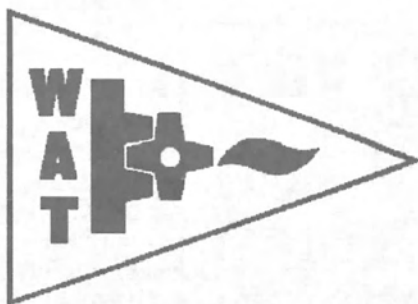


# *Wendover Arm News*



The newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust

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**March 1996**

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# THE WENDOVER ARM TRUST

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**Registered Office:** 2 The Driveway, Anchor Lane, Boxmoor,  
Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP1 1NT

**PRESIDENT Roger W Cork, FCA, FICM, FIPA.**

## CHAIRMAN

**Roger Lewis**

Hastoe Hill, Tring,  
Herts HP23 6LU  
Tel: 01442 823378

## FUND RAISING

**Mike Chessher**

27 South Park Gardens,  
Berkhamsted, Herts. HP4 1JA  
Tel: 01442 865398

## VICE-CHAIRMAN

**Bob Wheal**

467 Bideford Green, Linslade,  
Leighton Buzzard, Beds. LU7 7TZ  
Tel: 01525 381614

## PUBLICITY OFFICER

**Bob Wheal**

467 Bideford Green, Linslade,  
Leighton Buzzard, Beds. LU7 7TZ  
Tel: 01525 381614

## SECRETARY

**Richard House**

8 Eythrope Road, Stone  
Aylesbury, Bucks. HP17 8PG  
Tel: 01296 748036

## SALES OFFICER

**John Brooman**

66 Bryants Acre, Aylesbury Road  
Wendover, Aylesbury, Bucks  
Tel: 01296 623542

## TREASURER

**Beryl Martin**

12 Chipperfield Close,  
New Bradwell,  
Milton Keynes, Bucks. MK13 0EP  
Tel: 01908 312239

## WORKPARTY CO-ORDINATOR

**Roger Leishman**

Tel: 01442 874536

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Chris Mitchell**

**John Rowe**

## MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

**Barry Martin**

12 Chipperfield Close,  
New Bradwell,  
Milton Keynes, Bucks. MK13 0EP  
Tel: 01908 312239

## IWA NOMINEE

**Elizabeth Payne**

## EDITOR

**Ian Packe**

2 The Driveway, Anchor Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP1 1NT  
Tel: 01442 214126

## Chairman's Report

Having just returned from a holiday in New Zealand I find this English weather a little difficult to get acclimatised to again.

When I returned I was very pleased to see the progress which had been made during my absence. Mike Chessher's document, which has been presented to the Millennium Commission, is an outstanding presentation, not only by way of it's contents, but also in the beautiful way in which it has been published.

I am delighted with the response which we have received from Aylesbury Vale District Council following the talk (or in present day parlance "Presentation") which our Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Mike Chessher and Chris Mitchell gave to them in January.

During the past two months Trust Member, Ron Pittaway, and a small band of volunteers have been working away steadily to prepare a float for this year's Lord Mayor's Show on November 9th, Rod Saunders has again come to the aid of the Trust by offering us the use of his dayboat, Dabchick, and Messrs.

Reg and Charles Jellis, of Seabrook, have kindly offered us the use of one of their lorry units for the day.

Once again it is my pleasure to thank the Waterways Recovery Group, BITM for their sterling efforts recently. This winter we have been concentrating our efforts on root removal rather than continuing to chop down the undergrowth because when the roots have been taken out we are not getting vigorous re-growth again and, while we have been having enough volunteers to man the winches there have just not been enough workers to carry on with "Jungle-bashing".

KESWRG (Kent & East Sussex WRG) have offered to come and help us on 16th and 17th March and so we will be holding two work parties in March - the usual 1st Sunday workday and again during the third weekend when I know Roger Lieshman, who is now organising the workparties, will be pleased to see you. All man-hours

Continued on page 2

which we can now record can have a value put on them and can be used to match any money which we hope to receive from the Millennium Commission.

