



Dragonfly

issue 147



**The Quarterly Magazine of the
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
Winter 2017**



WILTS & BERKS CANAL TRUST

PATRON: H.R.H. THE DUCHESS OF CORNWALL

REGISTERED CHARITY NO 299595

RESTORING IN PARTNERSHIP THE WILTS & BERKS CANAL
THROUGH WILTSHIRE, SWINDON AND OXFORDSHIRE

A non profit-distributing Company Limited by Guarantee

Registered Office: Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 1WA

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 © 2017 The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust

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 CBE
Vice President	Roger Crapper
Vice President	John Laverick MBE
Office Telephone Number	0845 226 8567
Internet Address	www.wbct.org.uk
Email	info@wbct.org.uk
Postal Address	Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham, SN15 4HD

Cover Image

Reflections on Templars Firs section - Photo Richard Gosnell

Chairman's Report

Roderick Bluh

Tis' the season to jolly once again and accordingly I send my very best wishes to you all for a happy peaceful Christmas and a happy 2018.

The Santa trips are under way and my thanks go out to the team for the enormous task providing some 48 trips complete with crews and, of course, making sure that Santa's diary is well co-ordinated with all the trips and presents required. I have crewed in the last two years and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I have no hesitation in saying that our Santa trips are up there with the best, if not the best, based on my parental experience of many years ago now. I cannot wait for my new granddaughter to be old enough so I can take her to see Santa!

The AGM in October was well attended, and judging by comments received afterwards, was enjoyed. There were some issues with the layout of the venue and we will seek to resolve these next year.

As reported at the AGM, despite significant challenges being managed by our management team, 2017 has been a year of solid progress in building our momentum for future restoration. I hope we will be in a position to talk more openly about some of our plans in the very near future. We are excited about the potential for progress in 2018.

The mission of the Trust is very ambitious and challenges and obstacles will present themselves every day along the way. The important thing is to build the resilience, momentum and belief to show that difficult it may be, but impossible it is not.

As announced at the AGM, our first quarterly Open Forum evening will take place at the Peterborough Arms in Dauntsey at 7pm on Tuesday, 16th January 2018. It will be an opportunity for anyone to come along, to discuss with the management team any issues of the day, hear about what we are doing and hopefully enjoy a bit of a social evening at the same time. If you would like to come to this event, please let the office know by phone on 08452 268567 between 9.30 am and 12.30pm Monday to Friday or email on administrator@wbct.org.uk. If you wish to be on a mailing list for future events let us know also. I look forward to the evening.

Season's Greetings!

CEO's Report

Jonathan Till

I hope those who were able to attend enjoyed a very successful AGM in October. I was delighted to meet and have lunch with our founder member Neil Rumbol and another long term member Chris Toms. Roger Crapper who is an important supporter and funder of the Trust through his company also joined us for lunch and for an escorted tour of Studley Grange in the morning.

It was a privilege for me to listen to the recollections and, may I say, wisdom of these members. I hope those of you who attended the AGM enjoyed reading Neil's WBCT at 40 booklet, produced by Sheila Wade as her last piece of Communications work before leaving the Executive for the Board of Trustees. It is available for you to read on the Trust website. The Executive reported on our work in the morning sessions and you will be able to read summaries of these reports later in this issue of Dragonfly.

We are in the process of reorganising the executive, which includes Sheila's replacement and which adds new positions to strengthen the resources available to manage the ever growing work load of the Trust. While this is work in progress, I can already extend a big welcome to Patricia Clements who will replace Sheila on the Executive, and to Dave Maloney who has agreed to join the team. The new organisation will be set out in full in the next issue and will be on our website.

We are introducing delivery functions to the Executive to make a clear distinction between support and delivery. To explain this with an example, fundraising will be a support function to provide money for restoration and land acquisition, both delivery functions. By broadening the scope of work of the Executive through the support and delivery functions, we will need more volunteers to help with the work

in the delivery and in the support functions. If you are interested in any areas of our work, please contact me to discuss further.

One of our major pieces of work in the last few months has been developing the method for delivering the membership subscription increase, after Board of Trustee approval in July 2017. Our Membership Secretary tells us that this is the first increase in our subscription rates since 1993, so just a few months short of 25 years at the same rate. When your membership falls due for renewal, you will have received a letter from the Trust explaining the reasons for the increase, the new preferred direct debit method of monthly collection and the new rates which started with effect from 1 January 2018. The Trust is very appreciative of all your support in the past and we hope that you continue to support us in the future by renewing your membership.

The BioDiversity Framework Policy as prepared by Peter Brett Associates is close to being an integral part of the Sustainable Usage stream of our Executive work. It will also play a significant role in the Community Cohesion area as a basis for a new youth volunteering programme that is being currently developed with the assistance of the fundraising team.

The Studley Grange work continues to recover from the errors which resulted in the extremely large cost over-run of c.£300,000. I would encourage any member who can help us, to consider donating to the Studley Grange members appeal.

The Executive continue to provide information and assistance to the legal team who are managing the Trust's co-operation with the Pewsham fatal accident Health and Safety investigation. And we would all like to record our thanks to Sheila Wade who continues to liaise with Peter Konitzer's family on a regular basis and who reminds us from time to time that the aim of the accident investigation is first and foremost to give answers to Peter's family.

So another busy year in progress.

Correction

In the previous issue of Dragonfly we included an announcement about Sheila Wade's appointment to the Marketing Committee at IWA. At the top of the announcement we showed the IWA logo as well as our own: we should make it clear that this was not a joint announcement, but rather one of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust alone. The views expressed therein are solely those of the Trust.

Heritage Angels Award 2017

These annual awards celebrate the efforts of people who champion heritage and whilst we are disappointed not to have won, with 120 entries we did well as runners-up in our category, 'Best Rescue, Recording and Interpretation of an Historic Place'.

Our congratulations go to Nigel Ford, who won this category, for the repair, restoration and reinstatement of Norfolk's historic milestones.

We would like to thank all those in our team at Pewsham Top Lock and extend our thanks to CRT and People's Postcode Lottery for their help.

Roderick Bluh

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

Dragonfly 148

The next edition of Dragonfly will be published in April 2018

Please send articles for inclusion by 01 March 2018

Contents

CEO's Report Jonathan Till	3
Chairman's Report Roderick Bluh	3
Heritage Angels Award 2017	4
Nb Dragonfly Report	5
Stop Press	6
Trust Funding: Building The Team Derek Flexer	6
Membership Matters	7
Lots Of Winners In This Year's Prize Draw! Malcolm Hitchinson	8
200 Club	9
Ivy - A Vital Resource For Wildlife Judy Gosnell	10
Raising Awareness, New Members and Funding Your Editors	12
Wanted:	13
News at Christmas from the Trust shop Helen Thomas	14
In Remembrance	14
Wiltshire Council Countryside Officer's Report Ken Oliver	16
Another Survey for Melksham Link Completed Paul Lenaerts	17
A Message from the Land Team	18
The Tale Of The Naughty Nun Cilla Labouchere	19
NONSUCH Weekend, 16 – 17 September 2017 Steve Bacon	24
Peterborough Arms Update Dave Maloney	25
The Lotmead Planning Appeal Chris Barry	25
Notes from Abingdon Martin Buckland	27
Good News For Members	28
Student Project Wilts & Berks Canal John Henn	28
Volunteer Hour Presentations Juanita Poulton	29
Spotlight on ...Our Executive Team	30
Around The Branches	36
Branch Meeting & Contact Details	41



Nb Dragonfly Report

No report received. We firmly believed this is Santa Clause related (photographic evidence page 21) so, more next time.

Editorial

Editors:-

John Millican and Margaret Lord

E-mail:-

editor@wbct.org.uk Tel 0845 226 8567

A Happy New Year to our readers! We hope your festivities have been successful. Now we look forward to the challenges which always come our way in whatever part of the Trust we volunteer. There are some developments on the horizon which will surely make us all feel happy about progress. We cover a few of them in this first edition of 2018.

Among them is a summary of a planning meeting in which the Trust is heavily involved. We are having to fight hard to get people to understand the use of canals as a first line of defence against flooding, as well as a lovely long wildlife corridor and safe area for families to enjoy all sorts of recreational activities. Please take a few minutes to peruse it: it makes interesting reading, and a reminder that if we care for the environment we can only benefit.

We are, again, thin on the ground on letters from our readership so if you have questions for us why not get in touch. We are also always on the lookout for new features and articles so if you have ever felt like getting into print please make Dragonfly your first port of call or give us an idea and we will find someone to write for you.

We had very few good photographs of our canal for this edition so please do not be afraid to step forward. If you are out and about with a camera or phone (if it makes large images) and you get some good shots, please send them in and we can create a library for future use.

Thank you for all your contributions this year. Without you there would be no magazine.

John and Margaret
editor@wbct.org.uk

Trust Funding: Building The Team

Derek Flexer

As part of the Trust's ongoing campaign to boost funding, we are looking to make it easier for people to help the team. I am looking to create a collection of "standard" replies to the questions we get asked over and again in different funding applications and to build up a wider group of kind volunteers who will each take a bid or two and complete them, as far as they can, with the "standard" replies – obviously adapting them to suit the circumstances of the particular bid and the way

the body being applied to expresses the questions.

The objective here is to provide the tools and comfort for a much broader team to help with funding bids, instead of all the work falling on a few.

This is all embryonic at this stage, but if you have quite good PC skills (word, excel, browsing websites, etc.), good written English and feel you would be interested to help as part of this team (no need to commit at this stage), I would love to hear from you. Many thanks.

derek.flexer@wbct.org.uk

Stop Press

Peterborough Arms Christmas Fair: nearly £400

Peterborough Arms Beer Festival: over £500

Finding Santa trips:£2,000

Thanks to all those Trust volunteers and supporters who helped us get these three Christmas fundraising events organised and worked on the days.

Thanks to all those people who came and helped us raise money for the Trust

Anyone who would like to help the Trust in our fundraising work throughout the year (coffee mornings organised walks etc etc) please get in touch with Derek Flexer.

Membership Matters

Membership Secretary's Report

We welcome the following new members

No	Name	Town	Branch
4577	Mr G Clarke	Swindon	Swindon
4578	L. Chandler and M. Clark	Swindon	Swindon
4579	Mr and Mrs D Burchell	Swindon	Swindon
4580	Mr M Parker	Corsham	MCC
4581	Mr A Mason	Devizes	Wootton Bassett
4582	Mr D Dewart	Swindon	Swindon
4583	Mr and Mrs H Smith	Faringdon	East Vale
4584	Mr and Mrs B Davy	Bradford	Off Line
4585	Mr S Randall	Melksham	MCC
4586	T & M Gerrish	Melksham	MCC
4587	Mrs A Chaplin and Mr P Cotton	Melksham	MCC
4588	Mr and Mrs R Southgate	Melksham	MCC
4589	Mr and Mrs G Davies	Melksham	MCC
4590	Ms J Pearce and Mr A Smith	Melksham	MCC
4591	Ms V Drummond and Mr J Winn	Melksham	MCC
4592	Mr and Mrs C Adams	Melksham	MCC
4593	JG and S Alexander	Melksham	MCC
4594	Ms J Reed and Mr M Hussey	Melksham	MCC
4595	Dr and Mrs Hurley	Corsham	MCC
4596	Ms J Young and Mr D Barker	Malmesbury	MCC
4597	Mr B Moger	Westbury	MCC
4598	Mr and Mrs J Burtenshaw	Trowbridge	MCC
4599	Mr S Dawtry	Melksham	Wootton Bassett
4600	Mr A Bentley	Melksham	MCC
4601	Mr G Escort	Melksham	MCC
4602	Miss L and Mrs J Gray	Westbury	MCC
4603	Mr D Gardner	Kingston Upon Thames	East Vale
4604	Mr M Greenwood	Swindon	Wootton Bassett
4605	Ms F Johnson and Mr J Lawley	Trowbridge	MCC
4606	Mr R Williams	Melksham	MCC
4607	Mr and Mrs M Crisp	NSW	Off Line
4608	Mr and Mrs A Butcher	Royal Wootton Bassett	Wootton Bassett
4609	Mr and Mrs R Davidge	Chippenham	MCC
4610	Mr and Mrs S Browne	Chippenham	MCC
4611	Mr and Mrs D Hudson	Christian Malford	Foxham and Lyneham
4612	Mr A Davey	Royal Wootton Bassett	Wootton Bassett
4613	Mr S Sherwood	Abingdon	East Vale
4614	Ms D Rees	Royal Wootton Bassett	Wootton Bassett
4615	Mr and Mrs J Telford	Chippenham	MCC
4616	Mr H Davies-Ball	Devizes	MCC
4617	Mr and Mrs R Dalton	Lacock	MCC
4618	Mr and Mrs J Cavey	Swindon	Swindon
4619	Mr C Lalander	Didcot	East Vale
4620	Mr and Mrs N Francklin	Chippenham	MCC

4621	Mr J Harpum	Chippenham	Swindon
4622	Mr G Olson	Marlborough	MCC
4623	Mr R Mant	Calne	MCC
4624	Mr and Mrs N Boulton	Swindon	Swindon
4625	Mr and Mrs C Mann	Swindon	Wootton Bassett
4626	Mr G Mann	Swindon	Wootton Bassett
4627	Mr J Mann	Swindon	Wootton Bassett
4628	Mr D Swales	Royal Wootton Bassett	Wootton Bassett
4629	Mr R Sinclair	Swindon	Swindon
4630	Mr M Johnston	Devizes	MCC
4631	Miss DV Cane	Chippenham	MCC
4632	Mr P Mullery	Swindon	Swindon
4633	Mrs P Fowler	Royal Wootton Bassett	Wootton Bassett
4634	Mr and Mrs R Carter	Trowbridge	MCC
4635	Miss T Rodrigues and Mr D Longhurst	Swindon	Wootton Bassett
4636	Mr T Scott	Swindon	Swindon
4637	Mr and Mrs M Lay	Swindon	Swindon
4638	Mr and Mrs G Stanley	Chippenham	MCC

Membership Team, 01 December 2017

Lots Of Winners In This Year's Prize Draw!

