



# WENDOVER ARM NEWS

Newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust



Issue No. 52  
September 2006

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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*Disclaimer:*

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

## EDITORIAL

It seems a long time now since our Festival, back in soggy May, although we are able to report another success, despite the best efforts of the weather to defeat us! Special mention must be made of our volunteer organisers and helpers who demonstrated heroic efforts to keep the show going - we owe them a great vote of thanks.

Members in the Tring and Berkhamsted areas may have read in the local newspaper about controversy over the sale of the field in which the Festival is held, with suggestions that it could jeopardise the future of the Festival. We have known for some time that the field was likely to be sold, although we were given to understand that the Festival should be able to continue. That has proved to be the case, and we have been given formal agreement to hold next year's Festival on the site, and at no charge to the Trust.

Good news too on the restoration front with the first re-lined section (using the revised method designed by our restoration team) completed at Drayton Beauchamp.

The full story of both the Festival and restoration are in this issue.

Please note the details of our forthcoming A.G.M., and do make the effort to come along if you can; this is the opportunity to review our success and to anticipate further progress. We look forward to seeing you there.

Finally, the usual reminder from the Editor that contributions to this magazine are always most welcome, and are almost certain to be included.

*[Front cover picture: Buckinghamshire County Council's Community Leader Fund has funded this bench, inspired by County Councillor Bill Chapple and installed by our restoration volunteers at the request of Drayton Beauchamp Parish Meeting. The bench is by the towpath, adjacent to the Saxon Way Bridge which carries the new A41 over the canal. Your Editor was delighted to find the bench being put to good use when he went along to photograph it!]*

## **FESTIVAL 2006**

“Mud, mud, glorious mud.....” would have been the theme song, and any visiting hippopotami would not have been disappointed.

Perhaps ironically, in the middle of a sustained drought, the rain came in May with prolonged heavy downpours, particularly in the week before the Festival. It has, of course, rained before on Festival days, but never have we experienced such heavy rain beforehand softening up the field so much. This presented extreme difficulties for the organisers, particularly with getting heavy vehicles onto the site to set up the event. They churned up the sodden ground into a state that resembled a WW1 battlefield (although fortunately without the shell holes). Somehow, with heroic efforts from the organising team and restoration volunteers (without whom it would not have happened) the site was fully set up on the Friday, albeit with a lot of detailed tasks as yet unfinished.

Come the Saturday, it rained again. Heavily. And prolonged. Would we now even be able to get the visitor's cars onto (or off again) the site!

Fortunately the first day of the Festival, Sunday, was fine but by now the field was in an even worse condition.....

Amazing efforts from Festival Chairman and Site Manager Graeme Lockhart, Assistant Site Manager Max Deveril, the Restoration Team and our intrepid WRG helpers managed to get most would-be visitors into the field although, understandably, some took one look at the conditions and decided against it. Traffic tail-backs on the Icknield Way were a concern, caused by the slower than usual process of getting vehicles in. Graeme deployed himself on point-duty in the middle of the road to try to minimise the problem, which helped considerably until the Tring Fire Engine arrived..... This had been booked to come to give a demonstration in the arena, but it proceeded to become firmly stuck in the mud right on the main track into the car park. It took a lot of moving, using a tractor coupled to a caterpillar tracked digger to extricate it, by which time traffic queues of embarrassing proportions had built up.

Nevertheless, the Sunday was a success, with a healthy number of visitors not too far short of last year's record. All the attractions were there, apart from the classic vehicles (and two of the three traction engines) which, understandably, decided against attempting to negotiate the mud. This

was a shame, because we had record (capacity) bookings from them this year, and would have had an impressive display.....

Monday's weather was less kind, with a chilly wind and some heavy squally showers, during which the temperature dropped sharply. Not surprisingly this affected attendance, which was noticeably down on last year.

So, the Festival had survived, against the odds as it seemed at times. All that remained was to clear the site. Again, this proved a difficult and extended job as just about every vehicle got stuck and had to be pulled out by tractor. Right to the end every task was that much more difficult and time consuming for the, by now, exhausted team.

