

Wilts & Berks discovery

Brickwork exposed

A work party clearing undergrowth on the Wilts & Berks Canal has uncovered the remains of a lift bridge, which has been buried for nearly 100 years.

Volunteers working on the section of canal between Melksham and Chippenham discovered the brickwork near Reybridge. The crossing was once used by local residents to cross the canal, and it is thought that there was once a wharf nearby to serve the village.

"The brickwork was discovered by volunteers, who were carefully clearing away the undergrowth on a new stretch of land," said W&BCT local branch chairman Rob Jones. "Since the discovery, we have had lots of walkers and cyclists stopping to take a closer look, and wanting to learn more about our restoration campaign."

"It's always fascinating to find another missing piece of our local heritage, especially when it can be linked to old photographs. Lift bridges have already been rebuilt along other parts of the Wilts & Berks, and these show how we can open up the countryside for the benefit of the local communities along the route."

"In 2008, local volunteers contributed almost 4,000 hours of free labour on work parties between Melksham and Chippenham. They helped to clear rubbish and restore towpaths, culverts and other structures. This would have cost around £50,000 if paid contractors had been used."



Rob Jones shows the exposed brickwork of a lift bridge on the Wilts & Berks Canal, which has been buried for a century.

The W&BCT hope to eventually link the Kennet & Avon Canal near Melksham to the River Thames near Abingdon, and the Thames and Severn Canal near Cricklade, thus connecting Chippenham,

Calne, Wootton Bassett and Swindon. "Our branches always welcome new volunteers," added Rob Jones. For further information on the Melksham, Chippenham & Calne branch of the W&BCT visit www.melkshamwaterway.org.uk.



Not the one recently exposed, but an example of what one of the local lift bridges crossing the Wilts & Berks Canal near Reybridge looked like around 1900.