The Quarterly Magazine of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
Summer 2017
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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Chairman’s Report

Roderick Bluh

I am very pleased to announce that the Board of Trustees has co-opted three new Trustees from external organisations. Welcome to Susan Cooper from IWA, Cllr Fleur de Rhé-Philippe from Wiltshire Council and James Harpum from the Inclusions Project. Three of our existing Trustees, who have been working on the Interim Trustees Board will stand down at the 2017 AGM.

As the Trust enters its busy event and summer activity season, I would like to reflect on how far we have been able to progress on our journey to a very different Trust since I became Chair two years ago. I am sure I will be speaking more about this at our AGM in October.

In the summer of 2015 it was clear to me and many others within and outside our organisation that the Trust, although having made progress through its branch-based efforts at restoration, was never going to be able to complete this huge project without the introduction of new business based talent and processes. Even the first attempt to do so with the Studley Grange project was badly flawed: and the Trust is still coping with the mistakes and costs associated with the decisions taken on this particular project.

I have watched and supported the work of the Executive over the last 15 months since March 2016 and remain amazed and delighted at the changes that have been made in many of the Trust’s processes and activities. I have spoken previously about the great improvements made by our Communications team, about the tight and controlled Project approval processes now in place within Project management, about the improvements and progress in the Land and Engineering teams. We have seen the introduction of a systemised approach to maintenance operations and habitat management and we now have a new and externally validated Bio-Diversity Framework Policy in place, about to become the backbone of our environmental work.

We now have a new Commercial Director appointed in Malcolm Hitchinson and already there are signs of the same robustness and business-like approach in this most important area of income generation. The Board learnt at our recent Trustees meeting that, with the adoption of a systemized approach to fund raising, the new team has been able to achieve a 51% success rate on small bid applications, a truly impressive result.

Both I and the Executive are realistic and know that we will not be able to convince all our members that the direction the Trust is moving in, together with our clear positive results, are what the Trust needs to do to in order to achieve our aim of complete restoration and the through navigation of the Wilts & Berks canal. We will continue to work on communicating this and hope that all our existing members will become accustomed to the changes and will give full support. I know that our new members will support us, as that is why they have joined.

It has however been a surprise and a pleasure to find how supportive and enthusiastic external groups and organisations are about our new way of working. I am going to quote from a very recent IWA reference for an external funding application made by the Trust:

“The Trust has gone through some substantial organisational change and the new senior team (of whom I have met Sheila Wade, PR, Marketing and IT Director, Jonathan Till, Chief Executive, and Rod Bluh, Chairman) appears to have a strong vision and strategy alongside a clear determination to complete the restoration of the canal.

Canal restoration brings substantial benefit to local communities in terms of economic, social and healthy lifestyle outcomes. The national restoration movement has had some good success in the past, with canals such as the Kennet & Avon coming back into water, but as is the case with many volunteer led construction projects in this country, those involved are ageing and new volunteers and supporters are not being found.

Wilts and Berks Canal Trust are turning this on its head and have committed to attracting a whole new base of volunteers and supporters to what is a very exciting major project. They recognise the value that the future canal will bring to the community and they see it very much as a community based project….it is not just the final delivery of an open canal that will bring value to the community, it is the journey to arrive at this final point that can also bring huge value to all members of the local community. This approach is very exciting for the canal restoration movement as a whole. Other restoration societies and trusts are watching the work of the Wilts & Berks team with enormous interest…”
and (IWA) feel confident that the (WBCT) team will continue to be a powerhouse within the UK’s canal restoration movement. They are introducing new ideas and have a very strong sense of the power of community involvement to breathe new vigour and energy into what had become quite a static project prior to their involvement. I believe the community projects and people they involve in the restoration of the wonderful asset that a restored Wilts & Berks Canal will become, will be excellent exemplars for other restoration societies around the country…"

I am proud to be associated with these sentiments and I hope that all our existing members will feel able to adopt these and join in with the Trustee Board and Executive’s efforts, and indeed many members’ efforts, to move the Trust forward to take its place at the forefront of canal restoration in the UK today and in the future.

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CEO’s Report
Jonathan Till

Another three months have flown by and the Dragonfly Editors are calling for copy again; my problem is what I can leave out from all the things that have been happening in the Trust recently, otherwise I will need the whole of Dragonfly for the CEO report!

Let’s start with Studley Grange:
The good news is that the wildflower planting along the tow-path has taken place as a joint effort between WBCT volunteers and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust volunteers. Working in partnership with other organisations is the way forward for our Trust and I was pleased to see that Royal Wootton Bassett Branch was happy to use Wiltshire Wildlife’s expertise on managing volunteers in and around the water planting. The less good news is that although we have made some progress with the negotiations with
the external contractors to address the expensive cost overruns and design and construction problems that were experienced during the construction phase of Studley Grange, we have not yet reached a final settlement: there is more work to be done here. The Studley Grange Towpath and Wildlife Trail will be open for public access just as soon as we have a clearer view as to the liabilities of the design and construction work.

The joint Canal and River Trust/Help for Heroes project at Pewsham funded by People’s Postcode Lottery and other funders will be in its exciting and very rewarding volunteer phase by the time you are reading your Dragonfly. We will have the H4H veterans as our guests on site from mid-June to July and I know we all in the Trust wish them a happy and productive time with us. Many thanks for the hard work undertaken by the Pewsham project team led by Malcolm Hitchinson. We were told that flexibility was the key word in the preparatory implementation of this part of the project, and that has certainly proved to be true. Well done all.

The Peterborough Arms refurbishment project is coming to its conclusion: the volunteer team led by Dave Maloney has the final work in the main bar to complete and, with the good weather, has also been able to make rapid progress, with the help of some extra volunteers, with the outside pointing and painting. At the same time Project Manager Jock MacKenzie has been able to commence the legal and planning requirements to allow the transfer of the office and the meeting room to temporary facilities at the rear of the building, allowing for the full opening of the Peterborough Arms as a pub. Business and staff recruitment plans are well advanced and we have a provisional opening time of September 2017. Very good progress indeed by this team, going from a stalled project in November 2016 to not only completion of the community rooms’ refurbishment project, but to commercial opening in less than 12 months. Again, well done to all involved with this project.

April saw the very pleasing announcement that a lease had been signed for a significant stretch of the canal at Challow in the eastern sector. More about this in this issue as part of the “Spotlight” series of articles, but needless to say there will be a great deal of fund raising and restoration work needed over the next few years in the eastern sector to make good use of this Land Team progress.

Which brings me to one of the most important messages of my CEO report this time: it is extremely important that the Trust management makes best use of the Trust resources. We will not be able to complete this project effectively or efficiently unless we do manage our scarce resources extremely well. In fact we are obliged to do so as we are largely funded through grants and other charitable/public money. In our organisation, the Board of Trustees examines and sets the strategy framework regarding restoration and it is the Executive’s job to implement and complete projects to achieve that strategy. On some occasions this will mean that projects close to the heart of Branches and members may have to wait their turn for resources. You can rest assured that detailed scrutiny of all projects is undertaken before they are approved by the Board via the Executive-managed Project Control Document process, and one of the factors in the scrutiny process is how that project relates to the overall agreed restoration strategy. Special pleading by small groups uses management time and resource that is better used on more effective Trust work.

And finally membership: this year’s Towpath Festival is down to the two existing events at Melksham and Dauntsey. Disappointing news to report, but we are going to take some positives from this. The small team who are working on this (and we need more to join us please) are going to use the event season and our two Towpath Festival events to trial a number of new processes that we hope will make membership recruitment easier for both potential new members and our volunteers who are doing the recruitment. We will build on this in 2018 and 2019.

To summarize: many excellent results throughout the Trust during the last few months. Some negatives as well, but overall great work on the part of a great team.
Community Engagement
Sheila Wade

WBCT’s work on community engagement demonstrates to our communities, funders and influential outside organisations that our Trust and our restoration work bring benefits not only in the future when we have completed our project, but also immediately to all sorts of groups in all sorts of different ways.

In the last few months the new Transitions Project, run by the Communications Team, has extended the usual work the Trust has undertaken at events and talks into a much more proactive and targeted programme.

So far the Transitions Project has helped 160-plus different individuals in our communities by working in partnership to deliver individual benefits to various vulnerable groups including young adults with severe learning difficulties, older people with memory loss, recovering adults with dependencies and socially isolated adults.

In addition the Communications Team has been able to use the project concept, and its successes, to raise funding for the Trust by applying to many funding bodies who, while not interested in canals, are interested in supporting the Trust using our canal as a resource to help vulnerable people in the community.

Presentations have been made to a number of organisations including Wiltshire Council, CRT and IWA who have all expressed full support for the Transitions Project. This is great news as this work will open up lots of opportunities for our members to volunteer in many different ways, to become more fully engaged with the project and at the same time increase our funding opportunities and our profile in our communities.

