



# WENDOVER ARM NEWS

Newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust



Issue No. 54  
May 2007

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,  
WAT newsletter Editor,  
16 Lakeside,  
Tring,  
Hertfordshire,  
HP23 5HN

*Disclaimer:*

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

## **EDITORIAL**

Headline news in this issue is the formation of our new 'Phase 3 Group', set up to do the necessary groundwork to finish the job. This is an exciting development for the Trust which, as you will read in the article on the subject, has drawn in fresh talent from our membership.

Further good news is that Sue Hetherington and Lucy Johnstone are now well advanced with preparations for the 2007 'Walk an Arm's Length', to be held on Sunday 16th September. A full report on progress appears in this issue, together with an application form to enter. Please do all you can to encourage as many people as possible to join in this event, which makes a lovely day out in the countryside as well as raising useful funds for the Trust.

In the meantime, our Tring Canal Festival is almost upon us again! We hope you will support the event by coming along, and bringing as many others with you as you can. If you can help out on the day, so much the better, even if only for a couple of hours. All you have to do is identify yourself to Denise Laxton, our 'Personnel Manager', on the site.

**IF YOU HAVE NOT YET RETURNED YOUR GRAND DRAW TICKETS, SENT OUT WITH THE PREVIOUS EDITION, PLEASE DO SO NOW!**

**FINALLY, WE WOULD BE MOST GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD DISPLAY THE ENCLOSED POSTERS TO MAXIMUM EFFECT TO BRING IN THOSE CROWDS.....** (further copies are available from John Savage on request).

*[Front cover picture: it seems appropriate to illustrate the upper reaches in view of the 'Phase 3 Group' project. This is at Halton, where the banks appear to look adequate to accommodate the necessary rise in water level..... That log will have to go though! ]*



## RESTORATION REPORT

As reported previously, with the problems of resolving the sub-standard bund at Drayton Beauchamp behind us, full attention can be given to the Phase II lining task.

The Stage being worked on is the first 321 metres back from the bund, and it is planned to have about half of this (150 metres) in water (at Wendover level) this year, with a new temporary bund at its end. Work is well progressed on this stage, with a third of the pipe capping completed and bulk excavation substantially in hand.

Design of the lining method has been all but finalised, with hollow concrete blocks to be used to cover the Bentomat on the sloping sides below water level. The use of solid concrete blocks has been rejected because they are more expensive (to satisfy health & safety requirements, solid blocks have to be smaller and therefore more would be needed). They are also more difficult to handle than the hollow variety. Coir rolls will be used at water level to provide a soft edge, and as a base for plants to establish themselves.

Although it will not be possible to quantify until the first length is in water later this year, there will inevitably be an increase in both the cost and timescale for Phase II. The coir rolls alone will add £50,000 to the cost and the overhead of the travelling time for plant from Little Tring to the current work site at Drayton Beauchamp in difficult muddy conditions needs to be taken into account (although this problem will obviously reduce as we work backwards towards Little Tring).

Work has also been continuing on the wing walls for the two footbridges, and it is hoped to have these completed in time to open them for public use at the time of the Festival at the end of May.

A significant milestone was achieved in January, when the Trust's spending on restoration passed the £0.5 million mark. This made a good story for the local and waterways press and was widely reported, giving good publicity to the Trust.

## **NEWS IN BRIEF**

### **MOORINGS AT LITTLE TRING**

There have been further cases of boats overstaying on the 48 hour visitor moorings, and exceeding the general 14 day restriction elsewhere. The Trust has reported these infringements to the British Waterways Enforcement Officer who has taken prompt and effective action to move on the offending vessels. Some of those infringing the mooring regulations were also unlicensed, and so of extra interest to British Waterways. The Trust has written to all the residents of Little Tring to tell them of the action we have taken, and to advise them how to contact British Waterways should they wish to report infringements. We have not restored the canal for it to be used by those who seek to abuse the facility, and any further instances will be reported to BW for action.

### **STORAGE FOR TRUST MATERIAL**

The appeal for help in the previous edition produced a useful lead from member Robert Breakwell, who suggested that we contact Dacorum Borough Council, who may make available lock-up garages to Registered Charities without charge. Our application has been successful, and we are now the proud tenants of a garage at zero rent! This has solved our storage problems.

### **FOOTBRIDGE VANDALISM**

It is sad to have to report is that we have suffered some vandalism to footbridge 4a. Three steps have been broken, using concrete blocks to inflict the damage. The steps will be replaced, but it is an unnecessary and time wasting diversion for our restoration team.

