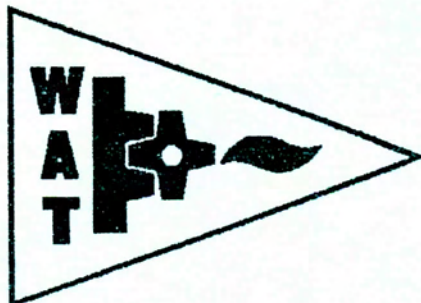


Wendover Arm

News

The newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust



Issue No. 15
March 1994

THE WENDOVER ARM TRUST

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IWA NOMINEE Alan Swaisland

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Let me commence these notes by wishing you all a very "Happy New Year". 1994 looks as if it could well be the year when restoration will begin.

Since writing my last report we have had the help of some 200 Waterway Recovery Group volunteers in November when a lot of undergrowth and tree roots were removed. We have also had four Sunday WAT working parties which, alas, have not been very well attended. However, the amount of work achieved on these Sunday happenings has been very rewarding - the output per head has been outstanding. If only we had a bigger turnout we should have cleared so much more.

The next working parties will be on March 6th, and May 7th and 8th. In May we will be joined by the Essex WRG and the work will involve a general clear-up and burning of roots which have been cut on earlier Sundays.

Plans for the 5th Canal Festival are well in hand and we again hope to make it as big if not bigger than last year's event. Sir John Johnson, the Chairman of the Countryside Commission, has kindly agreed to officially open it at 12 o'clock on Sunday May 29th and I look forward to meeting you all then.

Once again I appeal to you all to help during the weekend, particularly with manning the gates (collecting money!!) and parking cars. We are always very hard pressed to find enough people to fill these jobs and all will be welcome even if you can only manage an hour or two. If you can help please let me know on 0442 823378 or call Graeme Lockhart, who has agreed to co-ordinate human resources, on 0442 865421 (daytime only).

Roger Lewis

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Membership of the Trust has unfortunately decreased since the last newsletter and now stands at 414 members.

Sadly we report the sad loss of two Trust members, Charles Biggs and Raymond McCarthy who have died recently. We sent condolences to their families and friends.

The remaining losses are to members who have not renewed their memberships.

On a happier note, listed below are the members who have joined the Trust since the last report. - Welcome to the Trust.

Mr K.A. EllisonTring

Mr & Mrs D.J. Fear Wendover

Mrs J. Martin Milton Keynes

Barry Martin

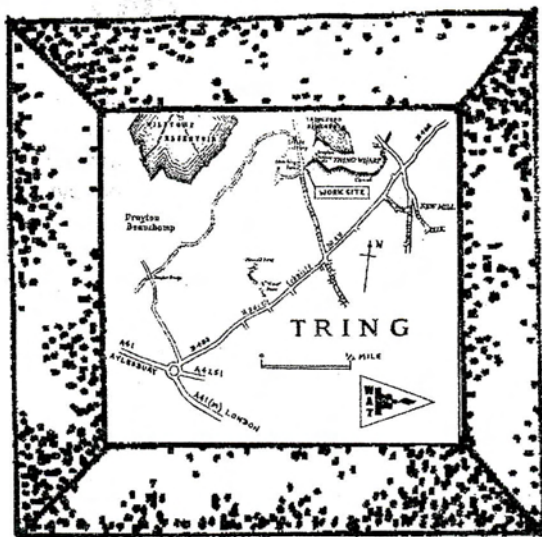
Membership Secretary

RAYMOND (RAY) McCARTHY

Many members will be very sad to hear of the sudden death of Ray recently. Living on his narrowboat *Stingray*, Ray was a regular visitor to our Festivals. He was always there working hard to put up the fences and doing all the physical jobs before the event, even though he insisted he wasn't built for that kind of thing.

Ray retired just a few months ago from his job in Air Traffic Control, and it seems cruel that the retirement which he had looked forward to and cherished should have been so short. I shall miss his ever-cheery demeanour, as will his many friends at the Grand Junction Arms and elsewhere.