As is usual, at this time of the year, the work is well in hand to try and make this year's Festival better than previous events. We have managed to do this on every occasion to date but, because of our earlier successes, this is becoming more difficult each year. Never-

theless your Festival Committee are working hard to achieve even better results.

Thank you all for your continuing support of the Trust

Yours sincerely,



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## Membership Report

### New Members

We are pleased to welcome to the Trust, Mr and Mrs R A Evans of Harpenden. This brings our membership to another all time high of 492. In addition, we welcome Mrs A Stanbridge who has joined Mr P Stanbridge as a family member.

### In Memorium

With sorrow, we report the deaths of two members, Mr Gordon Rowe who had been a Trust Member since 1992 and Dr Richard Clarke who joined the Trust when it was first formed in 1989.

I am sure that members will join the Committee in sending our sincere condolences to their families.

**Barry Martin,**  
**Membership Secretary**

## Funding The Future

### Mike Chessher continues the saga of our Millennium Application

After all the frenzied activity before Christmas, we are now into a long period of waiting as far as our Millennium application is concerned. It could be the end of April before we hear anything. Perhaps it would be better if they issued you with an instant scratch card when you delivered your application. Reveal six windlasses - or perhaps in our case, six concrete mixers - and the money's yours!

Meanwhile, we have concentrated on getting our "partnership" funding from the local authorities. You will remember, Dacorum has already agreed to support us and now, subject to full council approval on 3rd March, we have a commitment from Aylesbury Vale to supply funding over the four years of the project.

The two *county* councils seem to be having considerable financial problems and negotiations are proving more difficult. Buckinghamshire has agreed £10,000 from its "Countryside Budget" for the next finan-

cial year - and that might yet be slashed - but will not make any commitment over future years. It's worth mentioning though that this is the only local authority that has actually spent any money on the arm so far, so I feel future support will be forthcoming.

Hertfordshire has yet to decide on a policy over lottery funded projects and at the time of writing, things are very delicately poised in discussions with this "hung" council. Suffice to say that we seem to have a great fund of goodwill with the councillors on this and the other three local authorities. Bearing in mind that they are all being flooded with requests for "partnership" funding for lottery based projects and given the parlous state of local government finance, I am quite encouraged by our progress.

### Public Support

Another area in which we now must make progress is in ensuring that those living along the arm are fully informed of our plans. I am becoming increasingly alarmed that

Continued on page 4

there are people out there who think we are planning something like the Manchester Ship Canal with its consequent effect on the environment. It's important we get across that the restored canal will look more like the Aylesbury Arm or indeed, the bit of the Wendover Arm that is already navigable - and definitely NO WATER SKIERS ! You and I know that but the committee are hoping to arrange public meetings to allay genuine fears.

Another worry is about construction traffic. The local roads are quite unsuitable for it and at least, east of the A41, all spoil and materials will have to be transported along the canal bed in dumper trucks - part of the reason for the high construction costs.

## Wildlife

Great concern has already been expressed about damage to the wildlife and it would be foolish to suggest that a major construction project can be carried out without causing problems. What we can say is that the construction will be carried out SLOWLY - over a four year period which, in any case we need to finance it. This will allow

wildlife to relocate as work proceeds and return as sections are completed. Secondly, it will be fully monitored by a qualified environmental scientist who has already carried out an environmental audit. Thirdly, the net gain will justify the disruption as the restored canal will provide more varied habitats, including valuable marsh and aquatic areas. It's also worth mentioning that there will be a shallow off side edge, planted with reeds and that as far as possible, a screen of vegetation will be retained to provide cover for birds and small mammals. Money has been included in the budget for additional planting and landscaping.

So, although the arm needs a lot of concrete to make it navigable, great care is going into making sure the end result is a waterway in keeping with its surroundings. It's up to us all to get that message across to the public.

Enough lecturing from me. Next time I write, we'll either be on our way to funding or funding will be so far in the future that I'll have turned in desperation to buying lottery tickets - or even scratch cards.

