

WENDOVER ARM NEWS

Quarterly newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust

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Wendover Arm Trust

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Another very successful Wendover Canal Festival at Tring has passed off with flying colours. Unlike the past three years, when the weather progressively got worse, this year we had ideal conditions, the sun shone throughout the whole of the weekend and everyone had a wonderful time, the crowds came in by their thousands and lots of money changed hands. The bar sold every pint of beer that they had (and they had ordered a record amount of it). Both the tea-tent on the site and the tea-bar which was run by the Chiltern IWA ladies from a boat in the stop lock were as busy as they could be. At present I do not know exactly how much money we have raised but, when I saw Barry and Beryl Martin moving off towards the Bank on Tuesday morning I noticed how much trouble they had trying to lift the money bags off the ground!

Each year, as the Festival gets bigger, the few people who organise the Festival find that the work gets harder and it has now come to the stage where, if we can't have the offer of more help - both in setting the site up beforehand and with the actual manning of it during the Public opening times, we shall not be able to continue with this very popular fund-raising activity. Please come forward and help in the future - it is such a wonderful way of getting restoration money. To all of those of you who did help may I say "Thank you very much indeed" your help was invaluable.

It was very good to see so many of you turn up to the opening ceremony when our President, The Lord Mayor, did an excellent job and I know that the visiting VIP's - from whom we expect to see a lot of financial help in the future - were very impressed by the much larger than usual attendance at the opening.

If you were at the Festival you will have seen that a physical start has been made. Over the Bank Holiday weekend a party of Chiltern Branch IWA and WRG members started to erect a permanent fence to mark the lost canal boundaries.

Meetings have been held recently with the Little Tring and Miswell Group and, in order to obtain this Group's co-operation, we have agreed not to go ahead with permanent moorings at Little Tring but just to make a winding hole there. I think that this was the only subject that the majority of the Group's members were concerned about.

Returning to the subject of help, we will be attending the BW Bulbourne Open Weekend in July and the IWA National Waterways Festival at Henley in August with our stand and our mini-marquee and we would very much like some help from members in manning our stand. If you feel that you can devote a little time, on either of these occasions, I will be very pleased to hear from you and your presence will be most welcome.

Roger Lewis, Chairman

New Editor for Newsletter

Firstly let me introduce myself as your new editor. This my first attempt at producing a newsletter, so please be gentle with me... Also a big thank you to Ian Packe for his excellent work in producing your last few Newsletters. Now I know what's involved, I can appreciate the work Ian (and Richard House before him) put in.

I should also offer my apologies and explain that although this is issue number 26, it wasn't possible to publish it in time for it to still be called 'Spring 1997'.

Secondly, the obligatory plea for your contributions. Your letters, articles, notes, comments are all welcome. Any format is acceptable from floppy disk to postcards. As you can see the Wendover Arm News now also includes photographs, in glorious black and white. Do you have any interesting photos of the arm, maybe with a historical connection, or simply just a nice picture of a



well-known feature? Colour photos, are just as acceptable as black/white.

You could share it by sending it to the editor for it to be included in a future edition, along with a note to explain where, what, when, etc. All printed photographs

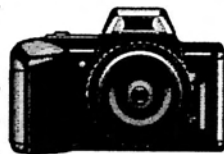


will be acknowledged and all photos returned. The content of the photograph is more important than the form. Go on - look out that old shoe box full of photos and dig out that 'Canal Moment'.

'All contributions gratefully received' as they say.

Finally, I don't want to fill the pages with adverts, but a smattering of display space is available at negotiable rates.

Please write or call me to discuss any of the above, or to give your news, views, comments, or suggestions for items to be included in future issues.



Bob Wheal, Editor

Phone: 01525 381614

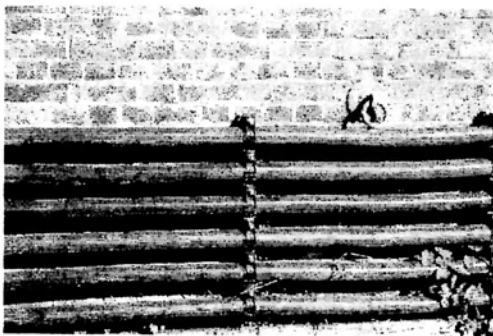
Write: 467 Bideford Green, Linslade Beds. LU7 7TZ

P.s: I hope you enjoy reading our newsletter!

Where On the Arm ?

A simple photo quiz; not too difficult, hopefully.

The photo shows a prominent feature from somewhere on the Wendover Arm. Can you identify where it is? There may be a clue in the photo. Answers by any means you like (phone, back of envelope, etc.) to the Editor.



Information Box In Place

In 1996, during the annual festival at New Mill, Tring the Trust Information Box was handed over by Bob Wetten to the Chair-

Marsworth.

