford Canal, which saw 5,933 lockages, a drop of 29%, remained the busiest locks on the English and Welsh canal system. Cholmondeston on the Shropshire Union Canal was the second busiest, recording 5,346 lockages, also down 29% on the previous year. Woodend on the Trent & Mersey (4,450) was in third, followed by Wardle on the Shropshire Union Canal (4,284) and New Marton on the Llangollen Canal (4,222): all recorded significant drops in use.

Volunteer lock keepers were still present at 105 sites to help boaters when Covid-19 restrictions allowed, recording 89,000 hours of lock keeping.



Aerial view of Foxton Locks

Unprecedented drop

Adam Comerford, national hydrology manager at the Canal & River Trust, comments: "The reasons for variances in lock use year to year can be numerous and complex, but in 2020 the reason for such an unprecedented drop was clear: the Covid-19 pandemic. This was compounded by the fifth warmest and driest spring since 1910, which

had knock-on effects for water supplies in the summer, when lockdown restrictions were loosened.

"It was heartening to see boaters, both owners and hirers, enjoying a summer of cruising. The waterways remain as popular as ever, and we hope that some of these new staycationers will return to the canals for future holidays.

"The monitoring of lock operations across our

waterways remains an essential element in our water resources management as well as providing an insight into any changing patterns in use across the network. We are all looking forward to being able to cruise freely again, hopefully in the near future."

'Lockage' can be defined simply as lock usage through the filling and emptying of a lock chamber, which in turn allows the movement of water and passage of boats. It is important to distinguish lockage from boat movements, which are the actual number of boats which travel through a lock. The Trust separates boat movements from lockage to acknowledge that averages can be skewed by the boat:lockage ratio (in the case of a typical broad lock, the ratio can be between one and four boats per lockful of water used).

Read the [full report](#).

[Canal & River Trust News - 11 February 2021](#)

Wey & Arun Canal Trust Hedge Layers

In Surrey and West Sussex a small band of volunteers are keeping an ancient country craft alive, and providing a valuable habitat for wildlife at the same time.



The Wey & Arun Canal Trust hedge laying team has been running for 18 years, and at the end of November they resumed their weekly working party under COVID-19-safe conditions. The team usually works from October/November

until February/March when birds begin nesting.

This season they are laying a hedge along the canal at Loxwood, West Sussex, continuing the one they began last year. Each team member has an individual area to complete, marked out in orange paint, keeping them socially distant from one another.

The Loxwood hedge will be laid in "Southern Counties" style. According

to the National Hedge laying Society there are more than 30 different regional styles, developed to cope with the climate of an area, different farming practices and the trees and shrubs that grow there, which in West Sussex is usually native species of hawthorn, field maple, ash and oak.

The technique, unchanged for centuries, first involves removing brambles and excess growth from the hedgerow about to be laid. The hedge layer then cuts away (pleaches) the stem towards ground level and arches it over at an angle of 60 degrees, encouraging new shoots to grow straight upwards. The 'pleachers' are then "weaved" in and out of the hazel stakes, with a stake every 21 inches.

The aim is to create a line for the eye to follow, with stakes in a row and the rolling lines of binders in between. Even the tops of the stakes are cut with care, so they are all the same height and angle.

The result is a thing of beauty bordering the canal towpath, but importantly the practice keeps a hedge healthy and longer living and provides both food and refuge for wildlife.

The Wey & Arun Canal Trust hedge laying team will be working on the Loxwood hedge, opposite the Canal Centre, for the rest of the season.

Gill Davies, [Cargoes Spring 2021](#)

SOUTHAMPTON CANAL SOCIETY

Established 1967

The objectives of the Society are to foster interest in canals and inland waterways, to assist in their preservation, restoration and development, and to give practical help on waterway projects.

Meetings are normally held on the first Thursday of each month at 7.45pm (see Waterways Events in this issue) at Chilworth Village Hall, Chilworth, Southampton, SO16 7JZ. OS Grid Ref: SU410184. Contact the Secretary for further information.

This Newsletter is normally published during the first week of each month in time for the Society's meeting.

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Growing Support for the Basingstoke Canal Society

Growing support for the Basingstoke Canal Society marks a strong start to 2021. The continuing constraints of Covid-19 can't keep the Basingstoke Canal Society from making a strong start to 2021, with the charity reporting a growing membership, increased fundraising and plans to build new links with councils across the area.

Our new website which was launched last year has received well over £14,500 in donations for our initiative for more information signs, with contributions coming from Fleet, Farnborough and Rushmoor Rotary Clubs, RAF Odiham, Farnborough Airport, and £1,000 from the De La Rue charity, in Basingstoke.

Hart, Woking and Surrey Heath councillors have also made extra contributions above their ongoing maintenance contributions. Two legacies have also been received from two long-standing volunteer supporters of the society, Dieter Jebens, a founder member, and Dick Snell, also a long-term member.

"We are tremendously grateful for everyone's very generous donations," said Society Co-vice-chairman Ken Sankey, "which means we have raised around almost three quarters of the £20,000 required

for our information boards project. These were called for by canal users who want to know more about the canal, its history and wildlife, so we are pleased to be well on our way to making these a reality! We



Barley Mow Bridge, Winchfield

hope to get the first signs in place within the next couple of months.

"It is great that we also hit our target of reaching 1000 members in 2020 with the Society's membership growing by 20% in the year. On the back of the increased usage of the canal, the committee now has ambitious plans to add a further thousand this year to take the overall number to 2,000 members.

"A new focus for 2021 is to develop our links with local councils along the canal, to promote this wonderful asset to our communities," adds Ken. "We believe more people could enjoy the physical and mental health benefits to be gained along its banks, and an aim for this year is to develop ways to reach more members of our population."

You can find out more about the canal and how to support the Basingstoke Canal Society via the website at <https://basingstoke-canal.org.uk>.

Lisa Taylor, *Cargoes Spring 2021*

High Call-out Figures

River Canal Rescue reports the number of rescues it undertook in 2020 yet again reached a new high. In the period from 1 Jan to 31 December, engineers attended 231 incidents (186 major and 45 minor), 55 per cent more than the 149 (105 major and 44 minor) in 2019.

Major is defined as submerged, partially sunken or grounded craft, plus salvage work; minor as situations which on attendance, can be resolved without the need for a full rescue team.

Storms Brendan, Ciara, Dennis and Jorge, plus lockdown restrictions, were the main reasons for the unprecedented rise. Vessels across the UK were either battered by bad weather at the start of 2020 or suffered water ingress, due to a lack of maintenance, as people struggled to get to their boats.

In contrast, the number of general call-outs, such as electrical, fuel and engine issues, flat batteries, over-heating and gearbox failures, fell by 17 per cent, from 3450 in 2019 to 2850. The decrease due to fewer

people cruising the waterways.

Managing director, Stephanie Horton, comments: "Given the current situation, I'm not surprised by these figures; the storms were relentless – in two months we carried out 52 major rescues – and many people were unable to check their boats last year. Once water starts seeping into a boat, it can quickly turn into a perilous situation."

The Government and other bodies now recognise the risk posed by restricting access to vessels, and state that checking on a boat's safety is an acceptable reason to travel.

Owners who fail to visit or maintain their boats during lockdown may have future insurance claims rejected if they cannot evidence they attempted to ensure the boat's safety (even if it means paying a third-party or arranging for a marina to do so).

Towpath Talk - 22 February 2021