**Mike Chessher**

## 1996 Festival Plans

Yes, its true!. In spite of their better judgement the Festival Committee have decided to hold another one in 1996. You won't be surprised that the date is the Spring Bank Holiday weekend, 25-27 May.

The general format is to be on the lines of previous events (why change a winning formula) but with some new innovations here and there. The beer drinkers amongst you will be pleased to know that Fred has some REAL ALE on order. With Fred's experience of all things beery, you can be assured that it will be in perfect condition when it reaches your glass.

The official opening will be by the High Sheriff of Herts., Mr Robert Dimsdale. The opening ceremony is very much an exercise in win-

ning friends in influential quarters, so if you can be there on the Sunday at noon, your committee will be very pleased to see you.

Richard has come up with some different family entertainment for the public open days. Those staying over night in tents, caravans or boats can be assured of some great music to dance to or to just listen and enjoy. Beryl and Barry Martin on 01908 - 312239 are the people to contact for booking forms.

As usual, volunteers will be desperately needed in order to (hopefully) take in lots of lovely money or to help out in other ways around the site. Graeme Lockhart, the personnel organiser, will be delighted to hear from you in advance of the Festival on 01442 - 865241 during office hours.

### Situation Vacant

## Assistant Harbour Master Required

If you are coming to the festival by boat and can arrive on the preceding Thursday or Friday morning, then this is one way of guaranteeing a good mooring. The job mainly entails walking the towpath to guide boats into suitable moorings in accordance with the master plan. This top secret document is only revealed by Jack Vatcher on a strict 'need to know' basis!!

Interested? Then call Jack on 01727 - 764326, evenings and weekends.

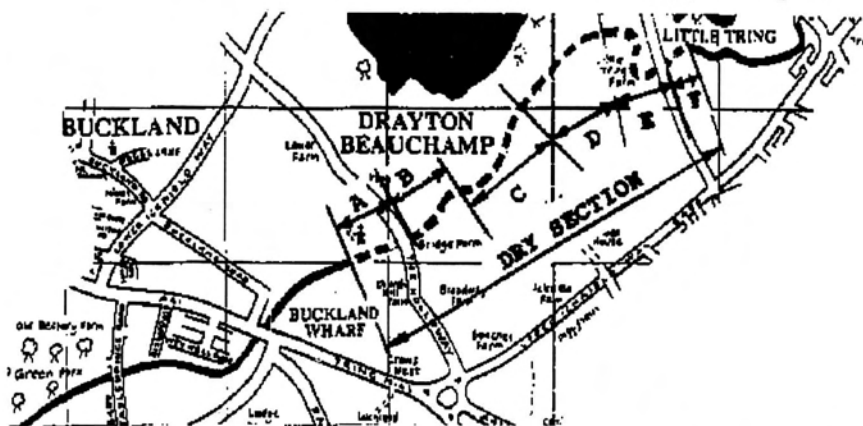
# WORKING PARTY WEEKENDS

## Roger Leishman reports on the work that has been going on this winter

It is now three months since I took over the job of Work Party Organiser and the Editor asked me if I would write a few lines on progress to date.

Firstly, what has been achieved to date? All work in recent years has been on the dry section shown on the map below.

Section B is the section we are currently clearing. All trees and bushes are being removed including rooting up stumps and as much minor vegetation as possible leaving a clean and tidy canal bed. The area between the towpath and the northern boundary is being left alone, apart from trimming branches obstructing the towpath, so as to preserve an undisturbed strip of land along the course of the canal. Nettles, brambles, rosebay willow herb and many other plants



Section A was cleared many years ago, I understand by volunteers and youth opportunity schemes. Apart from some trees to be removed, it is clear with no undergrowth and is being left alone at the present.

will no doubt proliferate in the bed during the summer but it is intended to trim this area in the autumn and spot remove any larger growth arising from broken off roots etc.



We hope that this will resolve the problem that has arisen in the past where trees and shrubs have been cut down but quickly re-established themselves because the stumps were not removed. I would ask members of the Trust, and anyone else who reads this article, who has not visited it recently, to visit this length and see what a difference has been made. Although initially slow work, this method will hopefully avoid the need for further clearance other than annual strimming.

