The Quarterly Magazine of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
Winter 2015
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.
The annual membership rate is £10, with discounts available for families and under 18s. 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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Dragonfly 139 Cover Image:
Richard Hawkins of Royal Wootton Bassett Branch with his digger taking out the top of the bund at Bincknoll Lane to get the water flowing again from the newly restored section at Studley Grange.
As we sit putting this edition together, we cannot help but think about the parts of our country which seem to have been submerged for so long. A strong argument still exists for reinstating canals as part of our overall flood defence schemes although even some of those have been inundated this year.

We wish all those involved in repairing the damage and those involved in nationwide restoration a very productive year ahead.

As we carry the announcement of the EGM in March it seems we are heading into a very exciting stage in the story of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust and we wish everyone success in everything they do this year.

So, that is it. 2016 has started already so lets get stuck in and build us all a waterway to be proud of and that can be used by countless numbers of people doing amazing things in it, on it and generally near it!

Best wishes,

The Editors.

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Stop Press

Congratulations are in order following the publication of the New Year’s Honours List


**BEM** - Michael Lee. Volunteer, Kennet and Avon Canal Trust. For services to the restoration of the Kennet and Avon canal.

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Happy New Year to you all!

In 2015, a lot of work has been done and is still on-going to re-organise the way the Trust does its business to ensure that it is in the best possible shape to face the challenges ahead. With that work almost complete, we can now work throughout 2016 to build the momentum and pace of delivery that we all want to see.

There are already a number of exciting projects underway, Studley Grange is almost finished and lots of conversations are beginning to take place with stakeholders about the opportunities that the canal can bring to the communities all the route.

So 2016 should be an exciting year with lots of progress made. It will not be without significant challenges along the way with financial resource, expertise and volunteers being needed more and more.

I ask all of you for your help in getting the word out there that the Trust is serious in the task it is undertaking and we need all the support we can get from wherever we can get it! Furthermore, we need to convince people that the canal will be delivered for the benefit of everyone along its route.

Finally, a huge thank you to all the amazing work done by so many throughout 2015 and in the past. I am genuinely immensely impressed by the commitment that so many give year in year out. With such support there is no reason why we can’t make 2016 better than ever.

I wish you all a happy and successful new year!

Chairman’s Report
Roderick Bluh

The spill weir at Chaddington which we completed about seven years ago after two years work and 250 tons of concrete. It has never been seen in action before but is now receiving water from the incomplete Studley Grange and this is what it looked like a couple of days ago for the first time.
A Special Message from Our Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Invitation to Members to apply to join the new Executive Committee, or to join the support teams and support staff.

Dear Member,

At its last meeting the Board of Trustees approved the organisation of the new Executive Committee, which it has set up to manage the day-to-day business of the Trust. The role of the Board of Trustees remains to set strategy and to oversee its implementation. Allow me to quote from the Q&As on our website.

Q. What will the Board of Trustees do?
A. Its role will be to safeguard the ethos and charitable status of the Trust. It will also appoint the Chief Executive, and set the strategy to follow. The Trustees are expected to focus their time and efforts on governance and strategy, as opposed to executive or ‘delivery’ work.

Q. What is the role of the Executive?
A. To implement the strategy laid down by the Board of Trustees, to manage the operations of the Trust, and to oversee the operations of the Trading and Projects subsidiaries.

Members of the Executive Committee are called Directors and are to be supported by teams and by support staff. Directors will determine how their teams and support staff will be set up and staffed. The CEO will also undertake the role of one of the other Directors as well as providing leadership to the Committee as a whole.

The overall structure including the teams and support staff that I would expect will be supporting the Executive are set out in the chart below. Some of the teams (the Land Team and the Engineering Team) already exist as such; others will be set up from scratch or will be crafted out of other existing bodies (the Projects Board and the Restoration Committee).

Further below you will find the roles envisaged for individual Directors.
We are looking for applicants for:

• Voting members of the Executive Committee (Directors)
• Members and heads of teams, and support staff for consideration at a later stage. We will presume that those in existing roles here will wish to continue with these roles unless we hear to the contrary.

Members may apply for more than one position – indeed we would welcome it knowing that we are a voluntary organisation that relies on the support of its Members.

Please send your application directly to me. By e-mail or by post to the Trust’s offices addressed to me and marking the envelope “APPLICATION – PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL”. Applications should reach me by Sunday 31st January.

During early February a committee made up of Rod Bluh (our Chairman), Colin Fletcher (a senior Member of the Trust) and myself will review the applications for the Executive Committee and as needed will invite individuals to interview. We are working towards having the Executive Committee membership decided in time for an EGM scheduled for 5th March 2016 - see formal notice on page 20.

In your application:

• Please state which position or positions are of interest to you.
• Give a brief description of your suitability for the position.
• Attach a cv.
• Make sure we have your correct contact details!

And if you have any questions or ideas about the new structure or about how you might help, then please write to me or call me using the details at the end of this message.

Outline roles for the Executive Committee members (Directors):

**Projects Director**
- Strategy Document: route, projects, costing
- Restoration policy, engineering design
- Land acquisition policy, acquisition
- Canal restoration organisations
- Project preparation, authorisation by Executive
- Construction contracts preparation, commitment and control
- Preparation of annual report (projects)
- Wilts & Berks Canal (Projects) Ltd

**PR & Communications, IT Director**
- Merchandising
- Website, social media, blog
- Membership, members database
- "Dragonfly" magazine
- Publication of annual report and accounts
- Events management
- Servers, data policy and security
- Internal file sharing, archiving
- Internal e-mail
- External PR & communications
- Data Protection Officer
Volunteers, Property, Commercial Operations Director
- Maintenance policy, implementation
- Health & safety policy, implementation
- Branch policy and support
- Volunteers co-ordination (maintenance, project participation etc)
- Management of Trust's property, plant and equipment (real estate, vehicles, boats etc)
- Commercial operations, shop management
- Boats management
- Preparation of annual report (volunteers, operations)
- Wilts & Berks Canal (Trading) Ltd

Fundraising, Sponsorship Director
- Major donor and grant funding organisations
- Entrust funds
- Legacy fundraising
- Project summaries for funding and communications purposes
- Grant fund applications
- Preparation of annual report (funding, sponsorship)
- Sponsorship of canal restoration through joint venture projects including enabling development

Finance, Legal, Administration Director
- Trust accounting, project & funding accounting including recording of larger commitments (contractual payment obligations and funding commitments)
- Budgeting, financial control and reporting
- Preparation, audit/examination of annual accounts
- Company secretary role
- Membership fees, donations collection, gift aid collection
- Leases database, lease payments
- Assets database, associated payments
- Short term (bridge) finance overdraft facilities
- Taxation, tax payment
- Risk register

Let me take this opportunity of thanking you for your support and of wishing you a peaceful and productive 2016.

Jonathan Till

JONATHAN TILL Chief Executive Officer

07444 432441
By the time you read this it will be the New Year and so a quick look back at our progress in 2015. Studley Grange was definitely the project of the year and although not quite finished at the moment, it was a great achievement for the Trust, the biggest project we have attempted and all visitors to the site were amazed by the scale of the work. As for further fundraising, the members appeal for funds stands at £16,600 so a big thank you to everyone who has given so far. The appeal is still open and the target £25K. The Wildlife Trail part of the project has been ably led by Kate Jones who has involved a lot of local schools, colleges and Guide, Scout and Cub groups who have all enjoyed contributing. All of this will be evident next year when the towpath is surfaced and the site is safe to open to members and the public.

Following on from Studley Grange, I am now looking to raise the funds to join the two sections at Studley and Chaddington together with a new bridge to carry Bincknoll Lane over the canal. This will enable us to run boat trips along the new stretch right through Chaddington Lock which will have gates fitted. Our good friends at Crapper and Sons Landfill have committed to support us with £150K over 18 months for various parts of the work which is a very good start. We now need the funds for the bridge and the rebuilding of the road and I will be working on applications for this. It would be great to get some local businesses involved in sponsorship.

The landing stage outside the Waitrose store at Wichelstowe has proved a big success and trips on Dragonfly now start from there. We hope that 2016 will bring some progress with discussions with the developers and extension of the navigable section.

At Pewsham, we are fundraising for Top Lock which is going to be a volunteer-built project. I am hopeful that the funds will be in place for next year – more news in the next article. I have also put in a bid for funds for initial design work for the cottage and if we get this we can work on the two projects alongside each other. The MCC Events team have been very active this year raising funds for all their projects including this one. The rest of the site will be covered by a bid to HLF and the team has restarted work on this application.