A win-win situation for all of us!
A POPULAR stretch of restored canal is finally full of water for the first time in more than a century. Volunteers with the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust have spent years breathing new life into the former link between Chippenham and Lacock, as part of a wider campaign to rebuild the entire network.

Several sections in the open countryside near Pewsham had been excavated and filled with water but they remained separated by large bunds of earth while culverts were restored and leaks were plugged. The work was recently completed and there is now a continuous stretch of canal from the bottom of the former flight of locks near Pewsham to the impressive Double Bridge near Reybridge – a distance of almost 1.2 kilometres.

The charity’s workboat can travel the entire length of the route, meaning craft are moving back and forth along this line of the canal for the first time since the 1900’s.

Much of the restoration has been carried out by teams from the Melksham, Chippenham & Calne branch of the Canal Trust.

Branch chairman Dave Maloney, who provided a live breakfast show interview for BBC Wiltshire alongside the canal, said: “There was a time not so long ago when this entire section was overgrown and largely forgotten, and sometimes used as a dumping ground for rubbish.

“Now, thanks to the dedication and commitment of our hardworking volunteers, it’s probably similar to how it would have appeared more than a century ago when it was an important link between local towns. It’s an amazing achievement.

“This stretch already contains a restored bridge, spillweir, wharf and other structures, and at the Pewsham end you can also see the remains of the lock-keeper’s cottage and the dry-dock which we hope to rebuild at a later date.

“It’s a wonderful example of our industrial heritage.”

The latest work along the Pewsham stretch was completed after a grant from the Chippenham Area Board allowed a sunken part of the towpath to be raised, meaning the water level in the canal could be increased to the same depth along the entire length.

Volunteers can now use the workboat to keep the channel clear while carefully removing reeds and overhanging branches, once the nesting season has concluded.

Dave added: “The Pewsham stretch is a prime example of the progress we’re making and we hope that our latest achievement will inspire even more people to support the restoration campaign.

“Aside from people who can help with fundraising and engineering, we’re particularly keen to recruit volunteers who can help with the physical tasks such as bricklaying, digging and grasscutting, especially those with specialist skills such as using chainsaws.

“This part of the canal is already hugely popular with walkers, runners and cyclists but we’re confident that one day it will be popular with boaters too.

“Wouldn’t it be great if our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren could one day walk along the towpath and proudly say that their family helped to bring it back to life?

“Together we can leave a lasting legacy for future generations to enjoy.”

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**Good News For Members**

1. 15% Discount from Cotswold Outdoors
   Just take this magazine into any of their stores or on line quoting AF-WBCT-M8. Note this only applies to full-priced items.

2. Early booking for Santa trips on *nb Dragonfly*
   The tickets for the general public go on sale on 1 October 2017. For Trust members the bookings open on 1 September 2017.

Keith Price
The Canal is fortunate to have been equipped with hefty milestones cut from rock, rather than mileposts. Some of the Wilts & Berks stones therefore survive to this day, a century after the canal became disused. The Kennet & Avon Canal only had mileposts consisting of steel stakes, with a wooden board attached bearing the mile number. The boards have nearly all rotted away or been removed, though the stakes are often seen.

The legend was carved directly onto the W & B milestones, and mostly indicated the distance north-eastwards, from Semington at the west end of the canal where it joins the Kennet & Avon Canal. Towards the east end this scheme seems to break down, and MS 48 is the eastern-most Semington stone seen on old OS maps. This is about four miles from the eastern end where it joins the Thames at Abingdon, a total length of 51.92 miles. I came up with such a detailed number by measuring along the tow-path from MS 48 on digital maps. I imagine they used a cyclometer to roll along the tow-path and fix the stones’ positions. Near where we would expect a “Semington 50” stone, there was a stone “London 70” suggesting there was more interest in that direction. There are a few stones lying intermediate with the whole-mile stones, and I assume these were half-milers. They are most common on the eastern section and may be labelled “stone” or “MS”.

The oldest Ordnance Survey maps, the 1-inch, do not show any canal milestones. The 25- and 6-inch OS were surveyed 1880-ish, and revised 1900 and 1922. We find that even with the earliest of these maps, some stones are not mapped. Exactly why this is the case, is a mystery (to me at any rate). The canal had been in use for about 70 years by 1885 so it is possible stones had been removed, or fallen into the water. Competition from the Great Western Railway had become ever more intense, so maybe the Canal Company lost interest in maintaining this infrastructure. The canal was originally required by law to be marked with milestones or -posts in order to discourage falsifying the freight charge which was based on tonnage and distance shipped. Somewhere there will be Canal Company maps showing all the milestones. The branch canals to Calne and Chippenham were also miled to give the distance from Semington but on the N Wilts Canal link to the Severn & Thames, no milestones are indicated.

The standard legend is “Semington XX” on 1880 maps, beside a dot or small ring, but later editions drop the Semington in some cases. Perhaps the carved words had become illegible. Sometimes a particular milestone is shown just as “stone”. Milestone 5 should be close to Laycock Wharf, and at first nothing is seen till close inspection of the 25-inch of 1880 and 1899 reveals just a small ring on the side of a building. This is in the right position. Perhaps space prevented anything else being printed.

Milestone 26, in Swindon, is the best known one, and is preserved in the wall on the Brunel shopping centre. It is a Grade 2 listed structure, according to Historic England’s information. However it is now about 110 metres west of its original estimated position. It is likely of Portland stone, but from Swindon Quarries in Old Town, not Portland in Dorset. MS 19 would have been near Vasterne, and 27 in Walcot, Swindon. MS 22 would be on the Studley Grange section of canal, whose tow-path is due to become available to public use sometime soon. Perhaps a facsimile milestone could be emplaced on the right position, at Chainage point 600? That would focus walkers’ knowledge. Cleaning up other stones is debatable because some say the lichen or fungus is of great botanical interest.

Milestones photographed by us are 7 (Pewsham Locks), 26 (Canal Wharf), and 32 (Steppingstones Lane Bridge). Others seen by us are 13 at Foxham (in dense brambles), and 41 shrouded in bushes on a private section near West Challow. The National Library of Scotland’s online browser service for all the old OS maps is most useful. Best of all, they have stitched maps at a given scale and vintage, to form a mega panel which can be zoomed or dragged to get quickly to a required place. Look for “Explore Georeferenced maps” then choose scale of map.

Here is a link to the 25-inch maps:-
http://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=18&lat=51.5207&lon=-2.0083&layers=176&b=1
That is set up to home-in on the “Peterborough
We welcome the following new members

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Arms” at Dauntsey. Once a map is loaded, the cursor’s position is given as a grid reference in full co-ordinates to 1-metre precision, and lat/lon. If using the lat/lon, note it refers to WGS 84 map datum. If writing points-of-interest into a satnav, that is usually the default datum. Using the OSGB datum causes positions to be 110 metres to the west-north-west of the wanted location.
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Membership Team: 31 May 2017

_Dragonfly Available as a PDF via email. Please contact membership@wbct.org.uk_
**Good News from nb Dragonfly**

Keith Price, Boat Treasurer

£20,000 Transferred to WBCT General Account

NB Dragonfly was launched in 2010 and was put into service as a trip boat on the section of the Wilts & Berks Canal at Kings Hill, Swindon. At the start there were only a few people who lived in Swindon who even knew that about a mile of the old canal that had been restored and had water in it. The trips started from behind the garage at the Kings Hill end of the canal and turned around just after the new bridge. In the first year there were public trips on Saturday and Sunday and the occasional mid-week charter. The first Christmas saw the start of the Santa Specials and this put Dragonfly on the map.

A step change came when Waitrose opened their store next to the canal and the Trust constructed a jetty next to it. The public could see Dragonfly moored on the jetty and with the Trust information boards and trip notice it became a popular form of entertainment for those having coffee in the Waitrose café. More public trips were run including Bank Holiday Mondays and Wednesdays during school holidays. Many more private charters have followed, some of them as pirate parties. Each year the Santa trips are full, and sadly we have to turn people away.

In the past six years due to the hard work of over 100 volunteers from the Trust doing the skippering, crew, booking, publicity, present wrapping, finance and boat maintenance, the Boat had generated £18,000 profit from its operation and collected £2,000 in donations. This has been transferred to the WBCT general account. In addition to this the trust has been able to recover an additional £500 from HMRC from the Gift Aid on the donations.

In addition to generating this money nb Dragonfly has been a flagship for the Trust and with the information and explanation given by the crew to the passengers many people have joined the Trust.