Section C has been untouched by our working parties to date. It is, in the main, fairly dense with trees but not a great deal of undergrowth. It is only when the trees are cleared that the nettles, briars etc., take over. When we tackle this, it will be cleared in the same way as Section B.

Section D has been cleared over the past few years but, although some stumps have been removed, there are still many that are regenerating themselves. The target for the 1996/97 working parties will be to clear this section up to the same standard as section B.

Section E is the length of canal that has been the subject of legal wran-

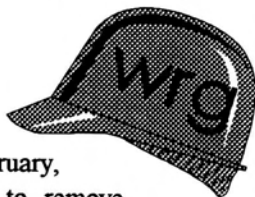
gles between BW, the Rothschild Estate and the farmer, now happily resolved. Some has been filled in by the farmer and some is still a channel, all fairly clear of vegetation. Until such time as BW repossess the land, there is nothing to be done, but then it may be necessary to keep it under control to prevent new growth.

Section F. The comments under section D also apply to this section.

Turning now to our regular working parties, these both cheer me and disappoint me. On the plus side, we have a regular band of dedicated workers who know how to 'graft' and are making good but slow progress. I have used the third person in this report because I speak for the team. I hesitate to single out anyone for praise but I must publicly thank Eddie Evans for his equipment and expertise. His stump extractor which he made from the hydraulic ram of a JCB and powered from his portable generator is well worth joining the working party to see in action and your presence will be welcome to operate one of the Tirfor winches also used for stump pulling or to help in general site clearance. On

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the down side, we normally muster only an average of 10 volunteers per working party. Perhaps this is due in part to the disillusionment of those who have seen areas that they have cleared in the past revert back to nature so quickly. I hope that the approach we have used for section B will refresh their willingness to help at working parties, dates of which are on the next page.



During February, our efforts to remove the stumps from section B were given a boost by the BITM ('Bit In The Middle') group of the WRG (Waterways Recovery Group). These are volunteers who give up their weekends to camp out in a local school or village hall and spend two days on canal restoration. They helped us over the weekend 10/11th February with the result that we had 21 volunteers on the Saturday and 23 on the Sunday. Just as we were finishing work on the Sunday we were visited by the leader of the KESCRG (Kent and East Sussex Recovery Group) of the WRG saying that they had a vacant weekend on the 16/17th March and

could they come and help us. No prizes for our response! This will be an extra to our usual March working party but please do come and join us on either or both days.

We recently had approaches from the Dandelion Trust based at Aylesbury who help with 'Care in the Community'. They are working on their own boats at Aylesbury but have asked if some of their people can come and help at our work parties. One of the organisers is attending the March working party as a reconnaissance exercise. We have also had an approach from RAF Halton who are looking for project work for cadets under training and while I was writing this article I received the news that they want 60 cadets to join us on Sunday 17th March!

During working parties, we are regularly asked about our work by passers by, either people on their own or, quite often, large parties of walkers. Nearly all are supportive of our work, including some local residents, and we get requests for membership application forms. I have prepared a brief explanation of what we are doing to display on a temporary notice board that is put up during our work parties. Most

people are totally unaware that the canal is still live, albeit in a large pipe below ground level and that, if we do not restore the canal, BW will eventually have to dig up all the trees etc. to renew the pipe which is now some 80 to 90 years old. We are also careful to stress that we take the conservation aspect of our restoration very seriously such as avoiding work in the summer that disturbs birds nesting. One interesting fact that I heard recently is that the navigable Aylesbury Arm has 5 times the variety of wildlife found on the Wendover Arm. From our experiences, most of the wildlife on the dry section consists of rabbits!

Now, a few facts about our work parties:-

There is a first aid kit on site and a portable telephone for use in an emergency.

We are insured but our insurers require participants to wear hard hats or you are not 'covered'; these are available on loan at working parties.

