



Dragonfly

issue 147



The Quarterly Magazine of the
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
Spring 2018



WILTS & BERKS CANAL TRUST

PATRON: H.R.H. THE DUCHESS OF CORNWALL

REGISTERED CHARITY NO 299595

RESTORING IN PARTNERSHIP THE WILTS & BERKS CANAL
THROUGH WILTSHIRE, SWINDON AND OXFORDSHIRE

A non profit-distributing Company Limited by Guarantee

Registered Office:

Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham, SN15 4HD

The aim of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust

To protect, conserve and improve the route of the Wilts & Berks and North Wilts Canals, and branches, for the benefit of the community and environment, with the ultimate goal of restoring a continuous navigable waterway linking the Kennet & Avon canal near Melksham, the River Thames near Abingdon, and the Thames & Severn canal near Cricklade.

The objectives of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust

Convince local authorities, government departments and local organisations of the benefits and feasibility of the proposed restoration.

Convince landowners, local commerce and the general public of the merits of the restoration.

Secure the route of the waterway and adequate water supplies.

Establish the Trust as a key member of a partnership with local authorities and other bodies that will facilitate restoration of the canal.

Implement an agreed programme for full restoration of the canal.

Membership of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust is open to all.

See page six for latest details.

Company and Society membership is also available.

The views and opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily represent those of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. The Editors reserve the right to shorten, change or not to publish any material received.

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DATA PROTECTION ACT

The Trust membership details are recorded in compliance with provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998

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Cover Image

Elwood and Inara Minney with their rope dragonflies - Photos from
Chippenham Museum event by Claire Selman - article page 17

Chairman's Report

Roderick Bluh

A long winter is hopefully nearing its end and a late Spring will emerge.

We have been busy working to put the Trust on a stable footing for the future. A lot of change is taking place and however challenging it may seem sometimes, I do assure you that it is for the good long-term.

Activity with future planning is fast-paced, involving negotiations with Councils and other bodies. Planning the future of the Peterborough Arms and new Community Centre is moving forwards so that when funding is available we are ready to hit the ground once again.

On a positive note, we have just completed the purchase of land at Queenfield Farm near Lacock. This was paid for with funds raised by the appeal to which so many gave generously and planning for this stretch can now get under way.

There is always a lot to be done and lots to achieve and I am confident that momentum is being maintained and important progress will be made very soon.

Enjoy the sunshine when it finally appears.

CEO's Report

Jonathan Till

By the time you receive this issue of Dragonfly we will have passed the financial year-end for the Trust. During the last months of the financial year we believe we have taken the final steps to ensuring that we have fully funded the cost overrun on the Studley Grange and two other projects.

Moving forward, we can focus once again on new projects while we repay loans from three very supportive members. Thank you to these members who lent us the money and to all those who have provided additional financial support to the Trust during the last two years of intense activity on this financial challenge. Please be assured that we have also put in place robust financial procedures to ensure that the mistakes made in the implementation and control of these projects do not happen again.

As I have said on several occasions, I share the frustration of members who, during this period of consolidation, have not been able to put enough energy and effort into new projects.

But the new financial year will be different. Tonight, as I write, I will be discussing with the Board of Trustees what projects should be prioritised from a funding and delivery point-of-view. We won't be able to do everything at once, but will make sure that, besides focusing on delivering longer stretches of canal, that there is progress along the whole length of the route.

Gordon Olson, Trustee, has been instrumental in focusing the minds of the Board and the Executive on our strategic aims, kicking off with a joint working day to take stock and openly discuss the way forward. The discussions will continue tonight. Thank you to Gordon, and to members and officers who have been pushing to get the Trust focusing once again on the mammoth project on which we have embarked. I would also like to thank Ken Oliver for the work he undertook a couple of years ago on structuring and costing restoration projects along the whole length of the canal route. Without this work it would be impossible to hold sensible discussions on the way forward.

Of course, we will need millions to deliver our ambitions here. In addition to Derek Flexer, who has taken over fundraising in the new Executive organisation structure (more about that later), we now have the support of Neil Croucher, who has joined as an advisor to the Executive and is tasked with raising the money for core costs, while we move towards self-sustainability, and with raising the millions we need for the projects on which we need to focus. He's done it before for other organisations and I'm confident that he'll do it again for us at the Trust.

As we embark on upping our project ambitions we will do our best to share more with members about the work that we are doing, even if much will be work in progress and subject to change as we move forward. To this end we have set up a members' area on the website that will provide information which

is not intended for public consumption, but that members may view on the understanding that this is for our day-to-day work as a Trust. The information will not have been endorsed as available to the public at large.

Members' Area

To view the members' area visit where you will need to provide your family name or postcode and your membership number to access the area. Please contact the Trust Office, if you have problems. It is a small beginning, but in the longer term we plan to migrate the wealth of information that is available only on our archive site.

In this drive to focus on larger projects we need more and more expertise on canal design (civil engineering), project planning and funding, and contract management. So please contact us, if you can help with any of this.

New Executive Organisation Structure

I mentioned in my last report that we are in the process of reorganising the Executive. This work is now complete and a full list of Executive members, their roles and contact details can be found here: (part of the members' area). www.wbct.org.uk/trust-organisation/executive-committee

We are focusing now on delivery. The (Acting) Executive members responsible for this are:

- Jock MacKenzie, Acting Executive Manager, Community Cohesion
- Max Crofts, Acting Executive Manager, Restoration & Land Acquisition (Andrew Matters will continue to support this function while we seek a permanent Executive Manager for the role)
- Malcolm Hitchinson, Executive Manager, Commercial
- Dave Maloney, Executive Manager, Sustainable Usage

Their work in delivering will be supported by:

- Peter Kinsman, Head of Finance
- Andrew Matters, Head of Engineering & Compliance
- Derek Flexer, Head of Fundraising
- Patricia Clements, Head of Communications, PR, IT, Administration

And by our advisors:

- Neil Croucher, Advisor, Funding
- Dr David Cook, Advisor, Environmental & Sustainability Management

We remain under pressure to deliver what seems often to be the impossible. So please support us in whatever way you can!

Subscription Rates Increase

Effective 1 March 2018 and a little later than planned, we introduced the first increase in our subscription rates since 1993 after 25 years at the same rate. We are encouraging as many as possible to pay by Direct Debit, which reduces the workload in the Office in banking cash or cheques, and in other ways too. Existing members may of course continue to pay the higher rates by whatever method they have been using until now, though we would encourage them to support the Trust and consider paying by Direct Debit. The online form for individual and joint membership is here: www.wbct.org.uk/fee-payment

New members may join online here: www.wbct.org.uk/join-online

Closing Thoughts

It is with great sadness that I share the news of the recent death of our President, Sir William McAlpine. I was hoping he would recover from his illness and to have the opportunity to share with him, once again, what we have been doing at the Trust. I was shocked to hear of his death: it will leave a great hole in our lives. He will be greatly missed.

Over the last few days I met Roger Crapper again who was a VIP at our October AGM. We enjoy chatting about what the Trust is doing: he is just as passionate as we are. He and his family do their best to ensure, as much as they can, that the Crappers landfill business supports us with ENTRUST monies. Thank you, Roger, thank you, Richard.

We have also been supported by a number of unexpected legacies over the previous months without which we would not be where we are today. I would like to express my gratitude for this support too, particularly to the surviving relatives of the donors who have ensured that the donor's wishes to support

the Trust have been seen through and that we have received the money. Thank you.

Thank you also to others who have supported us in many, many ways and have not been mentioned specifically here.

I now need to crack on! Tonight I discuss our strategy and projects with the Board...

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**Swindon Branch Notice
Annual General Meeting
6.45 for 7.00 pm on Saturday 2nd June 2018
at Immanuel URC Hall, Upham Road
Swindon SN3 1DH**

AGENDA

- 1 To receive apologies for absence**
- 2 To approve Minutes of the last AGM on 7th June 2017**
- 3 To approve the Chairman's Annual Report for 2017-2018**
- 4 To approve the Treasurer's Report**
- 5 To elect Principal Officers and Branch Executive Members**
- 6 Any Other Business**

A supper will be served afterwards followed by an informative and social evening.

Editorial

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**John and Margaret
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Our Tribute to Sir William McAlpine

It is with much sadness that I report our President, Sir William McAlpine passed away on 4th March 2018. He had been unwell for the past few months.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Lady McAlpine and his family and I will be sending our condolences to them all.

Sir William was a director of Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd for more than fifty years. He was Chairman of: The Railway Heritage Trust, The Dart Valley Railway ,-Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway, SS Sir Walter Scott on Loch Katrine, Railnews, and SONE (Supporters of Nuclear Energy). Sir William was a Governor of Shiplake College and President of the Transport Trust and other organisations. Sir William had served for several terms on the ZSL Council (Zoological Society London) and was on the Development Committee. He accepted the Presidency of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust as an extension of his interest in historic transport and was well known for his railway interests, including ownership of the Flying Scotsman locomotive, which he later sold.

