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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>President</th>
<th>The Hon Sir William McAlpine Bt FRSE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vice President and Founder</td>
<td>Neil Rumbol</td>
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<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Dr David Fletcher CBE</td>
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<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Roger Crapper</td>
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<td>Vice President</td>
<td>John Laverick MBE</td>
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<td>Office Telephone Number</td>
<td>0845 226 8567</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet Address</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wbct.org.uk">www.wbct.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>Email</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postal Address</td>
<td>Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham, SN15 4HD</td>
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An eventful quarter to report on.

After a significant and successful fundraising effort this summer, we were able to start the final phase of the Studley Grange project and although on a tight schedule, we aim to complete this flagship project by the end of October this year. We are also in the process of looking at lessons to be learned from this work and I am sure that I will have more to say on this subject later.

The Peterborough Arms project continues to make progress largely as a result of many volunteers’ hours spent on preparing, painting cleaning and other work. And much planned maintenance work has continued all along the canal line, in accordance with the Local Maintenance Plans. Our volunteers also attended many shows and events throughout the summer season, flying the flag for the Trust, engaging with the public and recruiting new members. Thank you for your efforts and the efforts of all our volunteers on all our work throughout the Trust.

The first external group use of the Community Rooms was on 21st September and we were very pleased to welcome the Dauntsey WI to the Peterborough Arms with press in attendance at this major step forward. Full opening of the Community Rooms will be taking place later this month. It is a great pleasure to the Trust to be able to take a part in our local community’s life. And as part of our increasing involvement with our community, earlier this summer our office staff took part in Dauntsey’s Decorated Wheelbarrow competition and were awarded a very creditable Silver Gilt. I look forward to more community events at the Peterborough Arms in the future.
Chairman’s Report
Roderick Bluh

I have to tell you the very sad news of the death of our volunteer Peter Konitzer in August on one of our worksites. You will read about Peter in this edition. I can only add to the beautiful and appropriate words from his family and friends by expressing the Trust’s deep sadness and profound sense of shock at this tragic accident. We are helping family and friends and other volunteers to come to terms with Peter’s death as much as we can, and we are of course working closely with HSE in their investigations.

At the EGM in March 2016 we introduced the new Executive Committee to the membership. I am delighted to report that the Executive Directors have been working effectively to deliver the Trust’s agreed strategy in all areas of our work. I commend their efforts particularly during a time when other unexpected and difficult challenges have required the expenditure of a great deal of time and effort. I am also pleased to see how the majority of members have been inspired and motivated by the Trust’s new management. As a team we work well together and we will rise to new challenges with even greater confidence in our abilities to deliver our great project.

The Foxham & Lyneham Branch was merged with MCC Branch this summer as a temporary measure due to lack of officers. I thank the three retiring Principle Officers for all their hard and difficult work over the last year. As and when suitable candidates are identified to become Branch Officers, F&L will be re-launched as an independent Branch, carrying out Trust work on Trust sites with due diligence and attention to process and procedures. In the meantime MCC Officers will supervise all F&L activities.

At the AGM we will turn our attention to the Board of Trustees. There will be one vacancy to be filled: the AGM will be your opportunity to vote for the members’ representative on the Board of Trustees. The Board is our governance and strategic body and I hope all our members will think carefully about who will bring most to this important part of the Trust’s work when they cast their vote. We need a truly representative member who will bring a positive and forward looking approach to our important work, who will have only the best interests of the Trust at heart, and who will work alongside other Trustees and the Executive Committee as a member of a team.

I look forward to welcoming many of you to our AGM held this year in Chippenham at Sheldon School on Saturday 15th October.

Popular Pub Supports Canal Campaign
Justin Guy

A POPULAR Wiltshire pub has adopted its first charity since being taken over by new management.

The Bell Inn at Bowden Hill, Lacock, has chosen to support the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust which is restoring the former waterway through the local countryside.

Paul and Georgia Maloney decided to fundraise for the charity after learning more about its history through Paul’s father Dave, who is chairman of the Trust’s Melksham, Chippenham & Calne branch.

However, it also links in with the history of their pub as its address is ‘The Wharf’ - a reference to how the former row of cottages was once located near the canal before it fell into disrepair and was filled in.

Paul and Georgia hope the restoration of the waterway would provide a big boost to the local economy and are already looking forward to raising a significant amount of money to aid the campaign.

Paul, who has been manager of The Bell for more than ten years, said: “This is our first year as leaseholders of the pub and we wanted to support a charity with a local connection.

“It would be superb if we could see the Wilts & Berks brought back to life. Everyone likes to sit in a beer garden next to a canal, watching the boats slowly passing by.

“It would also make Lacock even more popular with tourists, boosting the local economy.”
The Bell has previously supported several good causes, including the RUH Forever Friends Appeal and Barnardo’s.

Paul and Georgia hope to tap into that goodwill and are already considering several fundraising events including a beer festival, classic car show and regular quiz nights.

Dave has been chairman of the local branch of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust since last year.

He said: “We’re delighted that The Bell has chosen us as its ‘charity of the year’ and we hope the partnership will be a huge success.

“Our volunteers have already restored a significant stretch of the waterway between Lacock and Pewsham in the north, and we’re currently seeking planning permission for the ‘Melksham Link’ from the Kennet & Avon Canal to the River Avon in the south.

“We hope it would then simply be a matter of time before these two pieces of the jigsaw are joined together at Lacock, providing a wonderful new link between Melksham and Chippenham.”

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. 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

Volunteering? Please record your hours!

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Juanita Poulton

Do you have ideas on how we can increase our fundraising efforts (methods or contacts perhaps)? We really do appreciate the help.

We are pleased that our predictions last time came to fruition with a mapping conference (report included - page 8) and feedback on the member survey from two editions ago (page 15).

Please get in touch if there’s something you would like included in future issues or, even better, send us an article for publication.

Many thanks

John and Margaret
editor@wbct.org.uk

The only letter this edition is from Santa. It’s really good that he has the time to contact us. It is therefore interesting for us that we seem to be getting the content about right for you, our readers.

This edition includes reports of many things that are being achieved along the line as well as requests for more help. Please consider the adverts for roles within the trust. The more we need to do to achieve our goal of having a completely navigable canal, with all the benefits that brings to the whole community, the more we will need people to help us.
Chris Coyle

Chris was already our company secretary when John Laverick had his heart attack and gave up the chairmanship of the Canal Trust, then together with Kath Hatton he served as temporary joint vice chairman while a new chairman was found. This temporary phase continued for more than three years.

As company secretary and central contact with the Charities Commission, Chris was heavily involved with the reorganisation and may have worked alone for much of the time. Reports to Council of Management concentrated on proposals for the creation of an executive management board, appointed by the chief executive who, in turn, would be appointed by and be responsible to the new Board of Trustees. An elected Board of Trustees would determine policy to be carried out by the chief executive, and oversee its implementation.

The burdens of the administration of this fast growing project were widely recognised, and after a period of consultation including visits to all branches of the Trust by Rod Bluh and Chris, the proposals were adopted at an Extraordinary General Meeting in March 2016.

Chris had been Company Secretary since 2008, but his involvement extended back for twenty years, having been a member since 1987. Though living at St Albans he had been a regular at work parties at Wootton Bassett and Foxham. Perhaps physical labour and occasional immersion in black mud helped to relieve the stresses of life as a management consultant, this combined with dealing with the declining health of a close family member over a long period.

It took quite a while to get to know Chris, to peel away the defensive layers that have protected his sensitive nature from a life time of careless treatment, but in time we became good friends.

