

WENDOVER ARM NEWS

Newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust



Issue No. 47
April 2005

Price £1
Free to members

From the Wendover Arm Trust Articles of Association:

- To promote the restoration of the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal linking the town of Wendover in Buckinghamshire to the Grand Union Canal at Bulbourne Hertfordshire (hereinafter called 'The Waterway' which shall include all waterways, buildings, works and structures associated therewith) to good and navigable order and to maintain and improve The Waterway for the use and benefit of the public.
- To promote the fullest use of the The Waterway by all forms of waterborne traffic and for all forms of local amenity, tourist and recreational and water-related activities for the benefit of the public.
- To promote and educate the public in the history, use and associated wildlife of canals and inland waterways generally and of The Waterway in particular.
- To restore, reconstruct, preserve and maintain canals and inland waterways and works and buildings auxiliary thereto generally provided that such objects shall be carried out in a manner beneficial to the public and recognised by the law of England as charitable.

Contributions to Wendover Arm News

Contributions are welcome on any topic related to the Wendover Arm, its construction, history, wildlife and restoration. Letters, articles, photographs, drawings and maps are acceptable. All material will be acknowledged, credited if used and returned. Please send any contributions to:

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WAT newsletter Editor,
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Hertfordshire,
HP23 5HN

Disclaimer:

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

EDITORIAL

Welcome to our celebratory issue, with the first ever colour in 'Wendover Arm News', commemorating the completion and opening to navigation of Phase One of the restoration of the Arm!

We hope you enjoy the photographs of the re-watering and the first boats to navigate beyond the stop lock at Little Tring for over 100 years. It has been a long haul from the founding of the Trust in 1989 and the commencement of restoration work in earnest in 1998, but all those years of patient fundraising and construction by our members, friends and supporters has at last produced the wonderful result that you see.

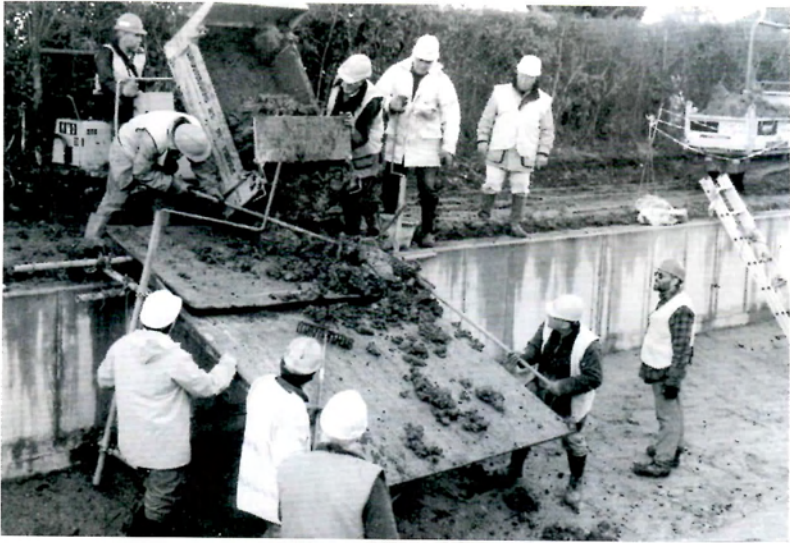
Attention now focuses on Phase Two; the article in this issue gives details of the costs, and that the Trust has a challenge to bridge the funding gap identified. However, I am certain that we shall rise to that challenge and we looking forward to Phase Two opening in six years time.

Back to that funding gap which emphasises that we need to make our Festival this year another sell-out success. Please do everything you can to promote it, and display the enclosed posters where as many people as possible will see them - further supplies are available from the editor. If you haven't returned your Grand Draw tickets with the money please do so NOW to Jo Leeson at the address on the tickets.

Thank you, enjoy the Festival, and do admire the newly re-watered Phase One if you haven't already done so - you will not be disappointed.

JOHN SAVAGE

[Front Cover Picture: the first boats through Little Tring Bridge 28th March 2005; Roger Leishman, David Suchet, Bob Wheal and David Fletcher on the front and Roger Lewis driving the cruiser. Photo – Ian M Charteris].



