

BRIDGE



DECEMBER

2020

The monthly newsletter
published by the

The
Grantham Canal
Society

CHARITY No: 507337



Photo by Philip Wright

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO
ALL AND A HAPPY AND
HEALTHY NEW YEAR



This month's update from Mike Stone (Chairman)

Greetings one and all,

After the pandemic there was sunshine and parts of the canal had no water. Where there was water the weeds grew freely. Then it began to rain and that soon churned the ground into mud.



A hard frost would have been useful but only wet snow has arrived so far! Who would be a volunteer on the Grantham Canal? *Well quite a lot of dedicated people actually! OK perhaps we are all slightly mad but we are happy, fairly healthy, and we're restoring something for the long-term benefit of others.*



Now you can even sit on the new benches to admire our work ... or better still help us to fit some more benches yourself!

Despite everything that has been thrown at us in 2020 – a plague of locusts isn't due before Christmas is it? – **The Society should finish the year even stronger than previously. This is entirely due to the continued commitment of our volunteers, the developing management team we enjoy and the continued support we receive from our members, the local community and our stakeholders. Thank you all!**

I am only sorry that current restrictions do not permit us to gather and mark our achievements. However I am confident that that opportunity will be available next year and then we may celebrate in a style befitting a rural waterway. Certain tasks will continue throughout the holiday period so you will see our volunteer teams active on various lengths of the canal. If, dear readers, you plan to walk, cycle, fish or run using the Grantham towpath please give the volunteers a wave or have a chat but please always be careful and stay safe.



I wish you and your families a very Peaceful Christmas and a very Happy New Year.



Mike Stone.

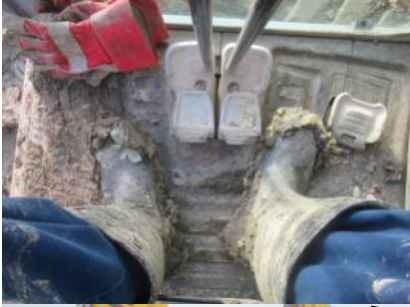


Support the IWA & become a member

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



Mudscaping at Kingston's Lock !



**ALL THIS
'PROFESSIONAL'
WORK IS BEING
CARRIED OUT BY GCS
VOLUNTEERS**



The lower landing completed



The upper landing takes shape

The NEW Benches & Oh! - so many!



Many thanks to all who sent me these photos *Ed*

Where the benches are sited

Purchaser	To be sited	No. seats
Chris Cobb	Between bridges 56 & 57	2
Elizabeth Aldridge	Plungar bridge 20 mile post (husband's initials MJA)	1
Mary Noble	Near 3 shires boarding area just above Lock 18	1
Norma Varley & Christine Clinch	On canal towpath near Dirty Duck at Lock 16	1
Jane Grylls	1/4 mile downstream from Casthorpe Bridge 64	1
Angela Hewson	Between Hickling & Hose	2
Heather Woodhouse & Sarah Marsh	Harby Wharf - walk from Bridge 41 past Mill on the offside come to a concrete wall on towpath side to site the bench	1
Bob Hudson	Harby side of Bridge 46a Stathern Rail Bridge	1
Kinoulton PC	1 situated on the corner approaching Swing Bridge 29 Kinoulton side. 1 between Irish Jacks Bridge 27 and Kinoulton Main Bridge 28 at the 11 1/2 mile post	2
Pat Hardisty	A1 side of Bridge 68a	1
Jodie & Colin Knight	wooden bridle bridge B63	1
Tony Binch	Near the 26 mile marker below Longore Bridge 58. To replace a bench originally provided by Fred Marsh	1

These benches were the inspiration of Chris Cobb, our previous Head Ranger, and we thank all those who donated them for the benefit of all to enjoy.

We also thank The canal & River Trust for agreeing to their installation.

Each bench will be marked with the adjacent tag which, when the QR code is scanned, will link to our online guide



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

The nights have noticeably drawn in here on Scilly in the last month – there is much to do around the vineyard but only so many daylight hours in which to do it! Being significantly further southwest, the shape of the day is a little different to what we were used to back in the Vale – the sun rises a few minutes later but sets a whole 40 minutes later which is something to be welcomed in the deep midwinter! We've not had the snow and frosts which most of the UK experienced at the beginning of the month - temperatures here have remained close to double-figures, but strong winds keep blowing in across the Atlantic making for unsettled weather.

