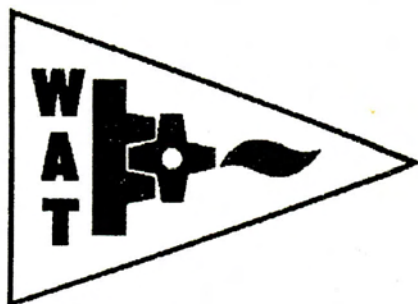


Wendover Arm News

The newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust



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THE WENDOVER ARM TRUST

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

In this, the first Newsletter of 1995 let me wish all of you "A Very Happy and Prosperous New Year".

The good news which has always seemed to be "just around the corner" is now a fact. The elusive Tenancy Agreement between the Grand Junction Canal Company (the original owners of the Grand Union Canal) and Lord Rothschild Estates has at last been found in BW's archives. The production of this vital document has resulted in the landowner at Little Tring, who has been delaying the repossession of the bed of the Arm by British Waterways, forfeiting his claim to adverse possession. This means that, as soon as there is money available, restoration can go ahead.

Our newly co-opted Council member, Mike Chessher, has been working tirelessly in an endeavour to persuade the Commissioners of the Millennium Fund to support our restoration. I do hope that some of the money that some of you have been investing each week in the National Lottery can come back to us through this Fund. In addition to any money which we can raise by this means, other funds must be found and now is the time for those

of you who live in the area surrounding the Arm to seriously talk to your local councillors telling them how beneficial it will be to have a restored canal in their territory.

The appeal which I made in the last Newsletter for more helpers on the first Sunday of each month to tackle the 'jungle' in the bed of the Arm has, alas, not received very much response. We are very grateful to BITM WRG for their help in December when about 30 of their members spent the weekend cutting scrub and pulling roots. We will be working again on the first Sunday in April so please come along and help - the work parties this winter have varied in number between 7 and 15. There is an old Buckinghamshire saying - "every little helps"!!

This year's Festival at the end of May is all set to be as successful as ever although this year we shall not have the support of the Hertfordshire Caravan Club - they are organising their National Rally at Knebworth on the same weekend as our event. We have had a few changes on the Festival Committee this year but both the new blood and the old hands are working hard to keep up the tradition of the previous years.

Roger Lewis

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Membership of the Trust now stands at 425 members. The small decline in the number since the last report reflects a few members not renewing - if you want to make sure that you are not accidentally removed from the list please consider paying by bankers order at next renewal - let the bank remember for you. This also helps to cut the postage costs for the Trust.

We welcome to the Trust the following new members:

Mr & Mrs S W HerleyNorthchurch

Mr & Mrs D E LakinHalton

and also Mrs K Ellison who joins new husband Keith as a family member.

As we actively seek grant aid now towards restoration costs, the size of our membership becomes more significant than ever. If you can introduce a new member, or spread the word about the Trust, please take every opportunity to do so. Let's see if we can hit the 500 mark this year - with your help we can.

Barry Martin

Membership Secretary.

MISLAID!!!! A "POST-BASHER"

If anybody has borrowed a post basher from Roger Lewis, could you please get in touch with him on 01442 823378

This is vital equipment for setting up the Festival, and is Roger's personal property.

**AN INVITATION
TO A BONFIRE PARTY
ON SUNDAY APRIL 2ND, STARTING AT 10 AM
AT DRAYTON BEAUCHAMP**

Following the March Workparty, we have about 250 yards of cut scrub and trees to burn, currently lying in the bed of the canal near Drayton Beauchamp bridge.

**We desperately need
YOU**

to come and set fire to some, to leave the area looking tidy for the summer and to make room for the root pulling to continue on this stretch.

**PLEASE TRY TO COME, EVEN FOR JUST AN
HOUR OR TWO**

Bring tools if you have them (loppers, secateurs, saws etc.) but dont worry if you cant - we still need your help.

GRAND DRAW

Enclosed with this Newsletter are 5 books of tickets for the Grand Draw, which we hope you can sell to friends, colleagues, neighbours etc.

Please fill in the ticket stubs in the usual way (name, phone number, and address if you wish) and return them with the money to Janet Packe, 2 The Driveway, Anchor Lane, Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP1 1NT.