He was also well known for his personal motto: "Life is not a rehearsal".

Since becoming our President in June 2015 Sir William has made many helpful contributions to our mission, including engaging with the Swindon & Cricklade Railway Trust to explore a joint project with our Trust to connect Swindon to Cricklade. Given Sir William's railway interests it is sad that he will no longer be able to pursue this exciting idea with us.

It was a privilege to work with him albeit for too short a time.

May he rest in peace.

**Roderick Bluh
Chairman
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust**

Membership Matters

Membership Secretary's Report

We welcome the following new members

No	Name	Town	Branch
4639	Mr and Mrs G Holmes	Trowbridge	MCC
4640	Mr and Mrs G Male	Royal Wootton Bassett	Wootton Bassett
4641	Mr C King	Swindon	Swindon
4642	Mr H Ellison	Swindon	Swindon
4643	Mr and Mrs R Clifton	Swindon	Swindon
4644	Mr R Moon	Chippenham	MCC
4645	Mr and Mrs Young	Chippenham	MCC
4646	Mr W Cunningham	Swindon	Swindon
4647	P. Boardman	Swindon	Swindon
4648	Mrs S Wilkinson	Chichester	MCC
4649	Mr and Mrs K Bennett	Chippenham	MCC
4650	Mrs J Boddy	Swindon	Swindon
4651	Ms T Cozens	Chippenham	MCC
4652	Mr and Mrs R Hardy	Swindon	Wootton Bassett
4653	Mr and Mrs C Fleming	Wroughton	Swindon
4654	Mr and Mrs Heath	Swindon	Swindon
4655	Mr A Parker	Swindon	Swindon
4656	Mr R Burbidge	Royal Wootton Bassett	Wootton Bassett
4657	Mr I Cullen	Sutton Courtenay	West Vale
4658	Mr C Richards	Calne	MCC
4659	Mr P Downie	Swindon	Swindon
4660	Mrs P Jackson	Swindon	Swindon

Membership Team, 21 February 2018

Membership Fees

Membership fees have increased from 1st March 2018 and are listed below. We encourage all new members to join online on our website at: www.wbct.org.uk/join-online

Individual £1.50, £2.50, £5.00, £10.00 monthly

Joint (2 individuals) £2.00, £3.50, £7.50, £15.00 monthly

Corporate organisation £120.00 yearly

Associations (Concession for small charities and small councils) £20.00 yearly

You can renew online: just go to [www.wbct.org.uk](#) and use your membership number.

Whilst we wish to encourage all renewals to take place on line, other methods of payment are possible. You can pay by bank transfer or update your standing order and the minimum for these is £20.00. If you pay by cheque please write your membership number on the back of the cheque along with your family name and send it to Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham SN15 4HD. If you wish to pay by bank transfer then please use the following details and email to let us know: Sort code: 30-98-41 Account number: 67300060 Name: Wilts & Berks Canal Trust Reference: WB (Your membership Number) (Your family Name). If you choose to continue to pay by standing order you must contact your bank to inform them of the increased rate. We cannot do this for you. If you decide to change your



Nb Dragonfly Report

Looking Forward To The Start Of The New Season And We Hope To See As Many Of You As Possible.

Dragonfly Boat Trips

At the time of writing, Dragonfly trips will start on 31 March 2018 but will run from our Kingshill Landing Stage until the canal at Waitrose has been reopened, hopefully in mid-summer. Trips MUST be pre-booked (details below) and will be subject to the availability of crew. Prices remain at £5 per adult, £2 per child.

To reach the Kingshill Landing Stage please park at the rear of The Runner car park, and follow the short walk to the canal tow path, which will be signposted. The Runner Public House is on Wootton Bassett Road, Swindon SN1 4NQ. The publican is more than happy with this arrangement.

To book, preferably e-mail or visit our Swindon Information Centre (opposite Swindon Library) Theatre Square, Swindon SN1 1QN. Open Mon,

Wed, Fri and Sat 10:00 to 15:00. Or book by telephone: 07401 220076 Public Trips run on weekends and Bank Holidays at 10:30, 11:45, 13:30 and 14:45 so long as bookings have been made.

Charters can be arranged (subject to Skipper and crew availability) at other times for £50 for 1 hour and £80 for 2 hours for up to 12 people. Please contact us to discuss your requirements. Your group will have sole use of the boat. Watch out for details of our 'special' charters (cream teas, coffee and cake, pirate specials, etc) on our website, or from our Information Centre.

The boat is wheelchair accessible but we can accommodate only one wheelchair at a time, please notify us when booking.

Chris Barry



Towpath Nature photos
thanks to Judy Gosnell

Winter Towpath Nature Notes

Judy Gosnell



**Towpath Nature photos
thanks to Judy Gosnell**

Winter is a quiet time for the countryside. Down along the canal at Royal Wootton Bassett it can be rather peaceful. It is time for nature to rejuvenate ready for the next year. But look a little closer and we find all sorts of things to see.

The water level in the canal can be variable depending on the local rainfall amounts. This winter, rainfall totals have so far been average but the water levels have varied. One or two times when the recorded rainfall has been high we see water pour into the canal at Studley from the nearby streams, make its way under the culverts at Chaddington and into the spillweir, flowing over like Niagara Falls. Great fun to watch: with foam collecting by the stream.

Some mornings have seen a thin coating of ice on the canal and with delicate patterns looking like ferns. The ice is not very thick so the mallards quickly break through to continue their dabbling.

The moorhens who live amongst the reeds and bulrushes by the sides of the canal, occasionally pop out and scurry back into the cover of the vegetation. Many mallards like the Studley end of the canal, flying over the water into Chaddington or waddling through the culverts. Sometimes a swan may arrive to join the flock and we have seen a few Canada geese but they don't get on with mute swans and squabble. When the water level has dropped a little and the sun is shining photographers arrive to spot the water voles. Several voles have been sighted so far this year, swimming across the water and sitting amongst the canal side water grasses and brambles.

On cold mornings wood pigeons sit silently amongst the branches of the oak and ash at Templars Firs sometimes disturbed by noisy squawking magpies or a jay. The pigeons get ready to take off from their perches and make a

flap in the branches. Blue tits are heard tweezing with their high-pitched sounds as they talk to each other. Sometimes a family of long-tailed tits are passing through, usually 10 or 12, off for an excursion in the trees looking for bugs as they chatter amongst themselves. A green woodpecker can often be heard high up in the trees and greater spotted woodpeckers may be ticking away. When spring comes their famous drumming will be heard. Wrens, robins and blackbirds flit backwards and forwards across the canal water and always a splendid sight is to watch the heron.

The trees are bare now and when a wind blows the birds take cover elsewhere. The tall ash trees swish and sway in the wind. Will the oak be out before the ash this year? A January gale blew straight down the canal making waves on the water and difficult to walk on the tow path. Often the water, which is so cold, is still and wonderful reflections are seen. The tall thin willows look as if they are growing down through the water, it is rather mesmerising.

The vegetation looks very dead and rotten in places. We poke around near the Lower Woodshaw spillweir. The water is flowing well and onward into the nearby Brinkworth brook. Here we find some small plants of hartstongue fern with its long leathery bright green leaves. It will grow profusely in damp woods and close to a water course. Bright green mosses are everywhere, growing around trees and dead wood. We also

find some common polypody ferns which also grow on and around dead wood. These are a couple of ferns that keep their leaves over winter. In autumn we found the bright yellow spores on the underside of the polypody leaves.

Many of the older hawthorn trees by the side of the canal have lichens growing on them. Particularly noticeable is the bright yellow zanthoria. Lichens are interesting and complex organisms, they are indicators of air pollution, good or bad and we can see them growing everywhere. They come in many shapes and colours too! Look at them through a small hand lens and another world is seen. Chaddington Lock bridge has many patches of zanthoria, brightly shining on the red brick. Other lichen grow on the bridge and some mosses. Sadly a couple of hawthorn trees were blown down during recent high winds.

We have been fascinated by other things near the canal. These are mechanical and look like Christmas decorations hanging from supports. Work to electrify the main railway line has been moving on at a faster rate albeit in leaps and bounds or fits and starts. Many different pieces of equipment can be seen dangling from the large metal supports in preparation for electrification. Christmas Day saw much activity.

Early green leaves of cow parsley, lords and ladies, dead nettle are becoming visible through leaf litter and grass bringing thoughts of spring and warmer weather.

John Millican is leaving us!

We are very sad to see John Millican step down as editor of Dragonfly magazine after many years producing our quarterly magazine. John has moved to Northumberland and feels that he is too far away to continue as editor. He will also have his hands full settling in to his new home. John, we wish you all the very best and our enormous thanks for all your hard work and support.

