

# BRIDGE

May 2022



The Newsletter of the Grantham Canal Society



Sunrise at Kinoulton (photo: Helen Burke)

## In this issue:

*The Mikron Theatre  
Three Shires update  
Workparty & Construction news  
Volunteers at work  
Towpath closure  
Open Day at The Depot*

*Published by*

The  
**Grantham Canal**  
Society  
CHARITY NO: 907337



## Chairman Mike Stone writes ...

Firstly may I thank all those who responded to my appeals in the last edition. Those who signed up as members help us to influence the various corporate bodies with an interest in the canal.

Those of you who wish to undertake volunteering enable the society to progress its plans and improve the canal environment throughout its 33 mile length. I hope all new arrivals enjoy our waterway. Those who have generously given donations are particularly appreciated and we thank you for your continued support. You may be assured that all donations are used to enhance and improve the Nottingham - Grantham Canal and the society does not use them for other purposes.

Those of you walking the towpath near Woolsthorpe will have seen that changes have been happening to the depot in recent weeks. Yes our energetic volunteers completed the slip-way and proved its usefulness by completing the necessary maintenance before the start of our cruising season. Since then there have been other visible changes all intent on ensuring that we can welcome visitors back to the depot for tea, coffee, and a chat – with cake of course! Opening dates will appear on social media. Talking of cruises, forward booking dates are available for what is our most important source of income. Take a picnic and cruise with a few friends for as long as you like!

Our next visible task is the raising of the level of Denton Weir. Many of you will have walked the towpath over it but not realised its function. It helps maintain the level of water in the canal and is a couple of inches lower than it should be. We will raise it to reduce the loss of water over it. To achieve this the cast iron bridge needs raising by few inches and this will require the towpath and the cycle route to be closed

for a period. An alternative cycle route has been arranged by Sustrans and a shorter diversion for walkers is being negotiated.

I am pleased to see that already one of our vacant positions listed in the last edition has attracted an applicant. Now that still leaves a few more volunteers to step up until we have a fully managed team. Why not contact us and see what opportunities you might be missing? At the start of Spring, go on, take a risk and pick up the phone or send us an email. Our responses might surprise you!

For those members living in Rushcliffe we will be looking for your support to enhance the canal in the Bridgford and Cotgrave areas. Despite our efforts so far the warm weather encouraging plant growth still presents a continuing challenge each summer. Keeping the canal litter free and tidy is a volunteering opportunity for all ages and more local help would be appreciated particularly along the urban stretches of the waterway.

A new event, for the canal, is a visit by the Mikron Theatre to the Plough Inn at Hickling later this month. Further details are shown on page 4.

Where will we see you on the canal during the next months?

On the towpath? On the water? Volunteering? Visiting Woolsthorpe Depot? Having a picnic? On your bicycle? Behind a pair of binoculars or camera? Working on an easel? Sitting on a bench?

There are many reasons to visit the Nottingham to Grantham Canal!

Enjoy our waterway!

Mike

## CONTENTS

<b>Chairman's Letter</b> text summary	2
<b>The Mikron Theatre</b> Polly Browne tells us about this unusual canal-related entertainment	4
<b>Three Shires update</b> Report from Elizabeth Bland & John Trigg	6
<b>Donations</b>	7
<b>Workparty &amp; Construction News</b> Volunteers working for the Society	8
<b>Trending</b> with Tony Jackson	12
<b>Lock 18 Restoration</b> Mike Atherley with part 3	14
<b>Competition Time</b>	15

### STOP PRESS

We are sad to announce the death of Joan Barker, who many will remember as the wife of our long serving Treasurer Jim. The funeral will be held at Gedling Crematorium at 2pm on Tuesday 24 May.

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### Mayday! Mayday!!

Not the sort of text you want from your mate when he's on his narrowboat! But I didn't have to worry, he was just alerting me to this significant date – 1st May (forgetting such details is one of my few talents).

May Day is traditionally celebrated as the return of Spring, the emergence from the cold misery of winter and the general renewal of life – check out Tony Jackson (page 12), who puts it far more eloquently than I can.

So, here too at the society there is definitely a renewed feeling of our determination to progress our march to the River Trent and Nottingham and with that goal in mind, the full restoration of this most attractive of canals. The reconstruction, refurbishment and renewal of the canal infrastructure is mostly engineering which is easy ... well relatively easy. What isn't easy is getting the right people and committed organisations on board.

But we need your help to achieve this aim and it really is so simple: if you are not already a member just pop along to our website or pick up one of our leaflets available from various local outlets, our Open Days, cafés etc. Visit our social media sites on FaceBook and Twitter for more information.