Until recently, our insurers banned children under 16 from working on canal restoration sites. This has now been relaxed in that 11 to 16 year olds are allowed to work on

site but not with mechanical plant or working on buildings and other structures. In cases of doubt, the Work Party Organiser's ruling is final.

Something that we badly need



for our working parties is some form of mechanised transport for moving equipment from the nearest road access along the towpath. We waste a lot of valuable time pushing wheelbarrows backwards and forwards. A motorised truck/barrow or, at the most, a small Benford type dumper truck would be ideal. If any member knows of one 'going for a song' or, even better, as a gift please let me know.

In conclusion. I hope to see you at our work parties, and do not forget, half a day is better than nothing. If you have any questions about what to bring with you (always a strong pair of gloves) or where we are meeting on a particular day, please ring me on 01442 874536.

**Roger Leishman**

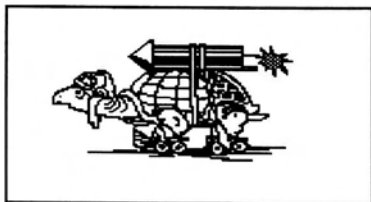
**Work Party Dates**  
**Sunday 14th April**  
**Sunday 5th May**

## Letters to the Editor



O.K I admit it! I'm impressed, in fact, very, very impressed. Only days after the last newsletter hit the door mat your letters to the editor started to arrive. Not only that, they were addressed to *me* as the new editor.

The letter from Muriel and Roy Smith certainly sparked off a debate. Do you think the Trust needs a rocket up its ....., or are you in favour of going all out for Millennium money to try to achieve full restoration in one go? Read the letters and, if you can spare a moment, please drop me a line.



**Dear Mr Packe**

I am responding to the letter from Mr and Mrs Smith in the December (September 1995?!) Newsletter [Did anyone else notice the gremlin in the type setting shop? - Ed.].

I have been a member of W.A.T. for some years and recall an article 'Let's break through in '92' published in the 1990 Festival programme. I attended the majority of work parties in 1993 but became disenchanted in subsequent years when all the backbreaking efforts expended in cutting back the undergrowth in the previous year appeared to have been largely wiped out by the vigorous growth during the intervening period. Other 'regulars' were also conspicuous by their absence and I believe this has been a major factor in the often poor attendance figures.

Whilst it must be appreciated that the average member does not have access to the full facts, and it is therefore difficult to draw fair conclusions, I do feel some positive visual progress must now be actioned for there is little to see for ten years of effort.

Yours sincerely

**N C Williams**

Aston Rowant, Oxon.

**Dear Ian**

Congratulations - or is it commiseration's? - on your elevation to newsletter editorship [I'll let you know - Ed.]. I've been at it for one club or another since the mid 1960's (no, not always the A.C.S)\* and I know what delights await you. So, here's a "letter to the editor" to get you some copy for your first issue.

Reading Muriel and Roy Smith's letter in issue 22 has prompted me to write. I generally agree with the content of that letter especially as to the "average member" - I'd guess most of WAT's members are termed thus - far too much seems to be spent on the annual rally whilst little visual progress other than working party clearance - takes place.

Access through Little Tring Bridge would indeed be wonderful publicity - more so if it could get to Buckland Wharf and show that the Trust is really progressing. Obviously money is the one big obstacle and I certainly applaud the approach to the Millennium Commission and of course it has to be for FULL restoration to Wendover itself - but couldn't the Trust "do something" to show the rank and file member that there is some actual progress.

I know boats are one of the main attractions over the May Rally weekend but wonder if it would be feasible, even desirable, to have a second event elsewhere on the Arm. What about a dinghy/canoe event on the 'still in water' section - I don't know if there would be sufficient depth, or even a practical launching site?

The annual rally is good publicity and an essential fund raiser - but I feel the Committee has to look ahead to make itself more visible elsewhere, or WAT will indeed run out of both committee and ordinary members before the objective is reached.

I hope that this is but one reply to Muriel and Roy's letter, and perhaps someone else has definite suggestions that could help towards "Water (and boats) to Wendover" once more.

