The Quarterly Magazine of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
Spring 2015
The aim of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
To protect, conserve and improve the route of the Wilts & Berks and North Wilts Canals, and branches, for the benefit of the community and environment, with the ultimate goal of restoring a continuous navigable waterway linking the Kennet & Avon canal near Melksham, the River Thames near Abingdon, and the Thames & Severn canal near Cricklade.

The objectives of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
Convince local authorities, government departments and local organisations of the benefits and feasibility of the proposed restoration.
Convince landowners, local commerce and the general public of the merits of the restoration.
Secure the route of the waterway and adequate water supplies.
Establish the Trust as a key member of a partnership with local authorities and other bodies that will facilitate restoration of the canal.
Implement an agreed programme for full restoration of the canal.

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

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

Copyright © 2015 The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust

David Fletcher C.B.E.
Neil Rumbol
Roger Crapper
John Laverick
0845 226 8567
www.wbct.org.uk
info@wbct.org.uk
PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN

Data Protection Act
The Trust membership details are recorded in compliance with provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998

Dragonfly 136 Cover Image:
Top Lock at Pewsham as it hasn’t been seen for many years.
You may be as surprised as we were to learn of International Water Day (22 March), which sounds like one of the more improbable annual celebrations. St Francis gave thanks in the thirteenth century for “Our sister Water who is very serviceable unto us, and humble and precious and clean”, but vital resource as it is, water today has generally been taken for granted.

But water has to be managed in order to supply our needs. In 1942 the UK government, threatened with possible water shortages, devised a plan to transfer water via a system of canals from the north to centres of dense population in the south. Nothing came of the scheme, but with increased pressures on the country’s water supply, the idea is being looked at afresh (read about it on page 15).

We would urge everyone to send us articles for publication and high resolution photographs to go with them.

This is your magazine and should reflect the interest of the readership. What would you like to invite other people to attend in your area? What is going on? Tell us and get us all involved.

Let us hope that as the postie delivers this edition of your magazine, the weather begins to feel more springlike so that we can all get out in the fresh air and continue making our aspirations into reality.

The more visitors we can talk to out there, the more new members we can recruit and the more support we will be able to demonstrate to the people we approach for financial support.

Wishing you all a productive spring time and we will be back at the height of summer.

The Editors.

Contents

200 Club 7
Vice-Chairman’s Report Kath Hatton 8
Good News For Members 9
Membership Matters 9
Canal Partnership Countryside Officer’s Report Ken Oliver 10
Situations Vacant 11
Project Co-ordinator for Studley Grange Wildlife Trail Project 12
Urgent Funding Appeal For The Studley Grange Project 12
Leave a Legacy 14
The Natural Grid Margaret Lord 15
Book Review Robert Yeowell 18
Fundraising for the Wilts & Berks Kath Hatton 19
Around The Branches 21
Branch Meeting & Contact Details 26
Volunteering? Please record your hours! 28
Melksham Food & River Festival 28
You’re never far from the canal John Hayes 29
A Page for Notes and Doodles 31
Minutes of the Twenty-sixth Annual General Meeting of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (company number 2267719) held at Old Mill Hall, School Lane, Grove, Wantage, OX12 7LB, on Saturday 18th October 2014, at 2.00 pm.

Present:
Kath Hatton                Vice Chairman
Peter Kinsman           Treasurer
Chris Coyle             Company Secretary
Ray Aldridge            Director
Colin Fletcher            Director
Derek Flexer              Director
Douglas Harris            Director
Roger Holmes             Director
Dave Maloney             Director
Dave Stirling             Director
Brian Stovold            Director
Jenny Stratton           Director
Edward Thomas              Director

Also present were 123 ordinary voting members and 5 non-voting visitors (as recorded on the attendance lists).

The Chairman (Kath Hatton) welcomed everyone to the meeting, which began at 2.00 pm.

Adjournment
In view of the amount of news and information that the Trust wished to present to members, it was proposed to adjourn the meeting – carried by show of hands. The meeting adjourned at 2.03 pm.

During the adjournment presentations were given as follows:

Progress on the Melksham Link         Ken Oliver
Progress on Masterplanning          Jock Mackenzie
Plans for the Peterborough Arms     Dave Maloney
Overall progress and Proposals for Restructure Chris Coyle

The presentations were well received by the members present.

Resumption
The meeting resumed at 3.12 pm.

Opening Statement
The Chairman read an Opening Statement, noting that this AGM was unusual, in that the Trust received ten nominations to be directors. The move was obviously planned and co-ordinated, as the applications all arrived in one envelope. Council of Management was not informed in advance of this manoeuvre. Given this very unusual circumstance, the Trust sought legal advice
on two points. First were the nominations valid, and second could an election on these nominations go ahead.

On the first the advice was that some of the nominations contained flaws; however the Trust decided to accept the nominations as valid, and not reject them. On the second point, the advice was there could not be an election, as to do so would not be in accordance with our Articles of Association, because sufficient notice of the nominations could not be given to all members so that they could express their views on them.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Dr David Fletcher, CBE, President of the Trust, Dave Cook, Neil Rumbol, John Laverick, Roger Crapper, Malcolm Hitchinson, George Eycott, Melanie Parker, Sheila Wade, Max Crofts, Dave Wedd, Pamela Wedd, Mike Lang, Diana Hunter, Roger Hunter, Brian De’ath, Jeff and Lynda Dawes, Adye Goodenough, Alan Lank, Mr and Mrs Keith Vickery.

**Approval of the Minutes of the 25th AGM and consideration of matters arising**

The draft Minutes of the twenty-fifth Annual General Meeting held on 19th October 2013 having been published in *Dragonfly* and circulated to branches for members to review, a resolution to approve them was proposed by Eddie Thomas, seconded by Alan Clyde, and carried on a show of hands. There were no matters arising.

**Directors’ Report**

The Directors’ Report for the year ended 31st March 2014 had been made available for members to review both on the website and before the meeting.

Rod Hacker raised the point that according to the Articles the Directors Report should have been circulated to all members, which had not been done, and the Report could not therefore be approved. Chris Coyle pointed out that in fact it had never been done, and the cost of doing so would be very considerable. There was some discussion on the best ways to make the report available to members, and agreement that the Article covering this point should be reviewed. There were no other questions on the Directors’ Report.

A resolution to approve the Directors’ Report despite the fact that it had not been circulated and to approve the Report was proposed by Chris Coyle, seconded by Colin Fletcher, and carried on a show of hands.

**Report and Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014**

The Trust’s report and accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014 had been made available for review by members before the meeting.

There were a number of questions on the Accounts.

A question was asked about whether the accounts had been circulated to members in good time. The Treasurer, Peter Kinsman, explained that it was desirable to prepare one set of accounts for presentation to both the Charity Commission and Companies House, instead of different versions. This, together with the need to finalise the Directors’ Report so that the accountants could review all of the documents together, combined with other factors, had this year resulted in some delays to the completion of the signing off and circulation. A question was asked as to whether the AGM should be delayed to allow more time for the completion of the process, but the Treasurer felt that this would not be necessary as he expected the process in future years to be quicker.
A question was asked the reason for the significant increase in Long Term Creditors; the Treasurer replied that this was the loans received up to the year end date from members to fund the purchase of the Peterborough Arms.

