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

President
The Hon Sir William McAlpine Bt FRSE
Vice President and Founder
Neil Rumbol
Vice President
Dr David Fletcher C.B.E.
Vice President
Roger Crapper
Vice President
John Laverick
Office Telephone Number
0845 226 8567
Internet Address
www.wbct.org.uk
Email
info@wbct.org.uk
Postal Address
PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN

Dunnington Aqueduct referred to in Royal Wootton Bassett Branch report on page 23 A view not often witnessed as we have to get special permission to work on what is still privately owned land.
We would like to welcome our new Trust Chairman, Roderick Bluh and wish him every success going forward.

We appear to have managed to get a good variety of articles for your perusal. Please let us know if you would like us to include other items of interest. Why not write something for us?

As we go to press with the Summer 2015 edition of Dragonfly, the activities and aims of the Trust have never seemed so important.

You may well ask “Why restore a historic transport method in today’s world?” and “Who is it for?” We are not talking only about the solid achievements of the Trust and other similar bodies in restoration and rebuilding, important though these are. Its very existence is a reminder of a human scale of activity, at a time when many people feel more stressed than ever before by present-day living. And the physical environment of canals has a soothing effect.

More and more people are discovering the pleasures of the waterways, including the makers of television documentaries. The audience figures for those who watched the two hours of BBC 4’s “All Aboard! The Canal Trip” along the Kennet & Avon surprised the pundits (nearly doubling that particular channel’s usual viewing figures), It was ideal for people to dip in and out of, so to speak, from time to time. There was a refreshing absence of background music: the sound track had only the lapping of water. Occasional bits of essential information were displayed on screen. A bold break with convention, the programme lingered in the mind.

A more conventional documentary was the latest in the series of canal trips by actors Timothy West and his wife Prunella Scales, long-term canal boating enthusiasts. This was daring in its own way, showing the couple taking Prunella’s developing dementia in their stride.

What the programmes had in common was a sense of relaxation and calm, reflecting the feeling of “getting away from it all” found on or beside the water.

The Editors.
It was with immense surprise that I was approached and asked if I was interested in taking the role of Chairman. In some ways I, perhaps, shouldn’t have been given my quite high profile campaign for the reinstatement of the canal through Swindon Town Centre, whilst I was Leader of the Council in Swindon. Nevertheless, I felt really honoured to be asked and after some consideration I accepted the invitation.

I have been in post a month now and quite a learning experience it has been so far. I am beginning to get to grips with everything going on in the Trust and the scale of the challenges ahead.

My first conclusion is the enormous amount of work going on with projects all along the route, particularly to the west of Swindon and the complexity involved in making anything happen. The commitment and dedication of those colleagues I have worked with so far leaves me inspired.

My second conclusion is that the delivery of a completed canal by the end of next decade is possible but only with a well resourced organisation, both in terms of people and finance, and a properly structured organisation focused on strategic delivery of the route. The whole canal restoration involves complexity, decision making, planning and management skills rarely needed or seen in most voluntary organisations. To deliver what we all want to see, particularly with the number of town centre proposals being worked up, will require very sound business thinking with the right people on board.

When I arrived draft plans for the restructure of the Trust were ready and I have been able to input my thoughts. I very much look forward to discussing these with Trust members in the coming weeks so that we can make a step change in the pace of delivery of the restoration.

My final conclusion, thus far, is that most, if not all, the people outside the Trust have absolutely no idea of the scale of the ambition of the Trust or the amount of work being undertaken, and we need to communicate this better. Most people I talk to about it love the idea but doubt it will happen. We need to change that to build momentum. The prize will be huge and I look forward to being part of making it happen!

Roderick Bluh
Elsewhere in Dragonfly you will find formal notice of the AGM, to be held on 17th October 2015 in Royal Wootton Bassett.

At last year’s AGM it became clear that there needed to be some clarification of our Memorandum and Articles and / or changes to our processes, in relation to the nomination of Directors. We undertook to make proposals to members, possibly at a General Meeting in advance of the AGM.

During the year there has been discussion among the Directors as to the appropriate structure to be adopted by the Trust. Those discussions on structure are far-reaching, and continuing. These changes could equally require changes to the Memorandum and Articles, and it is felt that we should try to make all proposals for change at one time. It has not therefore been possible at this time to formulate in precise terms the changes to the Memorandum and Articles, as required if they are to be included in the formal notice. The Directors have therefore agreed to await the AGM before putting any proposals to members.

In the meantime we have modified the processes for nomination to ask for them to notified to the Company Secretary with sufficient time for them to be circulated to members, thus avoiding the problem of last year. We have also asked that the nominations be submitted on a form obtainable from the Company Secretary or the Administrator.

Chris Coyle

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**Situations 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 Mirector 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
Canal Partnership
Countryside Officer’s Report
Ken Oliver

Partnership News

Predicting the future always leaves you as a hostage to fortune – to put it another way, sci-fi author Douglas Adams was always quoted as saying that he loved deadlines particularly the sound of them rushing by. Having just re-read my article for the last Dragonfly I could almost repeat the words I wrote then and change the date. The Partnership intends to hold its September meeting in Royal Wootton Bassett in order to look at the Studley Grange project which should be near to completion (written with fingers crossed and remembering Robert Burns ‘The best-laid schemes o’ mice an’ men/ Gang aft agley’!)

Poised for Action

All the above simply said means that despite the amazing achievement by Kath to obtain the funding and the extensive work to get the final permissions in place, and the selection of contractors, a few unexpected delays put the start of the Studley Grange project back by about four weeks.

I thought for posterity it would be a good idea to record a video of the site before restoration. You can watch it at https://youtu.be/hEPpfhyghDo but I do not think it will get the cult following of the BBC 2-hr Kennet & Avon film. I am looking forward to the follow up walk when the job is completed.

Go shopping by boat

Very shortly you will be able to do this at Waitrose in Swindon! Work on the new landing stage is well under way as I write this – a combination of the work of the WBCT volunteer team and contractors will have the work completed for the official opening in July.

