

BRIDGE

February 2022



The Newsletter of the Grantham Canal Society

In this issue:

A new Editor

Three Shires Spring schedule

Workparty & Construction news

Volunteers wanted

Woolsthorpe slipway completed



Reflecting the GCS logo? a bridge over the Grantham Canal (photo: Julie Blyth)



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Society

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OBITUARY: GEORGE GEE by Tony Osbond (General Manager)



Typical George – on the tiller, driving *Centaury* with a smile on his face

It was with great sadness that in late January we heard the news that George Gee had died age 86. George joined Grantham Canal Society in 2016 and was renowned for his operational skills when he was working on “his” boat *Mudlark*. This undoubted skill came from his career as a Crane Driver working not only in the UK but in Turkey and the Channel Islands.

I will always remember George when I joined the Society as that character where nothing was too much trouble and would always find a solution to a problem that would seem to the most normal person, insurmountable.

John Clark remembers that on one occasion he brought down to the canal a homemade boat to use as a tender between *Centaury* and the bank. It was a ramshackle affair built from odd bits of wooden packing cases and pallets, but it did the job, just! A lifejacket was a “must” when using it and a prayer was offered to the gods before getting into it. George hadn’t bothered with such niceties such as making sure it was leak-proof, but it floated and using a home-made paddle to propel it he showed his fearless and eccentric side. Eventually, the wood absorbed so much water, that the boat became unsafe to use – even for George and it was left, upside down, on the off bank between Denton Winding Hole and Harlaxton Wharf, where its remains can still be seen to this day.

On another occasion, George had been operating *Mudlark* at Sandpits, close to the Grantham end of the canal. *Mudlark* had been moored mid-stream in order to prevent access by undesirables and George had been picked up by *Centaury* so he could return to the depot. When it came to getting back on-board *Mudlark*, that didn’t present a problem to George. He brought along a child’s paddling pool and inflated it by mouth until it was, by his estimation, capable of bearing his weight. Where *Mudlark* was parked, the towpath bank is quite high and well populated by nettles and brambles. That didn’t deter George. Putting the (partially) inflated paddling pool on the ground, George sat in it and propelled himself through the brambles and nettles, down the bank and into the water. Using his hands as paddles he made his way to *Mudlark* whilst the paddling pool was taking on water. It became a race between what would happen first: him reaching *Mudlark*, or the paddling pool sinking. He made it, just! For a man of his age, he was surprisingly spritely and clambered on board as if there was a crocodile snapping at his heels.

Ian Wakefield said that George was always there, reliable, knowledgeable and happy to get on with things come what may!

The escapade we had in getting *Osberton* off the bottom of the canal at Casthorpe Bridge when George brought in tractor tyre inner tubes to attach to *Osberton* was another light bulb moment. Ingenious we thought and when inflated our hopes did rise but *Osberton* didn’t!

George lived at Fulbeck for over 60 years and is buried at St Nicholas Church. He is survived by his three daughters, one son, thirteen grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

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A New Year and a new Editor!

Jane Grylls, who bravely stepped in last year to temporarily edit the newsletter (along with her many other duties), has now handed over the reins to another willing volunteer – yours truly!

Although I only joined the society recently, I was from the outset very keen to help in any way and immediately registered my willingness to be a volunteer. So as the post of editor was still vacant and with over 30 years experience in the print and publishing-related industry, it seemed I might be a suitable candidate!

I hope to continue where Jane left off and keep BRIDGE on an even keel and I can already report that I am enjoying the volunteering life and would encourage any of our readers who have thought about it to give it a go – you won't regret it!

I believe that we currently have around 120 volunteers which, out of a total membership of about 800 is only 15% ... this is an area which I think is ripe for improvement, so come on folks, get volunteering!

According to WhatsApp and FaceBook chatter, I believe the western end of the canal is now attracting more volunteers which is great news indeed.

Towards the end of this year we hope to produce a promotional calendar, so please send photographic submissions to me, ideally with a seasonal flavour focussed on the canal.