Chris is now enjoying a growing interest in bird watching as well as the company of grandchildren here and overseas; visits to Australia, Canada and Argentina can be expected between county cricket matches at Taunton. During quiet periods of play he may care to reflect on the major contribution he made to the canal project, now equipped to manage large scale construction projects while maintaining the enthusiasm and support of active volunteers and the wider membership.

Colin Fletcher,
12 Aug 2016.

Pewsham Lock Cottage Draw
Malcolm Hitchinson

Early returns for this year’s prize draw are promising and a massive effort by two members of the MCC team at the Melksham Food and River Festival will boost the pot by over £400.

To those people who have already returned their allocation, a big thank you. But, like Oliver Twist, we would like some more please.

Just to remind you that this year’s draw will take place on 5 December, later than usual, so there is still plenty of time to sell the tickets.

To those, like me (makes mental note to get a move on), who have yet to sell their tickets, the team would be very grateful if you could possibly do so. This will help us reach the target of £5,000 for this Draw.

If you have not received any tickets or would like some more, you can obtain them from the office at Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre (AKA the Peterborough Arms). You can call in (between 9.30 and 12.30 Monday to Friday) if you are local, phone or email the office to place your request. The contact details are on the inside front page of this magazine.

As reported in the Summer edition of Dragonfly, this is a live project. Planning permission has been received and fund raising started so please help us by selling as many tickets as you can. Returns to be sent to Steve Roberts, 6 Butts Lane, Keevil, Trowbridge BA14 6LZ by 26 December. Cheques made payable to Wilts & Berks Canal Trust please.

Many thanks for your support.
**Membership Matters**  
**Membership Secretary’s Report**

We welcome the following new members

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<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>4334</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs Davis</td>
<td>Calne</td>
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<td>4335</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs G Taylor</td>
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<td>4336</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs M Robinson</td>
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<td>Mr and Mrs R Cessford</td>
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<td>Mr J Cook</td>
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<td>Mr F Townsend</td>
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<td>Mrs G Compton</td>
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<td>4341</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs M McGrady</td>
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<td>Mr M Maloney</td>
<td>Middlesborough</td>
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<td>Miss S Wilson and Mr P Matthews</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
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<td>4350</td>
<td>Mr D Curl</td>
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<td>Mr R Morland</td>
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<td>4353</td>
<td>Ms M Cumberland and Mr A Lewcock</td>
<td>Wantage</td>
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<td>Mr R Morse-Carter</td>
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<td>Mr and Mrs R Blackburn</td>
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<td>Mr R Csizmazia</td>
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<td>Ms B Ash and Mr D Phelps</td>
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<td>Mr and Mrs V Harrison</td>
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<td>Mr and Mrs K Wheeler</td>
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<td>Miss F Alexander</td>
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<tr>
<td>4363</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs C Hammerton</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
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Dear Editor

What a few months it has been for my team of Elves getting all the presents made and wrapped ready for this Christmas. A big thank you to all of them. Last year was such a success and delight seeing over 700 excited people on nb Dragonfly that I have given my reindeer more carrots to get me to Swindon again this year.

I know that some children were disappointed at not being able to come to see me because all the trips were fully booked so I have asked the boat team to try and fit in more trips for this year.

I am looking forward to being welcomed on board nb Dragonfly again this year.

Santa

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.

Mapping Conference 2016
Sheila Wade

20th July 2016

Report:

Representatives from the Land Team, Engineering Team, PR, Comms & IT team, Branch Chairs, Master Planning and Canal Partnership were participants.

The morning session concentrated on looking at the many audiences our mapping systems need to address, and the different messages we need our maps to convey either as stand-alone messages, or part of another message.

The attendees divided into two groups as a part of a workshop process, and then presented their
results to the whole group.
Although each group in the workshop approached the work in different ways, both groups were in agreement about the main points.

· Audiences were many and diverse but could be divided into two main group
  1. Those using Trust maps for specialised reasons: Technical Group
  2. Those using maps in a more general way: Public
· Each group could be broken down into many sub groups based on specific type of need, level of detail required, internal or external to the Trust, and degree of interest in canals to name just a few identified.
· Individuals could belong to more than one audience and could move between different groups over time.
· Maps can and do reflect the past, present and future.
· The message Trust maps could give were as varied as the audience’s needs, from showing the route to showing structures and facilities on the canal, its connections with other routes (either macro or micro), to more subtle messages of “blue and green corridor, inclusivity, getting people involved, professional image of the Trust…”
· However, a number of key features were identified
  1. Importance of accuracy as a base to the message
  2. Importance of updating the maps so they remain as accurate as possible
  3. Importance of developing different “layers” from the one accurate source map for different messages to different audiences
  4. Importance of maps in showing the bigger picture: “an image speaks a thousand words”

The after lunch session concentrated on a review of the current WBCT mapping system initially put in place by Tim Pyatt, and now developed and managed by Martin Stubbs. We looked at the data base for this system which uses GIS and Lidar measurement to give great accuracy. We then looked at the variety of “layers” that have been developed and the variety of background information that could be used to give many different looking maps, and whether these fulfilled the identified messages needed from the morning session. Martin also informed us that the GIS mapping system was used by WC and LAs as well as many other statutory organisations. And further that CAD information for all our canal route and structures was regularly fed into the mapping system.

Conclusions
· We all agreed that the current WBCT mapping system was fit for our purpose, had the level of accuracy needed, and also the flexibility needed, to fulfil our aims and allow us to send many different messages to many different audiences.
· We agreed that for our mapping system to remain useful, it needed updating often by information being sent to Martin from all sources within the Trust.
· We agreed that in line with Trust policy, we should seek at least one other person, and preferably two other people to assist Martin with the mapping system, keeping one base source but making sure updates kept the system accurate: and making sure that layers were developed for changing and developing message needs.
· We agreed that Comms would take the role of defending our Intellectual Property rights, not through prescriptive control of access to the mapping system, but rather by gentle and proactive correction of inaccurate data and inaccurate use of maps dealing with WBCT.
· We agreed that downloadable and printable versions of our source map, and also of the different layers, would be available to all.
· We agreed that the Trust would check that there were no restrictions and nil cost to the Trust, nor to individuals, concerning printing from our base map and its layers.
· We agreed that more information would be provided on the web site, and if necessary via online training courses, on how to use our mapping system, and in particular on how to manipulate the different layers.
After seemingly weeks and weeks of dry weather, as the first weekend of September approached, the dreaded raincloud symbol began to appear on the weather apps. Not normally a problem for our valiant volunteers, who come to work parties equipped for whatever the weather gods can throw at them, but definitely a problem for an ambitious public outdoor event such as the Melksham Food and River Festival – thousands of visitors anticipated on a sunny day, but probably only a few hundred if wet!

But, after months of preparation and publicity, you have to go ahead whatever the weather. And so on a lovely Thursday 1 September, an advance party of grass cutters, boat deliverers, river clearers and buoy placers turned up at the beautiful stretch of Melksham’s River Avon determined to have everything in place, crossing fingers that the doom and gloom predicted for the weekend would be another example of that well know affliction ‘Predictors’ Fallibility’.

The Food and River Festival this year was planned as two distinct days: The River Adventure on Saturday, and the Food Festival on Sunday. Saturday would see the inaugural Raft Race – an opportunity for would-be sailors to try their hand at tackling the waters of the river afloat their own boat. (NB: Strict safety rules were in place!) The popular Try Canoeing sessions would be available throughout the day, plus the appealing Wilderness Boats and Steam Launch would strut their stuff. There would also be more sedate trips on board the ever popular Damselfly, and (another first) on the Wheelyboat Sir Charles Morrison. This had been very kindly loaned as a trial by Sailing 4 Disabled to see if it would be possible and practical to provide access to the water along the Wilts & Berks line for wheelchair users. It didn’t look as charming as Damselfly in its battleship grey finish, but everyone was very intrigued by the simple wind-down access ramp, the platform-like appearance of the interior with a collection of simple chairs, and the silent electric motor. It had a bit of a look of a WW2 landing craft – but cuter.