This year’s draw raised a profit of £2,800 which will be used for different projects along the line. This total was quite a bit down on last year so I think we will have a change next year. Always pleased to hear what members think about receiving draw tickets for sale.

I am sure Jeff and Linda Daws are gearing up for a big influx of applications for the 200 Club – maybe they will reach 300 this year and change the name! It is a great source of funds for the branches to be able to buy equipment.

Here’s hoping that 2016 is a great year for you all.
Since the 200 Club was formed four years ago there have been many new members joining the Trust. We therefore, thought it time to remind everyone about the aims of the Club. An annual ticket costs £20 and all the money received is split 50-50. Half the amount raised is returned to ticket holders in ten monthly draws from March to December. Below is a list of the winners from last October to the bumper December draw.

The other half of the money raised is for the Trust branches who are each invited annually, to bid to receive funds for their individual needs. Previous editions of Dragonfly have detailed how money has been awarded. Brush cutters, fencing, display stand, laser level, dumper repairs, floating pontoons to name but a few are items that have benefitted the branches in carrying out restoration works.

In 2012, 172 tickets were sold rising each year to 276 in 2015. With increase in Trust membership we would love to sell 300 tickets which would produce £3,000 of prize money and £3,000 to help branches with their vital works. Help us to achieve this by either buying a ticket or tickets (form is enclosed). Payment can be by cheque, standing order or electronic transfer. Membership is open to Trust and non-Trust members. This is an ideal opportunity to encourage friends, relatives, neighbours, etc. to support our cause and, perhaps, become one of the lucky winners.

We hope you will continue to support the 200 Club in 2016 and be one of the thirty winners next year.

**Previous winners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Prize 1</th>
<th>Prize 2</th>
<th>Prize 3</th>
<th>Prize 4</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Michael Greenslade</td>
<td>£140</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Margaret Hiscock</td>
<td>£70</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deborah Whittaker</td>
<td>£35</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>John Sully</td>
<td>£140</td>
<td>Illminster</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roger Angerson</td>
<td>£70</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deborah Whittaker</td>
<td>£35</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>John McGrath</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lawrence Finnigan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vic Miller</td>
<td>£75</td>
<td>Devizes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ray Canter</td>
<td>£40</td>
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Regards

**Jeff and Lynda Daws**
We welcome the following new members

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<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Branch</th>
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<tr>
<td>4194</td>
<td>Mr C Foster</td>
<td>Corsham</td>
<td>MCC</td>
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<td>4195</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs G Squire</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td>MCC</td>
</tr>
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<td>4196</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs A West</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
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<tr>
<td>4197</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs G Stenning</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4198</td>
<td>Mr B Skingle</td>
<td>Southend - on - Sea</td>
<td>Foxham and Lyneham</td>
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<tr>
<td>4199</td>
<td>Ms J Gibson and Mr C Gaisford</td>
<td>Gastard</td>
<td>MCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>4200</td>
<td>Ms F Lloyd and Mr K Ballard</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
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<tr>
<td>4201</td>
<td>Ms D Watson</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
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<td>4202</td>
<td>Ms D Couling and Mr G Weatherley</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
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<td>4203</td>
<td>Mrs C Pope</td>
<td>Wroughton</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
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<td>4204</td>
<td>Mr P Thorley</td>
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<td>Mr R Sewerniak</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
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<td>Mr R Clarke</td>
<td>Abingdon</td>
<td>East Vale</td>
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<td>4207</td>
<td>Mr M Heath</td>
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<td>East Vale</td>
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<td>Mr E Rodgers</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
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<td>Mr and Mrs Kendall</td>
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<td>Miss H Pinder and Mr M Garforth</td>
<td>Dorchester</td>
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<td>Mr P Blanshard</td>
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<td>4215</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs T Chippendale</td>
<td>Broughton Gifford</td>
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<td>4216</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs Gray</td>
<td>Westbury</td>
<td>MCC</td>
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<td>4217</td>
<td>Ms G Cook</td>
<td>Corsham</td>
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<td>4218</td>
<td>Miss C Richards</td>
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<td>Mr J Till</td>
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<td>Mr and Mrs Crocker</td>
<td>Royal Wootton Bassett</td>
<td>Wootton Bassett</td>
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<td>Mr F North</td>
<td>Wantage</td>
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<td>Mr J Leggett</td>
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<td>4230</td>
<td>Ms. S. Jarvis</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
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<td>Mr P Beard</td>
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<td>Miss M Ryan and Mr P Konitzer</td>
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<tr>
<td>4237</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs Absalom</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
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This year the AGM was under the leadership of our new Chairman and, with the support of his team, presentations were made that showed the growing momentum of the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal. The membership of the Trust, and in particular the volunteers, is what gives the project kudos. The volunteers give a considerable amount of time and effort to the project and in memory of my late husband, Tony Davy, who was Chairman of the Trust from 1996 until his death in June 2004, it is my great pleasure to make an award to the individual who has worked the most volunteer hours and to the branches that have made exceptional input.

This year the Tony Davy Memorial Cup was awarded to Chris Coyle who made an amazing contribution of 1,804 hours during the last financial year with a value of £84,500. This represents a weekly average of over 35 hours a week. Equal to a full time job - not a poor show for a volunteer. This demonstrates an outstanding commitment and I am sure you will all join me in thanking Chris for all he has done, and is continuing to do, for the Trust. During this period Chris has been acting as joint Chairman with Kath Hatton as well as undertaking the position of Company Secretary. Personally I have to thank him for submitting such complete and accurate records of his hours!

I was also delighted to present the Melksham, Calne and Chippenham Branch with the Tony Davy Award for their phenomenal efforts throughout the year, which are mainly concentrated in the Pewsham area. Tony was very excited about the possibilities at Pewsham and would have been delighted to know that these are becoming a reality. The volunteers at MCC branch have contributed 8,860 hours with a value of £146,267.

Having appreciated that there is a variation in branch sizes, and at present MCC is far larger than any other branch, last year I had another Award made to be given to the Branch who had increased their hours the most since the last financial year (on a pro rata basis). I was delighted to present this to the nb Dragonfly Boat Team who have increased their hours by 2,288. Since the inauguration of the new landing stage at Wichelstowe last July the presence of nb Dragonfly has been a focal point to advertise the Wilts & Berks Canal.

All this effort by volunteers helps our joint aim of restoring the Canal and to see it navigable from the Melksham Link to the Jubilee Junction at Abingdon. However, in order to achieve our goal we need funds, and lots of them! To some extent the recording of the volunteer hours will help the cause. Ken Oliver has previously explained the position with Wiltshire Council in this publication. The Trust is about to make an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the input of volunteers will add not only weight to the application but the chance of “matched funding”. More applications will follow so I look forward to receiving a record of all your efforts.

Please keep in touch!
Dear Editor,

What a delight and privilege it was to be invited back onto nb Dragonfly to meet all those children with their families. The children were so excited at finding me on the canal bank; I could hear them 500 metres away. All the children were delighted with their present and I heard many comments from their parents on their good quality. This year was also the first time that I was able to give each child a badge that said "I have seen Santa on Dragonfly" The face on the badge looked just like me.

Turning on the Christmas tree lights outside Waitrose was a joy and it enabled me to meet more happy families.

Big thanks must go to all the boat team who planned, managed and crewed these trips. My Elves tell me that there were over 700 people who came to see me this Christmas.

A very big thank to Waitrose, Mill Lane, Wichelstowe, Swindon, who donated all the delicious mince pies which were much appreciated.

I am already looking forward to returning at Christmas time in 2016 for more fun with the children of Swindon and its surrounds.

Santa

From Tony Bianchi remote member in Rutland.

I know this has been raised before but for those of us who are remote supporters the reports of your branches are often meaningless as we do not know where the significant points on the canal are. The map in Dragonfly is pretty useless and thus most of the things I want to hear about are not able to be located. As I said I know that this has been raised before and I think some attempt was made. I just do not feel as involved as I should when I cannot identify the site of the latest triumph. Why not commission a proper A3 map of the whole system and its ongoing works and sell it for £10 You could also sell yearly updates for say £5

best wishes and keep up the good work

Dear Editors,

Photographs that show what is happening and with good detailed information at last! BUT, not in ‘Dragonfly’. Each magazine that arrives here I hope to see what is happening to the ‘Wilts & Berks Canal’ and each quarter we see people standing grinning at the camera, now insects, toy boats and tiny photos of what might be interesting restoration, if I could find a magnifying glass.