We've spent much of the time since the second lockdown working to sort, clear and clean those areas of the site which have gone unattended since we arrived in March. There are many different sized tanks and fittings in the winery which we've now organised from 30l barrels up to a grand 600l stainless steel tank. In a good year, the largest tanks will be filled with Orion grapes, whereas the smaller ones suit simpler projects - we have several of the smaller vessels bubbling away right now with blackberry and other country wines.

The tractor shed too was a revelation – many useful bits and pieces tucked away will be invaluable around the vineyard in the future, along with a few whose 'just in case' credentials are a little less apparent...

We've finally started work on the shepherds huts for next season – the steel chassis is being steadily sanded and painted ready to withstand the maritime elements, and we're hoping to put it together in its final position in the next week or so.



We're not the only ones busy here – winter is always a quiet time for tourism on the islands, even without the lockdown, and everyone takes advantage of these few months to make repairs and improvements before the visitors arrive again.

My diary from the Isles of Scilly by James Faulconbridge November 2020 (continued)

A walk through the vineyard still sends birds scattering from every field – flocks of redwings have taken to picking through the seaweed with the blackbirds whilst merlin zip across overhead sending the sparrows to the hedges for safety.

A walk to the eastern tip of the island to visit the fulmars is a real treat on a winter's afternoon – these diminutive relatives of the albatross have the same grace and bearing, they pair for life and can live for up to 40 years.



*Merry Christmas to ALL our volunteers.
I look forward to meeting you again in
2021.*

Best wishes from Mary N

Mike Atherley



This is the last of Mike's stories.
He recounts joining the Society in 1970

My memories of the Grantham Canal go back much earlier than the 1970s when I joined the restoration society. As a small child and having lost both my local grandparents I sort of adopted my next door neighbours to fill that roll. They must have had relatives who lived in Kinoulton and Owthorpe. The Kinoulton ones had a farm with beautiful meadow fields to play in with a river or stream passing through and ducks and swans swimming about. The Owthorpe one lived in a lane close to the canal bridge 25, Mackley's Bridge. I think their names were Batt or Batty, my neighbours were Kirk. I did meet one of the children when I did the real ale survey, she was the landlady at a pub in Stathern. The Kirks didn't have a car so we all went by bus, probably Bartons and I remember the driver having to be very careful going over the canal hump bridges. The bottom sometimes did scrape the road surface. I also remember taking my classic car to Belvoir Castle and inside the tearoom brought back memories that I had been there before. So I assume the Kirk's took me there. When I became 18 I joined a Long Alley Skittle team and being based on Home Brewery fixtures we visited several pubs in the Vale that sold Home Ales. This was a popular game in those days. Also passing along the Radcliffe Road I remember the old lift bridge No.3a, known as the Meccano bridge. None of the above was relevant at the time, it was only when I started with my own canal boat that I wanted to seek out any local rivers or canals I could cruise along.



The Plough at Hickling

It was about 1970 that I had an opportunity to visit the route of the Grantham Canal by car, quite a lengthy journey, and passing through Hickling found the village decked out with flags and bunting. So I stopped to read the notice board and was approached by a guy called Chris Tizzard who lived close by. He persuaded me to join the canal society and if possible bring a boat to the forthcoming rally. I did take a small dinghy with outboard and launched it at a temporary slipway they had created in one corner of Hickling Basin. On the day the water was shallow and very clogged with weed so boating was very limited. I was persuaded to come along to their monthly meetings held at the

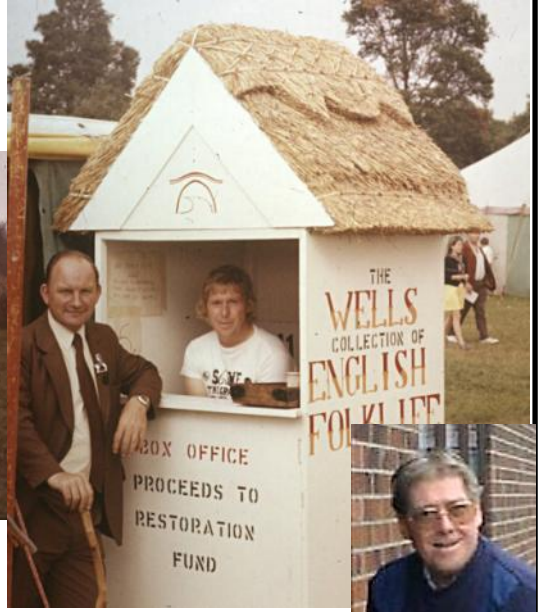


**The old Meccano Bridge
West Bridgford**

Plough Inn, close by. Two friends also joined so we took turns travelling there, a strange village pub with only a small room downstairs and a separate serving bar. Upstairs there was a large meeting room full of old chairs and settees. I don't remember there being any tables and you had to trot downstairs to get a pint. It was only after the Stathern Rally that I joined the committee as Secretary. The chairman was Garland Grylls. The rest I have covered many times so that's it for the time being and best of luck for the future. The best times for me being the campaign rallies and the start of the heavy engineering work at Woolsthorpe.