Come along to our **Open Day** at the Woolsthorpe Depot (next to the Dirty Duck pub) on **Sunday 29 May** and speak to any of our members manning the stands to find out more information and learn how you can help.

Already a member? Why not spread the word amongst your friends and family?

Consider volunteering – a most enjoyable and rewarding activity and costs nothing – just your time.

For the latest news & updates visit our website:  
[www.granthamcanal.org](http://www.granthamcanal.org)

Write to me at: [bridge@granthamcanal.org](mailto:bridge@granthamcanal.org)  
with your comments (good or bad!),  
ideas, news, submissions,  
articles for inclusion, etc.



Brian Cantwell (Editor)

# THE MIKRON THEATRE

## The Mikron Theatre are coming to the Grantham Canal

For 50 years Mikron Theatre Company have been performing at canal-related venues throughout the country, and we are delighted that they will be performing their play *Raising Agents* at the Plough Inn, Hickling, on **Wednesday 8th June at 7pm**.



Mikron's performers travel along the canals on board their historic narrowboat *Tyseley*, although as the Grantham Canal is not yet navigable up to Hickling they will be using road transport to reach their venue this time. One day, with your help, we hope to be able to invite them to perform on the canal travelling on their beautiful boat.



James Mclean, Hannah Bainbridge, Alice McKenna & Thomas Cotran (photo: Liz Baker)

There is no charge for the event and no advance booking is required but please arrive early to make sure you get a good place as this will be a popular event (Mikron Theatre have a very large following), and we suggest that you bring a chair and a blanket with you as the performance will take place outside (weather permitting). A hat for donations will be passed round during the evening, and refreshments will be available from the Plough Inn.

Mikron began in 1963 when Mike Lucas, a jobbing actor, realised that his mission was to take theatre to unusual venues and new audiences outside of London. Having spent many hours enjoying the atmospheres of the canalside pubs and sampling their local brews, Mike realised that travelling by canal would really give his company a way to

reach audiences and venues that may be too out-of-the-way for regular touring companies. Since then The Mikron Theatre Company has gone from strength to strength and is now famous for its national waterways tour, aboard the 1936 Grand Union Carrying Company narrowboat, *Tyseley*. First used by Mikron in 1975, she has been their floating home ever since.

*Raising Agents* promises to be an entertaining performance:



## RAISING AGENTS: SYNOPSIS

Bunnington WI is a bit down-at-heel.

Dwindling membership means they can barely afford the hall, let alone a decent speaker. So when a PR guru becomes a member, the women are glad of new blood.

Initially,

The milk of WI kindness begins to sour when she re-brands them the Bunnington Bunnies. They're hopping.

With stakes higher than a five tiered cake stand, a battle ensues for the very soul of Bunnington, perhaps the WI itself!

On the threshold of one century into the next, this tale of hobbyists and lobbyists asks how much we should know our past or how much we should let go of it.

Above all else, like the WI itself, *Raising Agents* is a story of friendship.



This is a great example of the benefits that a canal can bring to the local businesses and community along its length – and we hope to provide you with many more in the future – so please come along and support the Grantham Canal Society, Mikron Theatre and the Plough Inn for what promises to be a really fun evening. To learn more about the Mikron Theatre visit the website: [www.mikron.org.uk](http://www.mikron.org.uk)



## THREE SHIRES UPDATE



With the completion of the slipway at the Woolsthorpe Depot, Three Shires spent five weeks there having the hull inspected and blacked; various other maintenance tasks were carried out too. Many thanks go to all who helped in this major undertaking. The boat is now back in the water looking very smart indeed.

The cruising season started on Mother's Day, Sunday 27 March and since then we have had ten short trip days – all of which were sold out – and three 2-hour cruises, one of these being a 96th birthday celebration! These short trips are an excellent vehicle for upselling the longer private hire trips which are proving to be very popular.



This year we have also planned two new 'cruise & dine' opportunities. The first of these is a 90 minute cruise followed by a 2 or 3 course dinner at the Dirty Duck pub; the second offering is the Afternoon Tea Cruise – a 2-hour trip during which passengers are supplied with an afternoon tea that they can enjoy as they cruise along the canal.

The season is going well so far, with monies raised standing at £2,545.

With so many bookings, we are always seeking new crew. At the start of this season we have trained eight new crew members, all of whom will become valuable members of the team.

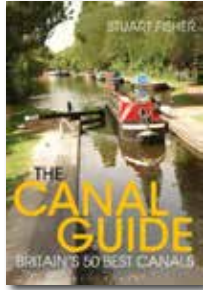


To book a private cruise or a cruise & dine trip, purchase a gift voucher or to find out more about the Three Shires, please contact our booking team on 07486 955775 or email [bookings@granthamcanal.org](mailto:bookings@granthamcanal.org)

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS & THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Tom Reviewer writes ...

