

WENDOVER ARM NEWS

Newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust



Issue No. 48
August 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:

John Savage,
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Tring,
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HP23 5HN

Disclaimer:

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

EDITORIAL

Headline news is the outstanding success of our 2005 Festival; last year's broke all records and we could not dare to hope that we could match that. Not only was the record matched, but exceeded; as this is written our treasurer reports that the profit from this year's event will be at least £54,000.

This is splendid news and helps tremendously to keep our ambitious plans for the second phase of restoration (the remaining dry section) on course. You may remember from the previous issue of 'Wendover Arm News' that we had identified a funding gap of some £138,000 for Phase 2 over the six years of the project; well that gap has now been reduced by at least £34,000 (we budgeted for £20,000 profit from each forthcoming Festival). We owe a huge vote of thanks to the Festival Committee, and to all the other volunteers who work so hard to make the event the success that it is.

Attention now moves to our next major event, 'Walk an Arm's Length' on Sunday 4 September. Full details and an application form appear in this newsletter and we hope that you, and your friends and families, will come along to support the event and have an enjoyable day out in the process. Last year the event raised £3000 towards restoration, and we hope to make a further contribution this year. All money raised will go towards funding one of the footbridges required to take public footpaths over the canal, a fitting beneficiary from a walk!

The previous edition of the newsletter included some colour photographs for the first time, and produced favourable comment. Some colour pages are included again this time, after which the Trust's Council will decide on whether to make it a regular feature. We have to balance the enhanced appeal of newsletter against the additional cost; perhaps a compromise would be to include colour occasionally, or for special events? If you have any views on this subject the Editor would be pleased to hear from you.

[Front cover: the sun shines on the Festival site – Photo. Ian M Charteris]

FESTIVAL GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Following the outstanding success of the Festival in 2004, the Festival Committee had reservations about whether we could maintain such a performance.

However, success tends to breed success, and this was evident in the run up to this year's event. Bookings for visiting boats were at record levels, demand for stalls in the craft marquee was such that a bigger tent had to be ordered (and that filled up) and we had, for the first time ever, to start turning away would-be trade stands and craft stalls as the site was full up.

All we needed was publicity to attract the crowds, and reasonable weather.....

Both prevailed and the crowds duly descended, filling the field early on both days. We must have had some 15,000 people over the two days and indications are that they enjoyed the event. There was certainly plenty to keep people entertained, and refreshed with a better selection of food than before. The bar purveyed the specially brewed 'Under the Bridge' ale from Tring Brewery, to commemorate the completed Phase 1 restoration, which large numbers of visitors went along to inspect.

At such a major event involving so many people there is bound to be something requiring improvement. This year we did have a problem with an undesirable element camping on the site who indulged in some unacceptable anti-social behaviour (not during the time the event was open to the general public). We cannot, and will not, allow a tiny minority to spoil the event and the Festival Committee will introduce plans to ensure that this problem is tackled. We shall publish full details of our plans in advance of next year's Festival.

Final accounts are not yet available (some bills are outstanding and receipts are still coming in), but we have made at least £54,000 – another astonishing record.

THE ARM IN THE 1960s



These two views, kindly loaned by member John Wheeler from his brother Derek who took them, show derelict boats stored at Little Tring. It is believed they were taken in 1968. In one, if you look carefully, the original Little Tring bridge (demolished 1973) is visible in the background

THE ROMANTIC HISTORY OF ASTON CLINTON HOUSE

All those who are familiar with the Wendover Arm Canal will of course know a little about the land that lies adjacent to the canal at Aston Clinton. That is the section of "the narrows", from where it has been alleged that at one time water drained into the Rothschild's dining room.

Now a scholarly article has been published giving the story of Aston Clinton House, published by archivist Diana Gulland of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, who has kindly given permission for this summary.

Early Aston Clinton

The village of Aston Clinton, around the church of St Michael and All Angels, lies beside what was the A41, formerly the Sparrows Herne Turnpike Road from Bushey Heath to Aylesbury. The Lord of the Manor, which included the village and the park, was Gerard Lake (1744-1808). Lake had a long military career overseas; and was MP for Aylesbury in 1790. He was raised

to a peerage in 1804 as a baron, and in 1807, as a viscount, he took the title of 1st Viscount of Delhi, Leswarree and Aston Clinton. He was a life-long friend and confidante of the Prince of Wales, later George III, and served him in many capacities, including equerry, gentleman's attendant and Master of the Horse.

