

Membership

BCS has a varied membership from many parts of the community. We welcome new members of all ages and levels of interest. You do not have to be a boater to join! We have members who offer passive support and also those who wish to participate more actively. Activities include: fundraising, administration, restoration, environmental projects, mapping and surveying, publicity and many others. There is a role to suit everybody.

On the social side, towpath walks and informal meetings supplement committee meetings and work parties. An annual waterside event is held in the summer at Cosgrove and our publicity stand attends many local events.

Please complete the membership slip enclosed or email membership@buckinghamcanal.org.uk.

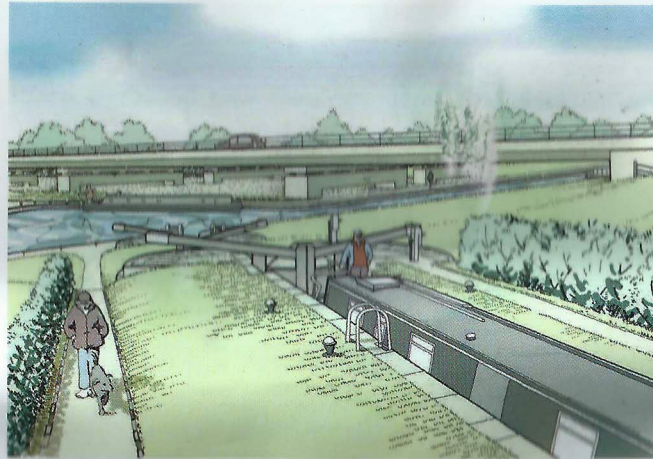
On our website you will find more information and links to places of interest along the route and access to our quarterly newsletter, *The Buckingham Navigator*, which tells of progress to date and contains items of historical interest.

Volunteering

The Society runs three work parties a month plus additional days as requested. Volunteers learn countryside skills including hedge-laying and building skills such as bricklaying. Our volunteers are from a diverse cross section of the community, including the retired, long and short term unemployed, those with special needs, youth groups and Duke of Edinburgh Award participants. Co-operative working and recognising the contribution of all, however small, is emphasised. A number of companies regularly use BCS work parties as team-building days for employees to exercise skills outside their normal work environment.

Regular work parties are held each month on alternate Thursdays and on the second Sunday of each month. Volunteers carry out physical restoration work and other tasks. On occasions work parties are supplemented by visiting canal restoration groups.

If you enjoy fresh air, exercise and meeting new people whilst helping with canal restoration, give our work parties a try! email info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk for more details.



An illustration by Stephen Peart of how the restored canal section may look .
A boat is shown locking up from the A5 to Cosgrove

Introduction to the Society

BCS exists to promote the restoration of the Old Stratford and Buckingham Arms of the Grand Union Canal and to promote their fullest use for the public benefit. We also promote public knowledge of the history and use of the canal.

The Society has developed partnerships with all local authorities and some landowners along the route, promoted the benefits of restoration and carried out improvements to the physical remains of the waterway. Where we have cleared the public footpaths alongside the old canal there has been a noticeable increase in the number of people using the footpath particularly in the walk between Cosgrove and Old Stratford.

At Hyde Lane nature reserve we have restored the lock chamber, cleared excessive vegetation, improved the footpath, and recovered a degraded hedge. Elsewhere volunteers have restored a spill-weir and a traditional stone bridge.

This leaflet has been
printed with the
support of



Buckingham Canal Society



Restoring Canal Heritage
for Future Generations
www.buckinghamcanal.org.uk
registered charity no 10729241

History of the Canal to Buckingham

The canal arms to Old Stratford and Buckingham were built in the 1790s as part of the Grand Junction scheme, and promoted by businessmen and financiers including the Marquis of Buckingham. The Grand Junction (now the Grand Union) ran from the Oxford Canal at Braunston in Northamptonshire to the River Thames at Brentford. A branch line led from Cosgrove to Old Stratford where goods could be transported to and from the important highway of Watling Street.

The extension of the arm to Buckingham, opened with much ceremony on 1st May 1801, soon proved to be both a financial success and of immense community value by allowing cheap transport of coal, stone and manufactured goods to the area.