A question was asked to where the salaries of the part-time paid administration staff appear; the Treasurer replied that they are included in management and Administration.

A resolution to approve the Report and Annual Accounts was proposed by Keith Price, seconded by Arthur Loveridge, and carried on a show of hands.

**Reappointment of Morris Owen**

A resolution to reappoint Morris Owen as Independent Examiner of the Accounts was proposed by Derek Flexer, seconded by John Minns and carried without dissent.

**Election of Members to the Council of Management**

In the context of the election of members to Council the opinion was expressed that it was undemocratic not to include in the election process the ten nominations which had been received; Chris Coyle observed that it would be undemocratic if the totality of the membership was not informed of those nominations, and given the possibility of expressing an opinion. It was agreed that the Articles of Association and the processes surrounding the notices for the AGM needed to be clarified in relation to the nomination of directors.

Mrs Chapman asked for it to be minuted that in her view an exception had been made for the circulation of the Annual Report, but not for the election.

Kath Hatton reminded the meeting that:

a. In accordance with articles 41 and 42 of the Articles of Association, Derek FLEXER, Doug HARRIS, David STIRLING and Edward THOMAS retired from Council in rotation. All offered themselves for re-election, except for Doug Harris.

b. In accordance with Article 36 of the Articles of Association Dave MALONEY offered himself for re-election having been co-opted by Council since the last AGM.

The candidates identified themselves to the meeting; there were no questions to the candidates.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 3.44 to allow the ballot to be held.

Secret ballots were conducted in which members were asked to vote ‘for’ or ‘against’ (or abstain) in respect of the election of each candidate. As there were fewer candidates than seats available on the Council of Management, members were advised that they were free to vote for as many candidates as they wished.

The meeting was adjourned while the ballots were counted. Jenny Stratton and Dave Stirling acted as scrutineers. During the adjournment an Open Forum of questions from members was held.

On completion of the count the Meeting reconvened at 4.09 pm and the Company Secretary announced that all the candidates had received considerably more votes ‘for’ than ‘against’ and they had all therefore been elected.
SPECIAL BUSINESS

There was no Special Business.

Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The Chairman then thanked East Vale Branch for hosting the meeting.

The meeting was formally closed at 4.11 pm.

Chris Coyle
Company Secretary

Signed as a true record.

Name          Date


200 Club

At the time of going to press 272 tickets have been sold in this year’s 200 Club which results in three pieces of good news. That is, 14 more tickets than last year, there is more money available to award to Branches and prize money will increase. Thank you all for buying tickets.

This edition of Dragonfly will arrive after the first draw has been made (as usual this will be at the Council of Management meeting towards the end of March) so consequently by the time you read this the first three winners will have been surprised by a cheque arriving by post.

Provisionally there is £2,715 available for Branches to bid to buy new plant, tools etc. Branch Chairmen have been invited to submit their bids and awards hopefully will be made by the end of April.

Again, provisionally this year will be draws in March to November with prizes of £138, £69 and £33 with the usual December bumper draw.

Future draws will normally be held at the MCC Branch meetings on the first Tuesday in each month, winners will be published on the website and in future editions of this fine publication.

Once again thanks to all of you for your continued support, and we wish you good luck in all of this year’s draws.

Jeff and Lynda
I split my time between fundraising and the Vice-Chair's duties and along with necessary work at home to keep the place ticking over, there are not many minutes left in my week.

I do attend a lot of meetings, although we try to reduce the number a little by using telephone or Skype conferencing wherever possible. I try to support some local events organised by the branches and also like to attend the meetings of the Southern and Northern Canal Associations as they offer the chance to meet volunteers from other canal restorations and glean new ideas.

Two projects that we hope to see good progress on this year are Studley Grange and the Melksham Link. At Studley Grange, the Trust has been negotiating with Biffa and getting engineering design and all the details done for more than 10 years and now we are almost ready to start. We have an excellent 125-year peppercorn lease from Biffa, planning permission, and have chosen a contractor. As you will see elsewhere in the magazine we have launched an appeal for matched funding for the preliminaries. Restoring this section of the old canal route will turn an overgrown derelict site into a great standing water habitat with easy multi-use access for the public. The planting that we will do under the People's Millions project will turn it into a haven for wildlife, bringing back water voles to the site and working with Friends of the Earth we will encourage more bees and insects.

Work on the Melksham Link project has also spanned a number of years. Having found a route acceptable to all, the Trust submitted a planning application 2½ years ago and since then has been working on all the surveys, studies and environmental reports necessary for the consent to be given. It is a complex project as it will be 3 km of new canal cut across farmland and through Berryfield and will join the Kennet & Avon Canal with the River Avon. Once our Environmental Statement is complete, it will be submitted to Wiltshire Council Planning Department. Then there will be a second round of consultation with the statutory bodies and providing no major issues arise from this process, planning consent could be forthcoming mid-year. Whilst this work has been in progress, our Master Planner, Jock MacKenzie, has been working on a plan for some enabling development to cover the costs of building the canal. This could include waterside housing development, a large new wetlands reserve, a primary school, village hall, a marina, a pub, camping, lodges, rare breeds, Melksham through the ages, visitor centres, bike hub and new offices for the Trust. All these ideas have been submitted to Wiltshire Council on a Pre-Planning Application which is currently out for consultation. Watch this space!

A simpler project that we hope to start work on soon is the new landing stage outside the Waitrose store in Wichelstowe. Planning permission is expected shortly and fundraising is under way. This will enable trip boat Dragonfly to pick up passengers at the store which will give us a much higher profile and probably more footfall. Waitrose are also planning some activities in the summer in the field next to the canal which our local branch is getting involved in. Keep an eye on the website for up-to-date information.

As you know, purchasing or leasing the canal track is one of the most important issues that we face. I am pleased to report that the Trust has applied to Wiltshire Council under the Community Asset Transfer Scheme to have all the canal land/track owned by the Council transferred to the Trust. We are very grateful to have this chance to do this.

Work at the Peterborough Arms is progressing slowly in the background. We have obtained planning permission to create a new toilet with disabled access and a new wider entrance from the car park. Those will make us DDA compliant. Also included is the change of use for the skittle alley so that we can offer a community meeting room to local groups and use it for meetings ourselves. Fundraising is under way and we have a group of volunteers ready to help. In case anyone is worried, we will be keeping the skittle alley and it will open again when the pub opens after full restoration. Following MCC branch's defeat against the local Kennet & Avon branch at skittles on Saturday night I think it will be great to have our
own alley for practising!!

Everyone in the Trust is working flat out at the moment and that includes directors, officers, volunteers and any not covered by those titles. I would like to say well done and thank you to all for your efforts. I know it is not easy at times but we are making real headway with some superb achievements to come.