Restoring the nation’s waterways

You may have seen the Wilts & Berks billed as the longest waterway restoration in the country. It is of course one of many schemes to revive derelict waterways and it is encouraging to see that the Canal & River Trust and Inland Waterways Association have joined forces to give help to all waterway restoration projects. Kath Hatton and I attended the second National Waterways workshop held in Birmingham in May. The workshop was on the theme of ‘putting it on the Map’ and much of the useful advice discussed during the day is now available on line at https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/restoration/news

Welcome to the new Chairman

I am delighted that Roderick Bluh has accepted the chairmanship of the Trust and look forward to his bringing his great experience and drive from his time in local government to help advance the restoration of the Wilts & Berks. Our paths first crossed some ten or more years ago when as a new elected councillor he rang me as the then Chairman of Swindon Branch to find out more about our plans for the town. We look forward to revisiting some of the town centre issues again shortly!

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)
We are getting closer to the challenge of turning the 200 Club into a 300 Club, as this year there are 276 tickets in the monthly draws. March to November monthly draws will be £140, £70 and £35 with the usual bumper bonanza in December.

Since 2012 over £9,000 has been awarded to branches and other Trust activities to support restoration work. This year again has seen a variety of deserving bids and monies have been distributed as follows:
- £500 to Westvale for digger hire to lay new footpath
- £400 to Swindon towards a plastic floating platform
- £800 to Wootton Bassett for fencing around Chaddington Lock and adjacent canal
- £820 to MCC for finger flags, publicity material and a water pump
- £150 to Peterborough Arms for internet access.

A similar amount of over £9,000 will have been won by the end of this year from the monthly draws.

Below is a list of the winners to date

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<th>March</th>
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<tr>
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<td>ticket 216</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sheena Rosser</td>
<td>Berwyn Jones</td>
<td>Derek &amp; Gaye Cash</td>
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<td>ticket 94</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rod Hacker</td>
<td>Alan Lees-Smith</td>
<td>Ian Prosser</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ticket 231</td>
<td>ticket 15</td>
<td>ticket 55</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deborah Whittaker</td>
<td>Howard Cole</td>
<td>David Walker</td>
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<td>Chippenham</td>
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<td>ticket 52</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Michael Greenslade</td>
<td>Chris Coyle</td>
<td>Carolyn Gilman</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
<td>Bath</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
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To all those who have not won to date, all the best in the forthcoming draws!

Jeff and Lynda
As you opened your magazine this time three books of Draw 2015 tickets probably fell out. I wonder what your first thoughts were? Maybe – “Oh no, not another appeal for money” or was it “Good – I can sell some of these to my friends or neighbours and spread the word about the Wilts & Berks”. Probably something in between. The Trust received an anonymous letter from a member a few days ago complaining amongst other things that there were too many appeals for money for restoration of the canal. I would like to respond if I could and say that our membership subscription is low compared to other organisations and you get four great magazines a year. We are also working to obtain discounts for our members for companies like Cotswold Outdoor – see this magazine. As for appeals, a lot of our members are not local and so can’t get involved along the line, but many like to send a small donation just to help out. I do spend a lot of time trying to raise money from grant-giving organisations but sometimes we do need members’ help. Happy to answer members’ queries but please leave your name!

It has been an exciting three months – Studley Grange has occupied a lot of everyone’s time. We have now raised over £576,000 from various organisations: Viridor Credits, the Underwood Trust, People’s Millions, Inland Waterways Association, Royal Wootton Bassett Area Board and our appeal to members. The latter now stands at £11,128 and I would really like to reach the £25,000 target. This is such an exciting project and will be a trail blazer for the rest of the canal. The work on the excavation is about to start and we will try to keep you up-to-date on progress on the website and social media. We have found someone to take on the Project Leader role for the wildlife trail and she is starting work immediately on preparations.

The bid to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for Pewsham Locks has suffered a delay. HLF were concerned on two fronts – one that the locks were not listed structures and secondly that we were asking for too much money. The Development Officer has now visited the site and we are going to carry on with the bid. We will get some expert opinion as to the heritage value of the locks and particularly the unusual Dry Dock, and will have to find some more matched funding/partner. The MCC work parties are clearing Top Lock in preparation for re-building as this one will be a separate volunteer project.

Volunteers are continuing with some restoration work on the Community Room at the Peterborough Arms and I am trying to raise funds to finance the new toilet for the less-abled and a new wider entrance from the car park. Plans for the restoration and extension for the pub will be submitted to the local planners later this summer.

As you will read elsewhere our new Chairman Roderick Bluh has been appointed and is already working hard. I am sure I speak for all our Directors when I say how pleased we are to welcome him.

Have a good summer

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### Good News For Members

**Benefit One**

15% Discount from Cotswold Outdoors. Just take this magazine into any one of their stores or on line quoting AF-WBCT-M8 and your Membership number. Note this only applies to full priced items. Full details page 17.

**Benefit Two**

Santa Special trips on Dragonfly. Members booking will start on 1st September: one month before the general public. Please note that for the past two years demand has been very high for this event.

More Discounts and Benefit initiatives may follow.

**Keith Price**
### 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>
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<td>4088</td>
<td>Mr S Wilkins</td>
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<td>Swindon</td>
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<td>4089</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs I Yates</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
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<tr>
<td>4090</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs D Rowland</td>
<td>Devizes</td>
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<td>4091</td>
<td>Mr A Macer</td>
<td>Stroud</td>
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<td>4092</td>
<td>Ms M Brunger</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
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<td>4093</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs D Moss</td>
<td>Bradford on Avon</td>
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<td>4094</td>
<td>Dr L Winter</td>
<td>London</td>
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<tr>
<td>4095</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs M Cleverly</td>
<td>Biddestone</td>
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<td>4096</td>
<td>Mr A Maloney</td>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne</td>
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<td>Mr and Mrs C Hooper</td>
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<td>Mr R Gayle</td>
<td>Kington St Michael</td>
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<td>4099</td>
<td>Mr D Wearing</td>
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<td>Ms. H. Corbett</td>
<td>Hungerford</td>
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<td>Mr and Mrs R Hibbott</td>
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<td>Mr M Kight</td>
<td>Swindon</td>
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<td>Mr and Mrs P Collins</td>
<td>Chippenham</td>
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<td>4104</td>
<td>Miss C Mason and Mr C Collins</td>
<td>Wroughton</td>
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<td>Mr and Mrs C Scott</td>
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<td>Mr J and Mrs V Carter</td>
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<td>4122</td>
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<td>4123</td>
<td>Mr R Bluh</td>
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Membership Team, 01 June 2015

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**Open Day at the Peterborough Arms**

There will be an Open Day at the Peterborough Arms at Dauntsey Lock on Saturday 15th August from 10am until 4pm. Come along and see current progress and plans. There will be refreshments available for a donation as last time.
Notice is hereby given that the twenty-seventh Annual General Meeting of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (company number 2267719) will take place at:
Wootton Bassett Memorial Hall, Station Rd, Royal Wootton Bassett, Swindon SN4 8EN, (Grid Ref Explorer 169 SU 069824) on Saturday, 17th October 2015 at 2.00 pm.