Malcolm Hitchinson

The winners of this year's Prize Draw, in support of the Trust's Land Fund, were drawn from well over four thousand tickets in the tombola drum, at the AGM, by Roger Crapper, a long-term supporter of the Trust.

There were eight winners, four won cash prizes and four won the consolation prizes of a family trip on the Trust's trip boat Dragonfly. The winners, in order of draw, are as follows:

Mrs M Duff,	Chippenham
Mr R Howell,	Newbury
Mrs V Smith,	Wootton Bassett
Mr J Golledge,	Salisbury
Stephen Pearse,	Bradford-on-Avon
Mr Hemmings,	Calne;
Alan Clyde,	Chippenham
Dave Maloney,	Chippenham.

Of course, the real winner here is the Trust or more specifically the Trust's Land Fund. In addition to recent land acquisitions, there are a number of opportunities on the horizon, so all contributions to this fund will help to realise these opportunities. This year you sold 4400 tickets, but you did not stop there. In addition to the ticket sales we received another £545 in donations, which when gift aid is included, boosted the total to £654. You really are a very generous lot. Thank you.

So our grand total collected came to £5,054. When we take out the prize money and printing costs, the contribution to funds is £3,853.

In the past we have changed the focus of the Prize Draw, on an annual basis. Because there is a real need to continue to boost the monies coming into the Land Fund, I intend to use next year's draw to raise funds for the Land Fund again. A very unscientific straw poll at the AGM suggested that this is an acceptable use of the Prize Draw profits.

I would just like to end with some special thanks. Lots of people requested additional tickets to sell and lots of people donated additional money, so thank you all, but three names stood out Alan Clyde,

C.J. Forster and John Sully. They made a substantial difference to the total, so very many thanks to them. Final thanks go to Ann and Justine in the office, who covered off all the administration for the Draw, including registering all the donations, which enable us to claim the gift aid. Thank you, ladies.

Let's do it all again next year please.

200 Club

Prize Winners

September

1st	No. 58	£170	Elizabeth Threlfall	Kirby Lonsdale
2nd	No. 98	£85	Colin Milsom	Thatcham
3rd	No. 268	£45	John Love	Trowbridge

October

1st	No. 142	£170	David Goodfellow	Chippenham
2nd	No. 45	£85	William West	Trowbridge
3rd	No. 284	£45	Basil Raddy	Chippenham

November

1st	No. 135	£170	Diana Hunter	Trowbridge
2nd	No. 10	£ 85	Michael Greenslade	Reading
3rd	No. 207	£ 45	Diana Trott	Swindon

December

1st	No. 180	£400	Derek & Jill Godwin	Marshfield, Chippenham
2nd	No. 330	£200	Jane Garnett	Marlborough
3rd	No. 275	£100	John Dodwell	London
4th	No. 83	£ 50	Doug Harris	Chippenham

Thanks to everyone who helped the 200 Club grow yet again this year, which has resulted in £3,450 being paid out as prizes. Branches, Peterborough Arms and Shop have benefited to the tune of £3,450 to assist them in their vital works. We have been able to help diverse needs from an outboard engine to fencing to a router etc etc. The final amount of £350 from this year was transferred to the Peterborough Arms towards cellar cooling equipment.

Now for 2018. You will find enclosed an application form and hope that once again you will buy a ticket, or tickets. For those who already pay by banker's order there is no need to do anything. If you normally pay by cheque, it would be a great help if you could switch to a banker's order or an electronic transfer (but please email us your full contact details to enable us to register your ticket and hopefully send your winnings). We would, of course, still be pleased to receive either cheques or cash.

For all new members of the Trust, we sell annual tickets for £20 each. Of the total money raised, 50% goes to support either branch or specific Trust needs, the other 50% is paid back to ticket holders in nine monthly draws with a bumper draw in December. Full details of rules etc. are all on the application form. All the best for 2018 – be in it to win it!

Jeff & Lynda Daws

Email: 200club@wbct.org.uk

Ivy - A Vital Resource For Wildlife

Judy Gosnell

Down by the canal at Royal Wootton Bassett we can see the ivy plant growing everywhere. At Templars Firs and by the tow path it is prolific. An easily recognised evergreen plant with shiny leathery leaves, ivy grows well in the hedgerows and attaches itself to trees, usually the large oaks growing at Templars Firs and some of the field maples growing in the tow path hedge.

Autumn sees the ivy plant coming into its own when other plants are dying back until the following year. Walking by the canal, watching leaves float down from up on high on to the water, there is often a sweet smell nearby. The ivy is flowering. Look closer: a mature ivy plant will have lots of clusters of flowers on the end of stalks. They are small, greeny yellow and rather pretty. The ivy likes the figure five; each flower in the cluster will have five sepals, five petals, five stamens and a five-celled ovary. Use a small lens and all is revealed.

The insect world loves the ivy. It is a home for many, offering shelter and so importantly, nectar. During a good year, on a sunny day in early autumn ivy plants will attract the colourful and handsome red admiral butterfly. They adore the ivy flowers. 2017 has been a very good year for red admirals, they have been numerous everywhere. Watching red admirals resting and then flying round ivy is a lovely sight. The black, red and white markings of the butterfly contrasts with the green of ivy. They also enjoy sunbathing and soaking up the sun on an ivy plant with food readily to hand. Butterflies such as the yellow brimstone, speckled wood, comma, small tortoiseshell as well as the red admiral are all to be seen in the vegetation and ivy by the canal. Flies and hoverflies, bumblebees, spiders, beetles and assorted bugs are all likely to be at home in the ivy too.

Ivy will host wild honey bees. Listen closely as you pass a plant on a tree in early autumn and a loud hum is often heard. Most plants by the tow path hold huge numbers of wild bees. Every now and again they can be seen buzzing round and nectaring on the flowers. Here's a question: does a bush full of bees really buzz on the same note? Or, is it merely an average pitch? Perhaps they aim for 'bee flat or bee sharp'? Later into autumn

ivy will also host social wasps. They will be flying round the plant in large numbers very happily enjoying the nectar that ivy provides late in the year. Another recent arrival in the UK is the ivy bee; this is a solitary insect, neither a bumblebee nor a honey bee. It doesn't live in a swarm but will nest individually in soil near to an ivy plant.

The bees and wasps are unlikely to be troublesome to us as they are content in their ivy bush buzzing around inside. Autumn has not seen many wasps at all in 2017: this includes wasps in the ivies all along the canal. Wasps have virtually been absent from our countryside this year.

As autumn moves into winter, the ivy flowers die away and the fruit berries grow. By early spring the berries will have changed from green to a blackish purple and will provide much needed food for birds. Blackbirds love them and will gobble the berries voraciously. Even fieldfares and winter thrushes will feast when the weather is cold and food is non-existent in late winter. Winter can be so difficult for birds to find food in the hedgerows with all the red berries such as haws and hips having been eaten. A hungry blackbird will soon strip an ivy of berries. The birds will flop into the leaves and gobble away until they are stuffed.

Ivy is a 'social plant' being a creeper and a climber. It will spread over the ground which can be seen amongst the wood at Templars Firs and will also climb trees to hang on to. The plant is not parasitic but uses trees, poles etc for support. Ivy clings to trees by way of 'ivy glue' which is lots of tiny hairs on the stems. A tree will not be killed by ivy but may be affected by competition at root level where both the tree and ivy will seek sustenance underground. Another interesting fact about ivy is that there are two phases of growth. In the early stages of growth, wild ivy will creep along the ground. On maturity, about ten years later, ivy will start to grow up the trunks and branches of nearby trees and will then start to flower in autumn. The leaves are variable: immature and ground growing ivy will usually have five points further up a plant as it grows vertically, the leaves where flower-bearing occur will often be more pointed and have wavy edges.

During winter, ivy is used as an indoor decoration and is said to have magical powers to ward off 'spirits' at Christmastide. I have not found holly

growing in the area!

Ivy is a valuable asset for wildlife



Ivy and insect photos
thanks to Judy Gosnell



Raising Awareness, New Members and Funding

Your Editors

For several years now John Laverick, a Vice President of the Trust, has been giving lectures on board cruise ships travelling the oceans of the world. His series of lectures are based on the works of the civil engineer. Designed to entertain, as well as to inform, each programme of lectures always contains one about the Wilts & Berks Canal restoration. From every presentation of this particular talk he always manages to recruit some new members (once famously a new President for the Trust) and sometimes contributions to funding as well.

John had regularly been told by members of his audiences that he should capture his presentations in a book, so early in 2017 he started writing. Partial drafts were submitted to publishers and The History Press challenged him to complete the work by the end of the year. I am pleased to be able to advise you that 'Voyaging the World's Civil Engineering Wonders' reached the bookshops on 1st December.

Sir William McAlpine wrote the Forward to this 192 page book, on the cover of which the publisher inscribed:- "Examples of enduring feats of civil engineering endeavour can be seen around the

world's seas and waterways, from the SS *Great Britain* to the Panama Canal. In this beautifully illustrated book, John Laverick offers an insight into the intriguing field of civil engineering, taking you on a journey that crosses three continents and three centuries, exploring extraordinary achievements including the artificial waterways of the Panama and Suez canals, floating concepts such as the concrete Mulberry harbours, the world's only rotating ship lift at Falkirk, a man-made island in the Baltic linking the crossings between two countries and the ambitious restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal". Chapter 12:- "The Impossible Dream – Britain's Most Ambitious Ongoing Canal restoration Project" ends with the sentences:- "So please consider helping us to win a new lottery grant – your support will be greatly appreciated by the hardworking volunteers of the Trust. Thank you. <https://www.wbct.org.uk>."

Hopefully readers of the book will tap that address into their search engines and take the action suggested by John.

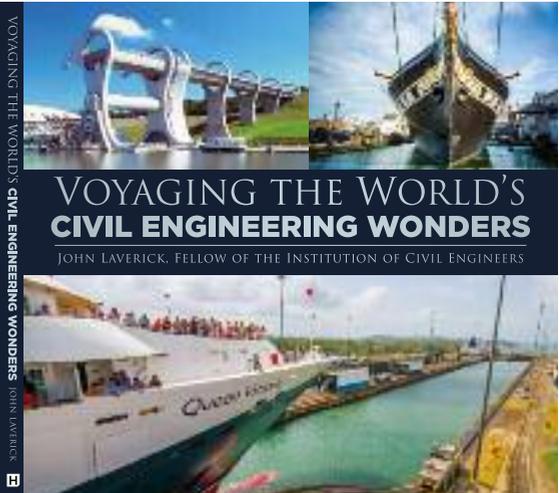
John and Margaret, Dragonfly Editors.



