**The aim of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust**

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

**The objectives of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust**

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

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

Secure the route of the waterway and adequate water supplies.

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

Implement an agreed programme for full restoration of the canal.

Membership of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust is open to all.
The annual membership rate is £10, with discounts available for families and under 18s. Company and Society membership is also available.

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

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**DATA PROTECTION ACT**
The Trust membership details are recorded in compliance with provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
Editorial

Editors:- John Millican and Margaret Lord
E-mail:- editor@wbct.org.uk  Tel  0845 226 8567

Please let us be the first to publicly thank all those supporters who voted for us in our successful bids for funding. This whole exercise demonstrated how much easier it is to contact people in a hurry if we have email addresses (the People’s Millions phone numbers were only made available from 09:00 on the day of voting) so, if we do not have yours could you please let us know.

The letters pages are generally critical about our lack of maps so if anyone can help we would greatly appreciate some detailed maps to assist people in accessing our canal.

The People’s Millions award shows that people appreciate the good work carried out over the years by Trust volunteers. Much has been achieved, with much more still to come. As you will read in this issue, the business plan will coordinate our efforts, with the goal of even wider recognition and support for the Trust.

Recognition might be the theme of this issue. Jan Flanagan’s article on p. 16 recounts the life of Joseph Hewer and his family: just one example of people who played a largely overlooked but vital part in the history of this country. Our activities are their memorial.

Please keep us up to date with what is going on up the whole length of our canal and let us know what you think and what you would like us to cover in future editions.

That only leaves us to wish all our readers a happy and prosperous New Year.

The Editors.

Contents

Vice-Chairman’s Report - Kath Hatton  4
Canal Partnership Countryside Officer’s Report - Ken Oliver  6
Leave a Legacy  7
Annual General Meeting 2014  9
Membership Matters  10
Fundraising for the Wilts & Berks - Kath Hatton  12
200 Club  13
An invitation from MCC Branch  14
Another Santa Cruise Returns.  15
Wootton Bassett, Branch Open Meetings, with Speakers.  15
Joseph Hewer: Swindon’s Last Canal Carrier - Jan Flanagan  16
Canal Rings Past, Present and Future - John Henn  18
A Tale of Two Swans - Cheryll Yeowell  20
Nb Dragonfly Report  23
Around The Branches  24
Branch Meeting & Contact Details  30
Master-Planning A Future For The Trust Margaret Lord  31
Cocklemore Brook & Top Lock Pewsham  36
Tony Davy Memorial Cup 2014 and the Tony Davy Awards  37
A Page for Notes and Doodles  39
I am sitting here with a blank page wondering what you would all like to read in this Vice-Chair’s slot. I have read Julie and Colin’s letter in the last edition with a plea for a map to explain the location of all the places that we talk about. I don’t have a map up my sleeve but can tell you that two of our members are currently working separately on documents that should help. One is working on a walking guide and the other a progress report on the work going on along the canal. I am hoping that next year we will be able to make these documents available.

On that theme I think something that is in short supply all along the canal is good information, interpretation and maps. The public love to know what is happening and it is a chance to “build our brand”. This year Ken has been putting up some boards and an audio message for Smart Phones outside Waitrose at Wichelstowe and further along that stretch of canal and they have been well received. I noted at Pewsham, MCC branch has been putting up some notices about the exploratory work going on at Top Lock, explaining what is going on.

It is pleasing to see that our membership is increasing now. This is so important as it gives us more money coming in, more influence when seeking funding and more credibility. The latest total as of last month is 2580. One of our members Keith, who is one of the boat skippers, has volunteered to organise a campaign to increase membership. He is hoping to recruit a membership champion from each branch and they will work as a team to come up with ideas. You will be hearing more about this next year but in the meantime if you have any ideas for Keith, send them to me and I will pass them on.

A brief progress report on some projects along the canal: on the Melksham Link we always seem to report that the environmental studies are continuing. This is still true but definitely nearing completion, although we are now embarking on an archaeology study that is necessary for planning consent. In the meantime the proposed plans for the Link between Semington and the River Avon now contain more comprehensive development on areas of land adjoining the canal for education and leisure.

At Pewsham a small team is now embarking on a bid for Heritage Lottery Funding for the restoration of the site. As it takes several years to work through the stages of a bid to HLF, it is hoped that Top Lock will be done separately as a volunteer run project and so they might be looking for donations for bricks! The team wants to raise money separately for the cottage as this is a new build and won’t be covered by HLF. Hope to see some progress next year on all that.

Up the line at Dauntsey a steering committee is looking at the next stage for the restoration of the Peterborough Arms. We are currently taking advice from experienced pub operators in order to finalise the plans for the future pub layout and extension, while at the same time getting listed building permission to upgrade the toilets and to put the Trust office and meeting room there. We are taking a lot of care to preserve the skittle alley for when the pub is open again as that appears to be a very popular local feature. I have put in a bid for some funds but no news yet.

At Seven Locks, Stewart Parsons, ecologist from Ellendale Environmental has drafted a Habitat Management Plan for the site which will give guidance on the most environmentally friendly way to clear the site and do the restoration required, whilst protecting the wildlife already there.

At the Wootton Bassett Branch, they are still celebrating the People’s Millions win for Studley Grange Wildlife Trail. The lease from Biffa for the site is almost ready for signing and we are waiting for the results of the tender process to choose a contractor to do the excavations. It should be noted that the publicity from making that bid has been very good for the Trust overall. If you saw the filming done by ITV for their news bulletins you will have recognised that it was done at Pewsham where we had a canal already in water. ITV were very impressed with the project and may want to come back and do more filming one day. I believe what impresses everyone is our great band of volunteers all along the canal that give up so much
of their time working on the restoration. The final photo shoot when the large cheque was presented was at the pub and they were impressed with that too.

At Wichelstowe the proposed landing stage outside the Waitrose store has been delayed a little but should go ahead in the Spring. This will mean that our trip boat can pick up passengers from the store. I think this will be a big boost to our image (and pocket!). Swindon plans are ticking over but nothing new I can report at the moment, whereas we have had a disappointment in trying to obtain the lease at Shivenham/Bourton, which we are trying to resolve.

It just remains for me to thank everyone who has been involved in the Wilts & Berks restoration for their magnificent efforts in 2014 – we have made great progress on all fronts, maybe not in new lengths in water, but in promoting the project and planning for the future.

I hope you all have a very happy healthy and prosperous New Year.
The Canal Partnership met in early December and discussed a number of important topics including the Local Plan for Vale of White Horse DC, the Towpath Challenge, and the Melksham Link. The next meeting is scheduled for 18th March 2015 where one of the main topics will be an update on the Partnership Strategy for Restoration.

**Funding success** - Fresh in my mind is the frenetic activity of November 26th when the Studley Wildlife Trail was a candidate for £50k from the Big Lottery Fund People’s Millions. Thank you if you voted and/or persuaded others to join in to make this a success. The Yorkshire Building Society Lasting Legacy vote was more measured over a few weeks but the collective resource of Wilts & Berks resulted in £10k to repair the Cocklemore Brook culvert at Pewsham.

All of these votes had to be organised at short notice so if you are able to sign up to the On the Button electronic newsletter this would help when we need to get in touch quickly http://wbct.org.uk/lists/?p=subscribe.

**Onwards in 2015** - I am sure that you are as frustrated as I am that so many exciting plans for the Wilts & Berks take so long to get from the drawing board (sorry showing my age again – perhaps I mean computer screen) to restored canal. Not wishing to jinx anything I am reasonably optimistic that 2015 will see some significant progress at Studley Grange Royal Wootton Bassett and Melksham. It’s not for the want of effort that these projects have not yet started! When works do commence it will be a catalyst for more support and more progress (nothing like success to breed success). One project certainly under way is at Pewsham - the culvert repair team have made great progress and initial work on clearing top lock has fired the imagination for what will be achieved.

**More Help** - I have been greatly encouraged this year by the team at Canal & River Trust where clearly restoration projects like the Wilts & Berks are now receiving much more technical assistance. I do not think anyone should expect CRT to suddenly take on restoration projects but their collective support and encouragement is worth a huge amount.

**MasterPlan** - If you were at the Trust’s AGM you will have heard a little about work on a MasterPlan for the Wilts & Berks. The Trust has engaged advisor Jock Mackenzie to produce what will be an amalgamation of 18 Business Plans (the canal route divided into key segments) to identify how it will all happen including funding. You might raise an eyebrow or two at this seemingly daunting prospect especially as it is being done at no cost to the Trust. However you should be very encouraged to learn that the first piece of work is under way now for the Melksham Link (one of the eighteen projects). Two commercial sponsors Hall & Woodhouse and Land & Water are resourcing production of plans for local landowners to create development around the canal and river corridor that will produce the major part of the £21m required to construct the project. More on this next time!

