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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I am very pleased to announce that the Board of Trustees has co-opted two further new Trustees to our Board. Welcome to Sheila Wade, well known to many of you, who has decided to stand down from the Executive to take a greater involvement in the strategic and policy setting part of the Trust. We also welcome Gordon Olson. Gordon has taken a keen interest in what we are doing and planning to do and wishes to help us, particularly with our fundraising efforts, which is very welcome at the present time. He is already hard at work.

With four new Trustees appointed in recent months, our interim trustees have stood down. I would like to thank Dave Maloney, Jenny Stratton, and Eddie Thomas for their past service as Trustees. They are still all actively involved in the Trust. Peter Kinsman has also retired as Trustee to work on the Executive Board as Head of Finance. I cannot thank Peter enough for all his hard work generally and particularly recently during some difficult financial times.

The AGM is almost upon us, so I will save most of what I could say until then. For those who cannot attend on 21st October my address to the AGM will posted on the website after the event.

As most of you will know, the management team, who have been working incredibly hard, have had a difficult year dealing with the fallout of the financial and other problems arising from the Studley Grange project and also the ongoing investigations into the tragic accident at Pewsham Locks in August 2016. I can say with some confidence that, were it not for the very professional manner in which these matters have been handled and the enormous amount of commitment put in by members of the team and the generosity of three of our members in supporting the Trust with loan finance, then the situation today would not be very promising. We all owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

The positive news is that these problems are being professionally managed, the situation re finances have improved, albeit we have a long way still to go. The Studley Grange project was finished this summer. The work at the Peterborough Arms is pushing ahead towards a re-opening and there has been much good progress made on several fronts in pushing forward with our plans for the future.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the AGM to hear more.

CEO’s Report
Jonathan Till

This month sees a considerable amount of work going on throughout the Trust to prepare for the AGM in October. Swindon Branch is hosting the AGM this year at Ellendune Community Centre in Wroughton SN4 9LW on Saturday 21st October. The Executive are reporting on their work strands in the morning from 10.30 in a series of presentations, rather than during the AGM itself, in order for the AGM to finish at a more reasonable time and to allow the Chairman’s report and my report to be the main focus of the formal business.

The Executive continues to work on a whole range of work strands and I would like to thank each of the team for their hard work and their many achievements. Their work load has been increased recently by the membership appeal to support the Trust in raising significant funding to cover the cost overruns incurred on the Studley Grange project. This is work that began in July 2016, almost as soon as the Executive started work, and continues this summer with an even greater focus to provide the means to repay the generous loans from three of our members. At the same time, others on the Executive have been working and continue to work on a process looking to recover some of the cost overruns from the parties involved with the management of the project.

None of this is easy work and I am constantly surprised and appreciative of the amount of work our Executive undertakes and completes in such a professional manner. We are now a relatively large organisation in the waterways restoration world, with usually around £500,000 of income pa, and
corresponding project and administrative work to manage, with largely a part time volunteer management team. This is something that will need to be reviewed as our project progresses, the income streams increase and the amount of canal line to be managed grows ever longer.

I hope to see many of you at our AGM in October.

Apology

The WBCT Communication team would like to offer their sincere apologies to Cllr Fleur de Rhé-Philipe. We inadvertently announced her as a new Trustee in the last edition of Dragonfly. Our Chair is discussing with Fleur the possibility of her becoming a Trustee now or in the future, but she has made no decision at the present time.

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

 Nb Dragonfly has been having quite an eventful time lately; at the time of writing she is no longer at Waitrose, but moored where she used to be, at the bottom of a WBCT member’s garden. The reason – long-expected works in Wichelstowe are now under way, and the section of canal just North of the bridge by Waitrose is being de-watered, to allow construction work including putting a sewer across under the canal to proceed. There will also be improvements to the canal’s profile there, and the whole development is called Canalside, so we’re certainly not complaining!

Luckily we were able to continue our public trips until mid-September, when demand starts falling off anyway; for the rest of the year Nb Dragonfly will operate from the original landing stage by the bottom of Kingshill in Swindon. We have ceased our public trips, but a number of charters are still going ahead, and we welcome further charter bookings. The Boat Team’s biggest headache was the Santa trips. Parking near Kingshill has always been an issue, and as the only place left to wind (turn the boat) is just beyond Skew Bridge, the trips will be significantly shorter. Fortunately, an approach to the manager of the Runner pub in Wootton Bassett Road yielded an immediate positive response. The car park behind the pub is quite large, and from the very back there is a path that leads almost directly to just beside our landing stage on the canal – walking it takes between two and three minutes. As for Santa, he will still park his sleigh at our compound by Beavan’s Bridge, but will meet the boat at Skew Bridge. The fact that the boat will not move far while he is on it will be of little interest to the children receiving their presents!

All this took quite a bit of working out by the Santa team, who are still finding their feet having been set up only last year. Many hands make light work – and at least two of our team members will not be able to continue for 2018. So this article is in part a plea, for anyone who might like to become involved in the behind-the-scenes work that goes on to make the Santa trips possible. In particular we are looking for Santas! Our regular Santa collapsed with exhaustion last year; although he is continuing at a slower pace, we need to complement our existing two ‘alternative’ Santas. If you feel you can help, as Santa or in any of the ways mentioned above, please contact me on 01793 881158, 07774 823153 or e-mail chrisbarry1945@gmail.com.

Chris Barry
“Don’t Hibernate, do something.” A quote you will find in one of our items later. Autumn, a time for huddling up round a nice fire with cosy slippers on your feet or, getting busy in the many ways we do in going about restoring a canal. The Trust has a really broad depth of people with knowledge ranging from things engineering through things horticultural, to things administrative. We need every single person to share knowledge and skills to help us reach our goal of a restored canal with all the benefits that will bring to communities the length and breadth of the corridor through the countryside that we all love.
Good news is always welcome and there are some great articles included in this edition. We appreciate input from our readership and you will notice we don’t even have any letters this time. Are we so great at covering what you want to see? We doubt it.
Don’t forget we are still trying to increase our membership and every single member we have can help us by persuading a good friend or neighbour what a good cause we are. What else in this world can you get for £10 a year that includes four magazines a year?
Food for thought. Talking of which, we will have been through Christmas and the New Year festivities by the next time you see us so we wish you a Merry Christmas and a happy and productive New Year.

John and Margaret
editor@wbct.org.uk

Summer at the Info-Centre
Helen Thomas

Visitors come in with many enquiries, not only about the Trust and its current operations and trust events. One day in August we met an early volunteer involved in the digging out of the Kingshill section close to Swindon centre. He wanted to contact Peter Boyce, then an engineer at Plesseys and possibly involved in production of early Dragonfly magazines as well as being a canal digger. Does anyone know more of his whereabouts?

Another visitor that same day was concerned about the disappearance of wildlife on that same section of canal, especially the swans, which have not been seen for some weeks. ‘They do come and go as they wish’ we replied, but referred her on to a knowledgeable Swindon lady who has been involved in protecting swans for many years.