BREAKING NEWS: GCS Dinner on 24 March for members, volunteers & partners at the Radcliffe-on-Trent Golf Club - email Jane at: membership@granthamcanal.org

For the latest news & updates visit our website: www.granthamcanal.org

Do please write to me at: bridge@granthamcanal.org with your comments (good or bad!), ideas, news, submissions, articles for inclusion, etc.



Brian Cantwell

Chairman Mike Stone writes ...

We are now escaping from possibly the most mild winter that I can ever remember. Very little frost and a slight sprinkling of snow! I hope a storm in March doesn't give me cause to regret my words!

The impact on the natural world is equally positive and spring flowers are appearing; grass and weeds are growing; our feathered friends are getting amorous and so, I guess is life under the water – though I haven't been down to find out. The impact on our Society is significant and not always positive. Some of our practical work that interfaces with the natural world has to be carefully managed to ensure that we work closely with wild life. Hence some tasks may have to wait until September and others may require different techniques to those used during the winter. I ask all volunteers to be aware of nesting habitats and sites when working.

Much has been achieved over the winter and you will see a much changed depot at Woolsthorpe with a brand new slipway and within a few weeks additional storage areas so that we can once again use the depot to host visitors. Regular management by the three maintenance teams along the top length to Denton and beyond has helped recovery of the navigation from the effects of volunteer absence caused by the shut-down and distancing requirements. A re-start has also been made to clearance and water management along the canal in Rushcliffe. Other visible signs of volunteer activity on the canal in the coming months will include completion of a safe mooring for volunteers to access maintenance craft above Lock 18; for the first time our engineers can access craft out of the water using the new slipway at the depot. After this work The Three Shires trip-boat will be commencing operations with an enhanced operating schedule this year offering both pre-booking short cruises and the opportunity for group charter cruises of up to four hours duration. If you are planning your days out why not include Woolsthorpe as a 'Go To' destination as there are

a range of local activities. Elsewhere we are intent on locating a secure and accessible canal-side site for a volunteer base in the West Bridgford area. This at present is proving difficult so if you have any suggestions please talk to us.

All our activity has attracted many new, to us, volunteers and we thank all who are prepared to share a little of their available time on restoring the Grantham Canal. Sometimes it may look as though the only tasks we offer are laying bricks but nothing could be further from the truth; a team of Society volunteers, the Rangers, regularly patrol the towpath from Lady Bay to Grantham; the cakes served at Open Days are produced by another group of volunteers; who do you think crew The Three Shires? Also, in today's world, there is always 'Paper Work' to be undertaken to meet official requirements! So we could do so much more with just a little of your time and help. Whatever your interest and skills there will be an opportunity for you to be a volunteer with the Grantham Canal Society.

Sadly we are all of us getting more senior and from time to time we have volunteers who retire for various reasons. Recent changes, see elsewhere in this edition, have created vacancies in the management structure so if you have experience of leadership or specialist skills why not consider volunteering with us? Contrary to popular belief a volunteer society doesn't operate without financial, legal, environmental, personnel and funding requirements! Many of these functions can be work-at-home if you would prefer that and are generally computer-based so communication is easy.

Life is getting back to normal and the Grantham Canal Society is moving positively into 2022!

Enjoy our waterway!

Mike

VOLUNTEERS WANTED



The Grantham Canal Society Needs

YOU!

VOLUNTEERS: There's no US without U

All of the work carried out by The Grantham Canal Society is down to volunteers. Every plan, educational talk, planning or legal document, marketing or fundraising event, lock completed and slipway built is due to donated hours and experience: expertise and skilled labour being shared between like-minded people. In 2022 we will be expanding further and are looking to fill these roles:

MARKETING MANAGER: We have lots of volunteers within our Marketing Team who cover publications, leaflets and books, flyers and posters, the Bridge magazine, Public Relations, regular posts on social media, website content and funding and we need an organised person to oversee the whole. Liaison will be required with the Three Shires trip boat and the Events Manager to ensure that our public know all about how, what, where and who we are.