Finally my thanks for all your help and support during 2014 and to you - Team Wilts & Berks - a very Happy New Year.

**Wilts & Berks Blog** - You can keep in touch with many of the fast moving events and projects in our weekly blog which you will find at: http://wiltsberkscanal.blogspot.co.uk

Tel: 01249 706494
Email: ken.oliver@wiltshire.gov.uk

Partnership Website:
http://www.wiltsandberkscanal.org.uk

@wiltsberkscanal (Twitter)
www.facebook.com/wiltsberkscanal (Facebook)
Commemorate the Award to the Trust
What better way to remember the award to the Trust than by buying the splendid souvenir items that are now available. The Trust was awarded a glass crystal, and you can obtain your own replica, engraved with the name of the Trust. Pinbadges, ties, scarves and a replica of the crystal award are available. Please order your items from:
Administrator, Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN.

Leave a Legacy
The restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal is one of the most difficult and exciting canal restoration projects ever. The sections of the canal that we have worked on so far have already shown the enormous benefits to the community and to the environment of the restored canal. With over 60 miles of canal to bring back to life as a resource for generations to come we will need funding and support for many years. As a registered charity what we can achieve depends largely on voluntary gifts and legacies from our supporters.
For more details and information about how to leave a legacy, contact the Company Secretary on 0845 226 8567 or via chris.coyle@wbct.org.uk

Situation Vacant
Leader for Studley Wildlife Trail project
Now that we have secured the funding for this project, the Trust is looking for a Project Leader to run it. It will be a part-time opportunity, starting from February 2015 running to December 2015. Some remuneration could be available. The person will need good communication skills as they will be working with local community groups, schools, other volunteer groups, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and Friends of the Earth. An interest in wildlife and ecology is also important, also the ability to manage a budget. As the dredging programme for Studley Grange will be running in the Spring, there will also be a need to work alongside the Project management and contractors and to slot into their timescales.

Anyone interested should get in touch with Kath on 01380 831231 or kath.hatton@wbct.org.uk.
WILTS & BERKS CANAL TRUST
Registered Charity No 299595

Melksham, Chippenham & Calne Branch & auctioneer Gordon Brockman of The Chippenham Auction Rooms (as seen on BBC’s Antiques Road Trip) are hosting a

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CHARITY AUCTION

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THURSDAY 26TH MARCH 2015
7pm registration for 7:30pm start
The Angel Hotel, Chippenham, SN15 3BW
Bar available

Online catalogue (www.melkshamwaterway.org.uk) and on the door.
Commission bids by email: Auction@WBCT.org.uk or contact 01373 859 207

Purchases must be paid for on the evening by cheque or cash only.
Winning bids will be a legal and binding contract.

For all general enquiries – Jeff & Lynda Daws (Auction@WBCT.org.uk)
or contact 07456.543.615

• Days out • Experiences
• Unique Items • Easter hampers
The twenty-sixth Annual General Meeting of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust was held at Old Mill Hall, School Lane, Grove, Wantage, on Saturday 18th October 2014. There were about 140 members and visitors present.

The venue was really suited for the AGM, with a big main room and separate space for tea, coffee and lunch, as well as plenty of display space. Members had the opportunity in the morning of visiting some of the worksites being worked on by East Vale branch, who organised and hosted the event admirably. For many it was a first opportunity to visit the Sack House, where the branch has worked very hard to turn this historic building into a small museum.

One of the things that the Directors wanted to achieve was to inform the members of some of the really exciting things that are happening along the line of the canal, so after the formal AGM was opened, it was adjourned to allow four presentations to be made.

First of all Ken Oliver updated us on the status of the Melksham Link. This very exciting project is gathering pace. He set the scene by describing how it is the highest priority project for the Partnership and the Trust. Having described briefly what the project entails – new canal, three wide-beam locks, a narrow lock, a hydro scheme etc. – he described where we are in the planning process, and the work that has to be done to complete that. Finally he gave an outline of the masterplan being developed to actually deliver it.

Jock Mackenzie then gave a presentation on the Masterplanning he is doing for the Trust for the canal as a whole, describing how the intention is turn the strategy, which has already been developed into a plan for actually delivering the canal. He went on to describe the overall scheme at Melksham, which is being put together to make the canal an integral part of a major tourism, educational and leisure centre. Finally he touched on a masterplan that is being developed for the restoration of the canal in Swindon.

The Peterborough Arms is the pub that we have bought, and Dave Maloney described the very exciting plans that we have to develop it as a canal centre. At this stage we are still carrying out detailed surveys of the condition, and working up the plans for its renovation and re-opening. Dave showed some pictures of the interior as it is, and then described the planned extension and other works that we intend to do.

Finally Chris Coyle did a round up of other projects and work under way along the line of the canal. He then went on to say that in view of the Trust's desire to complete the restoration of the canal within a reasonable time, it will have to undertake many large projects. In the light of that, directors have become convinced that the Trust will need to reorganise itself if it is be ready to face the challenges that will pose. The Trust itself will continue as a registered charity, but a clearer distinction will need to be made between the Council of Management, responsible for governance, long-term strategy and the values of the Trust, and the Executive team responsible for running the growing activities of the Trust. There will need to be a number of new companies set up, such as a trading company into which all commercial activities will be transferred, and a company charged with the physical delivery of the canal.

The AGM resumed after these presentations. Kath Hatton made an opening statement, bringing to the attention of the meeting a planned manoeuvre by ten members to submit nominations as directors, unknown to the Council of Management. The Trust had taken legal advice, and accepted the nominations. However no election could be taken on those nominations, as there had been insufficient time to give notice to all members. During the AGM there were a number of points raised in relation to this action and its impacts, and a discussion on the need to review our Articles of Association and the processes surrounding the AGM to ensure that they are consistent and coherent. Council had already decided on this review.

The normal business of the AGM included the approval of the Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014, and of the Directors' Report. Directors retiring by rotation and standing again, or co-opted during the year, were re-elected.

The AGM was concluded and was followed by an Open Forum in which members asked questions relating to the Trust. This was an interesting and stimulating session.
## Membership Matters
### Membership Secretary’s Report

We welcome the following new members:

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Membership Team, 03 December 2014
Before writing this article for the magazine I always look back to remind myself what I wrote for the last edition. This time it has really struck me how much has happened in those three months.

We had a very well-attended AGM at Grove in October – about 140 members came along. The mini-bus was full all morning ferrying people out to see the Sack House in Wantage – the latest Trust asset. Our merchandise stall was very busy and took over £600 on the day. There were interesting presentations in the afternoon from Dave, Ken, Jock and Chris, in particular the latest plans for the Melksham Link. We have realised that in order to raise the £20 million to do the work, we have to devise a more comprehensive development plan to include canal focused and related educational, cultural and leisure offers, all to be sited on significant areas of adjoining land. From meetings with Melksham, Melksham Without and Wiltshire Council, all appear very interested in this approach.

The Open Day at the Peterborough Arms in November was very successful. There was a constant stream of members and investors dropping in for a beer (donations only!) or a coffee and having a good look around the pub. We were keen that everyone should see it before renovations start. The atmosphere was very positive and again we sold some merchandise and also bric-a-brac from the pub, raising several hundred pounds on the day and in addition, we received a donation of £250 towards the electrics and another £1000 loan. Many thanks to the Peterborough Arms team of volunteers who worked so hard to make the day a success.

The best news to tell you is the success with two of my funding applications that I mentioned last time – the People’s Millions and the Yorkshire Building Society Lasting Legacy. Many of you will already know the results from the website and social media, but I will give details here. We won £50,000 from the People’s Millions for a setting up a wildlife trail at Studley Grange, Royal Wootton Bassett. This will be alongside the restored canal next to the BIFFA landfill site. The money will pay for a multi use towpath with benches and leaning posts, lots of planting to attract wildlife and insects, interpretation boards and lots of community involvement with local schools and groups helping out. Thank you to everyone who voted for the project on the day.

The other successful recipient of funds is the project to rebuild the 200 year old brick culvert under the canal at Pewsham that was severely damaged by excessive rainfall last winter. That has won a grant of £10,000 from the Yorkshire Building Society under their Lasting Legacy campaign to celebrate their 150th anniversary year. The MCC work parties will do the work and the grant will pay for the materials and plant hire.

The other two applications that I mentioned last time to the Guardian for £5000 and Swindon’s bid to Gannett Foundation for the soft banking at West Leaze were not successful, but then you can’t win ‘em all!