John has kindly agreed to be available to help a new editor and the Trust is asking if any of our members would like to take over the role. Margaret Lord, who has worked closely with John, will continue to help.

If there any members who would like to take up the role as the Trust's new editor of Dragonfly and has Desktop Publishing experience, please contact patricia.clements@wbct.co.uk if you are interested or if you require more information about the position.

Trust AGM Notification

**The Trust AGM this year will be held on Saturday October 13th
Old Mill Hall, School Lane, Grove, Wantage. Oxon
East Vale branch will be hosting the event.
Further details will be provided in the Summer edition as usual**



Looking Forward to
the new season

Market Harborough to Nantwich by canal, 1970

Robert Locke

A new 57ft narrowboat hull, fitted with just a fibreglass roof awaited us in Market Harborough. Isla and I had jobs in Chester and had made the decision to live on the Shropshire Union Canal. The idea was to fit out the interior of the boat ourselves. Madness, perhaps, but now we were committed.

Market Harborough is at the end of a branch of the Grand Union. As you join the main line, you are faced with the Foxton two staircases of five locks each. Isla who had never steered a narrowboat before had to take over on that first leg: I was faced with a calor gas stove, a coil of copper pipe and a gas bottle under the floor at the back of the boat. I had to fix this lot up before we could make ourselves a cup of tea, which we certainly needed before facing the locks. These are narrow locks (7ft 2 in) and it was just as well that Isla was a fast learner, though of course with a staircase, once you are in, you hardly need to steer.

This was 19 December 1970. Two days off the shortest day of the year. Most experienced canal users would not choose to make this journey at this time, but we had arranged for a small firm in Chester to put in a form of heating, and they could come no further than Nantwich to do the job. So we had to get as far as there by the end of the year. At this season there are various canal closures for maintenance, so we had to do some research before deciding our route. The best option seemed to be via Coventry rather than going north via Derby or keeping south through Birmingham.

Looking back nearly 50 years, it is difficult to remember details of the journey through Braunston, Rugby and Coventry. Most of the time we spent trying to keep warm. We had two chairs, a table, and a 5ft mattress, which is an absurd size for a narrowboat. What we ate I don't know now, but there was no stopping at an inviting canalside pub for a meal: there were few around in those days, and in any case there was no spare time, as we had to make use of every minute of daylight for travelling. We stopped for the night wherever we were when we could no longer see where we were going. Our only daylight

stops were to bury the contents of the Elsan, the only type of mobile loo available in 1970, which was basically a bucket and a lid.

At one point, a pound between two locks ahead had been emptied, showing a depressing stretch of mud and debris. Fortunately the pound was very short, and after judicious use of the paddles in the upper lock, we were able to fill it sufficiently to be on our way. The other sight that sticks in my mind from this stretch was the old Reliant factory at Tamworth, then still functioning. Here were old reject fibreglass bodies, strewn along the canal side. It emphasised to me the divorce of the original vital partnership between factory and canal throughout the system.

On Christmas Day, our celebration was to treat ourselves to a break, so we walked into Stone. It is a delightful town, but on Christmas day it was deserted, with nowhere even for a cup of tea, so it was back to the boat, and the two of us gathered round our tiny Christmas tree. We later planted the tree in a quiet spot by the towpath. If anyone notices a 35ft spruce by the canal near Stoke on Trent then it has done well.

Our water tank was on the roof: we felt we could best rely on a gravity feed. The long and shallow 90-gallon tank was boxed in with wood, and looked quite respectable. When we arrived at the Harecastle tunnel, however, we found we had a problem. We were lucky that we arrived on the only day that Christmas week that the tunnel (the later Telford design of 1827) was open. It has to be manned at both ends as it is too narrow for two way traffic. It is sealed off at the southern end, with a large fan to draw air through the one-and-a-half mile length. There is a gauge hanging before the entrance, like those that used to be used for railway trucks, to see if your boat would hit the roof.

The water tank casing hit the gauge. We filled it as full as possible with water. We moved several of our concrete ballast slabs from the rear to the front of the boat, which lowered the highest point of the tank. But the tank still just touched the gauge. We decided to plough on, hoping any scrape would be gentle. We had not accounted for the towpath. Though it was nowhere to be seen, the original piles, designed so that the water displaced by boats could run back under the path, were still there under the water. We had to steer as close as we dared to the sloping left-hand wall. The same subsidence which had put paid to the old Brindley tunnel had had a severe effect on the height of the roof. Steering slightly to the left took us into danger of hitting the arched roof. Any deviation to the right meant we hit the hidden piles, and bounced off towards the wall again. It was not helped by having a single light at the front which had a disconcerting effect on our vision of the rather wavy roof. There was a sudden ear splitting crack. That, we thought was the end of the tank's protective box. We couldn't see because all the boat was in darkness, with the light at the front pointing forward. As it turned out, we emerged unscathed, mightily relieved to see daylight but shocked to see everything covered in snow.

As we pushed on northward, not only was there snow, but the weather was becoming colder. The canal was rapidly icing over. Fortunately, the prow of Harborough Marine boats was very sloping, so had the effect of riding up and crushing the ice, rather than trying to push through it. With the ice now over a inch thick, evening was approaching, and we could see a lock ahead. It was too dark to try to negotiate the lock, and there was no way we could travel sideways to the bank. So we just stopped, immobile in the ice, and, and wondered how we were going to get through a frozen lock in the morning.

At the first glimmer of daylight, we were woken by strange sounds of jollity. A party of youngsters was making its way up the lock ahead. This was the only other boat we had come across for days. How had they coped with the ice? Without any delay, we moved through the now open top gates and found to our amazement, no ice in the lock, and no ice at all on the pound below. It gradually dawned on us that we were now into the Cheshire basin, where, of course, all the salt comes from. This meant that we could travel normally until we were half way along the Middlewich arm, and up some locks where a little stretch more ice could not stop us making our destination in Nantwich on time.

The ice had scraped off a lot of our paintwork around the waterline, and the salt had caused rust on our new hull, but we were otherwise unharmed. We were now in a position to have our heating fixed. With hindsight, it was a mistake to have a domestic oil heater, with two concentric wicks designed to be horizontal. Boat floors are seldom horizontal, but that is another story,



Towpath Nature photos
thanks to Judy Gosnell

News from the Trust Info Centre

Helen Thomas

Recent visitors included people considering moving to the area and wanting to discover the possibilities for boating, walking and cycling along the canal. One lady was even thinking of finding a narrow boat to become her new permanent home. We sent her away with plenty of ideas and magazines to help her.

However, our selection of information leaflets is rather limited at the moment. Is there any trust member who could develop simple leaflets of short walks based on different sections of the canal? As an example there is a very good leaflet produced about Shrivensham by Tony, one of our shop staff. Given current financial constraints we need a sheet which can be photocopied as often as needed in the centre. Offers please.

We can also point some people to the trust's website with its excellent new maps.

Meanwhile we are trying to dispose of certain clothing stock at reduced prices so that we can add baseball caps later this year, as requested at the AGM.

We also have a range of books and cards plus some lovely silk scarves and ties, great gifts for anyone. Look at the online shop if you prefer to do business in that way.

Soon you will see changes in the posters, layout and displays within the centre. Budget for this is minimal so we are being imaginative with any material we have. We want to keep displays up to date so please send news from all the branches of developments in your area.

Partnership Officer's Report

Ken Oliver

Partnership News

The March meeting of the Partnership was cancelled due to the bad weather.

Current 'hot topics' for the whole project include the M4 crossing for the canal south of Swindon and the new proposed 'Southern Connector Road' for Swindon's New Eastern Villages.

M4 Crossing

A long story to tell here but in précis there is an opportunity to co-site the canal crossing with a tunnel required for the road scheme linking Wichelstowe to the M4 at Junction 16. So far Swindon Borough Council has excluded the canal in the proposed scheme as they believe it would jeopardise delivery of the road scheme.

WBCT and other Partners believe that this is a 'once in a generation' opportunity to construct the canal crossing and we are all working very hard to try to influence a change to the decision.

New Eastern Villages – Southern Connector Road

WBCT engineers await the final decision on the route for this road and will then amend the current design for the canal.

Vale of White Horse DC Local Plan Pt 2

This has now been submitted the Secretary of State and a public enquiry will be held during 2018. The Plan contains a full protection for the route of the canal in Oxfordshire to add to the similar policies in Wiltshire and Swindon.

Towpath Challenge

I asked for suggestions for a new name for this project. So far I have had suggested:

The White Horse Way

The Six Towns Way..(Melksham, Chippenham, Royal Wootton Bassett, Swindon, Wantage, Abingdon) – maybe that should be 7 to include Cricklade!

The Town and Country Way

The Moonraker Way

Let me know what you think, or add your own suggestion.