Tipping the glutinous spoil from the bund into the channel from one of the little tracked dump trucks. Hard and messy work!



Water begins to flow into the channel - early afternoon on 6th March 2005.

PHASE ONE RESTORATION COMPLETION

RE-WATERING

At 10am precisely on Sunday 6th March, exactly on schedule, the stop plank was raised to let the first water into the completed Phase One restored section. Our Restoration Director, Roger Leishman, had once again maintained his impeccable record of delivering on time and within budget!

The working party over the preceding days had had to remove the bund at the previous limit of water. In order to do this, British Waterways staff had put in stop planks at the other end of the stop lock – fortunately a day earlier than anticipated, this extra time was going to be needed. With the stop planks in position a pump could be deployed to empty the lock, allowing access to the bund.

Removing the bund proved quite a task; much of it comprised of extremely glutinous clay, and ground conditions on the towpath were also very heavy and sticky. This necessitated the use of tracked dump trucks, rather than conventional ones, with the disadvantage that the tracked ones were smaller. The spoil was to be

used to line the concrete base between the bund and Little Tring Bridge, with the surplus removed by grab lorry.

The sticky spoil led to this being quite a laborious task and the team only just made it, with the job being completed at 6pm, as night fell, on the Saturday evening. It was anticipated that one truck load of surplus spoil would require removing, but in the event two were necessary.

About 100 people had gathered on the Sunday morning to witness the historic moment when the water was let in. The British Waterways men duly raised the top plank and the cascade began, much to the satisfaction of the assembled work party volunteers who had toiled so hard to make it possible. Forecasts that the restored section would fill within the day proved optimistic; by nightfall on Sunday the water had only reached the bottom of the upright part of the walls. That large winding hole clearly needed some filling! British Waterways stopped the flow at dusk, and restarted it next morning. By late afternoon on Monday the section was full to within about six inches of the final

level, the point at which BW wished to leave it to do their tests to establish that there was no leakage. This, of course, had to be done although we knew that no way was it going to leak! The test comprised of putting dye into the water upstream of the stop planks; if there was leakage the dye would be drawn into the new section. It did not move. The Official Opening on 28th March was therefore confirmed.

OFFICIAL OPENING

Despite gloomy forecasts to the contrary, the sun broke through on the morning of 28th March to shine upon the momentous first passage of boats along the new section. Some 250 – 300 Trust members, friends and supporters gathered in anticipation of witnessing the spectacle. Representatives from the local and waterways press were also present to record events. At 12 noon there were short speeches from Trust Chairman, Bob Wheal, Vice President Roger Lewis and Restoration Director (and Vice Chairman) Roger Leishman. All thanked the many who had helped in so many ways over the years to make the achievement possible.

It then fell to our Patron, David Suchet (who had kindly made space in his busy schedule to be there and support our big day), to say a few words and declare the new section open. The first two boats through (breasted up to ensure simultaneous passage) were those of Roger Leishman and Roger Lewis, followed by the hired trip boat 'Dabchick'.

The first boats moored at the winding hole, and celebratory drinks and nibbles were provided. The trip boat continued to ply up and down between the winding hole and pumping station, giving free rides to any who wished to sample the novelty of the new section and enjoy being able to navigate under the New Little Tring Bridge for the first time.

All-in-all a happy and enjoyable day, with almost a palpable sense of disbelief that we had actually done it! The celebrations, however, are not yet over. The 'Walk an Arm's Length' day on 4th September will be a celebration of the completion of Phase One, with a suitable social gathering as part of the event – we hope to see you there.



Above: removing the bund, prior to re-watering on 6th March 2005.



Left: the jubilant crew celebrate letting in the water, just after the stop plank was lifted on the 6th March 2005.

NEW TRUST PUBLICITY LEAFLET

- Enclosed with this newsletter is a copy of the Trust's new publicity and membership leaflet, updated to take account of the opening of Phase One. Please use it to recruit a new member; there must be somebody you can persuade with our rates being so modest! Also, if you can find an outlet to take a stock of the leaflets (pub, information office, library etc.) please let John Savage know and the necessary arrangements will be made.