Routine requests for information about boat trips are easier to handle, and we receive frequent compliments on the delights of those journeys, so thank you to all the crews whom we seldom meet.

One Saturday in August we had an extra attraction in the persons of Ruth Wintle and Marilyn Drew outside the shop window. In bright sunshine and in public view they were painting small items in canal-ware patterns to sell in the shop. Look at the photos on our website and come in to buy from our display or order personal designs for later delivery as gifts.

And finally, the new router for our computer promises much better access to the info-centre for trust members. Also our stock of videos and slide presentations can easily be run to show the right films to any visitor of any age who calls in to see us.

Even during the holiday season we have managed to keep the centre open for four days in most weeks. If you are interested in meeting passers-by and telling them about our canal, please come and join the staff team. Contact Darrell Donaldson, the centre manager via the wbct website or call in to the centre to see what is involved.
We welcome the following new members

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Good News For Members

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.

Keith Price
Surveying The River Avon for the Melksham Link Project:

Nb Dragonfly.
Two views! One day!
Here are the latest results of our 200 Club
Congratulations to all our winners

June draw.
1st ticket no.  175.  Graham Wright.  Chippenham
2nd.         302.  Margaret Beedle.  Chippenham
3rd          108.  Lawrence Finnegan. Chippenham

July
1st ticket no.  315.  A. Bletsoe.  Chippenham
2nd.          46.  Tony Welsh.  Berks
3rd.          253.  Keith Vickery. Chippenham

August
1st ticket no.  109.  Ian Bridger.  Marlborough
2nd.          254.  Keith Vickery. Chippenham
3rd.          50.  Richard Martin. Burbage

Jeff & Lynda Daws
Email:  200club@wbct.org.uk

Canalside Launched in Wichelstowe
Sheila Wade

The new District Centre development next to nb Dragonfly landing stage at Wichelstowe Swindon will be known as Canalside. The new logo includes one of the herons who can often be spotted in the area.

The new District Centre will have housing, a pub/restaurant and a school. The Hall & Woodhouse development which will be an urban, all-day, multi-occasion café, bar and restaurant located on the banks of the canal, has also triggered the outstanding donation payment for Dragonfly’s landing stage.

The existing Wilts & Berks Canal will be improved with a new well-lit footpath and a landmark footbridge linking the Waitrose store with the new public square.

Work has already started and the towpath is closed for the time being. The Boat Team have plans for running nb Dragonfly’s “Finding Santa” trips from Kingshill this Christmas (see page 17).
Berries and Fruit
Judy Gosnell

By the side of the tow path and adjacent fields at Royal Wootton Bassett from Templars Firs to Bincknoll Lane are the hedges. The hedgerow by the canal varies from neat and tidy with some tree species spaced within the hedgerow to rough and handsome.

Amongst the hedges are trees and bushes that bear fruit: these are mainly berries. Taking a walk on the tow path during late summer and autumn we can find wild apple, bramble, hawthorn, sloe, elderberry and briar all bearing their berries. These bushes and trees will produce fruit that is edible for us and delicious for wildlife. The birds and insects will dine out on these berries during winter especially when it is a hard one and we may pick the fruit to use in jellies and wines.

The most popular and well known bush is probably the bramble, with blackberries, so easily recognised by the overhanging branches with stalks of fruit getting in your way as you walk or pick. In a good year brambles will produce much fruit: shining reddish black bunches of fruit with many small berries when ripe and dripping juice and leaving us with their purple juice on our fingers. There are lots of bushes close to the canal, they grow well round here and survive happily in the hedges with blackthorn as their neighbour and love a south-facing aspect. The berries at the end of the stalks are the best, they are the ones to eat and try first. Ripe blackberries do not last long, easily deteriorating in your box as you pick making a juicy mess. They also deteriorate quickly on the plant and then begin to look unappealing.

Once a bramble is established in an area, usually by birds, the trailing branches take root. At the centre of each small berry is a hard seed. The bushes are wonderful for giving homes to a variety of life. They will host wasps, spiders, snails, flies, shield bugs, butterflies and birds. They have a home and food not far away. Comma and speckled wood butterflies like the nectar of brambles both the flower and berry and these butterflies are often seen flying round the bushes particularly the speckled wood.

Another favourite edible berry is the sloe which
is the fruit of the blackthorn. Again it is a recognisable fruit which is dark purple with a white waxy bloom on the skin rather like the damson but doesn’t taste like a damson. Inside the stone there is a hard seed. Most people will find the fruit sour, bitter and inedible. Their only use in life seems to be with gin. Pick in October after the fruit has matured and put in a jar with sugar and gin to mature into a delicious drink. One of the enjoyable things to see in spring is the blossom of blackthorn hedges and in a good year the countryside will look as if snow has fallen. Such a wonderful sight to see the clusters of white flowers often before the leaves appear. The stems of blackthorn are used to make walking sticks, and they grow long spikes whose aim in life is to cause an injury.

Occasionally along the towpath we can find some elderberry bushes whose dark reddish-black berries make gorgeous wine, dark red and very drinkable. This is another bush which has whitish flowers in spring like the bramble and sloe. The fruit is easily recognisable by the large bunches of individual drooping fruit. The fruit is tart and they have pips, so it will be preferable to cook and to make wine with the berries. An occasional plant to be found in the vicinity of the canal, with edible berries, is the dog rose with its bright orange to red hips. There is a large bush growing amongst brambles at the eastern end of the canal near to the level crossing. The hips should not be eaten but made into jelly, syrup or wine. The hips are full of vitamin C and some of us may recall being given spoonfuls of the syrup as children or as a drink.

Another common hedgerow plant is the hawthorn with the very familiar bunches of small red berries in autumn. Millions of bushes were planted as hedgerows and as individual trees during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to divide land with hedges and maybe as a weather protector. Haws are edible but are not really palatable however thrushes, fieldfares and small mammals love them. The best use of haws is as a jelly or wine but years ago an infusion was made and used to help several ailments including “nervous heart conditions”. Split a red berry with a finger nail and inside there are lots of hairs and a hard pip. By the canal are several good specimens of old hawthorn trees. They may have been planted or appeared naturally as the canal became derelict.

Another common fruit tree which is seen by the canal is the wild apple. Spaced throughout the length of the Royal Wootton Bassett line are various trees, one or two seem to be quite old and always bear a good crop of apples which are small and sour. One can be seen by the west end of the water at Chaddington lock by the tow path and the other is close to the level crossing. Some of the other trees surviving produce a crop of fruit in varying quantities and are adored by wildlife throughout the winter. A hard frost will make the fruit fall onto the tow path. Close to the lock is an old plum tree, that has little fruit and has probably been there for many years, being near the site of the former lockkeeper’s cottage.
2018 WBCT calendars now available for £5 plus a minimum £1 donation to Trust funds.

This year’s calendar has been produced from original art work created by WBCT Transitions Partner Stratton Community Art Group. This group, run by new WBCT members Marilyn Trew and Ruth Wintle, started work early in 2017 on this project with a brief to create images of how they envisaged the Wilts & Berks will look when restored. Judging took place in June with one of the three judges Ollie Phipps representing project funder Malmesbury Area Board. The calendar has been through design and print and is now available for purchase by members supporters and the general public.