### **PHOTOGRAPHS OF COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES ON FOOTBRIDGES**

Local company Inspirational Photography, good supporters of the Trust, have made available for purchase high quality photographs of all the bridge plaques. If you have sponsored a plaque, and would

like to buy a photograph of it, please look at the Trust's website and click onto the link to view the photographs. Inspirational Photography will donate 30% of any sales to the Trust, and they may also be contacted at 34 Icknield Green, TRING, Herts. HP23 5HH Telephone: 01442 891718 (Keith & Nicky Sharp).

## **CLUB 100 WINNERS**

Winners in the February draw were:

First Prize (£109.20) Mrs S Lewis

Second Prize (£45.50) Mr L Canderton

Third Prize (£18.20) Mr J E Aston

Don't forget that you may join the Club, or buy additional numbers from Barry Martin (details inside)

## **MUD PLUGGERS UNION?**

*By Rodney Evans*

'The Times' carried an article "Muddy Waters Run Deep" on 7th February. This was an amusing piece about a website [www.muddymatches.co.uk](http://www.muddymatches.co.uk) set up by Lucy Reeves for dating/networking/friendship for people who wear their mud-caked wellies with pride. A couple of country minded sisters have added to the lexicon of all things mud by defining a "muddy" as "any person who loves the countryside and is not afraid of a bit of mud".

Our Restoration Working Party members must qualify for membership of the "muddymatches" in spades, shovels and concrete. Conditions on Phase II of our beloved cut this winter occasioned many thoughts of what it was like in the trenches of WW1. Stood still in the one foot deep thick slurry for more than a minute or two and you probably needed a Tifors (whatever one of those is - Ed.) to pull you out, hopefully still united with your wellies.

I wonder whether Roger or Ray, our much respected restoration leaders, might consider seeking fresh volunteers from the "muddymatches" membership?



# THE WATERWAYS OMBUDSMAN – AN OVERVIEW

*by Shelley Savage*

The recently published Annual Report of the Waterways Ombudsman gives the opportunity to explain what an Ombudsman is, and what this might mean to users of the canals.

Ombudsmen have been set up in various sectors, both public and private, with the powers to investigate and determine complaints brought to them. The Waterways Ombudsman is empowered to receive complaints of injustice that arise from maladministration, or of unfair treatment, by British Waterways or its subsidiaries. British Waterways pays the costs of the Scheme, which was established in 2003. BW undertakes to comply with the Ombudsman's recommendations. The current Ombudsman is Hilary Bainbridge.

Private individuals, small businesses and trusts, and organisations that are members of the BW Advisory Forum are able to bring a complaint to her, but only after it has been considered by the body complained of, and that body has had an opportunity to deal with it.

The actual number of complaints investigated during the year was 29. In the current Report the Ombudsman has helpfully given

summaries of all her decisions, and below is a flavour of how the scheme works.

Compensation for damage to a boat caused by obstruction and loss of enjoyment of a holiday: Mr A complained that British Waterways had failed to take adequate steps to give warning of obstructions so that they could be avoided. Although British Waterways agreed to pay for repair to the boat, they did not offer compensation for loss of enjoyment. In this instance the Ombudsman recommended that £400 be offered to Mr A.

A complaint about mooring fees, when some boats, but not others, have electricity bollards: Mr B complained that it was unfair that he paid the same as others for his mooring, but did not have a permanent electricity supply. He was seeking a refund of part of his mooring fees. However, although British Waterways agreed that there was an anomaly on that site, they said that there should have been an increase to those who had received the service, and this would be addressed in a new pricing strategy. The Ombudsman's conclusion was not that Mr B was paying for a service he was not receiving, but that some others were lucky enough to receive the additional service free.

Another complaint involved British Waterways practice on limited mooring duration: Two complaints were made that all new moorings within two regions had been limited to 48 hours. It was thought that British Waterways was obliged to provide moorings with a mix of durations. The complaint was one of maladministration – that a new policy had been introduced without consultation. Although no actual change in policy had been made, there had not been sufficient account taken at that time to convey the altered policies to the waterways groups, and British Waterways was asked to apologise.

A good example of the even-handedness of the Ombudsman comes in her description of the complaint from a boat owner who complained that British Waterways was wrong to seek to remove his boat, which did not have a safety certificate or licence, as he had been sent a letter asking him to produce a plan of action to remedy matters within a month. In fact it was discovered that the issues had been raised by British Waterways three times over the previous six years, but as nothing had happened, the boat owner had become complacent, and did not expect the Section 8 notice. The Ombudsman felt that he might have

been lulled into a false sense of security. And as British Waterways had given him over nine months to complete his planning, do necessary repairs and obtain a boating certificate, there was no maladministration. In conclusion, the Ombudsman recommended that if the boat owner complied within two weeks of the report, then British Waterways should not enforce the Section 8 notice.