Saturday, as predicted, dawned grey and gloomy; but Wilts & Berks volunteers are an optimistic lot, and the boats were ready, the crews in place, the gazebos erected and the ticket sellers in place by 10:30 – all that were needed were some participants and passengers.

Despite the threat of downpours, there was a steady stream of customers for the two boats, a constant flow of individuals keen to get wet in canoes, and three brave teams for the Raft Race. The Wheelyboat was an instant hit, including in unexpected ways. Nervous, young and frail passengers liked the easy access, the familiarity of the chairs, and the very practical handrail. Babies could stay secure (even asleep) in their buggies, and the flexibility of being able to move the chairs made it easy to take wheelchairs – success! It wasn’t possible to test its accessibility for motorised buggies on this occasion, but that was due to the slope of the slipway: not a journey that anyone was willing to make on this damp day. On Sunday, two heroic wheelchair ladies, one of them in a powered device, did brave the slope, declaring afterwards that they were very pleased to have made the effort as they so enjoyed the trip.

Damselfly was kept busy, behaving impeccably with her new engine, and looking resplendent in her festival themed red, white and blue bunting. Try Canoeing were constantly busy and it was wonderful to see so many youngsters having a go on the river. The canoe club has since reported that, over the whole weekend, they signed up 83 new juniors – a fantastic result for them.

The Raft Race was very entertaining: three teams turned up to take part, one having to be content with just showing off their amazing speed, as they were eliminated for being a boat made of two canoes, rather than a raft! The Young Farmers of Chippenham showed that they were a capable crew, entering a well-designed raft, staying afloat, paddling with great unity and completing the course in a surprisingly quick time; they were very pleased to receive their medals, presented by Derek Flexer.

The promised deluge held off for a surprisingly long time, but eventually arrived during the
afternoon, continuing all that evening – what would it be like on Sunday? Sunday was the main Food Festival Day, with over 70 stalls and attractions booked, and the day when most visitors were expected… Fortunately it was fine: not hot, not sunny, but fine! Everyone was very happy with that – it could have been so much worse – and in the end, about 6,000 people came along for a great time.

The chilli-eating competition provided great audience entertainment, Modern Vintage provided live music and commentary, the Fire Brigade and Diving Club provided demonstrations and Phil and Frankie gave horse rides. There were fairground rides, face painting, free food, plenty to eat and drink, and plenty more activity on the river. By 3:00pm all boat rides were booked, and everyone eventually went home delighted with a busy, entertaining and profitable day.

Thank you to all who contributed in any way: the WBCT & MCC Information Tents, VIP hospitality, boat crews and trip organisers, draw ticket sales and merchandise, harbourmaster, work parties, fetching and returning boats, setting up and taking down equipment – it is all a massive amount of work. Many thanks also to those who have been involved from the start in helping to organise this brilliant annual event: there is a huge level of administration and paperwork required to run a public event such as this. Being a partner has enabled us to raise the profile of the canal in Melksham, as well as raising funds for the restoration.

It was a wonderful weekend on the water, and we are already thinking about next year – fancy a bit of raft building anyone?

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Ring Kath on 01380 831231

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

Your Trust needs you

Project Management

“This is the largest and most complex waterway restoration project in the UK”

As a WBCT Project Manager, you will be the focal point for managing a project from the initial concept to completion and handover to the maintenance team, selecting and leading a team and working with the Projects Director and other officers and Directors to achieve the project aims.

Good people skills, good organisational skills, awareness of budget and time constraints, good communication skills...

Sounds like you? Come and talk to us about small and large projects that we need volunteers to manage. And come and talk to us about our training scheme

Andrew Matters: andrew.matters@wbct.org.uk
Contractual and interlinked financial issues have been the cause of the delay but it is very pleasing to see the project once under way again.

**Melksham Link**

The planning application will now be considered when all consultee responses have been received and considered. Unfortunately face to face discussions with the EA have been suspended due to their imposed charges but written dialogue continues albeit at a frustratingly slow pace.

Tel: 01249 706494
Email: ken.oliver@wiltshire.gov.uk
Partnership Website:
**Calling all Members**

**Your Trust needs you**

---

**CAD Design**

*Dirty boots and clean shoes”*

Our project is not just about building and digging... we need designers and engineers too.

If you have CAD skills, we want to talk to you about how you can help us

---

**Brick-laying**

*“I was part of that!”*

Do you have experience of bricklaying?

Want to work as a member of a valued team?

Please come and join our volunteer working party teams weekdays and weekends.

---

**Fund raising**

*“Water adds value”*

We can’t even start all our wonderful work without funding.

So whether you have the writing skills to help us complete funding applications, want to give talks to publicise our work, hold fund raising coffee mornings or even do a parachute jump for the Trust... talk to us

---

**The Trust Shop**

*“Our window to the world”*

The Trust Shop in central Swindon needs motivated members to help sell the Trust.

Open on Monday Wednesday and Friday from 10:00 to 15:00, but we need to open for longer hours.

Help spread the word to the many who come in to the shop.

---

**Contact Us**

Derek Flexer: derek.flexer@wbct.org.uk

Andrew Matters: andrew.matters@wbct.org.uk
The letter which was sent out with *Dragonfly* magazine at the beginning of the year prompted a lot of members to contact us, at the time of writing this we had received over 500 replies! As a result we now email around 260 copies of *Dragonfly* which is a considerable saving in both printing and postage. There were some common queries that were raised and so we have decided to answer them all here.

1. "You don’t need to contact me about membership renewal as I pay by standing order". There will be times when we will need to contact people about standing orders, whether it is because a payment has failed or there needs to be a change made to the standing order details.

2. "You already have my email address, I have been communicating with XYZ about ABC using it for years". The problem here is that just because you have been in contact with someone involved in the Trust doesn’t mean that they have passed your email address on to the membership team to be added to the database, so although an individual within the Trust has your up to date email address it has not been updated centrally for anyone else to use.

3. “You already have my email address, I have used it to subscribe to On The Button”. The problem here is that until now we have had no way of knowing that someone signing up to On The Button was also a member and even if we did, if the person changed their email address used for On The Button, we would not pick that change up for our membership records. However this has now been resolved and we have a process in place to synchronise changes between the two systems.

4. "I emailed you to say I was happy to get everything by email, but you have posted me this copy of *Dragonfly*. OK, technically this is not (yet) a common query but I am getting the answer in first! Because going to an emailed copy of *Dragonfly* is something that members can opt into (whereas everything else was opt out), we only set people to receive *Dragonfly* by email if they specifically asked for it (as opposed to saying "please email all correspondence" for example). If you are reading a hard copy of *Dragonfly* and actually wanted/expected an emailed copy, please let us know by emailing

5. "I have opted in to getting renewal paperwork electronically, but you have sent me a letter". Although we have been emailing standard renewals since July, final reminders and anything odd (failed standing orders for example) are still sent by post.

6. "There was no specific postal address to reply to". I hold my hands up to this mistake! Because this exercise only affected people who have email it never occurred to me that people would want to post a response, after all, if we did not have an email address for you and you did not reply, you would continue to get everything by post anyway. I was clearly wrong as about 20 members posted their response! Lesson learnt for next time.

7. “I really want to continue to receive *Dragonfly* by post as I find it easier to read/pass it on to a friend/don’t like reading a screen etc”. That’s fine, there are absolutely no plans to stop printing *Dragonfly* for those that want to continue to read it that way.