Reserve your WBCT calendar by contacting the WBCT office on 08452 268567 or calling in at the office in the Peterborough Arms, the Swindon Information Centre and the Sack House Museum in Wantage where stocks are held. You can also purchase your copy from the AGM venue on 21st October.

The calendar will also make an ideal Christmas present: don’t forget to get extra copies!

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A cheque presentation by Wiltshire Community Foundation.

An award for WBCT Transitions Project of a grant of £5000 from their Foundations Grant programme. The presentation was made at a meeting of the Stratton Community Art Group who created the art work for the 2018 WBCT calendar as part of the Transitions Project.

Wiltshire Community Foundation was represented by Fiona Oliver, Head of Development and Maggie Watson, PA to the CEO & Development Team.

Roderick Bluh accepted the cheque on behalf of WBCT.

Ruth Windle one of the Art Group organisers (along with Marilyn Trew), and the Stratton Art Group were also present, with the 2018 calendar!
Wet on a sunny day!

Melksham Food and River Festival
A weekend of weather extremes!
Article pages 23/4

Dragonfly is available as a PDF via email. Please contact membership@wbct.org.uk
Historic England Angel Award

3.10.17

The Heritage Heroes Project has been shortlisted for the Historic England Angel award, a national award organised by Historic England and supported by Andrew Lloyd Weber.

WBCT and our team at Pewsham Top Locks Project was one of four canal restoration charities who took part in the Heritage Heroes, a project organised by CRT and funded by Peoples Post Code Lottery, where wounded and sick service personnel and veterans helped Trust volunteers in performing vital restoration work on some of England’s oldest canals including the Wilts & Berks canal.

Entries for the four Angel award categories for 2017 are judged against the award criteria and shortlisted entries will be judged by a panel of experts.

A public vote will determine the winner of a fifth award, the Historic England Followers’ and Telegraph Readers’ favourite.

The public can vote for shortlisted entries in the following categories:

• Best Rescue of a Historic Building
• Best Contribution to a Heritage Project by Young People
• Best Craftsman or Apprentice on a Heritage Rescue or Repair Project
• Best Rescue, Recording or Interpretation of a Historic Place

Our project Heritage Heroes is in last category: “Best Rescue …” This award recognises volunteers and professionals, individuals and groups who rescue, record or interpret any kind of historic place.

The deadline for voting is midnight on Sunday 5 November 2017. Follow the link below to vote for our project

https://historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/angel-awards/best-rescue-recording-or-interpretation-of-a-historic-place

The winners will be announced at a glittering awards ceremony at the Palace Theatre in London, on the evening of Monday 20 November 2017.

Please vote for us, and ask families and friends to do so as well

For more information please contact:
Sheila Wade, PR & Communications Director:
T: 07976 281586
E: sheila.wade@wbct.org.uk

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
Still Time To Make The Draw
Malcolm Hitchinson

If you have unsold draw tickets and think you have missed the deadline, originally set for 30 September, then think again. Because the July edition of Dragonfly was delayed, giving reduced time for selling the tickets, I am extending the deadline until 13 October.

Or, if you are attending the AGM on the 21st and you can get them to me, with the money, before 12 noon, I will ensure they get into the draw.

To those who have already returned their tickets, a big thank you.

It is vitally important to keep increasing the Land Fund to ensure we can pay our current leases and have sufficient reserves to fund new ones.

Thank you in anticipation of your support.

River Bed Survey for Melksham Link
Paul Lenaerts

Progress towards a positive outcome for the Melksham Link planning application took a watery step forward on 19 September when a team of three intrepid volunteers took to the River Avon in Melksham to assist in a river bed survey.

In order to keep costs to a minimum, project manager Paul Lenaerts had agreed with Devizes-based Downland Partnership, to provide the ‘platform’ for the surveyor’s staff while professional surveyor Matthew Read set up Downland’s GPS equipment on the bank.

Paul used his own Canadian canoe, and together with crew Steve Roberts and John Tucker, they spent a pleasant few hours paddling up and down the river on (very fortunately) one of the few dry sunny days in mid September.

The limited river bed survey is one of the requirements on the Environment Agency’s ‘to-do’ list before they can lift their objection to our 2012 planning application. A full bed survey of the river through Melksham will be required before any work starts, but the EA wanted reassurance that the last survey done (in 1994 for a flood alleviation study) was still appropriate. So it was agreed to check three sections downstream of the proposed new weir. Downland will process the results and present them back to Paul so that it will be clear what changes, if any, have taken place during the last 23 years. This will then form part of an Addendum Report to update the Environmental statement published in 2016.

MCC’s Ray Dyer took photographs of the proceedings from the bank, probably motivated by the possibility of a capsize! If so, he was (thankfully) disappointed. The pictures show Matthew with the hi-tech kit on the bank, and the crew in the canoe with John in the steering seat, Steve in the middle with the staff, and Paul at the front trying to ensure correct positions were being maintained.

With this piece of work ‘ticked off’, Paul is keen to get the next ‘physical’ survey done before winter. This is a ‘Walkover Survey’ by a geomorphologist to give a professional opinion on the likely effects of the proposed works on the river.

The river bed survey was financed through monies raised by the local branch and Paul is hopeful that further local support will be forthcoming to fund the Walkover Survey.

The remaining items on the ‘to-do’ list will then be theoretical studies to try to predict the effect of locks discharging into, and back-pumping out of, the river. These studies, together with the professional opinions on flood risk and mitigation proposals will cost thousands, compared with hundreds for the physical work, and will have to be dependent on our Trust’s finances.
Work at the new Swindon Borough Council ‘Canalside’ development near Waitrose has meant that Santa will have a new base this year. (See article in this edition of Dragonfly for more information about “Canalside”)

From the weekend of 2nd & 3rd December the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust Santa Trips, on nb Dragonfly, will be operating from a landing stage behind the Esso garage at the bottom of Kingshill Road, SN1 4NG. Car parking is available at The Runner public house Wootton Bassett Road, SN1 4NQ. From the very back of the pub car park, just a short walk will take you to the Kingshill mooring. Just follow the signs.

We will be ‘Finding Santa’ every weekend from the 2nd and 3rd December to the 16th and 17th December, and then daily up to and including Saturday 23rd December.

Booking opens on 7th October 2017
Contact us by:
Email: 2santa@wbct.co.uk
Phone 0740 220076
Look on our website: www.wbct.org.uk
Ticket prices are £10 for children and £6 for adults.
Trip departure times are 10:00, 11:15, 12:45 and 14:00 and please arrive at least 10 minutes before departure time. Look for more details on our website

Thanks to everyone who has helped us plan the Santa Trips this year: to Roger Waite on behalf of the Runner Public House for the car parking; to a WBCT member for allowing us to use the landing stage at Kingshill and to Swindon Borough Council for keeping us informed about the progress of the construction work near Waitrose.