Our Grand Draw for this year raised just over £4,000 in aid of a second trip boat. In the New Year I hope to make some other applications to augment this fund – a new boat like Dragonfly with disabled lift already fitted will cost around £40,000. It will be money well spent as we are finding that the current Nb Dragonfly gives such an excellent publicity to the whole project especially the Santa trips that are running at the moment and are fully booked already. May I take the opportunity to wish you all a happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2015.
Update of winners

October
1st prize ticket 189 Peter Bowers Parkstone Essex
2nd prize ticket 23 Ray Canter Chippenham
3rd prize ticket 244 Howard Cole Chippenham

November
1st prize ticket 192 Gaye Cash Swindon
2nd prize ticket 219 Hilary Sharman Cricklade
3rd prize ticket 184 Elizabeth Threlfall Kirby Lonsdale, Cumbria

December
1st prize ticket 19 Steve Dudley Shrivenham
2nd prize ticket 03 Brian Wright Chippenham
3rd prize ticket 38 Janet Carr Melksham
4th prize ticket 248 Howard Cole Chippenham

What is the next number in the sequence 170, 247, 258, ?? It will be the number of 200 Club tickets sold in 2015. During the last three years £6,750 has been donated across all the branches to buy various pieces of plant etc. to assist volunteers in their various restoration projects. A similar amount has been returned to ticket holders in monthly prize draws.

We will again run the 200 Club in 2015 and enclosed with Dragonfly is an application form.

If you are already a member and last year you paid by Bankers Order you need do nothing. New Bankers Orders and cheques should be sent to the Trust office (for our attention) together with your application form. If you prefer to pay by electronic transfer, details of which are on the form, do let us know by email your name, address, telephone number to enable us to track the transfer and, with luck, send you a winning cheque.

Remember, membership is open to all members and their family and friends. Once again, we would like to increase the number of tickets sold which would enable more money to be awarded to branches and increase the monthly prize draws.

The first draw will be in March and again thank you for your continued support and we wish you good luck in next year’s Draws.

Jeff and Lynda
An invitation from MCC Branch

After an incredibly busy 2014, Melksham, Chippenham and Calne Branch is planning a slightly less hectic, but hopefully still entertaining, series of events for 2015.

We would love to welcome as many Trust members as possible to join us next year; we hope that at least one, two, or even more, occasions may tempt you, and we are trying a few new ideas in an effort to vary the menu. The Race Night in particular, promises to be a very exciting addition to our calendar, and we are planning a few other novel events - please keep an eye on the website, Facebook and On the Button.

For more information please visit www.melkshamwaterways.org.uk

Charity Auction, Thursday 26th March

We are holding our second auction on the 26th March (see advert in Dragonfly page 8). We are looking for Lots to go under the hammer. If you have any suitable items, can offer a unique experience, are able to make a craft item or know any company that could donate a service or an item we would appreciate any leads. Thanks in anticipation, Jeff and Lynda Daws, email auction@wbct.org.uk

Quiz Night, Monday 30th March

This event is being held on Monday 30th March and is open to all. The doors open at 7pm for registration and the quiz starts at 7.30pm. Soft drinks and refreshments are available during the evening. The premises is not licensed to sell alcohol but you are welcome to bring your own.

This is a general knowledge quiz so you don’t have to worry about facing local canal questions, such as 'what is the colour of our Chairman’s hard hat’. The quiz night is held in the Lansdowne Hall at Derry Hill, SN11 9QY. As we found last year, space is limited so please book early to guarantee your team’s place. We invite groups of up to 4 people who want to take part to form a team and join in the fun. The cost of entry is £12 per team. Entry forms are on our web site.

Once again, we are issuing a challenge to the other Branches to enter a team to see who can become the 'Brains of the Canal’. If you need more details please contact Diana Hunter. 20 The Strand, Steeple Ashton, Wiltshire BA14 6EP or check our web site for more details.

Race Night, 18th April

There will a Race Night on 18th April 2015 at the Woodlands Social Club, Woodlands Road, Calne SN11 0JX. Entry will be free though you will be encouraged to spend at the evening. We will be selling horses in advance for those unable to attend and also to raise a load of money; the more we sell in advance, the more we make. More news later.

First race at 8pm.

Sponsored Walk Sunday 10th May

“Walk the Wilts & Berks”

Sunday 10th May 2015 is a date for your diary if you like the idea of walking beside a beautiful stretch of the Wilts & Berks Canal, at the same time as supporting the restoration project. Everyone is invited to join MCC’s Annual Sponsored Walk from the Buttercross in Market Place Chippenham to The Bell in Lacock. Walkers can choose to either walk there and back as part of the main walk (10 miles), or walk just one way and catch the provided minibus back (5 miles). We hope that having this shorter option will encourage people to participate. Registration fees are: £5 for individuals, or £10 for recognised groups such as scouts and cadets. We hope that as many walkers as possible will raise sponsorship money, not only to help our cause, but also to provide an incentive to complete the challenge! For groups who would like to raise funds for their own cause, we are very happy for you to do this, but ask that you split your sponsorship money with us 50/50. For those highly organised souls who come with £20 sponsorship already pledged, there will be no registration fee. Registration at The Buttercross (SN15 3HD) will open at 10:00am and the walk will start at 10:30am. Car parking is at Borough Parade or Emery Gate (both free on Sundays). The route will take walkers past the site at Pewsham Locks, where members of the work party are making terrific progress since receiving planning permission for the restoration of Top Lock and the Lock Cottage. Boswell, MCC's 'new improved' workboat and butty, will also be on view - although not necessarily afloat! It was delivered to a very shallow wharf section in November 2014 to wait for the completion of Cocklemore Brook Culvert. This would then enable the canal to be re watered, and Boswell to be re
floated, following the dramatic breach in Jan. 2014. Volunteers will also be manning an information gazebo, answering questions and offering mid morning tea, coffee and cake here, before walkers set off along the beautifully picturesque towpath towards Lacock and The Bell. Here participants will be able to enjoy a well earned drink, snack and/or meal, although it would be wise to book a table for this as it is a very busy pub: Tel 01249 730308.

MCC Branch would like to extend a warm welcome to everyone, for what is usually a very enjoyable day out. We would love to see you all there!

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**Wootton Bassett, Branch Open Meetings, with Speakers.**

**Monday, 13th April 2015, at 7:30,** Stuart Fisher will give a presentation entitled ‘Canal Short Cuts’ at the Church Hall, United Reformed Church, Wood Street, Royal Wootton Bassett, SN4 7BD. Free parking is available in the Borough Fields Car Park, (SN4 7AX) (by Sainsburys) and there are footpaths through to Wood Street.

There will be a charge of £2.00 to cover costs. Refreshments available.

You do not have to book a place but to give me some idea of the numbers attending I would be grateful if you could e-mail me at cheryll.yeowell@wbct.org.uk, or by phone 01793 812708, if you would like to attend.

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**Another Santa Cruise Returns.**

Our thanks to the whole boat team for the work from booking, rostering crews, buying and wrapping presents, decorating the boat and finally crewing each trip. So many smiling faces and more money raised! **Well Done All.**
Joseph, born in Chalford in 1857, was a third generation boatman with grandparents from the Castle Eaton and Lechlade area. His father Francis had been based at The Wharf on the Thames and Severn Canal at Latton (north of Cricklade) for 20 years and owned a number of boats. Two of Joseph’s sisters married boatmen and a third married a blacksmith from Cricklade who in 1901 and 1911 occupied the lock keeper’s house on the North Wilts Canal at Crosslances (near the Swindon and Cricklade Railway centre).

In 1881 Joseph married a Cricklade girl Amelia Selman. There he established himself as a grocer/beer retailer/coal merchant but continued his boat haulage business. He often transported coal for Butt & Skurray of Stroud. Skurray built a large mill by the canal at Whale Bridge in Swindon in 1893.

By 1897 he had moved to 48 Westcott Place, Swindon by the Wilts & Berks Canal. He owned four boats and often plied them between Swindon and Bristol. Amelia ran the shop. It was here that the youngest three of their 13 surviving children were born.

In 1901 the Wilts & Berks Canal become unnavigable east of Chippenham. Joseph sold two boats and broke up a third which left his remaining one called Staunch. He was aware that Gloucester County Council was repairing stretches of the Thames & Severn Canal. Anticipating the completion of these works, he took Staunch to stay at Latton Wharf for 10 months, undertaking transport of stone in the Siddington and South Cerney area.

In March 1904 he undertook a commission for Cirencester coal dealer Frank Gegg to fetch coal from Staffordshire collieries for the same price as charged by the railways. He and his mate Richard Bentley began their epic journey with horse-drawn Staunch. They were the first boaters through the Sapperton Tunnel for many years. They took a cargo of timber from Gloucester to Dudley and then went a further 25 miles to Hednesford Colliery to take on 35 tons of coal and brought it back to Cirencester Wharf. Here most of the coal was sold to Cirencester House.

The local newspapers recorded the journey and arrival of Staunch.

Joseph continued working his boat on the Thames & Severn and Midlands canals. The last ‘official’ boat through the Sapperton Tunnel was ‘Gem’ in 1911 but local rumour has it that Joseph used it in 1914 to bring his dead father’s furniture back from Chalford to Wiltshire.