Southern Canals Network

In the wider context of canal restoration, Phase 1 of the Cotswold Canals restoration was signed off as complete by Heritage Lottery Fund in November last year. We wish the project well as they now await news of their bid to HLF for Phase 1b to connect to the Gloucester & Sharpness canal (and therefore to the national network).

Just Phases 2 and 3 to go then, plus the Wilts & Berks!



@wiltsberks canal (Twitter)

www.facebook.com/wiltsberks canal (Facebook)

None this edition!

Letters
The Editor
Dragonfly Magazine

Email:- editor@wbct.org.uk

Write to:- Dragonfly Editor, Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham, SN15 4HD.

The Trust encourages debate and contributions from members on any matter relating to the Trust, and believes the letters page provides a forum for this. However the Editors reserve the right to shorten, change or not to publish any letters received.

Fun At The Museum

Val Melville

How many years does it take for an event to become a tradition?

Each year since 2014, Melksham, Calne and Chippenham Branch and Chippenham Museum and Heritage Centre have collaborated to offer practical workshop sessions during February half term, making 2018 our fifth – and possibly finest – year. These sessions are now a well-established event in Chippenham children's calendar, with one mum saying last week: 'He's been looking forward to this since last year!'

A wonderful band of adaptable volunteers changed their muddy boots and overalls for clean shoes and blue t-shirts. Instead of driving dumpers and concrete mixers, they wielded scissors and glue; and rather than building locks and tow paths or clearing undergrowth, they showed what an amazing range of skills they have by getting stuck into model boat building, miniature brick making, t-shirt printing and plate decorating. Another mum was overheard commenting how brilliantly patient the helpers were with her children, despite it being a little challenging coping with children ranging in age from 2–12 years all trying to make models at the same time!

Seventy-two children, plus their parents, attended over the four sessions, although on a cold, wet

Tuesday morning, it seemed as if they had all descended at the same time. But we survived still smiling, the children left very happy with what they had made, and the remaining three sessions were much calmer, with fewer wet coats.

This very important part of our community engagement gives us a chance to promote the canal to a new generation in a way that excites and interests them, and it will hopefully gain us new members and volunteers for the future. It certainly makes them aware that the canal once existed and that it is being restored; and it was great to make the front page of the Gazette & Herald (we even pushed the pancake races to the inside) – all good publicity.

Many thanks to Chippenham Museum and Heritage Centre for encouraging us to make a mess in their lovely Education Room, and to all volunteers who gave up their time for such a worthwhile event.

In the words of museum curator Mel Barnett: 'We are so grateful to you and the WBCT for all that you do for the museum. Your workshops are the highlight of the activity year and are always well attended.'

We are already looking forward to next year for this (newish) traditional event.



Nikita Wilson-Ash making a model narrow boat with Wilts & Berks Canal Trust volunteer Keith Vickery



Harriet and Gabriela Slater making T-Shirts



Peterborough Arms upcycled furniture. Article page 22



New wing wall and coping above Pewsham Top Lock article pages 24/25



Cornhill Lane Bridge
Article pages 20/21



Stockham section west of the housing developments
Article pages 20/21

Visit the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust Information Centre



1 Theatre Square, Swindon SN1 1QN

Opening times:
Monday, Wednesday, Friday & Saturday
10am - 3 pm

email: swindon.shop@wbct.org.uk



-  Learn more about the Canal, its history & route (including points of interest).
-  Get an update on restoration projects.
-  Become a member of the Trust.
-  Get information on the Trust's boat trips.
-  Purchase a range of canal related merchandise including books, tea towels, Trust work wear and much more.

The Information Centre welcomes

New volunteers from all branches and interested members of the public.
We also welcome canal related information on what branches and members are doing.

In memory of Bob Jackson

10/12/1921 - 01/12/2017



This is a photo of Bob helping to clean out the canal at Cricklade! He spent many a Sunday mucking out and even mucking in ...on one occasion, when he fell into the water! He was often the bearer of a cake that Pat baked for all the volunteers to have with their hot drinks.

Bob very much enjoyed his time volunteering with the WBCT and the camaraderie of the people he worked with.

Veronica James (Bob's Daughter on behalf of his wife, Pat)

Master Planning Status February 2018

As many of you will have been waiting for the results of the Master Plan commissioned by the Trust on 9 February 2014, in order to bring members up to date it was decided that the completion and presentation of the Master Plan, largely completed, should be suspended until further notice. There are several reasons for this:

Whilst we have received news from Vale of White Horse that the Canal route has now been accepted for inclusion in current and future core plans in the Vale, we have not yet had a response from the Chief Planner that the Abingdon Outline Master Plan is accepted. This plan was first presented mid-2016. In consequence this has delayed final preparation of the Challow – Wantage – Grove Master Plan. Until these two major plans can be included with some certainty, the stretch from Acorn Bridge to Abingdon is less meaningful.

Whilst we continue to hear that Wiltshire County remain behind the Melksham Link Master Plan, the decision to split the plan into two parts as a result of land acquisition difficulties with one owner, the Master Plan concept's relevance remains yet unproved.

Master Planning for the town centre of Swindon is currently up for approval by the Council. It is felt that waiting for approval to create the canal hub through Swindon would be a wise precaution. This has not so far proved an easy job.

In turn, when the Master Plan is accepted through the town centre, this will provide a major impetus to conclude the outline Swindon to Cricklade link Master Plan. This is to be created as a dual heritage project (canal and steam) project, but is highly dependent on Swindon town centre delivery.

Master planning resources have been and are fully utilised since late summer 2017 on recovery of several challenging Trust projects.

The Master Plan framework for, and much of the detailed infrastructural work to, has been completed for some time. With much of the content and logic accepted in principle, the whole plan can be concluded, as the Trust Board require, within a short time.

C J M MacKenzie

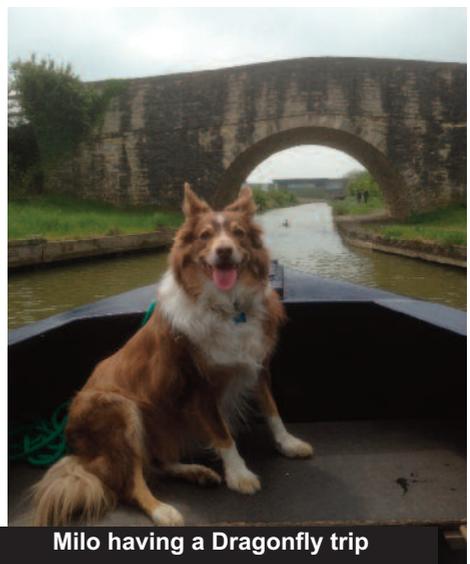
Have you met Milo yet?

Helen Thomas

He is one of the regular features in the Trust's information centre in Swindon on Wednesdays, along with his owner Brian Sharp and friend John Land.

Milo is an unusual red collie dog found in a Plympton rescue centre in Devon and now living happily in Swindon. Not only is he part of the info-centre team but he also goes on work parties with the branch crew.

When in our centre, Milo welcomes all visitors with a friendly loud bark. He has his own fan club, who come in each week to see him, sometimes with suitable gifts of bones. As the photo shows, Milo is also at home on Dragonfly, so look out for him and give him a friendly pat. He does not bite humans!



Milo having a Dragonfly trip

A Wander Along Our New Lease

Brian Stovold

Challow: Gateway to the West! People often say, and with good reason, that articles in Dragonfly are full of exotic locations and names and politely ask where are they? So I thought it would be timely to write something about our newly acquired stretch of canal west of Wantage.

Don your virtual reality waterproofs and walking boots therefore and join me at East Challow Village Hall (Canal Way, East Challow OX12 9SR), find the Canal Trust's notice board by the side of the road. You are standing roughly where the brick arch bridge stood! I've only seen one photo of this bridge, albeit a view looking down the hill.

Worth a glance to the north to the imposing Nalder and Nalder engineering works building, now converted into flats. This was the original Challow Brewery!

Now turn round, find the gap in the hedge opposite marking the tow path, check it's safe to cross and head across and down the footpath

Behind the long wooden fence on the left-hand side is the Wharfmaster's house and the site of Challow wharf.

Beyond where the wooden fence ends, look for a small pond in the garden on the right, find the hedge line crossing from north and south, the canal becomes reasonably extant...here's where our lease starts.

Enjoy the walk along the tow path...isn't it quiet apart from the odd car going along the A417?

Eventually you'll reach Cornhill Lane and a bridge across the canal. This was originally a simple lift bridge, now a fixed flat bridge. Officially a BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic) it had to be closed a couple of years ago as the 4 x 4s had made such a mess of the lane. Now open again so mind the ruts! This is also known as King's Lift Bridge. The lane was a drove road coming off the main Reading-Gloucester road and heading up onto the downs. Take a second to imagine the drovers and the herds of sheep, cows, geese in booties, etc. This also marks the boundary between the parishes of East and West Challow.