AGENDA

ORDINARY BUSINESS
1. To receive any apologies for absence.
2. To approve the Minutes of the twenty-sixth AGM held on 18th October 2014 and to consider any matters arising.
3. To approve the Directors’ Annual Report for the year ended 31st March 2015.
4. To approve the Trust’s accounts for the year ended 31st March 2015.
5. To elect Members to Council:
   a. In accordance with Articles 41 and 42 of the Articles of Association Ray Aldridge, Chris Coyle, Brian Stovold and Jenny Stratton retire from Council in rotation. All offer themselves for re-election.
   b. In accordance with Article 36 of the Articles of Association Roderick BLUH offers himself for re-election having been co-opted by Council since the last AGM.
   c. In accordance with Article 44 any other nominations to Council should be notified to the Company Secretary at the Trust’s offices at Spittleborough House, Swindon Road, Wootton Bassett SN4 8ET in writing to arrive no later than Friday 11th September 2015, in order to enable the Trust to inform members of nominations. Nominations should be signed by the Proposer and by the person nominated, both of whom must be full members of the Trust. A pen picture of the nominee and his/her interests and ideas towards the furtherance of the Trust’s aims should be included, and this will be made available at the meeting for the benefit of Members during voting. [Note: to facilitate running of the meeting a form for the nomination of directors is obtainable from the Company Secretary or the Administrator.]
6. To approve the reappointment of Messrs Morris Owen as accountants of the Trust at a remuneration to be determined by Council.

SPECIAL BUSINESS
7. No Special Business is proposed.
8. Any Other Business

By order of Council
C D Coyle
Company Secretary.

NOTES:
1. As a member of the Trust you are invited to attend the AGM. A member entitled to be present and vote at the AGM may appoint a proxy to attend, speak and vote on his or her behalf in the event of a poll being demanded on a resolution or a ballot being held for the elections to Council. A proxy MUST
be a member of the Trust. An instrument of proxy may be obtained from the
Company Secretary, to whom it must be returned not later than forty-eight
hours before the start of the meeting.

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

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

Dear Editors,

No doubt this point has been made before, but I wonder whether the name of the Wilts & Berks Canal
doesn’t serve to hamper progress on the restoration of the canal in Oxfordshire. As far as I can tell, no
part of the route of the canal goes through modern day Berkshire, and hasn’t done for the past 40 years
or so since the county boundaries were redrawn. As a consequence, persons living in towns such as
Abingdon and Wantage might find it hard to identify with a long-disused canal that from the name alone
would appear to have nothing to do with the county in which they live. At least The Wiltshire, Swindon
& Oxfordshire Canal Partnership accurately describes the location of the canal, so is it time to reflect
this in a renamed, re-branded Wilts & Oxon Canal?

Kind regards,
Paul Appleby

Dear Editors,

In response to the pleas for better maps of the canal, for those with access to the internet, I have created an
interactive google map.
To view this map, go to http://www.rachel-the-gardener.co.uk/ and click on the far right button, "Canal Map".
Choose a branch, and click on their box.
The canal route is indicated in blue, with Markers, or "bubbles", pointing to the exact location of bridges,
locks, tunnels and places of note: in light of comments in the magazine, I have added car parking locations
for work parties, as well as local landmarks. Clicking on a Marker centres the map on the correct place, ex-
pands the Marker box to show the details and photo (if there is one, not many at present but give me time!) and
pops the latitude and longitude up, which can be entered into sat navs.
Under the map is a search facility, as requested.
At present, only the East Vale area is fully populated, and I am hoping that other branches will wish to join
in: all I need is for one patient soul from each branch to supply me with the details of bridges, locks etc in
their area. Anyone wishing to do so will be warmly welcomed - please email me at
Rachel.at.home@ntlworld.com
for details on how to submit items for your branch.
Rachel Cassidy, East Vale
Dear Editor,
As I open the envelope, what a great start to this spring magazine. The first thing I see is a restoration photo of Pewsham top lock! So what is this all about? I quickly flick through the pages…even better ‘Colour Photographs’ but…. Where is the article on the newly exposed lock? The editor seems more interested in water shortages in 1942, well maybe the vice- Chairman will mention it, or perhaps not. Still it must be further on….all I can find are fundraising details, but wait, there is a second photo of another restoration project Cocklemore Brook again no article to explain what is happening here either. Can it be that the modern day navvy cannot write! There must be someone out there who could do at least let us all know roughly what is going on at each site ( perhaps there are more than the two shown here?).
Now to your letters – I can read the first and third quite well, the second is very small, but the last one is in a font so small is quite impossible to decipher!
Still no detailed map!
Lastly, I do see lots of improvements in the magazine over the years and you now seem to be very close, for those of us that are unable to visit the canal, we do like to know what is happening and to have if at all possible colour photos with the articles.
Yours hopefully.
Martin Carley, Fontenille, Burgundy.

Note from Editor, This was my reply to Martin and my apology applies to all our readers.
My fault entirely for not referencing photos (Pewsham Top Lock, Tree Fellas & Cocklemore Brook are all referenced to Melksham, Chippenham & Calne Branch report). In order to get as much colour in as I can, I have to get all colour on back and front of the same pieces of A4 paper. This makes it very difficult to include the photos with the submitted article. This means I have to be much more careful with cross referencing going forward.
The letters have been commented on widely. My fault again for trying to squeeze too much and make them look like “letters”. Must try harder and your letter will be printed in the July issue. Striving for continuous improvement needs feedback such as yours!
http://www.melkshamwaterway.org.uk/Access.pdf
This is a link to part of our website. As you will see, this much information would be impossible to get into Dragonfly. I am aware that a couple of our members are working toward producing guide books.
Best wishes, John

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.

Volunteer Project Manager Required - Swindon

The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust seeks a competent and experienced PROJECT MANAGER to take responsibility for the development planning phase of the Eastern Villages Link in Swindon.
The selected candidate will be expected to lead a team of expert volunteers including those already working on the project.
These are in the following skills sets not limited to: Project financial control, Corridor land assembly, Technical completion of canal line, Environmental/Eco integrity, Planning relationships with Swindon Borough Council and other relevant Authorities, Project PR and Communications.