Examples of enduring feats of civil engineering endeavour can be seen around the world's seas and waterways, from the SS *Great Britain* to the Panama Canal. In this beautifully illustrated book, John Laverick offers an insight into the intriguing field of civil engineering, taking you on a journey that crosses three continents and three centuries, exploring extraordinary achievements including the artificial waterways of the Panama and Suez canals, floating concepts such as the concrete Mulberry harbours, the world's only rotating ship lift at Falkirk, a man-made island in the Baltic linking the crossings between two countries and the ambitious restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal.



JOHN LAVERICK, a regular guest lecturer aboard ocean liners, is a chartered engineer who has spent his career designing, building and maintaining facilities for large ships and small vessels. As a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers, John is delighted that the publication of his book coincides with the organisation's bicentenary. Since retirement he has volunteered his time to the management and restoration of waterways for which work he was made an MBE in 2016.





**Surveying The River Avon for the Melksham Link Project:
pages 17/18 Photo A**



Photo B



Photo C

Wanted:

Back copies of 'Narrowboat' quarterly heritage magazine.

Contact Steve Bacon on 07749 215741.

I'll pay a donation to the Trust for them.

Thank You, Steve



The 'Allen scythed' towpath margins before mowing and showing the wild flowers on the conservation areas.
Article pages 27/28

In Remembrance

We are sad to report the recent deaths of two stalwarts of Royal Wootton Bassett Branch.

Ron Robertson and Hugh Sayce gave so much of themselves to the Trust. Our thanks to them for their efforts over many years, for all their support, and our thoughts are with their families, friends and colleagues.

News at Christmas from the Trust shop

Helen Thomas

A recent e-mail asked for details of our location and opening hours, which made us realise that few of our trust members have ever visited the centre of Swindon to track us down. A new information panel (on page 21 of this magazine) will be helpful and we are always especially pleased when members cross the threshold of the shop. At the moment most people want to find out about the Dragonfly boat trips to meet Santa Claus, and there is a busy schedule of journeys right up to 23 December. Thank you to everyone involved in this major operation.

Can we ask for more volunteers willing to help us keep the shop open regularly? At present we need eight people to enable us to open to the public on four days per week. Most staff come once a week from 10am to 3pm on a day of their choice, some come once a fortnight and others to fill gaps as needed.

The task falls heavily of course on members from Swindon and Royal Wootton Bassett branches, but we are most grateful for help from other branches too. If the light is on, the shop is open and people drop in. Please call in and find out more or offer help via e-mail: swindon.shop@wbct.org.uk

Stop press

The shop has a stock of short-sleeved T shirts, mostly size XL, at two for £5. Two lucky small persons can take the last two of that small size. All are blue with the printed logo of the dragonfly. Your summer wear on work parties could be sorted now.

And going back in time

One day in autumn, a surprise visitor to the shop was Bernard Phillips, a well-known Swindon archaeologist. He had found in a local sale two very old letters concerning the early days of the Wilts and Berks Canal and wanted to give the letters to the trust. Both involved Mr. William Crowdy, a solicitor living in Westrop House near Highworth. His family were clerks/attorneys to the first Wilts and Berks Canal Company from its inception to its sale in 1876/7 and then to the subsequent company until 1891. James Crowdy, father of William, was an investor in the canal and for periods the agent for both the Duke of Marlborough's estate in Wiltshire, and for Lord Radnor who had an estate at Coleshill.

Members of the Crowdy family married into the Dunsford family and father William Dunsford, and later his son Henry Lyde Dunsford, were the Canal Superintendents from 1817–76. They were based at the company offices at 'Fairholm', Drove Road Swindon, now the site of the Swindon Fire Station but then the canal company headquarters.

Our first letter, dated 19 September 1816, concerns a stoppage in the Wantage Arm of the Wilts and Berks Canal: the writer complains that rents for property and land were being delayed, thereby causing serious problems for the writer's son. Cash flow perhaps?

The second letter, dated 6 November 1822, was written by Benjamin Lord Slater, who in 1817 had married William Crowdy's sister Catherine. The writer acknowledged payment of £555 to the Exchequer Bill Loan Office in London. He thought the recipient would be pleased to note a reduction of interest rate on future instalments to 4%, following a recent Act of Parliament.

So much could be learned about the development of our canal from these two fragile letters. Thank you to Bernard, and to Jan Flanagan for most of this background information. And to all trust friends, please keep your eyes open when wandering around salerooms, auction rooms and even car boot sales. You never know what you may discover.



Crowdy's house, "Westrop House" referred to above

Wiltshire Council Countryside Officer's Report

Ken Oliver

Partnership News

The Canal Partnership met on 7 December but due to publishing deadlines, the summary of discussion will be in my next report. In October representatives of the Partnership received reports on projects at Melksham, Studley Grange, Grove (Stockham) and Swindon's New Eastern Villages and Wichelstowe. Swindon Borough Council also noted the plans for a new sports hub at Moredon and the opportunity to work with WBCT on the canal there. The new Canal & River Trust restoration manager Sam Anderson-Brown attended the meeting and outlined the organisational changes that supported his role. If you want to look at the full meeting notes they are published as soon as they are approved (i.e. the next meeting) at <http://www.canalpartnership.org.uk/index.php/partners/partners-meetings>

Re-organisation

In discussion with WBCT we have looked at how I work with the Trust and being mindful of the new team on the Executive, we have agreed how my role will continue to help the work of the Trust. My role to liaise with other Local Authority Partners is seen as essential to make sure the canal restoration is taken into account in policy (like the Local Plans). I will also continue to help WBCT with planning applications for various projects. General publicity and public relations (including social

media) on behalf of the partnership is also part of my role.

Towpath Challenge

It has been a while since Tim Pyatt left this project and in line with the thoughts of the reorganisation I have started to work on the project again which aims to open as soon as possible the Wilts & Berks towpath. The project is closely aligned with the work where I am based in Wiltshire Council's Countryside and Rights of Way team.

Can you think of a new name for the project? if you have any ideas please let me know.

Southern Canals Network

The Wilts & Berks, North Wilts, and Cotswold Canals when restored and linked to the River Thames and Kennet & Avon Canal will form the Southern Canals Network and on the map it is very obvious that Swindon is at the centre of this. You will see and hear much in the next few months (and years!) about the canal proposals in the Borough – currently Wichelstowe and the

New Eastern Villages are the focus but there is much more to do to complete the job. As I said in the last Dragonfly, Canalside is a great start and when you are talking to anyone who still doubts that the Wilts & Berks project will ever happen perhaps you might invite them to see what is happening there now.

Finally may I wish you all the very best for a wonderful 2018.



@wiltberks canal (Twitter)

www.facebook.com/wiltberks canal (Facebook)

Another Survey for Melksham Link Completed

Paul Lenaerts

The 31st of October proved to be a perfect day for (hopefully!) the last of the physical surveys required by the Environment Agency for the Melksham Link planning application. This was a 'Walkover' survey by a geomorphologist specialising in river behaviour, to predict the likely effect of the new weir on the River Avon at Melksham. The day was fine and the river levels low after a relatively dry month, so it was easy to see the river bed in the shallows and the course of the main flow between reed beds and around obstructions.

We had already commissioned a similar survey in October 2015 as part of the European Water Framework Directive Assessment, and this was published in the 2016 Environmental Statement, but the EA wanted to see it extended further up- and downstream. Conditions two years ago were very different as the river was in flood, so it was useful to be able to compare the two surveys. Both surveys were done by Jane Moon, although in 2015 she was working for our consultants Black & Veatch, whereas these days she has her own company: Hydro-Morph. This time, I met Jane and walked with her – and having two cars saved the long walk back!

We started where Semington Brook joins the Avon near Whaddon church – just north of Trowbridge. Here, the public footpath took us over Semington Brook on a very smart footbridge, then followed the Avon bank upstream. The next landmark was the remains of the railway bridge, a Grade II listed structure built in the late 16th century with historic connections back to the Monkton Farleigh monastery.

But we weren't there to look at the built environment – Jane was concentrating on the nature of the river and taking pictures showing the width and the bends, and scrambling down the banks at every opportunity to look at the shallows and the water's edge. A 'Walkover Survey' is just that – walking the banks to get a good feel of the stability of the course of the river, looking at tributaries, vegetation growth, blockages and any man-made features which could affect the natural processes. Then her job is to produce a report which will give an expert opinion on the likely effect of our plans on the nature of the river, with particular

thought to 'mitigation'- the preservation and improvement of the river ecology for the local flora and fauna.

Jane's commentary provided a new light on a stretch of river that I thought I knew quite well. I got to recognise the difference between 'riffles' (small waves on the water surface which occur with faster flow over a gravel bed) and a 'glide' (calm, smooth flowing stretch). Both of these were clearly visible – unlike in the 2015 pictures when the river was so full. The variation in channel width was large – from around 40m in the 'engineered stretch through Melksham, where the course of the river had been changed in the 1950s to reduce flood risk, to around 10m in places further downstream. The effect of the widening and straightening has been to reduce the speed of flow and therefore increase the silt deposition giving rise to excess vegetation.

Jane was pleased to find several stretches downstream of Melksham where gravel was clearly visible (photo B). A gravel bed is a good sign of a healthy river and provides ideal habitat for invertebrates and spawning fish.

Our walk took us upstream towards Melksham, past the location of the planned new weir and canal junction just downstream of Challymead Bridge. We then had to leave the river and cross the A350 (never easy!) at the back entrance to the cemetery. Then through Conigre Nature Reserve and to the town, where the ugly sheet steel piling opposite Sainsbury's combines with the industrial buildings to make this the least attractive stretch of the river (photo C). It is interesting to contrast the 20th century structures with the likes of Packhorse Bridge and Monkton House. I guess the pressures of industrialisation, economics and population growth have been difficult to resist, but surely we can do better?

The Melksham Link project will provide an opportunity to improve this stretch of river and our mitigation proposals will need to focus on measures to achieve an improved habitat for wildlife without increasing flood risk. We should also be able to make this stretch a pleasant and accessible riverside environment for the public. Longer term, the industrial buildings could be converted or replaced to provide sympathetic waterside

developments as has been done in many of our cities and riverside towns.

Walking on upstream we come to Melksham Town Bridge, built in the early 19th century to replace an earlier stone bridge which was carried away by a flood. There will be some dredging required here to establish a navigation channel, and again, an opportunity to improve the silted-up areas.

Upstream of the Town Bridge you see Melksham Gate Weir. This was built at the time of the flood alleviation measures, and ensures a reliable water supply for the Cooper Tyres factory. Production here has been reducing for decades and one cannot fail to speculate that the facility would be far better located on an industrial estate leaving this large waterside site ripe for development. The Melksham Link plans include a narrow lock on land by the south bank, to enable boats to by-pass the weir, and a hydro-electric generator on the 'island' between the lock and the weir.

The river above the weir is wide, deep and slow moving as one would expect, but at least here it is accessible and well used by canoeists, anglers and walkers. The 'red line' defining the upstream extent of the project crosses the river where the new footbridge carries the Millenium Walk path over the Melksham Loop – a meandering natural ditch which rejoins the river about 1km upstream.

We continued our walk over Millenium Footbridge, past Scotland Road footbridge (Ha'penny Bridge to the locals) and on up to Farm Bridge which provides farm vehicle access to the

island formed by the river and the Melksham Loop.

From this bridge you can appreciate the gradual transition in the nature of the river from heavily impounded by the weir, to a more natural state upstream. The river along this stretch is still a good depth, enabling navigation without the need for dredging, up to the point around 1.5km above the weir where another project (including a 'staircase' of three locks) will make the c.750m connection back to the historic route of the Wilts & Berks at Forest Farm. Another 1km upstream the river is back to its natural state with big meanders, gravel beds and fast flowing, narrow stretches.

But we had decided that Farm Bridge should be the limit of the survey, so we crossed to the right bank and walked back to Scotland Road where we had left my car.

We now have Jane's report to consider. It will form an important part of a larger report which will be an Addendum to the 2016 Environmental Statement. There are still some theoretical studies that need to be done before we can complete the Addendum Report. In particular, computer modelling of how the river flows and how levels will respond to locks discharging water, and back-pumping from the river to replace lockage. We still need to identify funding for these studies and hope we can produce the report in the early part of 2018.