WALK AN ARM'S LENGTH 2005

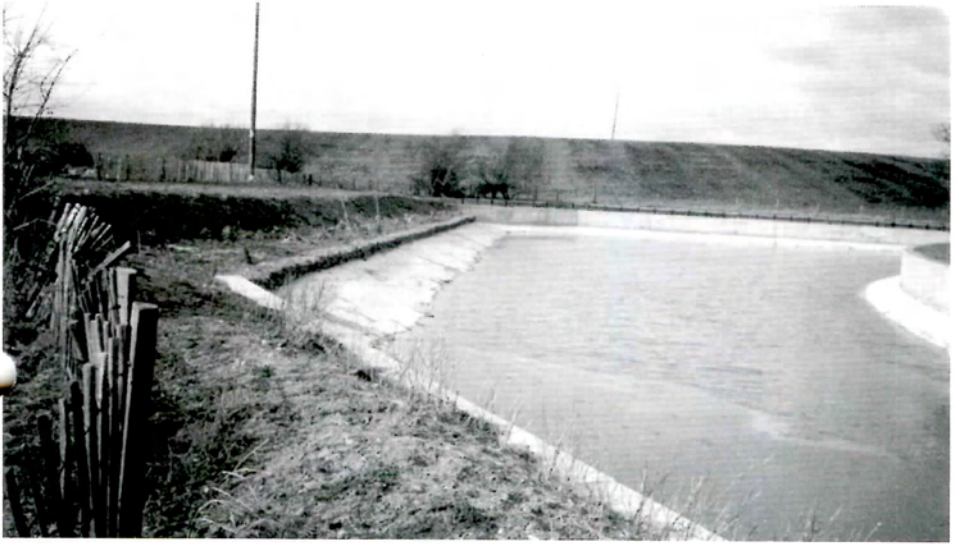
- Walk an Arm's Length, our successful sponsored walk, is to take place again this year on Sunday 4th September and will include a celebration to mark the completion of Phase One. Leaflets are enclosed which give full details and incorporate application forms to join the walk. It really is great fun, especially with the celebratory event - please do come along and round up all your friends and relations as well. You don't have to walk the whole way, you can do as little as you wish, or just potter a bit to enjoy some of the attractions. Last year we raised £3000 for restoration, and everybody had a good time in the process. We hope to beat the amount raised this time and, with the celebration, have an even better day!

FESTIVAL 2005: 29th & 30th MAY

Volunteers are always needed to help staff the entrance gates, and other tasks. If you would like to volunteer to help (and we hope you will), please report to Denise Laxton on the day.

Jumble. Get rid of any unwanted items for a good cause by donating them to the Chiltern IWA Boat Jumble stall at the Festival. Just bring it along or, if you have any queries, call Ray (01494 524166) or John (01494 873298) in advance.

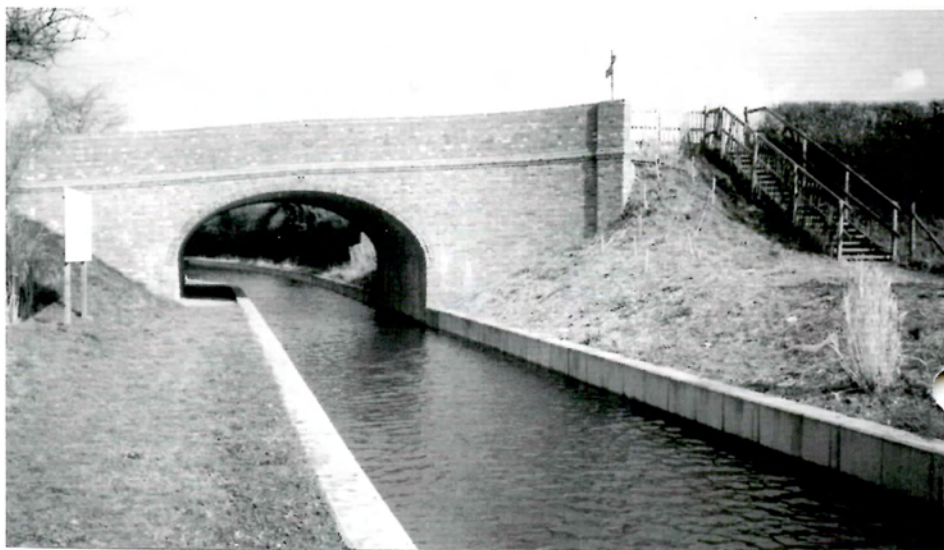
DON'T FORGET TO EXHIBIT YOUR POSTERS !