EVENTS MANAGER: The Events Team has been champing at the bit during the various lockdowns and disruptions caused by the pandemic and, as we're moving into 'safer water'; they're ready now to start meeting the public! The Events Manager will coordinate the activities of the Catering Manager, Facilities Manager, Merchandise Coordinator, Marketing Coordinator (pop-up marketing), Community & Education Coordinator and the Social Secretary (Volunteer/Member Events). Events are held both at the Eastern Depot near Grantham, but also at other venues and external events and will soon include the new Western Depot near Nottingham. Long-term this role will expand the range of activities offered at both Eastern and Western Depots, including corporate and group hire, etc., to increase revenue streams and broaden the outreach of the Society.

PROJECT MANAGER: We have great plans for the 33 miles of canal and some of the projects need long-term planning, coordination, liaison and time management. This would suit someone from the construction industry, used to all aspects of seeing a project through from conception to completion.

RECYCLING COORDINATOR: A forward-planning role to (a) work with the Dredging Manager to find a use for the nitrogen-rich silt which is taken out of the canal, including safe processing and selling the refined material; and (b) discover ways to use recycled materials within the building projects undertaken by the Society.

The recruitment process is simple and consists of an informal chat with the Volunteer Communications Coordinator to discuss the role vacancy, followed by an informal interview either over Zoom or face-to-face at our HQ near Grantham. This is an opportunity for the applicant to meet a few of the people who will manage the role and may include several senior leadership personnel, as appropriate to the responsibilities of the role. The applicant's CV, experience and short interview notes are then sent to the General Manager and Chairman for review. Once the volunteer has been proposed and adopted as a role holder, they will be Inducted at the level required for their role. Please note that all Volunteers must be Society Members.

THREE SHIRES SPRING SCHEDULE

**30 minute short trips on the Grantham Canal
from Lock 18 moorings, Woolsthorpe by Belvoir**

Sunday	27 March	First trip 10:00, last trip 15:15
Good Friday	15 April	First trip 10:00, last trip 15:15
Easter Sunday	17 April	First trip 10:00, last trip 15:15
Easter Monday	18 April	First trip 10:00, last trip 11:30 (Morning only)

Trips must be booked online via our website:

www.granthamcanal.org and follow the link on the Boat Trips page

Trips are £25 plus a £1 booking fee for up to 10 passengers

Why not treat the loved ones in your life to a trip on Three Shires?



WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Mr J Adcock
Mr D Andow
Mr D Armitage & Ms J Beckett
Mr D Barker
Miss M-L Bates
Mr D Bateson
Mr D & Mrs J Bilton
Miss E Bland
Mr C Bown
Mrs J Bruce
Ms T Bunby
Mr A Cartlidge
Mr M J Cherry
Mr G Cook
Ms L Cooper
Mrs A Cossins
Mr T & Mrs K Cressey
Mr D Donnell
Mrs R Dunthorne
Ms C Evans
Mr A Faulkner

Mr M & Mrs S Foss
Mr D Fowler
Mr J Green
Mr C Henson
Mrs R Henson
Mr M D Holmes
Mr C Hughes
Mr P Jacobs
Mr R C E Jennings
Mr S Kennion
Mr M Lawrence
Mr R Lennard
Mrs I Ludwig
Mr B Luxton
Mr D Mackenzie
Ms D Mardell
Mr D & Mrs N McBoyle
Mr T McDermott
Mr M J Meek
Mrs C Mullins
Ms S Murray

Mrs J M Peach
Mr P Phillips
Ms L Porter
Ms B Pownall
Mr K Proctor
Mr R & Mrs B Pugh
Ms J Robson
Mr A Rozier
Mr P Rudman
Mr R Simon
Mr D & Mrs A Smith
Mr G Starr
Mr J W Squires
Mr D & Mrs J Tarrant
Ms E Taylor
Mr A Trimmer
Mr A Wilson
Mr P Wingrove
Mr J C & Mrs D Yarwood

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Jo & Tim Altham
Stephen Ball
John Bannister
Brian Barnes
Tony Bianchi
Tony Binch
Colin Bryan

John Dodwell
Martin Duignan
Andrew Faulkner
Rosemary Gibson
Geoff Grantham
P R Hunt & J Ward
Jeremy Lee

Margaret Leighton
Nevile Arms Coffee Morning
Mary Noble
Tony Osbond
Tony Pitman (legacy)
Keith Proctor
John Sentence

We've also had donations for the GCSWRG SLOW fund

Are you a member of The Grantham Canal Society?

