



Wendover Arm News

Newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust



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*Price £1 where sold
Free to members*



Above - road closed for rebuilding Little Tring Bridge 24th July 2000
Below - Official opening of phase 1 28th March 2005



We are 21 This Year!!



The Wendover Arm Trust marks its 21st anniversary this year so we thought we would take some time to look at a few of our achievements over the years and to relive some of the remarkable occasions we have experienced. The next couple of editions will be a trip down memory lane for many of you as we revisit old festivals, go back to the days of scrub bashing and recall some of the things we have done to raise money for the restoration over the years.

Restoration proper started in 1996. Prior to that all the effort was focused on fund raising with some scrub bashing thrown in, indeed there was a great deal of soul searching before the decision was made to start spending

the money that had been so hard to come by. In hind sight it can be said that the right decision was made at the time. Success breeds success and the transformation has been truly remarkable.

There is a long way still to go: our front cover illustrates that the distance to Wendover from the Bulbourne Junction has not changed much over the years however the certainty that our goal will be achieved has been cemented in all our minds.

Stop Press!

Please see Roger Leishman's letter to the membership on the back page

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Air Training Corp Involvement 1993

Being a member of WAT and also the Duke of Edinburgh Award organiser at the ATC, writes Jenny Brice, I decided that I could combine the two, with both benefiting.

Each Sunday I and 4 boys joined in the monthly shrub bashing, which through a 6 month commitment enabled them to obtain their Silver Community Awards.

The boys were picked up in our mini bus with various gardening tools provided by their parents and a packed lunch. The packed lunch seem to disappear during the 45 minute journey and some of the very new tools came home rather worse for wear. The parents never complained they just seemed glad to dispatch their 14 year old boys off to a worthwhile cause.

The boys were enthusiastic and could destroy bushes quickly,

although with not much expertise. Their favourite part of the day was the bonfire they could feed this and keep it going for hours. At the end of the day, the party were decidedly smelly and quiet with exhaustion during the return journey.

Unfortunately the Health and Safety Laws changed which restricted any individuals from being aged below 16. .

As well as helping the Trust at least 2 of these boys continued with their Canal interest by joining the Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) while at university. Well things come full circle and 15 years later I retired, and decided what better way of keeping fit than joining the working parties. I note there might be a minimum age to join, but there is certainly no maximum to take part.



Bank Lining 2010

The hard labour has not gone but we are much more mechanised these days, without the plant the task would take a lifetime and would most definitely be a job for younger people. On a typical working party weekend small band of volunteers pitch up on the day. Using plant and equipment a great deal can be achieved even with that small number, without mechanical help we would be still be working on the first phase of the project.

In the photo below two excavators are working with teams of volunteers covering Bentomat liner with spoil. The spoil is being fetched in, using a tracked dumper, from bank profiling operations further up the canal utilising a third excavator. With this level of mechanisation we start to think more of the skills of the volunteers than their ability to labour for a full day at a time. The man hours alone saved by mechanisation pays dividends.



Bridges for Cars and Bridges for People



The bridge at Little Tring was the first one to be tackled and paid for by the Trust. The original bridge had been demolished in 1973 and replaced by a solid earth embankment carrying the road over the canal, cutting across the route of the canal and completely blocking its path. The demolition of the original bridge was carried out despite strong protests by many local residents.

The new bridge was built by contractors to a specification approved jointly by the Trust and

British Waterways that includes the attractive brick cladding and the 17degree skewed brickwork under the arch. The aesthetic brickwork covers a massive reinforced concrete structure necessary to comply with present legislation and today's traffic requirements.

Two pedestrian bridges, 4 and 4A, both to the same specification have been erected to take public footpaths over the canal. They have proved very popular with walkers as they offer fine

views of the surrounding country side.

Saxon bridge spans the canal carrying the new A41. When it was built it was necessary to divert the canal so that the bridge could offer the necessary draft for boats to pass under it, the work being carried out by the same contractors who were constructing the new road.