---

**Membership Matters**

**Membership Secretary’s Report**

We welcome the following new members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Branch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4056</td>
<td>Mr D Morin</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4057</td>
<td>Mr J Atherton</td>
<td>Upwell</td>
<td>Off Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4058</td>
<td>Mrs and Miss Rance</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td>Foxham and Lyneham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4059</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs G Robertson</td>
<td>Brentwood</td>
<td>Off Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4060</td>
<td>Mr R Dennis</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4061</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs R France</td>
<td>Wanborough</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4062</td>
<td>Mrs G Harrold and Mr L Fardell</td>
<td>Wantage</td>
<td>East Vale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4063</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs Homes</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4064</td>
<td>Mr J Coates</td>
<td>Bath</td>
<td>Off Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4065</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs B Shanks</td>
<td>Calne</td>
<td>MCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4066</td>
<td>Ms S Campbell</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4067</td>
<td>Mr R Youldon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4068</td>
<td>Mr R O’Carroll</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4069</td>
<td>Mr K Gowland</td>
<td>Wroughton</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4070</td>
<td>Ms E Machnik and Mr A Macdonald</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td>MCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4071</td>
<td>Dr J Miller and Mr N Ponting</td>
<td>Royal Wootton Bassett</td>
<td>Wootton Bassett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4072</td>
<td>Mr N Vines</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td>MCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4073</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs K Bates</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td>MCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4074</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs B Farrant</td>
<td>Shipston on Stour</td>
<td>Off Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4075</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs Marson</td>
<td>Royal Wootton Bassett</td>
<td>Wootton Bassett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4076</td>
<td>Mr P Baker</td>
<td>Royal Wootton Bassett</td>
<td>Wootton Bassett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4077</td>
<td>Mr D Robinson</td>
<td>Calne</td>
<td>MCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4078</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs D’Aucourt</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td>MCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4079</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs S Mitchell</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td>Foxham and Lyneham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4080</td>
<td>Mr I Chatterton</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
<td>Foxham and Lyneham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4081</td>
<td>Mr E Rooth</td>
<td>Bradford on Avon</td>
<td>MCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4082</td>
<td>Mr T Wood</td>
<td>Trowbridge</td>
<td>Foxham and Lyneham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4083</td>
<td>Mr T Thomas</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4084</td>
<td>Mr J Ratsey</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4085</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs I Gilbert</td>
<td>Lyneham</td>
<td>Foxham and Lyneham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4086</td>
<td>Mr B Scott</td>
<td>Farnham</td>
<td>Off Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4087</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs D Addyman</td>
<td>Royal Wootton Bassett</td>
<td>Wootton Bassett</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Membership Team, 17 February 2015

---

**Good News For Members**

There are a number of Discount and Benefit initiatives being negotiated for members of WBCT. More details will be in the next edition of Dragonfly. So watch this space and encourage your friends to join.

Keith Price
The recent March meeting of the Canal Partnership reviewed recent work on the Melksham Link Masterplan, the Towpath Challenge, Swindon Eastern Villages and other strategic issues. The next meeting is scheduled for 11th June 2015 where it is hoped that members of the Partnership will be able to see progress at Studley Grange at Royal Wootton Bassett

Landfill to waterway corridor. Long standing members of the Trust will know that the discussions about restoration at Studley Grange Royal Wootton Bassett date back to the last century (1990’s)! The opportunity to finish this work is now here and by the time you read this I hope significant works will have started. This is a £600k project to excavate the infilled canal and use the material to complete landscaping on the adjacent (now closed) landfill site. As I write this contractors have been provisionally appointed by the Trust to carry out the preliminary works.

I am sure you will have seen the Trust’s urgent appeal elsewhere to help fund this work http://bit.ly/1w23LrJ - I hope you can help.

I think it would be understating the case to describe this project as anything other than difficult – to get permission to work so close to the landfill site took a number of expensive technical reports and much negotiation. The solution is no less expensive as a significant length has to be piled. If you add in ecological issues and that the work has to be carried out taking account of a watercourse you will perhaps have a little understanding of why the project has taken so long. We are definitely at the threshold of completing this work and subject to confirmation of significant external funding the work will happen this summer. I have more than my fingers crossed.

Melksham Link-Masterplan proposes funding for construction. The Melksham Link project would certainly be considered quick in comparison to Studley Grange! However the continuing ‘grind’ of dealing with process to get a planning consent is certainly challenging Paul Lenaerts and project team. Its sometimes seems like every question answered provokes two more and the need for some further research and expense.

When planning consent is gained (hopefully later this year) the next big question is how do we get on and build it. This where Jock Mackenzie and his MasterPlan have a solution. A range of development, including housing, has been proposed and a business plan produced to show the canal construction can be funded. The Masterplan is currently being assessed by Wiltshire Council’s planning team who will decide whether the enabling development proposals can be permitted within the recently adopted Core Strategy. You can see the exciting Masterplan proposals at http://bit.ly/19ryvJb

Swindon’s next expansion. Just east of the A419 and north of the old Roman Road the next area for Swindon’s ever growing development is being planned. The Eastern Villages will provide 8000 more homes and a new route for the Wilts & Berks Canal. The aim will be to integrate the waterway into the design of the Eastern Villages in the same way as Wichelstowe. Initial technical work has started to refine the route proposals and provide a deliverable scheme

And the winner is.. Good luck to Val Melville and the team who have entered the Wilts & Berks in this year’s Living Waterways awards organised by Canal and Rivers Trust. The entry is for ‘Pewsham Locks: A Centenary Commemoration’ in the education & learning category.

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://wiltonberkscanal.blogspot.co.uk
Tel:01249 706494
Email: ken.oliver@wiltshire.gov.uk
Partnership Website: http://www.wiltonberkscanal.org.uk

The Wiltshire Swindon & Oxfordshire Canal Partnership

www.facebook.com/wiltonberkscanal (Facebook)
Situations Vacant
Chairman of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust

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:
With the personality to represent the organisation effectively as its national profile grows, the successful candidate will be:
• committed to achieving the most ambitious canal restoration project in the country;
• committed to preparing for and attending meetings;
• not afraid to ask questions;
• able to work with people at all levels;
• able to work as a member of a team as well as individually;
• reliable;
• willing to learn about the project and contribute new ideas;
• possessing good communication skills; and
• able to plan and organise.

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

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!

To apply for any of our vacancies (there are more on our website), please contact Chris Coyle or Kath Hatton whose contact details are given on page 30
This exciting project at Royal Wootton Bassett will restore a 1.25 kilometre section of the Wilts & Berks Canal and will create a wildlife trail alongside a former landfill site.

There will be 24/7 access for all on a multi-use path and this stretch will link with the already restored section around Chaddington Lock. It will be a lovely length of canal when back in water and we will provide plenty of benches for visitors. We will be involving the local community, especially the children’s groups and schools who will be able to visit and help with planting and monitoring the return of the wildlife, in particular the endangered water vole. We need over £600,000 overall and have a complicated mix of potential funding for the various aspects of the project, some secured and some where decisions are awaited. This includes grants from the People’s Millions, Inland Waterways Association, the Underwood Trust, the Landfill Community Fund and others.

How can you help?