Every member we have adds to the likelihood of us gaining grant funding, membership numbers are a great way of demonstrating the amount of our support, so why not join us and help make a difference to our canal and preserve our heritage?

Only a small proportion of members are active volunteers, the remainder help us just by being members. It doesn't matter if you live miles (or in some cases continents) away, you will still be supporting our efforts.

The cost is modest, annual subscription rates are:

Single Adult: £20

Family: £30.00 (Family membership covers two adults plus children living at the same address)

Under 16s / Concessions: £15

And, if you would prefer not to have to renew every year: Life Membership: £150

WORKPARTY NEWS

Despite the best efforts of the pandemic and the fact that it has been deepest winter, the Workparty teams continue to carry out their duties with such amazing vigour, good humour and enthusiasm.

During the past three months, an eclectic array of submerged junk has been removed from the canal. Apart from the usual tree branches, weeds, etc., some of the more exotic included road signage and a purse complete with Bank cards, driving licence, etc., which apparently belonged to a lady who had been burgled, which was duly returned to its owner.



Centauri glides slowly past Mudlark waiting patiently to embark on another adventure

The Workparty crews carry out a very wide diversity of jobs, ranging from cutting overhanging tree branches, strimming grass, removing weeds and reeds to maintenance work on tools and machinery. For example, just look at the 'to-do' list for Friday 3 December:

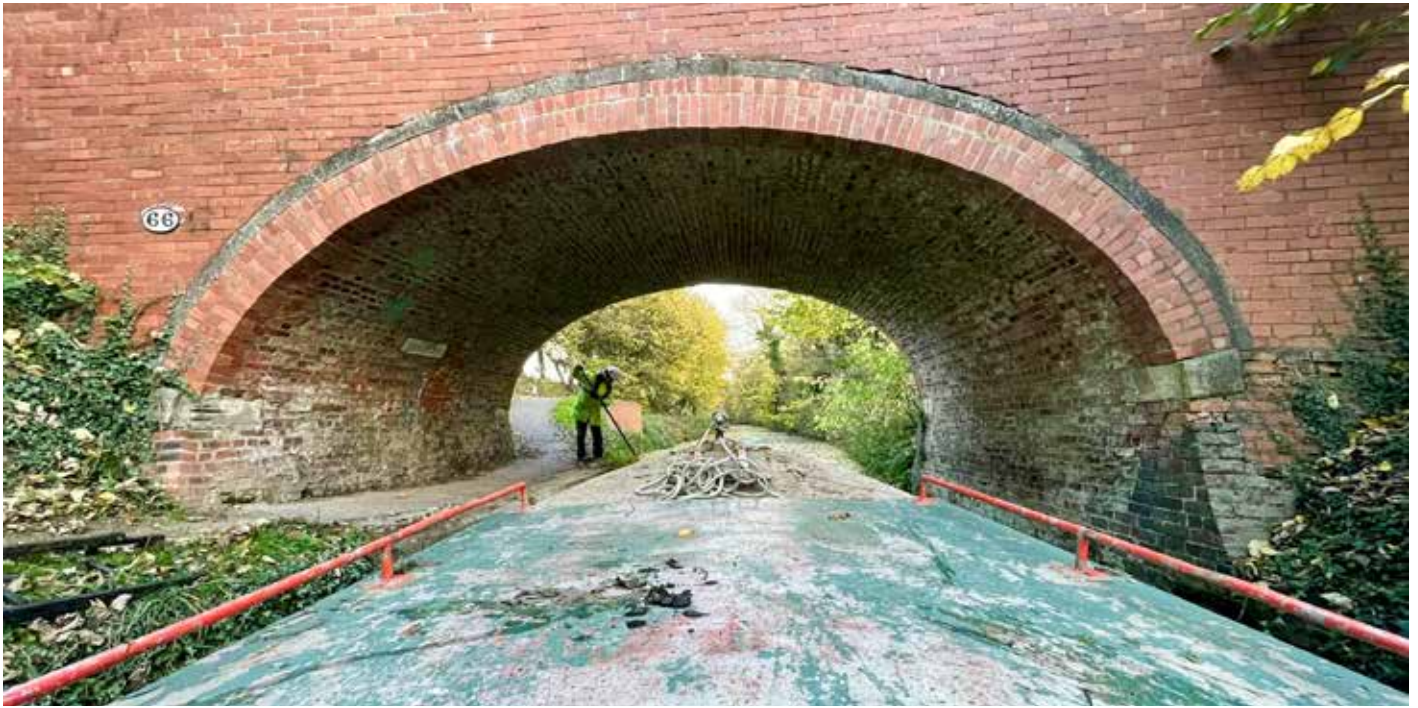
- Move *Mudlark* back to the depot and pump out
- Fit dredging bucket to *Mudlark*
- Pump out *Otter*
- Take van with tools to Casthorpe bridge and clear self sets between Casthorpe and Bridle bridge (towpath side)
- Check and repair double axle trailer for road worthiness
- Clear out the aluminium boat of leaves etc., and cover over