Cyan Ellis, boat team secretary said “This is a really busy time for us, we have to order the presents (from Lapland of course), organise Santa’s helpers to wrap them, and ensure we have sufficient skippers and crew to run all the trips. It is a real team effort so, a big Thank You to all who help and support us.”
The Peterborough Arms: progress report

Dave Maloney

A small core of dedicated volunteers, Dave, Richard and Fiona, are making steady progress on the refurbishment of the pub. When necessary extra assistance from specific members of Royal Wootton Bassett and Foxham and Lyneham is readily available.

Painting the front of the pub has recently been completed: the new green woodwork paint contrasts beautifully with the cream colour walls. We are indebted to Steve Leake for the loan of his scaffolding without which we would have been unable to complete this task.

Work continues in the main bar with new plaster on the walls thanks to Frank and John, and the original farmhouse fireplace uncovered. Richard has done a great job in cleaning the brick arch and now the flue is installed the fireplace is ready for its wood burning stove. We have installed new light fittings which give a slight industrial feel to the room and when the seat coverings that that Richard and Jacqui have been busy working on are installed they will really set off the decor. June Maloney kindly donated funds to pay for the smashing up-to-date dartboard lighting which casts no shadows.

We have at last found suitable timber to repair some of the floorboards in this room and hope that by Mid-September we will have the bar finished which will mean all the public rooms will be completed. We have a professional volunteer who is going to come in and help us with the interior design, and Caterfix Kitchens in Chippenham have helped us source numerous items of equipment and carried out servicing for us at cost which clearly helps stretch our limited funds.

We then move into two service rooms to carry out refurbishment which will include laying a new concrete floor and installing electrical lights, possibly uncovering an old window and installing a new door - so plenty of work to do. (If you are a skilled carpenter, bricklayer or electrician who can spare a few hours a week, we would love to hear from you.)

Meeting with the planning and listings officers have taken place with a view to refurbishing the first floor as manager’s accommodation and we are currently in talks with a potential husband and wife team to carry out this role.

We plan a little more outdoor painting before the weather turns too bad but the next few months will be spent indoors.
Announcement

I am very pleased to announce that Sheila Wade has been appointed in a personal capacity to the Inland Waterways Association National Marketing Committee.

The IWA National Marketing Committee is responsible for developing IWA’s marketing strategy and communications including Waterways magazine and the website. They are a strategic thinking part of the IWA organisation.

Sheila has worked closely with Aileen Stenner, IWA Marketing Manager over the last 12 months with the development of WBCT marketing and communication strategies and with the parallel development of IWA new strategies.

I was present at a workshop Alice and Sheila hosted at the IWA/CRT Restoration Conference in April this year and I can say that they make a great team. Sheila attended her first IWA meeting in July and her first as a National Marketing Committee Member, after her appointment was approved by the IWA Trustees, in September.

I look forward with great anticipation to further developments in both IWA and WBCT.

Exciting times for both organisations!

Jonathan Till
CEO WBCT

Canal Partnership Countryside Officer’s Report

Ken Oliver

The next meeting of the Canal Partnership is on Oct 5th where representatives of Partner organisations will be invited to join the WBCT member’s tour of the Studley Grange canal during the morning of AGM and of course to help celebrate the Trust’s 40th Anniversary.

Having been able to visit the site I am delighted that the project is finished and look forward to it being fully open next year.

Following on from my previous reports about how we might get the Partnership to work more effectively I am pleased that we have been able to implement the concept of ‘mini partnership’ working with Swindon Borough Council. This has started on both the Wichelstowe and New Eastern Villages projects where I meet, on behalf of WBCT and the Partnership, with the respective teams each month, and then liaise with appropriate members of WBCT.

Finally I wanted to add my best wishes to Kath Hatton who as you know has decided to take a less active role in the organisation. I am not sure if anyone has added up the amount that Kath has raised for the project in past years—it is certainly getting towards £1m -so what else can I say other than a sincere “thank you” on behalf of the Partnership.

@wiltsberkscanal (Twitter)
www.facebook.com/wiltsberkscanal (Facebook)
Back in the 1990’s Harry turned up at a Swindon Branch meeting and later persuaded me to take him on a tour of the restoration sites in North Wilts. I bought his lunch, this proved to be money well spent as he offered to try to raise funds for what was then the largest restoration project in Swindon, namely excavation of canal and rebuilding of Lock No3 at Moredon. It was only later that I discovered his considerable business acumen and promotional and fund raising skills. He was modest about his past achievements.

Harry had an illustrious military career and after his retirement he was involved in a wide number of organisations in a promotion capacity such as the British Olympic Association and Imperial Cancer Research Fund and locally through his work with the Old Town Business Association running the Christmas Lights event. He took the view that it was better to make personal contacts with companies for funds rather than writing endless begging letters.

He quickly secured funding for the Moredon Project from Crapper & Sons. This family firm have been generously funding our canal restoration ever since!

Buoyed by the success of the Moredon Project, Swindon Borough Council secured Heritage Lottery funding for the canal restoration at Westleaze, including the rebuilding of Bevans Bridge. Once again Harry secured a significant financial contribution from The Hills Group for this project. Swindon people now woke up to find two stretches of lovely canal that at some point needed to be joined.

In 1998 the National Trail Boat Festival was held at Royal Wootton Bassett and Harry persuaded Dr David Bellamy to open it, (having sat outside the latter’s office in London for many hours).

David Bellamy and his family had originally planned to only spend two hours at the event but stayed the whole day and visited again the next
day. In 2002 Harry raised £9000 from various sponsors to fund the Wiltshire Waterways Festival also held at Royal Wootton Bassett.

Harry was incredibly driven and tenacious with boundless energy in pursuing his objectives. Business people in Swindon were known to hide in doorways if they saw him approach in the lead up to Christmas as he was seeking contributions towards the lights!

He was polite, respectful and a stickler for detail, a true professional and above all that a true friend.

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**Information for Annual General Meeting**

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.

**Statement of Financial Activities for Year ending 31 March 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incoming resources</th>
<th>Unrestricted funds £</th>
<th>Restricted funds £</th>
<th>Total this year £</th>
<th>Total last year £</th>
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<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
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<td>171,702</td>
<td>472,097</td>
<td>450,900</td>
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<td>Investment income</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income from charitable trading</td>
<td>21,940</td>
<td>21,940</td>
<td>28,130</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members Subscriptions</td>
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<td>26,412</td>
<td>27,215</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>19,359</td>
<td>19,359</td>
<td>26,075</td>
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<td>Landfill Tax Credits</td>
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<td>2,911</td>
<td>53,724</td>
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<td>Tax refunds &amp; Sundry</td>
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<td>9,459</td>
<td>24,277</td>
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<td><strong>Total incoming resources</strong></td>
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<td><strong>203,431</strong></td>
<td><strong>567,034</strong></td>
<td><strong>595,625</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expenditure</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoration</td>
<td>258,289</td>
<td>199,384</td>
<td>457,673</td>
<td>702,333</td>
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<td>Fund raising and publicity</td>
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<td>303</td>
<td>42,866</td>
<td>28,423</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management &amp; Administration</td>
<td>22,806</td>
<td>11,557</td>
<td>34,363</td>
<td>47,728</td>
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<td><strong>Total expenditure</strong></td>
<td><strong>323,658</strong></td>
<td><strong>211,244</strong></td>
<td><strong>534,902</strong></td>
<td><strong>778,484</strong></td>
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<td>Transfer between funds</td>
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<td>(5,989)</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td><strong>Net movement in funds</strong></td>
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<td>(13,802)</td>
<td><strong>32,132</strong></td>
<td>(182,859)</td>
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<td>Fund balances brought forward</td>
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<td>243,616</td>
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<td>401,778</td>
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<td><strong>Fund balances carried forward</strong></td>
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<td><strong>21,237</strong></td>
<td><strong>251,051</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>229,814</strong></td>
<td><strong>218,919</strong></td>
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Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2017