Mike Atherley has delighted us with his detailed descriptions of the early work being carried out by the then Grantham Canal Restoration Society (GCRS).

He was an active member of the society from 1970 to 1999 and experienced many of the trials & tribulations of an intrepid group of volunteers who had loads of enthusiasm but were restricted to what they were allowed to do.



He now feels that he would like to answer any questions that readers may have about his time volunteering between 1970 and 1999 and as secretary of the Society .

If you would send your questions to bridge@granthamcanal.org I will forward them on.

Ed



Just in case some of you have forgotten - this is Kingston's Lock before & after

Flora & Fauna along the Grantham Canal by James Faulconbridge



The Winter Cast

The Wind in the Willows sees the swallows rhapsodising about the 'call of the South' as they gather and make their preparations for the long autumn migration. Birds which hawked insects over the Grantham Canal have already made it beyond southern Europe and are on their way across the African continent where they will spend the winter. After all of their eulogising, Ratty asks the swallows why they ever come back: "What do you find to attract you in this poor drab little country?". The swallows reply "and do you think that the other call is not for us too?" With the largely insectivorous summer migrants departed, 'the other call' drawing birds to England is already being answered by many. Perhaps the most noticeable along the canal are the noisy fieldfares and redwings which clatter and chatter as they move in flocks along the hedgerows feeding on berries and seeds. Similarly some waterbirds such as wigeon are only here for the winter and you might be lucky enough to see a short-eared owl hunting at dusk.

Whilst swallows exit stage left and the fieldfares enter stage right, more subtle changes occur too as birds join the existing cast. Did you know that many of the mallards which winter in the UK are migrants from northern Europe and Iceland? The winter population of garden favourites such as robin and blackbird swell with incomers from cooler Scandinavia – the robin you hear singing along the towpath may have just made an extraordinary journey!

HEDGEHOG RESCUE



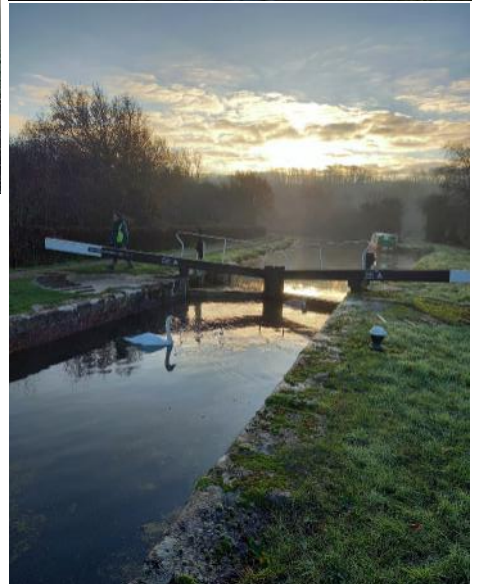
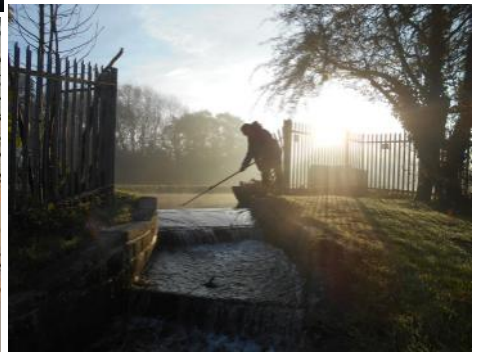
The hedgehogs were just starting to go into hibernation as it was turning very cold but not cold enough to make them go into a deep hibernation, this only happens when we have had several nights of hard frost but tonight as the temperature has suddenly gone warm again, the hedgehogs could be up and about. So please do not stop feeding them, if anything they need it much more now as their natural food is also beginning to go too deep in the ground for them to get at it. A small handful of kitten biscuits could be a lifesaver at the moment, especially for any little ones that are still about.