Many years ago when we previously had permission to work, we excavated under the bridge

to find the invert and thereby work out the levels. A bund prevents water flowing intentionally eastwards for the moment. Flooding is a well-known issue along the adjacent A417 for which "the canal" sometimes gets the blame. Personally I blame those who allowed the watercourse to be blocked, infilled and otherwise messed with!

Move westwards, pausing only to converse with the probable dog walker....and put on your sou'wester (if reading this in the summer add sun cream and a warm fleece).

Just at the boundary of the house on the right hand side you'll see a ditch running northwards. This is fed by a spring on the south side of OWW (our wonderful waterway) and runs under OWW in a siphon. Anecdotal evidence says that it originally fed a water trough further down the field but later was extended to go all the way to the main road and runs adjacent to it all the way to the junction with the West Challow Road near Mellor's Garage (culverted).

Moving on: If the undergrowth is low then it is possible to see Milestone 42 on the offside bank (partly fallen over, unlike I hope yourself).

The next structure is Hiskins Lift Bridge (or remains thereof). Just the brickwork remains, and note the pipe heading across the canal. The canal was infilled within the bridge hole to prevent water heading eastwards but this caused problems. Water flowing into the canal beyond here was backing up and flowing through a hole in the bank into the afore-mentioned siphon just west of here. The hole was repaired and the infill removed with permission of the landowner.

Eventually you will come to a small bridge over the Cornhill Ditch...and the initial boundary of our lease (yes, there's a gap). The ditch comes down from a spring on the hillside. Originally it would have fed into the canal. At some time after the canal was abandoned a ditch was dug out on the tow path side. When we first were able to work here a few years ago the public footpath had to do a mini climb up and down the spoil heap which we moved some years ago! Mount Challow was removed and level conditions returned.

The next item of interest is a causeway across

the canal. There are pipes carrying water under the causeway and in wet winters the water flows over the top. The track gives access to the farmer's detached field to the south and will need to be replaced by a bridge in due course.

As you approach the point at which the road comes near to the road on the south side we resume a part of OWW over which we have the lease. The public footpath finishes at Silver Lane, site of a standard brick arch bridge.

(Pause for another quick story: If as I hope you have the entire set of Doug Small's Wilts & Berks Canal books, and if you look at page 106 of the first epic tome you'll see a picture of this arch bridge, looking westwards (the picture, not the bridge) and on the left hand side the West Challow Post Mistress in full garb looking on (eastwards). This is a gorgeous photographic postcard handed to yours truly at a country show (Ridgeway Machinery Preservation, I think) back in the mists of the 1990s).

Cross the road and go through the gate. The notice on the gate points out that this is a permissive rather than a public footpath. Our lease ends at the next field boundary just before the Childrey Brook flows under the canal or rather through the canal bed in a large pipe. I wonder if there was a siphon here originally?

If all you are interested in is our leased stretch then turn back here dear reader and return back to East Challow or wherever you left your mode of transport: however, if still gripped by this outdoor extravaganza then read on. There'll be a quiz later!

Childrey Brook marks the boundary between

West Challow and Childrey. Take a rest at the seat and contemplate life in general, the sound of kites mewling overhead and anything else which takes your fancy. You shouldn't get disturbed by the residents of the field behind. It's West Challow Cemetery (which is actually in Childrey Parish).

Further on you reach the Childrey-West Challow bridleway. Alongside is the "temporary bridge" installed to enable us to take out the infill on the remains of the bridleway canal bridge and replace it with a new flat bridge. Project currently on hold for various reasons too long to go into here.

Enjoy the view across the fields or along the next stretch of canal (not open to the public). I once saw a snake swimming across the canal here, and water voles. Our local Wildlife Trust do surveys every year.

From here either retrace your steps OR take the bridleway up into Childrey village, linger briefly at the village pond, follow the path along the main street and turn left into Stow Hill. Follow the road until it turns into a footpath. This can then be followed along the side of the hill all the way back to East Challow. On a good day it gives great views across the Vale and is well worth doing.

Another time I'll take you on the circular walk around Childrey taking in Childrey Wharf but I feel the editor's pen approaching.

The plan for the moment is to start judicious canal bed clearance, no heavy work until everything else is in place, tidy up the offside hedgerow to enable stock-proof fencing to be erected, organising work on some of the rather ageing willows, etc.

News from the Land Team

The Trust has recently completed the purchase of another section of the canal, some 630 metres between Melksham and Lacock. This is the culmination of more than three years of negotiation with the executors of Queenfield Farm and their agents which has resulted in the farm being sold in lots and WBCT being able to purchase the canal, a key section of the Destination Lacock route.

Last year the Land Team was able to acquire a long term lease of some 880 metres at West

Challow and to negotiate the transfer of more than 550 metres at Morningside Farm, Royal Wootton Bassett from Wiltshire Council. Both transactions also required several years of negotiation and mean that the Land Team has now brought more than 1 ¼ miles of the line into WBCT control.

None of this would have been possible without your generous donations. The Team is very grateful for your continued support and looks forward to being able to report further acquisitions.

Peterborough Arms Update

Dave Maloney

As with other areas of the Trust's projects our work is now limited by funds which are diverted to cover Studley Grange costs. We are indebted to Trust members and members of the public who are making generous donations to help us continue with the refurbishment. These have enabled the small band of core volunteers to continue with the refurbishment. Two new volunteers joined us recently and we still have "specialists" in the wings we can call on. We have small fiddly jobs to finish down stairs but Fiona, Janet and Ian have moved to the first floor to start the bedroom refurbishments, with one now completed.

Due to two swing doors and a set of steps from the kitchen area, one of the potential chefs had suggested a hatch through to the kitchen from a proposed food preparation room behind the bar. When we investigated this idea we discovered an old outside window, fully intact, which had simply been boarded up when the kitchen extension had been built. Hopefully this will just be a case of removing the window frame and making good to create the new hatch.

In preparation for our recent beer festival the cellar was cleaned and new beer lines fitted and the beer engines serviced. Trust member Rob Jones from Caterfix Kitchens, who gave his time free to work with us on this task, ably assisted volunteer Mike. We currently have some ceiling boards removed in the cellar whilst we install insulation.

Although new furniture through the pub had been planned it was decided to refurbish some of the old furniture. With amazing work and skill by Fiona and David Rivers and Richard and Jacqui Mason we now have four tables and 12 refurbished chairs that are very much in keeping with the pub. A more "industrial" feel is planned for the bar area.

Once the spring weather arrives we will be moving to the outside of the building to carry out repairs and refurbishment to the exterior walls, windows, roofs and chimneys. This will need a fairly substantial "cherry picker" which is not cheap to hire so if you know anyone who has one we can borrow or loan for a week, at a discounted rate, please let me know.

Planning applications have been submitted and registered by the County planners. Two sets have gone in, one for the construction of the DLCC (17/11329/FUL) and others (17/11356/LBC 18/01244/FUL) for work at the Peterborough Arms to include an outside lantern, smoking "shed", new rear doorway and raised floor in a rear room.

The construction of the Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre DLCC) at the rear of the pub will of course allow us to move the admin office out of the pub, thus releasing the skittle alley playing area for refurbishment and the engineers' office for conversion to a food prep room, thus moving us closer to the day when the pub will re-open for drinks, food and skittles.

Dave Maloney

**East Vale Branch Notice
Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 2nd May 2018 at 8pm
Royal British Legion, East Hanney**

**Melksham, Calne & Chippenham branch (including
Foxham & Lyneham sub branch) Notice
Annual General Meeting
Tuesday 5th June 2018 starting at 19:45 hrs
The Rachel Fowler Centre, Market Place, Spa Road, Melksham SN12 6EX**

Ann O'Donoghue

With effect 31 March 2018 Ann will be retiring from the Trust Office, but not, I hasten to add, leaving the Trust. She has expressed a wish that she continues to be involved with our work and that we call on her to assist from time to time on an ad hoc basis. So I very much hope that she will remain a very active member of our organisation.

Ann has served us for many years and at various locations: Royal Wootton Bassett, Spittleborough Farm, and recently the Peterborough Arms. It is very much thanks to her that the pub-with-no-ale (as Dave Maloney kindly refers to it) has had life breathed into it. It was a rather cold and dank place before the Office moved there and Dave's restoration work got under way. Ann was always on hand to welcome members and officers to the Trust Office and made sure that there were always tea and biscuits to hand... while, of course, making sure that the office administration ran smoothly. There was always work to be done.

I have only known Ann for a relatively short period of time. Many of you have known her and her good works for longer than me. Please all of you join me in thanking Ann for everything she has done for us through thick and thin, through the dust of the renovation works at the Peterborough Arms. And join me in asking Ann to stay in touch and be an active member while she enjoys her retirement.