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total this year</th>
<th>Total last year</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post work in progress</td>
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<td>6,366</td>
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<td>Investments and bank and in hand</td>
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<td>122,232</td>
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<td>Current Assets</td>
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<tr>
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<td>180,979</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>213,783</td>
<td>29,048</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Equity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67,644</td>
<td>151,931</td>
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</table>

Notes to the Financial Statements for Year ending 31 March 2017

1. These financial statements have been extracted from the set of accrual based accounts prepared for submission to the Charity Commission. An examination of those accounts has been carried out by our accountants, Morris Owen, in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. A full set of those accounts is available on request for a small administration fee or from our website.

2. The definitions of the categories of funds are as follows:-

Unrestricted - Those funds that the trustees should spend on any of the charity’s purposes.

Restricted - Those funds that the trustees are obliged to spend on only particular purposes.

3. Net Landfill Tax credits of £2,911 have been received from Crapper & Sons.

4. The Fixed Assets of £519,407 are made up of Land and Buildings at cost of £480,609 (see note 9 below), Plant and Machinery at a depreciated value of £11,158, Boats at a depreciated value of £27,595 and office furniture and equipment at depreciated value of £45. (see note 9 below)

5. Debtors at the end of this year mainly consist of HMRC £20,607 (VAT refund, Gift Aid and PAYE), Health and Safety Executive deposit of £9,314 and various other deposits.

6. The charity had three part time paid employees at the end of this year.

7. The Long Term Creditors of £336,000 represents the loan deposits of £226,000 received in respect of the purchase of the Peterborough Arms property and its restoration and other loans of £110,000.

8. There has been no remuneration or other benefits paid by the charity to the charity’s trustees, or people connected with them.

9. The donations includes donated goods for land and buildings of £181,000 and boats, plant and machinery of £25,000. These have been included in the fixed assets at market value.
Fun in the Sun and Smiles in the Rain:
Festival is a tale of two halves

‘Take advantage of Saturday, it will be lovely,’ they said; ‘Sunday – forget it, it will be a wash out,’ they said. And they were right – except in one small matter: Wiltshire/Melksham/canal folk are made of strong stuff, and so did not forget it. They knew very well what fun could be had at the wonderful Melksham Food & River Festival, regardless of the weather.

As predicted, Saturday dawned with bright blue skies, beautiful sunshine and lovely warm temperatures; King George V Park looked glorious and things were ready for a fantastic day of fun, adventure and competition.

The Town Crier got into the swing of things very quickly by testing out the new attraction across the river: the Cooper Tires Wire Challenge. The idea was to stop on the far bank, but he was obviously enjoying it so much, he swung back again, and had to be rescued after coming to a halt over the middle of the river – what a champion, resplendent in all his finery! Following his plucky example, many others – young and old – took the plunge, and the Wiltshire Outdoor Learning Team was kept busy all day ensuring that all-comers had an exciting and safe trip across and back. They were also kept very busy supervising the 7.3m climbing wall, which was so popular, there was still a queue of eager climbers at the end of the afternoon.

The Raft Race competitors had a brilliant time paddling their excellent homemade craft (bizarrely including a raft disguised as a wedge of cheese, crewed by staff from Melksham based dairy firm Coombe Castle) up the river and back. This year, both junior and senior categories were won by the Chippenham Young Farmers, and both teams were delighted to receive their medals plus £100 prize for each category, very generously donated by Foxhangers Boat Builders. Hopefully the reputation of this entertaining event will encourage more entries next year.

Again on the river, MCC Branch, plus a few very welcome friends from further afield, organised boat trips, offering two boats: Damselfly and The Mary Archard, which were popular all day. There were in fact numerous damselflies and dragonflies flying around the boats, and the swans, cygnets, ducks, moorhens, house martins, swallows and even kingfishers obliged by putting in appearances for many passengers – a truly magical day on the beautiful River Avon. The Wilderness Boats, glorious steam launches, canoes and kayaks all added to the wonderful adventure commonly known as ‘messing about in boats’ and it was great to see this normally quiet waterway being used by so many people having so much fun. The Wiltshire Youth Canoe Club (WYCC) was offering Try Canoeing sessions, and instructors were kept constantly busy.

There were five visiting boats as well as the two ‘working’ Wilderness boats: Matchbox and The Ark belonging to the two Ians (Graham and Simpson) who shared the Harbourmaster duties. In addition there were three steam boats: Scathtan, a regular at this festival owned by our Vice President John Laverick; Millie a 17 ft 1900 Norwegian fishing boat owned by...
Richard Welch, converted to steam around 2000 with a 6 hp Locomobile engine; and Kathleen owned by Paul and Kirsty Cummins – a 1920s Bristol-built tender with a 2 hp single cylinder engine fed from a Merryweather boiler. The other two boats were Snapdragon – a 1980s built Wilderness Beaver owned by Sharon and David Cohen, and Maude Again a Wilderness type trailboat, but built from scratch and owned by Peter and Cynthia Fairall from North Devon.

The end of the afternoon saw crowds of people sitting in the sun, enjoying picnics and the odd drink (or two) from Box Steam Brewery, enjoying listening to the Warminster Military Wives Choir, followed by the Legendary Cross Guns Singers – a real festival atmosphere. The final treat was a sail-by of the Wilderness Boats decorated with lights. What a fantastic day!

Sunday morning was not so promising ... grey skies, with dire predictions of day-long rain and increasing blustery winds. Not a good start to the main event day, which would see the arrival of over 70 stalls selling a huge variety of great food and drink in addition to the river activities. Would anyone still come?

To everyone's amazement, they did. The Leekes Country Kitchen Marquee certainly came into its own, delivering both entertaining demonstrations as well as shelter from the elements – what a fantastic addition to the festival! It also proved to be a perfect venue for the chilli-eating competition with standing room only as hundreds enjoyed watching a few heroes abuse their taste buds with chillies of increasing heat. The boat rides continued despite the rain, although there was a reduced number of visitors both for these and the WOLT activities. Frankie continued to give horse rides, and the funfair and Barry the face-painter were kept busy – Barry even joined up as a member, and has offered his creative services to us for future events.