Richard House



INTERPRETATION PANELS

Regular followers of this journal will know of all the work being put in by Bucks County Council along the Arm from the A41 to Wendover. We recently received details of the information panels which are to be erected to accompany the footpath improvements.

Roger Lewis was invited to comment on the content of the proposed text. The full details of what is proposed are too long to include here, and anyway I would hate to rob you of the pleasure of seeing the real thing for yourselves and already knowing what was written!

We can reveal however that there are to be five panels located at various points along the length. These will

provide information on the footpath and local walks, the history of the canal and local history, landform and how this affected the Wendover Arm, wildlife to be found along the canal, and the local area of interest known as Cobbler's Pits. The introductory panels at each end will be the same, and illustrations are being prepared to accompany the text.

The Trust gets a mention on each of the introductory boards, and overall the information given is extremely comprehensive. Perhaps in future issues we might feature individual boards occasionally for those of our members who are less frequent visitors to the area.

DEVELOPMENT AT LITTLE TRING

Report by Roger Lewis

In November Ian Packe and I had a meeting at Hemel Hempstead with British Waterways representatives Peter Coyne, Regional Manager - South, Bob Parnell, Senior Management Surveyor and Chris Mitchell, Assistant Area Engineer and Acting Waterway Manager, Grand Union South. (Chris is temporarily acting for Caroline Clark whilst she is on maternity leave).

We discussed the future development of the Arm and particularly the leases with Lord Rothschild and Mr Bob Grace of Little Tring Farm. This is the first lengthy discussion we have had with Mr Coyne and it is gratifying for us to know that he shares the same enthusiasm for the restoration of the Wendover Arm that his predecessor, Robin Garrett, had.

We left the meeting feeling very well satisfied as we learned that Mr Grace had agreed to relinquish his lease on that part of the BW land that he has

tenanted and he has also agreed to forgo his acquired right to cross the bed of the Arm from his farm buildings on one side to his fields on the other side. To achieve these objectives and, of course, prepare the way for the first stage of restoration, has cost the Trust and British Waterways a lot of time and money - which could have been better used for other more positive items in the field of restoration. However, that hurdle is now behind us and at the same meeting it was agreed by Peter Coyne that Chris Mitchell and his team could commence the work of drawing up detailed plans for "Stage 1" which includes the replacement of Little Tring Road bridge. This work will start at the beginning of BW's financial year in April.

*I would like to thank Roger Hendey and Simon Chesterfield of Wainwright, A J Harry and Stevens for their freely given legal opinions at this stage, and Bob Parnell and his team for their efforts to date.

A MOVING EXPERIENCE

Have you recently changed address or are you about to move to a new house?- If so, please write to the Membership Secretary, address inside the front cover, so that we can change our records. - Thank You.

LETTER

**From: Alan Swaisland, Chairman,
IWA Grand Junction Region**

This region of IWA has had at its disposal a sum of money from IWA's National Waterways Restoration and Development Fund, arising originally from the proceeds of the 1985 rally.

My Region committee decided this summer that these funds should now be used to provide impetus to some of the most important waterway restoration schemes currently in progress. The restoration of the Wendover Arm is, of course, a project dear to all of us, and it was the unanimous decision of the committee that the largest proportion of the available money should go to support your Trust.

On Wednesday last, I therefore had the pleasure to hand to the Trust's Treasurer a cheque for £1,000 in token of the strong and continuing support of IWA for your Trust's work.

We are all particularly delighted that this comes at a time when a long period of patient negotiation and effort looks like being rewarded with real physical progress in the restoration work. Our very best thanks and good wishes to you and your colleagues.

Yours sincerely

A E H Swaisland,

The Trust replies:

We are extremely grateful to Alan and his committee for this generous donation. It is particularly pleasing that the work we are doing is recognised and held in such regard by influential bodies like the IWA. As the negotiation phase draws to a successful conclusion and the physical restoration starts, funds become even more vital and donations like this help to make the task ahead of us seem a little easier.

Thank you Grand Junction Region.



HELP HELP HELP

A Request from the Festival
Treasurer

Yes, I need four additional helpers for this year's Festival - two on Sunday and two on Monday - to assist the regular team with collecting and counting all the lovely money which our visitors donate.