Remember, if you have any queries or questions about membership at any time, you can email or you can contact the Trust office by post or telephone.
**The Trust’s Retail Outlet in Swindon**

Not only the duchess but also several trust members modelling a selection of the tops available to purchase from our Swindon shop. Each has a trust logo printed or embroidered on it, so in addition to promoting the trust you get a warm garment to wear at all times. We have a variety of sizes and styles available and they could make a good Christmas gift for someone you know. Shop opening is on Mondays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10am to 3pm, or you can telephone Darrell (07704938272) or Helen (07982064973) outside those hours.

Two replies were received almost immediately to my request in the spring magazine for certain back issues of ‘Dragonfly’ to complete the set held in the information centre in Swindon

Alan Townsell, who has worked on different sections of the restoration of Wilts and Berks and now lives near Bristol was pleased to send us the missing numbers via our mutual families in the Bristol area. Thank you Alan and keep on digging.

Avice Wilson, a senior member of the trust(#50) telephoned twice from the USA to say she had a complete set of our magazines and would happily donate them to anyone interested BUT they are stored in her basement and it would take some time to post them here. Her e-mail address is available via Helen. Transport arrangements to be negotiated. Avice now gratefully receives her magazine by e-mail and maintains a keen interest in our development of the canal.

Avice had a couple of interesting memories of our canal as she grew up in Chippenham and regularly walked with her family along the canal. She recalled her first kiss happening by the canal too! Her father told her of one winter in the early 1900s when he skated along the canal from Chippenham to Swindon. This was before the Dauntsey Lock fell into disrepair and the canal was closed down. This looks like a challenge to our restoration teams, though alas we cannot be sure of sufficient ice to repeat the skating feat.

Thank you Avice for your offer of help and for these fascinating memories.

*Helen Thomas*
Peter Konitzer
Remembered by his daughter Amy

Peter only started volunteering with the W&BCT in March this year so many of you will not have met him. But for those of you who had met him, I'm sure you will not forget his sense of humour, mischievousness and ability to tell a good story!

Peter was born in Bedford in 1952 and grew up on a pig farm in a small village nearby, called Clifton. The only child of German parents who had met in the UK after the war, he grew up speaking a mix of German and English and suffered with acute shyness. I remember asking him why his mother always spoke to him in German and he always answered in English – he said it had always been that way and he didn’t like speaking German as he had a rural accent learnt from his parents! Peter told me that when he was a boy, he would have to get up and give the pigs their swill first thing in the morning. The pigs would sleep in a heap to maintain body heat and he used to play a joke on the pigs by trying to wake up the pig at the bottom of the pile first, causing confusion for all of them! This was some time ago, in the days before RSPCA site visits!

Until he went to University in Newcastle, Peter spent his summers with German relatives, mostly walking in the area around Salzburg, Austria or sailing on his uncle and aunt’s yacht in the North Sea or Baltic Sea near Schleswig, in North Germany. After University, he tried his hand at teaching for a year, but soon realised he wasn’t teacher material. He was teaching science to 14-16 year olds but he
said that the kids ran rings around him and he couldn’t control them! Peter then moved into the oil industry, after studying Petroleum Reservoir Engineering at Imperial College in London. He lived with his young family in Carshalton, in south London until 1991 when the company he worked for, British Gas, relocated to Reading. The family also moved house nearby to the Hampshire village of Sherfield-on-Loddon. Peter spent most of his life there, completely overhauling the garden, which is now well-established with beautiful features, lush lawns, a flower meadow, thick hedges and unusual plants.

During the 1990s and 2000s, the house was extended, the windows and roof replaced and the driveway re-shingled with large double gates installed for more privacy. Peter was involved in every aspect – every couple of years he had a new project, he certainly was industrious!

Peter took a job in Tripoli, Libya in 2003, which gave him a chance to travel and see another culture. He found the Libyans to be mostly welcoming, but couldn’t understand how they could drive so badly! He made some good friends in the expat community, he liked the climate, pristine beaches and freshly caught fish too. He had seven tortoises he had rescued from an illegal trader, and would brew his own ‘moonshine’ as many expats did there.

I remember Peter telling me that whenever you walk along the beach in Libya you will always find Roman artefacts, mostly coins, because the area had a rich Roman history. In 2007 we went to see the ruins at Leptis Magna together, which were truly spectacular – Peter was especially tickled that the street signs were penises on legs!

Peter has two grown up children, William and Amy, and two young grandchildren, Oliver, four, and Imogen who is one. He described his parenting style as a ‘soft touch’ as he found it hard to be strict! He was a good father, which as many men will know involves a lot more than loving and raising children – it also involved being an entertainer, taxi-driver, removal man, delivery man, repair man, private tutor/homework helper, banker, shrink when things get tough or rather should I say a ‘reality-checker’, mentor, philosopher, listener, friend. Peter was a steady and reliable rock in their lives, with a quick-witted response for any drama they were experiencing – or creating! He always had an holistic view of problems and could offer good advice accordingly, peppered with a few jokes, incidents and good-humoured stories.

He loved being outdoors and had a strong connection with nature. Everywhere he lived had beautiful gardens; even when Peter lived in Libya, he had a hardy lawn laid and beautiful potted plants around the patio. Peter liked cats but hated that they would jeopardise the local bird population; he always fed the garden birds and has been a member of the RSPB for as long as I can remember.

Peter came back from Libya the year before Gaddafi’s regime collapsed, as his contract had expired. He was a bit deflated after he left and missed the good weather in particular. I suggested that he should finally join the local beekeepers as he had mentioned it a few times in the previous years, so he did. He really enjoyed it and bought two beehives. He had previously planted a wild flower meadow in a section of the garden to encourage wild bees and butterflies but his honey bees didn’t seem in the slightest bit interested, preferring to zoom over the tree tops to a different location altogether!

In 2014 he moved away from the family home to Calne with his girlfriend Maura, moving to Chippenham town centre in 2015. I asked him why he didn’t go back to Bedfordshire, he seemed puzzled by the question and said there was nothing up there for him and the landscape was flat and boring. He really liked Wiltshire, especially the history, so much so that he insisted on taking us to see the Avebury henge and iron age hill on Boxing Day last year (followed of course by an obligatory pint in the pub with a packet of pork scratchings!)

Peter decided to become involved with the W&BCT because he was not working and he wanted to do something meaningful with his time. He liked the idea of W&BCT and the ongoing work which will help the local environment and wildlife in the long term. He enjoyed it so much that he was considering going back to University to study Environmental Management – just for fun! Peter was joking with me that he was getting quite fit down at the canal and loved driving the dumper truck - he thought it was great fun. Peter didn’t have to go as often as he did but he was enjoying it. He liked being useful, he supported the cause and he liked the company of the other volunteers. I remember Peter marvelling at the fact that there is a volunteer working for the W&BCT who has volunteered more hours in one year
than a normal employee would work full time in an office – he thought that was brilliant, quite something to note and observe!

None of us can escape the inevitable end. Peter was quite a philosophical, wistful character at times and repeated the well-known Benjamin Franklin quote on more than a few occasions, in his typical dry humour, that ‘the only sure things in life are death and taxes’. All we can hope is that we leave our friends and family with good memories and that it was a life well-lived, which I feel certain his was. Peter has planted wild flower seeds somewhere along the stretch of the canal between Pewsham Lock and Double Bridge, with any luck they will all come out beautifully next season. Peter had a special love for snowdrops, bluebells and daffodils at his garden in Sherfield-on-Loddon and we will plant some in his honour near Pewsham Lock.