Then in the December copy of ‘Waterways World’ there are 4 pages of really interesting information, lots of photographs that correspond to the text, and even a map that is marginally better than the doodle on the back page of ‘Dragonfly’. I now have a better idea from those 4 pages than all the mag’s since I first joined.

Why in the section headed ‘Around the Branches’ “A LOOK at what is happening along the line”. Can we not see what is going on. Surely there must be some of the branch members that own a camera? The grinning folk will like to see themselves in ‘Dragonfly’ but good photos of restoration are much more likely to bring in more people and people bring in more cash!

Martin Carley
Brosses, France.
Editors notes:
We are pleased to report some real progress on achieving a web based, interactive map showing activities and structures along the whole length. This will make a real difference to peoples’ ability to see what is where and we hope to introduce this to everyone soon.
We too were really pleased to see what a wonderful job Waterways World did on their report. With a lot of sponsorship (their readers purchase the publication), we’re sure we could report more. We suspect the balance is about correct though when one considers the huge sums of money we require to continue the actual renovation of our canal.
We must thank Santa and all his helpers for, once more generating much needed revenue.
If any of our readers would like to save us even more money, may we suggest opting for our electronic *Dragonfly* so that we can save on printing and postage costs. This will mean even more of the money received from our members can be put into projects to progress the actual restoration.

Email:- editor@wbct.org.uk
Write to:- Dragonfly Editor, Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN
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.

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**Volunteering? Please record your hours!**

It is vital the Trust captures all your hard work so we can demonstrate to a wider audience just how much is going on. If you are a volunteer could you please spend a few minutes each month to send your hours to juanita.poulton@wbct.org.uk who will be happy to hear from you and will send you a form for completion if you don't have one. Thank you,

*Juanita Poulton*

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**Land Fund**

The activity in acquiring the track of the Wilts & Berks Canal is continuing to grow and so the need for funds is increasing.

It is vital that we secure the track, as we cannot make serious progress at any point until we have control of the land.

The Land Fund is still open for donations and if you would like to contribute, please send a cheque to *Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN*. If you were able to donate a few pounds on a regular basis, that would be even better.

Just contact the office on **0845 2268567** or by email **info@wbct.org.uk** or speak to Kath on **01380 831231** or **kath.hatton@wbct.org.uk** and we will help you to set up a Standing Order.
Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM)
5th March 2016 of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
1.00pm – 4:30pm

The Trust Office has arranged an EGM for the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, to be held at the Ellendune Community Centre, Barrett Way, Wroughton, Wiltshire, SN4 9LW. Everyone is welcome and members are entitled to participate in the EGM process.

Car parking is available at the Ellendune Centre.

Programme
1:00pm Refreshments and Welcome Packs
2:00pm EGM commences at the Main Hall.
4:30pm Close.

Maps Courtesy of Google Maps 2015

Commemorate the Award to the Trust
What better way to remember the award to the Trust than by buying the splendid souvenir items that are now available. The Trust was awarded a glass crystal, and you can obtain your own replica, engraved with the name of the Trust. Pinbadges, ties, scarves and a replica of the crystal award are available.

Please order your items from:
Administrator, Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN.
Take a stroll along the canal at Royal Wootton Bassett and you may spot a grey heron. For many years a grey heron has visited the canal at Royal Wootton Bassett. Sometimes he is regularly seen and at other times there is no sign of the bird so you could surmise he is a bit elusive. Nevertheless we are always on the lookout for him. Whether it is the same bird, I doubt it, neither is the home location known. What we do know is that the canal and surrounding area are a source of food for the heron.

The heron is a large, grey and solitary bird when by lakes, rivers and canals but enjoys life in a heronry with other herons. The height is often up to a metre tall, with mainly grey feathers, and a plume at the back of the head and with a vicious-looking bill for catching food. The bird likes to stand motionless among reeds and banks of rivers and canals, sometimes on one leg and maybe with closed eyes. Perhaps he is pretending to be asleep but watch and he will pounce should food appear close to him. His food is mainly fish but on occasions small mammals will be swallowed. I recall watching a heron on the bank of the canal and suddenly he made a dart and in his mouth I saw a small vole squeaking like mad and it promptly vanished down the heron’s neck so bye-bye vole.

The heron is a stately bird and if disturbed will make a loud squawk, take off with his big wings outstretched and relocate possibly to the nearby trees or fields. The wings are up to two metres across and so wing beats are rather slow. The heron flies with his legs outstretched behind and neck not straight. Quietly stalk a heron, it is fun to do it along the towpath to see how near you can get before lift-off. Often the heron will be waiting for food on the north side of the canal at Royal Wootton Bassett where there is more vegetation to lurk in and not be seen. He can be found hiding in the grasses close to the towpath hoping to be disguised. When the canal has frozen over during a cold winter, the mallards and moorhens will be sliding about on the ice, should a heron be there you may be lucky to watch his Torville and Deane routine: so graceful with one leg skating in front of the other, no chance of lift off here if disturbed.

Between Templars Firs and the bridges on the north side of the canal are handsome oak and ash trees which are home to many types of wildlife and where the heron can perch on a branch. Further along there are a couple of hybrid black poplars which are regrowing after being reduced in size some years ago and lots of young trees planted during the early days of the restoration. Here you will see ash, oak, sycamore, alder, hawthorn and some apple trees which provide food for birds and insects. In spring butterflies are around usually speckled wood, brimstones, green veined whites and peacocks as their plant foods are amongst the undergrowth.

Not far away at the restored canal near to Swindon at Wichelstowe (close to the Waitrose supermarket) you may see Henry the heron who perches on a post by the canal opposite the landing stage. Look out for Henry when shopping, he is well known to the staff. Explore the restored part of the canal here and at Kingshill.

Always have a camera ready for those snaps of Mr Heron and maybe a kingfisher.
And the Winner is... Everyone.

A personal view

What a shame, we didn’t get to walk up onto the stage to great acclaim from the audience, or to shake hands with the host, but we were up there in contention!

The Trust received a commended certificate in early October at the Canal & River Trust’s Annual Living Waterways Awards ceremony in London for the project ‘Pewsham Locks: A Centenary Commemoration’.

Although not officially a winner, the evening was still a great success for the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. Our project, although very small, was good enough to reach the final, it appeared in the ongoing slideshow during the evening, and it featured in the Canal & River Trust commemorative brochure presented to every participant. Also, the evening gave us the opportunity to meet and talk to other canal enthusiasts; they now know (if they didn’t before) that the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust has ambitious plans for the future. We have several really impressive projects already under way, or in the planning stage, which could hold their own in any competition; it would be brilliant if in future years we could walk away with the title of actual winner for Studley Grange, the Melksham Link, the Peterborough Arms or some other project.

‘Commended’ almost sounds like a flop when used in a competition. It has the hint of a let-down, a disappointment: ‘The plucky losers were commended for their efforts...’ and we have to admit we were disappointed when the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust was not the name drawn from the golden envelope. However, once we began to really appreciate the scope of the other projects, it was a different story – to even be in the same building as the artist, designers and engineers of the amazing Kelpies near Grangemouth Falkirk was an honour! (To appreciate these incredible sculptures and the rest of the Helix project, see the website: http://www.thehelix.co.uk

The winner of our category (Education & Learning) was also a very worthy winner: the Kennet Project. The organisers had restored and refurbished a historic Leeds & Liverpool Canal short boat and fitted it out as an interactive museum, visiting local schools and events all along the length of the canal. They also offer canal painting, creative writing, dressing-up and stories based on real history – all of which (and more) we covered in our project, but theirs is a permanent facility, not a one-off exercise. It certainly made us think of what we might offer when we get more of our canal in water.

The Awards covered seven different categories altogether, including ‘Contribution to the Built Environment’. A few years ago* the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust was awarded a Commended in this category for the excellent Wichelstowe development, and possible future candidates could be the exciting development plans to accompany the Melksham Link and other new build sections of...
our route. This year the winner was the Sandwich Town Tidal Defence Scheme, a multi-million pound scheme to protect the medieval town from flooding. The category Recreation and Tourism, was won by another million-pound project, the incredibly ambitious and impressive Pinkston Watersports Centre Glasgow – a complete competition standard paddlesports venue built on the site of a former power station. But perhaps the project which most resonated with us, was the winner of the Restoration and Historic Environment: The Cotswold Canals Restoration. This celebrated the £20 million restoration of a 5km section between Stonehouse and Brimscombe, achieved after several decades through a strong partnership between the Cotswold Canals Trust, local councils, the community, schools, volunteers, private enterprise, housing associations, developers, the Canal and River Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund. It all sounded very familiar; we were delighted to applaud their tremendous achievement and to be inspired by their success.