Full crew on board *Centauri* and inset – later that day with a full load of windfalls (12 Nov 21)



Many hands make light work! (17 Dec 21)



A dramatic view of Bridge 66 (20 Nov 21)



Friday's crew take time out to pose for a photo (21 Jan 22)



Time for a spot of lunch and a natter (23 Jan 22)



Centauri and crew on a mission ... (photo: Glen Bradford, 20 Nov 21)

CONSTRUCTION NEWS

Construction efforts over the past few months have been dominated by the completion of the Woolsthorpe Slipway project – an incredibly fine feat of engineering! Huge thanks to all of those involved – a magnificent achievement.

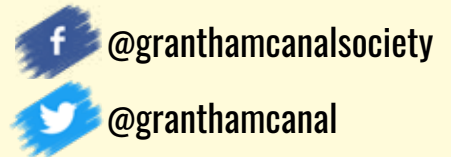
As with the Workparty volunteers, the Construction crews also carry out a wide variety of duties whilst working on a plethora of projects, from refurbishing boat moorings, maintenance work at the depot to major projects such as the new slipway. Presented here are a few of the hundreds of photographs taken which help to illustrate the broad spectrum of activities involved.





#Trending

by Tony Jackson



A truly amazing achievement by some truly remarkable people!

An incredible £28,000 was raised last year by people using the Grantham Canal towpath as a means to raise money for good causes – and these are only the ones I got to hear about!

Dr Emma Egging – CEO of the Jon Egging Trust (JET) – set the bar pretty high with £18,000 in the kitty, running the whole length in one go. This ultra marathon benefiting the Jon Egging Trust, set up with the aim of helping vulnerable young people get back on track and realise their potential.



Dr Emma Egging at the finish line

There was soldier Richard, who I happened upon on day one of his quest to walk/run 30 marathons in 30 days! Just to make it more challenging; carrying a 28kg pack! I have to confess, I thought Richard had bitten off a bit more than he could chew – was it humanly possible? It wouldn't be for the human writing this! I shouldn't have doubted, and nearly £6,000 will go to help wounded and sick service personnel.



Private Richard Lake, of the Prince William of Gloucester Barracks in Grantham

Dividing it up into seven more manageable portions, Esme and Bronwen, no doubt with mum and dad struggling to keep up, raised £1,400 for Dementia UK. The girls wanted to do this because their Grandma is living with this disease.



The Brown family starting their walk along the canal



The end of the canal and of the walk!

It gladdens our hearts, that so many, demonstrating empathy for others, are prepared to give up their time, often undergoing hardship, so that others may benefit.