Candidates should submit their interest and CVs by internet without delay to: Rod Hacker
Email: rodney.hacker@wbct.org.uk Telephone: 01793 347715
Whether you enjoy a walk by the Wilts & Berks canal or volunteer to help with the restoration you may well have noticed large plants with many large leaves and bell-shaped flowers hanging in rows. Along the side of the towpath and around disturbed ground of the canal, it is likely you will have encountered clumps of comfrey. It is a large and conspicuous plant, is widespread and frequent and likes growing close to watercourses such as rivers, ditches and canals.

The plant is a bushy, hairy perennial which grows up to a metre high and has broad lanceolate leaves. The bell-like flowers come in various sizes and colours and range through cream, white, blue, purple, mauve, pink or crimson or a combination. Certainly the plants I see around the Royal Wootton Bassett part of the canal are quite rainbow in colours with some cream flowers amongst the shades of blue and purple. There is a large patch close to the end of the watered part at Woodshaw. Grasp a handful and you realise the stems are hairy whilst the leaves are quite soft. The pretty bell-like flowers unfurl and hang down. The plant’s preference is for rough ground and it grows happily amongst the rosebay and great willowherb.

Watch out for the hairs on the stems irritating your skin. Comfrey has been known about for years for it’s medicinal uses. The leaves may be used as a herbal tea for chest infections and the roots as a poultice for sores and bruises and healing bones. There is folklore documentation throughout history that comfrey helps with the healing of wounds. A word of caution though, comfrey really shouldn’t be ingested, it is not recommended as there is a chance liver damage may occur. Another use for comfrey is as a garden fertiliser. You should collect leaves and soak them in water to make a liquid fertiliser which you can use on your tomato plants.

Comfrey belongs to the borage family. The scientific name for common comfrey (cream coloured flowers) is *Symphytum officinale* which simply means the plant can be used as a whole and is “official” as it could be bought from a herbalist. There are a few species of comfrey and one that may be the most common and generally has the blue flowers is very hairy and is a hybrid called Russian Comfrey. Disturbing or spreading fragments of roots when working round the plants will encourage them to grow on more vigorously. Comfrey is known to be a difficult plant to eradicate and needs to be dug out carefully removing all traces of the root.

Next time you visit to the canal look at the pretty flowers of comfrey and think of the uses of the plant. You may not like it but does have history.
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.
HARDWORKING volunteer Derek Flexer is taking a well-earned rest from leading his local restoration of the canal. The 55-year-old is stepping down as chairman of the Melksham, Chippenham & Calne branch of the Trust.

He became a familiar face after being elected in 2012, helping to secure a series of awards as well as national and international recognition of the charity’s work. Derek was looking for a voluntary role which provided a physical challenge and was drawn to the Canal Trust after seeing the restoration near Lacock.

He said: “The past three years have gone by in a flash but it’s been a very busy and immensely enjoyable time. I’ve tried to increase our professionalism in terms of organisation and public presentation, proving that we can be trusted with restoring this historic waterway.

Unfortunately I might need to move away, but I’m sure I’ll find another way to help whatever happens.”

During every year of Derek’s chairmanship, the branch has received the prestigious Tony Davy Award for donating the highest number of hours to the restoration effort: last year they provided an impressive 6,594 hours.

In addition, Derek was presented with an international award from former employer Motorola Solutions in recognition of his voluntary work with the charity, and the increasing interest in the Lacock stretch resulted in a feature on BBC TV’s popular ‘Escape to the Country’ series.

Another sign of his success has been the growth in branch membership from around 450 to more than 600 supporters, which has enabled the charity to organise large-scale events such as the Pewsham Open Days and Melksham River Festival.

Derek said: “I’ve been delighted by the fantastic efforts of our wonderful and enthusiastic team who have always worked so hard to bring the canal back to life – turning out in all weathers at our workparties or fundraising events, or working behind the scenes with the multitude of meetings and reports.

“I am incredibly proud of everything that we’ve achieved together and I wish them all the best for the future.”
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust  
Dragonfly Boat team  

For Sale

Dragonfly Tea Towels  
100% Cotton Colourfast  
48 cm x 77 cm  £6.00

1000 piece Jigsaw  
Images of nb Dragonfly & W&B Canal in Swindon  
£12.00

Large canvas bag with short handles  
10oz 100 % cotton canvas  
37cm by 37 cm with gusset  
Trust Logo on both sides  
£7.50

4 Different designs Mugs  
£5.00 each  
Postcards  
Various pack sizes

All proceeds from sales towards the work of the Trust

All items on sale at the Trust AGM  
so remember to bring your cheque book
Contact 01793 827678 or 01793 812708  
Or Email boats@wbct.org.uk
Good News For Members (page 8) - Offer Details

Wiltshire & Berks Canal Trust
PO Box 3630
Swindon
SN4 4AN
info@wbct.org.uk

Dear Members,

In recognition of your valued support, the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal Trust has negotiated a special discount for you to use at Cotswold Outdoor Ltd.

We are delighted to offer you 15% off* the full retail value of current season’s product ranges and is available for use both in our stores and online through our website.

Your unique code is: AF-WBCT-M8

How to use the code:

- **In-store** – please present this letter or a valid form of identification to obtain your discount.
- **Online** – register your address details at www.cotswoldoutdoor.com or login. When ready to checkout, key in the code in the Promotional Code box (not case sensitive). All qualifying items will have the correct price structure applied to the order.
- **Click & Collect** – our Click and Collect services are available for use from most stores, except The North Face Store Leeds and our three Rock Bottom stores, see: www.cotswoldoutdoor.com/ourclickandcollect for further information.
- **Mail Order** – please provide your address details to the sales staff quoting the Affiliation Code when ordering.

All orders placed using the mail order and online services for delivery within the UK will be subject to the promotional carriage charges that apply at point of order (FOC over £30.00) or incur our standard carriage charge of £4.95 any orders placed requiring urgent or overseas delivery will be subject to the relevant delivery charges that apply at point of order.