A high level of trade was maintained for almost 50 years with hay, straw and other agricultural produce being exported, mostly to London

The Bletchley to Banbury Railway, opened in 1850, soon drew trade from the canal. Also problems at Buckingham were caused by the canal silting up with detritus from the supply water from the river, and sewage dumped by the Buckingham Corporation. As a result navigation over the last mile to and from Buckingham had ceased by 1900. Trade along the rest of the line as far as Maids Moreton Mill continued in a desultory fashion into the 1930s

With the loss of the water supply from the river at Buckingham, silting and leakage due to poor maintenance, the arm began to draw water from the main line

To protect important war-time trade between London and the Midlands, a "temporary" dam was bulldozed under the first bridge in 1944 stopping any movement on the branches. The dam remained until in 1960 a report compiled for the nationalised British Transport Commission (now British Waterways) recommended closure of the arms. The Buckingham Arm was officially abandoned in 1964.

Since then ownership of much of the canal land has passed into private hands although the former towpath within Buckinghamshire is a public footpath and forms part of the Ouse Valley Walk.

The Buckingham Canal Society (BCS) was founded in 1992 to protect the whole of the canal from Cosgrove to Buckingham, until it can be restored to navigable condition. Awareness is growing of the benefits a restored waterway will bring, and progress with sections as they are restored will demonstrate publicly the potential which exists for an attractive leisure amenity in this rural area.

Physical restoration work started in some sections. There are a number of physical obstructions to restoration of the original line, but there are technically feasible ways around these. Awareness is growing of the benefits restoration will bring and progress with sections as they are restored will demonstrate publicly the potential which exists for an attractive leisure amenity.

Why restore the canal to Buckingham?

Leisure and Health

BCS believes that restoration will provide important benefits to all communities along the canal whatever their interest. The canal corridor will bring much-needed green infrastructure to the area and provide leisure opportunities such as walking, fishing, boating and wildlife study, which are recognised to promote the health of the community.

The Natural Environment

A good variety of wildlife already inhabits the rich, diverse surroundings of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. A restored canal will increase the diversity of the natural environment by providing additional and enhanced habitats. Biodiversity will benefit from the connection of habitats along the route of the canal.

Heritage

Conserved and restored structures, such as stone bridges and the Cattleford Aqueduct, will again be seen in a "living" setting, carrying out the function for which they were built more than 200 years ago

The Rural Economy

The Grand Union Canal is well used as a tourist amenity. A restored canal would provide an excellent destination for boaters, walkers and others in the historic town of Buckingham. The canal and its heritage will be a significant tourist attraction for the area

Drainage and Flood Relief

Originally the canal provided drainage along the northern side of the Ouse Valley. The restored canal could again contribute to local flood relief for Buckingham and some of the villages in the Valley. Research into water supply and rainfall run-off has identified possibilities for mitigating flooding in Buckingham. Discussions are ongoing with the Environment Agency via the Buckingham Local Area Forum.

Please complete and post with your remittance to:

**The Membership Secretary
Buckingham Canal Society
5 Staters Pound
Pennyland
MILTON KEYNES
MK15 8AX**

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS (Please Print)

Name(s) _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode _____

Phone: _____

Email _____

I would like to receive the BCS newsletter by email: Yes/No
I give permission for BCS to contact me by email: Yes/No

Cheques payable to Buckingham Canal Society please

I/We agree to be bound by the Constitution of the Society
and agree to my/our membership details being recorded
on a computer.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

In Partnership with:



South
Northamptonshire
Council



Canal & River Trust



Buckingham
Town
Council



BUCKINGHAM CANAL SOCIETY

Membership Application Form

Annual membership fees are

Single Member.....	£9.50
Family Membership.....	£15.00
Concessions (OAPs, unemployed, unwaged) (each member).....	£5.00
Corporate Membership.....	£35.00
Youth Membership (under 18).....	£3.00

I/We wish to join the Buckingham Canal Society and enclose the following:-

Annual subscription	£ _____
Donation	£ _____
Total	£ _____

GIFT AID DECLARATION

If you pay UK tax, the Gift Aid scheme allows BCS to reclaim the tax you have paid on your subscriptions. Please take advantage of this scheme, which costs you nothing but is of great benefit to the Society, by signing the declaration below.

(1) I pay UK tax.