The Report in full is available on British Waterways' website.



## **WHEN AND HOW CAN WE FINISH THE RESTORATION?**

All Trust members received a letter in February from Bob Wheal, which set out ideas for a 'Phase 3 Group' to progress the outstanding issues and funding to finish the job.

The letter called for volunteers to come forward to serve on the Group and it is heartening to be able to report that the response has been excellent, with some dozen people agreeing to help. The range of experience and skills amongst the Group is impressive, and augurs well for progress.

In addition to those volunteering to join the new Group, Bob also received a number of responses offering encouragement and suggestions, some backed with generous cash donations.

To all those who responded we offer our grateful thanks.

The Group will be led by our acting Fundraising Director, David Andrew. John Savage has agreed to chair the meetings to leave David free to work on the detail of the issues. The Group is to hold its first meeting in April.

There is a multitude of issues to be addressed, with many enabling stages before any bid(s) for funding the main work can be developed. These can be broadly broken down into two categories, technical and partnerships.

### **TECHNICAL**

The two principal issues are:

1. Raising the water level in the upper reaches from the present, variable, 'Wendover Level' to the constant higher 'Tring Summit Level' applicable to the navigable section of canal. It must be remembered that the restored Phase II length, currently under restoration, cannot be made navigable without raising the level of the

## PHASE 3 ISSUES ILLUSTRATED



*Bridges: The 'large culvert' at Bucklandwharf where a professional study will be necessary to determine what can be done to increase the headroom.*



*Bridges: The modern bridge at Halton, which will require complete rebuilding, but in what format?*





*Water level. Here, at the 'wides,' between Wendover and Perch Bridge, the water level is not far below the towpath. However, this photograph was taken in April 2007 when the Wendover water level was particularly high after heavy rainfall over the winter, and probably not too far off final level.*



*Bridges: Perch Bridge, Halton requires no attention, having been built whilst the canal was still in use for navigation. But what about that sewer pipe which could be tricky to divert?*



entire canal. Although Phase II will be re-watered in sections from this year, working from Drayton Beauchamp, it will be at 'Wendover Level' as determined by the inlet to the pipeline. Even our intrepid restoration team is unable to make water flow uphill! Whilst we hope that little attention to the banks of the upper reaches will be necessary to accommodate the higher water level (which at times, like at the moment after a period of high rainfall, is little different to the final level) no thorough engineering study has been undertaken to establish what, if anything, will need doing.

2. Road bridges. Whilst we know that the Bucklandwharf (old A41) and Halton Village bridges will need dealing with, again we do not have the necessary engineering reports to detail what is, and is not, possible and likely costs. The Bucklandwharf bridge is particularly uncertain as it is a large culvert, not too far short of navigable dimensions. Could the bore just be enlarged, or changed in profile from circular to rectangular to give the necessary clearance, or is a more major rebuild necessary? We just do not know without proper professional advice.

No doubt even getting the required engineering reports will not come cheap, and some preliminary fundraising may be necessary to fund them. We cannot, of course, do any of this in isolation and will have to work closely with other bodies, particularly British Waterways and the highway authority (Buckinghamshire County Council).

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

We are unlikely ever to attract funding just on the basis of restoring the canal to navigation for the benefit of a relatively small number of boaters, and quite rightly so. The canal is an amenity enjoyed and used much more widely by walkers, cyclists, anglers, wildlife enthusiasts and those who appreciate the heritage and visual attraction of the waterway. There is also scope for the restored waterway to be used for other suitable recreational and educational purposes. We therefore need to establish relationships with all interested groups and bodies to encourage their input and support; it is only with such involvement that funding can be sought.

This is necessarily only a brief overview of the task of the Group, but enough to make clear the importance and substantial size of the job to be tackled. We shall keep you informed of progress via this magazine.

## **VACANCY FOR TRUST SALES OFFICER**

Beryl Martin, who has done a stalwart job as Trust Sales Officer for some years now, wishes to relinquish the position after this year's Festival.

We therefore seek a volunteer to take on this role.

The job involves ordering Trust sales material, keeping account of the stock and monies received from sales and making the material available at events where the Trust is represented. There are limited mail order sales, and this side of 'the business' could be usefully developed.

There is no requirement to provide storage space for the material as the Trust now has its own lock-up accommodation (at Wigginton).

If you think you could take on and develop this job, or would like to discuss it first, please contact Bob Wheal, or any Council member.

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**PETROLEUM**

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## **1970 SURVEY OF DERELICT BOATS ON THE ARM**

We featured a photograph of the derelict boats stored on the Arm in the 1960s/70s in edition no.48 of 'Wendover Arm News'. Rodney Hardwick has kindly sent us an interesting report of a survey of the boats carried out on 25 October 1970.