The winding hole begins to fill – early afternoon on 6th. March 2005



Almost full, about 6" off. Compare this shot with the one on the front cover of the previous 'Wendover Arm News', taken in 2000, as it is taken from the same spot.

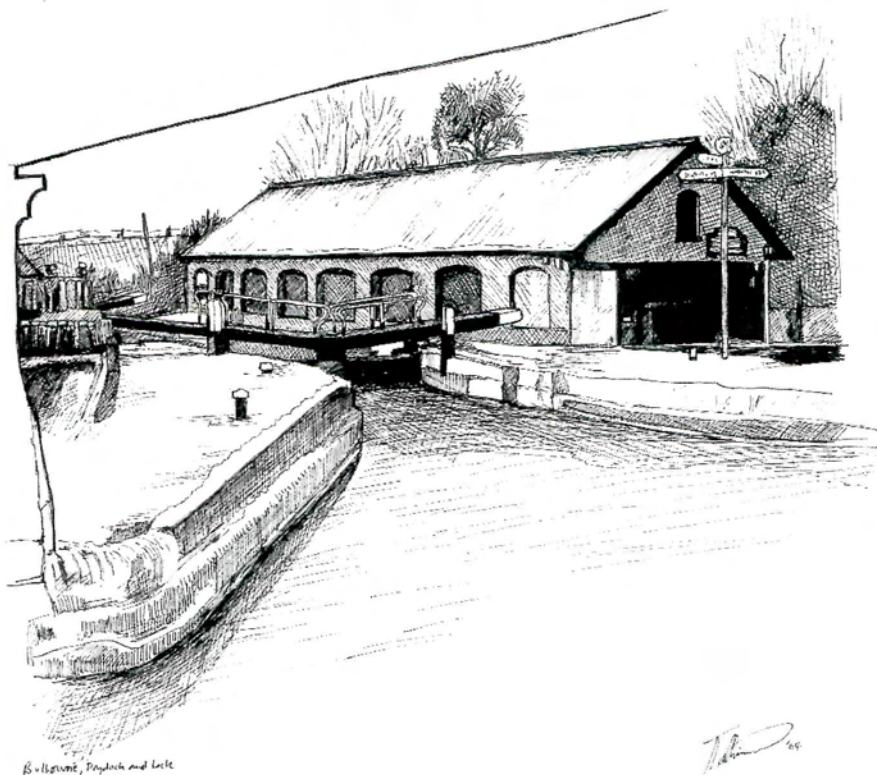


Little Tring Bridge with water under it at last; doesn't it look wonderful?



The first boats enter the winding hole

A charming drawing of Bulbourne Junction, done by artistic Trust member Toby Lattimore