Amelia left Westcott Place c.1916 and died in 1937 in Swindon (recorded as ‘wife of coal merchant’). Research by his family and others has failed to find details of where and when Joseph died.

His older children helped him to work the boats. Son James (born 1881) plied the Wilts & Berks Canal but later moved to London and trained as a baker. In 1928 he returned to boating, mainly on the Grand Union Canal. In 1939 he retired to his family who were then living in Wroughton. He died there in 1959.
Staunch at Cirencester Wharf in March 1904
Frank Gegg is in the suit (left) and Joseph is one of the other men

Joseph & Amelia Hewer and their 13 Children c.1919
Son James is in the front row on the right

48 Westcott Place in the 1940s
The Wilts and Berks Canal Trust is a registered charity, committed to returning this historic waterway to full navigable status. The canal will restore an important link in the national waterways network, but the project will also be part of the green infrastructure of the region, creating connections between existing wildlife habitats and creating aquatic and wetland habitats for endangered species.

What are we looking for?

Knowledge and Expertise:
• Be able to support fellow Trust members and staff
• Be able to act as an advocate for the organisation
• Have a good understanding of the organisation

Personal Qualities:
• Has a commitment to achieving the most ambitious canal restoration project in the country
• Commits to preparing for and attending meetings
• Not to be afraid to ask questions
• Ability to work with people at all levels
• Ability to work as a member of a team as well as individually
• Reliable
• Willingness to learn about the project and contribute new ideas
• Personality to represent the organisation as its national profile grows
• Good Communications Skills
• Ability to plan and organise

Canal Rings Past, Present and Future
John Henn

Past and Present
The Stourport Ring is a series of canals in the West Midlands.

The ring consists of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal, Birmingham Canal Navigations (BCN), Staffs and Worcs Canal, the River Severn.

The outer ring via Wolverhampton is 83 miles with 122 locks, including 3 electrically operated river locks, 2 pairs of staircase locks and 2 wide locks. The major lock flights are the Tardibigge Locks (30 locks) and the Wolverhampton Flight (21 locks). There are several tunnels on the route including Wast Hill Tunnel which is 2492 metres or 1.55 miles.

Attractions on the ring include Cadbury’s World, Gas Street Basin, the Black Country Open Air Museum, the Severn Valley Railway The route goes through the attractive towns of Worcester Kidderminster and Stourport as well as the centre of Birmingham.

Compare this with the ring which will be created by the east end of the Wilts & Berks Canal, North Wilts Canal, Thames & Severn Canal and the Upper River Thames.

The ring is approximately 83 miles long with 65 locks. This includes 3 wide locks and 15 electrically operated river locks. There are no tunnels.

Past and Future
Wilts & Berks Canal system: 36 miles and 47 locks. Abingdon (jubilee junction) to new route around Swindon about 21 miles and 14 locks.

Route around Swindon 7 miles and 16 locks
North Wilts Canal (from Kingshill) about 8 miles and 17 locks (3 extra locks at Cricklade and 3 extra locks to get to centre of Swindon from Kingshill)

Thames & Severn Canal from Cricklade to Inglesham: 7 miles and 3 locks River Thames: 40
miles and 15 locks

Attractions near to the canal include: Steam Museum of the Great Western Railway (Swindon); Blunsdon Steam Railway; Kelmscott Manor (William Blake’s House); Oxford colleges and museums; Vale & Downland Museum; Uffington White Horse.

The route goes near the attractive small towns of Abingdon, Wantage, Cricklade and Lechlade, the major tourist centre of Oxford and Swindon.

The canal route of the Stourport Ring goes through the Centre of Birmingham The centre piece is the area around the Gas Street Basin. The planners have used the canal as the centre piece of a series of attractive public spaces. It spearheaded the regeneration of the City.

The Worcester Bar looking back towards the Mailbox and the Worcester Birmingham canal

Pupils from St Peter’s C E Academy being briefed by Stewart from Ellendale Environmental Ltd. prior to filming for People’s Millions programme
For several years the pair of swans on the Kingshill, Swindon stretch of the canal have raised many broods of cygnets. In October 2012 they even hit the headlines in the local newspaper when they went on several walkabouts with their cygnets to the pub across a busy road. Dicing with death and bringing the traffic to a standstill on more than one occasion resulting in the police having to be called out to help Sue Hulbert from Swindon Swan Sanctuary rescue them and return them to the canal. Once the public were asked not to feed them in the pub grounds they decided they would stay put on the canal.

They have got used to the many tow path walkers and cyclists and also to Nb Dragonfly. The male swan (cob) enjoys pecking the boat and brings his new family along to visit us when we are taking the public on trips. They and the progress of their cygnets are included in talks given by the crew.

This has also been an interesting and distressing year for this family of swans. In 2014 they had six cygnets of which 4 survived. All was happy with the family until late July when one of the crew members noticed that the cob had a lump on his face above his beak. A week later it had increased in size and he seemed distressed. After ringing around several wildlife sanctuaries Sue Hulbert of the South West Swan Sanctuary in Swindon again came to their assistance and rescued him on 12th August. Because he was so poorly she needed to send him to the Swan Sanctuary in Shepperton, where they have a specialist vet and facilities.

Sue Paine in the boat team tracked him down and rang the sanctuary to see how he was. He had a very bad infection thought to have been caused by a fishing hook and had had an operation and antibiotics. Sue kept in touch and they sanctuary promised to let us know when he was better.

The Swan Sanctuary named him ‘Mr Swindon’ and Melanie Nelson sent us this report.

“Mr Swindon had a very severe sinus infection when he arrived here. His face was very swollen. He had his face drained and flushed and he has had a long course of antibiotics and is now doing very well. He does (and most likely always will) have a chubby face. Swan skin once stretched is not very forgiving.

As soon as we are sure the infection is properly cleared we will return him to his family. We hope everyone that knows him will keep an eye on him.”

Meantime the female (hen) swan was caring for her four offspring and we watched as they grew. By October one cygnet had decided to move into the grounds of the newly built Waitrose supermarket along the side of the canal and could be seen wandering around in the car park. We tried to get him to return to the water but members of the public were feeding him.

Many local people were asking us where the male swan was and wanted to donate some money so Sue Paine contacted the sanctuary who provided some posters and a collection box was put on the boat.

A week or so later we had a report that there was a pair of swans and three cygnets on the canal and thought that Mr Swindon had returned, then another swan and more cygnets were seen. The cygnets
seemed confused as to which swans were their parents and the female Kingshill Swan was seen to be pining on her own whilst her cygnets were swimming about without her, by this time another of her cygnets had gone. The new pair of swans and family seemed to be making themselves at home patrolling the canal. They hung around for a week or so before disappearing. As their cygnets were not developed enough to fly we can only assume that they all walked up Mill Lane from the Wichelstowe section of the canal, where we think they are now.

We all wanted Mr Swindon to be re-united with Mrs Swindon, but were warned that Mrs Swindon may, once her cygnets had flown, either remain on her own, find another mate, or fly away to join a flock. However the sanctuary would return him to the canal as long as she was still there, but there was no guarantee she would welcome him back as he had been gone some time. Swans generally mate for life unless one dies or disappears.

Meanwhile Sue kept in contact with the sanctuary with regular updates of his condition. On 1st December she had a phone call to say he was on his way back to Swindon. Some of us went down to the canal in the hope we would see him re-united with his mate. We saw Mrs Swindon with the last remaining cygnet swimming by the boat landing stage protecting her cygnet from a noisy inquisitive dog. We walked along the tow path to meet Sue Hulbert and Peter Martin from Swan Rescue South Wales, who had just delivered an injured swan to Shepperton and offered to bring Mr Swindon back.

Peter explained that he had been very poorly; he had had three operations and several courses of antibiotics and a drain in his face. He had also lost some weight. He was carried along the towpath by Peter in a special bag and once Mrs Swindon was in site he was put on the towpath, as soon as he saw her he started calling her, she called back and started to swim toward him, cygnet in tow, Sue and Peter then removed the bag and Sue returned him to the water. What happened next was amazing, he joined her and they began a kind of courtship, (the pictures tell the story) the poor cygnet following them around not sure what was going on. It was a very touching moment and everyone had a tear in his or her eyes. We were all relieved it had turned out so well and that they were re-united.

Mute swans are not in fact mute, they hiss, grunt and make other sounds. They are given the name because they are the only species of swan that do not call in flight.

All was still well a couple of days later; the cygnet was still with them. We are looking forward to them nesting again and hopefully producing another brood next year.

We would like to thank Sue Hulbert and Peter Martin, for their part in his rescue and return. Melanie and all the others at the Swan Sanctuary in Shepperton who were involved in caring for him.

A donation has already been sent to the Swan Sanctuary but after hearing from Sue Hulbert that the cygnet that took up residence at Waitrose has now been taken to the Swan Sanctuary as he had a large clump of fishing line in his throat and wrapped around his beak, we decided to continue collecting for the sanctuary and the collection box remained on the boat during the Santa Special trips.