Jonathan Till CEO

**Dragonfly is available as a PDF via email. Please contact
membership@wbct.org.uk**

It's the Luck of the Draw Prize Draw 2018

Yes, I know, it does not seem that long since we completed the 2017 prize draw. For the last two years I have been a bit tardy in getting the tickets out for the start of the events season, so I am starting the process earlier this year.

Last year's Draw, in aid of the Land Fund, made four thousand pounds profit (including gift aid), and gave eight lucky people an unexpected early Christmas present. This wonderful amount raised matched the previous year's total, which was the best we had achieved for several years. This was a fantastic effort, so many thanks to all who supported the appeal.

The work of the Trust continues to expand and grow. The land team have been busy following up numerous potential leads and we have just completed the purchase of another section of the canal between Melksham and Lacock.

Funds raised from the sale of raffle tickets last year went into the Land Fund and this year they

may be used for this purpose or others as determined by the Board of Trustees.

Those in our Trust's office, in addition to accounting for the stubs and monies sent in, also spend quite a lot of time responding to requests for additional tickets. If you can sell more than I have enclosed in this edition of Dragonfly, please contact them. They will be delighted to help.

It is with postage costs in mind that I have included four books of tickets this year. There is no pressure on you to sell them all, although it would be great if you could. I am grateful for every single ticket sold.

The stubs (with your contact details on) and monies need be returned to the Trust Office at the Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre by 30 September. The draw will take place at the AGM in October.

Full details of the draw, including the Office address, is on the tickets.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Malcolm Hitchinson

Companies And Contact Names For Financial Support

As you will have read elsewhere, I have taken up the mantle of Head of Fundraising, since Kath retired last year and Sheila has moved on to a Trustee role. I am sure you will join me in thanking them both for their unstinting and invaluable efforts.

Two very experienced gentlemen, Gordon Olson and Neil Croucher, are helping my Fundraising team to raise the money our Trust so needs at the moment. Neil is focussing on securing major long term core support for the Trust to create a secure and stable financial platform from which we may rebuild our reserves. By achieving this it will enable us to seek major project funding to see through so many of the great projects that are in the pipeline, but currently stifled.

I ask you, please, if you can think of your local and work communities to see if there are any companies who you might know of who might be able to support us with reasonable funding (say £5,000 or more) to support such an initiative. We would like the names of the companies and, if possible, senior contacts and any relevant details so that we can make an approach.

This is a one-off chance for us to find the immediate core funds to make everything else happen. I do hope you will have a think about this and send any suggestions to me at derekflexer@wbct.org.uk and we can start collating a list for Neil to make contact.

Your help with this would be invaluable and I thank you in advance for your support.

With best wishes

Derek Flexer

**Royal Wootton Bassett Branch Notice
Annual General Meeting
Monday 14th May 2018 starting at 7.30pm
Angel Hotel, High Street, Royal Wootton Bassett**

Around The Branches

**A brief summary of what's happening
along the line.**

MELKSHAM, CALNE AND CHIPPENHAM AND FOXHAM & LYNEHAM SUB BRANCH

Chairman:

Dave Maloney. 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham, SN15 3GQ.

Tel 07809 374 754

Secretary:

Lyn Dyer. lyn.dyer@wbct.org.uk

Tel 07486 948 017

MCC members and invited guests celebrated the success that 2017 undoubtedly was with a fine meal at the Chippenham Golf Club.

We reflected on the achievements of 2017, and occasional setbacks, but as always branch members bounced back and carried on regardless.

I would like to take this opportunity in the early days of 2018 to thank all our clean shoe and dirty boot volunteers, and those family members who support them, for all the hard work carried out in 2017.

My thanks also to George Eycott (WRG), our friends at the Devizes branch of the K&A and Ann and Justine at HQ for their continued hard work and support. I would also like to thank all our branch members for their continued encouragement and support in particular during our bid for Aviva funding for the Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre.

Finally, thanks to John & Margaret for their sterling efforts over the years as Dragonfly editors.

Wow, sounds like an Oscar-winning speech – however, all those mentioned help us in our progress along the MCC line.

Recently this progress has included the completion of a 3- year environmental plan to clear some 800m of line north of the A4. We have one small job to do and that's to remove the 126 stumps from the canal/tow path. We plan to carry this out during the summer months. The Land Team are currently in negotiations to secure a lease on an

adjoining 700m to start work in September 2018.

During the latter months of 2017 our midweek team finished the northern wing walls including some very effective looking concrete coping (photo page ??).

Jock's Master Planning team have been asked to create a mini Master Plan for the Pewsham line, from the A4 to Reybridge, a distance of some two miles (3.5km). They are currently working with branch volunteers to form the foundation of such a plan. While the mini master planning is taking place we hope to start work on two or three structures at Pewsham during 2018 and have indeed started uncovering middle pound waiting walls and bottom lock northern wing walls.

Our events team have been busy planning 2018 and we hope to attend 25 events this year. These events will be a mixture of fund-raising, public awareness and social events. Something for everyone and if you'd like to get involved just contact me for more information.

Dave Maloney

ROYAL WOOTTON BASSETT

Chairman:

Jenny Stratton, 35 Sheriden Drive, Wootton Bassett, Swindon SN4 8JJ Tel 01793 850310

Secretary:

John Bower, 20, Glebe Road, Royal Wootton Bassett, SN4 7DU Tel 01793 636297

In December we invited representatives of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust along to visit us on a work party day and this was arranged for early December. WWT are the new owners of the whole of Morningside Farm except for the canal corridor which runs through the middle of it and is now owned by WBCT. As we are now close neighbours we thought it would be useful to meet them in order to get an appreciation of each other's ambitions for the area. We had a very useful meeting when we assured them we were pleased to have WWT preserving the wildlife meadows around the canal corridor when otherwise they could have been lost for ever. They acknowledged the work we had done in preserving the canal and the wealth of wildlife in the canal corridor. I think each of us appreciated the benefits of being able to work together in the future to make Morningside Farm something very special.

We also invited Paul Heaphy, RWB Town Council Canal Representative, to visit us at Morningside and we were able to show him along the Studley section. He was impressed with what we have achieved and is a regular dog walker along the Templars Firs tow path.

Before Christmas we were hoping to start the construction of nearly six hundred metres of stock fencing at the far end of the Studley section to prevent dogs straying on to adjacent farmland. However this didn't happen so we busied ourselves clearing out our compound where we have accumulated nearly twenty years of 'don't throw that out it may come in useful' items. We did sort out a lot of things and discarded quite an assortment but we still don't have a lot of extra room for some reason.

Steve Bacon arranged a walk along the Studley section on Boxing Day morning. Although it was

done at short notice we had a good turnout of people to act as marshals and a rewarding number of members came along for the walk on a cold but sunny morning. Well worth doing.

We were given permission to start the Studley fencing at the end of December and we received a number of generous donations of fencing materials from members plus a substantial cash donation. We also had a 200 Club grant which was itching to be spent.

Members Keith and Mary Lambert have a smallholding near the entrance to the Studley site and they arranged the donations of materials as well as contributing themselves. The materials were delivered to their property ready to be transported on site. There must have been a ton or more of posts and stock fencing that had to be transported to the far end of Studley. Because the towpath is new it is quite soft in places, which prevents using a dumper on it. Our only means of transport is a four wheeled trailer we purchased for the purpose but has a limited capacity and requires two people to pull and another two to push the almost three

quarters of a mile to the far end. Keith and Mary to the rescue again, transporting the materials with their quad bike and trailer taking only two days to move it all and not leaving a mark on the towpath. It would have seen us off doing it with the trolley, as it is we have to trolley all our tools and bits and pieces a mile each way every week.

January and February have been cold and miserable months but we have made good progress with the fencing which we hope to complete in the coming weeks. Last week the weather forecast was for extremely cold conditions so I expected very few volunteers but eight hardy souls turned up despite -5oC. We had to work quickly to keep warm so a lot was done!

We are hoping the tow path will be open in the coming weeks though the permissive path across the old landfill site will be done at a future date. We are always on the lookout for new volunteers so come along and join us on a work party one Wednesday. There always seems to be more work waiting to be done.

John Bower

SWINDON

Chairman:

Rod Hacker, 11 Whittington Road, Swindon, SN5 7DF

Tel: 07840 072817

Secretary:

John Farrow

Tel: 01793 490672

Our summer season for attendance at events to raise our profile and recruit new members usually starts with the Old Town Rotary Club's Duck Race in late May and runs through to September at least. We now have a volunteer team which is considering how many and which ones we can manage this year.

We did eleven last year and turned down some opportunities which came to us at very short notice. This activity will integrate with consideration of events we plan for ourselves and with our fund-raising plans, also being looked at by a sub-group. We have been challenged with raising more funds this year than we have done in the last couple of years. I can safely say that there is plenty of work to do this year and we will need all the volunteer help we can get. Equally, we need all the good ideas that we can get.

