

# Wendover Canal News

Restoration Biodiversity Well-being



**WENDOVER**  
CANAL TRUST

2022 Winter  
Issue 3



**BRADLEY & JONES**

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## Chairman's Column



This summer has seen good news for the Wendover Canal on many fronts. Elsewhere in this newsletter you can read the press release about the funding we have received for

towpath improvements for Wendover, and we are still pursuing funding to extend this. Not only will this be a community asset, but also it delivers the bank repairs which will be needed before we can raise the water level all along the canal. Our Patron Sir David Suchet said "I was delighted to read the outcome of the Trust's perseverance in securing the funding for the Towpath Upgrade. It is a great achievement in these difficult times and I congratulate you all."

We were delighted to receive large grants from our local councils in Herts, which we have used to remove a lot more of the Tip infill at Little Tring. Dacorum Borough Council gave us £135,000, and Tring Town Council £20,000. The Wendover Canal Trust thanks both councils for supporting our long-held ambition to open this section

for all to enjoy. For more details of the work of our volunteers, including the removal of 1,400 tonnes of the ash infill, read the restoration summary elsewhere in this newsletter.

We identified at least part of the cause of the water loss between Bridges 4a and 4. This leak is through the one thing we didn't install, the sluice at Whitehouses. This was installed by a CRT contractor, and we are discussing with CRT whether we should repair this on their behalf. We are confident that 4a-to-Whitehouses is not leaking, but have been unable to test Whitehouses-to-4 due to a lack of water (which should soon be available if it rains like it did as I wrote this!).

Feedback suggests that we held a very successful AGM on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, which took place at our longstanding friends, the Dunstable and District Boat Club. We were delighted to welcome Chris Sargeant back onto Council, and he is filling our longstanding vacancy for an Archivist. We also welcomed Ken Palfrey onto Council, who schedules our volunteers and is learning to take over from me as



webmaster. John Rowe, our longstanding Honorary Secretary who stepped down last year, has now chosen to retire from Council – thank you John for your many years of service.



entirely dependent on the availability of funding and volunteers.

To further

widen our reach, we have an additional Patron. Many of us have enjoyed “Canal Boat Diaries” on BBC4 TV. This is almost wholly filmed by and starring Robbie Cumming, and we are delighted that Robbie has agreed to be one our Patrons.

Last time I described the need for us to raise more funds. Our latest estimate is that we have enough until at least the end of March 2024, but will run out some time in the few months afterwards. To support our next bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we have to show that we are being inclusive of our wider community. To support this, more than 100 representatives of local groups will be attending a reception on November 1<sup>st</sup>, and a report of this will be squeezed into this newsletter just before it goes to print. In that meeting, we are celebrating 25 years of volunteer construction. Then we are announcing that at the end of 2025, we expect to complete the canal relining near Tring, and that in 2026 we will start work to raise the water-level to Grand Union Tring Summit-level, all the way to Wendover. This however remains

**Clive Johnson, Chairman**



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## Council members 2022/23

Leadership	Chairman & Webmaster, Twitter & Talks as part of Marketing: Clive Johnson	<a href="mailto:chairman@wendovercanal.org.uk">chairman@wendovercanal.org.uk</a> & <a href="mailto:webmaster@wendovercanal.org.uk">webmaster@wendovercanal.org.uk</a>
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Finance Group	Purchasing Manager: Peter Lockett	<a href="mailto:purchasing@wendovercanal.org.uk">purchasing@wendovercanal.org.uk</a>
	IWA Nominee, Minutes Secretary: Jenny Brice	<a href="mailto:Jenny.brice@wendovercanal.org.uk">Jenny.brice@wendovercanal.org.uk</a>
	Archivist: Chris Sargeant	<a href="mailto:archivist@wendovercanal.org.uk">archivist@wendovercanal.org.uk</a>

Restoration	Site Manager: Mikk Bradley <i>(Mikk Bradley is an observer on Council, where he is also represented by Steve and Will listed below)</i>	<a href="mailto:site.manager@wendovercanal.org.uk">site.manager@wendovercanal.org.uk</a>
	Restoration Project Manager: Steve Chapman	<a href="mailto:steve.chapman@wendovercanal.org.uk">steve.chapman@wendovercanal.org.uk</a>
	Trainer and Team Leader: William Mathew,	<a href="mailto:william.mathew@wendovercanal.org.uk">william.mathew@wendovercanal.org.uk</a>
	Volunteers: Ken Palfrey (Ken reports into Peter Elwin)	<a href="mailto:volunteer@wendovercanal.org.uk">volunteer@wendovercanal.org.uk</a>