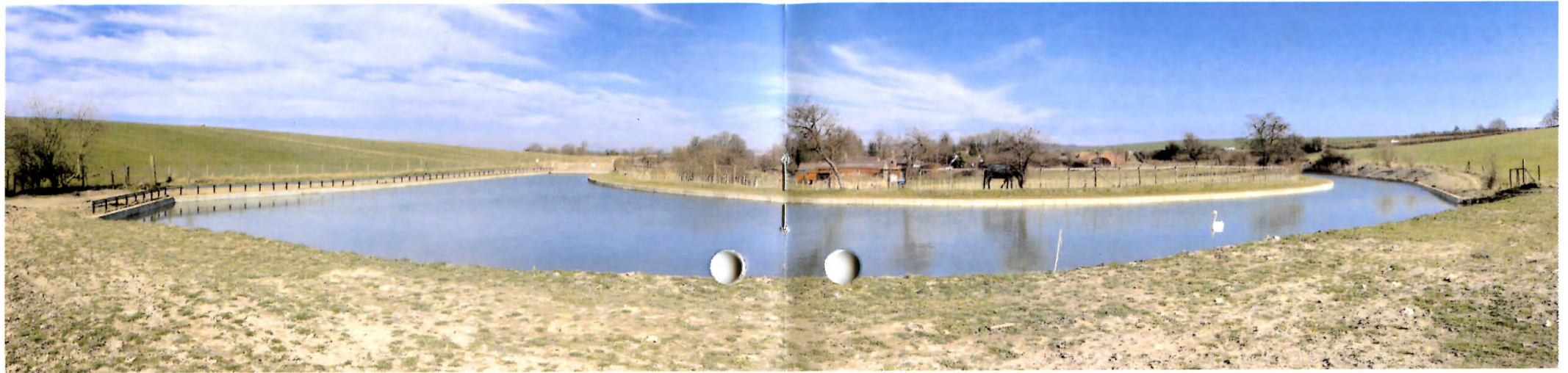


Photographs, centre pages.

Top: a magnificent panorama showing the filled winding hole, before opening to navigation. Photo – Ian M Charteris.

Bottom left: the historic moment at 10am on 6th March when the water was first let into the new section.

Bottom right: the newly filled channel, from Little Tring Bridge, on Tuesday 8th March 2005.



PHASE TWO RESTORATION: LITTLE TRING TO DRAYTON BEAUCHAMP (1.25 miles)

Notwithstanding all the excitement about the completion and opening of Phase One, planning continues apace for Phase Two; indeed by the time you read this newsletter there will already have been a four day working party devoted to work between Little Tring and Drayton Beauchamp. (Much preparatory work on this section has of course already been done).

In the previous edition of Wendover Arm News, we gave outline details of the construction methods to be used and final detailed costings, based upon these plans, have now been completed. At today's prices the total cost comes to £548,635. However, inflation has to be allowed for and a 5% compound increase has been budgeted over the six years (to year 2010/2011) of the Phase, bringing the total to £619,320.

Now that sounds (and indeed is) a lot of money for the Trust to find. A significant help is that British Waterways has agreed to contribute £200,000 as 'avoided costs' in replacing the time-expired pipeline of 1911. Taking this into account, together with money already spent (£11,116), cash in hand towards Phase Two (£150,000) and anticipated Festival profits over the six years (£120,000) we shall have a shortfall of £138,204 to make up by other fundraising.

Of course, should the Festival continue to perform as it has during the last two years, we shall be in a much stronger position. It would, however, be imprudent to make such an assumption – it's bound to rain on us some time!

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THE STORY OF THE WELLS WHICH SUPPLY THE ARM AT WENDOVER

Many of our readers will be aware that the Heron Stream, which flows through Wendover, feeds into the Arm at Wharf Road. The observant, however, will note that another flow of water enters the gauging tank from a side culvert, and this article tells the story of this supplementary source of water for the Arm.

Some time before 1871, the Grand Junction Canal Co. put down a well (Well No.1) on their own land in Upper Mill Head Meadow; this lies between the Heron Stream and Hale Road, in the vicinity of the present Sluice Cottage. In the summer of 1871 a borehole was put down into the Upper Greensand from this well to ascertain the amount of water which might be obtained. Should this be satisfactory, it was proposed to install a pump to draw this water and deliver it into the Heron stream, which was the property of the company.

It was later decided, however, to construct a pipeline to take the water underground by gravity from a point near the bottom of the well to discharge into the Wendover Arm at Wendover Wharf. This pipeline was to be laid almost entirely under lands belonging to Colonel Philip Smith and an Agreement dated 22nd May 1872 was accordingly entered into in respect of the necessary easement.

The work of laying the pipeline commenced in July 1872, mostly as a single 12" pipe, although a double line of 12" pipes was laid for the first 250 yards from the well.