WAT joins many other canal societies by having it's own information box. These are commonly mounted at junctions off the main line, so that visiting boaters and ramblers can learn what is of local interest, and providing a publicity opportunity for WAT. The WAT Box can be found mounted against the left hand bridge abutment at the entry to the Arm, at Bulbourne. It is in full view of boats passing along the canal into or out of the top lock, and is easily accessible.

The information box is a colourful addition to the scene at Bulbourne, and will provide a useful source of information to boaters, walkers, etc. for years to come.



RLW 

man Roger Lewis. Bob is a renowned canal artist as well as a WAT member, and kindly agreed to decorate the box in traditional style before it was placed in position. Before the winter set in, the box was completed and bolted to the bridge wall at Bulbourne.

Now the box is available to anyone with a BW Key (BW would like us to call the key a 'Watermate'), providing leaflets about the trust, the Arm, and the restoration project. The BW key is commonly held by boaters on the canal, as it un-padlocks certain locks, and opens sanitary stations. The key can be purchased from various boatyards and BW offices, including Watery Lane,



Hidden Gold

Our Chairman Roger Lewis has often said that he believes that there may be money buried in the infilled section of the Arm in the form of old and valuable bottles. He was proved correct on Friday 6th June when he passed the site around 9a.m. and saw an excavator and two men at work just inside the new gate (see restoration report in this issue - Ed.). On investigation he found two men with a hired excavator digging for old bottles. They refused to stop work and leave the site, producing a piece of paper stating that the land was unregistered, with no known owner. They also stated that they found the gate open, there being no sign of the chain and padlock we put on the gate!

Roger Lewis contacted Chris Mitchell, Area Manager of BW, and myself (Roger was actually on his way to take a short holiday). Chris, two of his staff and I went to the site. Chris Mitchell asked the two to stop what they were doing, but received the same response as Roger Lewis.

The police were then called and in due course a policeman arrived. After being briefed on the situation, the policeman spoke to the men on his own. This resulted in them agreeing to stop digging pending BW proving that they owned the land. Fortunately, because of the recent dispute over the lease of the land, the Tile deeds were readily available in the Hemel Hempstead

BW Office, and were immediately dispatched to the site. After seeing the Deeds the men admitted defeat and left the site, after having filled in the hole that they had excavated.

A recent small hand excavation has been found at the other end of the infill, so we must be wary of further incursions and consider how best the Trust can benefit from recovering and selling any old bottles or artefacts we find when we commence digging.

Restoration Note: Incidentally, I observed that the excavated material going down to a depth of four or five feet was virtually all topsoil and ash, which may not need to be disposed of at a licensed tip.

R Leishman



Working Party Dates

When: Sunday 27th July 10.00am

Where: Little Tring Pumping Station

What: Erecting new fence between the bridge and the infilled section.

When: Sunday 5th Oct 10.00am

Where: Drayton Beauchamp Bridge

What: Strimming the previously cleared section of the canal bed.

When: Sunday 2nd Nov 10.00am

Where: Drayton Beauchamp Bridge

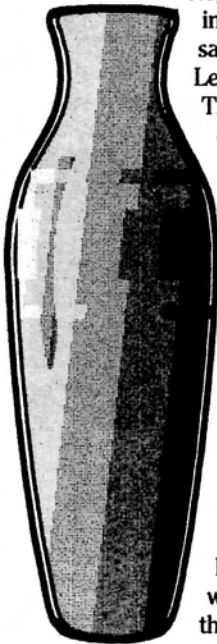
What: Strimming the previously cleared section of the canal bed.

When: Sunday 7th Dec 10.00am

Where: To be decided

What: Towpath hedge at Little Tring or Pulling stumps at Drayton Beauchamp

R Leishman



There's Work to be Done !

Before we get carried away with the excitement and glamour (?) of digging up the canal to restore it, let's not forget the routine but still necessary work to be done in maintaining and preserving what is there already.

Our work parties have their work cut out over the coming months. Here is a fore-taste of what has been achieved recently, and what is planned as reported by Roger Leishman, work party co-ordinator.

Fencing at Little Tring

We successfully completed the gate, stile and fencing at the far end of the infilled length during the 1997 Festival weekend. My grateful thanks to all of you who toiled so hard in the hot sun.

It is hoped to complete most of the towpath side from the bridge to the infilled section during July. There are three gaps to be dealt with in the hedge along the infilled section, and also a new fence from the bridge alongside the footpath to the far end of the 'triangle'. Further work parties will be arranged to complete the fence when the boundaries have finally been agreed in detail.

We will not be opening up the towpath within the fenced section until the fence is completely finished. This path will then need mowing periodically. I suggest it is initially mowed a few feet away from the fence to keep walkers away from the barbed wire, until a hedge is planted in the future.