We now have an urgent situation where we need to start on preliminary works ahead of the main excavation and need approximately £50,000 in the next few weeks. These works will include site clearance, ground investigation, land drainage consent and confirmation of the methodology for the works. One of our funders will release some of their funding for this as long as we can match it and so our appeal is to raise £25,000 so that we can start these preliminary tasks. Can you help with a donation? Every pound we receive will release another pound of funding. NB. If the monies raised exceed the preliminary works, your donation will be used for other matched funding or to fund a contributing Third Party payment to a Landfill Operator.

You can donate online: https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/wiltsberkscanaltrust

You can give via TEXT

For example - to give £5 Text: WBCT25 £5 to 70070. Just a note for anyone nervous of trying this – Our fundraising director Kath Hatton tried the text-giving the other night for the first time to make sure it worked and it is very easy even on a pay-as-you-go mobile, it works with any amount.

You can send a cheque

Please make the cheque payable to Wilts & Berks Canal Trust and send it to:

Wilts & Berks Canal Trust PO Box 3630 SWINDON SN4 4AN

Please mark the envelope “Studley Appeal”

Keep in touch with the appeal on the Trust website: www.wbct.org.uk

Project Co-ordinator for Studley Grange Wildlife Trail Project

Now that we have secured the funding for this project, the Trust is looking for a Project Co-ordinator to run it. It will be a part-time opportunity, starting from March 2015 running to December 2015. Some remuneration is 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 would be helpful, 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.
kath.hatton@wbct.org.uk
We want to change the scene above to look like the one below!
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

Land Fund
The activity in acquiring the track of the Wilts & Berks Canal is continuing to grow and so the need for funds is increasing.
It is vital that we secure the track, as we cannot make serious progress at any point until we have control of the land.
The Land Fund is still open for donations and if you would like to contribute, please send a cheque to Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, PO Box 3630, SWINDON, SN4 4AN. If you were able to donate a few pounds on a regular basis, that would be even better.

Just contact the office on 0845 2268567 or by email info@wbct.org.uk or speak to Kath on 01380 831231 or kath.hatton@wbct.org.uk and we will help you to set up a Standing Order.
In parts of this country there are people still unable to return to their homes following repeated floods. They may be surprised to learn of a proposal to update a war-time scheme to bring water down from the north in order to supply the south.

In a recent presentation to the Engineering Club of London, Dr David Weight, a senior consultant for the engineering company AECOM, has compared the problems facing present-day planners to those of the government striving for self-sufficiency in the bleak days of WW2. In 2009 the government’s Chief Scientist foresaw a “perfect storm” of problems: food reserves at a 50-year low, but 50 per cent more needed by 2030; and 50 per cent more energy required over the same period, together with 30 per cent more water.

Today the pressures for the water supply in south east England include population growth, climate change, and a reduction in the rate of permitted abstraction by the water companies. More development involves the need for more desirable places to live, with reliable infrastructure. At the same time, increasing intensity of agriculture – needed to ensure food security for an increased population – requires more irrigation. Ironically, severe flooding has also increased in recent years. (In 2012 an Environment Agency report put the cost of the floods at £600m.)

The response of the water companies includes demand reduction, leakage repairs, transfers between areas, desalination and new reservoirs. These measures have drawbacks: either because a supplying area has similar weather to that of the receiving area or because of the energy needed for pumping.

Water shortages also affect power generation itself: a report by Newcastle and Oxford universities shows the differing amounts of water required by various methods. Quoting figures from the Virginia Water Resources Research Center, USA, the quantity of water needed to generate 1,000 kWh of energy varies strikingly from 38 litres using natural gas through oil shale (260–640 litres), coal (530–2,100 litres), through to fuel ethanol (32,400–375,900 litres) or biodiesel (180,900–969,000 litres).

The present-day proposal is for a raised canal following the contour of the land and flowing downhill all the way (no pumping), from Keilder Water to the south. The canal would not utilise existing waterways and would avoid towns and motorways. Primarily intended to supply water, it would reduce water stress, support food production, help to alleviate flooding and, importantly, also provide...
a corridor for electricity transmission. Additionally, it would provide for transport and leisure facilities and create opportunities for enhancing the environment, including new ‘garden towns’. And of course it would create jobs both in construction and maintenance, relying on manpower rather than high-tech machinery: in Dr Weight’s words “an old-fashioned way of working”.

The supply of energy is an issue of primary concern, and here too the canal plan claims advantages. Power transmission is cheaper and less risky using the canal as a corridor rather than under-sea. Not only is it easy to monitor and maintain and upgrade in smaller stages but it is also simple to add cables to increase transmission strength as more generation comes on stream. Water will cool cables and improve transmission efficiency: 2.4 times greater than the equivalent cable if buried. And it avoids the problems of pylons. The National Grid has agreed to evaluate this proposal.

The Natural Grid would also play a part in flood control. As well as an attractive feature of the urban environment, canal basins could be used as a storage facility during extreme weather. This is already being done in North Glasgow.

The cost? Approximately £14-15 billion for construction. Assessing water supply only gives a cost/benefit ratio of about 1.3 to 1. Including benefits to leisure and tourism increases the figure to approximately 1.6 to 1. The option of more transfers between regions, together with additional reservoirs, would be cheaper, resulting in a ratio of around 2.3 to 1. However, if the total infrastructure, socio/economic, and environmental benefits are taken into consideration the canal becomes much more economic.

In a related report dated January 2014, David Weight suggests that the canal could be funded by a Special Purpose Vehicle – similar to a development corporation – made up of major stakeholders, with planning powers in the same way as, for example, the Docklands scheme. It remains to be seen whether an incoming government will have the imagination to grasp the potential of the Natural Grid.

See map page 18

Is this a “proper” boat? See John Henn’s letter on page 20
Cocklemore Brook exposed at last

Tree fellers working
Rescued from Obscurity. By Richard Skeet. Price £10.00 + £2.00 P&P.

I had three canal related books last Christmas all of which were good but the one that seems to be constantly on the coffee table is “Rescued from Obscurity”, the continuing story of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal.

I keep finding little bits of tantalising information every time I pick it up, this has already inspired two trips to Gloucestershire to see for myself the work that is going on.

The first part of the book is concerned with the history of the building and operation of the canal from it's conception to it's final closure and subsequent conversion to a railway, this too eventually also closed under the Beeching axe of the 1960's.

In the second half of the book the author describes how the Hereford and Gloucester Canal Trust has set about the enormous task of restoring the 34 miles of this historic canal, reconnecting two ancient Cathedral Cities.

The Wilts and Berks could really do with a similar publication to answer the many questions that both Trust members and the public frequently ask and would also be a money raising seller.

A highly recommended read, it can be obtained from The Wharf House at Over or

Janet Moult
18 Coningsby Court
Coningsby Street
Hereford. HR1 2DF

Telephone 01432264366. Email jmoult@tiscali.co.uk

Foxham & Lyneham Branch Meeting in Peterborough Arms

Natural Grid Map pages 15 & 16
Fundraising for the Wilts & Berks
Kath Hatton

There has been a lot of fundraising activity in the last three months and it continues with yet more ambitious projects to come. We need to raise £600,000 for Studley Grange; some of it has been raised, some promised and some ‘result awaited’.