For more information please phone Beryl on (0908) 312239.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

Meetings were held on 17th November, 15th December, and 19th January. Principal points arising were as follows.

November

WRG weekend discussed - felt to be valuable experience and good publicity, plus a number of useful contacts for the future.

WRG BITM (Bit in the Middle) group will assist at the Festival in May.

Leased land progress still slow - further ideas discussed to hasten action.

Looked at ideas for improving and broadening range of sales items. We now have WAT teddy bears in stock.

In discussion with Buckingham Canal Society to arrange a Quiz night in April.

December

Leased land - meeting with BW reported with (mostly) satisfactory outcome (see article on page 4).

WAT have been offered (virtually) permanent loan of a Tirfor winch.

Attending Lionhearts Open Day on 9th July.

Graeme Lockhart gave WAT slide show to Barton le Clay Rotary Club.

Rev. Roger Davis has again given a donation following one of his slide talks.

Tring Town Council have donated £500 to the £4,500 Groundwork Trust scheme for a walk along Brook Street and the New Mill feeder stream.

Festival details to be included in BW/British Rail sponsored leaflet.

Venues for WAT stand to be sought - possibly RAF Halton open day. 2nd BW open day at Bulbourne on 16/17 July already booked. IWA National Festival at Waltham Abbey in August also to be attended.

Trust is hosting Southern Canals meeting in October - possible venues and events discussed.

January

Contact received from "Work-Ability Marketing Initiative" - agreed to seek ways in which we can benefit.

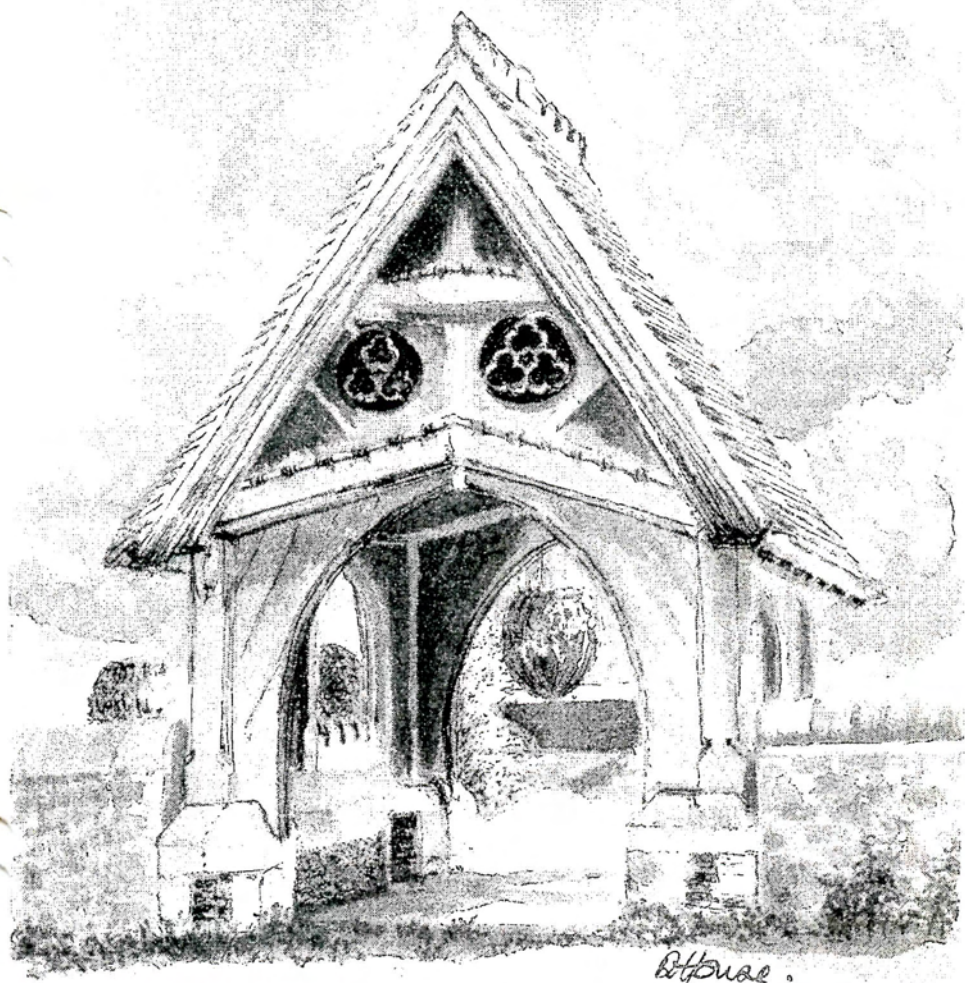
Some members being very slow to renew - with result a few will be dropped from mailing list.