A big ‘Thanks’ to all who are involved in the running of Dragonfly, whatever role you do. You are all important to this success. Keep up the good work.
First, 343 tickets have been sold for this year's 200 Club and the monthly prize money is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Prizes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>£170/£85/£45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>£400/£200/£100/£50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We list below the winners at the time of going to press:

**March**
- 1st ticket no. 144 David Walker, Portishead
- 2nd 89 Jenny Lund, Devizes
- 3rd 30 John Webb, Chippenham

**April**
- 1st ticket no. 247 Anthony Evan, Trowbridge
- 2nd 195 Francis Budge, Swindon
- 3rd 328 Jane Garnet, Marlborough

**May**
- 1st ticket no. 100 Ian and Carol Prosser, Pewsey
- 2nd 317 John Wisley, Salisbury
- 3rd 192 Patricia Suffling, Wantage

A variety of off-line and branch members. Before publishing this year’s branch bids, it came to our attention that there was a surplus of £756 that had not been claimed by branches in previous years. With the approval of all the 200 Club administrators it was decided to allocate this money to the Peterborough Arms to buy a wood-burning stove for the bar area.

In future if monies awarded have not been claimed and spent within the current year, that money will also be allocated to another project.

This year Kath Hatton has stepped down from her role of fund-raising activities. We have enlisted the help of Sheila Wade and Derek Flexer to assist in the award-making decisions of the club. We would thank Kath for her assistance over the past years.

£3,100 out of the £3,450 available has been bid for and allocated as follows:

- Wootton Bassett, £850 towards fencing at Studley Grange
- Swindon, £544 for a Stihl engine and various attachments
- MCC, £795 for a 4-stroke outboard engine and a concrete vibrator
- West Vale £600 for a plate compactor, security camera, hedge trimmer and sub base and topping material.
- Peterborough Arms, £189 for a reproduction outside lamp as original
- Swindon Shop, £120 for a router.

We will be announcing how the balance of £350 is to be spent at a later date.

Finally, as always thanks for your continued support which has resulted in yet another year-on-year increase in both prize money and awards to various Trust activities.

**Jeff & Lynda Daws**

Email: 200club@wbct.org.uk
Down to the tow-path for a morning walk. Not an inspiring day: a layer of low cloud, stratocumulus, keeping out any sunshine and a cold north easterly wind is blowing probably about 10 to 12 knots and straight down the canal at Bincknoll Lane.

And what do we see..? Actually, rather a lot caught our attention. The cool weather certainly hasn’t deterred spring activity near Chaddington Lock. The dazzling white of the swan is clearly visible from the lock. She is on her nest with the male nearby on the bank. Both are looking relaxed. Checking my notes I see that last year the cygnets hatched about 21 May. She has certainly been on her nest for a while now so fingers crossed for a happy outcome.

The three pairs of tufted ducks are paddling around, keeping together when threatened and then drifting apart. They are probably wild and will be nervous. These are diving ducks but today not much diving is going on, their head tufts are blowing in the strong wind. They have been a welcome sight for a few weeks; should they take to nesting they like a lot of vegetation in which to hide and not be disturbed. The male has the lovely white flanks while the female is drabber and brown rather than the black and white of the male.

Overhead aerial displays are taking place with swallows and house martins busy flying over the water at low levels. Such aerobatics are super to watch and at the lock they go under the bridge at high speed. Walking on towards Templars Firs we see the large oaks near the outflows at Chaddington starting to leaf and flower. The male flowers are catkins and they are dangling in the breeze and shaking their pollen in the hope it finds a female flower on the tree. Fingers crossed for a good acorn year. Last year was poor but this happens with oaks. All the hawthorn bushes are

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**Plantain Ribwort**

Tufted Ducks

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**Hawthorn Blossom**

Swan Family - photos thanks to Judy Gosnell
flowering, filling the air with a sweet scent. This is the last of three trees to flower in early spring. The first to flower is the wild plum cherry during February followed by blackthorn which flowers before the leaves appear. Finally the hawthorn, which is bright green with new leaves hosting branches heavy with blossom. There are a few wild apple trees alongside the canal that are a delight to see each year. A particularly fine old specimen of a large tree is growing by the stile at the level crossing. Most years there will be a good crop of apples for birds and insects over winter. This year the tree was covered with white and pink blossom. A few apple trees are growing in the tow-path hedgerow.

A pair of moorhens with two very small chicks, they may be a couple of days old, so small and black with their parents hustling them to the safety of the reeds in the water. A heron is on guard looking for food. He is quite grey so we ponder whether he is a different bird from the one that has lurked by the canal for a long time. He is spooked and takes off with his large wings beating the air and looking to return to the tow-path. Several mallards have families huddling in the undergrowth on the far side of the water.

Down at ground level lots of the tow-path plants are growing. The fresh leaves of meadowsweet with clumps of common vetch and bush vetch. The first purple flowers are out on the bush vetch. There are a few clumps of ribwort plantain. The lanceolate leaves are quite soft; look underneath and you can see the ribs which gives the plant its name. The flower is at the end of a long stalk. We used to pick the stalk, wrap the flower head round the stem and pull tight to release the flower, “playing soldiers” was the game. This is another plant that has a medicinal use: years ago it was used as an infusion for coughs and colds. Another member of the plantain family that can be seen close to the tow-path is greater plantain, easily recognised by the round rosette of basal leaves. The pink flower is on a long stalk and the seeds look like a rat’s tail. Birds are fond of the seeds. A tough and common plant of paths and tracks it constantly gets walked on. There is a lot of it near the canal. The leaves are rounder than the ribwort and the underside ribs on the leathery leaves are not so prominent.

The large old trees at Templars Firs are looking terrific, we note the oak is out before the ash. The hybrid black poplars look as if they are still asleep with no sign of bud burst at all. In the shelter of the trees and undergrowth of brambles and nettles brimstones and orange tip butterflies are about in the fleeting sunshine.

Later on in May: the sun is bright and it feels warm. A lot is going on by the canal at Bincknoll Lane. There is no sign of the swans but then they are spotted far away on the water at Studley. Meanwhile our attention is drawn to the sky to watch three pairs of red kites flying low over the neighbouring field which is being cut for grass, keeping company are two buzzards and there are swallows swooping around. The swans have arrived and usher their six cygnets through a culvert to their home area, what a sight! The sun has brought out broad bodied chaser dragonflies, the blue males chasing each other while the golden female sticks to perching on the rushes.
A change to the format this year for the Trust calendar

One of the Transitions Project groups expressed an interest in producing art work for a calendar. Stratton Art Group (supported by Stratton St Margaret Parish Council and based at Grange Leisure Centre in Swindon), have been working this spring on a brief to produce art work from photos of the Wilts & Berks canal and other canals showing the Wilts & Berks as it is now and how it could look in the future.

Twenty-three pieces were judged at the Peterborough Arms on Friday 2 June by three judges, Heather Ponting-Bather (a graphic designer working with the Communications Team on corporate branding and other design matters), Ollie Phipps (Malmesbury Area Board Community Engagement Manager) and WBCT CEO Jonathan Till.

Thirteen of the 23 submitted pieces were selected to be used for the calendar which will be ready for sale at the beginning of September. This is the first of the WBCT Transitions Projects partnerships, based at the Peterborough Arms and also using outreach into the wider communities, to complete a programme: WBCT Transitions Projects is about showing the benefit our canal can bring to communities now, as well as when restoration has been completed.

This summer, Stratton Art Group will be booking a charter trip on nb Dragonfly to have a painting day out.

Stratton Art Group meets weekly at the Grange Leisure in Stratton St Margaret and is run by Swindon artists Marilyn Trew and Ruth Windle, who also run the United Community Art Group each Thursday in Tesco’s Ocotal Way store. However, this new enterprise is not just about art.

As Marilyn explained: “It is aimed at people who live on their own and may be lonely or marginalised in some way, or for those with physical or mental disabilities. We want to bring people together and help to make a difference to their lives.”

As a counsellor, Marilyn has seen first-hand the positive effects that creativity has on people.

She said: “It helps to relax you, it’s a great way to keep your brain active and it’s very enjoyable. You are never too old to learn something new.”

The weekly art group welcomes people of all abilities. It offers tuition, equipment and materials for just £3 per session. It takes place every Monday from 9.30am until 12.00pm. For more info call Marilyn on 07768442393

Marilyn said of the judging: “The judges were very thorough and fair… and it was great being back in the Peterborough Arms: a lovely atmosphere and lovely people.”

Stratton St Margaret Parish Council

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Annual Accounts

The Year ending 31.03.17 accounts are with the external accountants and will be available for members to read before the AGM when published on the website, and at the AGM.
Commercial Operations
Malcolm Hitchinson

As you will have seen in the last edition of Dragonfly, a new division has been created. Its primary aim is to increase the flow of core funds. I was asked by Jonathan to head up this new division. It was originally part of Derek Flexer’s portfolio. How he managed this with all the other sectors he was managing I do not know, but manage it he did and found time to provide me with a handover session and ongoing support, as I eased my way into the new role. Thanks Derek.