Amy

A note from Peter’s workparty colleagues

Peter was a gentle giant and would help with any job we were doing. He would spend hours working with the all terrain mower. Once he had done his test on driving the dumper, you could say he was as happy as a pig in straw! The one funny thing I can recall was when he told us he may not be able to come to a mid week work party because he was going to babysit his friends llamas. He did do it, a man of many talents!

You could not wish for a better friend and work colleague.
Most of us are familiar with stinging nettles. They ‘sting’ you as you brush against the plant and cause an unpleasant reaction which is usually memorable. The plants are found growing everywhere from waste ground, hedgerows and in gardens. Nettles thrive in disturbed ground especially where man has left detritus as the nitrates and phosphates in soil help growth. They are an unmistakable plant growing up to two metres tall in places and have flowers which look not unlike catkins.

The towpath and the neighbouring area by the canal here in Royal Wootton Bassett host their fair share of the plant. Along the tow path the nettle may be seen growing singly in among the flowers. There are clumps, some large, where a little more land is available such as the bridges and surrounding area. Comfrey corner, by the east end
of the watered part of the canal at Templars Firs, comes to mind where the stingers are growing happily amongst the comfrey. The area is currently a good place for insects including bees and butterflies and an assortment of beetles as they like the comfrey and nettles. Small tortoiseshell and peacock butterflies live in this type vegetation and their caterpillars will thrive here. These butterflies will use the nettle plant to lay their eggs amongst the foliage. The lovely bright orange comma butterfly may also been seen here flying round the brambles and nettles. This kind of environment will also host speckled woods from the nearby hedgerows and other passing species such as the whites and brimstones and maybe a peacock. At springtime a thrush sits on the nearby ash tree and sings endlessly along with greenfinches, goldfinches and tits.

The nettle plants lurk tantalisingly in growth waiting for an unsuspecting person to come along so they can touch preferably bare skin to inflict the familiar stinging sensation. They live around stiles and gates looking out for legs and hands. They wait in large clumps for the work party to arrive to do clearance work. In summer, among the great willow herb, figwort and meadowsweet by the canal, they quietly sit and wait for someone to have a look at something and bingo they have got you. And in summer there are things to look at such as water plants, damselflies, various insects on the plants and fish.

Nettle plants are covered with little hairs on the side of the leaves and stems. When touched they inflict a cocktail of chemicals on the skin that cause a burning sensation and sometimes a red rash. This is because the hairs break off and the bulbous end remains in the skin causing the burning sensation. The hairs are to deter animals from eating the plant, though dogs’ noses seem unperturbed. They propagate by seed, and nettles have lots of seeds, and by a root system, chop them up and more appear. Where man is so are nettles as we leave our footprints of living everywhere we go.

The plant has several known uses such as a food where the young shoots are eaten in nettle soup or as a vegetable. They are full of iron and vitamin C. Fibres from the stems can be spun to make cloth.

Stinging nettles are well described by their scientific name which is urtica dioica. The genus urtica is from the Latin verb to burn which I think is apt when you encounter the plant. The species name dioica refers to the fact that the male and female flowers are on different plants. We use the term dioecious to describe these plants.

Autumn is welcome when the plants die back but soon winter is over and the bright green shoots start to appear again for another season of stinging. Stinging nettles are very much part of our world.
We are now licensed swan-drovers!

Richard and Judy Gosnell

Walked down Bincknoll Lane this morning. Several drivers reported road ahead blocked by walking swan flotilla. Sure enough, they were there as shown here. We escorted the unbelievably tame swans from Wick Hill Lane turning back to the canal via Farmer Nutland’s track, (gate open) with the help of a jogger who kindly rode shotgun while we manned the rear and sides. The cygnets got tired at times and sat down! We tried to vector them into the hedge just after the rail bridge but they returned onto the road via another gap. They finally seemed to know the return journey, as they turned off across thick sedges and reeds just west of the section of canal west of Chaddington Lock.

Good News For Members

15% Discount from Cotswold Outdoors. Just take this magazine into any of their stores or online quoting AF-WBCT-M8 and your membership number. Note this only applies to full priced items.

Keith Price
Tribute to Richard Ellis

The funeral took place on 31st August, of Richard Ellis, Chairman of Greenscape Services Ltd, one of the Trust’s corporate members.

Richard had been a keen supporter of the Trust in many ways over the last few years. Initially this was through the use of his company’s administrative office helping the F&L Branch with their admin and then by seconding Greenscape’s FD Sheila Wade to be F&L’s Branch Secretary in 2015. In 2016, as he could see the results of the Trust’s new management organisation demonstrating a focused business approach, he felt confident to support the Trust financially.

The Peterborough Arms Community Rooms restoration was the first to benefit and Richard’s loan to the Trust, which allowed the refurbishment programme via volunteers and contractors to commence in Spring 2016, will be converted to a donation from his estate. Richard attended the BBQ and Open Day for Peterborough Arms funders at the end of June and expressed his pleasure at the progress made by the volunteers led by Dave Maloney Chair of MCC Branch. Richard often popped in to the office at the Peterborough Arms to chat to Ann and Justine and to check on the progress of the Community Rooms … and have a cup of tea! He was still very “hands on” despite his failing health. He would have been delighted to know that the Dauntsey WI will be using the Community Rooms from September 2016, the first of many community uses to come.

Richard was also interested in the Studley Grange project and was part of the SG5000 crowdfunding initiative, with a small role in the publicity video. His estate will continue to support the Trust with a very substantial long term loan to the Studley Grange project allowing it to be completed this year. His executors intend to support many more Trust projects in the future via his legacy.

So why canals?

Well one of Richard’s many interests was in horse drawn transport: he was a Council Member of the carriage driving organisation the British Driving Society and received their most senior award, a Medal of Honour in 2002 for his work for them for over 30 years. He was well known in horse driving circles for his four black driving cobs, one of them being “Hesta” who had been working as a canal horse. So this, in addition to his great knowledge of horse drawn historic transport, led to the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust in his final years here in Wiltshire.

Richard’s funeral was well attended by many friends from Dauntsey, where he had lived the past five years, just one field away from the canal near Seven Locks. In addition to a large number of representatives from other charities Richard had supported during his life, many WBCT officers and members were also present at his funeral and Jonathan Till, WBCT CEO, gave the tribute. The wake was held at the Peterborough Arms, the first non-meeting use of our community rooms… very appropriate for Richard and for the Trust!
The first thing I do when I am crewing on Dragonfly is check the weather forecast. It determines what I need to wear for the day ahead and if it’s sunny, then I know we’ll be busy. I aim to get to Waitrose, where the boat is moored, around ten to help with all the pre-trip activities to prepare Dragonfly for the day ahead. This takes around 15 minutes and then we’re ready for the great British public to join us for the trips on the day ahead.

The first trip of the day can be quite quiet which gives me more time to talk to people and find out where they’re from and how they found out about the boat. Later journeys are generally busier. Some of the older generation have stories to tell reminiscing about when the canal still was present, although derelict, through Swindon town centre. I make tea and coffee for our passengers, squash for the younger ones, and point out things of interest. Sometimes it’s wildlife, sometimes it’s features on our stretch of canal such as Beaven’s bridge near Mill Lane. It looks like it’s been there forever now but was completely rebuilt in 2000 by volunteers. I have a book with old photos and the new bridge is just like the original bridge. Sometimes we spot water voles, our resident heron who watches for the fish swimming away from the boat, ducklings in late spring, early summer and just once in a while, a muntjac deer and once even a grass snake swimming across the canal.

I’m often asked about the route of the canal and where it went, and what’s happening next and will it link up with the other bit in Wichelstowe. I encourage people to join the trust and currently, I’m also on the lookout for people that might volunteer with us and become crew members.