Active planning is under way for our annual meeting which this year will be held on Saturday 2

June at the Immanuel URC Hall where we used to hold very successful evenings a few years ago. See our notice in this edition of Dragonfly. We would like to see once again a big turnout for an interesting and enjoyable evening.

At last real signs of progress are showing at Wichelstowe. The first phase enabling works which caused the closure of part of the canal are finished and the second phase has commenced. It will still be late summer before we can get back to the landing stage at Waitrose. We have seen the planning application for the new footbridge from the Waitrose side to the new district centre and pub on the opposite bank. This will be a very impressive and memorable structure in keeping with the decision to name the whole area as Canalside.

The signature of the agreement for the council's joint venture with a major builder for the rest of Wichelstowe means that we can now look forward

to agreeing the design details for the link canal from the old line near Waitrose to the new length at East Wichel, and perhaps seeing some of it built soon.

We have now made approaches to the council's planning team with two outline schemes. The first for the short length, including a lock, from East Wichel to the new business village adjacent to Croft road where the developer intends to build a short length for us. The second is for the western connection to Royal Wootton Bassett at Hay Lane which includes a proposed new crossing point under the M4.

I mentioned last time the idea for an enlarged slipway at our compound which would enable the Dragonfly to be turned and so increase the length of navigation from Kingshill while we wait for the canal restoration to be completed. We think we have a solution and the modest funding needed so this may even be achieved before you read this piece.

Some of our readers may have seen the public consultation on the new road schemes to accommodate the Eastern Villages expansion. This showed a new line for the Southern Connector Road from Commonhead Roundabout to the new

development area. This change means that we have to redesign the central section of our canal line between the A419 and the A420 road crossings. The plus side is that we can make use of the survey data compiled for the road. We plan to get a new scheme ready for showing at the same time as the road design goes public.

Out in the real world of chilly Sunday mornings our work party continues with the winter tasks of clearing the growth of hedges and trees and maintaining safe access to our canal. Rumour has it that a few bonfires have kept them enthusiastic.

In anticipation of a busy summer we have reverted to monthly branch meetings to which all branch members are welcome. Please note we have also changed the venue and day of the week so don't forget to update your diaries with the new dates – see our notice in this magazine or the web pages.

For the last couple of years our branch meetings have been hosted by Maureen and Keith Walker but we felt it was unfair to continue putting this burden on them. We owe them a tremendous thank you for all they have done for the branch for at least 30 years.

Rod Hacker

WEST VALE

Chairman:

Graham Banks, 12 Craven Common, Uffington, Faringdon, SN7 7RN

Secretary:

Brenda Forward, 'Llamedos', Longcot Rd, Shrivenham SN6 8HF

Tel: 01793 782776

Well, as expected the winter rains arrived and the pond in the park filled to the brim and it sure looks good. The wet weather curtailed our work parties somewhat and so did the snow, ice and bitter cold winds so as usual we are all behind. Luckily for us, we have had some mechanical assistance in the form of the Trust tractor.

A tractor training course was arranged here in West Vale with six trainees from several branches attending. The trainer and trainees braved a bitterly cold, windy, but unusually dry day. The trainees quickly learnt how to maintain the tractor and then to attach a rear flail mower, then they all 'got a go'. The tractor was dispatched to the Canalside Park, lots of work for it to do there and plenty of space for the novices to practise; it's not as easy as it looks, lots of knobs and levers to cope with, but they all soon got the hang of it. They were all

amazed at just how quickly it cut a neat 4-feet wide swathe through low scrub, brambles, coarse weeds and grass tussocks and used so little fuel! It even trimmed up a dry bit of the canal bed! They all wanted to take it back to their branch, big boy's toys to play with!

However, West Vale Branch had bagged it first! So on the first work party day that it didn't rain or snow, (one gets awfully cold and wet atop a tractor with no cab!), it was again put through its paces in the Canalside Park. It took just a couple of hours to make a neat and tidy job that would have taken several volunteers weeks of hard graft! And with further training with the hedge flail fitted it would easily cut back towpath hedges and canal banks as well! The tractor had to be returned so it's back to manual labour! Most of our winter work parties are engaged in tree/hedge work of some kind;

mostly cutting up wind damaged branches and trimming back shrubs and hedges. Even tidying up the entrance to the park took a couple of work party visits, the ornamental shrubs that border the entrance had flopped over the road and had grown high up into neighbouring trees and some of the lower branches on the roadside trees were in danger of scratching passing cars. It's surprisingly hard work and the resulting bonfires are massive, keeps us warm though! If we had a few more volunteers we may have a chance of catching up with outstanding jobs, If! We do have less strenuous, outstanding jobs to catch up on as well, fancy giving us a hand?

Would you believe it! The Shrivenham Canalside Park was opened 20 years ago, amazing just how

fast time flies and how fast trees grow! To celebrate the anniversary West Vale Branch is to hold a "Mid-summer madness – bit of a do" party at the park on Saturday 23 June. But our few local volunteers would appreciate a bit of organizational help from other branches and indeed anyone! So would you like to join in? Any help or ideas would be much appreciated, just give me a call or email –

An in-depth article about Shrivenham Canalside Park can be found at:-

Or just come along and see for yourself, sure to be a fun day, further details to follow as arrangements are made! Just watch the web pages for news!

Alan Norris

EAST VALE

Chairman:

Brian Stovold, 1 Roman Way, Wantage, Oxon. OX12 9YF

Tel. 01235 763072

Secretary:

Chris Naish, 5 Tirrold Way, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7DL

Tel 01235 769615

It hardly feels like Spring as I try to get this down in print, however at least one of my primroses is strangely out in flower so there's hope yet and on a recent walk along the canal at West Challow the bankside was drifting in snowdrops.

The work parties are re-starting. There's plenty of maintenance to get on with as well as the start of work along the Challow stretch, so if you are interested please contact Jon and join the work parties.

We're already looking at the various shows we would like to attend during the year. However we need more help from the local members to cover these as otherwise we will have to restrict the numbers we go along to. A briefing note is supplied re the current state of play along the canal and I would go through this with any new volunteers so you shouldn't be afraid to think about helping out.

The local branch activity is very much about putting us out in the community expressing the benefits of canal restoration, the more of this we can do the better – as well as keeping the canal maintained and tow paths open.

Last year I didn't put on any activities for the Wantage Summer Festival (June/July) and this was noted by many. The Festival this year was in

doubt as the previous organisers stepped down but I recently heard that a new committee has been formed. I shall therefore be adding some walks and activities at the Sackhouse to the programme.

Talking of the Sackhouse. This reopens in April and we will continue to open the museum on the first and third Wednesday and Saturdays. Again we need more volunteers to help open the place. There must be some of you in the branch membership with a few hours to spare!

Our branch AGM will be held on May 7 at 8pm in our usual venue, the Royal British Legion at East Hanney. There will be a short review of the year and the AGM business.

The Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan 2031 Stage 2 has now gone for inspection. The plan includes an updated policy re the canal and restoration and we are grateful to the planning policy and strategy sections at the VWHDC. We/they now await the Inspector's deliberations.

The housing developments at Stockham are drawing to a conclusion. At the Phase 1 Bovis site they have dug out a catchment pond along side the line of the canal adjacent to Denchworth Road and whilst our plans did not include the restoration of the old line to that point, I can't help thinking it would make a good winding hole/marina, etc.

Brian Stovold

Branch Meeting & Contact Details

The Melksham Calne and Chippenham branch meet at Rachel Fowler Centre, Melksham, at 19:45hrs on the first Tuesday of each month.

MELKSHAM CALNE & CHIPPENHAM WORK PARTY INFORMATION:

Organiser: Ray Canter: raycanter@btinternet.com, Tel 01249 659111, Mob 07717 536883

Work Parties: First Saturday & last Sunday each month

Details of the work parties are circulated by e-mail. Any member wishing to be included in this circulation please contact Ray

The Wootton Bassett Branch meets at 19:30hrs on the first Monday of each month. Please contact the secretary for details of meeting venue.

WOOTTON BASSETT WORK PARTY INFORMATION:

Organisers:

John Bower, 20 Glebe Road, Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire SN4 7DU

Tel 01793 636297

Richard Hawkins

Tel 01793 814959

Work Parties:

There are midweek and some weekend work parties. Please phone for details.

Work involves some maintenance of the existing canal area.

The Swindon Branch usually meets on the 1st Wednesday of the month at 19:30hrs. Next meeting 06 February in the Immanuel URC Hall, Upham Road, Swindon SN3 1DH. Check website or get on the branch email list for details.

SWINDON WORK PARTY INFORMATION:

Organiser:

Oliver Gardiner Tel: 07785 775993

Work Parties:

Regular work parties are on a Sunday morning with some on a weekday. Check our web pages for details www.wbct.org.uk/branches/Swindon

The West Vale branch meet at The Prince of Wales, High Street, Shrivenham at 20:00hrs on the first Wednesday of each month.