Now I thought might be a good idea to introduce myself. My name is Malcolm Hitchinson and I have been with the Trust for about eight years. I live in Westbury, so MCC is my local Branch and I have held a couple of positions within the Branch. With Branch approval, I set up and then chaired the Events Committee for four years, to bring some focus to the way events were organised. With the support of three Branch Chairs and a team of dedicated volunteers, we developed a range of skills that has enabled us to put on and manage some large events like the Pewsham Open Days (judged a success by the Heritage Lottery Fund) and the first Melksham River Festival. I have also spent two years as the MCC Vice Chair.

From my business background, I have purchasing, operational and contract experience. A bit of a Jack of all Trades, which I hope will stand me in good stead for this new role. It is stating the obvious when I say that there are two ways to increase funds. Increase the income stream and drive down the costs. In my new role, with your help, I will try to do both.

I am currently transitioning from my work at MCC (Top Lock Project and the Melksham Food and River Festival) to working with the Information Centre and Dragonfly Trip Boat teams. At this point I would just like to pay tribute to the two teams that run and support these operations. I have been so impressed with their professionalism and dedication in the way they approach their tasks. It has made my move into the Commercial sector so much easier than I could have hoped for. A little further down the line, the Peterborough Arms will go live. I also need to find a way of increasing merchandise sales. To that end, I plan to visit each Branch so that I can understand the issues/ideas you may have, first hand.

As I said at the beginning, the Trust needs to increase the monies that go into core funding. The boat team profits are one element. Membership is the other: everyone can help with this. The income stream from Membership is critical to keep the Trust solvent. That is why it was announced at the AGM that this year was ‘Membership Year’. (Oh dear, it is mid-summer and we have two fewer members than when we started.)

The core funds pay for our insurance, leases, rates and all the other day to day running costs. All needed just to keep the Branches operating. To continue to grow the Trust, we need to find additional funds for surveys, legal fees, planning applications and much more. Please take every opportunity to gain new members. Tow-path walkers, friends, colleagues in other clubs and societies that you belong to are all potential members, just ask them, they can only say no. Working together (all 2,700 of us) we can give the membership a big boost and, just maybe, get near to Sheila Wade’s target of 6,000 members. I now need to apologise to the editor. I said this piece would only take up half a page! Sorry John, but you should know me by now.

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
Partnership News
The next meeting of the Partnership is scheduled for June 15 so as the copy deadline is well before this date I am reporting on discussions held at the March meeting. As I said in my last report (DF144) this meeting discussed in some detail ways that the Partnership could be more effective. It was a wide-ranging debate and we were pleased to hear experiences of other organisations and other partnerships both within and outside waterways restoration. There was no single conclusion to the discussions but the consensus was that while the Partnership should continue in its current form to look at strategic issues, it seemed sensible and pragmatic to consider ‘mini partnerships’ that were related directly to a deliverable scheme and appropriate partners would ‘sign up’ for the duration of each of these projects.

Opportunity for Change
By the time Dragonfly is published there will be a new Government in place and although the world of canal restoration is absolutely apolitical you may recall that I have previously made note of some changes in the way national organisations like Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England are carrying out their work. By this I mean that instead of offering advice as partners in the Wilts & Berks project (as they have for many years), Wilts & Berks Canal Trust is now being charged as if it were a commercial developer seeking advice. In my view this cannot be right to treat a volunteer-led charitable organisation delivering a not-for-profit project which benefits all the community in the same way as a housing developer. WBCT approached one of our local MPs before the election to see if he could bring some common sense to the situation, but just before Parliament was dissolved WBCT received a letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Environment and Rural Life Opportunities stating that “the charged-for service is bound by HM Treasury rules and while EA is sympathetic to the plight of certain customers taking up the service, waiving fees is not permitted for any particular body”.

If this situation continues it means a huge added cost burden to the project and would seem to be the exact opposite of what Government has said it wants which is to help communities to do more for themselves.

I will be helping WBCT to take this back to Government again to try to get these important partners working with us again without charge.

@wiltsberkscanal (Twitter)

www.facebook.com/wiltsberkscanal (Facebook)
Important Information for Volunteers

Volunteers and the Trust’s Employers’ Liability Insurance

Dear Colleague,

As is the case for any corporate organisation the Trust is required to arrange Employers’ Liability Insurance, and is obliged to display its Certificate of Employers’ Liability Insurance where it employs persons covered by the insurance policy.

Because we are a voluntary organisation and most of our work is undertaken by volunteers who are not employees, I am often asked the question whether the Trust’s Liability Insurance covers the actions of volunteers as well as those of employees.

The answer is a categorical “yes”, in our Employers’ Liability Insurance (and in our Public Liability Insurance) the policy defines employees for the purpose of liability insurance to include volunteers – working, helping or instructing.

Through the IWA I have asked our insurance company to issue a definition of “employed person”, a term that is used in our liability insurance policies, so that it is clear to all that volunteers are explicitly included in this definition.

Please find attached the definition that we have been provided with. It would be helpful to display this statement alongside the Certificate of Employers’ Liability Insurance so that it is clear to all.

Many thanks for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Till
Chief Executive Officer

RSA Definition of Person Employed [Commercial Combined Wording UKCO4758C – July 2016]

Person Employed

Person Employed shall mean any of the following while under the direct control and supervision of the Policyholder and while working for the Policyholder in connection with the Business

A) Employee
B) labour master and persons supplied by them
C) individuals employed by labour only sub-contractors
D) self-employed person (not being in partnership with the Policyholder)
E) individual hired to or borrowed by the Policyholder
F) individual undertaking study or work experience while under the supervision of the Policyholder
G) person working under the Community Offender Act 1978 or similar legislation
H) prospective employees being assessed by the Policyholder as to their suitability for employment
I) voluntary worker helper or instructor

Signed on behalf of Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance plc (Authorised Insured)

Steve Lewis
Chief Executive, UK & Western Europe
Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance plc
Members join our Trust for many reasons and we hope you enjoy all the Trust has to offer and in particular being part of the largest and most complex waterways restoration project in the UK... and run by volunteers!

Many of you join in with our restoration working parties and learn hands on about the work we do. Anyone interested in joining in can get in touch with the branch to get details of the working parties.

However we are also aware that there are many other interests in the canal and our work so we in Communications felt that it was the right time to look at creating a number of interest groups for like-minded members to take part in and share their interest with other members.

First one we thought about is History and Heritage and the second one is Nature and Environment.

Is anyone interested in taking part in these groups and establishing a way of communicating with each other? We can have a regular article in Dragonfly and we have our social media and will have sections on the members’ area of the WBCT web site which is under development.

But very much in your hands for you to tell me what you would like to do.

Get in touch with me
Sheila Wade

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New Activities for Members.

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Construction in Middle Wichel is underway......

Site preparation began in May 2017 with full scale construction due to start in the Summer. By the end of the year work will have started on multiple sites and preparation underway on the first housing parcels.

1. Housing for Older People
2. Upgrades to the canal
3. Public square and footbridge
4. Central street running through the District Centre
5. Pub/restaurant/hotel delivered by Hall & Woodhouse
6. Secondary school run by the Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust
7. Housing parcels being designed by architects Metropolitan Workshop and Stonewood Design
8. Existing Waitrose store and car park

For updates on progress catch up with our monthly blog at www.swindon.gov.uk/wichelstowe or follow us on twitter @wichelstowenews

We will, of course, keep our members and supporters up to date through our website and this magazine, with these plans as they develop. In particular, how they may impact the running of our trip boat nb Dragonfly. We look forward to the extension of our navigable canal as a result of this work.
Spring Fair at the Peterborough Arms

The Peterborough Arms was the venue for another WBCT fund-raising event, a Spring Fair held on 22 April for the Peterborough Arms refurbishment. Items for sale included second hand books, cakes, plants and canal-related craft items. WBCT merchandise was also available for sale.

One of WBCT Transitions Project partners, Supporting Wellbeing and Developing Stability (SWADS) from Swindon also attended with their group’s model of a canal.

Just over £500 was raised by many members and locals.