In 1874 proposals were made to sink another well (Well No.2) on Colonel Smith's land at Well Head (just west of the junction of Hale Road and Hogtrough Lane). An Agreement providing for this was completed on 11th. September 1874. This gave the company power to sink a well at any one point on the Colonel's land and, if a supply of water was obtained, to lay a pipe not less than two feet below the surface to convey the water to the Company's existing Well No.1, or to the pipe drain connecting therewith.

The Company had to agree to deepen any wells to cottages adversely affected by these works, and should the wells at the Manor House be affected a hydraulic ram was to be fixed at the expense of the company, but maintained by Colonel Smith. The well (No.2) appears to have been

WENDOVER

GREEN LAND SOLD 3.6.1992 TO J.C. & B.A. VELLA-COTT

GREEN LAND SOLD 3.6.1992 TO M.J. & M.M. COMBEETT
3.430

LAND COLOURED GRANGE CONVEYED
TO A.H. TULL - CONVEYANCE 17. APR. 1914
P.S. BOOK 2/164

GREEN LAND SOLD TO R & E.E. HOLLOWAY
8.286
4.6.1992

Various Adjoining Owners
Registered Titles,
The Board have received no
Consultation or Correspondence.

WELLS Nos 1 & 2, AND HEADINGS:
SEE GRANTS: Genl. P. SMITH; II. 9. 1874; 4
AND ASST ENGINEER'S REPORT 28 AUG 1947
FILED WITH DEEDS; WENDOVER PARISH,

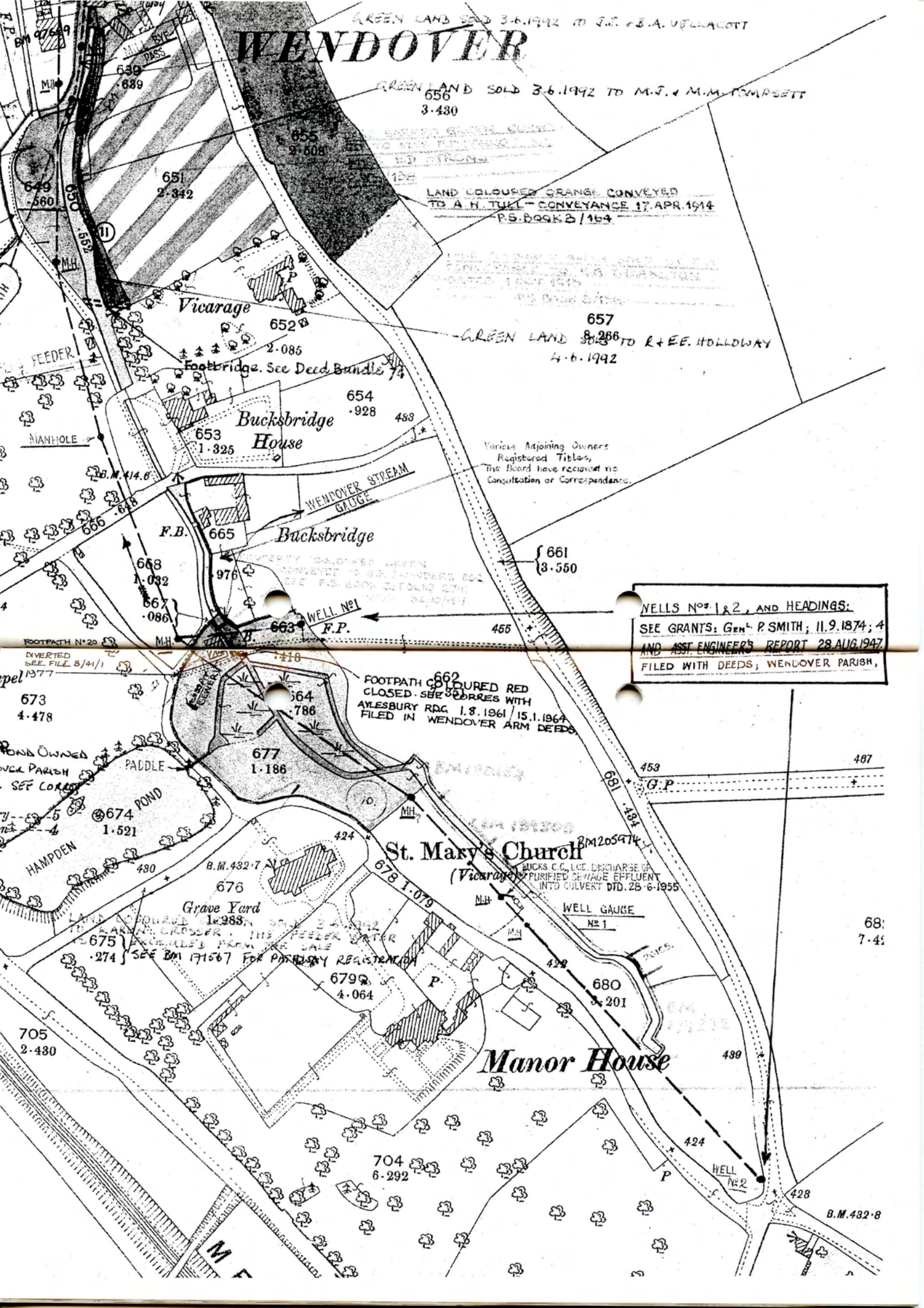
FOOTPATH COLOURED RED
CLOSED. SEE DEEDS WITH
AYLESBURY RDC 1.8.1961/15.1.1964
FILED IN WENDOVER ARM DEEDS