Best wishes,

Keith Price – Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal Trust
The Partnership Team - Cotswold Outdoor

*Terms and conditions: not to be used in conjunction with any other offers or discounts. Offer expires 31.03.16.
Competition

Design the next Trust Jigsaw

Either

1 single image

Or

5 images as Dragonfly

ie 4 Landscape + 1 Portrait

Photographs or Painting

Any Wilts & Berks Canal Image

Prize

Half Day Charter on Dragonfly

Plus Your work being produced into a jigsaw

Rules

Submission must be your own original work
All entries will then become Trust copyright

Judges decision Final

All entries to 11 Cawte Mews, Stratton St Margaret. Swindon SN3 4DF or to boats@wbct.org.uk by 1st October

Winner announced at Trust AGM
How long is it since you saw – or heard – a hedgehog in your garden? Just a few years ago there was a teeming population – but in spite of being voted the country’s most popular animal, unnoticed, they have stolen away. There are only one million now, down from 30 million in 1950.

The environment in general is less friendly to them. The rise in the number of badgers, controversial for other reasons, has increased the danger for hedgehogs. Badgers eat them, regardless of their spines. Ever-increasing road traffic takes its toll.

The spreading suburbs have been bad news for hedgehogs. Hazards include garden bonfires (don’t light up a pile of rubbish without checking, especially if it has been collected over a period of weeks); litter such as paper cups or tin cans, which could trap a small animal’s head; security measures such as lights which disrupt sleep, and fences which prevent hedgehogs roaming as they need to do. Dogs can attack and kill hedgehogs, and well-meaning people who put out saucers of milk do more harm than good.

To create a hedgehog haven, the British Hedgehog Preservation Society recommends allowing a five-inch hole in your fence, smaller than a cat-flap, so that hedgehogs can come and go over their territory. Garden pools should be easy to get in and out of. And there should be a wild corner.

However, wild does not mean neglected. A few springs ago I found an apparently lifeless hedgehog in a border. The little beast had evidently found some discarded netting (our garden isn’t the tidiest) with mesh which happened to be exactly the right size to entangle it. Frantically I cut through the seven or eight strands tightly wrapped round its neck: in trying to free itself it seemed to have gone round and round, doing just the opposite. The task seemed hopeless but as I cut through the last strand it gave a gasp and a gulp and trotted away into the undergrowth, apparently none the worse.

Slug pellets are poison and to be avoided: the hedgehogs themselves will deal with the slugs. Another danger, oddly, is wood preserver: hedgehogs will lick freshly treated fencing, given the chance.

The BHPS recommend putting out meaty cat or dog food, with the addition of chopped unsalted nuts or mealworms as an occasional treat. And a saucer of water, not milk.

These are nocturnal animals: if you see a hedgehog in the daytime it is a sign of sickness or distress. It may need expert attention, or just some TLC.

Why should we bother? There is evidently a deep vein of affection for these animals, nurtured in childhood by the still-popular books of Beatrix Potter and Alison Uttley. Found worldwide, we think of them as an essential part of our countryside. The website of the BHPS reveals a network of concerned people who record sightings of hedgehogs, and also the fact that one third of the population have disappeared in the last 10 years. Because the animal is so familiar, we shouldn’t assume that it’s always going to be there without some care on our part.

Margaret Lord

Follow the Society on Twitter at www.twitter.com/hedgehogsociety

and find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/hedgehogsociety

Join us to celebrate The Day of the Hedgehog on Saturday 21st November at Telford International Centre. The programme is jam packed with talks about a wide range of projects, most funded by Hedgehog Street (our partnership with People’s Trust for Endangered Species) and will be a fascinating tour of the issues facing hedgehogs in 21st century Britain. See http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-day-of-the-hedgehog-tickets-16497795350?ref=ebtn for tickets.
Melksham shoppers have been thanked for supporting the restoration of a former waterway.

The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust was one of the latest beneficiaries of the Waitrose Community Matters scheme which offers £1,000 to local charities each month.

Shoppers at the Bath Road store receive a token at the checkout and then choose which of three good causes they want to support.

The Canal Trust received £650 from one of the recent collections.

The cheque was presented to Brian De’ath of the Melksham, Chippenham & Calne branch by Waitrose branch manager Chris Smith.

Brian said: “We are sincerely grateful for this generous donation from Waitrose and its customers.

“The impressive sum is yet another sign that the restoration campaign is attracting growing support from the local community and more people are aware of what we’re trying to achieve.

“The money will be used to support the Melksham Food & River Festival over the weekend of September 5-6th, allowing the creation of a temporary landing stage for the Canal Trust to run boat trips throughout the event.”

Chris said: “Each month we donate £1,000 between three local good causes chosen by our customers.

“They receive a green token at the checkout which they can place in the box of the good cause they’d most like to support – the more tokens a cause gets, the bigger donation they receive.

“We hope the money given to the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust will help the restoration campaign and we look forward to the day when narrowboats might be mooring near our store.”

Canal Trust volunteer Brian De’ath receives £650 from Waitrose branch manager Chris Smith
Around The Branches

A look at what’s happening along the line.

MELKSHAM, CALNE AND CHIPPENHAM

Chairman:
Dave Maloney. 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham, SN15 3GQ. Tel 01249 658 699

Secretary:
Sandy Wright Tel 01249 658 812

The headline news for this edition has to be the stunning progress being made on re-building the Cocklemore Brook culvert. Taking advantage of the relatively dry spring weather, Ray Canter and Basil Raddy have been leading exceptional mid-week work parties for most days for the past many weeks. Steadily the new culvert is taking shape: as I write this, we have completed some 24 metres, with seven still to do, however by the time you are reading this, hopefully the brickwork will be completed. Originally built from two layers of locally fired clay bricks bonded with lime mortar, the culvert lasted over 200 years. Our new reincarnation, being made with three layers of modern engineering brick and using 50:50 lime and cement mortar, should fare substantially better.

It looks just so spectacular, it seems such a shame to have to cover it over again with earth, but such is its fate. On our sponsored walk on 10 May, we were able to show this spectacular structure to our many walkers and explain how this is literally a once in a lifetime opportunity to see this infrastructure: they were all very impressed. We have also had a visit from the Yorkshire Building Society to see the progress so far. You will recall we were successful in a bid for one of their “Lasting Legacy” awards of £10,000 which is funding the culvert re-build.