If you require more tickets, Janet will be happy to let you have them. If you object to being sent tickets in this way, we apologise - this is a major fund-raiser for us and we need to spread the net as wide as possible if we are to maximise the return. We know one or two of you have said in the past that you do not wish to get tickets in this way, but it is very difficult to isolate individual copies. Please bear with us - we do this purely for the good of the Trust!

Early return of ticket stubs relieves much of the burden on Janet, and also some of the worry over whether the money raised will be sufficient to make the exercise worthwhile. Your support is much appreciated.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

Meetings have taken place on 14th December, 18th January and 22nd February. Next meeting is on 22nd March. Brief details of principal points covered follow.

December

Chairman attended Mini Public Enquiry on Aston Clinton Bypass. Agreement reached between objectors, Highways Agency and BW for a scheme which would rewater the canal bed for a distance of 500 yards from existing A41 to point east of Drayton Beauchamp bridge. Not navigable - linear reservoir instead of originally planned balancing pond. Expected that Inspector will recommend adoption of plan to Transport and Environment Secretaries in first quarter of 1995.

Display stand taken to Halton for a weekend exhibition in November. Contact made with a number of people interested in the restoration - worthwhile attendance.

Mike Chessher reported on his early investigations into grant funding - principally through the Millennium Fund. (For a fuller report see Mike's article in this issue.)

Agreed that Trust should obtain its own computer - possible second hand sources to be investigated.

January

Meeting arranged with BW for 23rd January, to discuss figures and plans for grant applications.

The lease problem continues - great care needed over action on the landowner at Little Tring in order to avoid any adverse publicity which could damage WAT's aims. Agreed to discuss further with BW at 23rd January meeting.

Good turnout reported for January workparty. Noted that towpath very muddy in parts - to be brought to BW's attention (yet again on 23rd January).

IWA golden jubilee in 1996 - agreed to tell IWA that Trust is interested in supporting this significant event.

Trust Member Jack Vatcher (Harbourmaster at this year's Festival) had acquired a photocopier for us through his employer Fernau Avionics Ltd. Gratefully accepted and company written to with thanks.

Mike Chessher's appeal in last Newsletter for a frame tent had produced an offer - many thanks to the kind member for their donation of this item. We had (deliberately) forgotten to say that it was for use as a nappy changing facility at the Festival!

Agreed to attend the Wendover Charity Market on 6th May as part of the VE day commemorations.

February

Meeting with BW reported on. Constructive progress made, although some negative points arose regarding cost of restoration.

BW have found the Rothschild lease - now the last hurdle towards getting all the land back, which WAT has always stipulated as a precursor to spending any serious money on restoration, has been cleared.

Cost of necessary topographical surveys discussed - will need to be carried out prior to making accurate estimates of restoration costs and planning work.

BW has received an application for a permanent mooring on the non-

towpath side by the Festival site. No further details known at this time.

Mike Chessher reported on progress with grant applications - and the problems he had encountered. He has revised his initial aim of a single phase all the way to Wendover in favour of a more realistically achievable short term aim to reach Green Park. He has approached all the four local authorities, and English Partnerships (for Derelict Land Grants).

Trust stand will be taken to the Halton Show on 18th June, and to the Bulbourne Open Weekend on 16th/17th July.

Help Needed

The job of counting all that money the public throw at us over the Festival weekend is substantial. Would you be able to spend a day, or half a day, as part of the Treasurer's team helping to keep it all under control, and thereby giving the other team members a break?

Please, if you can help, give Beryl Martin a call on 01908 312239.

FUNDING THE FUTURE

Mike Chessher reports on his attempts to put together a package to finance restoration

As I wield my mattock at a small root in the canal bed just west of Whitehouses, last November, it occurs to me that at the rate I am going it will take 10,000,000 years to restore the Arm. An exaggeration maybe but it will take at least a millennium.

This thought comes leaping back into my mind a month later when, in the course of the day job, I bump into one of the Millennium Commissioners on the very day the fund is launched.

"You want money?" asks the commissioner.

"Yes please", I gulp.

"Well come round and get a proposal form" is the reply.