PONDS OWNED
WENDOVER PARISH
SEE LOCAL

St. Mary's Church
(Vicarage)
BUCKS C.C. LICE. DISCHARGE OF
PURIFIED SEWAGE EFFLUENT
INTO CULVERT DTD. 26-6-1955

Grave Yard
1.985

Manor House



completed some time in 1874 and a pipeline laid to connect with the existing one from Well No.1. It does not appear that any deepening of the cottage or Manor House wells was required at that time.

In 1875 it was found that the 12" pipe near Wendover Wharf was continually becoming choked and a culvert was subsequently substituted for the pipe over the first 150 yards from the wharf. The outlet of this culvert can be clearly seen today just downstream of the gauging weir (the pipeline was diverted above the weir when the present gauging station was constructed, so that the whole flow could be captured by the new automatic station – separate measurements had to be taken under the former manual system).

Also in 1875, consideration was given to constructing a deep level heading from Well No. 2 to the pipe near Well No.1, but this proposal was postponed.

In 1886 it was proposed to replace the remaining 12" pipes by a brick culvert and an Agreement dated 4th. June 1886 was entered into with Colonel Smith in respect of such work. Once again provision was made for the installation of a hydraulic ram to supply the Manor House, at the Company's expense, if requested within 12 months of the Agreement. It seems that the Company purchased a hydraulic ram, although there is no indication that Colonel Smith required it to be installed and there is evidence that it was still in the Company's stores some 8 years later.

The construction of the brick culvert commenced in 1886, but was not completed for the full length, the work being suspended in March 1887 at the junction of the old single and double lines of 12" pipes, the latter being allowed to remain for the time being. In 1891, however, this work was completed and at that time it was agreed with the now General Smith that the culvert should be extended as a deep heading from the Company's manhole at Upper Mill Mead Meadow to Well No.2, along similar lines to the former proposal of 1875.

An Agreement dated 12th. March 1892 was accordingly entered into, and the work carried out the same year. Thus was completed the brick culvert from Well No.2, with a branch from Well No.1, to Wharf Road which remains in use to this day, owned and maintained by British Waterways.

The matter of the water supply to the Manor House however, had not been finally resolved! In 1894 complaints were received from General Smith's tenants that the Manor House wells were failing, it was claimed because the new deeper headings were draining the chalk strata. In response to this the Company installed the hydraulic ram, purchased in 1886, with General Smith contributing £100 towards the cost. The ram remained in use until 1940/41 when it appears that the water supplied from it became unfit for drinking purposes and the ram was rendered inoperative at the tenant's request. The Manor House was connected to the Bucks Water Board's mains in January 1943 and the canal company then removed the ram.