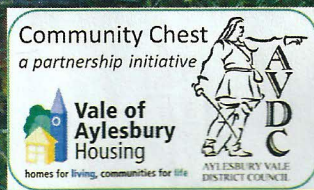
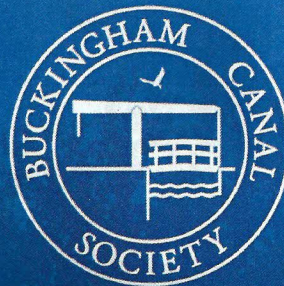
(2) I wish Buckingham Canal Society to treat the enclosed annual subscription and all future subscriptions and donations as Gift Aid donations.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

**PLEASE RECORD YOUR MEMBERSHIP DETAILS
OVERLEAF**

The Ouse Valley Way
from Bourton Meadow to the
Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve



BUCKINGHAM CANAL SOCIETY



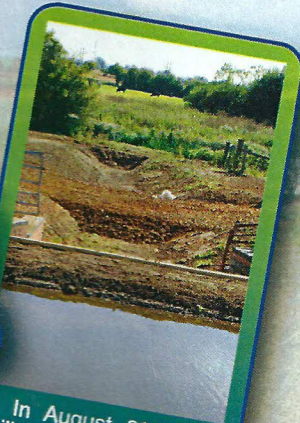
Do you dig canals?..... We do!

A. Bourton Meadow

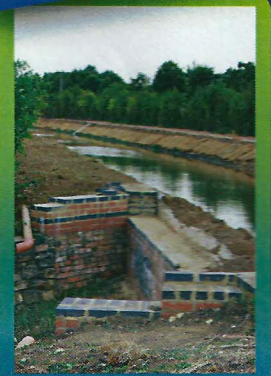
The rebirth of the Buckingham Canal and your journey along it begins here



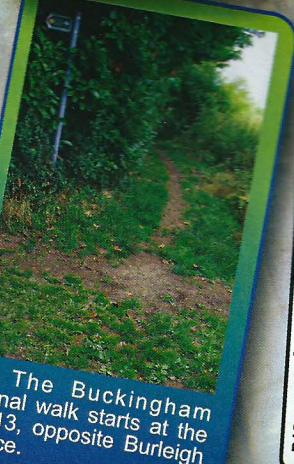
5. In July 2013 Bentoline SS100 Geosynthetic Clay Liner was used to line the canal bed. The Bentonite Clay sandwiched within the lining expands up to 15 times its dry volume ensuring a watertight seal.



4. In August 2013 the spillway was rebuilt as a fordable canal overflow with the crossing constructed with compacted stone allowing water to pass through it easily into the River Great Ouse.



3. In 2004 the spillweir was rebuilt. This enables excess water run off to the River Great Ouse by way of the spillway.

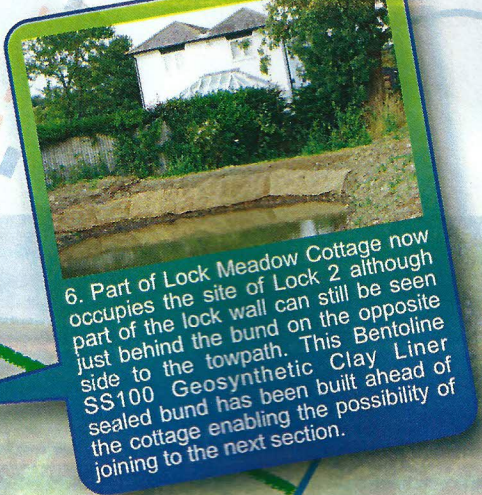


1. The Buckingham Canal walk starts at the A413, opposite Burleigh Piece.

A413 Buckingham/Stony Stratford



2. Coir Mats are made from Coconut fibre and are used along the 366 meter towpath bank to anchor vegetation and aid against erosion.



6. Part of Lock Meadow Cottage now occupies the site of Lock 2 although part of the lock wall can still be seen just behind the bund on the opposite side to the towpath. This Bentoline SS100 Geosynthetic Clay Liner sealed bund has been built ahead of the cottage enabling the possibility of joining to the next section.

new granite scrapings have been laid and this is upon a geotextile membrane acting as a weed suppressant (photos 17 & 18 on back cover). The towpath bank has been lined with coir mats (photo 2), and you will notice the opposite bank hasn't, as this will be seeded with a wild flower mix. The Coir Mats will be planted with native species that will eventually hold the soil in place, preventing erosion.

Before reaching the halfway point, you will see the spillweir on the opposite bank (photo 3). This has been recently adjusted to take into account the new water level. You may notice some of the old stone is still in place! Any excess canal water will be carried along a reconstructed spillway (photo 4). This connects to the River Great Ouse only a short distance away as it winds through the valley, with the canal never straying far from it. You will see that the spillway has been forded with compacted stone enabling the farmer to cross, whilst allowing water to permeate through.