The landscape changes quite a bit as Dragonfly makes its way down to Kingshill. The first part of the journey is quite open with the modern architecture of the Waitrose store next to us. But beyond Beaven’s bridge, there is the tall hedgerow and mature trees along the tow-path side and there is the Victorian grandeur of the 1880 railway bridge ahead of us. It underwent restoration at the end of 2015 and looks almost as good as new. The brickwork forms an archway of bricks spiralling on a skew above us as we pass underneath.

Our skippers negotiate a bend to the left, and we are now cruising into the suburbs of Swindon. The Rushy Platt nature reserve is to our left and the beautiful gardens of the grand houses on St Helen’s View to our right. Then as we approach the original landing stage, the white marker on the right hand side indicates the turning point and we are between the houses of the two modern estates on either side of the canal. The hedgerows on either side make for a peaceful green corridor and we always see people jogging, cycling, dog walking or just enjoying a stroll along the tow-path.

On the return trip, it’s time to tidy up, wash up any mugs used for tea and coffee and chat to our passengers. As we pass back under the Wichelstowe bridge, I get ready to help moor up the boat safely. When the boat reaches the landing stage, I jump off and we secure the boat to the landing stage and help our passengers disembark. Sometimes, there is a last photo opportunity by the boat.

At the end of the day, there is a close-down routine that is a mirror image of the pre-trip one. Once the boat is safely packed up for the night, we secure the gate at the top of the path and it’s then time to go home. Days on Dragonfly always have an interesting mix of people and you never know what wildlife you are going to see. It’s great to spend time on board the boat and hopefully I persuade more people to join us and support the trust. Best of all is seeing the pleasure the boat trips give people, young or old. If you might be interested in joining the crew, why not get in touch and arrange to come and try it out for a half day? Just mail or phone the boat team using the boat booking contact information. Hope to see you soon.
Before MOPS broke up for the summer, Margaret Gardiner suggested, as a treat, that we took a trip on Dragonfly, the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust boat based at Swindon (her son Oliver has worked on this since its inception and still does today).

On the last Thursday in July we left church by Dial-A-Ride to start our journey. To my surprise, we turned off down Eastcott Hill, taking a roundabout route to reach the Wootton Bassett Road and the new road to Wichelstowe. We arrived at Waitrose to find the narrow boat already waiting for us. When I stood at the side looking down, I thought how on earth are we going to get on to that. We had one person in a wheelchair, two others using walking aids and me with my bad eyesight, but as we stood there up came a lift, so two at a time we were lowered into the boat. Some of us sat in the cabin and others were seated in the open, which was much nicer.

We drifted along slowly, enjoying the scenery. There were wild flowers and grasses, moorhens and their babies, other ducks and a bedraggled heron. We went under a new bridge and glided along until we came to a large bridge, built to take the railway. Under the bridge we were told to look out at the railing beside the canal where we would find a little mouse and three snails built into the railings.

When Ivor and I first came to Swindon, one of our favourite walks was along the side of the canal, which hadn’t long been opened. We used to walk up to this bridge, which always drew our attention as it was so beautifully built of bricks. We would then leave the canal and walk up to the old railway track. In fact this was the first place we took our visitors.

Now back to our journey. As we sailed along, we saw mums out with babies, people on bicycles, older people just ambling along, all thoroughly...
enjoying the walk as much as Ivor and I used to.

All along the journey it was impossible to imagine that you were still in Swindon, as we didn’t see any houses or buildings until we got near to the end, where some of the houses in St. Helen’s View, off Okus Road had long gardens right down to the canal. When we got to the end, we had to turn round to come back and we were told that one of the residents in St. Helen’s View had his own little boathouse and he used to get his boat out and sail to Waitrose to get his shopping. To our amazement, on the way back, we heard a hooter and lo and behold it was this gentleman going to do his shopping.

The man who was our guide was a retired doctor so we were in good hands, and on the way back he even made us all a cup of tea. On landing we were taken into Waitrose where Margaret ordered tea and cakes for all of us. When we boarded Dial-A-Ride to return home, the driver took us through Wichelstowe which gave us a round trip.

This was a day that we shall all remember and maybe I might have whetted your appetite to try the experience. For details go to: www.wbct.org.uk

A big thank you to Margaret Gardiner for making all the arrangements.

Margaret Jones

Why donkeys you may be asking?

Well there is a connection… many canals, including the Wilts & Berks, when they were the main freight routes for the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, were “powered” by donkeys rather than, as is often imagined, large cart horses such as Shires or Clydesdales.

There were many reasons for this, including narrowness of towpaths, heights of bridges and the cheaper purchase and running costs of donkeys’ vs horses. Typically the barge donkeys worked as a pair or double hitch, or as a single hitch for small loads. And donkeys were also used to “puddle” the clay to make the canal bed watertight.

The Trust has a number of archive photos showing working donkeys on the Wilts & Berks canal.

Jonathan Till CEO of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust says:

“The Trust is proud to celebrate the heritage of our canal in all its aspects.

How the canal worked in its heyday as an integral part of the freight infrastructure during the Industrial Revolution … and the role of the animals used to pull the barges laden with coal from the Somerset coalfields, and later the material used to construct the Great Western Railway… is all part of this heritage.

These animals were sourced, trained, fed, shod, and looked after by a variety of characters up and down the canal line: we are proud that we have members who still have the knowledge and skills of using donkeys, mules and horses as working animals, the skills that have come down the generations from these “horsemen” of old, and our members can, in turn, pass these skills on to the next generation of canal users and supporters.

We are delighted to share our archive which includes photos showing working donkeys on our canal.”

The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust continue to celebrate this connection by their sponsorship and attendance at the Wiltshire Donkey Show in Dauntsey every September where the driving donkeys are driven up to the canal near 7 Locks to receive Wilts & Berks Canal Trust commemorative rosettes… and of course some carrots!

This annual event in Dauntsey was held this year on Sunday 4th September at Scots Smith Farmyard.

Jonathan Till CEO of Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, who presented the commemorative rosettes to the driving turnouts who competed on the show drive said:

“It was a real pleasure for me to be able to award these rosettes to the donkeys and their drivers today at the show drive of the Wiltshire Donkey Show.

We are very proud to be the custodians of the heritage and memories of the working life of the canal and the people and animals who were so much part of life here all along the Wilts & Berks canal until it was abandoned as a working canal in 1914. I look forward to the day, which is not long away now, when we can welcome donkeys back on the towpath all along our canal.”
Another three months have flown by and the editor is waiting patiently for my report! Several major projects have occupied most of the summer – Studley Grange being one. It is such a big complex project but so exciting and such a pretty stretch of canal. Unfortunately, various delays and extra costs last summer meant that when the rain came in the autumn the contractors had to leave a short section and the tow path to be completed this year. BIG Lottery, the Underwood Trust and other funders have been very patient with our delay. So I am still raising funds for the completion and would like to thank all of you who have donated to the Studley 5000 appeal so far. The new contractor has already finished the tow path and I will update you at the AGM on the final excavation and progress towards opening.

I am looking ahead to 2017 to raise money to join Chaddington to Studley with a new bridge on Bincknoll Lane and have already submitted a couple of bids, one to Great Western Railway emphasizing the historic link between the canal and the railway and one to Veolia, a landfill company. Our friends at Crappers Landfill are also contributing to this project.

Members and supporters have also been brilliant in donating lots to the Destination Lacock appeal which is already up to £43,000. This fund with which we hope to be able to purchase canal track north of Melksham is very important to the next stage of our development. The dream of the Canal Centre at Dauntsey Lock moved a little closer when we moved our office there. This move has proved very successful. Refurbishment of the pub continues with some small amounts of money raised for materials and a lot of volunteer effort and some contractor work on the toilets due to the generosity of a member. Completion of Stage 1 will see the community room available for the local groups and societies to use – hopefully soon. Along with Jonathan, I have been working on a bid to BIG Potential, a programme run by the Social Investment Business (SIB) in conjunction with BIG Lottery. It is a scheme to help enterprises improve the strength of their businesses with a grant and make them ready to seek finance. We plan to use it for the Peterborough Arms.