Many thanks to those who came to support, and to those who helped on the day.
1977 to 2017
Celebrating 40 years of volunteer restoration of the Wilts and Berks canal

It's time to create an environment both we and our children can be proud of...
It's time to inspire and excite...
It's time to put our canal at the heart of everyday life...
WILTS & BERKS CANAL TRUST
PATRON: HRH THE DUCHESS OF CORNWALL
RESTORING IN PARTNERSHIP THE WILTS & BERKS CANAL THROUGH WILTSHIRE, SWINDON AND OXFORDSHIRE

Annual General Meeting 21st October 2017
Displays, Presentations and 40th Anniversary Celebrations

Swindon Branch is hosting this year’s AGM of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, at Ellendune Community Centre, Barrett Way, Wroughton, Wiltshire, SN4 9LW. Everyone is welcome to hear about all the exciting developments concerning the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal.
Programme

10:15am Arrivals and refreshments. Car parking is available at the centre.
10:30am Free Minibus available to Studley Grange.
12:30pm Lunch. *Diners with pre-ordered meals are recommended to take an early minibus.*
2:00pm *AGM commences at the Main Hall, followed by the Open Forum.*

This year the format will have changed from previous years. The Executive Director Reports will not be given during the AGM and instead will be in the form of a presentation in the morning.

3:30pm Close.

Complete Section A Contact Details:

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Tel. No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I enclose a cheque for £........... to Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. Please complete and detach form as shown, and send form and cheque to: Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham SN15 4HD.

Section B Meal Selections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meal Selection</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Portions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cottage Pie</td>
<td>£8.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Curry &amp; Rice</td>
<td>£8.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable Lasagne</td>
<td>£8.00</td>
<td>No. Portions...</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total Meals .......... Payment ..........

Wilts & Berks Canal Trust: A Non-Profit-Distributing Company Limited by Guarantee.
Registered in England and Wales No. 2267719
Registered Address: Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham, SN15 4HD
Registered Charity No: 299595
Telephone: 0845 226 8567
E-mail: info@wbct.org.uk
Web Site: www.wbct.org.uk
Join us at our AGM and 40th Anniversary Celebrations

#forallofus
The Towpath Festival will be at our two existing venues this year while we prepare our volunteers and systems for a really big membership drive effort in 2018 and 2019.

MCC Branch will be in attendance at the Melksham Food & River Festival on 2nd & 3rd September and will be adding extra walk activities to their work there, planning to attract a younger audience and convert them into members. Well done MCC!

The Wiltshire Donkey Show is taking place on Sunday 3rd September. WBCT volunteers are needed to help talk canal, sell membership and generally promote the Trust.

Any WBCT members who would like to help at the Dauntsey Event please get in touch with Sheila Wade: 07976 281586 sheila.wade@wbct.org.uk
Fund Raising Officers

“Water adds value”

The Trust relies on grants, donations and sponsorship to carry out its work, both on the restoration projects and on its core work running the Trust. From promotion and publicity through to engineering resources, all our activities need more and more funding as we continue to increase the pace of progress with our project.

The Fund Raising Officers will report to the Executive and this volunteer role will involve applying for grants, liaising with grant making bodies, developing a members’ fund raising programme, and encouraging Branches in their fund raising activities.

Good people skills, good organisational skills, good reporting and communication skills, good ideas ...

Sounds like you? Come and talk to us about this role.

Sheila Wade: sheila.wade@wbct.org.uk
MCC&F&L groups get to grips with a climbing wall (article page 29)

First step into the void

Grand Opening of Jubilee Junction (article pages 34/5)

Exciting Encounters with Trees. Photos with thanks to Richard Mason

A real climbing challenge

RWB Volunteers with their new toy (article page 38)
It has been my great pleasure to donate my narrowboat Nonsuch to the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust to be used for the pleasure of members and the public. Nonsuch was named and launched by Professor David Bellamy as part of the official opening ceremony for the 1998 National Trailboat Festival on the Wilts & Berks Canal on Saturday, 23rd May 1998 at Royal Wootton Bassett which is where hopefully it will be based in the future.

Nonsuch is a Venture Class narrowboat produced by Sea Otter Canal Boats. It is a 26 foot long trailable boat of traditional design which is manufactured from marine B.S. 5083 grade aluminium alloy resulting in no corrosion. When launched from its specially constructed trailer, the boat takes on 1.5 tonnes of water ballast in about 2 minutes which creates an extremely stable boat. When the boat is floated back on to its trailer and towed out of the canal, the water is simply released back into the canal. The unique V-bottomed hull produces the minimum of boat wash, safeguarding the canal and river banks, plants and nesting birds. This hull also enables it to be easily moored close against the bank.

The name Nonsuch was chosen by its first owner Vic Miller, from the locality near Cheam, Surrey where he lived for many of his early years. Nonsuch was the name of the ornate palace built by Henry VIII at Cheam in an area now known Nonsuch Park. In recent years an organisation called The Friends of Nonsuch has been formed to protect the environment and features of Nonsuch Park. The logo used on the boat is the logo of The Friends of Nonsuch.

For many years Vic Miller was a Director and Trustee of The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust and assisted with the Royal Wootton Bassett canal restoration from 1989. Regretfully due to health reasons, he is now unable to follow his love of narrow boating so has decided the Trust should now benefit from the use of his boat.
Exciting Encounters with Trees
Val Melville

A slightly different challenge awaited a few intrepid Wilts & Berks volunteers on Easter Monday. Usually known for using ladders, straps, wires and ropes to tackle dangerous or obstructive trees along the tow-path, this group from Melksham, Calne & Chippenham Branch took on more elevated challenges in Monkton Park, Chippenham, courtesy of the Wiltshire Outdoor Learning Team. WOLT had set up outdoor challenges for local young people, and after a little arm-twisting by Richard Mason, agreed to do a special OAP session for Wilts & Berks members at the end of the day.

So zip wire, tree climbing, 7.1 metre wall climbing, and high slack wire walking were on the menu for five 50/60/70-something plucky volunteers. How did they get on? Everyone achieved at least one challenge; some managed more (Paul Lenaerts was an absolute STAR) and all thoroughly enjoyed the chance to succeed at an exciting new challenge.

Apart from the chance to have fun, it was also the opportunity to try out some of the equipment which will feature at the Melksham Food and River Festival in September: the Wiltshire Outdoor Learning Team will be bringing their impressive climbing wall and The Cooper Tires Wire Challenge to the Festival.

The MCC adventurers were really impressed with the WOLT, their equipment, their informal yet professional relationships with the young people and their attention to safety details. Everyone was encouraged to challenge themselves, to step out of their comfort zone, yet not feel disappointed if it was a step too far. What a fantastic way to build self-confidence and trust. It is hoped that the River Avon will form part of the challenge, but the logistics of this still need to be decided and will depend on the suitability of the existing trees along the bank.

Prize Draw in support of the Land Fund
Malcolm Hitchinson

Last year you supported the Prize Draw magnificently, raising over £4,000 for the Pewsham Lock Cottage. This money is being used to produce the architect drawing for the cottage. Thank you all for your wonderful support.

This year the Draw is in support of the Trust’s Land Fund. You may have seen the announcement, in April, that the Trust has signed a 30-year lease for a stretch of canal at Challow,near Wantage. There are some great pictures on the Trust’s web site.

As the Trust’s estate grows there is more and more demand for the Land Fund to pay the increasing number of lease fees. This is a good problem to have but we need to find ways of generating income streams to support, not just the lease fees, but the legal costs associated with them. Although the moneys raised from the Prize Draw will be ring-fenced to the Land Fund account, it will free up moneys that are being used to top up the Fund. I hope you can help to make this year’s fund raising draw as successful as last year, or maybe even better. Well, I can dream!

You will find three books of draw tickets enclosed in this copy of Dragonfly and more are available on request from the Trust Office. The stubs and moneys must be returned to the Trust Office at Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre by 30 September. The winning tickets will be drawn at the Trust AGM in October. Full details can be found on the ticket.

Thank you for your support.
Notice is hereby given that the twenty-ninth Annual General Meeting of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (company number 2267719) will take place at:
Ellendune Community Centre, Barrett Way, Wroughton, Wiltshire, SN4 9LW on Saturday, 21st October 2017 at 2.00 pm.

AGENDA

ORDINARY BUSINESS

1. To receive any apologies for absence
2. **Resolution to approve the Minutes of the twenty seventh AGM held on 15th October 2016 and to consider any matters arising**
3. **Resolution to approve the Directors’ Annual Report for the year ended 31st March 2017**
4. **Resolution to approve the Trust’s accounts for the year ended 31st March 2017**
5. **Members to the Board of Trustees:**
   a. In accordance with Articles 41 and 42 of the Articles of Association members retire from the Board in rotation and may offer themselves for re-election.
   **Resolution to approve the election to the Board of those retiring members who have offered themselves for re-election**
   b. In accordance with Article 36 of the Articles of Association the Board may appoint new members to serve until the AGM and such members may offer themselves for re-election.
   **Resolution to approve the election to the Board of those appointed members who have offered themselves for re-election**
   c. In accordance with Article 34 (b) and Article 45 nominating bodies (The Inland Waterways Association, the Canal & River Trust and the Wiltshire Swindon & Oxfordshire Canal Partnership) may each give notice of their intention to nominate a member to the Board
   **Resolution to note the nomination of members to the Board**
   d. Steve Bacon continues as the Members’ Representative into the second year of his three-year period
   e. There are no vacancies for new members of the Board. Thus in accordance with Article 44 of the Articles of Association the Board recommends no person for election as a new member (other than those offering themselves for re-election).
6. **Resolution to approve the reappointment of Messrs Morris Owen as accountants of the Trust at a remuneration to be determined by the Board**

SPECIAL BUSINESS

7. There is no Special Business proposed
8. Any Other Business

By order of the Board

Peter Kinsman
Company Secretary.