The process of gaining planning consent for the Melksham Link project has been very much more drawn out than anyone thought possible – but we are nearly there!

A Message from the Land Team

Over the past 30 months, the Land Team has been compiling a Land Registry-based directory of all the owners of land on or adjacent to the line of a restored Wilts & Berks Canal.

In order to maintain the accuracy of the Landowners Directory, we need to be aware of any changes of ownership of the properties in question. This is where the members of the Trust can help us. If you see signs of a canal-side property being on the market, or if you hear of current owners being 'on the move', please send an e-mail to land.team@wbct.org.uk or call Brian Poulton on 01793 731158.

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

The Tale Of The *Naughty Nun*

Cilla Labouchere

Glancing through the Gazette & Herald I saw a small 4-berth narrow boat advertised for sale. Colin and I went and looked at her, fell in love with her, and with no mention to the rest of the family we bought her, renaming her the *Naughty Nun* in memory of my beloved great aunt, a teaching nun who brought up my father when he was orphaned at the age of three.

The *Naughty Nun* was moored on the Thames in Lechlade, not far from Fairford where two of our sons were helping on a stand at the Air Tattoo. We met at the Trout Inn by the river for supper but it was too early to eat, so after a drink, we pressurised our hot and exhausted boys into coming for a gentle walk along the river bank. We hadn't gone far when we came to the cutting that led into the marina.

"Oh, bother," says Mum, "We can't get across and I am blown if I'm going to walk all the way round, so let's borrow a boat just to get across the marina entrance; this one here will do."

A friend of Peter's was with us and she knew our scheme, so she and I jumped on board and soon persuaded Colin to join us even though he is normally a most law-abiding man. He tried out the outboard engine and it started first pull.

Peter was horrified but came on board to make sure we did no damage. Martin's sense of right and wrong was so strong that he went and sat behind a tree looking like a thunder cloud and trying to disown his parents.

"Quick Martin, no one's looking. We will only borrow it to get past the cutting then we will put it back exactly as we found it," and I almost dragged him on board as we pushed off and started gently chugging upstream.

As we approached the far side of the cutting, Colin put the engine into reverse to ensure a very gentle landing, but the reverse gear jammed.

Reving the engine to try to clear the problem, we began to reverse at an ever increasing speed back towards the bank from which we had come. We hit the bank with a hearty thump, enough to knock all the wine glasses and a pint of cream off the table in the cabin.

What a nightmare scenario for the boys! They believed their Mum and Dad had stolen a boat, had messed up the engine, had smashed the glasses, had sent cream swilling all over the carpet, and this stranger's boat now had a very muddy stern. What more could go wrong?

Colin was quick to correct the engine problem and, as we set off again, we admitted to our panicking children that the boat and all its contents did, in actual fact, belong to our family. Their sense of humour took a time to recover and they didn't find it easy to forgive us!

Over a spell of three years we explored the network of canals. In what other way can you motor into the heart of London with your dogs running free along the tow path beside you? One of the signs that made it clear we were entering city confines were the moorhens' nests. Instead of being built of sticks and reeds the birds had used polystyrene cups and condoms!



Letters
The Editor
Dragonfly Magazine

Dear Editors

It was such a privilege to visit **nb Dragonfly** on your Wilts & Berks Canal in Swindon this Christmas. I had no problem parking my sleigh in your compound and walking along the tow path to Skew Bridge. I saw 15 different types of birds on this short walk.

As the boat came around the corner and under the bridge, suddenly the children could see me with my sack of presents. The shouts of excitement from both them and their parents brought a lump to my throat. It was a joy.

Your team of Skippers, Crew and backroom organisers were a credit to your Trust. With over 400 people travelling on the boat in those 12 days, it was a lot of hard work. Well done to all.

My elves are busy designing new toys for next year.

Please invite me back again.

Santa

Email:- editor@wbct.org.uk

Write to:- *Dragonfly* Editor, Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham, SN15 4HD.

The Trust encourages debate and contributions from members on any matter relating to the Trust, and believes the letters page provides a forum for this. However the Editors reserve the right to shorten, change or not to publish any letters received.

Bread doesn't fit the bill

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

Find out more at canalrivertrust.org.uk/ducks

Visit the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust Information Centre



1 Theatre Square, Swindon SN1 1QN

Opening times:
Monday, Wednesday, Friday & Saturday
10am - 3 pm

email: swindon.shop@wbct.org.uk



-  Learn more about the Canal, its history & route (including points of interest).
-  Get an update on restoration projects.
-  Become a member of the Trust.
-  Get information on the Trust's boat trips.
-  Purchase a range of canal related merchandise including books, tea towels, Trust work wear and much more.

The Information Centre welcomes

New volunteers from all branches and interested members of the public.
We also welcome canal related information on what branches and members are doing.



What the nb Dragonfly team have been busy delivering.



NONSUCH out cruising Templars Firs. Article page 24



Templars Firs in September.
Photo from Brian Stovold



**Heron keeping us company
on nb Dragonfly trips
Photo Chris Barry**



**Bevan's Bridge in Swindon looking
glorious in autumn sun.
Photo Chris Barry**

***NONSUCH* Weekend, 16 – 17 September 2017**

Steve Bacon

Mid-September saw *Nonsuch* on the Templar's Firs stretch. The main purpose was to run the boat back and forth as much as possible to inhibit weed growth, but of course we also had some fun, carrying Trust members during the weekend. On most cruises, people spotted water voles and kingfishers.

We were able to get *Nonsuch* almost to where Hancock's Water feeds the canal at Lower Woodshaw near the second footbridge. However, as feared, the canal was very badly silted from this point eastwards. Building materials as well as silt had been washed down the hillside stream, reducing the depth to rather less than a foot in places. We did manage to get it to the far end by bow-hauling it.

An area near the slipway had been mown, and it hosted one tent for Trust information and another for refreshment.

We hope to repeat the exercise in 2018 during the Spring half-term holidays. Although *Nonsuch* can't be used as a trip-boat for various reasons, we're sure experienced crews will volunteer to help us clear weed from the stretch that's fished by the local Angling Association.

Now, if we can borrow the *Mary Archard* when it's finished the Spring Bank Holiday weekend at Chippenham, we're sure that it could pass the shallows to the far end and earn money for the Trust.



NONSUCH delivery to Templar's Firs for the weekend.

Peterborough Arms Update

Dave Maloney

As with other Trust projects, our work is now limited by funds which are diverted to cover Studley Grange costs.

That said, Dave, Fiona and Richard had secured some cash from a local event that raised funds from refreshments sales; a generous branch member recently donated £500 and a non-Trust member I was chatting to has an interest in pubs, so donated £1,000 towards refurbishment. Thanks to these kind donations we are able to be proactive in our attempts to get relevant Industrial type furniture for the main bar by searching local For sale sites. We are also refurbishing chairs and tables for use in the small bar/dining area. We have agreed that the furniture for the main restaurant needs to be the

commercial sort to make it easier for this area to be flexible for dining/weddings/parties etc., so we will be fundraising towards such furniture in the new year. We have acquired a log-burning stove that will be refurbished, and we are just putting the final touches to the fire place/hearth area.

Whilst we still have some Guardians living on site, the whole of the first floor is now empty, so we can inspect each room and discover what needs to be done and what funds we need to raise to refurbish them. We have secured a decent second-user bathroom suite to replace the present green suite in the manager's quarters, which of course looks very very dated.

The Lotmead Planning Appeal

Chris Barry

Wednesday 15 November was 'water day' at the Lotmead Planning Appeal Inquiry. Ainscough's Planning Application was rejected by Swindon Borough Council (SBC); Ainscough appealed, and this was the Public Inquiry into that appeal. It concerned only the Lotmead and Lower Lotmead 'villages' – neither Ainscough nor SBC seemed willing to look at the area as a whole. See below as to why WBCT feels it would be missing the point not to do so; this is necessarily a much-abbreviated summary of the day's events, capturing only the salient points.

The first speaker was Adye Goodenough, for the Wanborough anti-flood group; he's also a Trust member. He showed photos of floods in 2013, 2011, 2008 and of course 2007-- but pointed out that the 2013 one had been classified as a 'one-in-20-years event'. He showed photographs of the culvert under the A420 by Acorn Bridge in flood conditions, saying that when it was overtopped, water would back up along the course of the River Cole into Covingham, even though much of it came from the Lenta Stream. This water came partly from a rising water table, and partly as surface water off the Downs. He listed the many areas in the New Eastern Villages prone to flooding. He said that all these areas would be at risk unless the proposed SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) were kept

clear, and may be at risk even if they were.

So far he was in line with WBCT, but deviated when he said that the canal line needs to go south of Lower Earls Court Farm. Lastly, he mentioned a second, disused culvert for the Lenta Stream under the A420, which could be reopened and used for flood relief: is anyone aware of this?

Our Chairman, Rod Bluh, and Francis Budge, one of our senior engineers, then gave WBCT's presentation, which can be summarised as follows.

The appellant's proposals are in contravention of the Council's policy EN11, (which says that nothing should be done that prejudices the delivery of the Canal) and they fail to present a holistic scheme to the benefit of the community:

- The proposed Revised Lotmead Alignment is acceptable in principle but further development is required to ensure that it does not render the canal scheme undeliverable. (They'd shifted the line of the Canal, but without showing how each end would join up with the agreed line!)
- Construction of the NEV development's infrastructure without integration of the requirements of the canal will prejudice the delivery of the canal.
- Insufficient consideration has been given to the complex drainage and flood protection of the whole of the catchment

area between the scarp of the downs to the south and the railway line to the north. This area includes New Eastern Villages. Flooding is already experienced throughout, including the 2007 inundation of houses in Covingham and the A420, it will not be improved and could be made worse by new development.

The proposed provision of independent SuDS by each developer in the New Eastern Villages cannot be relied on to provide adequate flood protection on the assumption that there will be no cumulative effect. The advantage of the integration of the canal within the schemes for NEV developments is that it adds protection to the whole NEV development area rather than each individual development only and also to the wider flood plain. It may also enable the localised SuDS schemes to be optimized. The Trust has recommended to SBC a comprehensive flood modelling exercise.

Three technical notes prepared by the Trust and submitted previously describe how the canal can be designed to aid drainage of the New Eastern Villages and manage the impact of water arriving in the watercourses from the downs to the South – there is a vast amount of detail in these.

The canal should not be regarded as a problem by developers, but recognised as the essential key to solving the fundamental drainage and flooding issues that should otherwise preclude development, which is essentially building in a flood plain against all guidance.

Construction of the canal contemporaneously with the green infrastructure of the NEV would reduce costs, avoid future disturbance by major earthworks and add a benefit for house buyers rather than being a disincentive.

The Trust would support an application that incorporates the construction of the canal in a way that provides environmental benefits, enables effective on-site drainage and assists essential flood mitigation.

To me, Rod Bluh's key point was that this part of the canal was as important as any other part. Francis Budge made the important point that in the NEV, any SuDS would be on an impermeable substrate, flood water would impact on other sites, and proper modelling needs to be done but there is no sign of this at present. Their exact presentations are available elsewhere. The

Inspector's comment was that the Appellants would have to carefully consider how to respond, and for that reason she postponed their hydrology expert, Amy Hensler, till later in the day to give her time to read our full submission.

Mr Gareth Hawkes, of Covingham Parish Council, was next to speak concerning flooding, which was a major concern of theirs - the EA has been sending them 12 flood alerts per year. He commented that there was a history of SBC and the EA neglecting rivers, and they are seeking a robust arrangement to maintain any SuDS.

Eventually Amy Hensler was called. We have a copy of her submission, and our rebuttal of it is in our own document presented on the day and to SBC previously. In her rebuttal of Adye Goodenough's presentation, she said that his photos of flooding were all outwith the Lotmead site, so weren't relevant; on SuDS, she said they will be setting up a Management Company via Section 106 monies to ensure proper maintenance. She said that Adye's favoured route was outwith their site, so wouldn't be relevant, but they would look at the concerns Adye had expressed over the Wanborough Road. Lastly, his mention of the second culvert was off-site so not relevant. She did not address his mention of water backing up the River Cole and its tributaries.

Turning to our own submission, she said she was pleased we'd accepted the general principle of the development, and that she was sure our concern over the 'loose ends' of our line could be accommodated. She disagreed that our construction costs would necessarily be prejudiced, and disputed our assertion on the aggregate effect of all the SuDS in the NEV. On what she called our 'Strategic Scheme' she said it was complex, but agreed that it could work in principle.