The bridge was named “Saxon Bridge” because, during the construction of the A41, and very near to the site of the bridge an ancient burial ground was uncovered. It was discovered that the grave contained the remains of a young lady and the artefacts buried with her proved that she was a Saxon of noble birth. The body and artefacts were removed and taken to a local museum.

IWA Supports the Wendover Arm Trust

IWA Chiltern Branch has supported the Tring Festival from the beginning. During this time the members have volunteered for many different types of



fund raising during the Festival. Originally we manned the refreshment tent, this was provided by National Westminster Bank free of charge to charities, as long as they collected and returned to the base. Unfortunately NO instructions were included with this large but old marquee, so the first time it was used the erection was quite a struggle.

John, Jenny Brice with Ray and the late Anne Powell outside marquee

Our next venture was the IWA second hand book stall (Bookstall1992). This proved popular, but was amalgamated with the WRG Stall at later festivals. Adrian Bull with his young family.



About this time Adrian Bull and John Brice dreamed up, a fund raising idea which could be transported around festivals. So the Chiltern Tunnel was born, this took shape during the winter months and was made out of everyone's scrap material. Painted with any old paint, but to great effect. This was used for many years at various festivals. (ChilternTunnel) Adrian Bull checking on the progress of a legger.



These are but a few examples of IWA Chiltern Branch activities in support of the WAT—more innovative fund raising activities in future issues of Wendover Arm News.

Grand Draw Update

We normally get about half our Grand Draw income at the festival, in May, but of course this year that opportunity is denied us.

So what do we do about it – print 20% extra tickets, that's what!

Why? Well we will be having our marquee at various events* up and down the waterways, and expect to offer our excellent prizes to more of the general public, hopefully making up for the loss of Grand Draw ticket sales at our own festival.

The other way we sell our tickets is to WAT members – that's why two books of tickets are included with this newsletter.

If you don't feel able to buy the tickets yourself, please ask friends and family. Tickets are one pound each, and more are available if you give me a call on 07860 286155.

Keep the tickets, return the stubs (don't forget to put a name and phone number down) and the money (cheques to Wendover Arm Trust) by 30th July, please.

The Grand Draw will be drawn on Monday 30th August at Beale Park, Pangbourne.

Thank you. With your help we will go a long way to compensate for not having a festival this year.

Bob Wheal

*We are at the Marsworth Boat Festival (Jun 5th/6th); Linslade Canal Festival (Jul 31st); and the National Waterways Festival at Pangbourne (Aug 28th/29th/30th) as well as other smaller events before August. Come along and help if you can – you will be welcomed.

A Record Breaking Club 100 Draw Pays Out BIG Cash Prizes....

As a result of our publicity campaign to promote the club 100 lottery scheme in the Winter newsletter, 29 additional members joined, buying a total of 53 lucky numbers between them. Together with the long standing members, this brought the total to a staggering 138, way in excess of Katherine's target to have 100 subscribers for our 21st anniversary year.

The club 100 lottery has been running twelve and a half years and has a unique formula so that approximately half of the subscription fees go into the prize fund and the other share to restoration funds. Therefore the size of the prize fund is dependent on the number of subscriptions taken out, the more subscribers, the bigger the prizes. Since the first draw, over £8,500 has been paid out in prizes and another £8,500 deposited in the restoration kitty.

The 51st draw was made at the April Council Meeting and a new larger box had to be brought into use as there were so many more tickets to

shake, rattle and roll; so that they could be mixed up thoroughly to give everyone an equal chance of winning.

The lucky winners were:

1st – Mr Donald Smart - £165.60

2nd – Mr John Wheatcroft - £69.00

3rd – Mr John Precious - £27.60

Congratulations to our winners!

It is not too late to sign up to Club 100 and be in with a chance of winning a nice sum of money; after all you have to be in it to win it! The 2nd and 3rd prize winners only signed up recently and have recouped their investment and more, just from one draw. It shows it is possible.

Each lucky number costs £15 per year, which entitles entry into four consecutive draws. Payment can be made by cheque or by standing order. If you would like to join club 100, please contact Katherine membership@wendoverarmtrust.co.uk or phone 01442 246523.

5 New Bridge Plaques

Since the last issue of the news letter there have been 5 new plaques installed on bridges 4 and 4A.