The Millennium Fund

The brochure I return clutching that lunch time makes interesting reading. To be eligible for funding, a project needs to meet two criteria. It must have public support, and make a lasting contribution to the community it is designed to serve. Further reading reveals that funds for capi-

tal projects will be divided between about a dozen 'landmark' projects costing up to £100 million and smaller projects of local significance. Only in exceptional circumstances will projects receive more than 50% of the capital cost or get any help at all towards the future running costs. I convince myself we are in with a chance but there remains the small problem of where the other half of the money might come from.



Finding the money

My first thought is the European Union, so I ring the Commission. Yes, a canal restoration might qualify but when I explain where Wendover is I am politely told that structural and regional funding does not apply to South-East England. Nevertheless, a blue book with yellow stars arrives by the next post but unless we can convince the Commission that Wendover is a fishing port, it looks like a Euro 'non'.

Give up two more lunch hours visiting government offices around Westminster - well, they all look

like government offices but claim to be acting as 'Agencies' for each other. Become an instant expert on everything from City Challenge to Village Hall Legislation Grants. Discover there's over half a page on canals in the Derelict Land Grant booklet so decide to give it a whirl.

Back to the Millennium

Get out Millennium proposal form. The first page is easy with questions like name and location of project but I take off my WAT baseball cap to whoever devised page 2.

'Estimated total capital cost?' ... Well, er .. Vaguely remember hearing about the Atkins report and some murmur of £1.4 million to reach the A41. Add a bit for inflation and double it. Decide £3.9 million looks a lot less than £4 million and move to question 2.

'Amount sought from Millennium Commission?' A trick question this. It weeds out not only those who haven't read the bit about them only funding 50% but also those who cannot divide by two. Write in £1.95 million and move to 'Sources of funding balance'. Pencil in the money already applied for from the Environmental Action Fund, money from our own fund-raising, money from BW and the local authorities then put the rest down as Derelict

Land Grant. The next question about 'Revenue funding' is too difficult, so decide to approach 'The Committee'.

The Committee

Set out for Dunstable and District Boat Club on a dank dark evening. Turn left at the pub as instructed. Turn into entrance and find myself in a very muddy field. Eventually manage to turn the car and, covered in mud, arrive at club entrance a bit further up the road. Am now half an hour late but the committee seem friendly enough. In fact, I seem to have met them somewhere before, maybe it's *deja vu*. They don't say much but seem impressed and promptly invite me to join them. I protest that I'm a trouble maker but in vain. That'll teach me to make better use of my lunch breaks.

British Waterways

The next step is to approach BW. Without their whole hearted support, I might as well stop and wash all that mud off.

Now you might be forgiven for thinking that they'd leap for joy if somebody comes along proposing to increase the value of their assets. But look at it from their point of view. They already have 2000 miles of waterway to maintain at a cost last year of £58.5 million. The last

thing they want is a few more miles of canal to look after and, remember, all over the country there are groups just like us bearing such a gift. Fans of the 1968 Transport Act will remember that the Arm is a remainder waterway, which means that BW can only spend money on keeping it as it was then. In practical terms that means money for maintaining the water supply, for safety, or investment they can get a commercial return on.

Anyhow, I digress, possibly to put off telling you that BW have done their sums less optimistically than me, and come up with a staggering estimate of 9 to 12 million pounds for total restoration. Furthermore, on the awkward question of revenue funding - maintenance to you and me - it becomes obvious that the cost of maintaining a navigation is much greater than maintaining a water channel or pipeline.

BW promise to refine their figures but I go home feeling very depressed and sink into a bath wondering why it is that some people manage to restore canals a lot longer than this one!

Back to BW

Decide that half a canal is better than no canal but can't see a way of dressing up restoration as far as the A41 as a millennium project. Be-

sides, there is no provision for a winding hole - no wonder the committee all have short boats! Out come the maps and the midnight oil. Decide that Green Park is about as far as we can go financially at this stage and about the least we can do to make a viable destination for boaters. There's a carpark with wheelchair access to the towpath, lots of trees, a nature trail and some land the County Council might let us have for a winding hole.