Trial trenches for Phase 1

The location of the required trenches will be fixed in the near future, and we will arrange for the loan of the exca-

vator we have been promised, and a working party arranged. BW will also be employing a contractor to take core samples of the canal bed from the lock to site of the planned winding hole.

Strimming at Drayton Beauchamp

The section eastwards from Drayton Beauchamp bridge was successfully cleared last autumn following de-stumping in the spring. This must be strimmed every autumn to keep it under control, until restoration reaches the site. There is also a length that was cleared in March 1996 by the RAF cadets from Halton. This requires de-stumping and clearing of cut down branches that still lying on site. If we have enough volunteers in October and November, perhaps we could start this work as well as the strimming.

R.Leishman

Roger and his team do an essential job of maintenance, and would be glad of extra help. Hard hats are always available at work parties, and a first aid kit is always on site. Work parties normally start at 10am and continue to 5pm (or earlier if dark). Breaks are taken for tea/coffee, packed lunch, and afternoon tea/coffee, and volunteers take their own food and drinks. Roger asks that you do not feel bound by these times as half a day is also appreciated. Some volunteers also start and finish at times to suit their own travel and other arrangements. Roger can be reached on 01442 874536



Restoration Matters !

At the Trust's 1996 Annual general Meeting members discussed different approaches to actual restoration of the Arm. These included starting at Little Tring opening the dry section to effectively a narrow channel, and working at the Wendover End. In the event, members voted to commence work at Little Tring in what became known as Phase 1.

Phase 1A includes the short filled in section between the lock and Little Tring Bridge (Lock section), the Bridge itself, and about twice the distance beyond the bridge to the piece of ground known as 'the triangle' (triangle section). This is so called because of it's distinctive shape - a triangular flat depression bordering the line of the Arm.

Phase 1B is the remainder of the infilled section to the point where the contour of the canal is again evident.

In the Lock section, the canal bed is filled with mud and dredgings. A sunken narrowboat is also rumoured to be buried there.

The Triangle section and the rest of the infilled section is filled with domestic waste, put there by the local corporation after the bridge was demolished in 1974

Before any of the restoration proper can start, the area has to be completely fenced off (this is already in hand - see the work party programme) and core samples taken with trial trenches of the ground under the present dry bed. It is expected this work will be complete by the autumn.

Then the canal has to be excavated to the

required profile, constructing the towing path on one side and the footpath on the other side of the canal up to the bridge. Next the walls for the towpath on one side of the Arm and footpath on the other will be built, and waterproof lining laid.

When the retaining walls are complete, the footpath and towpath will be re-laid, and hedges and trees planted. It is not expected that much work will have to be done to the stop lock. The single pair of gates were renewed relatively recently. Without gate or ground paddles the gates are largely symbolic anyway. Hopefully

they won't need to be used after the canal is re-watered, as it won't suffer the leakage which prompted the stop lock to be built in the first place...

Certain work will be let to contract, but it is intended to use volunteers as much as possible, to carry out the maximum amount of work with the funds available.

As far as the bridge itself is concerned the parapet walls and crown of the arch in the original brick bridge were demolished long ago. The rest of the

bridge is still under the present embankment but it is unlikely that they can be used. There is also a basic question over the style and form of the rebuilt bridge (see the article on page 11 - Ed). But whatever the form of the new bridge, it's reinstatement along with the re-watering of the short section to the stop lock will be a tangible and long awaited sign that restoration is finally taking place.



RLW



Membership Report

We warmly welcome all the new members listed below who have joined the Trust since the last report:

Mr & Mrs G Bowler & Family
Mr E R Braidwood
Mr V J Draper
Mr & Mrs R A Emsley
Mr & Mrs R J Fairfax
Mr & Mrs V Littlejohn
Mr G A Manning
Mr & Mrs A Murcott & Family
Mr & Mrs J T Tabor
Mr & Mrs F B Wurstlin

Slough
Dagenham
Coulsden
Furnace Green
Dartford
Tring
Abbots Langley
Marsworth
Aston Clinton
Tring

Three single memberships have been updated to family memberships - so we are also pleased to welcome:

Mrs P Fletcher
Mrs B Fortune
Ms S Radice

The Wendover Arm Trust has 14 Corporate members, and a total membership of 516.

In Memoriam

We are sad to announce the recent death of WAT Member P J Howes of Eaton Bray.

Navigation Plaques

Plaques are available again, now that stocks have been replenished.

Cruise to the current cruiseable limit of the Arm at the Tringford Pumping House, and you will become eligible for a WAT Navigation Plaque.

Send proof of your boat's navigation to Barry Martin, 12 Chipperfield Close, New Bradwell, Milton Keynes, Bucks. MK13 0EP, along with a cheque or postal order for £8 (including post and packing) and you will receive a handsome plaque to add to your collection. Proof can be a photograph or simply a letter countersigned by someone else.