Marketing	Head of Marketing & Sales: Bob Wheal	<a href="mailto:sales@wendovercanal.org.uk">sales@wendovercanal.org.uk</a>
	Publicity: Nigel Williams	<a href="mailto:publicity@wendovercanal.org.uk">publicity@wendovercanal.org.uk</a>
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Newsletter Editor: Carol Williams/ Janine Jones [newsletter@wendovercanal.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wendovercanal.org.uk)

## Obituary - Roger Leishman



It was with great sadness that we learned that Roger Leishman passed away on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October at the age of 90. We owe our restoration to Roger and his leadership. If it wasn't for Roger, the Wendover Canal as we now know it might not exist, and our work parties might still be restricted to pruning hawthorn. Roger was a chartered engineer who used to be employed by our railways, building lines & marshalling yards etc - all needing the same skills as canals but without the water. On his retirement, Roger joined the legion of those skilled retirees who devote their lives to serving a charity. We are indeed fortunate that Roger continued his love of the waterways by choosing to lead the restoration of the Wendover Canal.

In 1990 at a planning appeal, he persuaded the Highways Agency to modify the A41 Aston Clinton bypass crossing, with the canal moved slightly to retain headroom for future navigation. He became our Restoration



Director and stayed in that role organising our work parties for many years. In that time he led the completion of the clearance of hawthorn scrub, then he designed our canal construction and relining which we have used ever since. He negotiated to get Little Tring Bridge rebuilt, and was one of the first to pass through it with our Patron David Suchet in 2005. For a short period he additionally served as Treasurer and even Acting Chairman, before retiring as our Vice President. Rest In Peace Roger, we owe you so much, and we will finish your work.

Clive Johnson with information from  
Chris Sargeant and Bob Wheal



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## Work Party Schedules

The Wendover Canal Trust volunteers attend regular restoration working parties managed by our Site Manager Mikk Bradley. We are restoring the Wendover Canal to full navigation, which in turn achieves so much more. Our restoration has achieved considerable Biodiversity Net Gain and continues to do so. Our work also opens access to the canal for people to improve their well-being and enjoy the heritage features.

Restoration working parties are held throughout the year, usually starting on the first Friday of the month, listed below.



2022 December	Friday 2nd for 7 days
2023 January	Friday 6th for 7 days
2023 February	Friday 3rd for 7 days
2023 March	Friday 3rd for 7 days



We need further help for this highly rewarding work; for further information, please contact us at [volunteer@wendovercanal.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@wendovercanal.org.uk)

Any help will be greatly appreciated.



## Tidy Friday; 8:30am - 4pm

Tidy Friday work parties are light work to keep our canal, bridges and towpath looking spick and span and cared for. They are 9am to 2pm on one day each month, organised by John Reynolds. For details or to volunteer phone John on 07787 355515. The provisional days are below.

2022 December	Friday 9th
2023 January	Friday 13th
2023 February	Friday 10th
2023 March	Friday 10th



## Engaging our Local Community

We will be submitting a National Lottery Heritage Fund bid in the new year. It is a key condition that we are able to demonstrate greater inclusivity, which means engagement with the local community in a more effective way so that they understand what we're trying to achieve and to hear their views about it. It was this requirement that gave birth to the idea of our holding a reception to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the



start of restoration, which we held in "Your Café in the Park" in Aston Clinton on 1<sup>st</sup> November. It was attended by about 100 guests from 85 organisations, and a wide range of extremely useful discussions took place during the evening. Our chairman Clive gave a short speech, and Ros Daniels (CRT Director for London and South East) proposed a toast. Over 30 of our volunteers gave up their time to liaise with all of these guests. The pictures show Ros with our Site Manager Mikk Bradley, and a wider view of some of the many attendees.

The event was sponsored by FCC Environment who have been helping us remove the Tip, and also Fairhive Homes, Independent Hire, and Village Environmental Services. We received excellent feedback from those attending, and your trustees will be following up on the discussions in the coming weeks and months. Particular thanks must go to Richard Peel who suggested the idea of a reception in the first place – Richard has been supporting us continuously since then and who will be advising on our NLHF application.