- A step plaque in memory of Anne Grant MBE
- A stanchion plaque in memory of John S Cottrell
- A stanchion plaque in memory of Mary Lillford
- A stanchion plaque for John & Priscilla Wheatcroft
- A stanchion plaque for James and Dorothy Brown

What Does your Membership Mean?

Being a member of the Wendover Arm Trust is like being an investor in a business, whose aim is to restore the canal to navigation from Bulbourne Junction to Wendover.

The investment you make is your annual membership fee plus any additional donations to the Blockaid appeal for example or buying a bridge plaque or share in the club 100 lottery scheme. In return for your investment, the Trust offers several benefits which could be described as the dividend. All members are sent this newsletter keeping you up to date with current activities including actual restoration progress, fund raising events and historical information about the canal. Your being a part of the Wendover Arm Trust gives us have a bigger voice when dealing with statutory bodies and when applying for grants.

You may wonder if this is a sure-fire investment, well the Trust is celebrating its 21st anniversary this year and has made great progress in terms of actual restoration of the canal to navigation and the behind the scenes work of running the organisation and raising the money to pay for the work. Since the initial pioneers set up the company in 1988, hundreds of people have been investing and getting regular returns on their investment.

Some members also invest their time and expertise at the working parties or doing some of the back office work, like membership, finance and newsletter production. We all work for this great company because we are passionate about the Wendover Arm and want to see the restoration progress all the way to Wendover. In return we meet new people, make new friends, share ideas and learn new skills, plus having fun thrown in.

So to answer my initial question, being a member of the Trust makes a HUGE difference, so thank-you for being a part of a great organisation. If you would like to automatically pay your membership fees by standing order, please get in touch with Katherine who can send you the bank mandate form. Please email her at membership@wendoverarmtrust.co.uk or call 01442 246523.

We still have 74 founder memberships that were started in 1989, so congratulations to all these members for giving 21 years of support to the Trust. We would like to extend our thanks to all our members new and long standing for choosing to support the Trust by becoming a member.

March Working Party

The working party was a great success including having seven days of dry weather – just to emphasise this it rained the day after the working party ended!

80 metres of Bentomat lining and hollow block work along both banks were completed by the Tuesday. On the Wednesday and Thursday nearly all the solid blocks along both banks were laid. Eddy Evan's hydraulic lifting grab was a great success eliminating the need for manual loading of the blocks into dumpers at

Little Tring. Only about 500 blocks remain to be laid plus the coir rolls along the top.

It did demonstrate that the policy of concentrating on one operation at a time pays dividends and this will be so for all future work.

Below is the scene on the last day – the temporary bund at the end of Stage 1 will be just in front of where the excavator is standing.



Compare the scene above with October 2009, shown below, only four working parties ago!



April Working Party

Again we were blessed with dry weather for this working party. The few remaining blocks and concrete seal for the bund were completed on the Friday and work commenced on placing spoil on 160 metres of bank, 80 metres each side.

We experimented with a third excavator to load the two dumpers that were feeding the two exca-

vators placing the spoil on the banks, one either side. This was not wholly successful because the intention to carry on with bulk excavation of Stage 2 when spoil was not needed for bank filling failed because we were short of volunteers and had to use the dumper drivers to assist in placing spoil on the banks.

Only 80 metres of bed lining from the small bund in the middle dis-

tance and the temporary bund at the end of the stage remain to be completed – hopefully at the May working party, The 50 metre mooring bay can be seen on the towpath side in the distance.

Laying some 5,000 blocks along the two banks over 80 metres of

canal is hard work, especially for the older volunteers. Next time I am hoping we can enlist younger volunteers for mass block laying, e.g. trainees from RAF Halton for a weekend. The biggest problem will be keeping them supplied with blocks fast enough from Little Tring.

May Working Party

The last 80 metres of bed lining will be completed as well as the temporary bund. We intend to use 8 ton excavators to give extra reach over the Bentomat as it is unrolled and also for placing spoil over the bund. Spoil for this work will come from bulk excavation for Stage 2. Three rolls of Bentomat will have to be cut up to provide a total of 5 x 20 metre rolls.