We owe a great deal to Graeme and his team, the Restoration team and to the WRG (Waterways Recovery Group) team who staff the car park. Without their stoical dedication and refusal to be beaten by the dreadful conditions the Festival would have floundered. Thank you to them all!

Well, was it worth it? It most certainly was, as we have made around £40,000 profit on the event. In the circumstances this is an incredible achievement, and a splendid reward for those who did so much to make it possible. It keeps our income from the Festival above the budgeted amount needed to finance the restoration, a highly satisfactory position indeed.

*Footnote: we were concerned that the traffic problems and inevitable mud transported onto the road would inconvenience the local residents. We therefore delivered letters to them to apologise for the exceptional circumstances, which was appreciated.*

## **FESTIVAL POSTSCRIPT – IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE.....**

The Epsom Derby is held at the same time of year as our Festival, and the following account of weather problems may perhaps put things into perspective.

The Derby was almost wrecked in 1820 after a fierce gale the night before uprooted tents and booths, producing a scene of utter devastation in the morning. In 1830 torrential rain and a barrage of hail left the racecourse in such chaos that it took an hour to get the race underway after 13 false starts. Even worse weather struck the 1839 meeting, when it snowed right through the race, on May 22nd.. Another dreadful year was 1863 when Charles Dickens went down by train. He wrote how rain turned the day into a mudbath, with Epsom railway station “an oasis of boards on a sea of mud”. In 1891 the rain came down so heavily that the jockeys were wet enough at the end of the race to weigh 2lb extra when they weighed in. Shortly after the race on May 31 1911, a fierce thunderstorm erupted over Epsom Downs with hailstones as big as walnuts, and lightning blazed down at 30 strokes a minute. Terrified spectators ran for cover but seven people and four horses were killed during the storm.



*A habitual feature at the Festival is 'Ye Olde Fruite Apparatus' raising funds.*

# RESTORATION REPORT

The August working 'week' (of nine days!) has given a boost to progress with the Phase II restoration project. Our own volunteers were joined by others from the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust and WRG (BITM) – Waterways Recovery Group, Bit in the Middle; we are most grateful for their support.

Further work was necessary to finally resolve the problem with the leaking bund, installed by Nuttall's, at the new Drayton Beauchamp sump. It took a solid block of concrete to seal the end of the stone filled gabions that were causing the trouble because of the lack of a watertight seal. It is frustrating, to say the least, that it has taken 18 working party days to sort out the deficient bund, time and effort which would have been much better used to further actual restoration.

The new sump at Drayton Beauchamp was originally intended to be temporary, to be rendered redundant by the Phase II restoration. However, British Waterways has now decided that the sump will be maintained as a permanent feature to act as an additional flood relief measure; if water levels rise above normal after heavy rainfall the sump will divert some of the excess into the otherwise redundant pipeline, and thence into Wilstone Reservoir. This will mean that the sump, and the opposing concrete block referred to above, will form a narrows at that point.

Having got the bund problem out of the way, the main focus of the working party could shift to the primary task of re-lining the canal. Readers will recall that the original proposed method, using spoil filled gabions, had to be abandoned after experience showed the method to be too time consuming. The alternative method, outlined previously, involves using hollow concrete blocks to protect the Bentomat lining on the sloping sides of the channel below water level. The blocks are 'keyed-in' with concrete at their base, and voids are filled with ballast. The flat base of the channel between the block lined sides can be covered with loose spoil, which has the double benefit of helping to dispose of some of the surplus produced from excavations to cap the pipeline and from re-profiling the channel. Above water level soil will be used to provide a 'soft' edge, with vegetation right down to the water's edge.

The re-profiled offside bank has to be left to consolidate for at least six months before lining, but this will not cause a problem as work can continue in advance on the towpath side. The working party successfully completed the first section of lining using the revised method, which has therefore been demonstrated to be practical, using a straightforward method of working.

Having established the revised method, the previous costings for Phase II will now need to be re-worked.

The working party also made further progress with the two footbridges which, although substantially complete, require some finishing work. The final steps were fitted to both bridges, and progress made with the wing walls. There is concern about the rough woodwork, caused by sustainable green timber having to be specified. We are in discussion with the manufacturers about this. It is hoped to make further progress at the September working party.