The walk continues along the canal, which runs through Bourton Meadow, an area flourishing with wildlife. Not surprisingly Swallows and House Martins were among the first to take advantage of the canal water on it's first day with Kingfishers using the River Great Ouse regularly. Butterflies are prevalent and the Meadows are ablaze with flora through the summer months. You will notice that there is also a hedgerow bordering the towpath, providing a haven for wildlife including flora such as Cuckoo Pint, Sorrel, Blackthorn and Cherry, along with Fauna such as Coal Tits, Peacock and Red Admiral Butterflies to give just a few examples. With sympathetic native planting along the banks the Butterfly population will most certainly increase, with plants such as Water Mint known to attract at least 6 species.

As you approach the cottage, the restored canal comes to what is hopefully a temporary end. This is simply because many years ago Lock Meadow Cottage was extended and the garden now covers the lock. A sealed bund has been constructed a few meters ahead of the cottage (photo 6), with the hope that one day, an alternative watercourse can connect this section with the next.

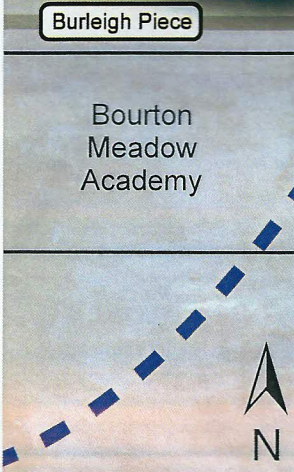
Of course, the restoration and preservation work is ongoing, and will require regular attention to keep this and all other areas along the canal in a good condition for you and future generations to enjoy. Hopefully you will have found this newly restored section of canal to be a peaceful and tranquil location that is rich in local heritage and natural history. Turn to the back cover for more on this site.

As you pass to the left of the cottage, you will follow the Ouse Valley Way path markers through the open countryside to find another restoration project, Hyde Lane Lock, as described on the adjacent page. The journey's length in it's entirety, inclusive of the distance walked already, is approximately 2.5 miles in each direction and is mapped in brief on the back page to assist you. Enjoy the walk!

A Guide to the Area

Twenty-one years of hard work and dedication have brought the Buckingham Canal Society (BCS) to this point, the first re-watering of a section of the Buckingham Canal.

Your journey starts opposite the southern end of Burleigh Piece, Buckingham, which is off the A413 (photo 1), and it forms part of the Ouse Valley Way. As the path leads you away from the road, you will come to a pedestrian gate through which the Ouse Valley Way passes. You are now walking along the old canal towpath, and the canal itself would have been to your right as becomes clear in a few yards. As you walk the towpath, you will notice



B. Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve

Discover a secluded haven of tranquility and wildlife surrounding the recently restored Hyde Lane Lock



12. Two volunteers 'kedging' the reed bed in an effort to open up the waterway at Hyde Lane Lock.



10. In 2012 Canal & River Trust kindly donated some lock gates. This is one of the pair of lower lock gates being moved to its new home from the Northampton Arm. The upper gate was also supplied.



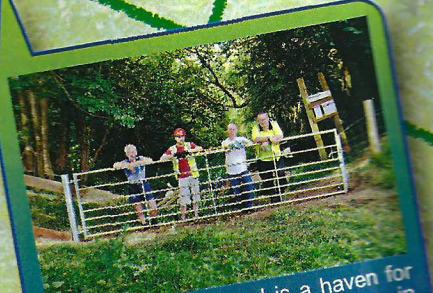
11. A replacement balance beam with partial winding gear assembly is carefully lowered into place upon one of the pair of lower lock gates.



9. In 2008 as part of its restoration the team removed around 80 years of silt buildup at Hyde Lane Lock in an effort to enable chamber repairs and later, lock gate installation.



8. In December 2012 the Buckingham Canal Society received a Campaign to Protect Rural England award for exemplary work in restoring the ancient towpath hedgerow.



7. The reserve ahead is a haven for wildlife, especially for Butterflies in the summer. Woodland birds and flora are also well represented.

(Campaign to Protect Rural England) Mark for its contribution to "Protecting and Enhancing the Buckinghamshire Countryside". Again, as at Bourton Meadow, this will only serve to enrich the biodiversity already evident here.

There are lakes to your left and these do not form part of the reserve, being managed for private fishing.