You have been warned!

PLEASE, BE PROMPT AND RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP WHEN REMINDED

New Amenity document - research work just about finished - draft script being prepared.

Initial ideas for Southern Canals meeting venue too expensive - alternatives to be followed up.



PARISHES OF THE ARM

Having started around the middle of the Arm last time, I thought it might be sensible to go to the source this time. So, here is Wendover. There is much of interest in Wendover, so I have decided to split this article in two and 'do' the church this time, and follow with the town next time.

The two drawings featured are again from the limited edition prints we commissioned. The Wendover picture consists of these two together with a view of the Clock Tower. Details from the Editor on 0296 748036 - remember each print sold raises money for the Wendover Arm Trust.

No. 2a - WENDOVER CHURCH

St Mary's church is unusual in that it is not anywhere near the town centre. A number of theories as to why exist - one being that witches continually frustrated attempts to build at the originally proposed site in Witches' Field (now Witchell) by removing building materials to the present site. That may be true, but I think the more likely explanation is that there was a dispute over ownership of the land where it was to be built which was sorted out by the Lord of the Manor giving some land in a place convenient to him. Betjeman described the situation as

"umbrageous meadows" - it may be remote but I wouldn't personally take umbrage at it if that is what he means!

The large churchyard is entered through a sturdy Victorian lychgate. Two substantial yews flank the path to the church, and chestnut, lime and sycamore trees surround the churchyard. The present church is probably the second, or even third, on the site, and dates from the early 13th century. Built of flint, there was some rebuilding in the early 14th century when the chancel was widened the tower rebuilt and a vestry added north of the chancel. A clerestory was added in the 15th century and then rebuilt in 1869. Otherwise, what you see now is very little altered from what you would have seen 500 years ago.

Inside, there is still evidence of the Roman Catholic origins. The Sanctus Bell is still in the belfry. A piscina for washing the priest's hands and communion vessels is in a niche in the south wall, and the remains of a holy water stoup can be seen in the south porch. The present pulpit dates from the 1869 alterations, but the original was a double-decker. This allowed the preacher to stand high, probably with an hour-glass to stop him going on too long, and the clerk to sit below keeping a watchful eye on the behaviour of the congregation.

The fabric of the church is fairly plain, and this probably saved it from the widespread vandalism of the

Commonwealth. This did not keep the Earl of Caernavon and his Parliamentary forces from plundering the town. The vicar's wife, Mrs Armitage, mistook them for Royalists and baked a huge batch of apple pies for them. When Prince Rupert arrived with his Royalist force they would not wait for another batch-bake, but are reported to have "made bold with her goods and other provisions". The outcome of the whole incident was that her poor husband was deprived of the incumbency by Parliament!

The tower is a mixture of 14th century original and Victorian embellishments. A ring of six bells hang in the belfry, four cast by Ellis Knight between 1623 and 1651, one by Chandler in 1722, and a more recent one dated 1914 in memory of Revd. Albert Smith, who was vicar from 1867 to 1914. The bells are rung regularly, and enthusiasts come from miles around to ring the changes on them.

The first savings bank in England (possibly in the world) was started in the vestry by Revd. Joseph Smith, vicar from 1790 to 1802. This must have been a more popular action than that of a later incumbent, Revd. Spencer Thornton (1837 - 1850) who promoted Sunday closing of pubs!