It is good news that the Drayton Beauchamp bund problem is now behind us, and that a practical method of lining has been established - we look forward to Phase II now proceeding 'full steam ahead'!

## **STOP PRESS**

The television programme featuring the working party is scheduled to be broadcast on ITV Anglia at 7.30pm on 12th October.

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*This picture clearly illustrates the revised method of lining adopted for Phase II. The sloping wall of concrete blocks extends up to the water line and they are keyed in with concrete at their base. The re-profiled offside bank can be seen with, nearest to the camera, exposed Bentomat lining. On the further section, the Bentomat has been covered with soil, which will enable vegetation to grow right down to the water level. The flat base of the channel, between the walls, will be lined subsequently with longitudinal lengths of Bentomat; this method enables vehicles to continue to be able to use the temporary roadway along the channel even after the side lining is complete, without damaging the base lining. As each length is completed, working from this point at the new sump at Drayton Beauchamp, it can be re-watered by installing a temporary bund at the limit of lining. This will enable the Bentomat to be kept wet, and the vegetation to establish itself on the completed length.*

# LOOKING AFTER THE ARM AT WENDOVER

There has been considerable activity at Wendover in recent months to keep the basin and water gauge areas in good order.

In April a working party comprising Trust members Angus McKechnie, Sue and Andrew Hetherington and David Beazley together with Cllr Jerry Weston and Eileen McKechnie from Wendover Parish Council cleared the cage around the water gauge of accumulated debris and vegetation.

This was followed by the installation of the new notice board giving details of the canal and water measurement at Wendover. The board was installed by Trust restoration volunteers, and located inside the cage where it can be read by passers-by on the towpath, but is hopefully protected from the local graffiti vandals. (This is the board which was kindly funded by the Wendover Community Trust).

It was intended to remove an earlier information board at Wharf Road, as it had become badly defaced by graffiti and detracted from the area. However, after Trust volunteers had cleaned-off the graffiti and repainted the frame it looked much more presentable and so has been left there, for the time being at least.

A bigger task is the rather nice cast metal sign near the cage, with a kingfisher depicted. This also had been covered in graffiti. The Trust has agreed to fund having the sign professionally shot-blasted clean, and then Sue Hetherington will repaint it. The frame has already been repainted in readiness.

The local members are also doing their best to keep the area free of litter, but there remains a lot of rubbish on the off-side of the basin which is difficult to access. It is hoped to enlist the help of the Parish Warden, who has a suitable boat, to deal with this.

The local Trust Members and the Parish Council are determined to fight back against the graffiti vandals and litter louts and maintain the Wendover terminus of the canal as the most attractive spot that it is.

## **NEWS IN BRIEF**

### **WALK AN ARM'S LENGTH**

We are delighted that a volunteer has come forward to take over the organisation of the successful fundraising walks along the Arm. These have raised over £5000 for Trust funds, as well as providing a wonderful day out for the participants, and introducing many to the delights of the canal. Sue Hetherington has taken on the job, and will be working towards an event next September (2007). She will need help, both for the all important planning and on the day. If you think you may be able to help please do give her a call on 01296 622955.

### **RESTORATION ON TELEVISION**

Anglia TV's "Country Days" programme spent a day at the August working party filming our activities. They report that they were very happy with what they saw and heard, and were impressed with the scale of our achievements. The programme is due to be screened in October and we also hope to obtain copies for those who cannot receive Anglia.

### **FORMAL 'OPENING' OF FOOTBRIDGES**

There will be a formal opening ceremony for the footbridges in October, attended by representatives from the Chilterns Conservation Board, the major sponsor for bridge 4a, and representatives of Pat Saunders, the major sponsor for bridge 4. Other plaque sponsors will also be invited to come along although, because of limited access and space, the event unfortunately cannot be open to the public or Trust members in general.