The MCC information gazebo proved popular (loads of room to shelter?) with lots of new members signed up. An incentive for new members signed on the day was a free trip on The Mary Archard once she starts trips at Pewsham, and the winners were John and Patricia Burtenshaw from Semington. One other very exciting visitor to the tent was Paul Martin (of BBC’s Flog It programme); he was very interested in our little project, enjoyed a trip on The Mary Archard, and took away a membership leaflet – fingers crossed that we may have our very own celebrity member. He even mentioned the possibility of featuring the Pewsham site on Flog It – again, fingers crossed!

The two Peters (Henden and Williams) put on a fantastic variety of walks for people to enjoy, which had entailed a huge amount of organisation and footpath clearance beforehand, and contributed to the overarching WBCT Towpath Festival. It would have been nice to see more participants, but those who came along on the guided walks thoroughly enjoyed the stories of survival, mayhem and murder on the canal. With all the wonderful preparatory work, we now have another Heritage Walk designed, when we can invite members of the public to learn more about our canal's past and its ambitious future.

So, despite the ‘curate’s egg' weather, much food and drink was consumed and enjoyed, and a great deal of fun was had by all, thanks to the efforts by the event organisers, the sponsors, many volunteers and Melksham Council.

Many thanks to the generous sponsors, especially Foxhangers Boat Builders and Leekes, and thank you to everyone who helped with organisation or turned up on the day/s. Over forty different individuals contributed a huge number of hours before, during and after the event; everyone's participation and contribution was much appreciated and led directly to the success of the event. Special mentions must however, go to Deborah Hendon-Jones, Paul Lenaerts, Ray Dyer, Brian D'eath and Malcolm Hitchinson who worked tirelessly behind the scenes ensuring that all aspects of the Food & River Festival were successful – they have helped to establish a fantastic community event for Melksham, which must reflect positively on MCC and the wider Trust. You are all stars.

See you all (and hopefully the sun) next year!

Val Melville
Not a letter but a suggestion from one of our members at the Food & River Festival. When we’ve finished with our copies of *Dragonfly*, why don’t we share them with Doctors’ surgeries, libraries, dentists, hospitals, etc so people can pick them up and read them and even decide to join this elite group.

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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**Royal Wootton Bassett Branch Talks**

The following talks have been arranged as part of Wootton Basset Branch bi-monthly series.

Monday December 4th 2017 at 7.30 - Kingfishers - by Alan Willis (a photographer and Kingfisher expert)
Monday February 5th 2018 at 7.30 - The Waterway Recovery Group by George Eycott

Both will take place in The Ballroom, Angel Hotel, 47, High Street Royal Wootton Bassett SN4 7AQ
Please note, the ballroom is upstairs and there is no lift.
Free parking in the Borough Fields car park SN4 7AX
Entry £3.00 to include refreshments
Further information: e-mail cheryll.yeowell@wbct.org.uk

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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
Spotlight on …
The Central Section (Royal Wootton Bassett and Swindon)

The two branches at the heart of the canal both have long records in restoration of the existing canal. They have interesting lengths open to explore and are well on the way with plans to join them together.

Swindon alone has 25km of canal shown on the Trust’s maps but two-thirds of this is proposed new construction because of the difficulty of restoring all the old route.

This represents a series of major construction projects most of which are being tackled with our master planner in order to create viable projects that will attract funding.

In the short term, we are pressing to get all the canal in Wichelstowe finished by the developers. The west end of Wichelstowe is less than one kilometre from Studley Grange. The M4 crossing is the subject of discussion with SBC and we are planning possible engineering solutions in liaison with SBC and road infrastructure needs. When this section is complete we can look forward to navigating, walking or cycling between the two towns.

Elsewhere, the New Eastern Villages development from near Junction15 to Acorn Bridge on the A420 is taking up a lot of our efforts in responding to planning applications. We still aim, in this section, to have the canal built as part of the development. Restoration of the old line from Kingshill Road into the town, under the railway lines and out to Mouldon Hill is part of the Trust’s town centre masterplan, so that we can eventually link to the Thames and Severn Canal near Cricklade.

The lengths described below are all accessible to walkers and some walking guides are available.

The oldest restoration in Swindon is at Mouldon Hill: the restoration started in the late 1980s. This includes a partially restored lock and an aqueduct over the River Ray. Recently the Trust decided to implement a ‘dry’ canal maintenance policy here with planned work which looks to increase the biodiversity of this habitat in line with the new and about-to-be-launched Trust Biodiversity Framework Policy, rather than attempt very expensive investigation and remedial work on water resource to this area. When adjacent sections are in water, we will establish this section as a ‘wet’ canal. The tow path is maintained and forms part of a circular walk around the Mouldon Hill Country Park. There is also a partially restored length of tow path from near to Mouldon Hill towards Cheney Manor.

The next restored section is at Westlease, carried out nearly 20 years ago, leading from Kingshill Road to Skew Bridge on an old railway line, on to Beavan’s Bridge near Mill Lane and then to the new Waitrose store in Wichelstowe. The length near Waitrose is about to be further developed with the creation of a district centre; the Trust was delighted that the canal is the ‘front and centre’ piece of this development, recently launched as ‘Canalside’. Our trip boat nb Dragonfly is based in this section and many of our passengers are able to view the wide range of wildlife which can be found in and alongside the canal from the water as well as from the towpath.

The first section of the new south-eastern canal
route around Swindon is found alongside the new houses at East Wichel. Some design and construction issues have become apparent after the SBC appointed contractor completed the construction work, which the Trust is working on in liaison with Swindon Borough Council and with some funding from SBC.

The old route through the town can be followed from Kingshill Road to beyond Fleming Way and the Magic Roundabout, looking for original bridges and other features en route. It is also possible to follow most of the North Wilts line from the town centre, past the North Star/Oasis site to Cheney Manor along footpaths and the Western Flyer cycleway.

Turning to Royal Wootton Bassett: the canal section that starts at Templars Firs was one of the first done, by the Amenity Group, the predecessor of the current Trust. Forward looking Town Councillors fenced off the far section which was then unregistered and the Council claimed it after twelve years. All the restoration work of these sections was undertaken by volunteers, who still work hard to keep weed growth in and along the canal under control. Wootton Bassett Angling Club has a licence from Wiltshire Council to fish here and the towpath is well used by walkers, dog walkers and occasional cyclists.

To the east, accessible from Bincknoll Lane, Morningside Farm was purchased by North Wilts District Council in the 1990s, specifically because it included a section of the canal. Chaddington Lock and a spillway were restored and also the canal in between. Wiltshire Council who took over the responsibilities of the District Councils, have recently transferred ownership of the canal to the Trust, as they will be doing with all their canal route land. It is connected to the earlier section by a public footpath along the tow path.

The most recent project is to restore the canal at Studley Grange: a technically challenging piece of restoration which was undertaken by contractors, with the excavated clay being moved to the adjacent landfill site. The Trust will be opening this section to the public as soon as possible.

Future developments – the council depot on Marlborough Road is on the market and we have planning permission to restore the canal through it when ownership of the route is transferred to us. Further west, the canal goes through Dunnington Farm. When in the future this site drops into Wiltshire Council’s housing allocation, we will be able to restore the canal as a focus of the development. Meanwhile every winter we have a short licence to remove vegetation growth from the aqueduct.