As you reach the right hand bend in the Canal, the centre piece comes into view, Hyde Lane Lock (or Lock No1). Much work has been carried out here over the years. In 2007, with a grant from WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental LTD), the Society was able to rebuild in part the lock chamber to a demonstrable condition whilst ensuring its structural integrity. Much silt had to be removed in the process (photo 9). Furthermore, in 2012, lock gates (photo 10 & 11) were kindly donated by Canal & River Trust (CRT) to augment and stabilise the chamber. These gates came from the Northampton Arm. The installation of these was logistically difficult, with the weather making accessibility a challenge. Nonetheless, the task was accomplished on time and on budget.

You've now reached the end of this walk. You can, of course, continue along the Ouse Valley Way if you wish, but for now take time to stand back and reflect upon every aspect of the triumphant achievement accomplished by the Society and its volunteers, not only at this reserve, but both of the restoration sites. In fact, why not take a seat near the lock and soak up the rather peaceful serenity here. You will have also noticed by now, dependent on the season, that the reserve is flourishing with wildlife. Again Butterflies are abundant, sent up with every footstep in summer months, and many woodland bird species along with a wide variety of flora can be found throughout.

A Guide to the Area

As you approach from the West, you will see a large wooded area ahead of you, and you may have noticed to your left that you've been following a banked hedgerow with tall trees. This formed part of the canal, the bed of which you are no doubt walking as you approach a large metal farm gate and a kissing gate (photo 7) through which you enter into the nature reserve. This reserve is leased from the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust and the BCS manages all aspects of the reserve. Immediately you feel as though you're in a different world! Follow the towpath along the right hand side of the Canal. Work has been done to secure the towpath until full restoration can be carried out. On the right, and for a rather noteworthy distance along the towpath, you can see the important work undertaken by volunteers to re-lay and replant the ancient hedgerow (photo 8), which in 2012 attracted a CPRE

	BUCKINGHAM CANAL - UNRESTORED
	BUCKINGHAM CANAL - UNDER RESTORATION
	BUCKINGHAM CANAL NATURE RESERVE
	TOWPATH and OUSE VALLEY WAY
	HEDGEROW
	WOODLAND
	LAKE
	RIVER GREAT OUSE
	ROAD
	PRIVATE ROAD/TRACK
	BUILDING
	LOCK 1 - RESTORED
	LOCK 2 - FILLED IN ON PRIVATE LAND
	SPILLWEIR

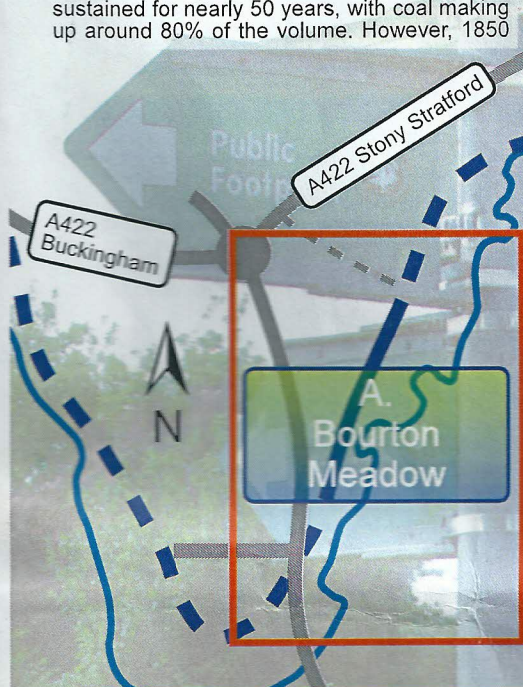
All maps not to scale



The Bourton Meadow and Buckingham Canal Nature Reserve sections form part of the 9.5 mile Buckingham Arm that originally contained 2 locks. This joins the level cut Old Stratford Arm making a total length of 10.75 miles which in turn joins the Grand Union Canal at Cosgrove. Originally surveyed by Barnes in 1793 with the plans being authorised on the 28th of March 1794, cutting of the Buckingham Arm started in September 1800 with it's opening taking place on the 1st of May 1801. This revolutionised trade between Buckingham and London with coal, stone and bricks amongst other bulk goods being transported. Hay and Straw could now be readily taken to London for the city's horse drawn transport. Buckingham saw improvements, such as street lighting coming into use for the first time, as a result of importing coal. Trade reached 20,000 tons a year and this was more or less sustained for nearly 50 years, with coal making up around 80% of the volume. However, 1850