If the development scheme gets approval, the Trust should at least have secured a workable alignment and corridor through the land in Lotmead ownership but of course we wanted more.

It's up to the Inspector to make what she will of all this, especially the contradictory assertions – but our request for a hydrological survey was noted. It's up to the Secretary of State to make a final decision – that will not happen until some time next Spring. For now, we can only hope the message got across that water knows no boundaries.

Notes from Abingdon

Martin Buckland

Due to the continued uncertainty about the Thames Water Reservoir, which may well be built over the historic route of the canal outside Abingdon, further construction of the canal beyond the Jubilee Junction is being reviewed to see what course of action is practicable. However, other activities to keep the Wilts & Berks in the public eye have taken place, albeit on a rather small scale.

The annual (and perpetual) clearing of the canal tow path along the section to the west of the Drayton Road, that runs between the houses and out to the A34, continues. This is usually limited to hedge and grass cutting but huge brambles have been removed in the last couple of years which has fully opened the path. In addition there has been a tri-partite effort with the Wilts & Berks volunteers, Vale Path Volunteer Group (ramblers) and the Oxfordshire County Council which provided 'jumbo' bags to remove foliage and fly-tipping.

The section from the Thames at Jubilee Junction to Peep-o-Day Lane is minimally mown to preserve the wildlife areas alongside. This was a condition of the substantial grant we received from WREN. The technique is to use a hedge cutter as an Allen scythe to cut back about two feet on either side at the start of Spring, then mow the inner foot-wide strips throughout the season. This presents a tidy appearance but allows the variety of wild flowers and grasses to flourish which supports a wide range of small, and often unspectacular but essential, wildlife.

However, such areas are vital to these species and we support the efforts of Wild Oxfordshire (formerly the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum) <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk> to preserve and increase wildlife habitats and increase biodiversity. I have been a member of those organisations for many years. There is a welcome move by a number of Canal Trust Branches to move away from 'mown lawns' to a more natural environment, if less pleasing to the 'tidy eye'. I wrote a small section for the new 'State of Oxfordshire Nature' report noting the positive contribution canals are able to make. The report can be downloaded from: <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/stateofnature/reports/>.

During all this activity there is frequent conversation with passers-by, adjacent householders and organisation members who are supportive and interested in the progress of the canal restoration, although we have to cite the physical progress of the sections to the West of our area. At Easter and during the Heritage Weekend in September I lead guided tours of the historic and new routes of the canal. These are usually over-subscribed. Walks are also led on an ad hoc basis for one or two local organisations.

During the last few years I have given my Powerpoint presentation 'Canal restoration - benefits to wildlife and the environment' to about half a dozen naturalist and wildlife societies, originally at the invitation of the Abingdon Naturalists' Society. I cover the conflicts:

Boaters versus conservationists

Boaters versus fishermen

Walkers versus fishermen

Dog walkers versus walkers

Walkers versus cyclists.

Of course I highlight the benefits, not only to wildlife but also to people's physical and mental well-being, which accords with a number of positive lifestyle recommendations that cost little or nothing. On the nature conservation side there are a remarkable number of SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) in former industrial canal-side areas. I would be very happy to give this presentation to wildlife, canal or any other interested organisations. Any fees are donated to the Wilts & Berks of course, as in the past. I could also let anyone have a copy if they wish to view or present locally but there is no script, just the slides as prompts.

A recent development in 2017 has been involvement with the Abingdon Museum Education Service. This has taken the form of visits to and by local Primary schools. The format has been to arrange benches or chairs to enclose an area six feet by eight feet to portray the area of a narrow-boat cabin. Pupils are asked to name the rooms in their homes (computer or games rooms are often cited) and then we describe how all these functions can be fitted into the 'boat cabin'. This exercise produces amazement that there was no electricity,

and all that that means by the absence of what occupies every moment of their day in one way or another.

Sooner or later someone raises the subject of sanitation with resulting horror when told of the non-plumbing options. Interestingly about half are able to identify a lump of coal and several have had a narrow boat holiday and clearly enjoyed it. Let us hope the seeds of future involvement in canal restoration and maintenance are sown. Your speaker, incidentally, appears in canalman's 'authentic' uniform. Processing six groups of fifteen seven- and eight-year olds in the space of two hours is an interesting logistical exercise!

For the last couple of years we have been

involved in taking samples from water bodies to measure the levels of phosphate and nitrate in the area. These have included the nearby exhausted gravel pits and waterways and watercourses that might one day become associated with the canal. The results can be viewed on: <https://www.freshwaterlinks.org>

Armchair activities include scanning various media to identify any initiatives or proposals that might impact, positively or negatively, on the future of the canal. I have reverted to 'local government officer' literary mode on occasion when responding to planning applications or consultations, notably the Swindon Eastern Villages proposals.

Student Project Wilts & Berks Canal

John Henn

We were contacted in September about the possibility of using an aspect of the Wilts & Berks Canal as the basis of a project for students in the 3rd year Mathematical plus Data Modelling unit in the Engineering Mathematics Department at the University of Bristol.

"The basic format is we find open-ended real-world problems to present to the students -- each problem then gets about five students working for about 5 weeks at 30%."

The project chosen was to try and model boat movement on the Wilts & Berks Canal with the view of establishing the water requirements in each section of canal.

The Trust provided the students with details of the location and drop of each lock and the average channel dimensions. We also provided information, from the master plan, on existing and possible attractions near the canal.

They modelled the movement of hire boats based at Pewsham, Wichelstowe, Blunsdon and Shrivenham. The model, consisting of discrete and probabilistic components, assumed that the boats would stop at certain attractions. The boat crew were put into categories – family, retired, romantic – the likelihood of stopping at attractions was related to these categories.

Some interesting results were produced and some of the ideas and methodology used in the study could be developed for a more comprehensive model.

Alan Champneys, head of the department and Oscar Benjamin, in charge of the projects, were pleased with the results and the collaboration and look forward to working with the Trust again.

Well done to the student team of Hadrien Gailly de Taurines, Rory Hicks, Rachel Limb, Cydney Psarolis-Stannard and Jed Roughley

Good News For Members

15% Discount from Cotswold Outdoors:

Just take this magazine into any of their stores or on line quoting AF-WBCT-M8. Note this only applies to full-priced items.

Keith Price

Volunteer Hour Presentations

Juanita Poulton

It was my great pleasure to present the Tony Davy Memorial Cup and the Tony Davy Awards at the AGM on Saturday 21 October 2017. It was encouraging to see so many members of the WBCT at the meeting and to see many familiar faces. For those of you who do not know me, I am Juanita Poulton and I was married to Tony Davy who was Chairman of the WBCT from 1996 until his death in June 2004 (for further information about Tony, please see his entry in the Roll of Honour on the Trust website). In 2006 I married Brian Poulton who was at that time Chairman of the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust.

The Trust records the hours in order to demonstrate to a wider audience just how much effort volunteers are making towards the restoration of the Canal and their support for this visionary project. All hours submitted are taken into consideration for 'matched funding' purposes and thus effectively provide a resource that the WBCT may hopefully convert to hard cash at a later date. These hours also help to support Ken Oliver's position with Wiltshire Council. Ken is an invaluable asset to the Trust. Please make a resolution to note your hours and activities and send them to me, preferably on a monthly basis.

The Memorial Cup is presented to the individual volunteer who has submitted the most hours worked for the Trust. This year it was my pleasure to award the cup to Sheila Wade who submitted 1,326 hours with a value of £70,278.

The Award for the branch submitting the most hours was presented to Melksham Chippenham and Calne Branch with a total of 7,696 hours with a value of £121,558. The Branch which had made the greatest increase in hours since last year was Royal Wootton Bassett with a total of 4,553 hours, value £57,922, and they too were presented with a crystal Award. Congratulations to both Branches.

For your information, in the financial year 2016-2017, the other branches submitted the following hours:

East Vale Branch 501; Foxham & Lyneham

Branch 752; Swindon Branch 849; nb Dragonfly 2,573; Peterborough Arms 1,511 and the Shop 1,565. This is a significant effort by all involved but I am sure there are many others who are not logging and submitting the hours which they have worked and it would be good to gain a true reflection of what you are all achieving.

I use the word 'submitted' rather than 'worked' because no doubt many more hours are worked by volunteers than the hours which are recorded. Without the volunteers there would be no hope of restoring the Wilts & Berks Canal. Many of you work significant hours on behalf of the Trust and apart from the obvious benefit of this work in pushing the project of restoration forward there are other benefits to be gained. By submitting the hours worked the Trust is able to give the restoration project credibility and demonstrate to potential funders that the Trust is an organisation capable of delivering projects. In addition, the Local Authorities in our Partnership are under extreme pressure to justify funding in specific areas. Having a 'baseline' of information about current hours will go a long way in demonstrating that any funding spent is giving the required outcome. It also means that all the information is available when funding applications are made and that we are able to produce verification of the efforts that you, as volunteers, put into the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal. Hours may be logged by individuals, especially by those with specific roles within the Trust, or may be submitted on behalf of branches. On the form you are asked for name, date and on whose behalf you are sending the hours. I would be grateful if this could be completed, and making sure that the hours are not 'duplicated' by submitting them individually as well as to the branch.

If anyone reading this wants a log sheet please do not hesitate to contact me at juanita.poulton@wbct.org.uk.

Keep sending in your hours -- I look forward to hearing from you!

Spotlight on ...

Our Executive Team

AGM Report - PR, Communications & IT.

The website was launched at the last AGM 2016, and received immediate and widespread praise throughout the waterways restoration movement for its design and content focusing on our external audiences, with messages promoting WBCT profile and credibility with funding organisations, local authorities and other influential organisations and also attracting potential new membership.

Planned developments, including the new members' area, expansion of project and volunteering reporting and updates on Trust news together with infrastructure maintenance, have been held up through lack of volunteering resource: Ian Skerry has recently joined the team and many will have seen the difference he is making in keeping the news feed of the website up to date. We are still looking for volunteers with relevant skills and commitment: please get in touch with Sheila or Patricia if you can help.

Social media in the form of our facebook page has been a story of success this year. We now have a number of facebook editors with regular contributions by Chris Barry who updates our facebook fans on the Swindon and **nb Dragonfly** stories and is happy to help on other stories. Our likes have risen to nearly 1500 and our reach is continuing to grow with posts regularly into the three to four thousands. One week in July we achieved an amazing 7,000-plus reach over several posts. The demography of our facebook fans is also very interesting with a ratio of 1 to 1 male to female and less than 20% over the age of 65: quite different from WBCT membership demography. Training sessions have resulted in improvements to the content and timing of most messages posted, so that we can make the best use of this means of communication. We have also integrated this, our main social media work, with the WBCT website so that supporters and members of the public can more easily join, donate, respond or volunteer as appropriate. We need to move on to other social media strands to replicate this excellent work and we need to make improvements to our website to integrate all our media and gain the maximum benefit from our external messages. We need more

and committed volunteers to do this.

Corporate branding (our green/blue banners, new fonts and strap lines) has now been rolled out to all our external media including -- with its new look front page and the launch of the new look OTB. The Communications Team is working with branches and teams to help them make the changes necessary to their promotional material. Corporate branding is only applied as different posters/leaflets come up for reprinting at nil additional cost to the Trust. The design choices were made by Trust members early in 2016 when the website was being designed in house. The WBCT clothing remains as current, blue and yellow. We also were responsible for the production of the 2016/17 Annual Report and the WBCT at 40 booklet.

Talks and events are a major part of our work: we now have a central Talks Co-ordinator in Alan Lank who develops and holds Powerpoint resources. He has given a couple of training sessions for those in the Trust who give talks. Event teams and all public facing teams receive a briefing document from the Communications Team twice a year updating them with all the news and progress so the Trust is represented in a consistent way during our busy events season and on the trip boat and at other events and talks.

Press releases have been systematised centrally in terms of style, basic content and media selection in order to give a consistent and professional image.