The CRT Awards Evening was certainly a very exciting event to attend, we were very proud to even be in the final with such amazing projects, and the MCC Branch representatives would like to thank Great Western Railway for their generous sponsorship of our travel to London.

Thank you very much to everyone who contributed to the Pewsham Locks project in any way: everyone involved was indeed a winner! We showed the local community what a fantastic resource they have on their doorstep, we taught local schoolchildren something about canals and canal life, we learned a tremendous amount about how to organise a heritage event, and hopefully, the reputation of the Trust as an organisation which can deliver has been further enhanced.

Here’s to the next time!

Val Melville

*Editor’s note: Dragonfly 121 (Summer 2011) reported the award by the Waterways Trust of a ‘Commended’ in the Partnership category of the Waterways Renaissance Awards for the Sharing the honours with the WBCT were Wiltshire County Council, Swindon Borough Council, designers Arup and contractors BAM Nuttall.

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Leave a Lasting Legacy

You may have been watching the ads on TV for the “Remember a Charity” week – have you ever thought about leaving a gift in your will for the Wilts & Berks Canal restoration? It is a common fallacy that you have to be rich to do this. Any gift, large or small, can have a big impact on our projects and it will mean that your name will live on for the future. The canal that we are rebuilding is an important part of our history and landscape: your gift will help it to last another 200 years for future generations to enjoy.

Your name can be on a brass plaque on a bench or for larger amounts we could arrange to rename a structure like a lock or a bridge in your memory. Talk to us about it – we would be happy to help with advice or suggestions what your donation might achieve. Please Contact:

Kath Hatton - kath.hatton@wbct.org.uk
or Chris Coyle - chris.coyle@wbct.org.uk
or ring 0845 226 8567.

Your Name Here?
At the time of writing the December meeting is approaching on the 17th and Partnership members will be considering the latest revision to the Restoration Strategy Document recently approved by the Wilts & Berks Board of Trustees. The September meeting visited the works at Studley Grange Royal Wootton Bassett – the tour took in all of the 1.2km of restoration.

New Year

One of the first items on my agenda for 2016 will be attending the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Enquiry in February. On behalf of the Partners I will be proposing that the Inspector considers reinstating the original Canal Policy proposed by the Vale of White Horse DC. This would then provide a consistent approach in all three Local Authority areas in protecting the route of the canal (Wiltshire and Swindon have already adopted a Canal Policy). Much work is going on to achieve a better dialogue with landowners on the route and an environmental and ecological assessment of the waterway corridor is being planned for early 2016.

Historic Environment Record

The Wilts & Berks Canal is part of the industrial heritage and transport history of the area. The Local Authorities (Oxfordshire County Council and Wiltshire Council) keep a database called the Historic Environment Record. During initial work with Heritage Lottery Fund it has been noted that there is only a small part of the Wilts & Berks Canal recorded. I am therefore currently completing a catalogue listing of all relevant structures and features for submission to each Local Authority’s County Archaeologist.

Studley Grange

Hopefully you will have seen elsewhere in Dragonfly the full story of the work at Studley Grange- it looks finished but there is still more work to do in the spring! In fact even after the current section is completed this project will only be ‘the finished article’ when the Bincknoll Lane bridge allows the adjacent section at Morningside Farm to be fully connected. This is why the current funding appeal will continue to be open to try to complete this work as soon as possible. You can still donate by sending a cheque to the WBCT office (marked Studley Grange Appeal) or visit the website for more ways to donate. The plan for the bridge is to simplify construction and reduce costs by using a system developed by Macrete called ‘Flexiarch’™ – the image shows the pre-cast bridge parts arriving ‘flat-packed’ ready for assembly and installation. Watch a video at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQbBxY3BmSI

New Lock Gates

For some time Swansea University and the Mon. & Brec. Canal Trust have been working on an innovative modular construction for lock gates. They cost the same as wooden gates but are made of galvanised steel and are expected to last 100 years, and can be installed without the use of a large crane. We were very grateful to Richard Dommett and the team at the ‘Waterworks Project’ for the opportunity recently to see the installation of the first sets of gates. The design mimics the traditional style of wooden gates and has been approved for use in a heritage setting.

Finally, my opportunity to wish you a very Happy New Year.

Wilts & Berks Blog - You can keep in touch with many of the fast moving events and projects in our weekly blog which you will find at:

http://wiltsberkscanal.blogspot.co.uk

@wiltsberkscanal (Twitter)

www.facebook.com/wiltsberkscanal (Facebook)
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
Extraordinary General Meeting

Ellendune Community Centre, Barrett Way,
Wroughton, Swindon. SN4 9LW,
on Saturday, 5th March 2016 at 2.00 pm.

AGENDA

ORDINARY BUSINESS
1. To receive any apologies for absence.
2. Chairman’s Remarks – The Re-organisation of the Trust.

SPECIAL BUSINESS

3. To approve the amendments to the Articles of Association set out below:
   **Motion 1.** To amend Clause 44 of the Articles of Association to clarify the process of nomination of Trustees.
   **Motion 2.** To amend Clause 66 of the Articles of Association to remove the need to send a copy of the Accounts by post to every member, and allow distribution by other means.
   **Motion 3.** To amend clause 70 of the Articles of Association to allow a member to elect to receive notices other than by post.
   **Motion 4.** To amend clause 74 of the Articles of Association to remove the need to send notices by first class post, and allow cheaper rates.

4. Any Other Business.

By order of Council

C D Coyle
Company Secretary.

As part of the formal business of the EGM, under Chairman’s Remarks, there will be an update by members of the Trust on the Re-organisation.

Following the EGM there will be a brief Open Forum Session at which members may put questions from the floor to the Trustees and Directors on any matter relating to the canal or the Trust’s activities.
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
Notice Of Extraordinary General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (company number 2267719) will take place at: Ellendune Community Centre, Barrett Way, Wroughton, Wiltshire, SN4 9LW, Swindon on Saturday, 5th March 2016 at 2.00 pm.

AGENDA

ORDINARY BUSINESS
1. To receive any apologies for absence.
2. Chairman’s Remarks – The Re-organisation of the Trust.

SPECIAL BUSINESS
3. The following changes to the Memorandum and Articles of Association are proposed.

Motion 1. To amend Clause 44 of the Articles of Association to clarify the process of nomination of Trustees, by deleting the struck through text, and adding the text in bold italics.

44. No person not being a member of the Board retiring at the meeting shall, unless recommended by the Board for election, be eligible for election to membership as an ordinary member of the Board at any General Meeting, unless within the prescribed time before the day appointed for the meeting there shall have been given to the Secretary notice in writing, by some five members duly qualified to be present and vote at the meeting for which such notice is given, of his intention to propose such person for election, and also notice in writing, signed by the person proposed, of his willingness to be elected. The prescribed time above mentioned shall be such that, between the date when the notice is served, or deemed to be served, and the day appointed for the meeting there shall be not less than twenty-one thirty five nor more than forty-two sixty clear days.

Explanatory Note: There has been some difficulty in the past concerning the nomination of Trustees, caused by an inconsistency in the Articles whereby the period of notice required for nomination did not allow any time for the preparation and dispatch of the notice required to inform all members of the nominations consistent with the required time for such notices. The above changes build in a gap between the receipt of nominations and the sending out of the related notice to members, to allow time for its preparation and dispatch. At the same time, given the current size of the membership, and in line with other organisations, we are taking the opportunity to increase the number of members needed for a nomination from one to five.
Motion 2. To amend Clause 66 of the Articles of Association to remove the need to send a copy of the Accounts by post to every member, and allow distribution by other means.

66. At the Annual General Meeting in every year the Board shall in accordance with the provisions of the Act lay before the Association an income and expenditure account for the period since the last preceding accounting reference date or (in the case of the first account since the incorporation of the Association) together with a proper balance sheet made up as at the same date as the date to which the income and expenditure account has been drawn. Every such balance sheet shall be accompanied by proper reports of the Board and the Auditors, and copies of such account, balance sheet and reports (all of which shall be framed in accordance with any statutory requirements for the time being in force) and of any other documents required by law to be annexed or attached thereto or to accompany the same shall not less than twenty-one clear days before the date of the meeting at which they are to be laid subject nevertheless to the provisions of Section 240 of the Act, be delivered or sent by post to the Auditors and to all other persons entitled to receive notices of General Meetings in the manner in which notices are hereinafter directed to be served or in such manner as the Board may from time to time determine. The Auditors' report shall be open to inspection and be read before the meeting as required by Section 241(2) of the Act.