The space to the north of the chancel, which at one time housed the vestry and the organ, has now been converted into "St. Mary's Centre",

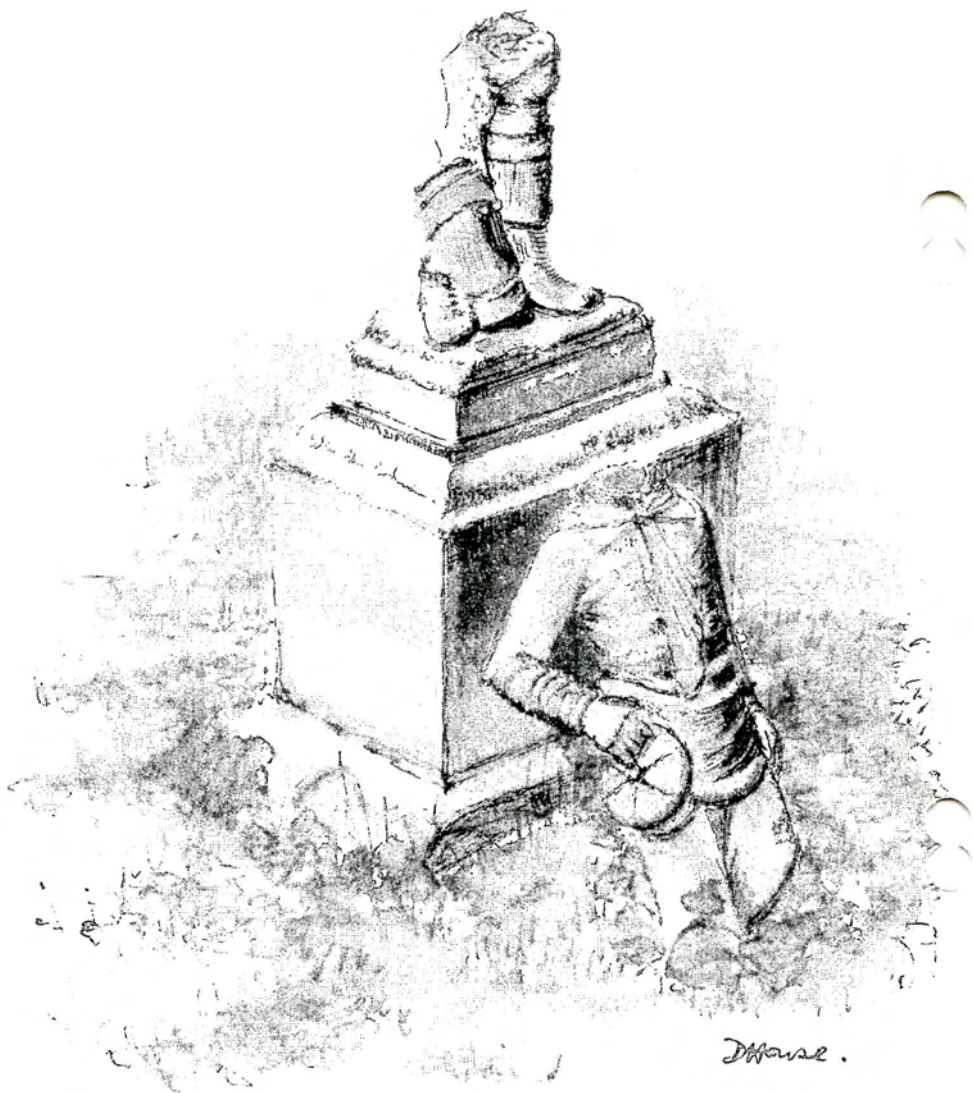
serving as a community centre. Mother and toddler groups and a day centre for the elderly are now among the uses to which the centre is put.

Of interest in the nave are the two-centred arches, with grotesque heads carved on the stops. Much character shows through in the carvings, leaving one wondering who modelled for the craftsman. The fittings throughout the nave are Victorian, with the font a convincing reproduction of a late Norman font.

Ancient memorial slabs abound in the church and churchyard - several dating from the mid-1600's. The curious statue illustrated here can be found in the graveyard, and commemorated Norman Ray, who died in 1926. This poor lad, shortly before his tenth birthday, was apparently run over by a steam-roller - some achievement when you think how slowly they move! Unfortunately the figure has been broken, and his head is missing, but it is clear that he was a keen Boy Scout from his uniform, and from the inscription "He did his best" on the stone.