The original manor house of Aston Clinton was next door to the church, but in 1749, only part of a surrounding moat was evident. A new Manor House was built some time between 1770 and 1793. It is known that in 1785 Lake applied to stop up a section of the lower end of the road, now Aston Hill, where it would have passed through the grounds of the house and in 1793, on a plan for the proposed navigable cut from Wendover to the Grand Junction Canal, a house close to it was marked as 'seat of General Lake'.

Lake had a family of seven children, and during the 1780s and early 1790s they were staying at a

cousin's house in Drayton Beauchamp, Turrett House, and an account book of that time shows a delivery there of faggots from his woodlands.

The Racing Stables

Diane Gulland continues: "Gerard's brother, Warwick (1783-1821) was manager of the Prince of Wales's racing stables. After a scandal over his race horse, 'Escape', in 1791, the Prince had decided to close his Newmarket stud. He looked for an alternative training location away from the public eye and charged Warwick with the task. However, it appears that before the 'Escape' scandal, thought had already been given to a new location. From 1789 to 1791 the account book of wood (referred to above) records that Warwick and the Prince of Wales had been taking delivery of large quantities of beech and ash at Aston Clinton. This wood could well have been used for fencing around a stud.

Evidence that a stud existed comes from a painting by George Garrard (1760-1825) entitled "Race horses at Aston Clinton 1791. Sketched from the Prince of Wales's stud at Aston Clinton 1791". No topographical features appear in

the painting but it would be logical for there to be a house or residence to accommodate the Prince and his retinue.... If Warwick and the Prince were using the new mansion as a sporting residence that would be another reason why Gerard remained at Turrett House".

The New Manor House

In 1808 Gerard Lake's son Francis Gerard Lake inherited the title and estate, and used it as his country residence. The illustration, a map at the time of the enclosure of the Parish open fields in 1814, shows that the only access to the house and park was along the private drive formed from the previously public road leading from the Turnpike road in the village.

Francis Lake died without heirs and in 1836 the title and estate and passed to his younger brother, another Warwick. Due to what was called a 'chequered career' (including a court-martial and dismissal from the Navy), he was possibly in financial straits and the house and estate were put up for sale. Following acrimonious letters between solicitors, the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos purchased the estate in 1838.

The house contained four best bedrooms and five secondary and servant's sleeping quarters. A 'cheerful' drawing room on the ground floor had a bow window. It was described in the sale catalogue as being 'a shooting box' with extensive plantations, pleasure grounds and a park, with shaded walks and a fish pond.

The Rothschilds

When, in 1849, the Aston Clinton estate came up for sale by the Duke's son, the Marquis of Chandos, the Rothschilds discussed a possible purchase, and agreed that it was not worth more than £26,000, as 'It was not a fancy place'. Sir Anthony de Rothschild decided to make it his country house (it was near his relatives), and moved into it with his family in 1853. However, it was rather small, and so Sir Joseph Paxton, the architect of Mentmore, was engaged to extend it. The work was actually carried out by Paxton's assistant, and by 1856 alterations had been made to exterior and the interior. The estate was kept going by the Rothschild daughters, Annie and Constance, until the 1st World War, when it was used by the Military. By the time the

house was sold in 1923, it had grown into a classic mansion with seven reception rooms, a billiard room, ball room, 13 principal bedrooms and dressing rooms, 17 secondary and servants' bed rooms and four bath rooms. There was a formal garden, stabling for 32 horses, and the interior was described as 'sumptuous'.

The decline

A Dr A. E.B. Crawford bought the house and grounds for £15,000 for use as a school for backward boys. The author Evelyn Waugh taught there for a short time, and described it in his diaries as "an inconceivably ugly house but a lovely park" and "a house of echoing and ill-lit passages and a frightful common-room". By 1932, it was on the market again, and the following owners are noted: Howard Park Estates, E.K. Cole (Echo Radios), H.M. Treasury and Thames Side Development Properties Ltd, and finally Green Park Hotel. A brochure of the latter advertised: "A weekend spent in these luxurious quiet surroundings is well spent, and the hours will slip by ...broken by an occasional dance in the wonderfull oak ballroom"(sic).