Contributions can be made via the shop in Swindon and through the boat team. Bank transfer or cheques accepted. For more information contact Sue by e-mail at boats@wbct.org.uk or by telephone (number in the back of the magazine). Cheques payable to WBCT Dragonfly Boat, please.
Nb Dragonfly Lady Skippers - Wendy, Sally and Annie

Tug & Butty delivered to Pewsham in need of water (report page 24)
I feel very lucky that my position in W&BCT not only allows me to play boats with the Trust's highest value asset (Nb Dragonfly) other than the Peterborough Arms of course, but also to work with the three women who now make up part of our team of qualified skippers who hold a Certificate in Community Boat Management (CCBM).

When Annie and Wendy both started crewing with me on Dragonfly over two years ago, I soon became aware that they were more than capable on the helm and also very experienced boaters with a lot of canal knowledge. When they started to show an interest in becoming qualified skippers I was more than pleased to help and encouage them to get their CCBM which is the qualification required to be in charge of operating Nb Dragonfly. I know that there are many Trust members that are capable of taking our trip boat up and down the Kingshill section but, as with most things these days, you have to do a course and have a piece of paper to prove you can. To gain this vital certificate will cost you about £150.00. To date our entire regular 10 plus skippers have paid the cost of the course out of their own pockets, commitment indeed!

We are fortunate that both Mike Lang and myself have contacts with the Bruce Trust, based at Great Bedwyn on the K&A Canal. In return for us skippering their day boat trips, Rebecca Bruce allows us to bring along our trainees to gain experience in operating their much larger wide beam craft and to use locks and swing bridges in the manner required to pass the CCBM test. When ready, our trainee skippers then complete the three day course and take the test on one of their boats. There are usually 3 to 4 courses per year depending on the number of candidates, various other boat groups and societies use the Bruce Trust to get their crews trained to the required standard to obtain their CCBM Certificates. Each course normally takes four people and there is the opportunity to sleep on board.

As Annie and Wendy had already worked so well together on Nb Dragonfly, it made sense to get them both on the same course, which they successfully completed in early 2013. This made it possible to operate with all lady crews which we have done on several occasions. This is probably a first for a canal society trip boat. The availability of two extra skippers has also allowed us to operate on both Saturday and Sunday for the last two years and cover all the extra trips required for the very successful Melksham River Festival.

Sally has now joined us in time for the Santa Specials. Unlike most of our other crew members that have come to Dragonfly with some boating experience, Sally came to us about a year ago as a complete novice, once she found out that you push the tiller to the right to go left and vice-versa and that Dragonfly is not fitted with brakes and going in reverse is a complete black-art, she soon picked it all up. Annie and I took her on several Bruce Trust Day Trips to give her some lock experience. Sally and her husband then had a very enjoyable boat holiday, which took in the River Severn. We then felt she had the ability and confidence to do the CCBM but unfortunately we could not get her onto one of the Bruce Trust courses until next April. Sally decided to strike while the iron was hot and do a course at Camden Lock on the London Canal System, which she successfully completed. She now makes up the third member of our Dragonfly Ladies.

We must not forget all the other women who make our trip boats such a success. Sue, who looks after bookings, crew rosters, accounts, Boat News on the web site and currently flat out buying and wrapping Christmas presents for the Santa Specials. Val, Dawn, Cheryl, Linnette, Viv, Linda, Gabbie and Helen are all part of the team.

Robert Yeowell
Welcome to our winter MCC report. Gathering my thoughts to write this, it feels that we have had a really busy and productive year, but not in quite the way I would have predicted a year ago; we have made no real progress on our priority plan of getting the main length navigable all the way from Pewsham Bottom Lock to Double Bridge, due to the much discussed breach of the Cocklemore Brook Culvert. But we have been very busy none the less. By the time you read this, you will hopefully have heard that we were successful in our bid with The Yorkshire Building Society for £10,000 to help repair the culvert. Whilst awaiting that announcement the team completed some 10m of re-built culvert and loaded the earth back on top of the completed section, partially re-building the tow path and allowing us to dig away the far bank and the rest of the canal bed to expose the remaining part of the culvert. Many thanks to the work parties for all the hard work that has gone into stripping back and clearing the old culvert and the beautiful work of rebuilding the new one. (Picture Page 36)

If you have long memories, you will recall that we bought an ex-CRT work boat called Boswell. With a huge amount of effort, led by Martin Stubs and Tim Herd, supported by many others, this has been cut in half and then re-made to create a tug and a butty. We had a deadline to complete making the two boats water-tight and crane them into the canal at Pewsham before our funding window expired. In October both halves of the boat were transported to Pewsham and craned into the canal where they now rest calmly on the mud – unfortunately until the culvert is repaired, this section is isolated from the main length. (Picture page 22)

Looking back at the events, talks and PR activity we have done for the year, with its special focus on marking the centenary of the abandonment of the canal, we supported 23 events including, of course, being the lead branch for both the Pewsham Open Days and the Melksham River Festival. A wonderful contribution from so many supporters from MCC and other branches. A special thanks to the core team members who plan and organise and support all these events and activities.

Long term readers will be familiar with the Melksham Link project and will recall that we formally applied for planning permission in the autumn of 2012. In the past two years we have done a huge amount of work on wildlife surveys, an economic benefits study, and so on. We have reported this over the past issues of Dragonfly. But we have been less able to talk about the work in...
the background with the land owners and some wider ambitions into which the new canal would fit. Those of you at the AGM will have heard a briefing on these wider plans. I’m pleased to be able to give an update here on where we stand with these items, courtesy of Jock MacKenzie;

“The report from our leisure and visitor attraction experts shows that the Melksham Link Canal Master Plan is projected to be a financial success for all parties involved. We are now in a position to share the detail with the landowners.

Following meetings with key members of Wiltshire County Council and Melksham Town and Melksham Without Councils, at which the Master Plan was presented, we received positive feedback that the scheme should be allowed to move forward with some details yet to be clarified. The plan already has approval in principle from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Visit Wiltshire and other key parties. The existing Planning application is awaiting the last studies to be completed and, in the New Year, the Trust will apply for Master Plan permission to work in conjunction with and supportive to the present Canal Corridor permission.”

Thanks to Jock for that update.

We ended the year with a larger than usual Christmas Dinner. Our thanks to the Angel Hotel in Chippenham for hosting a splendid evening. With increased capacity, we were able to invite more people than usual which allowed me to thank many of the people who have supported us this year. It was a pleasure to welcome people from other branches, the boat Team and even other canal trusts who have been so important to us in delivering our challenging programme. Fortunately Phil managed to leave Franky in his stable for the evening although I’m sure it would have been nice to see him again. Visits to Chippenham Market on a Saturday will never be the same again with such a friendly horse we got to know so well.

Until next time then, safe digging and many thanks,
Derek.

FOXHAM & LYNEHAM

Chairman:
Andrew Chapman, Dauntsey Lodge Farm, Sodom Lane, Dauntsey, Wilts, SN15 4JA.
Tel: 01249 890379 Mob:07778 568957

Secretary:
John Harrod, 6 Downham Mead, Chippenham, Wilts. SN15 3LN Tel. 01249-461023

As the Chairman, Andrew, has been and is ill, some of the members asked me to write this at the end of the last meeting. The text was circulated around the Branch Officers before release.

Andrew mentioned in his last report that our branch had grown significantly over the last year. This was formally acknowledged at the Trust’s AGM where we were awarded the “Pick of the Branches” as the branch with the highest proportionate increase in membership (picture page 36). So welcome again to all of you who have relatively recently joined us, and congratulations to all who helped with the recruitment. Gordon updated Branch members at the September meeting on works done at Foxham. Very good progress is being made towards the “Duck Pond” with the help of another weekend visit of Waterways Recovery Group “Bit In The Middle”. The team deserves great credit for their efforts even suffering some days of incessant rain. The first stage of clearance of the canal cut itself between the footbridge and the Duck Pond bund is all but finished, just in time for the winter rains to start filling the cut.

Everyone that visits, walkers, neighbours and BITM members are impressed by the rate of progress now the cut looks more like a canal than a massively overgrown hedge. Well done to the work party!

The work party team now has to concentrate on making the cleared area of the towpath wide enough, at the correct level and watertight before getting plant to profile the cut, hopefully next summer. The Branch is considering investing in a GIS survey to obtain consistent data / design levels for accurate profiling.

George Schmidt, one of two F&L members on the Peterborough Arms Project Steering Group reported that the electrical and other surveys have now been completed. Planning permission is being sought to put the Trust Office temporarily in the skittle alley until the pub opens when it will move...
The big news is the award of a £50,000 grant from the ITV/Lottery People's Millions for the reinstatement of the towpath and a wildlife trail on the Biffa site. This will undoubtedly be covered in detail elsewhere in the magazine but I would like to say a big thank you to all those who took the trouble to vote for us on the day.