Ken and I have worked on and submitted a bid to Awards for All to pay for more interpretation boards and audio trails to be put up at several locations on the canal. Visitors to the canal bank love to read and hear about what is going on and what wildlife can be seen.

IWA has announced the chance to bid for a legacy of £200,000 that they have received from the late Tony Harrison. He was a member of WBCT, belonged to Abingdon branch and lived in Goring. This is a great opportunity to extend Jubilee Junction and we have until 31 October to get the bid in.

Looking to the future – we must become more sustainable. This means completing more projects that can produce an income to fund the everyday running expenses of the Trust and contribute to maintenance as well as restoration. Plenty of ideas to think about – pushing to get the pub open as soon as possible, lock cottages built that can become cafés and holiday lets, investing in more boats for giving trips, selling more merchandise, increasing membership.

Lots to look forward to!!
MELKSHAM, CALNE AND CHIPPENHAM

Chairman:
Dave Maloney. 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham, SN15 3GQ.   Tel 07809 374 754

Secretary:
Vacancy

A brief summary of what’s happening along the line.

Around The Branches

We have had a number of both Dirty and Clean Boot activities going on since the last Dragonfly. Most memorable was the Melksham Food and River Festival where once again MCC Volunteers came to the fore and helped make the event the great success it was. This two-day event was held in Melksham, strangely enough, which of course is where the planned Melksham link will connect the Kennet and Avon Canal at Semington with the River Avon and then back on the Wilts & Berks line to the Bell Inn at Lacock.

The inaugural Raft race was great fun, despite only three entries – and one of those was disqualified as being more of a boat than a raft! Chippenham Young Farmers were the winners, and enjoyed their medal presentation. We anticipate continuing this next year, and adding more outdoor challenges, particularly for young people.

We are considering purchasing a Wheely Boat, which is a craft designed to carry able and disabled passengers, and were lucky enough to have one offered for a trial by Pete Bisson who runs Sailing4Disabled. The trial was a great success, with very positive responses from both passengers and crew. It enabled very young babies in buggies, elderly and/or infirm, as well as disabled passengers, to access the river.

Fundraising for local projects had a massive boost when we received funds from the Chippenham Area Board and players of the Post Code Lottery via CRT in conjunction with Help for Heroes and we are looking forward to working with military veterans along the MCC line in Easter of 2017.

Some months ago I was contacted by a producer who was creating a celebrity canal trip programme saying that one of the celebrities was particularly interested in restoration as they were cruising the K&A could they pop down and see us. I of course agreed.

Although I was on holiday for their visit the celebs were very well looked after by Val and Malcolm in particular. They arrived in an enormous black 4x4 with privacy glass, reminiscent of premier league footballers, and not particularly encouraging. As it happened, they were all absolutely delightful, friendly, determined to put us at ease and to remember our names. Sensibly dressed, incredibly interested in everything, totally amazed by the whole experience – and never lost for words!

Our Destination Lacock project, which will offer a safe route for pedestrians, cyclist and maybe horse riders, between Melksham and the National Trust Village of Lacock moves closer as the fund raising campaign moves ever closer to our goal of £60,000 to enable us to buy land at Queenfield Farm, north of Melksham.

Dave Maloney
We have continued our battle with Mother Nature this year and have again come second. However as summer comes to an end we are beginning to make some progress and our paths and hedges are looking good. We thought we had got the better of the weed in the canal but we turned our back for a couple of weeks and there it was again, tons of it, bank to bank.

Over the summer we have developed our weed cutting and gathering technique and are able to clear about half the length at Templars Firs in a day. We were throwing the weed we had cut over the hedge where it quietly rotted away. However, the tenant farmer pointed out that the sheer volume of it was causing him problems in the autumn when he was cutting the hedge and grass under it. We have now cut several access points on the offside of the canal and pull the weed out on that side and this is working out well as there is no hedge to throw it over.

I understand other sites are having weed problems in their stretches of canal and it seems this will become more of a problem as short sections are restored. It may be we will have to look at using a method of using a herbicide to kill off the weed over a period of time, doing small sections in rotation. We have spoken to our local fishing club about this and they are in favour though it could affect the fish population for a while. However, this will need further investigation and permission before we can proceed with it.

At Studley Grange work has just started to lay the surface on the towpath and we are hoping the dredging work will recommence very soon. Hopefully we will have a few dry weeks so the job can be completed. Maybe all this hope will help produce some results. A few months ago we drained part of the Studley Grange section in anticipation of the dredging restarting but this meant no water was coming through to the section above the lock. As there is no other water supply to that section the water level has been dropping slowly all summer but it should remain deep enough to keep the swan family happy until they leave. The parents with their eight cygnets have created a huge amount of interest over the summer.

We have had a number of enquiries recently from local companies offering some of their staff to help us on work party days. Generally, the numbers they offer are more than we can accommodate though the details are passed on to other work parties. However, in June we were offered a couple of volunteers from a Network Rail support company in Swindon and they seemed to enjoy the day they spent with us as much as we enjoyed having some new faces around.

ABCelec is a company which does work for Network Rail and is based in the old Council Yard near Templars Firs. They made contact with us and explained they would like to have the Wilts and Berks as one of the nominated charities they would like to support. They had already held an event to raise money for us. During September we will have a small number of ABCelec staff joining our work party over three weeks. They are also making some bird boxes for the Templars Firs section and are planning to involve local school children in that part of the project. We will be joining their staff for a
lunchtime walk along the canal in a couple of weeks. ABCElec are interested in helping out with other projects and have offered to be involved in building a footbridge at the end of the Templars Firs section and with helping to kick start the canal extension project. We anticipate working closely with them in the next few months. ABCElec acknowledge the work they do can create noise and cause disturbance and inconvenience so are keen to help with giving something back to the community.

Looks like we will be having a busy few months and we will welcome anyone who would like to come and join us on our work party any Wednesday.

John Bower

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SWINDON

Chairman:  
Rod Hacker, 11 Whittington Road, Swindon, SN5 7DF  
Tel: 07840 072817

Secretary:  
John Farrow  
Tel: 01793 490672

We have been getting around the town and the villages with our marquee. Attendance at 10 events has been completed or is planned for this summer. We have also had to decline three more invitations for one reason or another. Some new posters have refreshed our display, helping to make our achievements and ambitions known more widely and of course recruit more members. We have seen some new volunteers join branch activities, which is very encouraging. A big thank you from me to the small band of volunteers who turn out to help with events and other tasks.

The good news from the New Eastern Villages is that the planning applications to which our members responded in large numbers were refused by the borough council, citing the drainage issues which we raised as one of the many reasons. However, this may only be a brief respite because the developers have gone to appeal and there will be a public inquiry. We will battle on to get the canal included in the development plans.

The construction of the link section of canal from Waitrose to East Wichel is still a target for early action but progress is painfully slow while we wait for the development partners to get into gear.

At East Wichel we are still trying to solve the leakage problems but the leak or leaks seems to be up in the sides of the canal and until we get more water in there we cannot detect it or them. With such a low inflow of water it looks like it will be winter before the level will be high enough to make more detection efforts. The fire and rescue service kindly tried to help by pumping from the attenuation pond up to the canal. The experiment helped us to assess the problems but the pump was too small to make a real impact in the time they had available.

