

Looking towards the restored Double Bridge from the south



## Going another mile

It might seem like a mile of dry ditch that goes from nowhere to nowhere, but the length that the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust is tackling this year could be the key to much greater things



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### Does BW really want volunteers?

LAST AUGUST I warned

that the effect of future changes to British Waterways on restoration needed watching – and it seems my fears are being confirmed. One might think that BW trumpeting its support for more volunteers would be good news for canal restoration. It should be, but I'm hearing of volunteer projects being cancelled due to cutbacks in BW cash – and that's not good for volunteering. Remember the 1980s, when BW involvement was seen as the kiss of death by many in restoration. Let's not go back there...

*Martin*

Once they get beyond the early stages of work, restoration groups need to think and plan strategically, as anyone involved in the 'political' side of waterway restoration will tell you.

Rather than working on whatever takes your fancy, it makes sense to choose sites that attract attention: by creating links to existing waterways; by regenerating derelict land to raise the canal's profile with local authorities; by working on lengths near main roads or local attractions to get the public interested; or by conserving historic navigation features to gain the support of heritage organisations. Only that way will you get the best value out of your limited resources, get potential supporters onside, and move your project forward.

So why, then, is the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust putting a fair slice of its effort this year into working on a mile of canal in deepest countryside, with no roads near it, seven miles from the nearest navigable water and separated from it by a major blockage, and with no ex-industrial land for regeneration; a mile of canal with a modest flight of three

very derelict locks at one end and a farm accommodation bridge at the other?

Often in these situations, the answer is 'because we can'. Sometimes it is necessary to establish your credentials on a less-than-ideal stretch of waterway, and maybe you'll get permission to work somewhere more useful. But there's more to it than that...

It might seem to be in the middle of nowhere, but take a walk along the towpath from Pewsham towards Lacock on a summer Sunday and you'll see lots of people out

**This was a horseshoe-shaped overspill weir – but has been badly damaged by tree roots**