As well as the sponsored walk, our events team have been very busy. We held our second Charity Auction, the first being three years ago. The sub-committee spent three months contacting local businesses, organisations and individuals to request lots for the auction. This effort produced 85 lots including a unique visit behind the scenes of the Yeovilton Historic Flight hanger, items of jewellery, tickets for folk festivals, food hampers, works of art and, courtesy of our Patron, a trip round the gardens at Highgrove House with a champagne tea in the Orangery. The star lot turned out to be John Laverick’s offer of a trip on his steam launch, where the successful bidder would be able to steer the boat and fire the boiler. This lot alone went for £400 and boosted our total on the night to over £3,000. A few items that did not reach their reserve were taken by the Auctioneer for sale at Chippenham Auction Rooms, so more to come from this event. The Branch is very grateful to the Angel Hotel and Auctioneer, Gordon Brockman, for their support and all those who so generously donated items to be auctioned.

Next came our annual Quiz Night, once again this year we laid down the challenge to the other Branches to continue the ‘Brain of the Canal’ competition started last year. The event was well supported by Branch members and members of the public and the hall was full to capacity with over 20 teams. The ‘Brain of the Canal’ trophy went to Foxham & Lyneham, who were presented with a trophy that had been specially made for the competition by Keith Vickery, one of MCC’s talented volunteers.

We held two events in a new venue for us, the Woodside Club in Calne; a Race Night, kindly supported by the expert team from The Lions, who made a most entertaining evening. Also in Calne we held our second music evening, traditional jazz by “Four Plus One”, which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. It is unfortunate to read in the local press that the Woodside Club is in financial difficulty, so it seems we may have to find another venue for
Always one of our bigger events of the year is the Chippenham Folk Festival. This lasts for four days, it involves organising gazebos, building a temporary landing stage on the bank of the Avon, delivering and managing boats and running the boat trips, a huge effort by all involved. This year we were blessed with lovely weather, baring a few showers on Sunday morning, and the boat trips ran continually. Many thanks also to the skippers from the boat team who helped by supporting these trips and having a different stretch of water to explore.

After the success of last year’s Melksham River Festival, this year we are working with Melksham Town Council to combine a cut-down River Festival with their annual Food Festival, so please put the weekend of the 5th and 6th of September in your diary to come to Melksham to join us at the Melksham Food and River Festival.

Looking to the future, once we have completed the culvert, our main restoration activity at the moment, we have a massive amount to get our teeth into. One priority will be to re-water the section above the culvert and to return to the “wet section” where we reinforced the bank with sand bags filled with dry-mix cement last year. We will also work on completing Boswell and her butty (the ex-work boat) so we can use her to keep the length clear of weed growth. As we now have planning permission to restore all three locks at Pewsham, the dry dock, etc, we also need to complete our engineering studies to determine exactly how best to proceed with top lock, and our fundraising efforts to secure support for this major project.

As a final note, after three years, my personal circumstances have changed, so regretfully I have decided to step down as Branch Chair. I will take this opportunity to thank all those who have worked so very hard to make the MCC branch the thriving team it is; be that with restoration, maintenance, events, public communications, fund raising or behind the scenes organisation; all of you, thank you so much. Safe digging and many thanks,

Derek Flexer

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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

We have made the most of the better weather in the last few months.

The Working Party have made impressive progress with maintenance work on both the Foxham section and at Seven Locks. They are having a well-deserved couple of weeks off while WPO Gordon is on his holidays, after which they are hoping to be able to make progress on a project along the Foxham section.

Some branch members attended a plant fair in Bushton (that's plants with leaves rather than wheels!), and coped well with putting up the marquee and stand and flying the flag for the branch. Lots of people came to chat and took away leaflets. It was the weekend of the Studley Grange funding announcement and many at the fair were interested to find out more. Very positive reactions.

We are still planning some branch activities this summer but have not yet been able to arrange dates.

I’ll be in touch with branch members as soon as we have a timetable, but one date that is fixed in the diary is the Wiltshire Donkey Show on Sunday 6th September here at Scots Smith Farmyard in Dauntsey. Donkeys as well as horses and mules were used on the W&B canal and the branch will be there at the Donkey Show with some surprise events to celebrate the connection. All members will be welcome. Please contact Sheila for more information.

Sheila Wade
This has been another busy quarter for the work party, the weather has been kind and we haven’t missed a week, so no rest there then. We started with our last visit of the winter to Dunnington Aqueduct to complete our winter scrub clearance. The area on top of the aqueduct is looking quite good now after clearance sessions for several winters. The summer scrub growth is slowly giving up after so many strimmings. When restoration was done on the south face quite a few years ago I remember some of the volunteers telling me about the kingfishers flying back and forth through the aqueduct tunnel. Not something we would expect to see in the winter but we did spot one below us exiting the tunnel at great speed with its’ remarkable colours brightening the gloom.

We have had several sessions at Templars Firs clearing the undergrowth which was encroaching across the canal at the first bridge site. We have also done a complete mowing of the paths and have used our new grass cutter which will take some of the pressure off the old Honda. The weed in the canal is growing vigorously again and we had hoped to have an early start with running the trip boat but we have only managed one trip so far. The saga of the manholes has progressed a little and there has been a further meeting with Wessex Water.

Most of our work has been at the Chaddington site. Wiltshire Council is again planning to sell off the land around the route of the canal and have agreed to transfer the canal site to the Trust. For this to happen we have been required to identify the area of land we need to operate and maintain the canal. This area has now been agreed and our next requirement was to erect a stock fence all the way around it in order to identify the boundary. We are well into doing this after several weeks of hammering in posts and stretching wire. After a couple of weeks of hammering in the posts manually we decided to find a post hole boring machine. However, this turned out not to be too successful as the one we hoped to hire was either not always working or available at the time we needed it. When we did use it things were much easier. We still have quite a bit of work to do to complete the fence. We were delighted to receive a grant of £800 from the 200 club towards the cost of the fencing.

At Studley Grange we have tried to keep the banks of the stream strimmed to deter the water voles. The good news is that the contractors are due to start restoration of this section in early June after so many years of discussion and planning and such an effort to raise the funds.

Having just saved this document I realise this is the sixtieth consecutive Dragonfly report I have written, the first being Number 78 fifteen years ago. Took me a while to work it out, 78 from 137 is 59 but it’s inclusive so you have to add in one for the seventy-eighth. I hope you are not too bored if you have plodded through this one as well. It’s difficult to find something interesting to write about concrete and grass cutting for fifteen years. The highlight of my report for Number 78 was me dropping my mobile phone in the canal and stripping off to go in after it. The wildlife is still in shock. The report also describes the exciting new project about to start to restore Chaddington Lock. Been there, done that. When we started the lock in 2000 we had already been holding work parties for eleven years and had restored the Templars Firs section. We first started signing in volunteers when we started the lock project and I still have all the signing in sheets since then. How sad is that? However, it’s interesting to see the names change over the years, with some volunteers leaving us and others starting. Amazing how it’s kept going for so long. Our first work party at the lock had four volunteers, two of whom are still work party members and the other two I see regularly.