It has been a really busy time for us since September, up to 7 hedgehogs a day coming in, we have not had a day when we have not had at least two hedgehogs in. We are still releasing hedgehogs and we will continue to do so unless the ground is frozen or thick snow, 2 went yesterday and 5 have gone today. This at least empties out some of our carers, we will give them a day or two (so they can scrub their cages really well and hopefully they will dry off a little) then with any luck we will have some hedgehogs that we can pass on to them, ensuring that we have some room for any new ones coming in.

Just a quick reminder to anyone who has not returned their quiz sheets, they all need to be back with John Kitchen no later than the 30-11-2020 which is Monday so get posting. Thank you for supporting Hedgehog Welfare.

Janet Peto
Hedgehog Welfare **07940 714830**

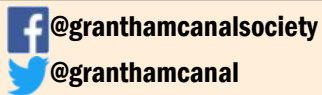
SOME SUPERB PHOTOS



Many thanks to Phil Wright for such excellent photos - all calendar worthy!

#Trending

By *Tony Jackson*



The title of this feature was always going to be a little tongue in cheek – never do I expect a post on our social media to appear in the Trending list. But when my Facebook post encouraging our followers to support our aim in improving the crossing of Lings Bar/A 52, reached over 18,000 people – I was a little taken aback!

We've had some fabulous photographs on both Facebook and Twitter – stunning sunsets to wonderful winter scenes!

A strange phenomena has been occurring on the towpath recently. We seem to be experiencing a profusion of Santas? Does this mean something is soon to happen? No, there's ages yet.

Love this picture of the night sky above Belvoir Castle posted by James on Twitter. We couldn't decide what the star was to the right and up a bit of the Moon – but in any case, we thought it prudent not to follow it.

Wishing you all a happy bloomin' Christmas!



Just because of the Beautiful Bassingfield Section

I have been a keen cyclist for many years and I started to use the canal towpath as it was so handy. It was on one of my outings in an easterly direction that I became aware of the incredibly sudden change once I crossed the A52 Lings Bar Road. On the west side of the very busy A52 is sprawling West Bridgford, comfortable but solid with houses and associated volumes of traffic. Travelling a short distance I can reach a safe place to cross the A52 through pedestrian traffic lights. The journey there takes me along a narrow footpath, past an almost hidden caravan park, between overhanging trees suddenly breaking out at the A52 pedestrian crossing. Once safely across the dual carriageway road I then enter the hamlet of Bassingfield.

Another short distance up to Tollerton Lane I join the canal. The first time I made that journey I became aware just how beautiful it is. Just a little way along the towpath away from the A52 it's incredibly quiet and peaceful. I am surrounded by neat hedges bordering wide fields of healthy looking crops. A lovely stretch of water with swans, coots, moorhens and birds twittering away in the hedgerows. No indication that there's an airfield nearby. What could possibly change all this!



**View westwards also from Bridge 9 on the same
murky December day.
Only a few hundred yards from the A52.**



**View from Bridge 9 across fields to Tollerton Airfield
on a murky December day. The Airport Building is
just about visible as is the windsock.**

About 4 years ago, when I retired from full time work as a Design Engineer, I started a group of local volunteers to occasionally litter pick along the canal in Gamston and the Lady Bay area. It wasn't long before someone told me about the GCS which I joined and became a Ranger for Section 1. The Head Ranger at that time was working overseas but Chris Cobb took over that roll soon after.

It was around that time I heard of the plan to re-connect the canal to the River Trent. However, I was shocked to discover that, not only did the plan exclude the Gamston section, the whole of the Lady Bay section and half of the Bassingfield section also. From that moment I began to investigate deeper into the matter to try to establish how this decision had been made.

Continued ...

Just because of the Beautiful Bassingfield Section (Continued)

I was made aware of the Scott Wilson Report which described four possible options, with costs and other relevant factors, for re-connecting the canal to the Trent. There were two clear favourites. One was the Polser Brook route and the other via Lady Bay. Well, as far as I was concerned, only the Lady Bay option made any sense.

I rapidly discovered that there were a couple of very large problems with the Lady Bay option, namely, getting the canal under the A52 Lings Bar Road and also under the eastbound part of Radcliffe Road (the A6011).

I had arranged to meet two people from Highways England at the site of the A52 to hand over my report and to walk over what could possibly be done at some time in the distant future.