Get out the calculator and do a serious breakdown of Atkins' figures, adding extra money for improved lining and raising the A41 culvert, then hit the phone to BW, English Partnerships and all the local councils. BW come up with their refined figures and they are down to £8.6 million for the whole arm, but as far as the A41, we are only £60,000 apart - and my figure is the higher one!

Yes, there's a chance we can do it. It *is* only a chance mind you, but a better one than buying lottery tickets.

Back to the future

By the time you read this, we should have just heard whether we have jumped the first Millennium Commission hurdle and been asked to submit a fully worked up application. While it's in the lap of the

gods, or rather the Commission as to whether we get half the money, we have to work hard to make sure we get the rest. It's fashionable for stories to be interactive and this one is no exception. Lobbying may have a bad name at the moment but it is perfectly legitimate for individuals to lobby their elected representatives.

Bucks. and Herts. County Councils, Dacorum Borough and Aylesbury Vale District Councils all have funds they allocate to voluntary groups and environmental causes, but they amount to a few thousand pounds, not the £200,000 we are looking for. If we are to succeed, council committees will have to be persuaded to vote special funds.

If you live in the areas of the councils through which the canal passes, please write to your local councillors, expressing your support for restoration. Remember, it's £200,000 over four years, spread between four councils - an average of £12,500 each per annum (although we would expect rather more than half from the counties). Also, we wouldn't even ask if we were not planning to put £250,000 into the project from our own hard labours.

Mike Chessher

FESTIVAL 1995

It hardly seems any time at all since last May when our most successful Festival to date took place. But here we are, just about 10 weeks away from the next one. So, what still needs to be done?

As I typed up the minutes of the last meeting, it became apparent that all the 'action points' from the earlier meetings seemed to have been sorted out, and the framework of another well-organised event was in place. Now the details have to be fixed, and we will be all ready to start on the field in the week before the event itself. Certainly it appears to become easier with experience, but the danger is that it can also become too routine, and the event loses its originality.



Continued from page 9

With this danger in mind, we have kept the formula the same - the site layout works well, the craft tent with the high quality stands Bob & Johanna always find is ever popular, and Fred's bar and Judith's teas attract more customers each year. By way of change, we try to find new acts to entertain the public and new displays to interest all ages. Unfortunately, much of this lands on my shoulders, and I lose a lot of friends each year as I nag them to let me know the phone number of everybody they know in order to track down a new magician, or an escapologist, or a good jazz band.

If money were no object, the entertainment provided would be amazing - but of course the idea is to raise money, not spend it. You can probably guess the next bit - yes, do *you* know an act or display which we can get cheap (translate that as free if possible!). Perhaps your company has something of interest to show - do they put out dramatic fires for example? I have filled a lot of time already, but I still have a bit left in the budget, and would love to get some more interesting bits and pieces to spend the rest of the money! If you can help in any way, please call me on 01296 748036 and help me to keep one or two friends for next year!

Your Part

Please remember, the Festival does not just run itself. The Committee who put it all together work for months beforehand to arrange everything, and then work 18 hours a day from the Thursday before it starts till the Tuesday after it finishes just getting it up and keeping it running. The twin aims of the event are to raise money, and to raise awareness of what we are doing. These must be the aims of every member of the Trust, and this is the big chance for each and every one of you to make a positive contribution to the year's efforts.

We need people to help take money off the public as they come in, to help put up the fence which will keep them out until they do (and in until they've spent everything else they have), and do all manner of other vital jobs over the weekend. We are without the Caravan Club this year, who have been terrific in their support in the past, so the plea is even more important this year - **HELP US IF YOU POSSIBLY CAN.**

Graeme Lockhart is again organising the 'person-power' (of course we are politically correct here) and will be pleased to hear from you either before the event, on 01442 865241 (working hours), or at the

the Site Office, or most probably in his 'office' (the bar!) with a list of volunteer jobs which needs to be filled.

Temptation

Just to tempt you along, we can let slip that the evening entertainment is now fixed.