Follow Tony on Twitter [@granthamcanal](https://twitter.com/granthamcanal) and on Facebook [@granthamcanalsociety](https://www.facebook.com/granthamcanalsociety)

Imagining How it Was in the Past by Rob Cook, Ranger Section 1

The very muddy towpaths we've had lately made me wonder how the horses used to cope at this time of the year as they gently trod along with their heavy load obediently following. It is said that a horse towing a boat with a rope from a towpath could pull 50 times as much cargo as it could pull in a wagon on the road.



Completely unqualified to talk about this subject, as I am neither a boat owner nor even a boat or horse enthusiast, I was steered in this direction by a task recently delegated to me; to draw a picture on my CAD system of a horse drawn barge (thanks John!). The drawing will be used to create a metal gate for our Woolsthorpe Depot. One of our skilled Work Team will fabricate the new gate from round steel bars and flats. I was provided with a hand drawn sketch to work from but before I could hope to start work in earnest I had to arm myself with details of horses and barges. Having looked at some old photos I became aware of just how incredibly beautiful they can be. I had to try to conjure up the scene in the sketch into a real scene from the past. Unfortunately my efforts to recreate that in CAD form are so far falling way too short, so lots more work required from me on that.

I believe the Vale of Belvoir section would probably have been a horses favourite. Imagine, they had around 20 miles of grass where they could steal a nibble as they moseyed along, no hills to climb at the locks and the momentum of the heavy barge just needing a relatively low energy input to keep it gliding smoothly on its way to the basin in Grantham.

If the Duke and Duchess had ordered more coal for the Castle, a stop would be needed at the Muston Gorse Bridge wharf. That coal would then be transferred to the Castle's own railway and hauled (by horse?) across the fields up the steep gradient to the Castle. I wonder how the correct amount was measured and agreed at the wharf side and whose responsibility that would have been?

I imagine that these powerful, sturdy animals must also have learned a few tricks themselves. I wonder if they had to be told how to negotiate the Roving Bridge at Cropwell Bishop or to ease up on the approach to a lock. Would they mentally prepare themselves for the much harder work of persuading their burden to start moving again after the necessary pause when passing through a lock? Being intelligent and knowing their route intimately, they would probably anticipate the dreaded group of 7 locks at the Woolsthorpe Flight, all within about a mile and a half of canal. That's a lot of re-start effort required on their part.



We complain about the cost of fuel for our vehicles these days. I'm sure it was just the same for the boatmen and women on our canals. Would they be worrying about the rising cost of grain for their horses and the saddlers and farriers maintenance costs? I wonder if they had insurance and bank loans in those days. My guess is it was a hard life and a risky business being in charge of a barge, along with your husband or wife, children and maybe a dog or two.

The engraving above kindly donated by the Mary Evans Picture Library: for print-on-demand visit www.prints-online.com

SLIPWAY COMPLETED!



To start with it takes a lot of foresight to even consider a project like this. GCS had to become an approved CRT contractor to be allowed to carry out unsupervised work on their Assets. Which in this case is the canal bank and bed.

Part of the approved contractor process is that the design which we carried out ourselves has to be approved by a Chartered civil engineer. Here the IWA helped us as they have a small group of volunteers who advise on and approve designs for restoration groups. So many thanks to Howard Worth & Mikk Bradley for their assistance with this project.

Having got all our 'ducks in a row' we were then challenged with the Covid! While this had no direct impact on the project the Society's commitment to complete Lock 14, it meant we did not want to start the slipway until Lock 14 was complete. As a consequence, this was delayed in the final stages by approximately six months.

Having overcome all of this we started at the beginning of Sept 2021 and with 3 weeks off for Christmas the slipway and workboat moorings were completed by the end of January this year.

By the end of February, the new Trip boat mooring will be complete, and the first stage of the depot revamp should have taken place (the tidying up). There are still quite a few tasks to complete: the depot wall rebuild, installation of an electrical and water supply to the slipway area, finalise the boat repair shop/marquee and refurbish and install the slipway winch.

A few facts and figures that has gone into this project:

- We have laid in excess of 70m³ of ready mixed concrete.
- Fabricated and installed 80m of rail.
- Designed and fabricated two bogies to pull the boats out.
- We have recorded over 4,500 of hours worked on site with many more hours that go unrecorded where our members are working at home carrying out design, ordering materials or planning work.