Another busy few months as winter closes in and the mud returns. We have permission to access Dunnington Aqueduct again this winter for a few weeks to clear the summer vegetation growth over the aqueduct. We had hoped to start before Christmas this year to avoid the extremely cold conditions we usually encounter in January and February. However, it’s been so mild everything has kept growing so there is no point in cutting stuff back yet. Looks like we will be doing it in the freezing cold again.

At Templars Firs we have been mowing and strimming as usual. The reeds in part of the canal had become so thick it was impossible to drag them out using our weed cutters so we hired an excavator and were able to drag tons of them out from the far end of the watered section, roots and all. We realised the towpath hedge had been gradually encroaching over the towpath on another section so we have been cutting this back, giving us another three or four feet of towpath. This will give us room to hire and operate an excavator for a day again to clear another area of reeds. A while ago we were awarded a Wiltshire Council Area Board grant to acquire and install another seat on the towpath not far from the slipway end of the watered section. Royal Wootton Bassett Town Council obtained the seat for us so it matches some they have already installed. It took a couple of wet work parties to dig out a base for the seat and concrete it into position. It will be ideal for people walking a short distance along the canal and having a rest before returning.

The heavy rain raised the water level in the canal which led to another leak which we have fixed. There is a short length of towpath on an embankment which is riddled with holes, some of which only come to light when the water level is high. Maybe one day we will fix the last one and be free of leaks, maybe not, but we can hope.

We have planning permission to extend the canal westwards from Templars Firs, with the first phase being to extend the watered section to the council yard fence. Unfortunately this will be a difficult task as a number of sewer and storm water pipes cross the area. Initial discussions with Wessex Water have not been too promising but need to be progressed. With the help of someone from Wessex Water we have been able to locate one of the

Looking forwards, the Branch will press on with restoration locally but is focussing its efforts on the Foxham section.

John Harrod has kindly agreed to continue as Secretary in the short term pending the appointment of a successor. If you belong to the F&L Branch and feel you could do this role, please contact Andrew.

Theresa Chapman
manholes which had been hiding from us but despite a lot of rooting around in the undergrowth and digging holes there is still one that remains elusive.

At the Chaddington site we have done further mowing and clearing. The area of the field where we spread the spoil from dredging below the lock suddenly started to sprout when it rained after the dry spell. Unfortunately what grew was mostly weeds but it has been mowed a couple of times and the grass is starting to come through already. We have also cleared the area between the spillweir and the stream where the weeds were six feet high. Also, the stones and rocks thrown into the spillweir area by local yobs have been cleared away.

The Templars Firs section is looking particularly good at the moment; I think it looks quite special in the winter for some reason. Well worth a walk along on a sunny winter’s day.

We have also worked on the Biffa site, strimming the area near the stream several times to deter re-colonisation by water voles until the canal is restored here. This has been difficult as the banks are quite steep and slippery and it is necessary to strim the edges whilst walking in the stream.

We are always keen to add to our volunteer numbers on a Wednesday so why not come along and see what we are up to.

John Bower

Since my last report it has been one of those periods where nothing much seems to have moved on despite all the efforts made. We continue to press on with the planning applications for the restoration at Mouldon Hill and the landing stage at Waitrose in Wichelstowe. Both have been slowed down by requests for more information and, in the case of Mouldon Hill, a serious objection to the scheme. It is likely to take several more months before we can get to our goal of consent for the works.

Branch members will probably be aware of the numerous developments being proposed around the town and in the town centre which may impact on our plans. We are struggling to keep up with all these proposals so that we can put our case for the canal to the right people at the right time. Fortunately, a couple of members have come forward to help track and intercede as some of these projects develop. The situation in the town centre is more complex but I am optimistic that we will soon see progress there also. We still have to wait and see if the Inspector’s Report from the Inquiry into Swindon’s development plans will reaffirm our protected line through the borough, although we are hopeful.

Our small work party has almost finished re-arranging the maintenance compound and disposing of all those items which seemed to be certain to be useful at the time but actually have just cluttered up the area. This work has been greatly aided by member Dave Watkins from whom we lease the space. We will be moving on to the usual winter maintenance tasks. We are still waiting to start hunting for leaks in the new East Wichel section because the weather has not played ball – the lack of rain has kept the level too low to use tracing methods.

We have finally bought a small tipper truck with a lift platform on the back. It’s perhaps seen its best days already but it was a bargain and it looks good to run for a year or two more. We are sharing the usage with West Vale but other branches can request it – for a contribution towards the running costs of course. This has already been useful for clearing the compound and it now enables us to move materials and plant between our sites scattered around the borough.

We took part in a pop-up museum at an empty shop in the Brunel Centre for three days in October thanks to Jan Flanagan. This was arranged by the Swindon Museum team as part of a programme to stimulate interest and support for a new museum and art gallery building near to the Wyvern Theatre.

Please check the web site or get on to our branch email circulation list for details of forthcoming meetings to which every member is welcome. We
may lose our present access to the Broome Manor Golf Club now that the borough council has passed it over to a commercial operator. We are also planning a special event for the branch AGM meeting which will be next May.

Darrell and the shop team have been improving the computer facilities (with help from Dave Maloney) and are trying to find enough people to open more often. There is new stock of trust clothing and other items for sale. Why not pop in to give them some support?

Best wishes to all for Christmas and the New Year. Here’s hoping that we will see some real progress on our patch of the cut next year.

Rod Hacker

WEST VALE

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

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

Tel: 01793 782776

‘All hands to the pumps!’ – No we aren’t sinking, just wet, and well, flooded! We wanted to get on with some more work at Steppingstone Bridge and all our pumps have needed repeated attention! Our bridge team have been working steadily under the bridge since the summer, gradually removing the mud to reveal the wing walls, a mighty task which requires that the site needs pumping out before work can begin. Now, if it hasn’t rained for a while the old 3 inch pump soon drains the site, which was OK up till recently but lately it’s been getting really wet. Now it’s rained nearly every day and a couple of days ago we had a deluge with the site completely flooded, recently the canal water level was so high it even flowed over the top of the eastern coffer dam onto the site, then over the stop planks under the bridge then over the western dam to escape westwards towards South Marston, that’s in the opposite direction to the original water flow! We need a dry spell now or we may have to wait till the Spring!

We still have plenty of work to keep us busy though, among a myriad of jobs we have returned to our path making activities in several places but especially at the Canalside Park and have been fortunate to have some very helpful visiting volunteers from the Nationwide Building Society. Sixteen turned up for the day and cleared all the vegetation from the planned path site and had bonfires and burned it all up, appropriate as it was the fifth of November! They also cleared a bit of the canal as well; they enjoyed it so much that arrangements are in hand for them to return again in the spring!

Thanks to a welcome grant we have taken delivery of most of the materials for the path, forty tonnes of stone for a start! That’s two lorry loads or about 800 wheelbarrows full! To shorten the distance from the car park to the path site the delivery driver was most helpful and transported the first load to within 10 yards of the path starting point, tipped it just where we wanted it but then (empty!) got stuck in the grass half way back out, Oh dear! What a mess! It didn’t take long to get the lorry out but, not surprisingly, he refused to take the second load further than the car park. More work! The mess took a workparty to sort out, and twenty tonnes now need to be moved an extra 100 yards or so! Any help out there?

Things have really moved on since I started this report, the council suddenly turned up and carried out some repairs to Station Road bridge (the only original road bridge on the whole canal to remain in daily use since it was built)! Monday Network-Rail came up trumps and delivered to Steppingstone Lane a couple of dozen or so coping stones from an old bridge near Andover to be demolished. Then Wednesday Six dum py bags of aggregates and a half tonne of cement were delivered, fortunately a local agricultural contractor was available to haul it all the half mile down to the bridge site. Phew! And yesterday I learnt that the Trust got 50 grand. - Crikey! I guess all the volunteers will now be off to Studley to spend the dosh! Busy! Always more work than volunteers to do it! Just join in, most worthwhile and surprisingly rewarding!

Seasons Greetings and a Prosperous New Year and 50,000 well dones! from us all at West Vale.

Alan Norris.
Bad weather managed to frustrate the recent Monday Mob activity and this will re-start in the Spring. However the team have done a magnificent job over the past year of keeping the towpath tidy along our patch. My thanks to Mike Matthews for organising the workparties. Similarly I should thank Bob Airey as WPO for our main activities and all those who valiantly turn up in all weathers.

Recent work has included tidying up the area south of the canal at New Road bridge where the drainage ditch was bringing silt into the canal. It now looks very tidy with a new pipe under the access track into the field. The Childrey New Road across the road is looking very good and a very enjoyable walk whatever the season.