The plan associated with this article shows the route of the culverts and location of the wells. Some of the manholes can be seen, especially the one where the branch culvert from Well No.1 joins that from Well No.2; it is surrounded by a wooden fence and is near the public footpath (Ridgeway) which follows the Heron Stream. Look out for this, and the culvert entering the gauging tank at Wharf Road.

JOHN SAVAGE (Source: Grand Union Canal Company Engineer's Office Memorandum dated 28th August 1947)

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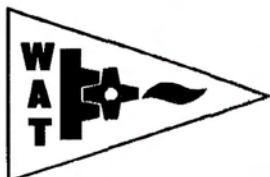
Left: rubbing strips were added to Little Tring Bridge ready for the Official Opening – a nice finishing touch.

Below: a view of the recently completed improved towpath between Gammel bridge and Bulbourne Junction. British Waterways has invested about £100,000 in this project.



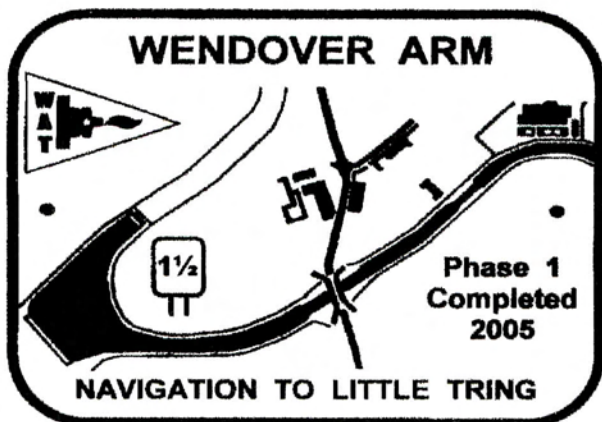
PLAQUE ORDER FORM

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Thank you for your order

A FRESH LOOK AT JAMES BRINDLEY

They say history is written by the victors. Given the speed with which the railways supplanted the canals perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that it is the great railway engineers, not those who built the canals, who we remember today. Stephenson and Brunel are taught in our schools – but what of the man who broke the mould and laid down the basis for the first national transport system, James Brindley?

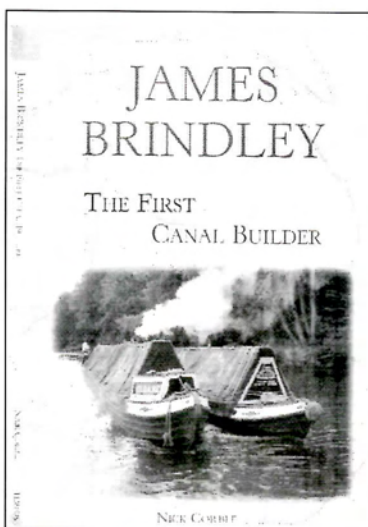
A new biography due out in early May written by WAT member Nick Corble attempts to redress this imbalance. Published by Tempus Publishing, and called 'James Brindley: The First Canal Engineer' the book takes a fresh look at Brindley's achievements and asks the bigger question of what might have happened if Brindley hadn't come along.

Most of us know about the more obvious examples of Brindley's legacy, the bridges, the aversion to locks, the triumphs of Barton and Harecastle, but perhaps less of us are aware of how close he came to failure, the details of which Nick describes almost as if he was writing a thriller. He also focuses on Brindley's very human tale - how he was born into poverty, how he was barely literate and how he rose above all this to do things no one else thought were even possible.

The book also suggests that Brindley was the man who put the 'united' in United Kingdom. In a compelling argument, Nick describes a Britain of parts, brimming with ideas and resources but unable to pull them together.

Brindley's canals not only kick-started the industrial revolution and set the country on its way to becoming the world's first modern superpower, but they also created a common experience and sense of nationhood.

This book is a 'must read' for anyone with an interest in how the canal system came about and is illustrated with dozens of original photos, many of them in colour. The book is available from your local bookshop at £18.99 but Nick advises WAT members that Amazon are offering a 30% discount.



Wendover Arm Trust

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Expectant crowds line the bridge on the opening day, awaiting the passage of the first boats.



David Suchet enjoying turning the trip boat in the winding hole, with Ron Pittaway looking rather precarious!