brought with it a change in fortune as the Bletchley to Banbury branch railway opened. This inevitably saw trade being drawn away from the canal. To make things worse, the Buckingham end of the arm became silted up, not only from the River Great Ouse feeder, but mainly from sewage being disposed of by that section's then owner, the Buckingham Corporation. This was to be the final blow to the canal as toward 1890 trade had dropped to around 3,000 tons per year, and trade beyond Maids Moreton was impossible by 1900 due to the silt build up. 1932 saw the last boat travel only as far as Leckhampstead, and even then it had to be hauled by horse from Thornton Bridge. The Buckingham Arm was officially abandoned in 1964, whilst retaining the Old Stratford Arm.

From the past.....



.....to the present.

The Buckingham Canal Society (BCS) was founded in 1992 with the aim of protecting and preserving the entire length including the Old Stratford Arm, until it's eventual restoration to a navigable condition. The Society has, from it's inception, researched the canal's history through gathering archive materials, producing detailed surveys and speaking with those who remember it and then shared it's findings through it's website, newsletters, meetings, BCS events, etc. This information has assisted in promoting the objectives of the Society to various organisations for funding and to local authorities concerning planning applications and public enquiries. For example, so that it's

preservation and restoration as a navigable, environmentally rich & recreationally important canal and asset is recognised. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that this canal could again provide flood relief along the northern side of the Ouse Valley. Now, after further feasibility and environmental surveys, work is finally underway in 4 locations. A stone bridge has been restored at Little Hill Farm and work has started at Cosgrove to prepare for re-watering. Bourton Meadow and Hyde Lane Lock are described below & overleaf. The Society strongly believes that the restorations taking place will enrich the accessible green infrastructure, linking habitats and increasing biodiversity. Activities such as walking, fishing and boating will also benefit the local community and will increase tourism as a result. The Society knows that none of this would be possible without it's volunteer team. Regular friendly work parties are held each month, where you can learn many new skills such as hedge-laying or bricklaying. So, do you dig canals? We do! If you'd like to support us, please contact us using the details below.

Restoring the Bourton Meadow section



13. The 386 meter section of canal bed before restoration commenced.



14. Re-profiling the canal bed and banks to hold water to a depth of 4ft.



15. Bentoline SS100 Geosynthetic Clay Liner rolls are carefully applied.



16. The liners are carefully adjusted if required, making sure they overlap.



17. The scraped soil is then replaced and work can start on the towpath.



18. Coir mats, towpath boards and stone are situated before re-watering.

Restoration of the Bourton Meadow section at the Buckingham end began in at least 2004 with the landowner giving permission to access the whole section allowing for clearance of undergrowth to begin and the rebuilding of the spillweir, further on (photo 3 overleaf). However, the current restoration work commenced with a grant funded Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey in May 2011. This revealed, as you may be able to see along the walk, that the area is rich in flora and fauna, with Birds and Butterflies being well represented. This survey was required for the subsequent and successful planning application that was granted approval in April 2012 to re-profile, re-line and re-water the canal. Final preparations began in September 2012, including surveying the new waterline. Patrons Rt. Hon. John Bercow and Lord Boswell of Aynho cut the first sod in January 2013. WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental LTD) issued a grant for nearly £70,000 soon after, unlocked by seed funding of over £7,000 from Aylesbury Vale Community Chest and with strong continued support of many local groups. Re-profiling (photo 14) and re-lining (photos 15 & 16 and 5 overleaf) took place in July 2013, involving the contractors (Water-Lines Solutions LTD) removing 35 cm of topsoil and silt along the 386 meter length and applying the Bentoline SS100 Geosynthetic Clay Lining and redressing with the aforementioned soil (photo 16). The Buckingham Canal Society (BCS) have since then installed the coir mats, geotextile membrane towpath lining, gravel boards and granite scrapings (photo 18). The far bank has been seeded and the spillway rebuilt (photo 4 overleaf). The canal was re-watered for the first time in about 100 years, from the 23rd of August 2013, and now holds approximately 5 million litres!

Contact Details

Scan the QR barcode for easy website access
 email: info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk
 Website: www.buckinghamcanal.org.uk



Buckingham Canal Society is a registered charity: no. 10729241.
 Leaflet design by Ian Matson.
 Images: © Richard Lewis, Ian Matson and Canal & River Trust.
 Cover main: Hyde Lane Lock. Cover inset: Bourton Meadow section in water.