



BRIDGE



COMBINED ISSUES 26 & 27

Nov & Dec 2011

Grantham Canal News Sheet

This latest issue of the Electronic News Sheet is for **anyone** who would like to be updated on GCS activities and progress. If this is the first issue you have received and you would like future monthly issues, please send an email to: Membership@granthamcanal.com stating your name, confirming your e-mail address and indicating that you wish to receive the News Sheet. Future copies will not be sent without your permission. You do not have to be a member but please consider joining. Details on the "Contact Us" page on our website: www.granthamcanal.com

1. Apologies

Sincere apologies for the non arrival of the November edition of Bridge. You didn't notice? Well, a little bit in the way of an explanation anyway. As you were probably aware the new lock gates were supposed to be installed in the top of Lock 18 in November. Much hard work from a lot of people went into preparing for the event which as you will see below didn't happen. For those who went along to have a look and found us missing, sorry you had a wasted journey. The workparty took advantage of the fine weather and having abandoned lock 18 moved on to clearing tops of locks 12 to 15 for the Heritage Lottery Fund Project. For my sins, as well as being editor of 'Bridge' I am also Workparty Leader or as Ralph kindly calls me, on a good day, 'Canal Operations Manager'. (*I won't tell you what he calls me on a bad day!*) This is where I start to grovel! Unfortunately, I can't always wear two hats at the same time and something had to give this time and Bridge "lost", so to keep the continuity of issue numbers I have combined November and December editions.

For some of you, October's issue caused a few problems down to its sheer size and your ability to download it. There were a lot of photos in fairly high resolution which seemed to be the problem. I've recently upgrade my DTP program from PagePlus X4 to X5 and that's where the trouble started. Hopefully I've solved the problem by reducing the resolution of the photos. If that causes any problems to you, please let me know.

Hope that all makes sense. Ed.

2. Lock 18

Lock 18 Top Gates Replacement

In last month's 'Bridge' and numerous website announcements, we've explained how the Society has successfully raised sufficient funds to enable it to order a brand new set of top gates for Lock 18 ... and the arrangements for installing them in late-November. [This would restore navigation through Locks 18, 17 & 16 and enable us to move our vessels down to Woolsthorpe Depot for winter maintenance and security.]

An enormous amount of planning and preparation was undertaken by a hard core of GCS volunteers, our contractors Hargreaves and Chris Allsop Crane Hire and other supporters ... only for the project to be postponed with only 12 hours to go! The GCS Executive wishes to say how distraught it was that the Lock Gate Replacement project – one of the biggest in the Society's history – was stopped in this way through no fault of the Society and to ask everyone to bear with it. The history of canal restoration is, very regrettably, littered with such frustrations!

Special apologies are offered to those volunteers who had made arrangements to take time of work to help out. Please look out for further news. The bespoke gates have been made and we hope to have them installed not later than Easter 2012. Meanwhile, Locks 15, 14, 13 & 12 require stripping of their vegetation to permit engineering surveys. If you can help with this urgent work, please contact Ian Wakefield (a.k.a. the Editor) on 0115 9892128.

Press release from Peter Stone

3. Missing Logs



It has come to the notice of the 'Canal Operations Manager' (I quite like that title! Ed.) that someone has been removing large quantities of cut logs from the canal bed at Cotgrave.

Our roving photographer caught this guilty looking young man in the act.

Photo Colin Bryan with George

4. Workparties

Rather than sit back after the disappointment of Lock 18 and remembering the weather conditions this time last year, it was decided to press on with clearing, as far as possible, the lock tops and surrounding area on Locks 12 to 15. They have not been touched for many years and have a lot of growth, some of it as trees from the lock walls within the chambers themselves. The offside wall of Lock 14 became unstable, many years ago and the upper brickwork was pulled into the chamber with an excavator by the late Dave Smith who was one of our members and also an employee of BW.



The years of neglect!
Lock 15 (left) & Lock 12 (right)



(below)
Clearing a pathway through Lock 14



(below) Lock 13 during and after clearance. The ivy on the lock wall must be surveyed for bats. So we are instructed!



As you will see we have yet to tackle Locks 15 & 12 but on the 7th & 8th January we hope to see WRG North West Group working with us after a plea from the Partnership for help. We have made considerable progress with Locks 14 & 13 but there is still plenty to do. (below) If you are free and would like to help please email me if you can or leave a message and I will call you back. Details on page 1 or the back page.



The trees and brambles on the right, growing out of what was the offside wall of lock 14



Bert celebrating, having cut through to brambles to the end of the lock



Just a few of our brilliant workparty volunteers. L to R: Alan, David, Bert and Jim

If all goes well WRGNWG will be back on the 4th and 5th February and WRGBITM will be back on the 18th and 19th February to continue their work at Cotgrave so more dates for the diary.

Some lighter workparty moments! (usually involving Alan)



5. Spiderwork

Rosemary – she who you rarely see without a needle and thread or crochet hook in her hand – kind of subliminally cajoled me into dressing up as an early 20th century boatman for when we're attending shows with our society's publicity stand. Rosemary likes dressing up, yep, her secret's out. Be it Iron Age woman or treading the boards as some formidable school ma'am, or in this case, Boatwoman. Indeed, being able to dress up, was one of her conditions for taking the job on...her only one, if I remember correctly. But there was more than a slight resistance on my part to make a spectacle of myself (don't mention the ducks!) I'm quite happy to trundle through life unnoticed. Generally speaking, my head is to be found tucked safely well below the parapet.