We have launched an appeal for £25,000 (see details on page 9) and will be able to draw down matched funding so that we can start on the necessary preliminaries on the site. Please help if you can – it will be a showcase project for the restoration and therefore it is so important for it to go well as it will raise our profile for future restoration all along the line.

This year, local Area Boards have supported the project at Chippenham with £4,900 received for fencing and scaffolding for Top Lock at Pewsham and at Malmesbury with £1,750 promised towards the new disabled toilet at the Peterborough Arms. This is required so that we can offer the meeting room to local community groups. Next week we will be attending the Royal Wootton Bassett & Cricklade Area Board to see if our bid to them, to help with the costs of fencing at Studley Grange, is successful.

For the work at the Peterborough Arms we are currently trying to raise the money to make it DDA compliant so that we can offer a community meeting room to local groups. This entails putting in a toilet suitable for wheelchair users, a new entrance, and we want to decorate the room as well. As above, we are grateful for a contribution from the Area Board. The local parish council will support us too. The Inland Waterways Authority Avon & Wilts branch have donated £250, our share of the IWA 2014 Raffle of £440 has been credited here and we raised £255 from sale of goods from the pub. All useful amounts. For the main restoration work at the pub we need to obtain planning permission and to raise a significant sum. I am looking at some possible European funding for part of it.

At East Vale, £750 was raised from Sovereign Housing Association and this will be used for preparation work for the bridge replacement at Childrey. The 200 Club reports that there is £2,715 available for branches for equipment, tools, signage or interpretation boards.

At Pewsham a Project Enquiry form has been submitted to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This is the forerunner of a bid to restore the site at Pewsham that has been priced at £1.25 million. That is without Top Lock and the Cottage which are going to be funded and built separately. We will be asking HLF for about £900,000. The first stage of the bid is being worked on by a small team. Top Lock will be a volunteer project and it is being cleaned out at this moment to assess the condition.

As you can see, projects have become bigger, more expensive and a challenge for your fundraiser. I need to spend more time finding new sources of funding and hope very much that the Trust can find and appoint a new Chairman soon.

Letters
The Editor
Dragonfly Magazine

Dear Wilts & Berks,
I thought you might find my 90 years of canal exploring and interest worth reading and perhaps printing in dragonfly. Please give us more maps and plans, so useful for the armchair members.
All the best
Jonathan Hayes

Editors’ note, see article on page 29
Dear Editors,

Delighted to see the large number of letters in the latest Dragon Fly. It is clear that for many members, we need to be able to provide more detail of the locations we describe in our reports and contributors may like to consider the needs of readers who are not yet familiar with Elephant Bridge or Squirrel’s Rest.

A detailed map is a pressing need, but with such a long canal, the amount of detail that a map could carry will be frustratingly inadequate. Four regional maps, published in successive quarters would allow more local detail and might be more successful.

An example of the amount of information required for access direction can be seen by googling Melksham Waterway; then selecting Access. This shows in great detail access routes to the canal from Chippenham, Lacock, Calne, Melksham and Semington, though clearly beyond the capacity of a printed magazine.

Keep up the good work.

Many thanks

Colin Fletcher.

---

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.
Sometimes the winter season represents a bit of a lull in proceedings; cold wet weather, short days; volunteers would rather spend time at home with their families round the fire. Well it appears our volunteers have no families, or no fires, or their families would rather have the fires to themselves. Whatever is behind it, our volunteers have been out braving the elements and working their socks off.

Being out of nesting season, we have been able to make great progress North and South of the A4 near Pewsham, working on the agreed clearance plan, designed with our environmental ecologist for a wildlife-friendly approach. This year saw further clearance of the main towpath route and sections cleared of growth of 3m tall and less, then a wildlife break left intact and then a further clearance section, etc. Of course there were plenty of big bonfires along the way to keep us warm. As well, areas have been cleared ready for Scouts and Guides who are going to help plant up the hedgerow using trees generously supplied by the Woodland Trust.

Meanwhile at the Pewsham locks site, the team have been further working to clear top lock, including a visit by Tim Hurd using a magical cross between acrobatics and tree surgery, to climb up a huge oak tree that had grown right up against the lock wall. He dismantled it, branch by branch (photo p 22), while we “banksmen” stood on watching in awe. Then it was our turn to clear away, log up and build more roaring bonfires. A splendid pile of oak is seasoning ready for next year’s log sales. We have also bought safety fencing and scaffolding with money generously granted by the Chippenham Area Board. This all adds to the impression given to the public that the restoration is actually happening and looking professional and efficient.

Catching up with the epic tale of Cocklemore Brook culvert, the earth has been re-laid over the re-built section, to link the towpath back up (although not yet at full working height) and the whole of the remainder of the culvert has been exposed and dismantled (photo p 22). This was initially done in an intense week with a hired digger and our four-wheel-drive dumper. However the ground was so soft it was difficult to use the dumper, so for another week, we hired two diggers, one to excavate the ground over the culvert, the other to take away the spoil and to build it into a temporary bund, acting as a holding site, until we finish rebuilding the culvert and it can all be put back again. As so often when seeing these powerful machines in action, I marvel at the sheer willpower and strength of the original men, digging all this exact same earth, but only with wooden shovels and wheelbarrows; incredible.

The Events Team are busy with our new 2015 season already, as I write this, everyone is frantically preparing for the Auction and the Quiz night, although they will be over by the time you read this. Around the time this article will be published will be the Race Night in Calne at the Woodside Club, on the 18th of April and the Jazz Night with Four Plus One, a great local band, also at the Woodlands Social Club in Calne, on the 24th of April. And please don’t forget the MCC Sponsored Walk on 10th May. Please note, this is not on the bank holiday this year, we’re trying a different weekend for a change, since so many youth groups already had plans for the Spring Bank holiday weekend.
The Melksham Link team has been strengthened with two new members – Bill Gush from Land & Water who is bringing his experience to consider the prospect of actually building the project, and Steve Roberts who is concentrating on progressing the hydro-electric scheme by Melksham Gate weir. Meanwhile, we continue to hunt down the outstanding issues to do all we can so our Environmental Statement contains all the necessary information to pass smoothly through a second round of consultation on the planning application.

The archaeological survey report has been received and is being digested, but there is still work to be done on water resources and Water Framework Directive issues.

Jock MacKenzie’s team is progressing the longer term plans for development adjacent to the new cut and this continues to excite interest with councils, prospective partners, other stakeholders and the local press.

Until next time, safe digging and many thanks,

Derek Flexer

FOXHAM & LYNEHAM

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

Secretary:
Sheila Wade, Scots Smith Farmyard, Dauntsey, Chippenham, SN15 4JA Tel. 07976 281586

It was great to be back in the Peterborough Arms for our Branch meeting on Tuesday 17 March where we had a really good attendance of 26 branch members (see photo page 18).

We are planning some summer activities, including a BBQ for branch members and boat launch (of a radio controlled scaled model of a canal barge, beautifully constructed by one of our members and painted by a canal artist): date to be announced but when the weather is nice!