Buckinghamshire County Council acquired the house and park in three lots between 1959 and 1967; the house was demolished and Green Park Training Centre was built. The only evidence of the existence of the mansion is the balustrade which once encircled the garden at the front of the house.

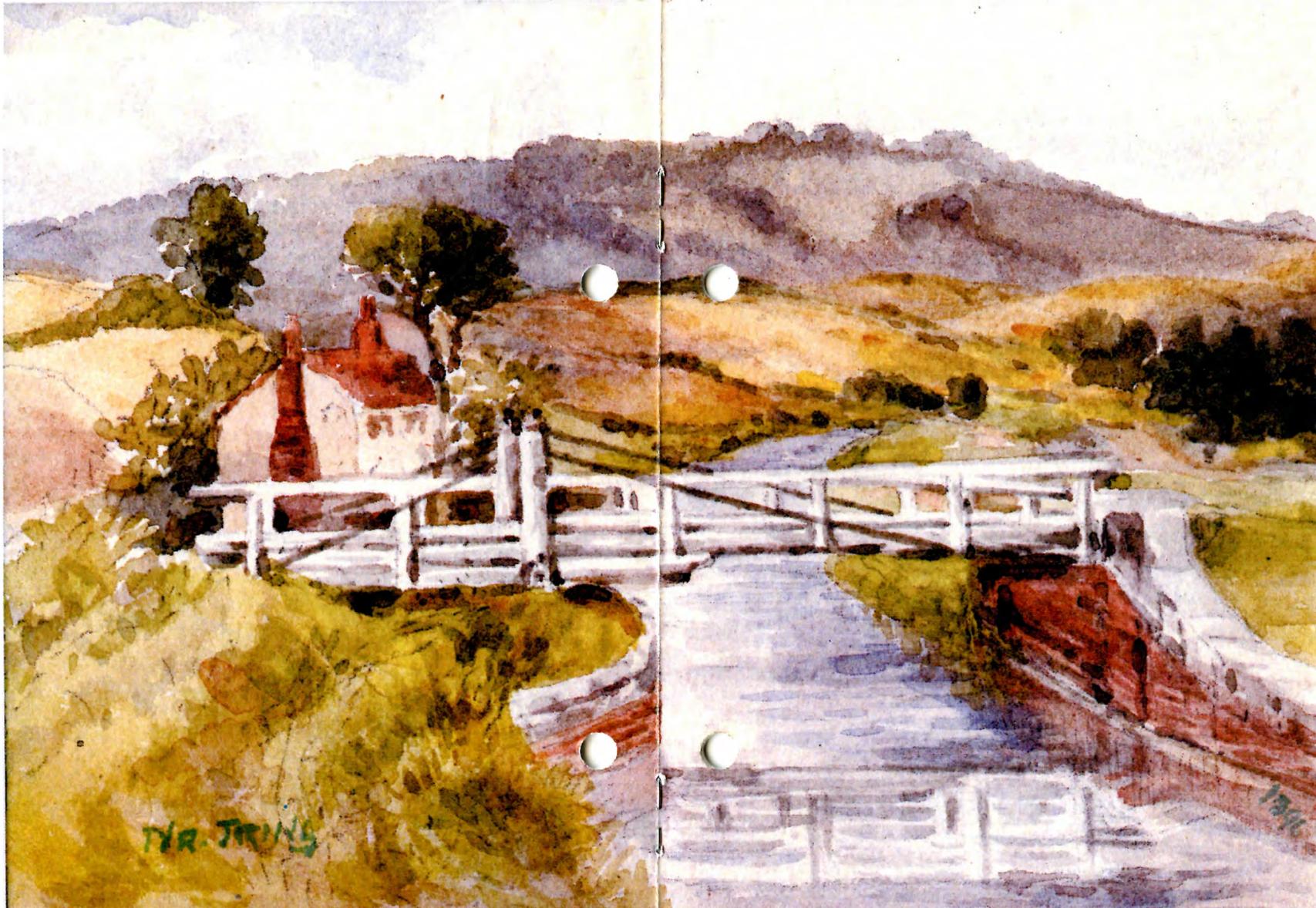
Reference: "Aston Clinton Manor House: From moated site to classical mansion" by Diana Gulland, published in "Records of Buckinghamshire" Volume 43, 2003.