Do take time to visit the church - it is beautifully kept and well worth some time. My thanks to the Vicar of Wendover and Halton, Revd. Andrew Meynell for his help in compiling this article.

Richard House



1994 FESTIVAL BOOK NOW

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find two booking forms. - One form is for anyone fortunate enough to be able to attend the Festival by boat and the second form is for anyone else who wishes to book in advance and enjoy any, or all, of the evening Social Events.

We invite all Trust members (including Corporate members), IWA members, GUCS members, members of all canal societies and local boat clubs to join in these fantastic evening events. Just complete the advance booking form and we will send you tickets early in May.

Remember - free parking - a private bar each evening with musical entertainment - and on Sunday evening a barbecue. There is more Festival information on page 14.

KATATYC *

The Trust has regretfully declined the Russian Government's offer of a now surplus nuclear submarine and submarine "butty" for use on the Wendover Arm, in exchange for Corporate Life Membership of the Trust, and our Chairman's autograph.

Our refusal was based on the fact that Parish Councils along the Arm will not accept the passage of atomic powered vessels unless the proposed diversion of the cut at Drayton Beauchamp (for the A41 road bypass) be further re-routed to take the restored canal along the south side of Aston Clinton.

However, our return offer of Roger Lewis's autograph still stands.

Bernard Banfield

(* Bernard says this is Russian for Canals)

TOKENS

Back in issue 12 I reported that we had accumulated 254 BP tokens, out of a target of 5000 (which would be worth £250 to us). I'm sorry to report that, although I have not counted recently, there must be a leak somewhere further back along the line, as the flood I had hoped for is hardly even a trickle today.

Thanks to those few good folk who have continued to send them in - I haven't given up hope altogether yet so do please everybody, look around and see what you can send me. All types of tokens are welcome - and those we can't use are forwarded to IWA/WRG Charity Bank.

Richard House

RESTORATION

WATERWAY RECOVERY GROUP WEEKEND

The weekend of November 6th/7th saw our plans for the WRG Reunion come to fruit. By Friday evening there were people all over Tring School, with every imaginable type of sleeping bag, portable mattress, and change of clothing.

The registration desk reported some 150 already in, with more promised over the day, when the WAT brigade turned up early Saturday. Whilst we laboured in the kitchens, a fleet of WRG mini-buses moved out the workers to the Arm, depositing them at either Little Tring or Drayton Beauchamp bridges. These were the base-camps to which they would return, hungry, all through the day to consume the vast quantities of soup and sandwiches which we had prepared for them back in the kitchens. Bad luck on those who had drawn the short straws and were working just about midway between the two bases - it was a long walk back for them.

Huge quantities of trees, bushes and undergrowth were hacked down, but the fires were as usual being less than reliable, and the hackers steadily gained on the burners. Sunday had more root-pulling being done, which takes longer to produce less firewood, so some catching up did happen, but a



lot was still left unburnt at the end of the weekend. All the same, when I walked the length on Sunday as it got dark, there were some very noticeable changes in the

scenery, and the profile was clear in parts where before one had really had to guess at it.

On Saturday evening we helped the WRG organisers to put on a grand firework display. With practically no wind, and some pretty large devices, hard hats were definitely advisable. The thud of rockets impaling themselves in the ground all round were quite worrying - especially the 4 foot long one which landed just a few feet from where Roger Lewis and I were standing! The display over, the gangs went in to do justice to the meal which had been prepared by their travelling cooks, and then danced energetically to "Roy's Disco" until gone midnight, and competed for desirable prizes (new bowsaw blades). Where they got the energy from defeats me - but they managed to crawl out of their sacks next morning and attack the Arm again, although possibly one could detect a little less enthusiasm from some!

Overall the weekend has to be declared a success, although I was

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

disappointed to see some of the winches we hired for pulling roots lying idle at times. Many more roots could have come out, and when WRG return again we will concentrate much harder on ensuring they pull all day. Having now burnt most of the rest of the cut growth, the results are more evident, and I am sure you will appreciate the difference when you next walk there.