Future Work

Two additional containers (40ft and 20ft) should arrive at the beginning of March. During Spring these will then be painted and have doors and racking installed. This will allow the equipment in the Workshop and Carpenters shop to be sorted and moved into the containers.

The plan will then be to return the Workshop into an operational workshop thus allowing our Plant Department to have somewhere to maintain our ever-growing fleet of craft, tools and equipment (if anyone has any workshop tools – as opposed to hand tools – they would like to donate these would be most welcomed by our Plant Dept). This will then free up the space within the Carpenters shop to allow us to create a Visitors Centre where we can properly show off our achievements and aspirations for the future.

Rod Gordon, Major Projects Manager

Part Three of Mike Atherley's account of Lock 18 restoration will appear in the next issue

COMPETITION TIME

NOVEMBER'S CONUNDRUMS

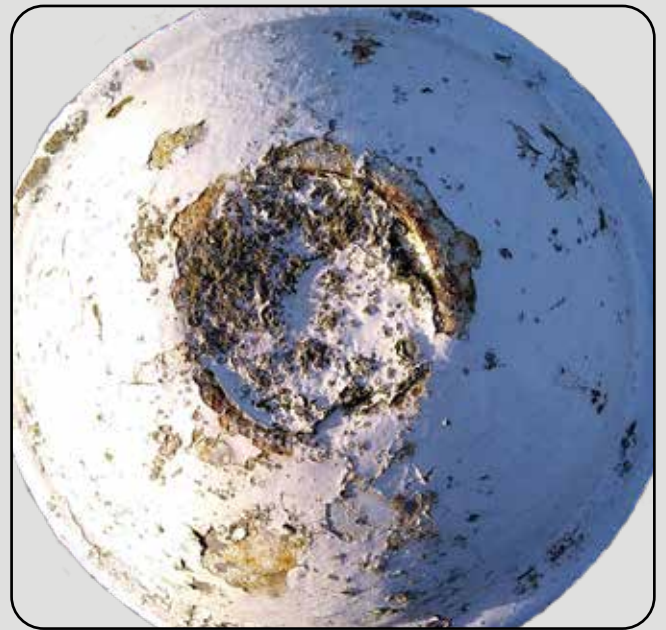
Some of the entertaining responses:
Michael Ling from Long Eaton came up with:
"You're looking in the wrong place, mate. It's at the back just in front of the tiller"
David Cross with this technical observation:
"What makes you think the stern gland greaser is this end?" and Jonathan Good with the winner:
"Well it definitely had an engine last week"



Correctly identified as an Azolla weevil (*Stenopelmus rufinasus*) by Tom Reviewer

This issue's mysterious object below ...

Email your answers to:
bridge@granthamcanal.org
with PUZZLE as the subject



CAPTION THIS!



Email your wittiest caption to:
bridge@granthamcanal.org
with CAPTION as the subject

If any of our readers would like to submit a
"puzzle", please email me at:
bridge@granthamcanal.org
Editor

Co-op membership - Charitable Cause

Great news - we have been chosen by the Co-op as one of the causes supported in the next round of the Co-op Local Community Fund.



Select us as
your cause

We're part of the Local Community Fund
When members buy selected Co-op branded
products and services, the Co-op will give local
causes a helping hand. Go online
coop.co.uk/membership



Co-op members are now be able to select us as their cause to receive the charitable donation when they shop at a Co-op Food store.

It's easy to participate; all you need to do is join up at [coop.co.uk](https://membership.coop.co.uk), log into your account, go to our page at <https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/62643> and select us as your chosen cause.

Please spread the word - the more people that join up and choose us the more money we get and the more progress we can make on the restoration of our canal. If you don't have access to the internet, you can phone the Co-op on 0800 0686 727. You will need to quote our cause reference which is 62643.



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 website giveasyoulive.com or app and sit back and let good things happen!

A considerable amount has already been raised this way for the GCS.



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.

So when shopping online, perhaps the Grantham Canal Society could benefit a little too!

If you have any questions or difficulties, please get in touch:
bridge@granthamcanal.org