**Ros Daniels, Canal & River Trust & Mikk Bradley, Wendover Canal Trust**

**Peter Elwin, Partnerships Director**

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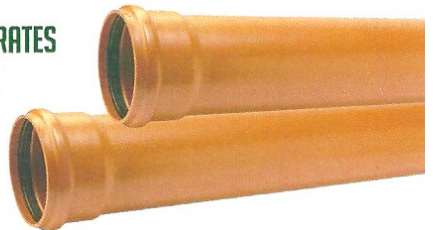
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## Operations Report

This is a summary of our Operations Reports from July 2022 to October 2022, compiled by Clive Johnson from the monthly reports by Mikk Bradley. The full reports can be read on our website. Our volunteers worked for a total of 6 weeks in this period. Visiting Waterway Recovery Group canal camps worked a further 2 weeks, and a travelling WRG group “BITM” also came for a weekend.

### Water loss

Our volunteers have found at least part of the water loss between Bridges 4a and 4. We established that the section from Bridge 4a to Whitehouses has no apparent leakage. However the sluice below the paddle gear at Whitehouses (just visible in the picture below) is leaking. The water then runs away into the bottom of Wilstone reservoir, which is why we haven't found any sign of it.

CRT and Mikk Bradley recently inspected the sluice at Whitehouses and identified that a seal/gasket between the sluice frame and pipe wall has become dislodged. This sluice was installed by a CRT contractor several years ago. We believe that the sluice should be removed from the wall, so that an inspection can be made of the back of the sluice paddle and wall with the intention of effecting a repair of the seal to ensure the sluice does not let water past. CRT have asked if WCT volunteers could carry out the removal, inspection and repair during a work party, and we are seeking approval from CRT.



We have been unable to test whether the section from Whitehouses to Bridge 4 leaks, because of a lack of available water following the recent drought. So

we don't yet know if the Whitehouses sluice is the cause of some, or all, of the water loss.

### Ash removal from the Little Tring tip

Thanks to the grants from Dacorum Borough Council and Tring Town Council, we have made further considerable progress with the ash removal in the second week of the August work party. There was an average of 5 volunteers each day due to the criteria of not having facial hair in order to effect a seal when wearing a face mask, a requirement of the control measures identified in the risk assessment.



A specially-hired 20T excavator dug out the bulk of the ash, which was made much easier because it had a tilt rotator bucket which could be turned sideways or to any angle. A 5T excavator trimmed the sides down to the coal tar layer and moved ash to the 20T excavator.

By the end of the week 70 large lorry loads of ash had been removed, 1400 Tonnes of material. There is more ash to be removed over the next few months, after which the last ash will be left for a couple more years because it is under our volunteers' car park. Well done to the team that spent the week excavating the tip.



While preparing for this work, we discovered that the fence between the canal and a field belonging to Little Tring Farm, had been erected too far into canal land. We had to move the fence back to remove all of the ash in this section.

## Narrows

The WRG canal camps built the block and brick Narrows adjacent to the winding hole.

The first week of the camps focused on building the block walls to the Narrows. Previous WCT work parties had concreted the base slab including the 'starter' bars in the concrete for building into the hollows of the concrete blocks. Much of the first day was spent organising the working area and setting out and levelling the blockwalls.



During the remainder of the first week the block walls were built to height and the hollows filled with concrete. Included in the work was setting up the stainless steel stop plank channels which are built into the walls.



The back of the block walls were painted with a bituminous waterproofing paint and were partly backfilled with spoil excavated from the canal channel and the towpath strengthening wall. The backfill was compacted in layers.



During the middle Saturday, change-over day for the two canal camps, WCT volunteers were on site to carry on with the backfill behind the block walls.



The start of the second week prepared to build the brickwork facing walls. Movement joints between the concrete walls of the winding hole and new blockwork of the narrows were sealed using a poly sulphide sealant. It was reported to be a very sticky job.

The brick courses were carefully laid out to ensure an adequate bond between courses to comply with the specification for the English Bond walls.



Great progress was made and the brickwork was built to the underside of the coping bricks, with some coping bricks laid.