Explanatory Note: Currently the Trust is required to send to all members by post a copy of the Annual Accounts. For reasons of cost this has never in fact been done. The change in bold italics above allows for their distribution by other means, including for example by email and the website, and by circulation to branches.

Motion 3. To amend clause 70 of the Articles of Association to allow a member to elect to receive notices other than by post.

Notices

70. The Association may give any notice to a member either personally or by sending it by post in a pre-paid envelope addressed to the member at his registered address as appearing in the register of members or by leaving it at that address. A member whose registered address is not within the United Kingdom and who gives to the Association an address within the United Kingdom at which notices may be given to him shall be entitled to have notices given to him at that address, but otherwise no such member shall be entitled to receive any notice from the Association. A member may elect to receive notices by
means other than by post by informing the Trust of his wishes.

Explanatory Note: The Trust is currently required to send notices (such as of the AGM) to all members by post. The amendment in bold italics allows members to elect to receive notices by other means, including for example email.

Motion 4. To amend clause 74 of the Articles of Association to remove the need to send notices by first class post, and allow cheaper rates.

74. Any notice, if served by post, shall be deemed to have been served on the second third day following that on which the letter containing the same is put into the post and in proving such service it shall be sufficient to prove that the letter containing the notice was properly addressed and put into the Post Office as a pre-paid first-class letter.

Explanatory Note: The Trust now uses bulk mailing methods for items such as Dragonfly and giving notices to members as a way of saving costs, rather than first-class mail. The above amendment recognises this position.

4. Any Other Business.

By order of Council

C D Coyle
Company Secretary.

NOTES:

1. As a member of the Trust you are invited to attend the EGM. A member entitled to be present and vote at the EGM may appoint a proxy to attend, speak and vote on his or her behalf in the event of a poll being demanded on a resolution or a ballot being held. A proxy MUST be a member of the Trust. An instrument of proxy may be obtained from the Company Secretary, to whom it must be returned not later than forty-eight hours before the start of the meeting.

2. After the formal business of the EGM there will be an Open Forum Session at which members may put questions from the floor to the Trustees and Directors on any matter relating to the canal or the Trust’s activities.
Much of this length of canal was infilled and the majority of the section is owned by Biffa Waste Ltd. While this is at first sight a relatively straightforward engineering project, the main consideration has been the need to maintain the integrity of the adjacent landfill site with its clay lined ‘cells’ which contain the rubbish tipped over the last 15 years. WBCT has spent a considerable sum on engineering consultants to provide the landowner, planning Authority and Environment Agency with an approved design.

During 2014 the Trust obtained planning consent, and put the scheme out to competitive tender for construction. In the early part of this year Kath Hatton (WBCT Fundraising Director) managed to complete the considerable task of raising over £500,000 to allow work to commence. Land & Water Services Ltd were appointed and work started, later than planned, in July. The WBCT Trustees have had to make some really difficult decisions to go ahead with this project, driven by the fact that 2015 has been the last opportunity to save literally millions of pounds by disposing of the considerable amount of infill material on the adjacent landscaping scheme for the landfill site. The Trust is extremely grateful to Biffa for contributing this disposal facility: otherwise the material would need to be removed elsewhere by lorry – a very expensive process.

An integral part of the project is the Wildlife Trail which was successfully funded through the Big Lottery Fund People’s Millions television vote.
Work has been in three main areas:
* rebuilding the towpath on the south side of the canal (eroded over the years by the watercourse that runs through the site);
* working from both ends of the site, excavating the infill and profiling the canal bed;

* carrying the material out from the midway point by dumper truck and disposing of it on the landfill site as part of the final landscaping scheme.
In November this year the contractor advised WBCT that they were not able to complete the works until drier conditions in the spring. The site therefore currently has two excavated sections at the east and west (hydraulically connected with a ditch). The consulting engineers advised allowing the canal to fill so the net result looking from Bincknoll Lane is a completed canal.

Please note the whole site is still a construction area and there is no public access.

One of the additional benefits is a water supply for the canal on the other side of the road at Morningside Farm.
The towpath will be laid and the wildlife trail will be planted in the spring – please contact project officer Kate Jones if you can help – email: Studley@wbct.org.uk

The remaining infill will be excavated and works completed.

Funding:
This project will finally be completed when the road bridge is rebuilt and Chaddington Lock is gated. This needs more funds!

If you can help please send a cheque to the Trust office (payable to the Trust and marked Studley Appeal) or visit the Trust BT Mydonate web site
https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/wiltshirecanaltrust

Images: Ken Oliver & Jenny Stratton

Volunteers celebrating the completion of another part of their Bailey Bridge - Report pages 24 -26

Elephant Bridge, Foxham & Lyneham - report page 27
Bailey Bridge Restoration  
Paul Lenaerts

The Bailey Bridge restoration exercise has been completed!

This statement is something of a simplification – as usual the full facts take a little more explanation. So here’s the full story.

It begins back in the early 1940s when production of Bailey Bridges for the British Army was in full swing and our bridge (or at least its components) was born. By this stage the basic design had been developed into a number of different formats to cater for bigger loads, but ours is the basic version.

The fundamental idea was a portable modular bridge that could be assembled without the need for heavy lifting equipment, and could be ‘launched’ over a river from one bank by a team of Sappers. Donald Bailey, a civil servant in the war office, came up with the idea to solve the problem whereby an advancing army needed to get over rivers and canals after the retreating opposition had blown up all the existing bridges.

As must have happened a lot during the latter years of WWII, manufacture of equipment continued despite the end being in sight, so supply outstripped demand giving rise to that well-known phrase “Army Surplus”. And, like most of the other stuff, our Bailey Bridge never saw any enemy action.

Fast forward a few years in storage and the story continues in 1986, when Frome Town Council decided that to make use of a town centre space for a car park, they needed a bridge to provide access over the river Frome. Someone must have had the bright idea that a Bailey Bridge could do the job and was good value for money. So it was installed and served the community well until 2010. In the latter stages of its life at Frome its condition was monitored on a regular basis until it was eventually downgraded from general use to public service vehicles only and then to pedestrian use only and finally in the summer of 2009 it was closed to all traffic. The bridge however continued to provide an essential public service carrying trunk telecommunication cables to the nearby telephone exchange.

Becoming aware that this historic Bailey Bridge would shortly be replaced by a new structure John Laverick (then our Chairman) approached Mendip District Council’s project manager to enquire if recycling the old bridge through the volunteer efforts of a charity might be more beneficial to the Council than simply consigning the structure to a scrap yard. After explaining that the Trust had identified a site on its prestigious Melksham Link scheme where the bridge after many hundreds of hours of voluntary restoration and over a shorter span might be used, the council engineer readily saw merit in recycling over scrapping.

John added that public interpretation would be provided on site outlining the history of Bailey in general, this bridge in particular and the generosity of Mendip District Council in gifting the bridge to the Trust. The deal was done: the bridge was ‘craned out’ in October 2010 (see picture) and dismantled under the eagle eye of Mike Lee. They even transported the bits to friendly farmer John Stainer at Semington free of charge.

Mike Lee (then our Engineering Director – West) was ideally qualified to say what should happen next. Not only had he done the majority of the...
design work on Melksham Link, but during his national service, had been heavily involved with Bailey Bridges. Fortunately for us, he has a good memory (possibly aided by some manuals which he had the good sense to retain) so he knows how it goes back together! He drew up a design and a method for restoration and the bits sat in the farmyard with stinging nettles growing up through them, waiting for some TLC.

In 2013, I threw my hat into the ring to Project Manage Melksham Link through to planning consent, and quickly realised that I would be spending most of my time in front of my computer or in meetings – nothing active. So the Bailey Bridge restoration seemed to provide light relief (I was wrong – it was heavy!).

First thing was to recruit a team. Ken Oliver put an ad in the ‘volunteers wanted’ section of the Council’s website, we had some enquiries via our stands at MCC events, I enlisted some neighbours and some active MCC members put their hands up. We soon had the original six ‘Bailey Bridge Boys’ (see photo) and work began.

We decided Friday mornings would be a good routine and my records show that our first work party was on 31 May 2013. John allocated us some covered storage, so piece by piece, we cleaned off the loose rust, treated them with ‘Fertan’ (converts rust into an inert layer of hopeite), freed off the remaining nuts and bolts, and put them into store. This was relatively straightforward for the smaller bits, but the ‘Panels’ (side pieces) and ‘Transoms’ (cross girders) are heavy. The manual says that you need six Sappers to lift a panel, eight for a transom. Even when our team had grown to 12, we never managed to lift these bits! However, we got to be quite good with levers, rollers, an old trailer and lots of scrap tyres, so we managed – although on occasions, John took pity on us and helped out with his Manitou loader.