Work parties in both the Swindon and RWB branches continue to undertake maintenance of the towpath and waterway through their working parties. Much activity goes on behind the scenes in promotion, fund raising, project planning and other branch activities. Please get in touch with the relevant WPOs or Branch Chairs if you are interested in joining us in our work.

The team with Buckingham Contractors at Studley Grange

Breakthrough - the final scoop out at Studley Grange
As summer turns to autumn, we are looking forward to the cooler months when we will have less vegetation to manage – apart from our section at the A4 where volunteers will spend a few months pulling the last few tree stumps from the canal bed and tow path and preparing for the next stage of restoration.
to add to our volunteer workforce, probably by inviting other volunteer groups to help us in the clearance stages.

Unfortunately, my contact with landowners in the Foxham & Lyneham area seeking permission to carry out maintenance on non-leased sections of the canal have not been so positive and as such, Trust volunteers are unable to manage these sections at this time.

Many of you will be aware of our work with Help for Heroes veterans at Pewsham this summer and we can see the physical evidence of this at Pewsham Top Lock in particular. We are lucky in this area as we get many positive comments from those using the tow path on their way to Lacock, so we know how much the public enjoy the fruits of our labours! Working with H4H though also brought home how much we can get from volunteering and I confess to being quite moved when one of the veterans attending our branch dinner mentioned that due to the relaxing, positive and fulfilling atmosphere surrounding his work with us he was able to chat to his children about his condition for the first time. It was not only humbling to hear this, but extremely satisfying that our work had changed a little bit of his life.

At Pewsham Top Lock the northern wing walls are now rebuilt up to the correct height and topping off will be carried out over the next few weeks by the mid-week work parties. Since the last edition of Dragonfly we have modified a small slipway to be able to launch The Mary Archard so that we can use her to show people the progress we are making at Pewsham from a different perspective. We recently had a couple of good days removing bull rushes and weeds from the canal bed along that stretch.

There will be a report on the Melksham Food and River Festival elsewhere in Dragonfly, but I would like to add my thanks to all those volunteers who made the weekend possible, in particular Malcolm Hitchinson and his core team of committee members. The weather for Saturday’s raft race was superb! Unfortunately, the same can’t be said for the Sunday when the main food event was held. Hey-ho, we can’t control the weather, but people did come along and enjoy the boat trips, climbing wall and zip wire. The cheerfulness and positivity of volunteers and skippers/crew of our Riverfest team was an inspiration.

MCC, Foxham & Lyneham and Royal Wootton Bassett branch members continue their work at the Peterborough Arms, with work on the front of the pub now complete. Funds for this project have always been tight – no one seems to want to help fund the restoration of a pub, unless it’s a community owned/run pub, so you can imagine how pleased I was after a casual conversation in another pub led to a generous donation to pay for our cellar cooling! Also, our friends at Caterfix Kitchens have managed to acquire a replacement oven for the kitchen for us. Work in the main bar continues, with just a few jobs left to do, including hanging the dart board.

We have interesting and challenging times ahead and I want to close by thanking all our new members for wanting to be a part of this wonderful project and thank you to those volunteers who give up their time to make the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal a reality.

Dave Maloney

**ROYAL WOOTTON BASSETT**

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

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

Autumn is officially with us from 1st September; perhaps we will get some dry Wednesdays now. I think someone must be doing a Wednesday rain dance here in Wiltshire, we have had more work parties interrupted by rain this summer than ever before.

However, we have been busy as usual with a good turnout for our work parties including three welcome visitors from Amey, the railway company in Swindon who joined us again for one of their Community Days. Even when I suggest people may prefer not to come along because of the forecast of bad weather at least half a dozen turn up and we are able to get something useful done. We have been in the growing season for several months trying to keep the paths walkable and the canal fishable.

At Templars Firs we have paths both sides of the
canal which need mowing every couple of weeks which involves a few miles of walking behind the mower each time. The tow path hedge needs trimming and the weed in the canal defies our efforts to reduce it. The end result is worth all the effort as there is a lovely walk around this section of canal, and the canal itself is full of fish and water voles. Aah, the water voles – so many of them we often have to slow the boat to let them cross in front of us. We now have a regular group of photographers on the tow path looking out for them. We also have frequent sightings of kingfishers and herons. Water voles have appeared since we have been weed cutting which indicates we have created a habitat that enables them to thrive.

We are planning to have the nb Nonsuch at Templars Firs in September for a couple of days and will try running it up and down to clear the channel and help suppress the weeds but we will need to clear enough of the weed to make this possible. We have had a further problem with leaks at Templars Firs, our usual leak reappeared and another sizeable leak started up. It took some time to locate the source of the leaks and we spent most of a very wet Wednesday fixing them. Where we had fixed the old leak in the past we found a perfectly round water vole sized hole in the clay we had previously used. We may have more of these problems.

We have also had a busy time at Chaddington. A couple of years ago we agreed with Wiltshire Council, the owner of the land, how much of it we needed for the canal corridor. We fenced off this area and a couple of months ago the ownership of it was transferred to the Trust. This gave us an unusual canal restoration job to do in that we had to install a water meter on our mains supply to the caravan so we could be charged separately from that which feeds the stables and water troughs. There has been plenty of grass cutting to do at Chaddington and we have taken some of the weed from the canal.

There has been some vandalism at Chaddington again and a group of youngsters has broken into the compound and on to the lock where they removed a heavy concrete slab and threw it into the lock. Some of the youths have been identified and the police have visited their homes. Their parents have taken the matter seriously and the culprits have been grounded.

Also, some good news about the Studley section. Contractors were employed to carry out some remedial work on the new section and complete the short partially excavated area in the middle. The canal had to be carefully drained down for this work to be done though; despite the wet Wednesdays it has only just about refilled and overflowed to top up the Chaddington section, I am sure the swans were grateful for that. We had a work party to start to mow and strim the tow path but will need to return to complete it. We hope to be able to have some guided walks along this section on the day of the Trust AGM but will not be able to open it to the public until we complete some fencing work.

Looks like we will have a few busy months ahead.

John Bower

The good news has to be that reconstruction of the canal is now under way in Wichelstowe. The bad news of course is that it has disrupted the trips by Dragonfly. At this stage the closure is on a short length north of the bridge by Waitrose store while sewers are constructed underneath it. The canal banks will be restored at the same time. Later there will be work to provide a hard, piled edge south of the bridge alongside the new district centre and pub and then a footbridge over the canal between Waitrose and the new centre. The importance of the canal here is recognised by renaming the area as Canalside. Plans for the various developments are advancing and the secondary school is already under construction.