Since the canal camps, our volunteers and the visiting BITM group have completed work on these walls. Additionally they have built a concrete block strengthening wall as additional protection for Little Tring Farm behind the canal. However this wall will not be seen, because it will be within the towpath bank.



## Canal channel on Little Tring side of Bridge 4



Three lengths (120 metres) of each side of the canal have been excavated to the correct profile and then lined using the Bentomatic. This work has now reached the wide corner which we have been using as a passing place and material store.

Concrete blockwork is not yet complete, because as the weather changes, progress was hampered by wet weather. The rain will however dampen our stocks of spoil to put on the banks – it has to be wet enough for the loose spoil to stay where the excavator places it, or it just slides off.



## Tidy Friday

Tidy Friday have a new powered wheeled strimmer donated in memory of David Page. This will reduce strimming time by 75% and also reduce the risks of vibration, noise and manual handling from using hand-held strimmers.



**Mikk Bradley, Site Manager & Clive Johnson, Chairman**

## Towpath improvements for Wendover Canal of the Grand Union Canal

The towpath on the Wendover Canal of the Grand Union Canal is set to be made more accessible to local people through a £367,000 partnership project led by the Wendover Canal Trust and national waterways and wellbeing charity the Canal & River Trust.

As a result of funding awards from five organisations, the Canal & River Trust is planning to upgrade the towpath throughout the parish of Wendover. The project will dramatically improve the surface of the towpath and make it resistant to flooding, enabling it to be accessible all year round.

The work has been funded by the HS2 Chiltern AONB Review Group, Wendover Parish Council, Lionel Abel-Smith Trust, Wendover Community Board and Halton Parish Council. In total over 28 local, regional, and national organisations supported the campaign to upgrade the towpath, which was led by the Wendover Canal Trust in conjunction with the Canal & River Trust. These included all the schools in Wendover, the Chiltern Society, Chilterns Conservation Board, Inland Waterways Association, Sustrans and Chiltern Railways.

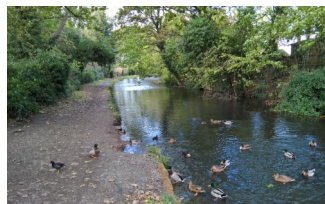
**Ros Daniels, Canal & River Trust director for London & South East, said:**

“We are extremely grateful to the funders; their support will enable us to transform this stretch from a muddy path to one that can be

enjoyed by all throughout the year. The Wendover and Aylesbury canal towpaths constitute 80% of the Grand Union Canal Triangle and these awards will significantly help us to achieve our aim of a full upgrade by 2025. Research shows that spending time by water improves your mental and physical health. We want to encourage more people to benefit from their local canal and enjoy wellbeing from walking and cycling along the towpath and spending time amongst nature.”

The canal in Wendover forms an important link throughout the community, and the improvements will help the towpath provide a traffic-free, more consistent and accessible network for everyone, including schoolchildren, walkers, cyclists, families and people with mobility requirements.

The project builds on previous small scale towpath improvements undertaken by the two Trusts in Wendover in the past year. Design work is currently being undertaken and the works are being programmed to commence in January 2023 and be completed by March 2023.





Clive Johnson, Chairman,  
Wendover Canal Trust, said:

“I’m delighted that we’ve been able to co-ordinate funding to transform this worn-out canal towpath. This will be of great benefit for local people who’ll be able to use it more safely and enjoy the canal.”



## Club 100 Lottery

Please consider joining Club 100. Club 100 has been really helping our funds since 1997, and the Trust has profited by a little over £22,500.

We need every penny and the winner could be you!

There were 196 tickets in this draw and it was made at the October 2022 council meeting. The winners were....



Valerie Matraves, £235.20



Peter Lockett, £98.00



Stewart Collins, £39.20

Congratulations to our winners and thank you to all members who take part in the Club 100 lottery. **The next draw will be in January 2023**

If you would like to be in with a chance of winning next time, joining Club 100 couldn't be easier. Simply complete the application form and arrange payment (cheque, BACS transfer or standing order). Each lucky number costing £15 per year is entered into 4 quarterly draws. The jackpot is directly proportionate to the number of subscribers.

Remember you have to be a paid up member of the Trust to enter Club 100, each lucky number costs £15 per year for 4 prize draws. The prize fund increases with every new subscription taken out. **Join today** - the application form can be found on the website.