While all this was going on, Mike Lee decided to move eastward out of easy reach! So we thought in case he didn’t return, we’d better find out more about Bailey Bridges and what to paint them with. We got in contact with the MoD structures team, who look after military bridges, etc. all over the world. They were very interested in our project and came to see our work. They confirmed our thoughts about what we’d got and its suitability for the job in hand. They are only a small team of ex-army personnel, now civilians, so couldn’t offer us any practical help in refurbishment, assembly or ‘launching’, but they gave us some good advice and promised to keep their eyes open for any of the bits we are short of.

I should say here, that although we have a surfeit of the main components (because our use of the bridge across the canal will require a shorter span than that needed to cross the River Frome), the timber ‘deck’ of the bridge was in poor condition and was scrapped. The timber ‘Chesses’ are supported by steel ‘Stringers’ which sit on the transoms. Many of the stringers were badly rusted and were also scrapped but there were almost enough to suffice. Fortunately, one of our group has welding skills and equipment, so we managed to use the best bits of the scrapped stringers to make up the four we were short. So, while our pile of stringers is sufficient in quantity, there are still a few that are borderline quality.

So we are still hoping that the MoD team will come up with chesses and stringers to help us out. If they don’t, we’ve found a supplier of chesses and we’ll need a professional opinion on whether our stringers are good enough. If they aren’t, we’ll need to get some new ones fabricated.

After nearly a year of Friday mornings (less a few rained off) we had all the components cleaned up, treated and under cover. The next challenge was painting. We had been meeting with paint manufacturers, showing them what we were doing, asking advice and begging for free paint, for some months when the Hempel rep came up trumps. Hempel are an international business with HQ in Denmark, well known for their expertise in paint systems particularly in the marine and structural sectors. They suggested we used their two-part cellulose based paint with two undercoats and one topcoat, applied with brushes. The paint arrived in June 2014 but, for various reasons, we didn’t get started until December. Final preparation was debated and we decided that our best bet was to use John’s high-powered pressure washer to clean up and knock off any remaining flaky old paint. Then came the question where to paint the larger components. John offered us space in his big barn for the summer, which was ideal, but not quite enough time so September found us outside finishing the last of the transoms. Fortunately the weather was kind and everything was stored away by the end of the month.

So that’s the story so far. The team of Bailey
As always we have been very busy at the Western end of the line, we wouldn’t want it any other way!

At the recent Trust AGM I was very proud to receive on behalf of branch volunteers not only the Tony Davy Award for the most volunteer hours submitted by any branch but also the “Pick of the Branches” which is awarded for the branch with the most increased membership. So thanks not only to those volunteers who spread the word about the Canal Trust but to those readers who have joined us recently. The fact that you have joined us does make a difference! At this point may I ask all branch members to let us have their email addresses as communications are much easier, quicker and cheaper that way. We do not pass on your email address to anyone outside the Trust.

Work continues on the line north of the A4 where we are continuing with our three-year clearance in accordance with our environmental plan. A casual chat with a couple of branch members at Pewsham revealed that Fiona was keen on hedge laying. This resulted in her and David’s coming along to the A4 stretch and teaching four of our work party volunteers how to lay hedges. Clearly she is keen and skilled in such activity because she has been back on every work party day since and the tired old dead and rambling bridge...
hedgerows are being transformed. So thank you to both Fiona and David for the work they have done and the time spent adding to our skills base.

We have satisfied the planning requirements for the Pewsham Locks site and submitted these for approval. Hopefully this will be received in time for us to start the restoration of Top Lock in the spring. At present we have had scaffolding (paid for with a grant from Chippenham Area Board) erected in the lock and have started to investigate the wing walls at the southern end. As regular readers may be aware Top Lock was used for demolition practice prior to WWII and the east wall was partially demolished and the rest bows slightly inward. We estimate some 103,000 bricks will be needed to carry out the repairs/restoration. We will use salvaged bricks where appropriate.

The mid-week team have been working hard restoring the canal over Cocklemore culvert which they have now completed and have started to remove bunds along the line. In addition they have carried out some bank stabilisation work in an area we call the Wet Section which will enable us to dredge the last section of the canal between Top Lock and Double Bridge which, we intend to do before the spring if the weather is good enough.

Progress on our work boat Boswell continues. Repairs to the hull completed (thanks Tim). Bob and Rob put on the first top coat of paint onto the cabin (more in the warmer weather) and she had a little trip in the small area she was moored in. Now the bunds have started to be removed she will be able to travel further and start to tackle the weed issue further down the line.

The Clean Boots team (many of whom wear dirty boots as well) have been busy organising our first Ale, Cider and Sausage Festival. This was at the Assembly Hall in Melksham and we were lucky enough to get an award to cover the cost of hire from Melksham Town Council so thank you to them.

As this was our first such event we worked on 100 turning up and as it happens 85 did so not too far out! Ten ales were available from local and Gloucestershire breweries. There was a cross section of types, colours and strength of ales. On the cider front we had ciders from local producers including the world’s first black cider (infused with squid ink) which unsurprisingly sold out. A variety of sausages from local butcher Newmans went down very well. We had sufficient room for our branch displays explaining what is going on in the local area. The feedback we had was very positive and we made a few pounds for branch funds.

Thank you to the events team for their positive inputs, the Bell at Lacock for their sponsorship, staff at the Assembly hall and of course those who attended for making it the great event it was. Some lessons learned but I suspect we may run another festival in 2016.

Dave Maloney

FOXHAM & LYNEHAM

Chairman:
Ian Gilbert, 15 The Banks, Lyneham, SN15 4NS

Secretary:
Sheila Wade, Scots Smith Farmyard, Dauntsey, Chippenham, SN15 4JA

A note from the new Chairman: Ian Gilbert

I retired three years ago from a working life in Information Technology and now I’m an active member of the Lions Club of Chippenham. I have little knowledge of Canals, except what I’ve learned this year, but I do live close to the Trust’s pub the Peterborough Arms, and I’ve been infected with the commitment and enthusiasm of the F&L working party.

I’ve been an active member of the work party since joining the branch in mid February 2015 and in that time I’ve seen the quarter mile section of the canal from the duck pond north to the elephant at ST980787 transformed from a long strip of weed and woodland to what now looks like a canal bed with a towpath. An amazing transformation, but only part of the way to a working canal and always in danger, without constant maintenance, of returning to its original state.

As in previous years, the F&L branch faces big challenges: this year we’ll help start the Seven Locks project (see below), persevere with maintenance and upgrade of the stretch from the duck pond to the elephant, provide some focus on the duck-pond to Foxham top lock at ST981775, and start to address maintenance at Dauntsey Lock.
(ST996802) and beyond. At the same time we will continue to build our relationships with local landowners and councils, raise our profile with local residents, increase our membership and obtain whatever funds are needed! In short we’ll promote the construction, restoration, maintenance, protection, preservation, improvement and use of the W&BCT waterway, and help educate the public in the history, use and associated wildlife of canals.

A note from the WPO: Gordon Williams

We’ve given the top brass a guided tour of the canal from Foxham to the elephant on two separate occasions. It’s fair to say they’ve been impressed with the work we’ve been doing: the new stop planks at Foxham top lock (photo page 39), the new field gate at the neighbouring lift bridge, the new Ekki lift bridge and everything we’ve been doing to clear the growth in and along the stretch to the elephant.

We are now on the final bit of stage 1 of the work to repair the spillweir at the elephant. Stage 1 is to collect enough water to keep the puddled clay from cracking and leaking again. To do this we are profiling the cut with the use of a 12-ton digger as well as its little brother! Stage 2 is to repair the leak in the spillweir itself, which at the very least will require more clay to be puddled and may need repair to the culvert itself.

More than 10 tons of trees have been cleared from this stretch of the canal to allow the re-profiling to happen and the wood has been made available for the public to purchase either as cord wood or split into smaller logs. Much of it has already been delivered and all the funds raised will be used to cover diesel costs for the diggers – they are very thirsty beasts!

News from the Seven Locks: Sheila Wade

The WBCT approved a project proposal in late October for a 2-phase restoration of the Trust-owned land at Seven Locks (SU020807).

Branch member Sheila Wade was appointed Project Manager, so she will be spending some time over the next few months together with other Branch Officers on the overall plan to prepare costings, commission surveys and prepare planning applications for the work to finish locks 3 and 4 and to move lock 2 a little upstream. Locks 1, 5, 6 and 7 are off the radar at the moment! We’re hoping to make a formal start on the physical work in Spring 2017.