In addition we are organising an escorted walk to work party locations at Foxham on a Sunday early in June for any W&BCT members interested in seeing the progress that is being made by the working party, and of course finding out about the elephant hut! Please contact Sheila Wade (contact details above) for more details and to book your place: there will be alternative routes/transport for able and less able walkers.

We are also planning to attend at least five local fetes and shows to fly the flag for W&BCT, including Dauntsey Feast on 26 June, Christian Malford Fete on 4 July, Tockenham Summer Fair on 18 July, the Wiltshire Donkey Show in Dauntsey on 6 September (I’m told that donkeys were used on the W&BCT!) and Foxham Horse and Dog Show on 19 September. Volunteers will be needed to help with the stand on these dates. Please get in touch with either Sheila or Andrew if you can help.

We are also still looking for volunteers for our work parties to help with planned maintenance this summer. Please contact Andrew Chapman.

Our next meeting is on 19 May and will be at the Peterborough Arms starting at 7.30 pm. I look forward to meeting even more Branch Members then.

Sheila Wade

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

Amazing how quickly the time comes around to write the next Dragonfly update. It hasn’t been too bad a winter weather wise and we have managed to plod on through the mud and rain. We haven’t missed any of our weekly work parties other than the two we always have off over Christmas and New Year.

At Dunn...
clearing some of the tall grass someone spotted what looked like an unusual nest attached to the grass a couple of feet off the ground. It was about the size and shape of a tennis ball, woven together and to the tall grass with grass strands, with a small entrance hole on one side. It was clearly abandoned but we left it untouched in an area of grass, unwilling to destroy this little work of art. We puzzled what sort of bird might have constructed such a nest but had no answers. However, when doing a search on the computer afterwards a photograph of an identical nest turned up, not a birds nest at all but that of a harvest mouse, Britain's smallest rodent, weighing in at just twenty grams. We live and learn.

A couple of work parties have been spent at Templars Firs cutting back more of the towpath hedge where it had grown out over the path. We also spent most of a day looking for manholes and measuring the depth of them so we will have all the information needed before talking to Wessex Water again.

We now have a lease on the section of canal which runs through the Biffa site. We have had a lease for some time on the hundred metres of canal west of the Biffa site and are now trying to get used to calling this whole section Studley Grange. Before we had a lease on the Biffa section we came under the rules of the landfill site and were required to sign on and off site at each visit. We were not allowed fires of any kind but can now burn up the scrub we cut with just a few restrictions which makes life easier for us. The ladies in the Biffa office were always most helpful to us and Brian, who patrolled the site on his tractor, often paid us a visit and sometimes saved us a lot of effort by moving our tools from one place to another.

Most of our work parties have been on the Studley Grange site. At first we worked at the east end (near the garden centre) and had to carry our tools nearly a mile from the lock compound and then back again. We are now at the west end so we can nip back to the caravan in the compound for lunch before going back for a couple more hours. The trouble is, I have noticed, that as the late afternoons are lighter and warmer now we seem to be going home later each week. At the Studley Grange site we have been clearing the undergrowth on the remains of the towpath right back to the hedge line to see just how much towpath still exists. The answer is not a lot. The stream which runs in what was the bed of the canal has been dug out and cleared over the years, taking much of the towpath with it. This has left the towpath just two or three feet wide in places and sloping steeply, making it very difficult to work on.

If you look east from the site of Bincknoll Lane bridge now that much of the vegetation has been cleared it is possible to picture the canal restored along that section.........with a bit of imagination.

We will have plenty of work to do in the coming months, why not come along and see what we are up to or even join our happy (?) band of volunteers. We have plenty of room for more volunteers.

John Bower
new route will affect our canal line from Mouldon Hill to Cheney Manor and so we have started a study and preliminary design for that length to prepare for future negotiations.

The Eastern Villages developments are now getting very close and again we need to be prepared with a scheme for the canal. The 7km length from the A419 crossing near Junction 15 to the A420 at Acorn Bridge is very complex due to numerous constraints on the alignment and levels, not least the serious flooding issues in that area. We hope to develop a scheme which assists the drainage and flood prevention. Adye Goodenough has been tracking developments there and working on design solutions for several years. We have now set up two working groups, one to develop the engineering design and one to work on the strategy for getting the scheme built. We have a long list of tasks we must complete in order to be ready to build. My thanks to our sterling volunteers but we need more. I know I always write this but there are about 25km of canal on the Swindon plan, most of which needs some effort whether it be maintenance, new design or general support.

We have been stymied in our attempts to improve the condition of the new length at East Wichel by the low water level which has made it impossible to find the leaks and lack of funds to carry out the maintenance works. However cooperation with the borough's officers continues and we hope to see some improvement soon.

One of my regrets for this last year is that we have not managed to hold any proper social meetings, although the regulars at our branch meetings are a fairly social bunch. We plan to do some catching up with activities around the AGM. See the notice below for the bare formal details. We are planning to make it an interesting and enjoyable afternoon and early evening event around the AGM so please look out for more information soon on the website and in the mail. Any one willing to help make this happen will be welcome, please contact me.

Looking to the summer, we want to expand on last year’s coverage of local events where we were present with our display stand to inform and encourage membership. We would like some more members to take part by sparing a few hours to show their enthusiasm for the trust’s activities at their local event. And if someone would like to take the organisation of participation in the events off my shoulders that would be wonderful.

Here’s looking forward to more sunshine.

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

Spring has sprung, the sap has ris, I wonder where the flowers is? Well, the flowers are there if you look closely along the canal and well, the water level has ris! So it must be spring!

But hasn’t it been wet! Nice to see the canal full up and overflowing the spill weirs! But it ain’t much good for work parties! So apart from clearing fallen trees, picking litter, tidying the sheds, hedge cutting and a little done to the paths etc. not a lot has happened. All work at Steppingstone Bridge is suspended at the moment.

All that water has prompted several people to mention ‘why don’t we have the trip boat over here’. Well it would certainly float OK! But it couldn’t go very far! We don’t have permissions from the relevant landowners in place, so we can’t clear or dredge the canal. The Trust owns the Canalside Park and it has a slipway, and we do have a lease and do work on some of the canal nearby but we just can’t get the adjacent landowners to ‘come on board’.

We are making progress with the repairs to the digger but the stripdown has revealed further problems: some have been fixed, some still to do, but it is progressing and as soon as it is serviceable we plan to get on with the new paths round the park, wet weather permitting! We are expecting visiting volunteers soon to give us a hand! 

Fingers crossed for dry weather.

Alan Norris
At long last the days are drawing out. A popular rumour that the sun shines directly down Brunel Way in Swindon on Robert Whitworth’s birthday is, of course, false. The birthday in question was of his son. Anyway, start off with a bad joke is the East Vale Chair’s modus operandi for branch socials, and with that falling flatter than a piano in Pewsham Locks I’ll move on rapidly.