Perhaps next year boat crew and passengers
Well, it’s been warm and dry here in West Vale. The entire canal near to the Canalside Park has dried up, but the other side of Station Road Bridge through to Steppingstone Bridge is more or less full. There is good reason for this as it is a trapped pound, our protective coffer dam at Steppingstone Bridge (installed so that we can safely work on the remaining wing wall), is at one end whilst under Station Road bridge is chock-a-block with silt and other unmentionables so it holds water! Also it takes all of the water from the drains along Station Road so even a summer shower means water flows into the canal to top it up. In wet periods dozens of land drains also drain into it so it should stay full when the boats finally return. Needless to say the moorhens and herons love it here. Roe deer come to drink as well!

It has still rained enough to make all the weeds and grass grow though! As usual they nearly overwhelmed us! Our trusty machinery has been kept busy keeping all the paths and tow paths clear; we couldn’t manage without our mowers and brush cutters! Fuel, servicing and maintenance costs us time and money but are well worth it. The hedges keep growing out over the paths as well and the odd fallen branch needs removal but our biggest bugbear is brambles, we regularly have to walk all of the paths with loppers to hand, cutting back the pesky thorny invaders, we leave all the berries though for the birds and the regular visitors who come to pick them!

We get lots of visitors, walkers, joggers and wildlife watchers in the Park and along the paths and tow paths. There is a great variety of fauna and flora to see, some of it quite rare, so several more knowledgeable visitors come to take notes and photos especially at our special ‘wild end of the Park’, (we take extra care of this bit). The local villages have several walking groups and our regular Wednesday work party very often have to
We've had a good season of village shows this year. Better still, the weather was generally kind to us. Perhaps I have a short memory as the Old Berks Country Show was marred by a downpour as we tried to take the marquee down. The White Horse Show at Uffington however avoided the usual Monday afternoon over moist conditions and turned out a heat wave such as I cannot remember before.

Much interest as ever in our project and a few new members as well. A welcome to all of them to the happy throng. As I said when I pinned them down by the membership leaflets, the more members we have the more political clout we achieve.

Next, however, a plea for help. My stalwart team in the East Vale is in need of some younger and energetic blood. Our Mid Week work party group, mostly those who have retired with some time on their hands could do with reinforcements to help the ongoing maintenance that we need to do. For more information give me or Jon Miles a call. The Mid Week work party meets once a month for a mow and strim. There is so much work that we need to restart the weekend work parties. However what I also need is someone to take up the cudgels as another Work Party Officer. Again, for more information . . .

The Sack House: Thanks again to the team for manning this. We will be closing at the end of October for the winter, re-opening in April. We do however (another plea coming up) need more volunteers to man the museum in order to relieve the pressure on the usuals. Training on the TV, light switches and secret supply of cat food for our local feline visitor will be provided. There must be some of you in the Abingdon and East Vale area who could spare the occasional Wednesday or Saturday. At this point I will leave you to digest the above accumulated pleas . . .

We welcome all visitors to the West Vale patch! Please come and have a look, I bet you’ll enjoy it! Ah! It’s just started to rain so the cut will soon be full again!

Alan Norris

Work parties are held weekly on Wednesday mornings from 10am until approx. 1pm. Except in very bad weather! We always meet at the Canalside Park, Stainswick Lane, Shrivenham. Occasional weekend work parties, usually the weekend after the Branch Meeting, are held on an ad hoc basis. Usually from 9am Saturday, sometimes just the morning & sometimes all weekend! Extra help is always welcome!

Brian Stovold

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Please do come along to our monthly social meetings for general banter and canal-type discussions.

Brian Stovold
The Swindon Branch usually meets on the 1st Tuesday of every second month at 19:30hrs. Check website or get on the branch email list for details.

**MELKSHAM CALNE & CHIPPENHAM WORK PARTY INFORMATION:**
Organiser: Ray Canter: raycanter@btinternet.com, Tel 01249 659111, Mob 07717 536883

Work Parties: First Saturday & last Sunday each month
Details of the work parties are circulated by e-mail. Any member wishing to be included in this circulation please contact Ray

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

**WOOTTON BASSETT WORK PARTY INFORMATION:**
Organisers:
John Bower, 20 Glebe Road, Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire SN4 7DU
Tel 01793 636297
Richard Hawkins
Tel 01793 814959

Work Parties:
There are midweek and some weekend work parties. Please phone for details. Work involves some maintenance of the existing canal area.

The Swindon Branch usually meets on the 1st Tuesday of every second month at 19:30hrs. Check website or get on the branch email list for details.

**SWINDON WORK PARTY INFORMATION:**
Organisers:
Oliver Gardiner Tel: 07785 775993

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

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

**WEST VALE WORK PARTY INFORMATION:**
Organisers:
Workparty details from West Vale Branch Work Party Organiser & Volunteering co-ordinator –
Alan Norris alan.norris@wbct.org.uk or phone 01793 783024
Branch web-site: www.wbct.org.uk/branches/west-vale

**EAST VALE WORK PARTY INFORMATION:**
Organiser:
Bob Airey Tel 01235 769469, John Miles 01235 764890
Work Parties:
Second and fourth Saturday of the month with changes at public holiday times. The East Vale work sites are: Childrey New Road; West Challow; Elm Farm section; and Grove Locks. Contact WPO for details.
Board of Trustees:
Chairman          Roderick Bluh,          Contact via Trust Office 07831 340 387
Vice Chair        Colin Fletcher, Lower Foxhangers Farm, Rowde SN10 1SS 01380 828 254
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 215 741
James Harpum      Contact via Trust Office 08452 268 567
Sue Cooper - IWA Appointee Contact via Trust Office 08452 268 567
Sheila Wade       Contact via Trust Office 07976 281 586
Gordon Olsen      Contact via Trust Office 08452 268 567

Dr David Cook     Advisor to the Executive Committee

Executive Committee
CEO and Finance   Jonathan Till Contact via Trust Office 07444 432 441
Co. Secretary & Head of Finance Peter Kinsman,Nant-y-Broch, Purton Stoke, Swindon SN5 4JG 01793 771 548
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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: Vacant Contact via Trust Office

Officers
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Branch Chair Swindon: Rod Hacker, 11 Whittington Road, Swindon, SN5 7DF 07840 072 817
Branch Chair WB:    Jenny Stratton, 35 Sheriden Drive, Wootton Bassett, SN4 8JJ 01793 850 310
Branch Chair MCC&F&L: Dave Maloney, 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham SN15 3GQ 07809 374 754
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Gift Aid Officer :  David Chalmers,40 Greenleaze, Knowle Park, Bristol, BS4 2TL 01179 720 423
WRG rep:           George Eycott, Knowle House,1 Ham Road, Wanborough, SN4 0DF 07771 775 745
Membership

Partnership - Wiltshire Council Countryside Officer:
Ken Oliver, Wiltshire Council, Monkton Park, Chippenham, Wilts, SN15 1ER
Email Ken.oliver@wiltshire.gov.uk 01249 706 494

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

Trust Office
Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham, SN15 4HD 08452 268 567
Administrator:    Justine Hanley
Finance Assistant: Ann O’Donoghue
IT/TechOps:       Martin Stubbs
The Big Cheese Launched - Melksham Food and River Festival Raft Race - Article pages 23/4

#Finished at last, #Happy faces, #Winners
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