Last Friday was the Annual Wantage Dickensian Evening in the Market Square. We attended with our marquee just under the machine belting out fake snow...which took a bit of cleaning off later. As ever in between people listening to the Band playing carols, the various food stands and general hubbub we had quite a lot of interest. My thanks to the team for once again standing on cold tarmac for the evening.

We have the usual post Christmas walk on Saturday 27th. This year I will do the circular walk to the east of Grove taking in 4 out of the 6 Grove Locks with the paths newly improved by the replacement of stiles with nice metal gates courtesy of OCC Countryside, Grove Parish Council and funding from TOE. A nice bit of local teamwork.

We are watching with interest the erection of a solar farm to the east of Grove. The farm itself does not impinge on the canal line and boundary hedging/fencing will be installed as a buffer zone. A temporary construction track has been built near to the site of Nevilles Lift bridge avoiding the wedge of trees. This is however only temporary. Further discussions with the landowners will be held in due course regarding the canal route itself. Locals may have spotted the earthworks in the fields south of Cow Common lane between Steventon and Hanney (not to mention the various temporary traffic lights for the last couple of months, thankfully now gone). The cable for the solar farm is running alongside the historic canal line (here infilled) and where it crosses will be a suitable depth below supposed water level.

As I write this we are in preparation for our response to the Vale of White Horse District Council’s 2031 Local Plan proposals. Under the amended Canal Policy provisions protection of the route and future restoration will depend on us carrying out various specific detailed studies. We have been considering the implications of the requirements and are commenting appropriately. There is much work to do in the Vale area so expect to read more about this in the next edition of Dragonfly.

Brian Stovold
The Melksham Calne and Chippenham branch meet at St Andrew’s Church Hall, Melksham, at 20:00hrs on the first Tuesday of each month.

**MELKSHAM CALNE & CHIPPENHAM WORK PARTY INFORMATION:**

Organisers: Doug Harris, Chiverlins House, Sheldon, Chippenham, SN14 0XQ Tel 01249 652236
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 doug.harris@wbct.org.uk

The Foxham & Lyneham Branch meet on a two monthly cycle, usually on a Thursday evening at the Foxham Inn, at 19:30hrs.

**FOXHAM/LYNEHAM WORK PARTY INFORMATION**

Organiser: Gordon Williams Tel. 07949 257897
Work Parties: Every Sunday at about 09:30-10:00hrs.
Ring Gordon to find out where we are working.

The Wootton Bassett Branch meets at 20:00hrs on the first Monday of each month. Please contact the secretary for details of meeting venue.

**WOOTTON BASSETT WORK PARTY INFORMATION:**

Organisers:
John Bower, 20 Glebe Road, Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire SN4 7DU
Tel 01793 636297
Richard Hawkins
Tel 01793 814959

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

The Swindon Branch meets on the 1st Tuesday of the month at 19:30hrs, usually at the Broome Manor Golf Club. Check website for details.

**SWINDON WORK PARTY INFORMATION:**

Organisers:
Ray Aldridge Tel or Txt: 07502 046708
Oliver Gardiner Tel: 07785 775993

Work Parties:
Regular work parties are on a Sunday. Check web site for details

Branch web-site: [www.wbct.org.uk/branches/swindon](http://www.wbct.org.uk/branches/swindon)
The West Vale branch meet at The Prince of Wales, High Street, Shrivenham at 20:00hrs on the second Wednesday of each month.

WEST VALE WORK PARTY INFORMATION:
Organisers:
Chris Forward, 'Llamedos', Longcot Road, Shrivenham, SN6 8HF
Tel 01793 782776

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

EAST VALE WORK PARTY INFORMATION:
Organiser:
Bob Airey Tel 01235 769469

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

Master-Planning A Future For The Trust
Margaret Lord

The story so far . . . The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust is an example of what used to be called the Big Society: volunteers giving their free time to work for the good of the community, organising themselves into groups in order to achieve their goals.

The Trust has cooperated over many years with some 25 organisations through the Wiltshire Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership. During the Open Forum at the 2013 AGM Peter Kinsman said that mindful of the successful way in which the Trust had worked with the Canal Partnership, he expected that such collaborative working would need to be expanded for bigger projects. With the weight of the Partnership behind us, we have been able to contemplate restoration of the canal as a single continuous project to be completed by 2025, at a cost (estimated in 2008) of £250m – and now a mere c. £350m!

The aims of the Partnership as set out in the Report of 2011 are ambitious: to foster economic and community-based regeneration by way of both short- and long-term employment directly on canal projects and indirectly in the local area; an increase in tourism and leisure activities; imaginative schemes for re-use of brownfield sites, resulting in increased value of existing properties. The end result would be to change perceptions of the area round the canal, as demonstrated in the Swindon area at Wichelstowe and the proposed Eastern villages. The community would benefit from a 60-70 mile country park used by walkers, cyclists, and anglers. Wildlife would flourish.

Flood control is a serious and topical consideration; the restored canal could make use of streams and ditches and control flooding by diverting flows, and/or storage, and creation of wetland biodiversity.

These are issues not only of local interest but of national importance; the Trust has to deal with planning authorities and landowners as well as government departments. It is felt that time is short and the Trust needs to get a move on.

Cometh the hour . . . In February 2014 after some months of negotiations the Trust signed a contract with Jock Mackenzie MBE to produce a master plan for the whole canal to be rebuilt and completed before 2025, with the stipulation that this plan has to be completed by October/November next year. He promises to bring about a “sea change” for the Trust.

At the same time a separate business plan is
being drawn up for the Melksham Link. Supported well by the Canal and River Trust, Jock says this business plan “is well on track for a theoretical start next year”.

Jock has returned to the UK after 30 years in central and eastern Europe, where his job was to create inward investment, assisting governments affected by the fall of the wall to move from command economies under a communist regime, to demand economies within a free market. He is MD of Marlix International BV, a Dutch advisory company and has experience in managing large-scale investment in retailing, the consumer sector and its related logistics and its waste chain. His team of strategic investment experts worked to create major projects for inward investment by many multi-nationals including Tesco, Auchan and Interspar in Hungary. He also worked with local authorities in the Ukraine to help create energy from waste.

You might be surprised to know that Burns Night is celebrated in Hungary. In 2005 Jock founded a major children’s charity: the Robert Burns International Foundation, successor to his work with Hungarian Scottish Society. He is particularly proud of having raised over 2m euros over the years for the charity “without spending 1p on overheads”. The organisation remains overhead-free. At about the time you read this, the charity will be holding their 17th Burns Night party.

The next chapter . . . Jock, who was awarded the MBE in 2002 for community support, says he is “Totally thrilled” to be working with the Trust. He says the Trust has done some amazing work, and that what is now needed is a “better awareness and brand-building exercise” for the Wilts & Berks Canal.

The Trust has an engineering and technical solution to the restoration of the canal, derived from the Scott Wilson and Halcrow reports. These form the basis of a strategy for restoration, which was updated in 2011, and is in the process of being updated again in the light of the changes that have taken place.

The purpose of the Masterplan is to take that strategy, and move on to the next stage, which is setting out how the strategy will be implemented, and the necessary funding found. Hall and Woodhouse, and the Land and Water Group are among the companies that have already committed to sponsorship of the project.

We are using the Melksham Link project as a pilot for this approach, because it is well advanced and we expect to receive planning permission in the near future. So Jock has been concentrating on developing a mini Masterplan for this project, as a model to be rolled out to other sections of the overall restoration.

There will be some consequent changes necessary to the way that the Trust is structured and operates, and we will keep you informed of those as they come through.

Situation Vacant - Events Sales Manager

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

The main tasks would be to:
- Liaise with the Membership Secretary, Events Director and Merchandising Director to ensure that appropriate materials and personnel are at events where the Trust is exhibiting
- Organise teams to act as ‘Events Sales Staff, encouraging membership applications and selling Trust items such as merchandise and raffle tickets
- Provide briefing and advice to Trust personnel on duty at events

Situation Vacant - Communications Director

We need someone to oversee all our communications, both internal and external. We have such a good story to tell and we need someone to tell it!
Dear Editor,
I would like to say how I agree with the letter from member 17, Mr and Mrs Gray. It is interesting to read about all the wonderful work of the Trust but frustrating not knowing the locations.
Today there seems to be an assumption that we all have a computer, but that is not the case. The trust must miss out because some of us feel alienated. My wife and I would like to take a ride on Dragonfly next year but have no idea how to find the start point. Could we please have some information in the magazine?
Finally, to help both Mr and Mrs Gray and ourselves would it be possible to produce a canal map like the one that we have for the Cotswold Canal Trust. We are sure many members would benefit.
Many thanks,
J & D Bond

Dear Editors,
I have to say that I found the WBCT AGM on 18th October a rather disheartening experience. It was obvious from the meeting that there is some dissatisfaction with the way the WBCT is being run and the perceived lack of progress in restoring the canal. I am in no position to judge whether the complaints are justified, but I feel that the Trust’s Council of Management should be willing to debate the issues rather than trying to sweep them under the carpet, as appeared to be the case at the AGM. Dragonfly would seem to be the perfect vehicle for debating the issues and I hope that the editors will have the courage to allow the dissenting voices to have their say in the pages of the magazine (giving the Trust’s officials the opportunity to reply) so that supporters can judge for themselves whether they are justified in their criticisms.
Yours sincerely,
Paul Appleby
Grove, Oxon

Thank you for the email confirming the receipt of my membership form & donation. Yes I have received the paperwork & Canal magazine now. It’s a real pleasure to be able to use the Canal now I’ve got a boat and I am able to access it from my back garden. We are so lucky to have this in Swindon, it gives myself, my family & friends a lot of pleasure. I try my best to remove rubbish from the Canal when I can, would like to do more but very busy with work & family. I look forward to many years using the Canal & can’t wait until more work is carried out to open it up further. Best Regards
Rob Williams
Old Town, Swindon
Dear Editor

What a delight and privilege it was to be invited back onto nb Dragonfly to meet all those children with their families. The children were so excited at finding me on the canal bank; I could hear them 500 metres away.