The ball park estimate for the project is £1 million, so there will be major efforts within the project team to identify and access such a huge sum!

The Wiltshire Donkey Show

One of the local events the branch attended this year was the Wiltshire Donkey Show in Dauntsey held at the beginning of September. Donkeys have a close connection with the canal and were used on the canal both to puddle the clay to make it waterproof, and also to haul some of the barges. Attendance figures at the Show were high at an estimated 450, and branch members, including some of the Working Party, were able to raise the profile of the canal and the Trust. Nancy Collingborn arranged for a special donkey and canal themed cake to be made which was raffled for more than £100.

The future

There will be plenty of opportunities to help as a member of a Project Working Party or with planned maintenance along the seven miles and eleven locks of our part of the canal, or with promotion of the canal and our work in the local community. We will all be kept very busy so any offers of help will be gratefully received!

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

It’s that time of year when we can honestly say we have been working dawn till dusk on our work party days. Not as impressive as it sounds as it is barely light at eight o’clock and getting dark again by four. We had to abandon a work party in October because of the atrocious weather; that doesn’t happen very often.

We seem to have had a busy few months again, mostly fighting nature. At Templars Firs we have been battling to keep the weed down in the canal and thankfully (hopefully) it has stopped growing for the winter. We will have to think of other methods of reducing the canal weed in future years. Perhaps we will have to think about acceptable weed-killing
solutions, though this has to be done by people licensed to use the necessary chemicals and in conjunction with the local fishing club. We have managed to catch up on our grass cutting on the towpath and offside path so this should stay in order until the spring. This section of canal was restored in the nineties following which there was very little vegetation on the offside. However we are now in the situation where we are having to cut back overhanging growth from trees and bushes which have grown naturally. There is probably more that we can do over one winter but it does give us the chance to have a bonfire.

We have spent some time at Chaddington clearing and mowing the paths so shouldn’t have much of that do this winter. The field where we dumped the dredgings from the canal grew so much scrub and nettles that it took several weeks over the course of the summer to clear. This section was mowed again recently and is already going back to grass. The offside of the canal below the lock has not been touched since we spread dredgings on it and it has given a wonderful display of different grasses and thistles. One regular walker along this section said he has spent time watching ‘hundreds of goldfinches’ feeding on the thistle seeds. Further along the canal near the lane a kingfisher was spotted, perched at the edge of the water. The article in the last Dragonfly about dragonflies and damselflies by Judy Gosnell was very enlightening and shows how much there is to see if we take time to look rather than hurry by. None of these things would have been there had it not been for the restoration of the canal: imagine how much wildlife habitat a fully restored canal will support.

Further along the canal where Bincknoll Lane crosses it there are two three-foot diameter pipes under the road, put there when the bridge was demolished, presumably to take excess water from Studley Grange in extreme flood conditions. We have seen water flow through these pipes on only two occasions in many years when there was extreme flooding. However, it is proposed to bring these two pipes into everyday use any day soon. The watered section above the lock ends at a bund just west of the lane crossing. Many hours were spent clearing reeds from the canal bed between the bund and the spillway. We recently hired a digger for the day and cut a channel through the bund to the two pipes. Several happy hours were spent by a couple of work party volunteers up these pipes clearing years of accumulated debris with a bucket on a rope (photos page 39). The water that flows through the Studley Grange section has exited the canal just east of the lane. This exit point has been replaced by a pipe with a valve which will be turned off to allow the canal to fill and overflow through the pipes into the section above the lock. When the water reaches the required level here the excess will flow out into the stream via the spillway which has been waiting patiently for a job to do for several years. The recent wet weather conditions may make it impossible for the Studley Grange section to be completed before the spring but provision will be made to water the completed sections and channel the water through the pipes. We were pleased that at the AGM over eighty members took the opportunity to visit the lock and to view the progress at Studley Grange from the lane.

Every winter we spend several work parties at Dunnington Aqueduct clearing back the summer growth and generally clearing things up. Each year we have to apply for a licence to do this work from the agents who manage it on behalf of the owners, and this process is under way. The condition of the aqueduct is slowly deteriorating and will need major repair work before too long. There is quite a trudge across the fields to the aqueduct but it’s rewarding work and we always manage to have a bonfire which is most welcome in the depths of winter. So, plenty to keep us going over the next few months, new volunteers always welcome to come and join us for a few hours.

John Bower

50+ paving slabs available - 18inch square – collection only – small donation for Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. Tel Kath on 01380 831231
What a way to finish November! 50mph gales almost blowing Dragonfly backwards under the bridge while the branch work party struggled to erect a Christmas tree near the landing stage. The tree, provided by Waitrose and lit up by the boat team, is the focus of the opening seasonal celebration planned by the trust jointly with Waitrose for 5th December. We are definitely hoping that December will bring calmer weather.

All of our projects seem to be proceeding at a snail’s pace, so not much to report this time except that we keep pressing on. Work in Wichelstowe is still at a halt while we wait for the new developer to become active. The engineers, our master planner, officers and project managers keep pressing on with correspondence and meetings to develop support and action for the major schemes around the borough. We have now gone public with our initial scheme for the 7km Eastern Swindon route by presenting it to Wanborough Parish Council. This is the start of our campaign to create public support and engagement with the project which we will take forward through more meetings and consultations in the coming months.

Our work parties continue to deal with minor repairs and leak-plugging along the Westlease section, leavened with some hedge trimming and weed clearance there and at Mouldon Hill. The tasks would be less if the local vandals would desist from throwing stuff, including the life belts, into the canal but I suppose there is not much hope for that. Fortunately it was the council’s job to remove the dead deer and make safe the electrical cabinets at East Wichel lock.

I mentioned last time that we are looking for some small restoration projects that will give something for the work parties to really get their teeth into. We have found a couple of projects which we are studying now, although one may prove complicated technically and legally. Our big aim for 2016 has to be to make progress on the new link from Kingshill to East Wichel where some small components are within our capability.

Starting with our regular branch meeting in February we are going to trial meeting once every two months for our ‘business style’ meetings. Note – no meeting in January. We have a keen turnout of regulars for every meeting but often are not able to report much progress. We would like to fill some of the alternate months with more social events or talks for members. Anyone with a suggestion or offer to help should please contact me. It might not happen otherwise.

Our branch membership is growing at about 10–15% per year. If anyone joining in the last nine months has not received a welcoming email or letter from the branch please let us know. We do want to establish direct contact with every member and tap into your skills and interests.

If you are into New Year Resolutions, then why not make one to do a little more for your branch in 2016? Just offer a day of effort in one of our tasks and see if you enjoy volunteering with us.

Season’s Greetings to all our members on behalf of the branch committee.

Rod Hacker

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**WEST VALE**

**Chairman:**
Graham Banks, 12 Craven Common, Uffington, Faringdon, SN7 7RN

**Secretary:**
Brenda Forward, ‘Llamedos’, Longcot Rd, Shrivenham SN6 8HF

We were expecting to host four visits during September and October from visiting volunteers from the Nationwide Building Society, so over a couple of mid-week work parties we tidied, cleaned and upgraded our ‘extensive facilities’ at our base in the Canalside Park. These facilities known, tongue in cheek, as the ‘Hospitality Suite’ are basic, just a caravan toilet and wash facilities in a cabin with, if required, heating, and with chairs, a place to hang clothes, change footwear, rest etc. But it is much appreciated, and well used, especially by
visiting volunteers. We do try to keep up with Trust requirements and modern regulations. We also provide volunteers with all tools, materials and personal safety equipment required for every planned task!

Nationwide duly turned up, as keen as ever but unfortunately only three visits took place as it rained for the third, well a deluge might best describe it – you may remember it in mid-October– and we had to cancel. Fortunately all the volunteers on the other days worked like Trojans and lots got done; the first two groups moved thirty tons of stone! Wheelbarrowed to the path and levelled, then they even had the time and energy for a bit of scrub clearance, then on the fourth visit further scrub clearance, tidying up and four bonfires. Excellent and well done, Nationwide! As reported last time our compactor (whacker plate) failed part way through the start of laying the new path, so the top surface is not as smooth and flat as we would like – it is safe and usable, please come and try it, but for wheelchairs, etc. it is a bit rough. We intend to finish it as soon as we can get a compactor.