**Michal Porter**

n/b Seagull, Aylesbury.

\* Michal is the editor of the award winning Aylesbury Canal Society magazine.

## Janet Packe comments on your letters

I felt a need to write having had sight of a number of letters received regarding restoration progress, or lack of it!

For many years (10 approx.) Ian [that's me - Ed.] and I have worked on the Trust Committee and are perhaps closer to the situation than our fellow ordinary members.

There has been considerable time and effort spent over the years by all members of the committee, both Wendover Arm Group and, more recently, the Trust. All are volunteers who have given their free time to this project. Repeatedly, they ask for help, especially for members willing to join the committee and help spread the load. Sadly, the response is always very small.

Almost certainly WAT is no different to most other voluntary organisations in this respect, and I also appreciate that just being a member and paying a sub. is giving vital support. But, when fresh ideas come up, as they do quite frequently, the real decision maker is "who have we got to organise it?"

Some very good ideas for fund raising, publicity etc. have had to be passed up purely due to that lack of people resource.

I know that the entire Trust Committee, both past and present, really want to see some physical progress made but raising the money is inevitably the first requirement. Obtaining money from the private sector is never easy and canal restoration is low on the 'emotive scale' when asking for sponsorship.

I would love to see Little Tring Bridge opened and, with the money already raised, this could, perhaps be done at last. But, if the same money can be used to tempt the Millenium Commission, BW, Local Councils etc., to fund the entire restoration in one go by the year 2000, I say 'go for it'.

On the specific comment about work parties, I accept that this year's clearance is next years regrowth. However, the importance of being seen to be keeping it under control can not be over emphasised. It produces excellent P.R and enhances the Trust's credibility.

**Janet**

## Halton's Concerns

Reported by Roger Lewis

Bob Wheal, Mike Chessher, Chris Mitchell and I attended a meeting of the residents of Halton village recently to discuss our plans for the restoration of the Arm and we soon realised that there are some people living by the Arm who are very apprehensive concerning the effects of having boats going past the bottom of their gardens.

From my own experiences I know that these fears are groundless but one of the aspects of restoration is that we must convince these canal-side residents that their fears of being robbed, stared at or having their Sunday afternoon peace disturbed by noisy boats and/or boaters are totally unfounded. One of the

speakers thought that all boats were crewed by teenagers who spent their whole holiday drinking and making a nuisance of themselves.

A few letters to the local papers from members emphasising the benefits of restoration will not, at this stage, do any harm (The Bucks Herald and Bucks Advertiser in Aylesbury and the Gazette and the Echo & Post in Hemel Hempstead).

With the permission of one of our members, Michael Blundell, the Chairman of Halton Parish Council, a letter along these lines is published on page 14 from a canal-side resident expressing her pleasure at having boats passing her door.



Mr M Blundell  
 Chairman,  
 Halton Parish Council  
 Halton

Dear Mr Blundell

**Proposed Restoration of the Wendover Arm**

I am writing in support of this proposal and note from the report in the Bucks Herald that some have expressed concern as to the possible ill effects of such a restoration, and in particular the usage of the canal by narrow boats.

For the last 13 years my husband and I have lived in the cottage at Lock Four on the Aylesbury Arm. In all these years we have experienced great pleasure from the passing of the narrow boats, often many a day in the summer. We are delighted by the starting up of the season around Easter, and miss


them in the winter. We have found the people that use the waterway to be friendly and considerate on the whole, and do not trespass. They tend to be always on the move, and if they do occasionally moor near our house, they are very quiet.

We also find the considerable number of people who walk by our house on the towpath (on the other side of the canal) to be equally inoffensive. I wish I could say the same for the fishermen, who more than anything tend to leave rubbish, but all in all, living right on the canal is a great pleasure which is more enhanced by the passing foot and waterway traffic than otherwise.

Yours sincerely

*Sandra Costello*

Lock Four Cottage  
 Marsworth



This year's design for the commemorative plaque

### Festival Posters

Do you have somewhere that you can place a poster to advertise the Festival? Is there a staff noticeboard at work, perhaps? If you can help, please contact Roger Lewis on 01442 823378 for as many as you can use.