Enough of this nostalgia, we have work parties every Wednesday and there is plenty of work to keep us occupied.

We look forward to welcoming any new members, you too can become part of Wilts & Berks canal history.

John Bower
At long last there is some construction going on in Swindon as I write this. However, I am going to use that as the excuse for being too busy to write at length.

We received our planning consent for the landing stage and work started on 26th May. We have appointed a contractor but since his first tender last autumn we have had to review the pricing, also he was unable to find a piling sub-contractor willing and ready to meet our programme. As a result our own branch volunteers are doing the piling work with essential support from RWB branch. Special thanks to Richard for driving a huge excavator every day. We are aiming for a high quality result that will not look out of place against the distinctive architecture of the Waitrose store. Look out for our grand opening sometime in July.

Let us hope that we can follow this with some more real canal restoration or construction work and I can write of physical progress instead of endless background studies and scheming.

Of course, all the background activities I mentioned in the last Dragonfly still roll on. The Eastern Villages route specially challenges us because the first outline planning application has now been made. It does its best to ignore the canal so we will have to work hard on that one.

Our AGM at Bowmoor Sailing Club near Lechlade was technically successful because we appointed officers for the next year and got the annual reports for 2014/15 approved. Ray Aldridge has stood down as Vice-chair and Peter Hunt as Treasurer. John Farrow has taken on the Secretary role and Oliver Gardiner switches to Treasurer. Graham Perry has taken on responsibilities for branch membership matters.

We had a modest turnout for the meeting and some members enjoyed the local walks that we suggested. After the formal business of the AGM we had an interesting presentation by Jim White, Vice-chair and Engineering & Operations Director of the Cotswold Canals Trust. Chris Coyle gave us an update on our own trust’s progress.

We are looking for ideas for informative and social events that might attract more of our branch membership to participate, not to mention an idea for next year’s AGM. Please contact me with your thoughts on this.

By the time you receive this publication we will be well on with our summer programme of attending local events to raise our profile and increase the membership. If you are able to help even just your favourite event for a few hours please contact me.

The team in the shop and information centre at 1 Theatre Square is also looking to increase the active numbers so that we can manage to open more reliably on at least two days a week. It is not too onerous and the volunteers there are sociable so come and give it a try if you have time on a Wednesday, Friday or Saturday.

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The better weather has meant that branch volunteers have been able to get on with some of the planned work here on the canal in West Vale. However we have decided to delay work at Steppingstone Bridge on the wing walls and towpath until the summer when we hope that the water levels have dropped to a minimum (yes, the canal here is still full after all the rain).

Mentioning rain reminds me of bank holiday weekends, bound to rain! And it did! We have been planning to lay a new wheelchair-friendly path around the eastern end of the Canalside Park here in Shrivenham and all was in place, machinery, volunteers, materials and the ground conditions
At the May AGM of the East Vale branch the existing committee were re-elected. We therefore battle on for another year.

Put the first Wednesday of May 2016 in your diaries ready for the next one. The Summer fete season is upon us. The branch attended the Old Berks Countryside Show at Faringdon and had a good reception. Mike and I were kept busy with enquiries during the day. Next up is Childrey Fete later this month, Newbury Waterways festival on the 26th July and the White Horse Show on the Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday at the end of August.

Since the last report we did a presentation/talk to the Friends of the Ridgeway in Faringdon which we thoroughly enjoyed. One new member signed up on the night.

The grass in full growth mode and the team are doing a superb job of regular maintenance. A further work party of note was that carried out to tidy the boundary between Wasborough Field and the canal at Grove, as we had had grumbles re overhanging branches. Negotiations continue on a lease over a large stretch of canal between the Challows with site visits having taken place recently with the land team and land agents, plus a full topological survey.
to ensure the boundaries of the land to be lease are accurate.

No Summer Festivals planned as the Festival is having a break this year before restarting in 2016 with new organisers.

Brian Stovold

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**FRIENDLY ABINGDON**

The Friends of Abingdon (Civic Society) organised several walks around the town on Spring Bank Holiday Monday, 25 May. One of them was the walk along the historic canal route and the proposed new route from the Thames. Walkers participated by booking a free place on their chosen walk from 10.00 in the Market Place. By 10.30 setting-off time we had 15 people booked and badged.

The roads section was easy enough of course but when we got to the narrow towpath behind the houses along Mill Road we would not have been able to get through had Jane Bye and I not spent a day two weeks previously jungle busting. A major obstacle was the huge briar with stems, and I tell you no lie, one and three quarter inches across (or 40mm if you prefer). This took as long to clear as the rest of the half-mile path. The day before the walk we mowed the whole length again as the cow parsley had surged ahead in that short time.

There is a section where the path diverts around Tythe Barn Lock into two back gardens. The occupant of one house came to warn us that we would not be able to get through because of the vegetation. We were able to reassure her that this was now possible! (Another pleased resident.) After a visit to the ‘dragon’s teeth’ on the footpath alongside the River Ock about half the group left us (there were two options offered: old route and old and new routes) and the rest of us trekked to Jubilee Junction which is the junction with the River Thames. Pleasingly there was a narrow boat moored in the 150 metre long new canal.

An added bonus was the release five days previously of the Wilts & Berks Canal maps which showed which section had been sold to whom. ‘Our’ section was sold 100 years ago less 10 days and copies of the map were shown as we proceeded. Having subscribed to the ‘Find My Past’ genealogy website I followed up the buyer which is proving most interesting. More next time perhaps.

A few days later, while at the Abingdon Naturalists’ Society, one of the walkers who is a life-long Abingdonian, said he was amazed at how much history was right under his nose having passed by many thousands of times. Similar sentiments were expressed by the walkers on the day. The next walk will be on Heritage Weekend on Sunday 13 September 2015 again with the three-mile or five-mile option.

Martin Buckland
See photograph Page 17

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**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 web site for details

Branch web-site: 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.
The Melksham Link:  
update on the Planning Application

As the third anniversary of the planning application approaches I find myself, not for the first time, thinking that six months ago there was anticipation that by now we surely should have incorporated all the outstanding reports and assessments into an Environmental Statement and submitted it as requested to the planners for a second round of consultations.