One of the anglers I regularly see on the Half mile pound, Brian Barnes, has donated a book, The Canal Guide : Britain's Best 50 Canals. It's new (although published in 2015 and has since been updated), which could be used as a tombola prize or similar or become part of our library?



St Giles Church at Cropwell Bishop have kindly donated a quantity of fencing posts to the GCS. The church are, in turn, receiving them amongst other spare wood from Bloor Homes, currently building in the village.



I've agreed with Tony J that I will donate the £15 face value of the book, in Brian's name.

Barnaby Luxton, the owner of Kingfisher House (part of the former Peacock Inn) at Redmile has kindly donated £350 as well as providing a skip for our volunteers to deposit reeds, etc., from the canal in an intensive canal clearing operation near his house on 21 April. Barnaby even joined in helping our volunteers in what was a pretty filthy job indeed. It is hoped that a village action group will be formed in the near future to help carry on this type of work.



### Reading this but not 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 & CONSTRUCTION NEWS

Excerpts and photos from some workparty and construction reports over the last few weeks indicating the diversity and extent of unpaid work the volunteers carry out



Otter's basket full to the gunwhales! (photo: David Salter)



Otter busy clearing weed(photo: David Salter)





Half of The Dirty Dozen? Jim Freeman's Friday team of stalwarts

## Construction

Following the completion of the much-needed slipway, the construction teams have been busy with various other tasks, such as the landing stage refurbishment, sorting out machine & hardcore deliveries, Trifor winch training, laying hardcore, etc. There's always something to be done and these volunteers never seem to rest ... only for the well-deserved odd cuppa of course!



## WORKPARTIES

As can be seen from the photographs opposite one of the major headaches is the proliferation of weed on the canal. The utilisation of craft such as *Otter* helps to keep the stuff at bay, but it does seem to be a never-ending battle. I have been told that some of the wild fowl, such as ducks and swans like to eat this weed ...

# VOLUNTEERS AT WORK



## The Bench by Lock 17 *by Alec Hampson*

The area next to Lock 17 is very picturesque and it was just missing a table or bench for the many walkers on the towpath.

We have been keeping the grassy areas tidy and I asked my father in law, Barry, to build a heavy duty wooden table bench for the benefit of all .

With delivery courtesy of the society trailer and van, as it is rather large and heavy, the help of the Friday crew and some chain and concrete we hope it provides a convenient stop off point for the benefit of walkers along the towpath.



Bench installation engineers aka navvies!



Test driving the new bench

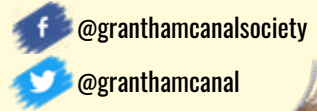


Precision soil excavation techniques being demonstrated by Lou working at the Depot



# #Trending

by Tony Jackson



Skylarks circling high heralding springtime and a new season's life. It's a time of resurgence and regeneration and, I think, reflection.

Both Twitter and Facebook claiming our first duckling of the year, soon to be followed by many more sightings of these fluffy little cuties.



Do support us in protecting this important amenity for our children and grandchildren – they too may need to gain solace along its banks.

Swans indulge in their elaborate courtship ritual, while pigeons make do with a bit of necking and head bobbing on the fence. Whatever the species, it's time to ensure its survival. Not so for us it would appear. September being the busiest month for midwives. Ah, Christmastide!

I think many of us, if we have an ounce of empathy and compassion, will be suffering a degree of post traumatic stress. Having held it together through the ravages of Covid, we find our senses further challenged by so much unrest and suffering in the world today.

Do make use of the canal and its environs as part of your coping strategy. Sit quietly and simply exist in the moment for a while on one of the less frequented stretches.



Do support us in protecting the canal for the many creatures which rely on it for their life support system.

Thank you to Ray Shrouder on Twitter for this fabulous picture of a bullfinch (above) taken by the canal, and to Julie Blyth for the inspiring courting swans photo below.

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



## 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](https://www.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 [co-op.co.uk](https://co-op.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 (over £500 raised to date) and the more progress we can make on the restoration of our canal.



Give as you Live®  
Online

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](https://giveasyoulive.com) or app and sit back and let good things happen!

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

amazon smile

Another way to help is by using Amazon's Smile option:  
Shop at [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://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](mailto:bridge@granthamcanal.org)

## Part 3 of Mike Atherley's account of Lock 18 restoration

Luckily the rally went very well and the Casthorpe Road bridge had been removed while work to rebuild it continued; we had raised Casthorpe Bridle bridge just in time and we were commended on the whole job including Denton Slipway. There were small problems with the lock gates until they bedded in and stopped leaking but they didn't fail.