## Just *what* is Roger up to now?

Well, on Sunday, February 4th, he was to be found in the Wendover Arm at Halton. Nary a boat in sight, of course, so what was he doing.

Some of us had wellies, but only Roger had waders, so as all good Chairmen do - he boldly went . . . . straight in, along with 400 ducks.

Yes, we were out on a dummy run for the Duck Race on July 20th (book the date, folks!). It's an IWA Jubilee Special this year, but with a percentage coming to the Trust.

Next year we could be doing it just for ourselves when we'd have all the profits.

So, what did Roger find? Surprisingly absolutely NO rubbish, but a great depth of water. Several times he was over knee height but, thanks to his depth stick, he had adequate warnings of the 4ft plus deep surprises. Ever the optimist, he reckoned he could cruise the race course in 'Aramis' . . . . .

*'Quackers'*

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## Grand Festival Draw

As usual at this time of year we have taken the liberty of enclosing 5 books of Draw tickets and ask that you do your best to sell them to friends and neighbours, or failing that, your more amenable relatives for £1 a book. To make it easier to sell the tickets there is, on the back cover of the newsletter, a mini poster which lists the main prizes.

We appreciate that some of you have strong feelings about these sorts of things and would prefer that we did not send you tickets.

Unfortunately, the process of compiling the newsletter mailing means that we include the tickets with every newsletter. If you do not wish to become involved, in what is after all, a form of gambling, please just disregard the tickets and accept our apologies for sending them to you.

This year the draw is being promoted by Sheila Lewis. Ticket stubs and money should be sent to her at Hastoe Hill, Tring, Herts. HP23 6LU. Alternatively, you can bring them to the Charities Marquee at the Festival.

## **Any old books?**

The Trust's stand at the festival will again feature a second hand book stall. Do you have any books cluttering up the place, either hard back or paper back, and are you willing to donate them to the Trust?

If you are, then either please bring them to the festival or call Janet Packe on 01442 214126 to make arrangements for us to collect them in advance.

## **Phew! ... It's the back page - at last.**

As you may have gathered, this is my first attempt at editing the Trust's newsletter. Richard House has done a sterling job as editor ever since issue 7 back in the summer of '91. You're a hard act to follow, Richard, and I hope your loyal readers are not too disappointed with the replacement.

Actually, I have been very fortunate with this issue to have received so many contributions. In fact, it has meant leaving some of the regular items out this time. Please do air your views about the topics discussed in this issue (or anything else) by dropping me a line at the address on the inside front cover. If you write using a word processor I will be delighted to receive your copy on a disk (5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" or 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" ), which will be returned to you. I can 'read' from nearly all of the main PC packages, even Macs. If you just want to jot a few lines in the time honoured fashion (pencil and paper), that is every bit as welcome.

Many thanks

*Ian.*

## **Disclaimer**

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

## 1996 Grand Festival Draw

# WIN a Canal Boat Holiday

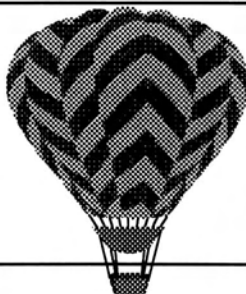
Worth up to £500

Donated by Grebe Canal  
Cruises

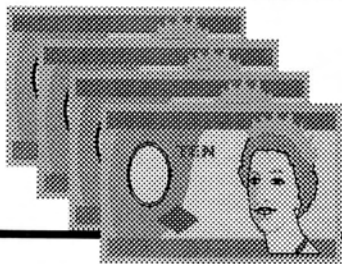
This Holiday may be taken up to  
31st December 1997 (excluding  
school holidays)



**OR**  
A Hot Air  
Balloon Flight



**OR**  
£100 Cash



**Plus many other prizes**

Tickets 20p each or £1 per book

The Draw will take place at the Wendover  
Canal Festival on Monday, 27th May 1996