With weather stopping some of the usual work, the gallant East Vale team have been out doing talks these last few months. In the space of two months we have talked to the Reading AND Newbury branches of our sister canal restoration trust the Kennet & Avon. Actually the Newbury branch in the guise of our ex-Company Secretary Graham Smith booked me first but Reading got the earliest date in my diary. Lovely receptive audiences (only half of them dropped off during my four hour PowerPoint presentation). At Reading I had Company Secretary Chris to help answer questions and as my voice was fading fast it was great to have someone to alternate with. Next week I go in the opposite direction to the more rural end of the Vale to do a talk to the Friends of the Ridgeway in Faringdon.

Bookings for the Spring/Summer shows are starting to go into the diary. Forms to send off to Uffington for the White Horse Show and the Old Berks Countryside Show at Faringdon. No doubt we will be at the Childrey Village show as well (now booked for 20 June, thanks Childrey). At the risk of repeating myself and turning into a canal bore (cries of “too late” from readers) I would once again offer to the parish councils of the Vale to attend a meeting to keep you up to date on progress and show you the superb new format PowerPoint (I was only joking about the four hours).

John Minns recently attended a meeting of the Sovereign Housing Association Charities following a submission by Kath for a grant towards our work at Childrey Bridleway Bridge. He was given a short time to state our case and I am delighted to say that we were successful and have been granted £750. Planning permission for the new bridge is to be submitted very shortly with further ecological studies to be done to update the previous one. Enabling work will be needed in order to assess the state of the bridge brickwork on the abutments and a path diversion put in place.

Close by, we have been trying for some time to acquire a lease over a large stretch of canal between the Challows and progress is being made thanks to the efforts of various people. Step forward Chris and the Land Team. Very recently a site visit was made jointly with the land agent to discuss Heads of Terms and requirements on both sides including ensuring that the actual boundaries of ownership are clear from the outset. Now awaiting next steps but I hope to report good news in the next Dragonfly. This would enable us to restore a good chunk of the East/West Challow pound including rebuilding one bridge, and build a weir to control the water levels: obviously in conjunction with suitable habitat management, engineering and fundraising.

I should mention that our intrepid CAMRA member and Secretary Chris recently called up a local micro brewer friend to brew a special Wilts & Berks Ale. The specifications were that it had to be very dark, muddy, and have a foot of silt at the bottom of the bottle. Luckily he ignored that and came up with a gorgeous ale . . . I would offer samples via this august publication but unfortunately nearly all of the 72 bottles were earmarked immediately at our last social meeting. I have one locked away in my fridge at home . . . however, watch this space as we hope to have more over the Summer.

I usually publish details of my Summer Festival walks in this edition. However the Wantage Summer Festival is not, as far as I am aware, being held this year. Keep an eye on the website and On the Button for the programme for June/July.

Developments around the Vale continue apace. I took a stroll around Stockham the other day. The newt ponds required under the permission for Phase 1 have been dug out and planning permission for Phase 3 has recently been granted. Meanwhile we have gone out to tender for the
ecological surveys of the canal through there in order to submit our planning application for the restoration of the canal and building of the new diversionary route around the north of the Mably Way/Denchworth Road roundabout. I am also involved with the work on the Wantage Neighbourhood plan in particular the green spaces side of the plan.

The Sack House resumes normal opening hours at the beginning of April and the team will be in there doing an airing and maintenance before we open. The new Sack House leaflets are going like hot cakes from the Vale and Downland Museum. My thanks to John for getting them printed and to Chris Naish for translating my text into a semblance of English. Doug’s new updated version of A Waterway to Wantage (originally written by Reg Wilkinson) will be available to purchase.

Finally, I have the pleasure now of working out of an office in the middle of Abingdon. I had forgotten quite how nice the riverfront is there and as I queue in the morning traffic I get to pass over the old canal entrance and the Ock Bridge – perhaps it’s time to do some guided walks there as well.

Brian Stovold

---

Branch Meeting & Contact Details

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 website 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](http://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.

**Swindon Branch**

**Notice of Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 16th May 2015 at the clubhouse of Bowmore Sailing Club near Lechlade starting at 6.00pm

**Agenda**
1 To receive apologies for absence
2 To approve Minutes of the last AGM on 8th February 2014
3 To approve the Chairman's Annual Report for 2014-15
4 To approve the Treasurer’s Report
5 To elect Principal Officers and Branch Executive Members
6 Any Other Business

Further information about the arrangements and activities planned for the day including a BBQ and buffet will be published on the web site and directly to branch members.

**Royal Wootton Branch**

**Notice of Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Monday 11th May 2015 at the Woodshaw Inn. Light refreshments will be provided.
Melksham Food & River Festival
A new event for 2015

Following the well reported success of the Trust's River Festival last September, there were calls from both within the Trust and from the people of Melksham to do something again this year. Costs being prohibitive however, the organising team knew that it would not be possible to do the same event, so we were resigned to it being a one off, limited to commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Act of Abandonment.

However, late in 2014 we heard that the successful Melksham Food & Drink Festival had had to move from its central location in the town to the King George V playing field, which is where the River Festival was held last year, and the Branch was delighted to be asked to join with the Food & Drink Festival team to put on a combined event.

Following an exploratory meeting in January, it was clear that a combined event would work well for both organizations. It was therefore agreed to work together to put on the Melksham Food & River Festival on 5th & 6th September.

The event will start on Saturday 5th September with Littlefest, in the Littlebrook Centre, supported by Melksham Waitrose and local independent traders, with boat trips on the river run by MCC Branch. It is possible that there may be some other water based activities, but these have yet to be decided. Sunday the 6th sees the main event spring into life, with over 60 food and drink stalls expected, a full range of river based displays and activities and of course more boat trips. The full programme of events for both days will be published in due course.

Former Mayor of Melksham Adrienne Westbrook, Chair of the Food & River Festival Committee, said, “The Food Festival has become an important part of the Melksham Calendar with well over 3000 people attending last year’s event, and I would like to thank the previous Chair, Pam Wiltshire, for helping to make the Food & Drink Festival such a success over the first six years of its life.

“This year the Food Festival will join with the River Festival for a super weekend on Saturday and Sunday 5th & 6th September, and I am delighted to be chairing such an enthusiastic group of people. The first WBCT River Festival was very successful last year and talks were held between the two committees to join together this year to create a great day out for Melksham residents and to showcase this area to visitors to the town.

“The food aspect of the festival will continue showcasing local food producers with lots of stalls where food can be bought and tasted. Local bands will also be entertaining visitors.”

Miriam Zaccarelli, Melksham Deputy Town Clerk, said “Both events are brilliant examples of how volunteers in Melksham can work together to create something fantastic for the community.”

Derek Flexer, MCC Branch Chair, said “I am really excited about how the plans for Melksham are taking shape and it is great to take advantage of the wonderful river resource in Melksham and give people a taste of how it will be one day, when the Melksham Link is completed.”

Brian De'ath, who leads the MCC implementation team for the river events, said that he was keen to make use of all the experiences gained last year, to ensure that this year’s event is just as successful. He added “If anyone from the other Branches involved last year would like to play an active role again this year, I would be delighted to hear from them. This is especially true of the boat team who worked so hard last year; their input and help would be really useful. We will be running our two boats Willow and Damselfly. If you would like to help, or find out more information on the river activities, I can be contacted at b.death226@btinternet.com or telephone 01225 705806.”