Sadly, despite paddling furiously, it now seems likely that with two major pieces of work still outstanding, we are unlikely to complete that document until late summer. With a minimum of eight weeks’ consultation, the earliest we can now expect a decision is late autumn.

So what has held things up? First, the archaeology. Two years ago we commissioned a desk study to look at all the historical documentation available that might indicate whether we were likely to dig up anything interesting. The conclusion was that we may well come across some bronze age items, but there was low risk of a major find. The report was sent off to the County Archaeologist, but with no response, despite reminders, the assumption was that we would need to have a “watching brief” during excavation.

When finally a response arrived, it was to request a geophysical survey of virtually the complete length of the new cut! This was done last February (we were lucky it was a dry winter) and the results were discussed. The survey showed up a number of magnetic anomalies that could indicate historical activity of archaeological significance. These would need to be investigated by digging “trial trenches”. With spring/summer now under way, half of these are under crops and not easily accessible until autumn.

We have now proposed we dig and report on the accessible ones and leave the others until after a planning decision. As I write, we are hoping to receive approval for this plan and dig in late June.

Then there’s the Water Framework Directive assessment. This is a piece of European legislation aimed at improving the quality of our rivers and inland waterways. You have to be able to demonstrate that any work carried out will not downgrade the water quality or upset the ecosystem. As we shall be connecting the K&A to the river at Melksham, we also have to consider any possible effects that may have on the two waterbodies. (We know they are connected at Bath, but that’s much further downstream).

We had a fish survey done in the river Avon at Melksham in early 2014 but it didn’t go far enough. We now needed a professional assessment of the likely effects of our plans on the fish population, plus an understanding of the invertebrates. The draft Fisheries Assessment arrived last week and needs some tweaking, and we’re expecting results from the invertebrate survey shortly. Once we have got these, the Water Framework Directive assessment can be completed.

There are other issues, hopefully of lesser consequence, that I won’t bore you with. Sufficient to say that compared with this time last year, when we were well on with the wildlife surveys, I have learnt that there are many more hoops to jump through than the water voles and the great crested newts!

Paul Lenaerts

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The Wilts & Berks Canal Grand Draw 2015  
Raising Restoration Funds - Please Sell as many as you can.  
To be drawn at our AGM
Melksham Food and River Festival Taking Shape

As reported in Dragonfly (issue 136), MCC have joined forces with the Melksham Food & Drink Festival team and Melksham Council to put on this joint event on 5 and 6 September. You will see below that Waitrose are officially the main event sponsors.

The full programme of events and activities will be published on the web site within the next couple of months. We are pleased to confirm that John Laverick is bringing his steam launch once more, and there will be another chance to ‘try canoeing’. Plus of course, the opportunity to take boat trips on the Avon, which one day will be the canal route through Melksham.

Look out for the Chilli-eating competition, which I am told is not for the faint hearted, but does make a great spectator sport. Plus more food and drink related stalls than you can shake a windlass at.

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

Waitrose, Melksham
To Sponsor Local Food And River Festival

Adrienne Westbrook, chair of Melksham’s Food and River Committee, recently announced that Waitrose has confirmed it will be sponsoring this year’s hugely popular local event through the Community Matters Scheme. The festival, which is now in its sixth year, showcases local food and drink providers, as well as providing free entertainment with local bands. Waitrose’s generous sponsorship will help to ensure that this festival will be as successful as those of previous years.

Last year over 3000 people attended the Food Festival, which is expected to attract over 60 stalls where visitors can sample and buy a huge array of products.

Following the very successful Wilts & Berks Canal Trust’s Melksham River Festival in 2014, it was decided to join forces and combine the two festivals to stage Melksham’s first ever Food and River Festival for 2015.

Chris Smith, manager of the local Waitrose store in Bath Road Melksham said: “I am delighted to be able to help with this fantastic festival; we have supported them for the last two years. Last year we were thrilled when we were told that over 95% of the people visiting the Food Festival knew that we were the main sponsors. It helps to cement our position as an important part of the life of Melksham”.

Adrienne Westbrook, on behalf of the committee, collected a cheque from Chris Smith for £1500. She said: “We would like to thank Waitrose very much for their support for this very important event in the Melksham Calendar. The new joint Food and River Festival will take place on Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th September at the King George V playing field.

“As well as the main festival, the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust will be on the river with their boat rides on both days, when there will also be canoe taster sessions. We are thrilled to be linking our two organisations to stage an even more exciting festival; it will be wonderful to make use of the beautiful River Avon, as well as raising awareness of the amazing food and drink providers we have in our area.

“Put the date in your diary now and join in the fun over the September weekend.”

The very popular LittleFest will also take place at the Littlebrook Centre on the Saturday: September 5th.

Volunteering? Please record your hours!
Trust Officials and Council of Management

Council of Management:

Chairman: Roderick Bluh, 07831 340 387
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-Broach, Purton Stoke, Swindon SN5 4JG 01793 771 548
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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
Mtte. Policy Director: Derek Flexer 07753 980 297
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: Dave Maloney, 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham SN15 3GQ 07809 374 754
IT/Tech Ops: Dave Maloney, 18 Bolts Croft, Chippenham SN15 3GQ 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:
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Contact Officer Abingdon: Martin Buckland, 4 West Avenue, Abingdon OX14 1QG 01235 204 115
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Branch Chair Swindon: Rod Hacker, 11 Whittington Road, Swindon, SN5 7DF 07840 072 817
Branch Chair West Vale: Graham Banks, 12 Craven Common, Uftington, Faringdon, SN7 7RN
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Finance Assistant: Ann O’Donoghue, PO Box 3630, Swindon, SN4 4AN 01793 784 197
Events Co-ordinator: John Minns 19 Compton Drive Abingdon OX14 2DF 01249 890379 / 07778 568 957
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

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: firstname.lastname@wbct.org.uk (firstname and lastname as printed in the listings).
The next edition of *Dragonfly* will be published in October 2015
Please send articles and reports for inclusion by 1st September 2015

**Working on top of Dunnington Aqueduct as described in Royal Wootton Bassett Branch report page 23**

Cocklemore Brook almost culverted again with thanks to great weather, hard working navvies and Yorkshire Building Society (Report MCC Branch pages 21 & 22).