There were twelve boats (eight motors and four butties) which, with the exception of one of the butties, were of all-steel construction.

The motors were 'ALTON', 'TARPORLEY', 'HALSALL', 'SUDBURY', 'BELFAST', 'COLESHILL', 'BADSEA' and 'NUNEATON'. The butties were 'BANBURY', 'ALPERTON', 'BAILDON' and 'SATELLITE', the latter being of composite construction.

The survey records that most were in a pretty poor state; the following extracts give a flavour of the conditions found:

'intermediate shaft and gearbox missing....engine cylinder block missing' 'heavy contact damage in bulkhead, rivets sprung with rust' 'engine removed – remains in hull' 'engine room partly demolished' 'Hull: poor, badly patched in places'

In the opinion of the surveyors only 'ALTON', 'HALSALL', 'SUDBURY' and 'BANBURY' were worth considering for further trading, the other boats all requiring extensive steel work to bring them up to trading condition.

It is remarkable, therefore, that it is thought that all these boats survive and are in use today! Keep a look out for them and see how many you can spot.

NB: photographs of boats stored at Little Tring appeared in Wendover Arm News No.48. In those photographs the only boat with an identifiable name is "Moon", which does not feature in this survey.



# **WALK AN ARM'S LENGTH 2007**

*By Sue Hetherington*

Walk an Arm's Length 2007 will be on Sunday 16th September. It is being organised by myself and Lucy Johnstone. Very broadly, we have modelled the event on the successful and popular 2004 and 2005 versions and we have kept the familiar "boot" logo.

The objectives are to:

- encourage people to see for themselves what a wonderful canal we have, together with its countryside, wildlife, heritage and communities.
- see the restoration in progress, and what still needs to be done.
- help raise much needed funds for that work.
- have fun!

The event is open to all, although WAT members are especially welcome! We would like to thank everybody who has helped but as the list is growing all the time we shall have to do this in a later edition of 'Wendover Arm News'.

For anybody new to 'Walk an Arm's Length', it is basically a sponsored walk. Entry is free but we ask you to pre-register, using the form printed in this magazine. It is not a race and you can choose to walk as much or as little as you like. If you want to help fundraising but don't want to find sponsors we are very happy to accept donations instead. We are also pleased to team up with any other clubs or organisations that wish to enter as groups, and in this case any money raised can be shared between the organisations.

As well as the registration form in this magazine, further supplies will be available at the Tring Canal Festival and they will be distributed in the Wendover area with the local newsletter. If you can help distribute to homes along the line of the canal, or put up posters, please get in touch with me. We shall also need help on the day to staff the reception points at Bulbourne and Wendover; again please get in touch if you can assist with this.

So, what has happened so far? Firm plans have focused first on the essentials, toilets and transport! (Both are organised). We shall once again have a free shuttle bus to convey those who wish to walk one way and ride the other.

What of fun things? We plan to persuade lots of local groups and societies to come along and tell and show us something about their special interests. Plans are still being worked on at the moment, but we can promise that there will be something for everyone.

There will be no excuse for anybody going hungry or thirsty because not only has Halton Village agreed to serve their legendary teas and light lunches (not to be missed - Ed) but Drayton Beauchamp Church will also be providing teas. There are also plenty of picnic spots to supplement the organised refreshments.

Full details will be available in the information packs which can be obtained by completing the registration form and sending to the address shown (with a self addressed C5 envelope, please). The registration pack should contain everything you need to know, but if you have any queries please do give me a call.

My contact details are:

Sue Hetherington  
45a Wharf Road  
Wendover  
AYLESBURY  
Bucks HP22 6HF

Telephone:  
01296 622955





## THE WENDOVER ARM OF THE GRAND UNION CANAL

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

For more information visit:  
[www.wendoverarmtrust.co.uk](http://www.wendoverarmtrust.co.uk) or tel 01296 622955

I would like to be registered to WALK AN ARM'S LENGTH on Sunday 16 September 2007

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 enter 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 with a size A5 SAE by 1 August 2007 at the latest to:

**Walk an Arm's Length, c/o 45a Wharf Road, Wendover, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP22 6HF**

You will be sent a full information pack in good time before the event.





# 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  
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# **SUPPORT THE FESTIVAL!**

**Sunday 27th & Bank Holiday Monday 28th  
May, 10am to 5pm each day.**

**Please remember to return your Grand Draw  
tickets to Beryl Martin at the address on the  
ticket stubs.**

**If you can help on the day, please contact  
Denise Laxton on site.**

**THANK YOU IN ANTICIPATION  
OF YOUR SUPPORT**