Volunteering? Please record your hours!

It is vital the Trust captures all your hard work so we can demonstrate to a wider audience just how much is going on. If you are a volunteer could you please spend a few minutes each month to send your hours to juanita.poulton@wbct.org.uk who will be happy to hear from you and will send you a form for completion if you don't have one. Thank you, Juanita Poulton
You’re never far from the canal

John Hayes

I made my first trip on a canal when we lived in Folkestone. A Folkestone Canal, surely not, but a mile or two to the west and you’re in Hythe and here is a rather unusual canal the Royal Military. We are glad to see French visitors these days but there were times in the past when we felt the urge to discourage. So it was in the early twenties of the last century I saw and glided on my first canal.

In 1928 we moved to St Helens, a large town in Lancashire, famous for coal mining and glassmaking. They needed to transport the coal to the chemical works down on the Mersey.

It seemed that the government at the beginning of the canal age would only agree to improvements to rivers so they became navigations. St Helens had only got the Sankey Brook, far too small to turn into a canal. So there are those who say that this St Helens Canal was the first real one in the great canal age. There were plenty of other canals for a boy to discover. Lord Bridgewater, feeling depressed, turned to canal building and certainly made a name for himself. Not far away on the Mersey, canals started on their way to the Midlands and, nearer Liverpool at Ellesmere Port, you met canals from Shropshire and even North Wales as well as the Manchester Ship Canal built somewhat later.

My next port of call was Worcester. Here was that centuries-old waterway, the River Severn attracting canals from Birmingham and the Black Country - it was black then. A little further upstream is Droitwich, a salt town, whose canals have recently been in the news. A little further up river is the old river port of Bewdley. Proud of its standing it rejected new canals. This was sad for its future trade as the canal came to Stourport on Severn, a good example of canal age prosperity.

By the middle thirties I observed at Oxford how coal was brought down by the Oxford Canal to a large coal yard where Nuffield College now stands.

Holidays gave me a chance to do a little exploring. What an experience it was to be carried over the Dee in a remarkable construction, part of Llangollen Canal. How could the Leeds and Liverpool Canal get through the backbone of England? I found out how it chose the best path a great achievement.

In Europe they do things in a big way. I remember going down from North Germany through locks with falls of 80 or 90 feet and finding myself on the Danube. In Canada the Niagara Falls are remarkable but how do you carry goods past them? At first it was porterage then a narrow canal with 80 or 90 locks. This canal slowly grew until it became the Welland Canal with very few giant blocks to raise sea-going vessels from Lake Ontario at St Catherine to Lake Erie and the other great lakes. Once, our Queen in the Royal Yatch, sailed up the St Lawrence Seaway and then via the Welland to the heart of the United States.

At home in Surrey I was caught up with the urge to reopen the Kennet & Avon Canal. How exciting it was to see that giant fall of locks at Devizes working again. Then I was pulled in to be told that support was needed for the Wey & Arun. Time surely for a 90-year-old to relax no, it seemed that someone had discovered the Wilts & Berks. Surely folk would have extended their gardens over it and tried to forget it but neither I nor anyone else was allowed to remain in ignorance of its course once the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust made it plain they were going to restore the said canal from one end to the other. What fun for the people of Swindon to discover they have a canal!

I knew Abingdon the former county town of Berkshire had moved overnight into Oxfordshire. A bridge showed where some watercourse had entered the Thames. Had I discovered this almost lost canal? No time for doubts, I was soon an armchair supporter of yet another good canal cause. At least we elderly can cheer on all those workers and, one day there will be a completely restored Wilts & Berks Canal.

John Hayes life member 2409
Trust Officials and Council of Management

Council of Management:

Chairman: Vacant
Vice Chair: Kath Hatton, 4 Charlton Hill, Edington, Westbury, BA13 4PL 01380 831 231
Co. Secretary/Vice Chair: Chris Coyle, 27 Seymour Road, Bath BA1 6DZ 07710 737 166
Treasurer: Peter Kinsman, Nant-y-Broch, Purton Stoke, Swindon SN5 4JG 01793 771 548
IWA Rep: Roger Holmes, 72 Primrose Hill, Lydney, GL15 5SP 01594 840 316
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 Charlton Hill, Edington, Westbury, BA13 4PL 01380 831 231
Environment Director: Dr David Cook, 11 Highfields Road, Early, Reading RG6 5RZ 01189 863 284
Engineering Directors: Eddie Thomas, 14 Sandringham Road, Swindon SN3 1HP 01793 534 404
Vacant
Health & Safety: Dave Stirling, Contact via Trust Office 08452 268 567
Branch Chair East Vale: Brian Stovold 10 Kestrels Grove Wantage OX12 0QA 01235 763 072
Branch Chair WB: Jenny Stratton, 35 Sheriden Drive, Wootton Bassett, SN4 8JJ 01793 850 310
Branch Chair MCC: Derek Flexer 29 Rowden Hill, Chippenham, SN15 2AQ. 01249 656 497
IT/Tech Ops: Dave Maloney, 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham SN15 3GQ 07809 374 754 01249 658 699
Communications Director: Vacant
Membership Director: Vacant, contact via Trust office
Towpath Project Director: Vacant
Events Director: Vacant
Land Negotiations Director: Vacant

Officers

Archivist: Doug Small, 8 Raymond Rd, Maidenhead SL6 6DF 01628 544 666
Contact Officer Abingdon: Martin Buckland, 4 West Avenue, Abingdon OX14 1QP 01235 204 115
Branch Chair F&L: Andrew Chapman, Dauntsey Lodge Farm, Sodom Lane, Dauntsey, SN15 4JH 01249 890379 / 07778 568 957
Branch Chair Swindon: Rod Hacker, 11 Whittington Road, Swindon, SN5 7DF 07840 072 817
Branch Chair West Vale: Graham Banks, 12 Craven Common, Uffington, Faringdon, SN7 7RN
Administrator: Justine Hanley, PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN 08452 268 567
Finance Assistant: Ann O’Donoghue, PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN 08452 268 567
Events Co-ordinator: John Minns 19 Compton Drive Abingdon OX14 2DF 01235 525 116
Trip Boats, New Boats: Mike Lang, Contact via Trust Office 08452 268 567
Trip Boats, Operations: Sue Paine and Robert Yeowell 01793 827 678
Corporate Membership Executive: Contact via Trust Office 08452 268 567
ENTRUST Liaison Officer: Ian Skerry, 16 Chapel Hill, Watchfield, Swindon SN6 8TA 01793 784 197
Gift Aid Officer: David Chalmers, 40 Greenleaze, Knowle Park, Bristol BS4 2TL 01179 720 423
PR/Press Officer: Vacant
Webmaster: Dave Maloney, as above
WRG rep/Technical Ops: George Eycott, Knowle House,1 Ham Road, Wanborough, SN4 0DF 07771 775 745

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

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

Emails
Anyone on this page or in the branch details may be contacted using an e-mail address in the form: first-name.lastname@wbct.org.uk (firstname and lastname as printed in the listings).
A Page for Notes and Doodles
(things to tell the editors?)

---

**Dragonfly 137**

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