Internal communications have been improved through promoting the Activity Reporting to all Trust Officers on demand: this is a web-based reporting system which is also sent out weekly to all on a subscribed email system. This is still under-used unfortunately. The cascade communication system, implemented in Spring 2016, is in regular use but is dependent on the different levels of Trust management and Officers in promptly sending the messages further down the email chain and in promptly sending any messages back up the chain. We continue to work to change as many members as possible to email contact from post contact, as

that is the most efficient way of keeping in touch. The info@ and ideas@ emails are in regular use with our members and supporters. The response rate is within 12 hours. Branch Chairs attend Executive meetings allowing branch views to inform our management of the Trust and the Branch Chairs in turn should explain the decisions taken to their branch members. Editors John Millican and Margaret Lord continue to produce an excellent *Dragonfly* every quarter, but would like copy to come in more promptly please.

The Communications Team has also been actively involved in running the Transitions Project this year which you will have read about in previous *Dragonflies* and also in the 2016/17 Annual Report. We have also been involved in both Transition Project funding work and in core cost funding and project funding work.

We worked on the membership drive from October 2016 when it was announced at 2016 AGM. The WBCT membership leaflet was redesigned with an external focus and the new draft leaflet performed very well in its trials with external groups within and outside the waterways restoration sector. The leaflet was printed and available at the start of the event season at the beginning of May 2017. Branches and teams at that time were also offered help in producing separate insert DL leaflets to promote their branch work and volunteering opportunities, with MCC taking up the offer. Work was completed on a section of the website allowing on line membership and donation payments. Training was offered to events and other public facing teams on membership sales. We worked with interested

Branches to help them find new partners within the active sector (walking groups/cycling groups/canoists/wildlife photographers) in their areas to work with and recruit from. The Towpath Festival part of the membership drive work was put on hold in late Spring, when it became apparent that there was very little available committed volunteer resource to organise this work. The Festival venues were reduced to two existing venues. With the first and second year churn on new memberships remaining high, the membership level has disappointingly remained static at just over 2,700.

During the year, I have worked with Exec Directors Andrew Matters and Derek Flexer on various pieces of policy writing, with CEO Jonathan Till on membership subscription work, researching and reporting to the Exec and BoT on various behavioural and financial models and with the Office and Swindon Branch on the arrangements for the 2017 AGM.

I have continued to liaise with Peter Konitzer's family and have contributed to the work of the accident investigation.

To conclude: in Communications, we have had a year of considerable successes in some areas but no clear progress in other areas. Our major challenge to increasing the success we achieve in our work for WBCT is lack of committed volunteers with the right skills. We continue to appeal for members to join us and we are also looking at the possibility of commissioning external resources and the funding necessary for that process.

Sheila Wade, Director

AGM Report - Projects

Project activity during 2017 has been limited due to financial constraints but, in spite of this, we have been able to achieve the following:

A4 Crossing:

The 3-year planned clearance on the A4 north is coming to an end and because of this work and that at Pewsham, we have been invited to clear two other sections in the area one of 300m and another of 700m. Work continues along this line to clear canal bed scrub as far as Pudding Brook. Pewsham:

Although the northern wing walls have been rebuilt and capped, other work on Pewsham Top

Lock and Top Lock cottage have been delayed pending funding and release of the Top Lock by the Health & Safety Executive. We have started putting the concrete capping stones in place on the northern wing walls and they will be the basis for a standard format for this type of work.

As part of the Top Lock funding programme from CRT, a team of 9 Help for Heroes volunteers, plus one member of their support staff, started work at Pewsham. The work programme has been designed to act as a platform for the volunteers to support their efforts to obtain a C&G certificate in Construction or Ground Management. The week

went better than we could have hoped, with fence building, bricklaying and grass cutting initiatives. The volunteers had opportunities to continue to develop their skills with a range of activities including infrastructure maintenance, reed clearing using Boswell and its butty. They also visited the Sack House, the 'urban' Canal at Swindon and took a trip on Dragonfly, as part of their experience.

Melksham:

The original planning application submitted in 2012 lacked professional surveys in a number of areas. These were addressed and presented in an Environmental Statement (ES) which was published in the spring of 2016. The Environment Agency (EA) raised a number of points arising from the ES requiring clarification, and an extended email dialogue reduced these points down to one main issue - the use of the River Avon for navigation and the effect of the proposed works on the ecology of the river through Melksham.

Eventually, in April this year, a meeting was held with the EA to discuss outstanding matters and a list of extra studies was agreed. Consultants Black & Veatch have quoted for carrying out the majority of this work and it is proposed that the results of these studies will be presented in a further report which will be an addendum to the ES.

There are two physical elements on the list:

- a limited survey of the river bed at 3 sections downstream of the proposed new weir;
- an extended "Walkover Survey" of the river from well below the proposed works, to well above, by a geomorphologist.

The other main elements are computer modelling of the river flows and levels that would result from the proposed locks discharging into the river, and from the back-pumping of river water to the Berryfield pound of the new canal section.

In order to get the river survey done while the weather is reasonable, and at a minimum cost, it was agreed with Downland Partnership that they would supply a surveyor with GPS equipment on the bank, and 3 WBCT volunteers in a Canadian canoe would place the surveyor's staff at the required points on the river bed. This was achieved on 19th September at a cost of £750 which was funded by MCC Branch.

The 'Walkover Survey' also needs to be completed before the winter and it is hoped that the cost of this (c£500) can also be funded locally. The remainder of the work, which would cost in the

region of £5,000, will be commissioned when funding is available.

There is some progress regarding landowner agreements and funding the whole project through enabling development, but major progress on these matters cannot be made until the 2012 Planning Application is determined.

Wichelstowe and M4 crossing:

After lengthy discussions with Swindon BC on the design details for Wichelstowe canal length, we have agreement. The work has started on the district centre area now being called Canalside. A short length has been drained to allow for sewer crossings and upgrading of the canal. Further work to upgrade the canal alongside the new district centre is planned within the next 12 months. A pub, schools, some housing and district centre facilities have started or will start soon.

The trust is pressing SBC to include in their new studies, a canal crossing of the M4 alongside the planned road tunnel. The previously identified crossing point for the canal is unsuitable and a joint project will minimise disruption of the M4 and make economic sense. This crossing is also the major obstacle to the trust's priority to link Wichelstowe canal to Royal Wootton Bassett.

There is no progress on linking the existing two sections in Wichelstowe pending progress on the intended joint venture development for the rest of Wichelstowe.

The scheme for the proposed small business village next to Croft Road includes the construction of the short length of canal which passes through that land. We are detailing the scheme to link this piece to the existing East Wichel canal which includes one lock.

Croft Road to A419:

Meetings have been held with the residents of Badbury Park development who are keen to see the canal pass between the housing development and the adjacent industrial zone as is planned. The engineering team has been investigating possible water sources for this length.

New Eastern Villages:

The WBCT maintains its objection to the outline canal scheme included in the planning application for the Lotmead Farm site and expects to attend the public inquiry on the refused application, scheduled for November. Discussions continue with SBC over various issues related to the protected canal line. Implementation of the Trust's

scheme to build the canal as an aid to drainage and flood protection is still our target. Meanwhile we have responded to various consultation documents as the development planning for the NEV and the Southern Connector Road which runs close to the canal is progressed.

Mouldon Hill:

We have been unable to get agreement on a water supply for this leaky section of canal and therefore cannot get planning consent for a major restoration and upgrading. If we cannot get water into the canal and utilise it any work done is likely to have to be redone eventually. This section is now held on a maintenance basis to stop further deterioration until we can connect into another length on one side or the other. The towpath is open as a part of a circular walk around the country park and the canal route will be kept tidied and safe.

Swindon Town Centre:

The branch working party installed a barrier under the Eyam Road Bridge on Sunday. Shorthanded due to various holidays, the small team got some stop planks installed in the slots but was unable to form a seal at the time. Work on the soft edging repairs is still stalled pending identification of funding and the identification of a project manager.

River Ray:

The Swindon Branch working party carried out clearance which revealed the poor condition of the old spillweir and draw-off near Skew Bridge. A work plan is being developed to make these features safe. At the same time access to the nearby River Ray aqueduct was cleared to reveal that this is in very poor condition. The aqueduct was added to the council's register of assets and inspected 3 years ago and the poor condition noted. It will be re-inspected by a specialist contractor in this year's programme of works. If necessary a contractor will be appointed for repairs. The branch working party can help by clearing the access to both faces of the aqueduct and also offer to help with superficial repairs. The SBC officers will check on ownership of the aqueduct which may be shared by two parties. They also advise consulting the EA in relation to all the works.

Templars Firs:

Once the remaining conditions had been

discharged in mid-December 2016, we made a substantial start to the Templar's Firs Extension project by creating a diverted all-weather access track by the second week of January. However, the second part of Phase 1 (to dig exploratory trenches and establish the depth and condition of the sewage pipework) is awaiting feedback from Wessex Water before we can make further progress.

The Royal Wootton Bassett branch has created a secure compound on the site of the canal bypass to store the fencing materials and to allow access to the land now that the track has fully dried out and the grassland is growing again. We have also erected a post to help passers-by visualise how high the canal by-pass will be above the field level. It seems to me that we would have difficulty building up the ground level for the by-pass and boat basin unless we can access more material by starting work on the canal through the site of the old Council Depot. The old Council Depot closed late March and apart from the occasional security patrol, is now deserted.

East Wichel:

Leakage remains a major problem in the new length of canal. An application has been made to Nationwide under their community funds scheme for up to £5000 for necessary investigations. The work envisaged includes test pumping into shorter lengths of canal to raise the water level until leakage can be detected. Simple fixes such as minor clay puddling will be carried out immediately. More sophisticated leak detection methods are being investigated in case simple tests fail to find the leaks.

The pumping will be partially from the attenuation lake and partially from adjacent sections of canal but the fish stocks will be safeguarded. The pump tests will also be helpful to the design of permanent pump installation.

Work on replacement of the failed soft edging is waiting on receipt of the promised funds and appointment of a project team to carry through the approved scheme.

Studley Grange :

Excavation is now complete, as is the tree-planting. We are currently working on the towpath and will have more news on this area early next year.

Andrew Matters, Director

AGM Report - Volunteers, Maintenance, Property, Commercial Operations and Health and Safety.

Along with all the Executive members, I prepared some talking points for the morning of the AGM so we could have discussions with groups who might be interested. I was first up and we pressed ahead with my discussion, but unfortunately the acoustics in the hall meant that it didn't work as well as we'd hoped. It was clear from the support and the interest shown there was an appetite for such a format, so hopefully at another opportunity, there will be the chance to try it again, but with a separate room or area to use.

Here are some of the points we talked through, with many thanks to those who persevered and for the discussion such as we could hold:

For the 2016/2017 year, I'd held the role of Volunteers, Maintenance, Property, & Commercial Operations Director, and was also the Trust's Health and Safety Officer.

I started by exploring the Commercial Operations aspects, summarising the work with the Dragonfly boat team and the shop team. In particular I spoke about a challenge we faced last year with organising Santa trips as our previous volunteer, Sue Paine, had stood down. We pulled together a team to approach the planning and implementation – invited anyone from the boat and shop teams. A great group set up to spread the work around a team who all worked really well together. They set to buying age and gender appropriate quality presents, booking skippers, crew, Santas, wrapping presents, organising mince pies, mulled wine and then the actual trips, which, as ever, were really appreciated by the many families who took the fully booked trips. Around March '17, I handed the role of Commercial Operations on to Malcolm Hitchinson, so I left much of the Commercial Operations updates for his session.

I then went on to explore ongoing volunteering efforts in all weathers: restoring the canal, maintaining the works already cleared, staffing a stand, operating a trip boat, helping organise events or one of the officers of the branch. Also new this year has been volunteering to support the Transitions Project – a whole new audience and set of potential funders to engage with. There is a steady stream of offers from external organisations to team up for their CSR (Corporate Social

Responsibility) programmes. I have been liaising via Branch Chairs and WPOs, but I repeated my appeal for someone to take on the role of volunteering coordinator: a role to collate all incoming requests, linking up with the Branch Chairs and WPOs and seeing if we can broker a match. This would be an ideal self-contained role for anyone thinking of trying out some volunteering. To give a flavour of those CSR groups asking to help, we had offers of groups to volunteer from (alphabetical order): BT Advise Verify, MoD Bristol, Nationwide, Network Rail, Phoenix Enterprises, private individuals, Scouts, Science and Technology Facilities Council, Swindon Autism Partnership Board, Volunteering Matters, Vodafone. Some of these offers we are able to match up, some not. Some of the issues that prevent a match include:

- mid-week vs weekend;
- summer (nice weather) vs out of bird nesting season (main activity for larger groups is often scrub bashing);
- location – some groups are very specific;
- liaison and response with Branch Chairs and WPOs in a timely manner;
- someone to manage these liaisons would really help.