After the rally site was cleared and we thought it was time to move on to a new project, true to form BW decided they wanted bypass weirs at each lock even though they had agreed the new lock gate builds would be to the old design of overweiring themselves, like they had been since the canal was built. BW provided a plan of the bywash and pressed some sheet piles in the bank where the entrance was to be. The design was to create waterfalls at both ends of the run with a long straight section – all to create a slowing effect before the water entered the lower pound. John Mulsher's relative agreed to dig the profile but encountered major problems because of the saturation of the ground between the lock and adjacent field. WRG agreed to lay the concrete bed but encountered the same problems but managed to find some items to form a solid base. BW supplied all the building materials for the bywash walls using all reclaimed stone from demolished buildings.

It was a very interesting job building the bywash and we also diverted a water source through a buried pipe to come through one of the lower waterfalls. BW cut the sheet piles to the correct height and the bywash was complete. They also provided the topsoil and grass seed to enable

the lockside to be re-landscaped and finished off. Although they tried to build a bywash around Lock 17 they couldn't find a suitable route and would not accept a buried pipe on the towpath side. So their answer was to butcher the new gates to lower the water level. I don't remember whether it was BW or Trainline who built the bywash around Lock 16 but I don't think we had any involvement with it.

After some time had passed it was noticed that Lock 18 would not retain water, pools appeared in the towpath side field and this meant the lock was always empty and little used. I don't know what remedial measures were taken but the problem appears to have been resolved. Later examination revealed the offbank wall was moving and gaps were appearing behind the coping stones. The answer was to bite the bullet and take the whole wall down to the invert and rebuild to the new standard using concrete with a brick skin. Problems over, but all the slabs and ornate blockwork has disappeared and the island had to re-landscaped. Of course the next job was the top gates were life-expired and were replaced with new and then some years later the bottom gates faced the same fate, possibly due to the lock being empty most of the time. I have not been back for over twenty years so I don't know the current situation.

Perhaps with insight if we had started working on Lock 12 first we would have had a better picture of how poorly constructed the whole flight appears to be. It's also possible that before the top seven locks are finished, the gates on 17 and 18 will also be life-expired.

Lock 18 today (photo: Dave Healey)

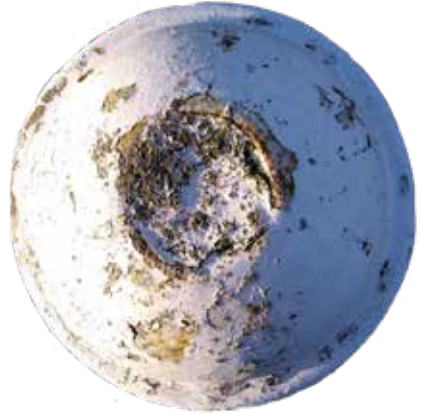


# COMPETITION TIME

February's brain exercises revealed ...



A cracking cryptic caption from Jonathan Good:  
"How Alpha met Centauri"



David Cross was first with the correct answer:  
*mooring bollard*. Malcolm Parker (from York) also  
emailed in the correct answer.

## CAPTION THIS!



Email your wittiest caption to:  
[bridge@granthamcanal.org](mailto: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](mailto:bridge@granthamcanal.org)  
Editor

Where is this yellow globe?  
(clue: it's not on our canal)

Email your answers to:  
[bridge@granthamcanal.org](mailto:bridge@granthamcanal.org)  
with PUZZLE as the subject



## GRANTHAM CANAL TOWPATH CLOSURE

May 16th 2022 for a period of two months

Essential repairs to Denton Spillweir and to the associated steel bridge carrying the towpath over the weir, necessitates the closure of the towpath between Bridge 66, Harlaxton Drift and Bridge 65, Denton Wharf. The towpath bridge will be lifted out of place for the duration of the works.

Sustrans volunteers will ensure diversion routes are waymarked on the day before closure.

The Grantham Canal Society wishes to thank everyone for their understanding during these works, as it continues to restore and maintain our canal for all to enjoy. The society also wishes to thank Sustrans and the Canal and River Trust for their support in this project.



Further info and maps of the diversions:  
[www.granthamcanal.org](http://www.granthamcanal.org)

# OPEN DAY

**SUNDAY 29 MAY 10am – 3pm**

Childrens' activities - fun and educational

Refreshments & homemade cakes

Tombola ≈ Bric-a-Brac ≈ Bottle Stall

Merchandise for sale

Information displays

Proceeds to the Grantham Canal Society

**Woolsthorpe Depot (behind Dirty Duck pub)  
Woolsthorpe by Belvoir NG32 1NY**