Richard House

WORK PARTIES

A poor turnout on January 2nd was, perhaps, to be expected. The stalwart 9 who did muster did good work clearing up around White Houses, and also finishing off the root-pulling between the stop-lock and Little Tring bridge.

February 6th saw a better number working, and a remarkable amount done. The main gang continued to work around White Houses, and you can now walk freely around the remains and see the old wharf walls clearly.

More roots went round the gateway area, thanks to the "Patent Special Pneumatic Wonder-puller". If you don't know what I'm talking about, come down on MARCH 6TH and see it in action - and please bring a spade, pick, or other suitable digging tool to help.

The last conventional workparty for the season is on MARCH 6TH - do please make a special effort to come along. Parking is by Little Tring bridge - look out for the WAT sign-board. We will then leave the growth for the birds over the spring and summer, but we will be there on May 7th and 8th to clear up what is lying around. Again, you are all very welcome!

From time to time we hear people say "What is the point in doing this jungle-bashing?". The answer is - money. One of the major cost factors in any restoration project such as ours is clearing the land in order to be able to cut the correct profile again. Every root we pull out now is a step along the way, and leaving them until we properly restore that part of the cut only means that there will be a bigger one to pull later. Similarly, cutting down bushes regularly prevents them becoming established trees - and yet another big root to remove later. So, now you know why we do it, do come and help if you can one day.

As you know, we currently hold workparties on the first Sunday of each month in the winter. However, is this the best day, or do other commitments get in the way? Please let us know your views - we are very happy to change if it makes it easier for you to come.

FESTIVAL 1994

As briefly mentioned in the last Newsletter, the Festival is on. As usual the date is the late-May Bank Holiday weekend, and the place is New Mill.

The Festival Committee, which looks remarkably like the Trust Committee with some welcome additions, meets once a month at this stage. Item 1 on the agenda of the first meeting in November read "Do we want to do this?" Obviously the answer was a resounding yes.

Barry Martin has once again designed a superb plaque for the occasion, which highlights the strong links we are forging, and the support we receive as a Trust, with both Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. Barry also doubles as the Booking Secretary, although having taken a job in Denmark for the next three months, it looks as if Beryl might have an extra job (apart from being Treasurer) again. Last year Barry slinked off to Barrow-in-Furness about this time - suspicious I think!



A new addition to the crew this year is Mike Chessher, taking on the major job of Site Manager. We made sure he didn't know what this entailed until he had agreed to do it, but he has dived in with great enthusiasm and seems to be well in control. Graeme Lockhart, who has been Site Manager for the previous Festivals, thought he was having a year off, but a (not very) gentle bit of persuasion one night, and a few glasses of Grand Junction Arms finest, brought him to his senses and he takes over as Personnel Manager. You have been warned - Graeme has shown he doesn't understand "no" so you might just as well get in first and offer your services for an hour or two before he "asks" you!

The rest of the team looks much as last year, with the exception of Judith Chessher taking over the tea-tent. However, we still need more people to do specific jobs. We would like to hold a car boot sale again on both Sunday and Monday. It doesn't take a lot of time, and no prior work really, so please do come forward if you are able to run it on either day (or both).

We are keen that Trust members in particular should see this as their Festival. Whilst quite a number of members do come by boat and caravan each year, we realise that many cannot. However this does not mean that you cannot join in all the fun. Included in this magazine is a booking form. For the price of

normal entry for each day, members can come along on both days with the public, and on all three evenings as well. The final line up for the evening entertainment is still being kept secret (even from Richard House who is supposed to be organising it!), but we can definitely promise a really good 3 days of fun. Sunday night will feature the traditional barbecue, still at the same price as last year and every other year and great value - but you must book in advance so we know how many to cater for. Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings will feature live music this year if humanly possible. So, fill in those forms today and be sure of a memorable bargain weekend.