Big thanks must go to all the boat team who planned, managed and crewed these trips.

My Elves tell me that there were over 600 people who came to see me this Christmas.

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

I am already looking forward to returning at Christmas time in 2015 for more fun with the children of Swindon and it’s surrounds.

Santa

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Hi, dear editors.

I am responding to a very useful letter in the last mag. I live in Chippenham, and have no idea where Wichel and Waitrose and the new piece of canal are. But as a non-driver these days I did recently happen to catch sight of a map of Swindon bus routes, which suggested that Wichel lies just north of the M4 between J16 and J15 and does have some bus links. And on a rare recent coach journey along this stretch of motorway I caught sight of new housing really very close to the road. Am I getting any warmer? So please – some simple directions for out-of-Swindon residents to reach Waitrose Swindon by car from J16 and J15? And more importantly for me, by bus from Swindon Town Centre, and if possible from Chippenham/Wootton Bassett (route 55/55A) and from Devizes/Melksham/Trowbridge (I think this is route 69).

Many thanks for your help!

Harriet Garfitt
Dear Editor,
Echoing the letter from Julie and Colin Gray in the Autumn issue of Dragonfly, as a member living many miles from the Canal but keenly interested in its restoration, I agree that the map on the back of the magazine is woefully inadequate – even Wootten Bassett does not exist! Merely removing extraneous information North and South of the Canal would be of little use, as the East/West spread of the Canal would still fill 60% of the width of the page. One solution would be to divide the page in two, showing two overlapping sections of the Canal, both including the section from the North Wilts Canal to East of Swindon. This would allow the scale of the Canal to be increased by about 100%. The map should still be geographic, not diagrammatic, showing the Canal’s relationship to other canals and rivers, towns and villages and main roads. Black lines should be drawn across the Canal to show the area covered by each Branch, and sections in water should be coloured blue.

Alan Pegrum

Email:- editor@wbct.org.uk
Write to:- Dragonfly Editor, Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN
The Trust encourages debate and contributions from members on any matter relating to the Trust, and believes the letters page provides a forum for this. However the Editors reserve the right to shorten, change or not to publish any letters received.
Cocklemore Brook & Top Lock Pewsham  

Report Page 24

Rebuilt, covered & next bit exposed  
Pewsham Top Lock cill fully exposed

Foxham & Lyneham Branch, “Pick of the Branches Award” - Report page 25

Report Page 24
It was my privilege to once again award the Tony Davy Memorial Cup at this year’s AGM. This cup is awarded to the individual who has devoted the most voluntary hours to the WBCT. The Cup was presented to Chris Coyle, a very worthy recipient, who has worked a phenomenal 1,799 hours with a value of £84,169. That equates to about 5 hours for each of the 365 days of the year. I am also pleased to report that the individual volunteers who have submitted their hours for the year to the end of March 2014 have worked 4,776 hours with a total value of £193,198.

I was also delighted to present the Melksham, Calne and Chippenham Branch with the Tony Davy Award. This Award is given to the Branch which submits the most voluntary hours for the year. The branch has submitted 6,594 volunteer hours throughout the year with a value of £95,635, and I congratulate them for their wonderful achievement.

As many of you will appreciate, there is a variation in branch sizes and membership so I was also delighted to present a second award. This went to the Royal Wootton Bassett Branch which had increased the number of voluntary hours most significantly since the previous year. This is based on a twelve monthly basis.

For your information the hours submitted by the various Branches, the shop and crew of “Dragonfly” for the year 2013 – 2014 total 16,810 with a value of £293,017. This is made up of:

**Dragonfly Crew**
310 hours with a value of £64,080

**East Vale**
2,718 hours with a value of £36,352

**Foxham & Lyneham**
2,596 hours with a value of £33,336

**MCC**
6,594 hours with a value of £95,635

**Wootton Bassett**
3,850 hours with a value of £51,734

**WBCT Shop**
742 hours with a value of £11,880

Regrettably the hours for West Vale Branch and Swindon Branch have not been submitted for this period but I hope they will be in the future. It is not too late to send the hours to me so that in the future they may be taken into consideration for “the most increased voluntary hours” category.

Throughout this report I have used the term ‘submitted hours’ because obviously many members have made valuable contributions to the restoration of the Wilts a& Berks Canal but haven’t let me know of their efforts. Whatever you do – whether working physically towards the restoration, compiling research, manning exhibition, etc. – is taken into consideration for ‘matched funding’ purposes. So effectively you are providing a resource that the Wilts & Berks can hopefully convert to hard cash at a later date. Please make a resolution to note the hours and activities and send them to me. I will be only too pleased to send you the blank sheets and instructions for completion. You may contact me in the usual format at juanita.poulton@wbct.org.uk.

Wiltshire Council is keen to support volunteering and monitor these figures every 3 months. By continuing to show the amazing amount of work being carried out for the benefit of the community, the recorded hours help to justify Ken Oliver’s position with Wiltshire Council (which is an invaluable asset to us all). So please keep giving your time and effort and let me know what you have done.

It has been good to see the voluntary hours increasing year on year. On behalf of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust I thank all of you for what you do to further the restoration of the Canal and for supporting this visionary project.

Juanita Poulton
Trust Officials and Council of Management

Council of Management:

Chairman: Vacant
Vice Chair: Kath Hatton, 4 Charlotte Hill, Edington, Westbury, BA13 4PL 01380 831 231
Co. Secretary/Vice Chair: Chris Coyle, 27 Seymour Road, Bath BA1 6DZ 07710 737 166
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IWA Rep: Roger Holmes, 72 Primrose Hill, Lydney, GL15 5SP 01594 840 316
Project Director - North: Vacant
Project Director - West: Colin Fletcher, Lower Foxhangers Farm, Rowde SN10 1SS 01380 828 254
Project Director - Central/WPO Swindon: Ray Aldridge, contact via Trust Office 07502 046 708
Project Director - East: Vacant
Fundraising Director: Kath Hatton, 4 Charlotte Hill, Edington, Westbury, BA13 4PL 01380 831 231
Environment Director: Dr. David Cook, 11 Highfields Road, Early, Reading RG6 5RZ 01189 863 284
Engineering Directors: Eddie Thomas, 14 Sandringham Road, Swindon SN3 1HP 01793 534 404
Vacant
Health & Safety: Dave Stirling, Contact via Trust Office 08452 268 567
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Branch Chair WB: Jenny Stratton, 35 Sheriden Drive, Wootton Bassett, SN4 8JJ 01793 850 310
Branch Chair MCC: Derek Flexer 29 Rowden Hill, Chippenham, SN15 2AQ. 01249 656 49 7
IT/Tech Ops: Dave Maloney, 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham SN15 3GQ 07809 374 754
01249 656 699
Communications Director: Vacant
Membership Director: Vacant, contact via Trust office
Towpath Project Director: Vacant
Events Director: Vacant
Land Negotiations Director: Vacant

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Branch Chair West Vale: Graham Banks, 12 Craven Common, Uffington, Faringdon, SN7 7RN
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Trip Boats, Operations: Sue Paine and Robert Yeowell 01793 827 678
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ENTRUST Liaison Officer: Ian Skerry, 16 Chapel Hill, Watchfield, Swindon SN6 8TA 01793 784 197
Gift Aid Officer: David Chalmers, 40 Greenleaze, Knowle Park, Bristol BS4 2TL 01179 720 423
PR/Press Officer: Vacant
Webmaster: Dave Maloney, as above
WRG rep/Technical Ops: George Eycott, Knowle House, 1 Ham Road, Wanborough, SN4 0DF 07771 775 745

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

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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).
A Page for Notes and Doodles

(things to tell the editors?)

__Dragonfly 136__

The next edition of *Dragonfly* will be published in April 2015
Please send articles and reports for inclusion by 1st March 2015