The only sign of rapid change is the growth of the grass and undergrowth along the canal. The work party is running hard to keep it all under control at Westlease and Wichelstowe and have found time to make the Mouldon Hill length look very tidy also. They have also started to pull out some of the reeds growing on the route of nb Dragonfly to make it easier to navigate. It looks like we will have to do some major maintenance along there in the not too distant future.

So, not a lot to write about this quarter in terms of progress on the ground but we are continuing to respond to the threats to our ambitions along the routes in the borough and to promote our canal, which absorbs lots of clean-shoes effort. If only I had a magic wand.

Rod Hacker
Unbelievable, those nettles and thistles that I reported in the last Dragonfly that had reached five feet tall had got to at least 10 feet tall when luckily just in time we had groups of visiting volunteers from BT and Nationwide to give them a good bashing before they interfered with passing air traffic! Unfortunately not before they impeded pedestrian traffic on our new path in the Canalside Park though! Our weekly midweek OAP work parties have been kept busy clearing towpath edges and disposing of the drying herbage ever since.

The first to visit us was BT and they were put to work clearing a 100-metre long patch of brambles from the bank of the canal next to the towpath near the park. Now we quite like brambles, and we have heaps of them, good for wildlife and the berries are good in pies with apples! But next to the path they cause no end of trouble, sending those long thorny tendrils out to scratch passing walker’s legs and arms, and they are difficult to control with our brush cutting equipment, keep getting tangled up, so they had to go, and with BT on the job they soon went. Then with a full head of steam worked up they turned to Jungle clearance attacking those thistles.

The Nationwide group’s main task was to lay a stone topping on the re-aligned towpath by the substation next to Station Road Bridge. We had seven dumpy bags of stone, (purchased from an award from the 300 Club, thank you, most appreciated, please keep buying the tickets), delivered the day before, with insufficient space to have it tipped from a lorry! Just seven volunteers loaded the stone into barrows, wheeled it to site and tipped it onto the path for our normal work party to rake level. Done by lunchtime! Well done Nationwide! Then returning from a pub lunch with renewed enthusiasm they bashed some more of those thistles and nettles for us, (I must ask the landlord of the pub what they put in their lunches, must be the same stuff as Team GB get!).

Still a bit more work required here though, some road side safety fencing, a gate, and ground levelling before the final stone topping can be laid! And we plan to return to the Steppingstone Bridge soon and the site needs clearing. More jobs for visiting volunteer groups, luckily we have a couple due! Phew! Where would we be without them? Lost in the Jungle “Get me out of here!”

Reading my reports you may get the idea that scrub bashing, fallen trees, gates and fences, hedge trimming is all we do but don’t be fooled, a lot goes on behind the scenes, machinery to maintain, the mowers get a hell of a bashing (and talking of bashing, our height barrier at the entrance got another knock, breaking a weld and requiring a modification). Always tools to mend, reports to write, grants to beg for, plans and designs to produce, web pages to publish, health and safety, planning authorities to persuade, landowners to...? And so on – you’ve heard it all before “canal restoration requires all the skills known to man”, please come and join us and you will discover that I’m right! Just volunteer, you won’t get much more than a thank you and the deep satisfaction with a worthwhile environmental project well done. No medals here!

Alan Norris
The Wantage Summer Festival took place this year after missing 2015. I returned as well with a series of canal guided walks circular or otherwise. Maybe the publicity wasn’t as good and the programme description a bit too short but the take up was rather less than before the year gap. Anyway we did the usual Childrey Circular walk, the Grove Lock flight (4 out of 6) and the Wantage/East Challow circular.

The Grove circular walk was good in parts. The woodland adjoining the canal bed between Grove Common Lock and Small Marsh Lock (just to the east of the A338 at Grove where the canal and road ran parallel) was thinned out several years ago and is a lovely area to walk around or through. The tow path is well strimmed by our team right out to Grove Bottom Lock. The next field is more complicated as the footpath crosses the Pill Ditch and then runs parallel to the hedge. North east you can walk to the site of the lift bridge and then the footpath leaves the canal and heads SE to the road. Alternatively, running back west the foot path crosses the meadows (some with longer grass than others depending on whether the sheep were in the field) back to the A338. This walk felt like hard work.

The circular Wantage/East Challow walk was interesting this year if only to see the mess the developers are making with the adjoining fields to the canal through Stockham. Unfortunately the developers have been permitted to place pipes across the canal at the site of Stockham Bridge. We have recently also had to protest about a planned bridge across the canal further west which would not be fit for navigation. We have made clear to the developer what our requirements/wishes are and at this point await their reaction!

I once again led walks around Wantage exploring the “lost pubs”. One of these stood on Mill Street opposite the Mill and at the end of a lost row of houses. The Jolly Boatman was well known for its food (faggots a speciality) and for the wager the landlord would undertake and normally win, ie could someone push a wheelbarrow up and down Mill Street with one hundredweight of coal on board. It usually ended up in a heap on the downward trip! The pub had been converted to shops long before it was demolished in the 1970s.

We have taken our East Vale information stand/marquee to various events. First, Childrey Church fete. This is a lovely village gathering in a splendid setting. We were visited by many people, some with interesting stories about the canal and the area.

A recent event was the first Wantage and Grove Extravaganza. Unfortunately the Recreation Ground does not look its best this time of year as the water supply always dries up leaving a receding water level . . .

The August Bank Holiday brings the classic White Horse Show at Uffington (strictly speaking, it’s held in Fawler.) The weather was kinder than in previous years. I attended on the Monday, a day of glorious sunshine and resulting crowds at the Show). We had many visitors and useful anecdotes, snippets of news, contacts in general which we will be following up. Always nice to chat to people who are interested in the project in general – usually asking when this or that is going to happen or why it hasn’t happened yet.

Next event for East Vale is, dare I say, Dickensian Evening in Wantage on the first Friday in December. In the meantime I must also thank Martin Buckland for acting as speaker for a couple of talks to organisations locally where I have been unable due to work commitments.

Finally: work continues to negotiate a lease over a chunk of canal in our patch, and with various developers regarding the canal and the impact of the development on the canal restoration and on the planning for Childrey Bridleway Bridge.

Brian Stovold
The Swindon Branch meets on the 1st Tuesday of every second month at 19:30hrs.
Check website for details or get on the branch email list for details (the next one is October 4th).

SWINDON WORK PARTY INFORMATION:
Organisers:
Ray Aldridge Tel: 07502 046708
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 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-vale

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.

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Work Parties:
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Advisor to the Executive Committee

Executive Committee

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Jonathan Till  
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**Gift Aid Officer:**  
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Ken Oliver, Wiltshire Council, Monkton Park, Chippenham, Wilts, SN15 1ER 01249 706 494

Email Ken.oliver@witshire.gov.uk

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

Trust Office

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Administrator: Justine Hanley 08452 268 567

Finance Assistant: Ann O’Donoghue 08452 268 567

IT/ TechOps: Martin Stubbs 08452 268 567
200 Club

Prize winners for July.

1st. No 208. June Pitcher. Stevenage
2nd No. 25. James Andress. Chippenham
3rd No 137. David Lewis. Kingsbury

August.

1st No 274. Alan Lees Smith. Chippenham
2nd No 198. Tim Skull. Brandenstoke
3rd. No 161. Peter Jones. Swindon

September.

1st No 121. Dave Malony. Chippenham
2nd No 139. Sheena Rosser. Uxbridge
3rd. No 109 Colin Fletcher. Rowde

Omission from Summer edition of Dragonfly, second prize in June draw ticket 188, Damian Le Gresley, Winterbourne Basset.

To all ticket holders, best of luck with the remainder of the draws.

Jeff and Lynda
Map courtesy of Doug Small

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

Dragonfly 143
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