NOTES:

1. As a member of the Trust you are invited to attend the AGM. A member entitled to be present and vote at the AGM 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 for the elections to the Board. A proxy MUST be a member of the Trust. An instrument of proxy may be obtained from
1. The Company Secretary, to whom it must be returned not later than forty-eight hours before the start of the meeting.

2. A Member may propose a resolution at the meeting. Such a resolution will be Special Business, requiring a majority of 75% of the votes cast at the meeting. To assist in the orderly conduct of the meeting it would be helpful if members (or their duly appointed proxy) wishing to propose a resolution would indicate their intention to do so by informing the Company Secretary either in advance of the meeting or at the venue on the day of the meeting.

3. After the formal business of the AGM there will be an Open Forum Session at which members may put questions from the floor to the Directors on any matter relating to the canal or the Trust’s activities.

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**Membership & Volunteers Co-ordinator**

*“an excellent focus for community activity”*

The Trust needs help to develop our membership base, both in terms of recruiting new members and also in encouraging them to volunteer for all sorts of activities within the Trust: both our traditional dirty boots’ restoration roles and all the many “clean shoes” roles that are needed to run a large members organisation.

The Co-ordinator role, reporting to the Executive, will be to liaise with the Branches and the Communications team over membership recruitment and help the Branches develop strategies to engage members more in our project. Organising corporate volunteer days and developing our relationships with partner organisations and community engagement activities will also be an important part of this volunteer role.

Good people skills, good organisational skills, good communication skills, good ideas ...

Sounds like you? Come and talk to us about this role.

Sheila Wade: sheila.wade@wbct.org.uk
Dear editors,
Congratulations to Stuart Fisher for one of the most explanatory articles printed in Dragonfly. I would dearly like to read other articles written in the same enlightening manner for other subject areas of the canal. Someone???

Neville Bowler, California USA

Dear Editor
Good News: Santa is coming to Swindon again this year
My team of Elves were so pleased with the delight that the children had with the presents they received last year that they have already started to make more new ones ready for this Christmas. A big thank you to all of them.
Last year was such a success and delight seeing over 500 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.

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Bread doesn’t fit the bill

Just like you, ducks need to eat healthy food. Bread is really bad for them, and pollutes the water. Feed them seeds, porridge oats, lettuce and even defrosted peas instead. Try and spread the love and feed ducks in less busy locations too.

Find out more at canalrivertrust.org.uk/ducks
Organisers of the Melksham Food & River Festival are delighted with the fantastic response from local organisations, charities, and food and drink providers, who have committed to attending the increasingly popular Festival to be held in the King George V Park on the weekend of 2/3 September 2017.

80 stalls have now booked to appear on the main Festival day on Sunday, as well as extra adventurous activities on and by the River Avon on Saturday: the greatest number of stalls and activities at the Festival since its beginning.

Adrienne Westbrook, Chair of the Festival Committee said: “The Melksham Food and River Festival is a true community-based affair, and it promises to be a real supersized event this year!

“By popular demand, there will be additional attractions on Saturday to complement the River Adventure that was a great success last year. These will include the Wiltshire Outdoor Learning Team’s 7.3m climbing wall, the Cooper Tires’ Wire Challenge (which will be a traverse wire across the River Avon and back) hot food stalls, soft drinks, children’s activities, and demonstrations. The Foxhangers Raft Race has medals as well as a cash prize for the winners, and there will be boat trips on the river. As well as the beer tent, there will be cooking demonstrations, the Decibelles and the Military Wives Choir in the Leekes Country Kitchen Marquee, and to round off the day, at dusk there will be an illuminated cruise by the visiting Wilderness Boats – although this will depend on the weather.”

Melksham Town Council is supporting the Festival even more this year, by suspending car park fees for the weekend; and as well as demonstrations on the river, free Try Canoeing, free music, free cooking and cocktail demonstrations there will also be free entry to the event, so visitors won’t need to spend a fortune to have a fantastic time.

Adrienne added: “Sunday will be the main food and drinks day with 80 stalls now booked on the King George V Park – the biggest number we have ever had! Many stalls will highlight our excellent local producers, and there will also be free entertainment from the brilliant local duo the Decibelles. The Chilli Eating Competition returns on Sunday when competitors pit their taste buds against increasingly intense chillies, and Bewley and Merrett will complete the day with a memorial balloon release.

“Please visit the website as we are adding updates all the time.”

www.melkshamfoodandriverfestival.co.uk

Both days will feature boat trips, including on the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust’s new wheely-boat The Mary Archard. This boat is also accessible to wheelchairs, disability scooters and children’s buggies, allowing everyone in the family to enjoy a trip on this beautiful stretch of the River Avon.

The Festival Programme is available from the Melksham Tourist Information Centre, plus the programme, all information, prices, rules and entry forms, are on the website:

www.melkshamfoodandriverfestival.co.uk

The website also has a wealth of information, directions, children’s colouring competition, and many photos to give you a tantalizing taste of this wonderful event.

For more information, please contact Adrienne Westbrook on 07595 420021 or via email: info@melkshamfoodandriverfestival.co.uk

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Royal Wootton Bassett branch talk

Monday 02 October 2017 07:30pm - 09:30pm
The Angel Hotel, 47 High St, Wootton Bassett SN4 7AQ, UK

At the October meeting of the Royal Wootton Bassett Branch, Peter Turvey will give a talk about the Crofton Beam Engines. (Peter is Chair of the Crofton Branch of the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust.) The steam engines are the only ones in the country still working and performing the function they were built for. There is a lot of history and engineering to hear about, and work to make the site a great visitor attraction with a bar and cafe.
Spotlight on …
The Eastern half

The “Berkshire” half of the canal is of course wholly within Oxfordshire, albeit that unlike Wiltshire where the local councils are unitary, over here for the moment we remain two tier. The historic line of the canal lies in the Vale of White Horse District Council boundaries from Acorn Bridge (the River Cole) through to the Thames at Abingdon. And the reason why it’s the Wilts & Berks canal and not the Wilts & Oxfordshire canal is to do with boundary changes in the past.

Three social branches of the Canal Trust cover the Vale: Abingdon, East Vale and West Vale. We take Abingdon as covering from the Thames junction to the Great Western main line. Within that area work took place some years ago on Drayton Lock. This was vital as the lock fell, indeed still falls, within the area proposed for the reservoir. The major work, however, was the construction of Jubilee junction and the short length of waterway leading from the junction towards the fishing lake. Then Chair Martin Buckland spent a considerable time planning the project and obtaining the necessary permissions. The major funding came from the IWA celebrating their Jubilee.

Abingdon and the new route westwards is one of the Restoration Plans being developed by the Trust’s Masterplanner.

Unfortunately Abingdon branch was suspended several years ago for lack of active members sufficient to cover the roles required under the constitution. We could really do with a revitalised branch based there to help promote the restoration and carry on with the vital maintenance.

It is planned to restart a programme of routine maintenance at the junction area this Summer using other Trust resources.

The East Vale branch covers the area between the GW main line north of Ardington, and Baulking Road, Uffington.

The first section the branch worked on was the pound of canal between Grove Top Lock and Lime Kiln Lock, around 400 m. This included restoration of the wing walls of the upper lock and the construction of a dam at the entrance to Lime Kiln Lock. Unfortunately, whilst this stays in water during the autumn and winter from road and field drainage, the lack of a constant water supply means that during the summer it tends to dry up and this has promoted the re-establishment of weed over the years. As the canal here comes under the area covered by the Ove Arup Engineering Study which proposes a diversion to avoid the Top Lock it is pointless spending vast sums of money re-dredging the canal here at the moment. The local team continue with routine maintenance.

East Vale branch operates under WPO Jon Miles its mid week work parties which are purely maintenance ie strimming and mowing.

We own a significant stretch of canal between Wantage and East Challow. The footpath between Stockham and Challow was cleared and the canal de-silted around 25 years ago and is well-used.

At the Childrey end we have a lease over a 600-m stretch of canal. The water level on this pound is controlled by a weir at the eastern end of the section, built by the volunteers.

Our challenge in the East Vale part is the need for more qualified Work Party Organisers as we are currently restricted as to weekend work. There is more than enough work to be getting on with. Similarly, I am looking for people to do project management.