WEST VALE WORK PARTY INFORMATION:

Organisers:

Workparty details from West Vale Branch Work Party Organiser & Volunteering co-ordinator –

Alan Norris alan.norris@wbct.org.uk or phone 01793 783024

Branch web-site: www.wbct.org.uk/branches/west-vale

EAST VALE WORK PARTY INFORMATION:

Organiser:

Bob Airey Tel 01235 769469, John Miles 01235 764890

Work Parties:

Second and fourth Saturday of the month with changes at public holiday times.

The East Vale work sites are: Childrey New Road; West Challow; Elm Farm section; and Grove Locks. Contact WPO for details.

Board of Trustees, Executive Committee and Officers

Trustees:

Roderick Bluh,	Chairman & Company Secretary	07831 340 387
Brian Stovold,	Vice Chair	01235 763 072
Sheila Wade	Treasurer	08452 268 567
Steve Bacon		07749 215 741
Sue Cooper	IWA Nominee	08452 268 567
Colin Fletcher,		01380 828 254
Gordon Olsen		08452 268 567

Executive Committee

Jonathan Till	CEO and Finance	07444 432 441
Peter Kinsman	Head of Finance	08452 268 567
Andrew Matters	Head of Engineering and Compliance	08452 268 567
Derek Flexer	Head of Fundraising	07753 980 297
Patricia Clements	Head of Communications, PR,IT and Admin.	07501 947 488
Jock MacKenzie	Acting Executive Manager, Community Cohesion	07867 680 325
Max Crofts	Acting Executive Manager, Restoration and Land Acquisition	08452 268 567
Malcolm Hitchinson	Executive Manager, Commercial	07595 833 297
Dave Maloney	Executive Director, Sustainable Usage	07809 374 754
Neil Croucher	Advisor, Funding	08452 268 567
Dr. David Cook	Environmental and Sustainability Management	08452 268 567

Officers and Employees

Brian Stovold	Branch Chair East Vale	01235 763 072
Graham Banks	Branch Chair West Vale	01179 720 423
Rod Hacker	Branch Chair Swindon	07840 072 817
Jenny Stratton	Branch Chair WB	01793 850 310
Dave Maloney	Branch Chair MCC & Foxham & Lyneham	07809 374 754
George Eycott	Membership Secretary (membership@wbct.org.uk)	07771 775 745
Patricia Clements	Office Manager	08452 268 567
Nancy Collingborn	Finance Administrator	08452 268 567
Justine Hanley	Administrator	08452 268 567
David Chalmers	Gift Aid Officer	01179 720 423
Ian Skerry	Entrust Liaison Officer	08452 268 567
Martin Stubbs	IT/TechOps Officer:	08452 268 567
Chris Barry	Trip Boats Operations Officer	08452 268 567
Doug Small	Archivist	08452 268 567
George Eycott	WRG Officer	07771 775 745
Ken Oliver	Wiltshire Council, Countryside Officer	01249 706 494
Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham, SN15 4HD		08452 268 567

Emails

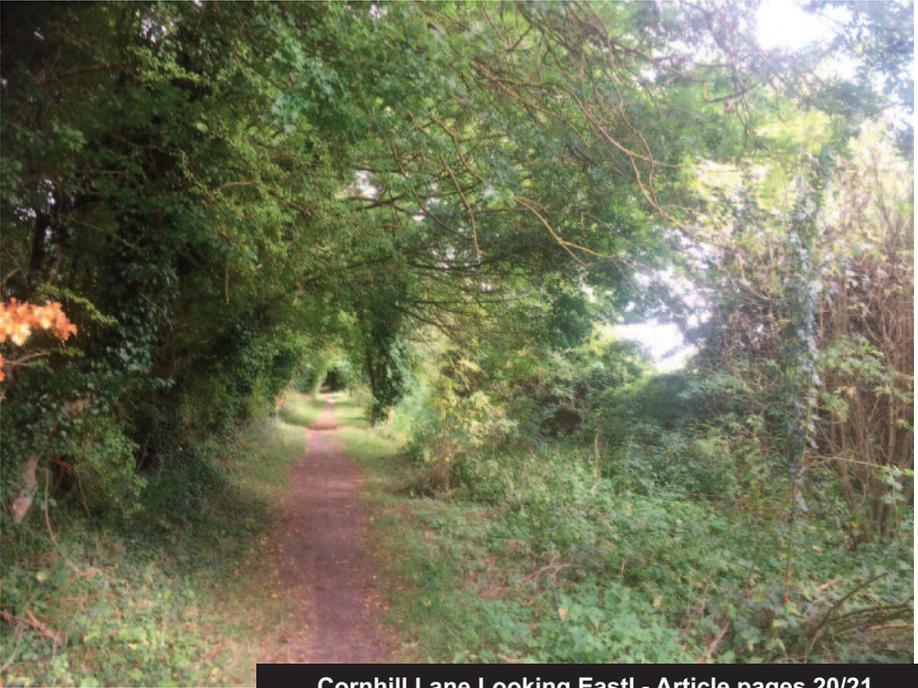
Anyone on this page or in the branch details can be contacted using an e-mail address in the form: first-name.lastname@wbct.org.uk (firstname and lastname as printed in the listings).

Please go to our website at www.wbct.org.uk for further details

A Call for Project Managers

Andrew Matters

The Trust has a range of restoration projects under way and is keen to engage with volunteers who could take on the role of Project Manager for each of these projects. Experience in construction work would be an advantage but is not vital. If this appeals to you then please get in touch with the Trust's Head of Engineering and Compliance, Andrew Matters on andrew.matters@wbct.org.uk

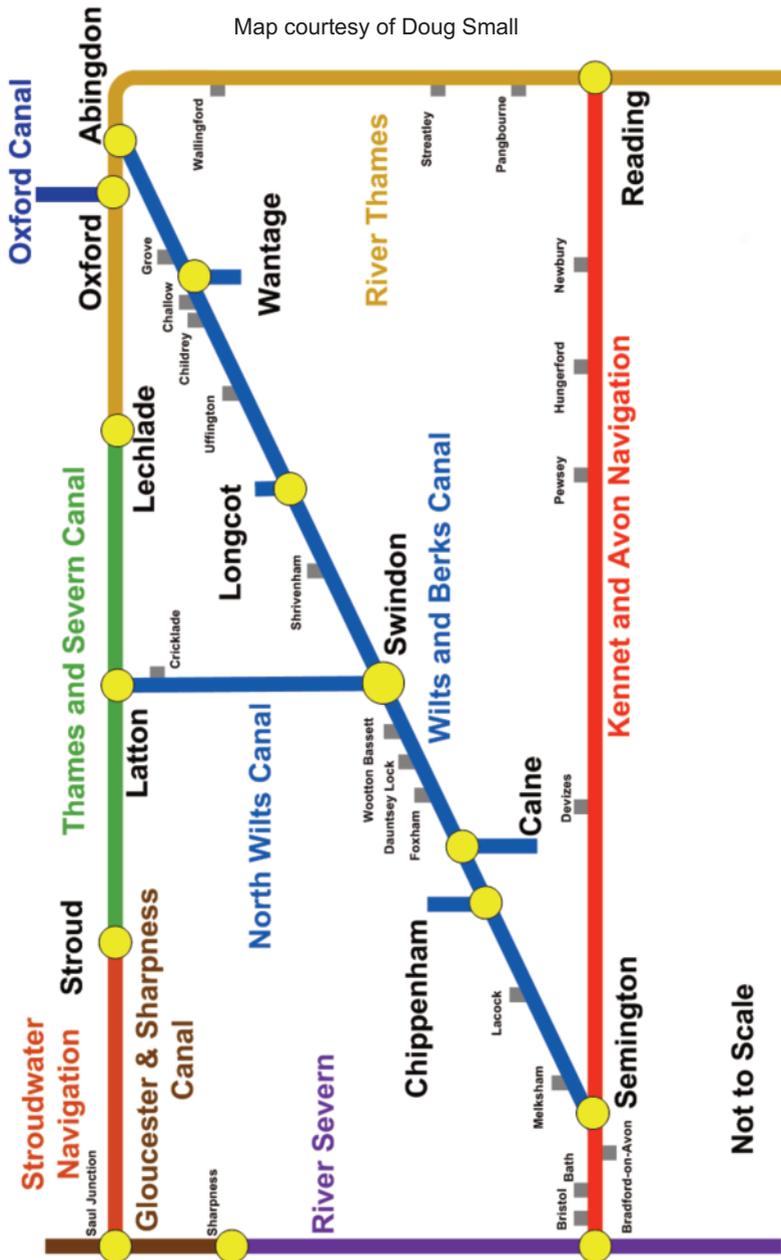


Cornhill Lane Looking Eastl - Article pages 20/21



Cornhill Lane Bridge - Article pages 20/21

Map courtesy of Doug Small



Not to Scale

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