I also gave a special mention for the H4H project supported by the Post Code Lottery at Pewsham, six weeks in June/July – building entrance to Pewsham top lock, children's play area with narrow boat laid out, strimming / mowing, maintain styles, fencing and the progress they were making to enable this activity to contribute towards C&G qualifications.

I went on to maintenance; some areas of significant concern where stretches have previously been cleared but then left fallow. We need all areas to complete their local maintenance plans to help quantify the issues and help raise local awareness in their teams on the importance of keeping on top of this. Clearing a section and then letting it go back to a wild state sends a particularly unwelcome signal to our potential supporters. I also explained how the Maintenance Policy is structured and related to the local maintenance plans. We have commissioned a Biodiversity framework which we hope to publish shortly.

This year, my H&S Officer role has been

dominated by the tragic accident at Pewsham.

I am pleased to report we are receiving excellent advice and support from the team appointed by our insurers. Resolution of situations like this typically takes years, rather than weeks or months. Pewsham has cast a very long shadow across everyone affected and, most of all, Peter's family and friends.

Immediately after the accident, the Trust implemented a voluntary ban on all works bar maintenance as a precaution. We have told WPOs that they may do projects beyond maintenance if they come to me with their plans and safety systems for review and approval prior to starting work. Certain approved works are in place, but still highly restricted. We are continuing to cooperate closely with the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as it continues its investigations.

As well as liaising with the HSE, we have been

running a 'task force' to review processes and approach, reviewing and approving, or suggesting modifications to documentation for tasks undertaken by the Trust.

The Task Force's work is focused on two areas.

The first is Pewsham-specific, working towards putting in place appropriate measures for completion of the project. The HSE tends to look at things on a site-by-site basis, the normal 'unit of measure' it is used to, and we have adopted this approach on its suggestion. This work is being carried out to establish effective procedures, training and best practice at Pewsham.

The second area of activity is to consult partner and sister organisations, to benchmark other practices. Based on the information that we receive we may then draw up specific proposals on how to introduce wider procedural changes.

Derek Flexer, Director.

AGM Report - Commercial Operations

The Commercial Operations division has been created in order to increase the income stream, manage down costs and support the Trust's core funding requirements.

We will be building on the established and well-developed Boat Operations and Information Centre platforms, further developing the Merchandising sales, including draw tickets, membership numbers and, in the future, we hope that the Peterborough Arms will be added to the Division's portfolio.

We will also seek to develop new and sustainable income streams by optimizing the use of the Trust's assets.

The Boat Team

The new team was formed just before Christmas 2016 and has built on a sound base. They have recruited six new skippers and increased the number of crew members. Ideally we require more volunteers to maximize the income stream from this asset.

The Trust's trip boat **nb Dragonfly** is currently unable to use the Waitrose landing stage due to a partial closure of the canal nearby for unassociated works that are out of our control. We have been quoted a closure time of between six and twelve months. In the meantime our Santa trips have been relocated from our old base at Kings Hill and although this change has been difficult to manage, bookings for Santa trips continue to roll in.

The Boat Team carries out a very professional job and continues to develop the key operational processes to ensure that the boat, skippers and crew are fully compliant. Keith Lambert has boosted this process by agreeing to take up the role of Boat Team Training Officer.

Once this stretch of canal is re-opened in 2018 we hope to increase the booking and charter numbers as we start to maximize the potential of this wonderful Trust asset.

The Information Centre

The Information Team Centre, led by Darrell Donaldson, has also done a superb job, and last year topped the leader board for recruiting new members (19%). The Information Centre in Swindon opens 4 days a week although with more volunteers we could open 6 days a week. If you live within striking distance of Swindon, and have a few hours to spare on a regular basis, please speak to Darrell.

Merchandise

Thanks to Diana Hunter for managing this part of the operation.

Merchandise sales are low and I plan to visit Branches in order to understand the difficulties they face in further developing this area.

The Prize Draw

Thank you too, for all of you who entered this year's prize draw, which supported the Land Fund

and raised over £4,760 of which £3,500 was profit. Some of this was made up of generous donations. Each year, with more members requesting Dragonfly magazine in electronic form, the sales

of our tickets, which are sent out by post with the magazine, are dwindling. I would welcome ideas as to how we can increase our prize draw ticket sales.

Malcolm Hitchinson, Director

Around The Branches

A brief summary of what's happening along the line.

MELKSHAM, CALNE AND CHIPPENHAM AND FOXHAM & LYNEHAM SUB BRANCH

Chairman:

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

Secretary:

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

The *Mary Archard* official launch

What a great day we had on Saturday 14 October when the *Mary Archard* was officially launched by Mary's god-daughter Chris Knight. We had a number of official guests, including Chris and members of her family, local Councillors from the Pewsham and England's wards (where the old branch line ran), the Chippenham Town mayor and our local MP Michelle Donelan. It was good of them to give up a Saturday to help us celebrate the launch of a craft that will enable less able bodied folk to enjoy our waterways as part of the celebrations they also enjoyed their trip on the *Mary Archard*. Many thanks to those Branch members who helped on the day, in particular Fiona who organised and managed the refreshments, Alan who was the display lead, Val with her meet and greet team, Brian who kindly organised and drove the minibus, and Derek and Rob who skippered the boat. Of course we had a work party on that day as well and the volunteers helped set up and then set off for a day of hard graft pulling up weeds and bull rushes from the canal bed, so well done and thanks to those guys as well. We are also grateful to Andy Beadsley from the Wheely Boat Trust (<http://www.wheelyboats.org/>) who helped us find a suitable craft at a good price.

I have had a number of emails back from our

invited guests saying how much they enjoyed the day, and all of our guests stayed much longer than I had anticipated. Those councillors who also sit on the Chippenham Area Board were pleased to see how donated monies had been spent in the Pewsham area.

Pewsham Top Lock

Volunteers continue with work at Pewsham Top Lock and have done a marvellous job of reconstructing the northern wing walls, which had been covered by soil for many many years. They have now moved onto the southern wing walls to carry on with a retaining wall that will help protect the tow path. The mid week work party team are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so if you can spare a few hours or a day during the week please contact Ray Canter on raycanter@btinternet.com or 07717 536883.

Melksham Link

(see separate report on river walk (pages 17/18))

The next survey to be done before winter is the Geomorphological Walk Over. Funding was found locally and the survey will be carried out imminently.

The drawing revisions needed for the Addendum Report have been completed.

It is hoped that the go-ahead for the theoretical studies can be given before the end of the year but this depends on funding.

At a site meeting at Semington, Wessex Water indicated that they will be able to carry out the necessary water main diversion within the required budget as part of the Phase 1 works providing that excavation can be done by others.

Ale, Cider and Sausage Festival

Another successful Ale, Cider and Sausage festival was held at the Assembly Hall in Melksham. Over 80 people attended to sample the range of Oxfordshire ales and ciders along with sausages

from local butchers. There was a lot of interest in our display boards – plenty of publicity which of course spread the word about the fact we exist. Thanks to all who helped make the day a success but especially to JG (publicity), Val (and her kitchen team), the bar staff and reception staff and of course to those who paid to attend.

Dave Maloney

ROYAL WOOTTON BASSETT

Chairman:

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

Secretary:

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

All of those who knew him were saddened to learn of the death of Ron Robertson very recently. We always considered Ron as a member of our Branch at Royal Wootton Bassett but he did so much over the years for so many branches others will think the same.

He was mainly a bricklayer but had a lifetime of experience doing so many hands-on jobs that he accumulated a wealth of practical experience. When he started with us many years ago he very soon 'knocked up' a footbridge over the canal and built the slipway at the end of the canal. He was that sort of person. Ron spent many hours laying bricks at Dunnington aqueduct when the south face and tunnel were restored. When we built Chaddington lock and tail bridge with so much construction work he did much of the bricklaying and was able to guide us on how to do so many of the other tasks that had to be done. I don't think we would have contemplated building the tail bridge without his guidance; as a bunch of amateurs we were so proud when we took the scaffold down and the bridge stayed up. Ron was a quiet and undemanding man, enjoying the simple things in life and always prepared to work hard for anything he acquired or achieved. In recent years he wouldn't be defeated by his inability to walk far and frequently visited our work parties on his electric buggy. I think he took that buggy to every far corner of our patch and more than once we had to pull him out of the mud. Others will be able to tell of the work he did for them. He will be missed.

There were another busy few months when we spent some time working on our four different sites. We applied to the land agent as we do at this time

each year for a licence to work at Dunnington Aqueduct where our task is to clear the summer scrub growth from around the structure and canal bed. We have only had a couple of work parties there but already we have made a great difference. There will be more work parties there through the winter.

At Templars Firs we have had a number of sessions mowing and strimming the paths and clearing weed from the canal at the far end. We have a path along both sides of the canal but they have not joined up at the far end. However, a small temporary bridge has been installed across the stream and we now have a very pleasant circular walk around the canal about a mile and a half long.

The narrow boat *nb Nonsuch* was at Templars Firs for a long weekend in September, organised by Steve Bacon. His account of the visit can be found on page 24.

At Chaddington the grass has been mowed and strimmed and a number of odd jobs done. We have a small paddock which is mowed several times a year but this takes most of a day with someone walking behind our Honda mower. The Chaddington Section of canal, which we own, runs through sixty acres of the last 2% of unimproved meadowland in England though there is no preservation order to protect it. This year there has been a spectacular show of wild flowers at the time when Wiltshire Council put the land up for sale. There were fears that any farmer buying the land would want to develop it for agricultural use. There is very good news that Wiltshire Wildlife Trust have purchased Morningside Farm dependent on them finding sufficient funds. We are planning to have a

meeting with them soon to discuss how we can each follow our aims whilst promoting the benefits of having a restored canal with a wildlife area wrapped around it. It could become quite an attraction.

We were unable to spend time at Studley through the summer because of the remaining engineering work which had to be completed. However we were keen to allow members to be able to walk the site on the day of the AGM. When we did gain access, a few weeks before the AGM we were faced with a towpath untouched all summer. We had a few weeks before the AGM to get it sorted and to get

the interpretation boards and brass rubbing plaques in place. It's surprising how long 1.2 km is when it has to be strimmed and mowed but it was all done and looked quite good for the AGM. We had about eighty members taking a walk along and the weather was kind to us. We have plans to erect fencing on the side of the towpath and to create a new path from the end of the towpath across the restored land fill site from where it is a short distance to the Garden Centre and a cup of tea.

Why not come along and join a work party one Wednesday? It would be good to see some new faces.

John Bower

SWINDON

Chairman:

Rod Hacker, 11 Whittington Road, Swindon, SN5 7DF

Tel: 07840 072817

Secretary:

John Farrow

Tel: 01793 490672

Roll on Summer, or at least Spring, but meanwhile we have the season of good cheer to get us through well into the New Year. As I write, the Dragonfly Santa trips are under way and there are signs of progress on various canal projects around the town - so no need to be too gloomy.

Work on Phase 1 of the closed section of canal at Wichelstowe is nearing completion. Phase 2, which includes surfacing of the towpath and planting on that section as well as restoring the southern section with new hard edge next to the new pub and district centre should be completed by mid-summer. We can hope to get back to Waitrose landing stage then.

A recent joint exhibition held in Waitrose of the plans for the secondary school, pub and restaurant, retirement homes, and houses on the canal side was very well attended. Our team took a small exhibit there. The area will look different from the present rural scene when it is built up but the prognostication is that it will look very good. 300 new households will be there to sign up as members. And of course the pub will be open. The school is already under construction and the other developers expect to start on site in 2018. You can also find more news and details on the official website.

We hope soon to see the plans for the next phase which is for the new town square and an impressive footbridge across the canal in front of Waitrose.

No sign yet of a move towards constructing the

link to join Canalside to the length in East Wichel but maybe progress on the central section will re-awaken the whole project. Also, the developer still awaits the planning approval for the Croft Road Business Village which includes a short section of canal and will be the stimulus for us to get on with the other short piece to link it back to East Wichel.