Another priority will be to excavate for and construct the Stage 2 mooring bay in order to complete at least the base before the winter weather. Fortunately the towpath bank swings in from the canal at a suitable point so this will minimise the excavation required.

KESCRG (Kent and East Sussex Canal Restoration Group) are also visiting us on Saturday to Monday of the May working party and will be working at Bridge 4. They will pour concrete for the

next base of the mooring bay, erect the steel formwork for the first wall section and strip and re-assemble the base formwork for another pour. They will also work on the initial clearance of the Whitehouses old pumping station site to try and expose better details of what lies below ground level.

Good Relations

It is very heartening that the two farmers on each side of Stage 1, at their suggestion, are co-operating in trimming the boundary hedges – you can see this in the middle picture opposite where the offside hedge has been trimmed during the winter, the Trust having trimmed back the canal side of the hedge. On the other side the Trust have cleared some old elders and left specimen trees so that the farmer can trim the hedge right across to the towpath.

Progress Report

Another six months and it is again time for me to report progress, writes Roger Leishman. As you have read, Stage 1 is virtually complete and it is now possible to say that, in round figures it will have cost £130,000.

This is less than my initial estimate of £176,550, partly due to Herts County Council allowing us to tip spoil on their land near Bridge 4A.

This means that Stage 1 has cost £400 per metre and, bearing in mind that the initial work on this stage was experimental in design and a long learning curve, I would hope that this cost plus inflation can be maintained for the remaining stages.

My best estimate now is that Phase II will cost around £1 million and be completed in 2017

We have now put in over £½ million of voluntary labour effort, a figure that will be very useful for the Trust's Funding Director when he applies for grants.

Yet again, many thanks to Joyce Smith for all the time that she spends in collating our time sheets, a great asset when we require matching funding.

The picture below shows Phase II Stage 1 ready to be filled with water for the first time in over 100 years. May 2010



YOUR VICE-CHAIRMAN SPEAKS

Trying to be Acting Chairman and Restoration Director at the same time leaves me little time to write regular reports in the Trust Newsletter but the current situation requires action sooner rather than later.

This is not an appeal but more of an ultimatum if you want to see the restoration of the Wendover Arm completed. We are short of volunteers on the following four main fronts:

The Trust Council needs more Directors as at present everyone on the Council has specific duties. We badly need new directors without specific responsibilities to take on 'one-off' tasks when they arise. At present these responsibilities fall on the 'faithful few' who are already doing ongoing tasks as secretaries, treasurer and so on. One piece of good news is that we now have a Trust member who is considering taking on the post of Trust Chairman, a current vacancy.

The Trust also needs volunteers, not necessarily Trust Directors, to take on organising the Trust's presence at rallies and the like where a Trust stand not only raises money but most importantly raises the profile of the Trust in the eyes of the public. There is also a need for volunteers to help our Funding Committee in seeking funding sources and help in preparing submissions for grants.

Next, we are concerned that many of our restoration volunteers, some of whom have been with us for ten to fifteen years, are not getting any younger. It is encouraging that we have had new volunteers recently but, as we work mainly on week-days, we rely on retired people a great deal and as the retirement age is going up and the era of early retirement seems to be over, we need a regular influx of new volunteers. Nevertheless those still at work are very welcome when they can come at weekends.

Finally, and very importantly, we need more members, not only to increase our pool of potential volunteers but also to demonstrate our support from the public when applying for grants. I appeal to every Trust member to canvas among relatives, friends, work colleagues and any other acquaintances for new members.

To sum things up, we need Trust members to raise the profile of the Trust, take an active part in raising money, promote the restoration and complete the work, Phase II by volunteers and Phase III mainly by contract.

If you feel you can help in any way please get in touch with me, telephone 01442 874536, mobile phone 07850 170858 or e-mail chairman@wendoverarmtrust.co.uk

On a final note of good news, our volunteers have completed the first 320 metres of the 2,058 metres of Phase II at Drayton Beauchamp and hope to put it in water during the next working party, Friday 4th to Thursday 10th June 2010.

Roger Leishman