This year, after a long time of planning and with great thanks to the Land Team, we obtained a 30 year lease over most of the canal between East and West Challow. Planning for work on this section has commenced and once it gets going it will be all hands to the pump.

East Vale also mans the Trust’s museum at Wantage Wharf. The Sackhouse was acquired from the developers of the adjacent flats on the wharf site, and has lots of information regarding the canal and its context in the locality. It also allows us to promote the canal restoration. Currently open on the first and third Wednesday and Saturday: more volunteers would be great!

We take our marquee and displays out and about during the year, being regular attendees at the Uffington White Horse Show, Childrey Fete, the Old Berks Country Show. A new event locally is the Wantage and Grove Extravaganza which we will be attending again this year. Our last event of the year is generally the Dickensian evening in Wantage Market Place on the first Friday of December.
We have been regular contributors to the Wantage Summer Festival, with a series of guided walks using the canal as an integral part of the walk.

East Vale Branch meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month from 8pm at East Hanney Royal British Legion, Mill Orchard, East Hanney, Wantage OX12 0JH. Normal meetings are a chance for a catch up about activities and to discuss up and coming workparties and outside events. We have occasional speaker evenings. 

Branch Chairman: Brian Stovold: 07946 524928
brian.stovold@wbct.org.uk

West Vale Branch section has the Wiltshire/Oxfordshire border as its western limit (where the canal crossed the River Cole) and extends some 12 km to just east of the village of Uffington.

Shrivenham Canalside Park
Some years ago, the branch cleared and dredged several lengths of the canal around Shrivenham, opening up 1500m of tow-path. wo hectares of land to the south of Shrivenham were purchased including 100m of in-filled canal. The canal was excavated and the area landscaped to create a small park that now includes a car park, slipway, paths, numerous trees and a wildlife area.

The branch working parties devote the majority of their time to keeping this area well maintained.

Stepping Stone Bridge
In order to join two of the dredged sections of canal the brick-arch bridge that carries Steppingstone Lane bridleway over the canal needed to be rebuilt, having been demolished in the 1950s. The bridge was originally constructed in 1804/5 to carry the road from Shrivenham to Bourton. With the construction of Avenue Road, access to Bourton was improved and this route became less important and had been a simple track and bridleway for many years. The new bridge opened in 2012 is now in use and work continues with the rebuilding of the remaining three wing-walls and adding coping stones to the other parapet.

Branch meetings
The branch has monthly open meetings on the first Wednesday of each month, starting at 8 pm, at the Prince of Wales pub in Shrivenham High Street with, usually, a work-party on the following Saturday.

We also hold weekly work-parties most Wednesdays.

Contact our chairman Graham Banks for further details at graham.banks@wbct.org.uk

Heritage Heroes at Pewsham Locks
veterans to join WBCT working parties in June

Much progress has been made on this joint project with Canal & Rivers Trust and funded by People’s Postcode Lottery and other funders, with a great deal of hard work from MCC work parties and the project team.

Now the exciting stage of working with the Help for Heroes veterans is about to begin. June, rather than the original date in September, will see the first of the veterans on site, working with WBCT volunteers to gain skills for future use in careers in construction and land based management. The last few weeks have been very busy with many site and office meetings to ensure that the veterans gain as much as possible from their experience with us. They will be working on landscaping the education and play areas and on towpath repair and lock construction.

Roderick Bluh, Chairman, Wilts & Berks Canal Trust said: “We can’t wait for the veterans to join us in the restoration at Pewsham. This project will really benefit local communities and will give us the opportunity to share our passion, knowledge and skills with the military heroes. We are particularly excited about being able to give them something back for the hard work they have done for this country.”
A brief summary of what’s happening along the line.
MELKSHAM, CALNE AND CHIPPENHAM AND FOXHAM & LYNEHAM SUB BRANCH

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

Secretary:  
Lyn Dyer.  lyn.dyer@wbct.org.uk  Tel 07486 948 017

As usual it’s been a busy and fruitful few months along the MCC line. With financial assistance from Chippenham Area Board volunteers carried out tow-path raising and repairs at the wet section.

A number of fringe benefits resulted from the project. Not only did we get new volunteers coming along to help (and without this help we wouldn’t have been able to complete the project) but due to the raising we were able to remove a couple of bunds (dams) across the canal and let the water level rise at this end of the Pewsham stretch. So we were able to take our work boat Boswell as far as double bridge. This is the first time since Stanley aqueduct collapsed in 1901 that a narrowboat has been along this stretch! An historical moment in the restoration along the MCC line and of course very very satisfying for the volunteers concerned.

The removal of these bunds and a clear navigation to double bridge means we are just short of the length of the canal at Wichelstowe where nb Dragonfly operates . . . oh for a car park at Pewsham.

Recent checks of work progressing along the line reveal that we are working on 75% of the line, be this physical work or chatting to landowners or gathering information. It’s amazing just how much time and effort goes into a project even before a spade/digger is put into the earth!

Chippenham Folk Festival is an annual event held over the late May Day Bank Holiday weekend and traditionally we have had WBCT gazebos on site spreading the word and run boat trips along the beautiful river Avon in Chippenham. This year we had the added bonus of trialling our new wheely-boat the Mary Archard, so named after Mary who kindly left us a legacy which we as a branch wanted to use to buy a trailable boat that could be used on accessible watered sections of the line. This not only gives the WBCT an income but ensures Mary’s name lives on a little longer.

Although she is designed to carry disabled passengers we were unable to do this at the Folk Festival due to the steep angle of the bank in Chippenham. The Mary Archard will be officially launched at Pewsham so we will be advertising the opportunity for disabled passengers to enjoy the canal from the water.

Volunteer Richard Mason approached the company planning to offer zip wire trips at the Melksham Food and River Festival with a view to more mature members trying out the kit, so five intrepid MCC members clambered up trees and climbing walls to enjoy the zip wire experience. You can too in September at the festival. MCC are involved in the river element of the festival and preparations are well under way. Peter Hended is coordinating walks along the original canal line through Melksham and volunteers have been hard at work clearing and preparing paths along the route.

MCC and F&L members are working on the Peterborough Arms and recently started to prepare the outside render and window for painting. We are on the look out for some floor boards, of the correct age and size for the main bar and have ordered lights for main and small bars. Non-public rooms are being prepared for various uses once we re-open.

Corporate partners Greenscape have volunteered to maintain the areas around Seven Locks which we thank them for.

With all this work going on, branch members and volunteers are looking forward to our summer dinner where we plan to meet up and relax over good food and beverages at The Bell, The Wharf, Lacock.

Finally our congratulations to Malcolm Hitchinson who has stepped up and become the Commercial Operations Director for the Trust. We wish him well in his new role and thank him for his hard work at MCC, and my personal thanks for supporting, and questioning me sometimes, as the branch vice chair. Malcolm’s skills, talents and hard work will be sorely missed.

Dave Maloney
I worry about how fast the time is flying by at the moment, time for another Dragonfly report: it seems like I have only just finished the last one.

It’s been another busy few months and we have been active on all of our sites. We had one work party rained off, other than a week at Christmas it was the first Wednesday work party we have missed in well over a year.

We have had a couple of work parties at Dunnington Aqueduct and managed to strim the canal bed quite late in April, hopefully that will deter the undergrowth and give us a good start next winter. It’s starting to look like there may have been a canal there at some point in the distant past!

At Templars Firs the grass has started to grow and we have started the mowing and strimming. At the far end of the watered section we have removed a lot of the reeds which had taken over that part of the canal which had become very silted up. There is a stream coming in and the reeds seem to have slowed down the water flow causing any sediment to build up. The lily pads have been slow to grow so far this year, we started to think maybe we are getting the better of them but they are probably just lurking there waiting for us to work elsewhere before bursting into life again.

However, we have started to use our splendid new work boat which we purchased with a generous donation from the Wootton Bassett Civic Trust following their decision to wind up the trust. We also received a donation from the 200 Club which together covered the cost of the boat, a weed cutter and ancillary equipment. We have begun to cut the weed as it starts to grow and we are trying to devise new ways of clearing the canal of weed so we can spend our time doing other things. The far end of Templars Firs where the stream comes in has become quite silted up. A long time was spent clearing the weeds from that area and a better water flow may disperse the silt.

Further along at Chaddington the maintenance work at the spill weir was completed after a few weeks of working in the cold and mud. The wall below the west end where the water enters the stream has been lowered by half so in the event of severe flood conditions the water will have more space to get away. We have also started to mow and strim the various paths around the site. The grass and weeds in our little paddock have shot up despite being cut a few weeks ago. The two people on the grass cutters were barely visible on our last work party but they managed to find their way out just as tea was being poured.