## AGM Questions and Answers

At the recent AGM we encouraged members and other volunteers to ask questions in an open forum. The following questions and answers have been paraphrased for readability, by Bob Wheal and Clive Johnson.

**Q1** Is WCT still committed to full restoration for narrowboat navigation over the whole length of the Canal?

**A** Yes!

**Q2** Is there a plan covering the costs of restoration and the timeline involved and if so, is spending to improve the towpath in an unrestored section of the canal the best use of funding in relation to that plan?

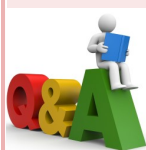
**A** During this winter we will produce a plan and costings for the remainder of the restoration, however this inevitably takes time, to avoid overworking the very small pool of volunteers who can do this. The funding for the Wendover towpath improvements could only be spent on that work and could not be spent on our wider restoration. The footpath upgrade will improve the public's enjoyment, and walking groups will boost publicity for the Trust. The bank repairs which are part of this work are also essential for when we raise the water level. The towpath restoration is part of the planned Aylesbury triangle.

**Q3** What amenities / facilities will there be for boaters using the Canal when it is restored?

**A** This will be a question for CRT. WCT will try to advise, and to influence the decision making.

**Q4** When the restoration of the Wendover Canal is complete, it is anticipated that Canal & River Trust will then take full responsibility for the canal. What role is then envisaged for the Wendover Canal Trust?

**A** CRT manage the canal on behalf of the nation, and will retain full responsibility. WCT will then be a support group. However this is still a long time away!



**Q5:** As the canal is relined and rewatered from the Marsworth end, the water level is necessarily that of the GU Tring Summit. Between Wendover and Drayton Beauchamp the canal is in water but at an unretained level well below that required for navigation. The flow from Wendover drops into the pipe in the canal bed just NE of bridge 5 at Drayton Beauchamp, from where it drops down to Wilstone Reservoir and is then pumped back up to the GU summit. It would seem that in order for the canal to become navigable to bridge 5 & beyond, the water level would have to be raised to Tring Summit level all the way to Wendover. This operation will incur all the costs of relining while navigation will only be extended to the old A41 at Buckland Wharf.



**Q5** While reconstruction of lowered bridges can be tackled in stages, raising the tackled in stages, raising of the water level to maintain flow cannot. Does the Trust have a strategy to address this issue? If not, it's a question that major funders are bound to ask.

**A** Yes, to allow Boats to Buckland, we will have to restore the water-level to Tring summit-level, all the way to Wendover. This will be the next task when relining is complete. It will also save CRT money in pumping, because the water can then flow by gravity, just as it used to. The reservoirs and pumps will then only be used for their original purpose of storing surplus winter water.

**Q6** The plant we hire for work parties is delivered on a Thursday morning and collected the following Friday morning. Our work party on site runs from Friday to Friday. Do we pay from Thursday to Friday? If so, why are we not starting our week on site on a Thursday and making full use of the plant and not wasting money?

**A** We pay a fixed rate per plant, sometimes delivered at the end of the day so we cannot plan to use it on delivery day. We only pay for Friday-Thursday.

**Q7** Some months we have work parties running for 1 week and at other times run for 2 weeks. Would it better to run say April to October as 2 weeks summer months and November to March 1 week Winter months? This may increase the number of volunteers.

**A** Yes that is planned in future – 2 week spring & summer, 1 week winter, kept under review according to work demands and the availability of leaders and first-aiders (we must not over-tax those who lead our work).

**Q8** Where the canal crosses MoD land at Halton, is it possible that it could feature within a “linear country park” with funding towards the restoration sought from the developer?

**A** The canal land belongs to CRT, not MoD. We are already promoting this as a green corridor. It is not certain that RAF Halton will be closing; but if they close and houses are built, there may be options to get Halton Bridge re-built. This includes exploring options with the RAF for them to rebuild the bridge. Alternatively it may be possible to work with the developers to get the bridge rebuilt and Perch Bridge sewer moved. This could use Community Infrastructure Levy, or meet a requirement for the development to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain.

**Q9** The website talks about ‘bringing the canal to life’. Can you describe your ambition to make the canal into a ‘go-to’ destination for visitors and locals alike?