Contact addresses:

Bookings - Barry Martin,
12 Chipperfield Close, New
Bradwell, Milton Keynes MK13
0EP. Phone 0908 312239

Personnel - Graeme Lockhart.
Phone 0442 865241 (daytime)

Craft and Trade - Bob Wheal,
Phone 0525 381614

Programme - Ian Packe,
2 The Driveway, Anchor Lane,
Hemel Hempstead HP1 1NT. Phone
0442 214126

Charities & Waterway Societies
wishing to exhibit in the societies
marquee should also contact Ian
Packe.

GRAND FESTIVAL DRAW

As in other years, you will find 5 books of tickets for the Grand Draw tucked in this issue.

What we want you to do is to sell them to friends, neighbours, workmates or anybody else who gets near enough. You can of course buy them yourself instead, but surely you owe it to your friends to include them.

The prizes are as usual well worth winning, so do please get cracking. Further supplies of tickets are available when you need them from Janet Packe, address on the inside of the front cover.

Send stubs with money (cheques payable to "Wendover Arm Trust") to Janet as soon as possible. Any unsold books should also be returned please by May 16th or at the Festival.

Don't forget, if they come within talking distance they're within selling distance! as they say in the insurance trade

P.S. We know that a few members would rather not receive Draw tickets. Unfortunately it has not been possible for us to be selective in the ticket distribution this year. So, if you have received tickets and did not wish to, we apologise.

TOW-PATH TALK

- ◆ Congratulations to Caroline and Dave Clark on the birth of their son Thomas in November. I understand that Caroline is thoroughly enjoying her new role as mother, but of course is longing to be back in her office at BW in Marsworth as well.
- ◆ Congratulations to Grantham Navigation Association, who having applied for a Derelict Land Grant, were awarded £400,000 for the full restoration of 2.5 miles of canal at Hickling. The 100% grant has allowed an immediate start, with the work, which includes 3 swing bridges and basin improvements, due for completion at the end of March.
- ◆ Hugh Turner of Blackwater Boats wrote to tell us of his intrepid voyage up the dark reaches of the Wendover Arm, and sent details of his hire boat fleet. Based a couple of miles from Chelmsford, he has four berth narrowboats, nicely appointed, available with some peak rates lower than 1993. Contact him on 0787 227823 to explore the Chelmer and Blackwater.
- ◆ Our more active members might be interested in walking holidays around parts of the canal system. Tow-path Treks, based in Aylesbury, have a brochure outlining 20 walks, and they arrange overnight accommodation, transfer of your baggage each day, and full route notes. Contact Keith Pyott on 0296 82692 for further details.
- ◆ An ecologically sound way of keeping down the potentially toxic blue-green algae which invades some waterways is apparently a sausage! Not the humble pork banger, but a bundle of barley straw, which floats on the water and, as it rots, inhibits the algae growth.
- ◆ The Serious Boat Trip (sounds like a contradiction in terms to me) is again being planned for 1994. This worthwhile project is actually concerned with humanitarian aid for Bosnia, using the waterways of Britain and Europe to facilitate collection, transport and distribution. Working narrow boats will be travelling the system, stopping at specific points to collect tinned goods and cash. More details from 071 916 9334.
- ◆ Steve Hillier of the Wey and Arun Canal Trust is obviously both an optimist and an original thinker. He suggests that every member should treat the Trust as a friend for whom they buy a pint or two each month! Rather than give it to the landlord however, he suggests a bankers order to the Trust instead for say £3 per month. Clever idea - should we follow it up at WAT?

Dates for your diary

- March 6** Trust Work Party to clear scrub near Whitehouses. Access either from Little Tring Bridge or Drayton Beauchamp Bridge.
- April 30** Copy date for June newsletter.
- May 7 & 8** Essex WRG and Wendover Arm Trust workparties - root pulling and general clear up..
- May 29 - 31** Wendover Canal Festival. - see page 14.
- July 16 & 17** Bulbourne open weekend at British Waterways Bulbourne Yard. Can you help with the Trust display and sales stand? Please call Janet Packe on 0442 214126.
- August 27 to 29** IWA National Waterways Festival at Waltham Abbey. Again, can you help with the Trust display and sales stand? Please call John Brooman on 0296 623542.

WE NEED YOU!

Disclaimer

Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Wendover Arm trust.



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