Shelley Savage



*Aston Clinton House showing the NW front and the NE side 1956.
By courtesy of English Heritage. National Monuments Record.*

HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE



This delightful watercolour depicts Whitehouses in 1896. The swing bridge carried the Tring – Wilstone footpath over the canal, and provided access to the cottages. This is one of the locations where the Trust will have to install a footbridge to carry the present public footpath over the soon to be restored canal.

Our grateful thanks are due to Mike Bass of the Tring and District Local History and Museum Society for a copy of the painting, the original of which he recently acquired at auction.

NOTIFICATION OF A.G.M.

NOTICE IS GIVEN TO ALL TRUST MEMBERS THAT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IS TO BE HELD AT 8.00PM ON WEDNESDAY 26TH OCTOBER AT THE ASTON CLINTON SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB (ENTRANCE OFF THE FORMER A41, ALMOST OPPOSITE THE 'DUCK IN').

THERE ARE VACANCIES ON THE TRUST COUNCIL AND NOMINATIONS ARE INVITED; THEY MUST BE IN WRITING, PROPOSED AND SIGNED BY TRUST MEMBERS AND RECEIVED BY THE SECRETARY (address inside rear cover) BY POST BEFORE 19 OCTOBER 2005.

THERE IS A LICENCED BAR, AND WE HOPE TO HAVE SOME ENTERTAINMENT AFTER THE FORMAL BUSINESS.

CELEBRATION BBQ

An informal barbeque is to be held between 12.30 and 2.30 on Sunday 4 September, at the winding hole at Little Tring to celebrate the completion of Phase 1 restoration. Trust members are invited to come along and join in, and participants on the 'Walk an Arm's Length' event that day will also be welcome.

A small marquee will be provided, and a portable toilet hired. Soft drinks will available.

Parking at Little Tring is extremely limited, so please be considerate by parking elsewhere (at Tring or New Mill, for example) and walking the short distance to Little Tring. Even better, why not participate in the walk, even if only for a limited section, and incorporate the BBQ into your outing.

So that the right amount of food can be ordered, please book in advance (by 30 August) by telephoning Shelley Savage on 01442 827702 or email Judith@plusfinance.co.uk. The charge is £4 per head for a light lunch (meat + salad) if booked in advance, payable on the day. We look forward to seeing you there.

ASPHALT ON THE ARM

On 2 June John Savage gave a talk on the Wendover Arm at the London Canal Museum. In the audience was Professor Timothy J Peters, who was much interested in the use of asphalt to line part of the Arm in the nineteenth century. Prof. Peters is working with the Ironbridge Institute and British Waterways investigating the concrete and asphalt lining of parts of the Thames and Severn Canal, now under restoration. The application of asphalt on the Wendover Arm is an early use of the material and raises interesting questions about its source. Prof. Peters has taken samples for analysis and is making extensive enquiries.

Clearly, this is a significant aspect of the heritage of the Arm and we hope will be the subject of a more detailed article in a future edition of 'Wendover Arm News', when Prof. Peters has completed his research.

WALK AN ARM'S LENGTH

This year's Walk along the length of the Wendover Arm is being promoted as 'More than Fresh Air and Exercise!'

In order to give a bit of variety to the experience (after all, the route is exactly the same as before), we have persuaded all kinds of people to sit on the towpath, to be available to walkers who will bombard them with questions. For instance, local artists will be in action, and will expect to be watched while they draw or paint a canal view. Peter and friends from Friends of Tring Reservoir are bringing a telescope so that participants can view birds and find out all about them. Sara and Crispin will identify plants, insects and other creepy-crawlies in the Wides area. Our stalwart Restoration Team will explain exactly what they are doing in the dry section, and near Gammel bridge the friendly Tring Anglers are keen to stimulate interest in fishing on the canal.

Another new attraction is the delightful 12th century church at Drayton Beauchamp, open specially for participants to visit. There will be quizzes for children and adults as well as opportunities for children to collect various listed items – all of which proved very popular last year.

The marshals along the route will be provided by Tring ATC – to 'stamp' the 'passports' and help walkers cross the roads.

If you don't wish to walk the whole length, it does not matter – you can

walk as much or as little as you choose. Indeed you could enjoy the event just by visiting the attractions along the way.