### **CLUB 100 WINNERS**

More winners to announce are:

Spring Draw-

First Prize (£126.00) Mr S J Bell

Second Prize (£52.50) Mr G R Danbury

Third Prize (£21.00) Mr J P Martin

## **NEWS IN BRIEF (CONTINUED)**

Summer Draw-

First Prize (£109.20) Mrs J J Jeffryes

Second Prize (£45.50) Mr R A Dunkley

Third Prize (£18.20) Mr G Watts

### **VISIT BY THE LORD LIEUTENANT OF HERTFORDSHIRE**

On Saturday 5th. August our Vice President Roger Lewis gave Sir Simon Bowes Lyon, the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, a conducted tour of our restoration work. He visited both the completed Phase I and work in progress on Phase II. Roger Leishman has since received a letter from Sir Simon in which he says:

*"It was a great pleasure to meet with you on your working site at the canal and I found my visit most informative. I did not realise until my visit what an ambitious project this is and the completed work is certainly most impressive."*

### **REFRESHMENT FACILITIES ALONG THE ARM**

Further to the article in the previous issue, a rather glaring omission has been pointed out, and that is the Mead's Farm Shop and Café at Wilstone Green.

It is not far from the Arm, by footpath, and makes a pleasant diversion. From the Arm, take the public footpath which crosses at new Footbridge No.4 (the one nearer to Little Tring) and descend to Wilstone Reservoir. Follow the reservoir bank round its eastern side and, just before you reach the northern edge, take a waymarked public footpath to the right down a flight of steps. There is a sign for the Café at the foot of the bank, and from there follow the footpath which soon emerges adjacent to the Café. The Café and Shop are open seven days a week, and are housed in an attractive historic barn.

# **NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Notice is hereby given that the seventeenth Annual General Meeting of the Wendover Arm Trust will be held at the Aston Clinton Sports and Social Club, Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire on Wednesday 25th. October 2006, commencing at 8pm.

## **AGENDA**

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Minutes of the 16th AGM held on 26th. October 2005.
3. Chairman's Report.
4. Individual Trustees' Reports.
5. Honorary Treasurer's Report.
6. To receive and, if thought fit, approve the report of the Committee. (Council of Management).
7. To receive and, if thought fit, to approve the Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet of the Trust for the year ended on 5th. April 2006, and the Report of the Honorary Auditor thereon.
8. To re-appoint Mr F W P Lea F C A as Honourary Auditor.
9. To seek approval to amend the Articles of Association in order to reduce auditing costs.
10. To elect Members to the Council. (See Note 1 below).

By Order of the Council.

John Hopkins  
Secretary  
19 July 2006

Registered Office:  
129 High Street  
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## **NOTICE OF AGM (CONTINUED)**

Note 1 Under Article 39, nominations for election to the Council may be received by the Secretary up to seven clear days before the date of the meeting. Nominations must be in writing and signed by the proposer and the person nominated, confirming their willingness be elected. Only members qualified to vote at the meeting may make nominations or stand for election.

A list of members standing for election will be given at the meeting. One third of the ordinary Members of Council shall stand down at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting and being eligible may offer themselves for re-election. The members selected for this meeting are: Ray Orth, Ron Pittaway, Matthew Routledge, Shelley Savage, John Savage.

Note 2 Any person being a member of the Trust is entitles to appoint a proxy to attend and vote on his behalf at the Annual General Meeting. Such a proxy need not be a member of the Trust. A Letter nominating the proxy, signed by the member, must be received by the Secretary before the start of the meeting.

## **A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN**

This year, Graeme Lockhart did a sterling job of getting the Festival up and running, with help from many individuals and in the face of very adverse weather conditions. I passed on to Graeme a short list of those whom I had thanked after previous Festivals, but with the many additional tasks and difficulties this year I may have overlooked someone. Please therefore accept both my thanks and those from Graeme if you have helped with the event and have not heard from either of us. Your contribution, large or small, was valuable and helped us towards the excellent profit from the Festival.

Bob Wheal

# 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  
[www.wendoverarmtrust.co.uk](http://www.wendoverarmtrust.co.uk)

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Vice President: Mr. Roger Lewis  
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### IWA Nominee

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### Festival Chairman

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## Festival 2006



*For the first time this year, a second trip boat operated to give visitors rides along the newly restored Phase 1 section.*