On Friday evening, as a background to the bar where old friends meet and swap stories of epic voyages undertaken over the past year, we will have a *real* juke box. This will be loaded with records of my choice (which means nothing pre-war and nothing post 1975 probably) unless I hear from you with special requests in advance. It will not be turned up loud I promise. The owners, Jooks, have kindly lent the machine to us free and will let us have any money it takes.

Saturday night sees the return of 'Bishopswyc', the ceilidh band from last year who were very popular. Now last year nobody turned out in appropriate garb, so let's have a really special effort this year to all look silly!

Mr Kite's Benefit Band, complete with light show, are with us for Sunday night after the barbecue. I make no apologies for having them back again - last year I had more positive comments about them than all the rest of the entertainment put together, and they perform for us free which must make them the very best value around.

Please do come and support all our entertainers - and why not spend a few quid in the bar at the same time. If you have still not been to a Festival, find out why so many people come back year after year when they never visit any other rally. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible there. If you want to come to the evening entertainment and are not booked in with a boat or a caravan, you need to let one of the Committee know in advance because there are no tickets available at the door - for security reasons. Members of the Trust can attend every evening and both days for the cost of just £3 - the normal cost of a daily ticket.

Richard House

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Wendover Arm Trust.

RESTORATION REPORT

Sunday workparties have continued, with the usual regular team being boosted by others from time to time. We have been working at Drayton Beauchamp, near the bridge, for the last three months, and together with the work done there by WRG we have made a noticeable impact.

Concentrating on pulling as many roots as possible, so we don't have to cut it all down again next year, we are steadily inching our way along leaving a scene reminiscent of the Somme at times. However, this will soon settle down to hopefully leave just the light annual scrub growth coming through in the summer, and certainly it already looks far more tidy and cared for than it did.

On the March workparty, when the turnout was disappointing, we decided to concentrate on just cutting as much as possible down, and not worry about burning as we went. We passed our initial target point (a telegraph pole which almost got chopped as well in the enthusiasm of the moment) at about 4 o'clock, when we would normally be thinking of packing up. Such was the excitement that we just carried on until we reached a point about 40

yards on where the chain-saw gang had been working in February. Now there is enough debris lying there for several bonfires - so please come down and try to help us get rid of it on 2nd April. If we can get enough people working on bonfires it will release others to carry on with the winches pulling roots - if you fancy that rather than a bonfire we will be happy to accommodate you! Bring tools if you have them - we will provide a hard hat - and gloves are strongly recommended - but above all, bring yourselves please.

During the summer we do not cut down any growth, due to the birds nesting, but there is no reason not to carry on pulling more roots. If you would like to spend a day doing this, let Roger Lewis or Richard House know. We are also hoping to get into the basin at Wendover to clean that out, but have not quite worked out the logistics of this - it would seem a couple of punts could be the answer. More news on this project next time.

We look forward to seeing lots of you at Drayton Beauchamp for the last official bash of the season on April 2nd.

TOWPATH TALK

- ❑ This is the first Newsletter produced using the new WAT computer. I am still having to enlist Ian Packe's help with the desktop publishing part, but I am learning fast and hope to do the next issue entirely on my own. Meanwhile, has anybody got an old inkjet (or laser) printer they are throwing out? I am currently borrowing the Chairman's, but he might ask for it back!

- ❑ Ian Packe contacted Aylesbury Vale District Council over the Banner Homes proposals to put a bridge over the basin at Wendover to try to ease their obtaining planning permission for new homes there. His contact at AVDC? A Mr Canal! Surely that must be a good omen.

- ❑ Following the success of the first Help the Hospices horse-drawn trip last year, another is planned for this September. This time the crew want to see new scenery, so they are going from London to Birmingham instead of the other way like last time. We haven't yet persuaded them that the Arm is a good place to go, especially as they can't wind the boat and horse-drawn backwards is difficult! Once we get through Little Tring and get a winding hole there, they'll have no excuse in future.

- ❑ You will have noticed that this issue is shorter than usual. Now this is not down to laziness on the Editor's part (honestly, there are articles queuing up for inclusion!) but in order to save postage. With the enclosures this time, it helps us to come in below the next postal rate band if we keep the Newsletter short - and if you believe that I'll eat my WAT hat (available from the Sales officer at a very reasonable price which I have forgotten offhand!).



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