After a bit of chasing up I received the following reply from Highways England

"We have added this to our "needs" list and it has now been scored, unfortunately at the moment the score is not high enough for us to take a scheme forward. However we will keep the issue on our needs list and will review it again as part of our programme review that we undertake on a regular basis."

My report contained other options to get across the A52 (a bridge and pedestrian lights) not just an underpass for canal boats.

I have seen people risk their lives crossing the A52 at this point. That is why I feel the only safe way for the hundreds of people and children who will need to cross this road from the new development must be provided with the safest means available.

But then suddenly we all became aware of the development known as Gamston Fields – the intention to build 4,000 homes on the Tollerton Airfield site .

Could this be an opportunity to make improvements to the canal and actually use it as a way to see it connected to the West Bridgford side and eventually to the Trent? That's just what some of us are hoping to achieve right now. A safe crossing under the A52 could actually materialise from this.

But the dilemma is; Should we be making efforts to create changes at the western end of the canal with the risk that this could dilute those at the eastern end? There's so much to do at both ends.

This particular topic is to be the subject of an imminent debate and I am not going to make any comments about what the outcome might be. I can only hope for the best.

Whatever the outcome, from the debate or from the housing development, I just hope that the Bassingfield section remains beautiful.

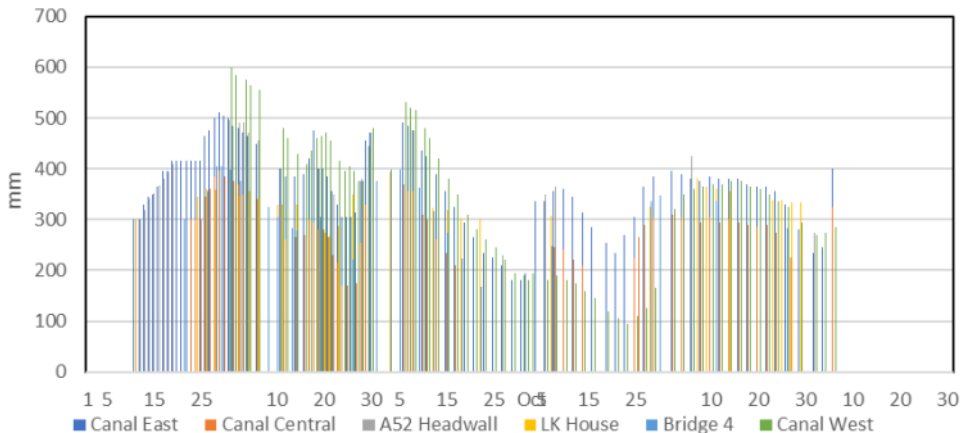


Returning back to Gamston from Bassingfield, if you stay on the canal towpath, this is what you are faced with. The end of the canal towpath immediately before the A52. You can see the steel Armco Barrier at the top of the steps. There is no landing at the top, just road

Ranger Rob

GRANTHAM CANAL WATER LEVELS BETWEEN LADY BAY & COTGRAVE

Chart 1: July - December 2020
Daily Rise in Water Level



Here is a suggested action plan to try and regulate the level of water in the canal

We need a good idea of what the value of normal flow is over the weir at Gamston (Lock 2) and suggest we carry out a similar flow assessment at this location the next time there is adequate rainfall and flow. This will enable a comparison between flow at the weir and canal water levels to be made to see if all of that water is reaching the canal, whether all of source flow reaches the Lock 2 Weir and at what point the leakage from the canal is greater than the flow from the Lock 2 weir.

We need to obtain some channel flow values at in the Polser Brook feeder at Skinner's Lock House. This is critical as it may be possible that depths of water in the channel do not reflect flow conditions.

We need to decide if we are going to ask for the CRT's help in carrying out a simple leakage test by blocking off each canal section into 3 discreet elements when water levels permit this.

We need to pursue an alternative water supply with some urgency.

The Outfall to the River Trent

This was viewed on 31st July. The lock (Lock 1) did not seem to have any flow through it; the water level behind the sluice gate was much lower than the top of the sluice and there was only a very tiny flow into the final section of the canal from the long culvert under Radcliffe Road. No flow has been witnessed during two further visits.

This is a brief extract from a detailed report by Ranger Rob



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

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:

<http://www.gcsguide.org>



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

Tony Binch, Margaret Leighton,
Tony Osbond, Elaine Neal, John Nuttall,
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Jo & Tim Altham