Our biggest effort was at Studley where we spent several weeks installing benches, interpretation boards and brass rubbing plaques for the eventual opening of the section. We hired an auger to drill the holes for the many posts though this was difficult to use because of the roots from the hedge in the towpath. The holes for the benches had to be dug by hand and this was also a challenge. However, the most difficult bit was getting the materials on site to do the job. The tow-path is not yet solid enough to support a dumper so we had to transport everything, including forty bags of Postcrete, four benches, twenty posts and all our tools on our four-wheeled trolley, almost a mile from our compound to the far end of Studley.

We were pleased to welcome Wiltshire Wildlife Trust who spent several days at Studley in April on a project to plant 20,000 plants along the water’s edge. As well as their own resources and volunteers they had support from a large Network Rail group and some Trust volunteers. It sounds an impossible task but with their experience, equipment and excellent organisation they completed the task in four days. Both sides of the Studley section water’s edge, over two kilometres including both sides with the exception of the bit still to be dredged were planted along with hundreds of tree cuttings on the offside. Well done them!

There is plenty to keep us busy over the summer, if you fancy coming to join us on a Wednesday. We have had three new volunteers recently which has been a big boost to our work party and there is always room for more.

John Bower
The programme of summer events throughout the town is now in full swing. The branch has committed to a presence at ten events and has requests to attend others. We have limited the number of events to reduce the load on a small band of volunteers, although I am pleased to report that we are seeing some new faces at all of our activities.

Already we have been to the Swindon Old Town Rotary Duck Race and the Wroughton Historical Society’s 40th anniversary. We have just attended a Swindon Volunteer’s Fair but with limited success on a poor footfall.

In addition to the usual tasks the work party has been uncovering the old spill weir and draw off just south of Skew Bridge at Westlease in order to examine their condition and plan some maintenance. Few trippers on Dragonfly will realise that the boat also crosses an aqueduct high over the River Ray because the trees and bushes are so dense. The work party have also cleared the exterior of this structure and found it to be in very poor condition. Arrangements are being made with the owner, Swindon council, for a professional inspection.

There is still not much progress to report at East Wichel. We have not been able to start the repairs to the soft bank and we failed with our grant application to start the leak-hunting with pumping trials. We are in contact with the angling club who are naturally concerned about the risk to their fish stock and we will start this task as soon as possible. Anybody know where to find a few thousands?

Behind the scenes we have continued to engage with the planning for Middle and West Wichel. A planning application has been published which details the upgrading of the canal through the new District Centre opposite Waitrose and our landing stage. We have made proposals for improvements and continue to press for their adoption. It is expected that these works and some of the surrounding building projects will start later this year. Some of us at least can’t wait for the opening of the new pub opposite the landing stage.

We made formal responses to the consultations on the green infrastructure for New Eastern Villages and the vision for the many bridges needed in the area including canal bridges. We wrote that the canal will be a major feature within the green space infrastructure around and between the new villages which should be recognised from the outset. It will provide an important feature for local recreation and travel on foot and cycle and also provide a corridor for people and wildlife linking the villages with adjacent developments. We made some suggestions to improve the provision of bridges and culverts and proposed that they should all be built in advance as a part of the overall infrastructure development.

The scheduled public inquiry for the application to build on the Lotmead site and move the canal line, to which the trust objected, has been moved back to November. Meanwhile the borough council is seriously considering the scheme developed by our engineers to use the canal to aid flood prevention and drainage of the whole area.

As ever, there is no obvious sign of movement on the canal line through the town but I am told that cogs may be beginning to turn.

So, looking forward to lots of sunny summer time out and about on the canal.

Rod Hacker

SWINDON

Chairman:
Rod Hacker, 11 Whittington Road, Swindon, SN5 7DF Tel: 07840 072817
Secretary:
John Farrow Tel: 01793 490672

WEST VALE

Chairman:
Graham Banks, 12 Craven Common, Uffington, Faringdon, SN7 7RN
Secretary:
Brenda Forward, ‘Llamedos’, Longcot Rd, Shrivenham SN6 8HF Tel: 01793 782776

...
Well, the first Summer/Spring Fete of the season has taken place. Old Berks County Show near Faringdon. A welcome to those new members who joined up that day. We had many visitors to the Trust marquee, and it was great to hear the interest shown in this project. Unfortunately the weather later in the afternoon was not kind. The downpour occurred at the critical point of take-down.

Since the last Dragonfly we’ve attended the Goring Gap Historical Society to give a talk on you know what. Probably the best talk technologically speaking. Large screen, loudspeaker, throat mike. After five minutes’ wandering around the hall talking randomly I had a vision of mixing canal history with stand-up comedy. Actually, perhaps I’d better move on rapidly at that point. Seriously, a very good turn out with some very interesting questions and offers of assistance.

I’m giving the Summer Festival walks a break this year – but put Sunday 10 September, 3 pm in the diary for the Childrey/Challow circular walk. Start at Childrey village green.

Why there? Well, the good news this time – sorry, great news this time is that after much negotiation and work by Max Crofts and the land team, we have acquired a long lease over almost all the canal between the edge of East Challow and the Childrey Brook at West Challow. Our thanks go to the owner’s land agents Savill Smiths Gore and to the Stockham Estate/ Wasborough family.

Restoration of this significant chunk of canal is not going to happen overnight. There is much preparatory work to be done, including fencing and some serious tree work. There are various structures along the canal, some of which have already had plans drawn up. Ecology studies will also be necessary.

However the medium term aim is for a watered and fully restored canal between East Challow and West Challow within five years.

Project planning will also take in possible extensions to this stretch as landowner permissions allow.

Exciting stuff, after a period of relative inactivity. Hence please join me for a circular walk to look at the site in question. See above. Sept 10, 3pm Childrey Village Green.

For those interested in the Stockham housing development situation, the Land team have been in contact with the Phase 3 developer regarding their plans for a bridge across the canal to connect the housing estate to the open space opposite. As I write we are awaiting a response from them to our latest proposal.

The Monday /midweek work parties of tow-path maintenance continue. If you would like to join our merry throng please contact John Miles, on 01235 764 890.

Brian Stovold
Branch Meeting & Contact Details

The Melksham Calne and Chippenham branch meet at Melksham Skills Centre, Melksham, 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 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 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 August 1st).

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-vaile

EAST VALE WORK PARTY INFORMATION:

Organiser:
Bob Airey Tel 01235 769469, John Miles 01235 764890

Work Parties:
Second and fourth Saturday of the month with changes at public holiday times.
The East Vale work sites are: Childrey New Road; West Challow; Elm Farm section; and Grove Locks. Contact WPO for details.
Board of Trustees, Executive Committee and Officers

Board of Trustees:
Chairman             Roderick Bluh, Contact via Trust Office 07831 340 387
Vice Chair            Colin Fletcher, Lower Foxhangers Farm, Rowde SN10 1SS 01380 828 254

Interim Board of Trustees
Peter Kinsman, Nant-y-Broch, Purton Stoke, Swindon SN5 4JG 01793 771 548
Eddie Thomas, 14 Sandringham Road, Swindon SN3 1HP 01793 534 404
Jenny Stratton, 35 Sheridan Drive, Royal Wootton Bassett, SN4 8JJ 01793 850 310
Dave Maloney, 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham SN15 3GQ 07809 374 754
Brian Stovold, 1 Roman Way, Wantage, Oxon. OX12 9YF Branch Chairs Rep 01235 763 072
Steve Bacon 50 Templars Firs, Royal Wootton Bassett, SN4 7EW 07749 215741

Dr David Cook Advisor to the Executive Committee

Executive Committee
CEO and Finance Jonathan Till Contact via Trust Office 07444 432 441
Co. Secretary, Treasurer: Peter Kinsman, Nant-y-Broch, Purton Stoke, Swindon SN5 4JG 01793 771 548
Legal & Administration: Jonathan Till Contact via Trust Office 07444 432 441
H&S, Volunteers and Property Director: Derek Flexer Contact via Trust Office 07753 980 297
Commercial & Operations Director: Malcolm Hitchinson Contact via Trust Office 07595 833 297
Projects Director: Andrew Matters Contact via Trust Office 08452 268 567
PR & Communication and IT Director: Sheila Wade Contact via Trust Office 07976 281 586

Officers
IWA Rep: Vacant
Branch Chair East Vale: Brian Stovold, 1 Roman Way, Wantage, Oxon. OX12 9YF 01235 763 072
Branch Chair West Vale: Graham Banks, 12 Craven Common, Uffington, Faringdon, SN7 7RN
Branch Chair Swindon: Rod Hacker, 11 Whittington Road, Swindon, SN5 7DF 07840 072 817
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Branch Chair MCC&F&L: Dave Maloney, 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham SN15 3GQ 07809 374 754
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