We are not anywhere near so far down the road at the New Eastern Villages. We had objected in 2016 to the planning application for the Lotmead and Lower Lotmead Villages and sustained the objection through the public inquiry in November. The objection was because the scheme seriously prejudiced the construction of the canal and failed to address the flood issues through the whole valley. Several trust members attended the public inquiry which ran over 10 days. We made our case and presented new evidence in response to the last minute efforts by the developer to come up with a viable canal alignment through the development area. Our case for an integrated flood scheme design for the whole valley, which of course includes building the canal, is less clear cut in terms of failure to meet planning policy but we were supported by the statements made by local parish councils and the Wanborough Anti-Flood Group.

The results of the appeal will not be known for some months because the inspector has to write a report and make recommendations for a decision by the Secretary of State. However, we think that if the appeal is successful we will have agreed an acceptable scheme through the development which

will be protected by planning conditions. The trust will continue to press the council to address the flood issues with a proper and comprehensive study.

Workparty-wise, the guys continue to do a good job on maintenance of hedges, trees and the canal environs while continually diverting to drag life belts out of the water yet again. Some more clearance to expose the faces of the aqueduct deep under the canal by Skew Bridge has revealed that some restoration there is long overdue. Mouldon Hill length and the aqueduct there are also looking much more cared-for.

We did look at enlarging the slipway at our compound so that we can turn Dragonfly there and even launch larger small craft – if you see what I mean. A friendly ecologist advised that with at least

three water vole burrows within 10m there was no chance until we can have them cleared. Spring is the earliest possible date so that is another interesting project on the back burner for a while.

We can start to think of plans for summer of 2018, such as which events we will attend or run ourselves and who will volunteer. A small team has offered to reinstate at least one branch social event so let's give them all our support. It would be nice to plan ahead and work up some interesting projects instead of being reactive all the time. Are there any projects or activities that you would like to see us undertake? Do let me know or come along to our branch meetings and have your say.

Seasonal best wishes to all from our branch members.

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

Here in West Vale the pond in the Canalside Park is completely dry. I have never seen the pond dried out completely before; usually something resembling a swamp remains in the bottom throughout the summer, soon to be refilled for the next nine months by autumn rains, but not this year!

The pond is at the edge of the 'wild end' of the park, where we leave Mother Nature to get on with it, but now and then we have to give her a bit of a helping hand. We do get wildlife that prefers a more open habitat so we have occasionally to give the more invasive scrub a bit of a bashing to keep it under control. This can be time consuming and hard work so we are to enlist the help of some mechanical assistance from the Trust's tractor mower and flails! The tractor fitted with a rear flail mower will be able to cut back to ground level quickly and easily all the rough growth and small emerging scrub thus allowing the finer flora, (and then fauna) to flourish! Also, the tractor has a hedge-cutting attachment so that should also save us a lot of time on tow path hedgerow maintenance and also will be able to deal with tow path and bank side scrub and vegetation invasion. Early in December we are to hold training courses on the finer points of safely operating and maintaining the

tractor and its attached equipment. Several branches are to send volunteers.

Maintenance is all important. We are, as ever, short of volunteers and there are always unexpected jobs to cope with every week. And some take a lot of 'dealing with'! Take the multi-stemmed willow tree that took it in its mind to split and collapse in a summer storm. Just two branches split, right in the centre of the surrounding branches, falling diagonally opposite to each other, perfectly blocking two paths! What with the other smaller unexpected jobs that urgently needed doing, it took our Wednesday work parties five weeks to cut it up and clear away the debris. Another job was to repair the path through the kissing gate by the pond. Unfortunately, some walkers and joggers avoid opening the gate to get through by swinging round the gate post and out over the edge of the pond and this had resulted in the path edge being eroded by the pond making it difficult for those who use the gate properly. A work party, a plank and several wheelbarrows of stone fixed it, but it took time!

A few more volunteers wouldn't half help though!
Merry Christmas!

Alan Norris

EAST VALE

Chairman:

Brian Stovold, 1 Roman Way, Wantage, Oxon. OX12 9YF

Tel. 01235 763072

Secretary:

Chris Naish, 5 Tirrold Way, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7DL

Tel 01235 769615

Wantage Dickensian evening took place on 1 December, with the Sackhouse open for the evening. The East Vale marquee was in its usual position and welcoming all oncomers.

That was the last opening for the Sackhouse this year, re-opening in April. Special tours can still be arranged via myself.

The building work at Stockham Phase 1, the Bovis bit, seems to be coming to a conclusion. Delighted to see this week that a digger was removing the rubbish on the canal near Denchworth Road where the builders had used the canal bed as a general storage area! Shame as it had been quite reasonable before. I walked around Old Canal View which is not quite strictly true as the canal runs in a cutting at that point but the general principle is sound. A nice gate has been installed in the fence, giving access to the track across the remains of Hunters Bridge. We don't as yet have permission to work along the canal here, but a reminder to all that part of the Land Agreement for the Phase 2 development on the North side of the canal (also now well on the way to completion) is that once we get planning permission for the new route of the canal (towards Downsview Road) then we get the land. A preliminary application has been submitted to the District Council and Ken has held meetings with the relevant officers. The next stage is to work up a full planning application. The exact scope is yet to be decided but I expect that it will include; the canal west of Stockham Bridge, (more on that in a bit), the extant cutting east of Stockham bridge, the new canal route to Downsview Road, and thence across Denchworth Road into Wasborough Field and then in turn into the Elm Farm pound below Grove Top Lock.

Back to Stockham Phase 3: much consternation locally as the builders have put a causeway across the canal. This was to enable them to take heavy machinery to the field to the north which is going to be open space. This seems to have necessitated completely taking the field apart and putting it back together again! The causeway will be removed once they have finished work and replaced with a bridge.

Unfortunately, and this cuts a rather long story short, despite best endeavours by our land team and support from the planning officer the bridge design as last seen would not be of navigable standards! Something else to change in due course. Perhaps when the planning permission is in they may take us more seriously! The footpath through here is rather boggy and in stark contrast to the nice section westwards (which we own!). I see that the really boggy bit by the causeway has now had some remedial work. I must thank the local contacts for keeping me up to date on activities on the canal as whilst I try to head down there quite regularly it doesn't always happen!

So much for Stockham at the moment.

At the Challows, initial work should be commencing shortly on attending to some of the trees along the section which are in need of attention. During the early part of the year we will start gradual management of the hedges and overgrowth in the canal bed. Obviously we will be keeping clear of bird nesting season (nice to think ahead to Spring when it's really cold outside).

Thanks to all those helping with the planning going forward.

The Monday Mob held a general maintenance work party this month along the Childrey New Road section. My thanks to the team and Work Party Organiser Jon. The Maintenance work parties are an essential part of our work, as I have said many times before. More volunteers to help with strimming and mowing would be extremely welcome.

We still need more signed-up Work Party Organisers to keep up with our workloads and with the new work coming along, if anyone out there is interested please do contact me.

Finally, It was a delight to be able to walk along the Studley Grange section of newly restored canal. A great achievement of which the Trust should be proud. At an adjacent weekend I had the chance to go on trailboat *Nonsuch* along the Templars Firs section. It was a joy to watch the kingfishers flying along the canal and the water voles on the bankside seemingly oblivious to the boat.

Happy Christmas and a very happy New Year.

Brian Stovold

Branch Meeting & Contact Details

The Melksham Calne and Chippenham branch meet at Rachel Fowler Centre, Melksham, at 19:45hrs on the first Tuesday of each month.

MELKSHAM CALNE & CHIPPENHAM WORK PARTY INFORMATION:

Organiser: Ray Canter: raycanter@btinternet.com, Tel 01249 659111, Mob 07717 536883

Work Parties: First Saturday & last Sunday each month

Details of the work parties are circulated by e-mail. Any member wishing to be included in this circulation please contact Ray

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

WOOTTON BASSETT WORK PARTY INFORMATION:

Organisers:

John Bower, 20 Glebe Road, Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire SN4 7DU

Tel 01793 636297

Richard Hawkins

Tel 01793 814959

Work Parties:

There are midweek and some weekend work parties. Please phone for details.

Work involves some maintenance of the existing canal area.

The Swindon Branch usually meets on the 1st Tuesday of every second month at 19:30hrs. Next meeting 06 February.

Check website or get on the branch email list for details.

SWINDON WORK PARTY INFORMATION:

Organiser:

Oliver Gardiner Tel: 07785 775993

Work Parties:

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

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

WEST VALE WORK PARTY INFORMATION:

Organisers:

Workparty details from West Vale Branch Work Party Organiser & Volunteering co-ordinator –

Alan Norris alan.norris@wbct.org.uk or phone 01793 783024

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

EAST VALE WORK PARTY INFORMATION:

Organiser:

Bob Airey Tel 01235 769469, John Miles 01235 764890

Work Parties:

Second and fourth Saturday of the month with changes at public holiday times.

The East Vale work sites are: Childrey New Road; West Challow; Elm Farm section; and Grove Locks. Contact WPO for details.

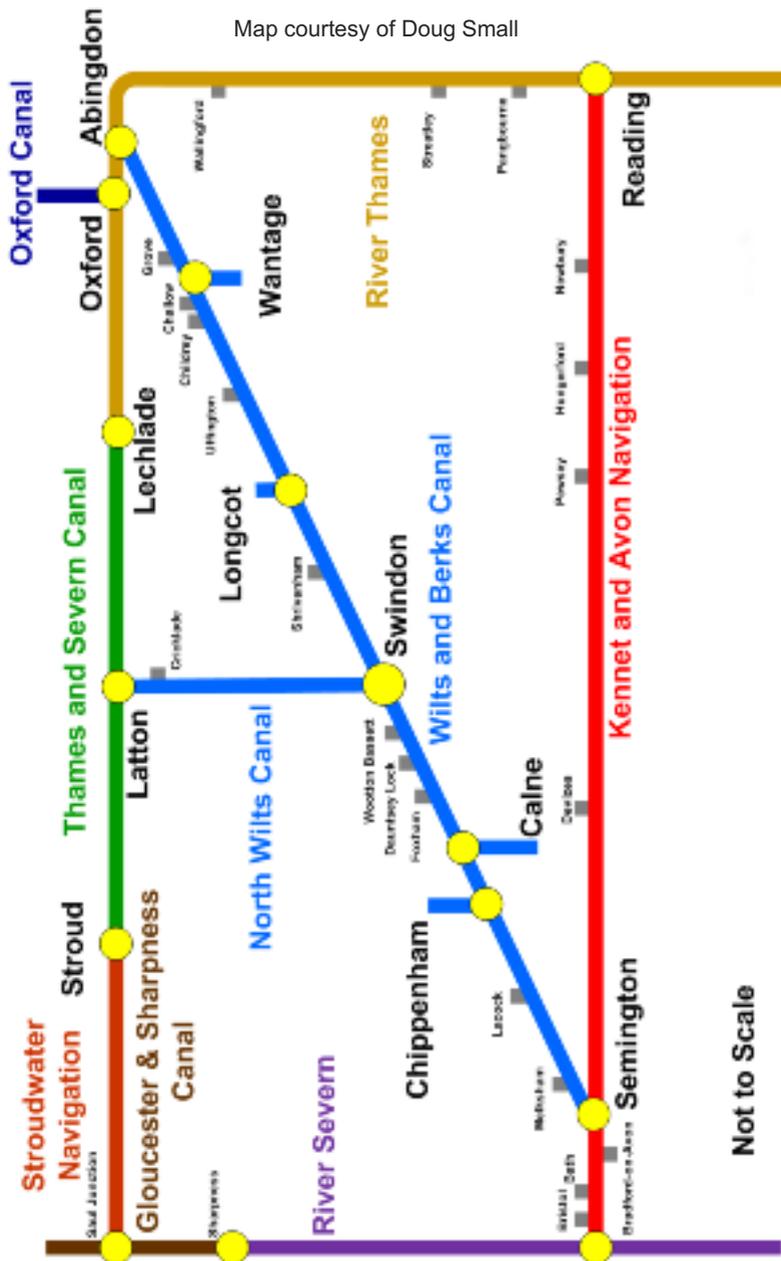


MCC Beer Festival - Article pages 36/37



MCC Mary Archard Launch - Article pages 36/37

Map courtesy of Doug Small



Dragonfly Available as a PDF via email. Please contact membership@wbct.org.uk

Dragonfly 148

The next edition of Dragonfly will be published in April 2018
Please send articles for inclusion by 01 March 2018