**A** To a great extent it already is a 'go-to' destination. One thing we need to do is to improve access signage and informational signage along the canal. Much work has been undertaken at Whitehouses Pocket Park, installing benches and a picnic table. We are awaiting a monolith signpost from IWA. The wildflower meadow is also being reseeded.

## Boating in Alsace & Lorraine August 2022, Chris Sargeant & family Part 1

Alsace Lorraine area, now being renamed Alsace Mosel, is in north eastern France nestling against the German border and shown in red on the map below.



Over the years ever since the days of the Holy Roman Empire the regions have zig-zagged between French and German ownership many times and thereby developed much of their charm for visitors. Cuisine and building styles feature a delightful mixture of both countries.

Having thoroughly enjoyed the Norfolk Broads last year, together with daughter & husband plus twin granddaughters we decided to embark on another boating trip this year ... but in France.

My own attraction to the Alsace area came from a TV travelogue by Rick Stein and research soon showed that the Marne - Rhine Canal would be a perfect location, basing ourselves at Hesse, a dot on the map approx. 360 miles from Calais and about 35 miles east of Strasbourg where it joins the Rhine.



The original objective of the canal was to connect Paris and the north of France with Alsace and Lorraine with the Rhine and Germany.

The 313 km (194 mi) long canal was the longest in France when it opened in 1853 and boasts 154 locks, four tunnels and an inclined plane.



Our mobile home on water was the good ship Calypso from Hesse, designed for up to eight and very comfortable for we five at 13.25 mt \* 4.10 mt with three sleeping cabins, two bathrooms and steering positions inside or up top.

French canals are generally much wider than in UK although, whilst being long, locks are mostly only wide enough for one boat since boats are also wider.

- \* Several small boats can go through together in a line.
- \* Locks are almost all power operated and controlled remotely with various sensors or ways of communicating one's presence to the system.
- \* Tunnels are similarly one way operations with sensors and traffic lights at both ends.
- \* Tow paths were well surfaced and attract many walkers, cyclists and fisher folk.

Here you can see a typical tunnel entrance showing a red traffic light and in front of it a red box which houses the sensor to detect boats coming out.

Scenery is ever changing and there are beautiful stretches where you seldom see anyone or another boat.



Early morning mists were a joy to behold and encouraged hardy joggers such as my daughter and grandchildren out pre breakfast.



Saverne

Even in the tiniest villages one could almost always find a bakery and fresh baguettes !

The most picturesque small towns we visited along this stretch were Lutzelbourg and Saverne.



Lutzelbourg

To be continued...



# WENDOVER CANAL TRUST

**President**  
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**Dr David Fletcher CBE**  
**Sir David Suchet CBE & Robbie Cumming**

Wendover Canal Trust, the operating name of Wendover Arm Trust,  
A Company Limited by Guarantee.  
Registered Charity No.801190.

Its **AIMS** are: To promote the restoration and maintenance of the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal, (including all waterways, buildings, and related structures), to good and navigable order and to promote the fullest use of the waterway by water-borne traffic (subject to the regulations of The Canal and River Trust) and for local amenity, recreational and water related activities for the benefit of the public.

To restore, preserve, maintain and educate the public in the history, use and wildlife, of canals and inland waterways generally and the Wendover Arm in particular.

**General telephone number:** 07547 181 857

**Facebook:** Wendover Arm Trust

**Website:** [www.wendovercanal.org.uk](http://www.wendovercanal.org.uk)

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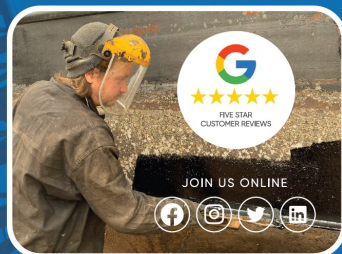
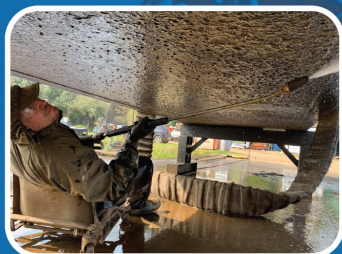
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Regards from your Editor Carol Williams (left)  
Assisted by Janine Jones (right).

Deadline for the  
next newsletter is  
31st January 2023

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