

Oakham Canal Spring Newsletter



We're jam-packed with news and updates. Read on to hear all about what we have been up to over the cold winter months - and lots of new ways to explore as spring starts to come to life.



New footpath ready for spring

Major improvements to the section of the canal path nearest Ashwell Road are now complete.

Over the winter a team of wonderful volunteers helped us dig 410 metres of path, lay 50 tons of aggregate, replace the old footbridge, lay new steps and replace all the old fencing and gates. All during some of winter's coldest, wettest weather!

Teams also cleared the bank of debris, and we will shortly plant the area near the new steps with native wild flowers. We also recently received funding from two generous supporters to install a simple wooden bench on the towpath, which we will do over the next month or so.

We would like to say a huge THANK YOU to everyone who helped get us this far in such a short space of time, and also to Healthy Rutland Grant Scheme, who funded this work.

New geocaches along the canal

Another new way to enjoy your time at the canal is up and running.

Thanks to a local enthusiast, a new set of geocaches has been planted along the canal, ready to be discovered. For those who don't know, geocaching is a kind of modern-day treasure hunt, where people follow GPS location clues to uncover physical objects that have been hidden in various places. You can find out more about how to play [here](#).

We'd love to hear from anyone who uncovers some of the canal geocaches, so please do comment on our Facebook page if you go out hunting for any treasures.

Presentation to Trefoil Guild

Two of our Trustees, Paul Cundy and Bethany Hunt, recently did a presentation on the charity's work to Trefoil Guild.

The ladies, many of whom had grown up in Oakham, were very keen to help us and share some of their old memories.

We are happy to do presentations for similar local groups - if this is something that is of interest, please do [email](#) us.

Upcoming improvement works

Work is beginning on improvements to further sections of the canal.

On the wooded footpath between Burley Road and Ashwell Road we have dug out the route for a slope to give easier access, and will lay aggregate at the next work party on 7 April. We will be laying wood chippings along the length of the path over the next few months, ready for next winter. We had a big clear up in the woods when Oakham School visited on 12 March and made x2 hibernanaculums out of the wood collected, thanks to our Trustee Bethany's design.

We are planning to start work on the footpaths south of Burley Road over the next three months. The wooded side will have wood chip laid along the path, while the towpath will be repaired and topped with shingle later in the summer.

We are also planning to replace the bridge over the dam at the end of this section with a new five-metre bridge. If anyone can offer help with any of the above - with building supplies, funding or helping with the physical work, please get in touch - we'd love to hear from you!





Q: What's black and white and lead* all over?

A: A rare Oakham canal milepost

Some of you may have spotted the old milepost that recently appeared on the bypass next to the canal entrance. There is a lovely story behind this and we will be officially unveiling it soon, but for now we need to keep things under wraps. Keep an eye on our Facebook page and local media for the big reveal on this soon.

*OK, it's actually made of iron, but that wouldn't work nearly as well in the headline!

Seeking budding nature sleuths

As spring begins we are keen to gather information on canal biodiversity.

Knowing what is present will allow us to protect and enhance habitats for as many plants and animals as possible. Which is where you come in! We're inviting you to join [iNaturalist](#), a citizen science survey that allows you to take snaps of what you see and upload them for identification by other naturalists. iNaturalist will then form an overall map from all users who upload data. Your pictures can be of anything: flowers, insects, fungi, birds, trees - if it's alive, we'd like to see it recorded.

We already know we have the rare water vole present, as well as owls, bats and many other species. On 12 March, we had nine students from Oakham School on a work party, who made a great start on the iNaturalist survey, identifying 37 different species in one day - all data will feed into our planned ecological site surveys over the coming months. It's not just important to help us measure biodiversity, it's a great way to liven up a walk with the kids - or just one by yourself, so please do give it a try!



Volunteer of the month

Meet Gina Hall, who has volunteered with us since summer 2021. We tracked her down by the canal for some quick fire questions.

What kind of activities have you been involved in?

I've attended three work parties. Two involved working on the paths; preparing the ground and laying gravel. That sounds easy, but gosh it was heavy work. The gravel needed to be shovelled into buckets at the top of the steps then taken down to the wheelbarrows. Another work party we cleared the top path and created wildlife piles of branches. I was in awe of Paul's (Project Manager) enthusiasm and drive. His knowledge of the canal is outstanding, and I can recommend his guided walks.

Why did you volunteer?

We moved to Oakham in November 2019 not knowing the area well at all. We enjoy walking and found the canal early in 2020. However, the state of the path on the second stretch was really unpassable for much of the time. After seeing Paul's advert we decided rather than sit and moan about the state of the path we would help sort it out. We walked it again recently and what a pleasure it was. As well as the swans, mallards and moorhens I spotted a grey heron and egret. Wonderful!

And finally...

Upcoming work parties scheduled for April 7 and 21, get in touch or check Facebook for more...watch out for a feature on the canal in April's Rutland Pride magazine...we are looking for ideas on how to engage young people with the canal - please send us your thoughts...guided walks will start up again soon, keep an eye on the website and Facebook...as always, please keep spreading the word and sharing the love for our local waterway as we bring it back to life.

Visit the Oakham Canal website 