Refreshments will be available all day in Trust member Michael Blundell's delightful garden at Lower Farm Bungalow, Halton Village. The cakes on offer make this well worth a visit!

Also, as part of the event, there will be a barbecue to celebrate the completion of Phase 1. This will be at the winding hole at Little Tring, between 12.30 and 2.30, at a charge of £4 if booked in advance (by 30 August) by telephoning Shelley Savage on 01442 827702, or e-mail judith@plusfinance.co.uk. We will take cash on the day. If you take a chance and just turn up, that will cost £6 per person.

For those who wish to walk the whole way, there will be a frequent free minibus going back and forth between Bulbourne and Wendover.

So please do come along and join in, even if just by visiting the barbecue or enjoying a visit to the church at Drayton Beauchamp or having tea (and those wonderful cakes) at Halton.

An application form is reproduced on the following page for our day out along the canal; those registering will be sent a full information pack in good time prior to the day.



THE WENDOVER ARM OF THE GRAND UNION CANAL

Please complete a registration form for each person who is walking.
Photocopy the form as required.

I would like to be registered to WALK AN ARM'S LENGTH on Sunday 4 September 2005

Forename: _____ Surname: _____ Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss
(please indicate)
Address: _____

Post Code: _____ Tel No: _____

Age: _____ (only if under 16 when you must be accompanied by an adult)

E-mail address: (if applicable)

Declaration

The organisers would like to remind you that you have entered this event at your own risk and that they will in no way be liable for any injury before, during or after the event. All children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

I have read and agree with the declaration above.

Signature : _____ Date: _____

The 1998 Data Protection Act. The Wendover Arm Trust will hold your details only in connection with The Trust, and will not pass them to third parties.

I do not want to receive other communications from The Trust.

Please return your registration form by 22 August 2005 at the latest to:

Walk an Arm's Length, c/o 14 Hillside, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 2PQ

Email: judith@plusfinance.co.uk

Contact Telephone No: 01442 827702





THE GRAND UNION CANAL SOCIETY

Certify that on this day 21st Sept 80

The boat Aramis

and her fearless crew,

captained by Roger Lewis

did navigate the treacherous waters

of the Wendover Arm of

The Grand Union Canal

witnessed by Jean Inford

NEWS IN BRIEF

- * **WENDOVER QUIZ.** The Trust has been invited to field a team in the popular Wendover Village Quiz. We would like to participate, so if any members in the Wendover area are interested, please telephone Trust member Allan Baker on 01296 622728. The quiz starts on 6 October.
- * **'MEET THE NEIGHBOURS' AT HALTON VILLAGE.** The Trust is to have a small exhibition, showing progress to date, in the Halton Village Hall from 2.00pm to 7.00pm on Sunday 16 October. This will be an ideal opportunity to talk with people about the future of the canal through their village, and find out their preferences.
- * **CLUB 100 WINNERS.** The latest winners to announce are (April draw): first prize (£132.00) Mr C M M Jenkins. Second prize (£55.00) Mrs J R Wright. Third prize (£22.00) Mrs P M Everett. Congratulations to them, and don't forget that you can participate by contacting Barry Martin (details inside back cover).
- * **HISTORIC NAVIGATION.** Reproduced on the preceding page is a certificate recording an intrepid navigation of the Arm twentyfive years ago by our Vice President, Roger Lewis. 'Aramis' featured in the previous edition of 'Wendover Arm News' as one of the first boats to navigate the newly opened Phase 1.
- * **TRUST RECEIVES GRANT FROM WENDOVER COMMUNITY TRUST.** We are delighted to announce that our application to the Wendover Community Trust for a grant to fund an information board at Wharf Road, Wendover has been successful. We have been granted £500 to fund a board which will explain the historic significance of the water gauge and measurements at Wendover, so much part of the Arm's heritage but probably not appreciated by many of the local population. The board is now being designed, and will be installed inside the cage surrounding the gauging tank so that it may be easily read, but protected from the local vandals. Our grateful thanks are due to the Wendover Community Trust for funding this project.

Wendover Arm Trust

Registered Office: 129 High Street, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 2DJ
A non-profit making company limited by guarantee. Registered in England No. 2353392
Incorporated 1989. Registered Charity No. 801190

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FESTIVAL 2005



These views nicely capture the family fun enjoyed at the 2005 Festival.