I can remember long ago when I was just a kid, (I know that’s only just after the canal was abandoned, we used to play there where Fleming Way is now!), my uncle said to me “lad get your schooling and pass your exams or else you’ll finish up a road sweeper – hard work and poor pay”, he was quite correct! At Wednesdays WP it was decided to tidy up the entrance, access road and car park at the Canalside Park. We do it once a year in the autumn when all the fallen leaves swamp the gutters, and please believe me it was hard work: umpteen wheelbarrow loads of soggy leaves, weeds, twigs, litter, mud and bits of branches were shovelled up and disposed of, and the pay? It was just loads of “well done, – good job – keep it up – sorry can’t help today” from passing visitors, dog walkers, walking groups and drivers; we had to keep stopping to let them all pass by! Gave us a chance to get our breath back though; it was very busy, proves the park is being well used! And the rewards? Well, it was worth it; when we finished it looked great and I have gained a great respect for road sweepers: glad I took uncle’s advice and became a ‘sparky’!

We plan to return to Steppingstone Bridge soon and in preparation we have installed shelving in the tool/rest cabin on site and had a good tidy and clean-up. We have also re-installed the refurbished valves to our ancient 3-inch pump which we keep there, (it failed on our last visit in the late summer). Our machinery tinkerers fixed it, so that’s working again, let’s hope we get some dry weather.

Recently we have had lots of new tools and good quality equipment, (including a strimmer, hedge trimmer, professional lawnmower), kindly donated to the branch – now we just need some more volunteers to use it all!

We really do have lots that we could be getting on with, if only we had more and regular helpers! Perhaps next year, eh?

Seasons greetings from West Vale.
Alan Norris
it, it will be time once again for the glorious Childrey Church fete and the White Horse Show. Barbara Murrell once again expertly ran the branch raffle. I did have my eyes on the Toblerone bar but as I am supposed to be losing weight perhaps it was just as well my ticket got stuck to the bottom of the bucket.

Mike Matthews and I attended a meeting of the Cotswolds Oil Machinery Preservation Society at the very well-equipped Quenington Village Hall (north of Lechlade) where they suffered my Wilts & Berks Talk. Despite this being a return favour for their having donated a genuine West of England Sack Hire Co sack for the Sackhouse (my attempt to get the world record for mentions of sack in a single sentence) we came away with a very generous donation.

With Martin Buckland, I attended a meeting of the Oxfordshire Local History Society in Banbury. A morning of speakers on the subject of the Oxfordshire canals ending with me on the Wilts & Berks past and present and Martin on the benefits to the environment of canal restoration. I attempted the nigh-on impossible, i.e. sticking to a time limit of 25 minutes. It nearly happened. Obviously someone enjoyed it as I have just had an invite to talk to a local history group.

Dickensian Evening in Wantage is looming on the horizon and we pray for dry and non-windy conditions. A good opportunity to chat to the locals about the canal. Once in the branch marquee there's no escape. Vic is manning the Sackhouse - where at least he can have the heater on!

Lots of other things going on – and plenty to talk about next year.

Brian Stovold

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**Situations Vacant**

**Events Sales Manager**

The Trust attends a number of events such as Festivals and boat shows during the year. To ensure that it gains maximum financial and membership advantage at each event the Trust is looking to appoint a Sales Manager.

**Communications Director**

We need someone to oversee all our communications, both internal and external. We have such a good story to tell and we need someone to tell it!

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**Branch Meeting & Contact Details**

The Melksham Calne and Chippenham branch meet at Melksham Skills Centre, Melksham, SN12 7EF, at 20:00hrs 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:** Second & 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 Swindon Branch meets on the 1st Tuesday of the month at 19:30hrs. 

**FOXHAM/LYNEHAM WORK PARTY INFORMATION**

Organiser: Gordon Williams  Tel. 07949 257897

**Work Parties:** Every Sunday at about 09:30-10:00hrs.
Ring Gordon to find out where we are working.

The Wootton Bassett Branch meets at 20:00hrs 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 West Vale branch meet at The Prince of Wales, High Street, Shrivenham at 20:00hrs on the second Wednesday of each month.

**WEST VALE WORK PARTY INFORMATION:**

Organisers:
Chris Forward, 'Llamedos', Longcot Road, Shrivenham, SN6 8HF
Tel 01793 782776
Branch web-site: www.wbct.org.uk/branches/west-valet

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

**EAST VALE WORK PARTY INFORMATION:**

Organiser: Bob Airey  Tel 01235 769469

**Work Parties:**
Second and fourth Saturday of the month with changes at public holiday times.

The Foxham & Lyneham Branch meet on a two monthly cycle, usually on a Thursday evening at the Foxham Inn, at 19:30hrs.
Trust Officials and Council of Management

Council of Management:
Chairman                    Roderick Bluh, 07831 340 387
Vice Chair                  Kath Hatton, 4 Charlton Hill, Edington, Westbury, BA13 4PL 01380 831 231
Co. Secretary/Vice Chair   Chris Coyle, 27 Seymour Road, Bath BA1 6DZ 07710 737 166
Treasurer:                  Peter Kinsman, Nant-y-Broch, Purton Stoke, Swindon SN5 4JG 01793 771 548
IWA Rep:                    Roger Holmes, 72 Primrose Hill, Lydney, GL15 5SP 01594 840 316
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Project Director - West:    Colin Fletcher, Lower Foxhangers Farm, Rowde SN10 1SS 01380 828 254
Project Director - Central/WPO Swindon: Ray Aldridge, contact via Trust Office 07502 046 708
Project Director - East:    Vacant
Fundraising Director:       Kath Hatton, 4 Charlton Hill, Edington, Westbury, BA13 4PL 01380 831 231
Environment Director:      Dr David Cook, 11 Highfields Road, Early, Reading RG6 5RZ 01189 863 284
Engineering Director:       Eddie Thomas, 14 Sandringham Road, Swindon SN3 1HP 01793 534 404
Mtte. Policy Director       Derek Flexer 07753 980 297
Health & Safety:            Dave Stirling, Contact via Trust Office 0845 226 8567
Branch Chair East Vale:     Brian Stovold 10 Kestrels Grove Wantage OX12 0QA 01235 763 072
Branch Chair WB:            Jenny Stratton, 35 Sheriden Drive, Wootton Bassett, SN4 8JJ 01793 850 310
Branch Chair MCC:           Dave Maloney, 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham SN15 3GQ 07809 374 754
IT/Tech Ops:                Dave Maloney, 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham SN15 3GQ 07809 374 754
Communications Director:   Vacant
Membership Director:        Vacant, contact via Trust Office
Towpath Project Director:   Vacant
Events Director:           Vacant

Officers
Archivist:                  Doug Small, 8 Raymond Rd, Maidenhead SL6 6DF 01628 544 666
Contact Officer Abingdon:   Martin Buckland, 4 West Avenue, Abingdon OX14 1QP 01235 204 115
Branch Chair F&L:           Ian Gilbert, 15 The Banks, Lyneham, SN15 4NS 01249 891159
Branch Chair Swindon:       Rod Hacker, 11 Whittington Road, Swindon, SN5 7DF 07840 072 817
Branch Chair West Vale:     Graham Banks, 12 Craven Common, Uffington, Faringdon, SN7 7RN
Administrator:             Justine Hanley, PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN 08452 268 567
Finance Assistant:         Ann O’Donoghue, PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN 08452 268 567
Events Co-ordinator:       John Minns 19 Compton Drive Abingdon OX14 2DF 01235 525 116
Trip Boats, New Boats:      Mike Lang, Contact via Trust Office 08452 268 567
Trip Boats, Operations:     Sue Paine and Robert Yeowell 01793 827 678
Corporate Membership Executive: Contact via Trust Office 08452 268 567
ENTRUST Liaison Officer:    Ian Skerry, 16 Chapel Hill, Watchfield, Swindon SN6 8TA 01793 784 197
Gift Aid Officer:          David Chalmers, 40 Greenleaze, Knowle Park, Bristol BS4 2TL 01179 720 423
PR/Press Officer:          Vacant
Webmaster:                 Dave Maloney, as above
WRG rep/Technical Ops:     George Eycott, Knowle House, 1 Ham Road, Wanborough, SN4 0DF 07771 775 745

Partnership - Wiltshire Council Countryside Officer:
Ken Oliver, Wiltshire Council, Monkton Park, Chippenham, Wilts, SN15 1ER
Email Ken Oliver@wiltshire.gov.uk 01249 706494

Trust Office
PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN 0845 226 8567

Emails
Anyone on this page or in the branch details may be contacted using an e-mail address in the form: first-

name.lastname@wbct.org.uk (firstname and lastname as printed in the listings).
Royal Wootton Basset volunteer unblocking a pipe with a bucket (and he did it!). Report page 29

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

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