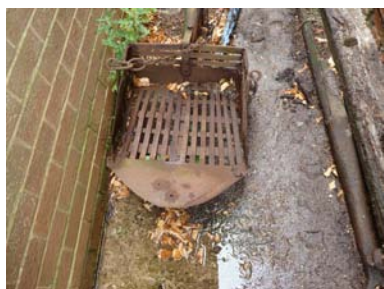
Anyway, however it came about, an early 20th century boatman I've become. My particular 'dressing up outfit', was a little challenging. I kept hearing this word 'spiderwork' mentioned. I was unaware as to what this was, but it involved a trip to Stoke Bruerne canal museum, and sweet talking someone into doing some copies of an information sheet about this spiderwork stuff. I wasn't too concerned, I was only half interested really, this *was* sewing after all. These copies were in black and white. It wasn't until Rosemary set to work on my spiderwork belt, that the full impact of what I was getting myself into, began to sink in. This was no ordinary belt, not to mention the accompanying braces!

Spiderwork, or perhaps, more usually called, spiderweb belts, are colourful. They originated – and I'm grateful to Avril Lansdell's article in *Narrowboat*, winter 2006, for this information – on the Oxford and Grand Union Canals, and were part of the boatman's Sunday best attire. The needlework, done in the design of a spiders web, would be worked on any suitable fabric - an old tea towel for example. Of the few belts that have survived, each has a different design. Or, more accurately, variations on the same theme.

Whilst we were at the Inland Waterway's Association National Festival, with the publicity stand this summer, we were approached by someone wanting such a belt. We agreed to make one for a reasonable donation to society funds. I say we, Rosemary does the needlework, which is the biggest part of the job, and I do the leatherwork. The belt is now finished – and we thought you might like to see a picture of it. You're probably witnessing the only boatman's Spiderweb Belt, to be produced – in the world – in 2011! Thought you'd be amazed!

Tony Jackson

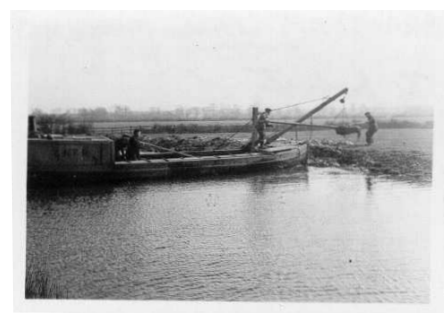
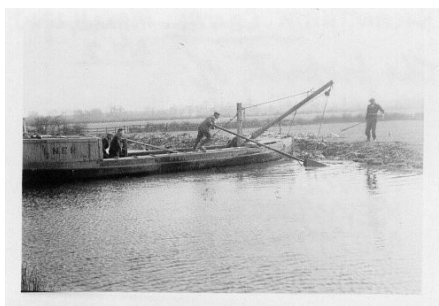
6. Spoon Dredger



Do you remember in October's issue I asked if anyone knew the connection between the two pictures above? Our Chairman knew immediately that the object in the colour picture was called a [Spoon Dredger](#). The b&w photograph (above right) shows it in use on the Grantham (1928?) I have the names of the people on board.

Tony Pitman sent me the pictures below which show a sequence of a/the dredger in use in 1934.

All I can say is that it looks like hard work to me. Ed



7. Loughborough Students

On 26th November, 35 students from Loughborough University's 'Action - the Volunteering Section' along with 10 of our volunteers cleared a length of the feeder to the Canal from Knipton Reservoir. Despite considerable planning and assurances we found that unless we, and a flock of sheep moved quickly, all were liable to be mistaken for pheasants and shot at! So plan 'B' came into operation minutes before our guests arrived in their bus! We attacked a different section of the feeder which would have been the next area to be cleared anyway. I hope the boys and girls enjoyed their day out. It could have been warmer but we don't have any control there! They did a brilliant job and we thank them very much for their help. We were fortunate to have some new tools (see B&Q below) and much support from Simon Gent from BW, not only leading up to the event but providing fluorescent waistcoats and getting his hands dirty on the day too. There is talk of 150 students coming next September but I will know more about that in April.



When work was finished for the day it was quite obvious just how much rubbish had been removed and the flow of water was moving considerably faster. A brilliant job, done by all

8. B&Q

GCS must thank **B&Q** for their very kind gesture in giving us a **£1000 Gift Voucher** to spend in one of their Store to provide enough hand tools for the students. The staff at **Netherfield B&Q** were really helpful especially the manageress and our 'Personal Shopper' who gave up his lunch hour to help Ralph and myself. The company also produced, at short notice a large banner which we display when we are working

9. Bridge 62

Poor old Bridge 62 is at last getting some remedial attention after the repeated attacks by vandals during the summer. Contractors are starting repairs during the second week of January and supposedly removing the fallen masonry which is under the water and causing problems for the boats. The towpath will be diverted and the canal closed to boats for the duration of the works which is expected to be about six weeks.

10. Barry Noble

At this years AGM Mary Noble joined the society on behalf of herself and husband Barry, hoping they might be able to get involved with GCS activities. Sadly Barry died the following week. A representative from the Society did attend the packed funeral service. Our condolences to Mary and her family.

11. From the Editor

Thanks to everyone for their support during the year, both offering suggestions and providing articles for 'Bridge'. Special thanks to Angie for distribution duties.

With my other hat on, the support of all the workparty teams throughout the year has been brilliant. You have made some real changes to the canal and should be rightly proud of you efforts. There are 4 big projects ahead with the locks and there will be a lot of satisfaction coming your way. I must also thank my fellow Committee members for backing me to the hilt and having the faith to allow me to get on with the job. Ian

To all the readers of 'Bridge'. We hope you enjoyed you Christmas Festivities, in the sunshine for a change. Best wishes for 2012 from your Committee and me.

Photos : Ian Wakefield unless credited otherwise

If you spot anything new or unusual on the Grantham, please contact the editor with photos if possible. Any questions: I will try to find answers.

The editor can be contacted at: ian.wakefield@granthamcanal.com