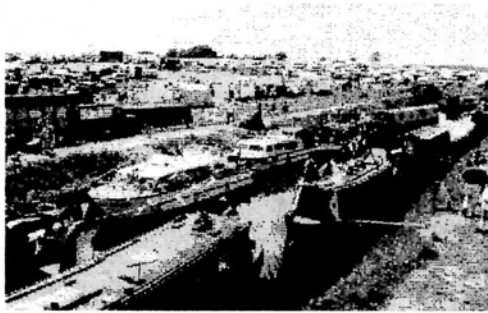
British Waterways

**Tringford
Pumping Station**

Record Festival Result

Thanks partly to the superb weather, attendance at this year's Canal Festival was a record, and the Trust was able to bank record amounts also. After deduction of costs (marquee hire, entertainments,

advertising, etc) the net earnings from the Festival are expected to exceed £28,000. This is the highest to date, and comes as a



The Canal Festival at Tring

welcome antidote to last year's reduced earnings, again mainly due to the poor weather.

(Almost) all who attended this year's Festival agree it was one of the best ever, with no major upsets or problems. The record income from the 1997

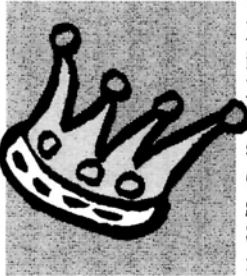
Festival will help significantly with restoration plans.

RLW

Royalty at the Pump House

In 1985 Rod Saunders, the owner of Grebe Canal Cruises, was asked to take a party of BW Managers and visitors up the Arm to the Tringford Pump House at Little Tring. Earlier that year Rod had taken delivery of his biggest boat yet for taking parties on canal trips. Princess is 58' 6" long and 10' 6" ft wide; a giant by narrow boat standards. The engine on Princess was in need of some attention, but a busy summer season meant that the necessary maintenance had to be planned for the autumn.

Princess needs plenty of water under it to float freely and the Wendover arm is not the deepest of canals. So it was not surprising that on what turned out to be Princess's last trip of the year, the engine began to protest as Princess was reversed out from Tringford. Large boats have to complete the last part of the Arm to the stop lock in reverse, as only boats up to 30ft can turn at the Pump House.



Rod remembers the journey well. 'We had three crew; one was steering, one was taking buckets of water from the canal, and the third was pouring the water straight into the cooling tank of the engine. The water came straight out as steam!' The crew member on 'engine duty' was Rev. Goulder, Minister of the Church in Iv-inghoe.

Maybe there was divine assistance because the boat made it safely to Bulbourne before the engine decided to give up the ghost.

Since that time, Princess has returned several times to the Wendover Arm, including the

last section to the Pump House. Although the journeys have been less eventful than in 1986, Rod is looking forward to the time when Princess can be taken through a restored bridge and turned at the end of the navigable Arm for the return trip.

RLW

The following letter was received from the winner of the 1996 Festival Grand Draw.

The Secretary
Wendover Arm Trust

Dear Sir,

I was the lucky winner of the first prize in the 1996 WAT Festival Draw: this was a one week holiday donated by Grebe Canal cruises, of Pitstone Wharf. I thought you would like to hear what happened when I claimed my prize.

I telephoned the owner of Grebe Canal Cruises to ask when it would be possible to take my holiday, intending to aim for some time in the Spring of 1997, and found to my dismay that Grebe Canal Cruises were to cease trading at the end of 1996 (in fact Grebe is still very much in business, they simply disposed of their hire-boats to concentrate on canal trips- Ed). I was pleased to be told that the owner was taking seriously his offer of a prize, and had already made arrangements with Blisworth Tunnel Boats to provide a boat for the holiday instead of him. Time passes, and it was not until January that I telephoned Blisworth Tunnel Boats, fully expecting them never to have heard of either me or the holiday prize. To my considerable surprise I found that they knew about both, and were able to offer me a week on their 40-foot nb 'Shrewley Tunnel' at a period when my whole family were free to use it. We therefore had a pleasant week during the Easter school holiday period travelling up the Grand Union towards Coventry.

It was a pleasure to find both that there are those who take their promises seriously, and that the boat operating community provides such strong mutual support. I commend the owners of both the hire companies for their commitment.

Yours sincerely
Richard Downs
Higher Denham, Bucks.

WAT Launches Club 100

Club100 is a quarterly draw run by WAT with cash prizes of up to £120. The object of the Club is to raise funds for the Wendover Arm Trust.

The rules are simple. As a Club100 member you subscribe £15 which entitles you to take part in four consecutive prize draws. The draws take place in January, April, July, and October.

In any year the total prize money will be approximately 50% of the total subscribed in that year, so the amount actually available for prizes depends on the number of Club100 members. Assuming there are 100 members, prize allocation for each draw would be 1st Prize - £120, 2nd Prize - £50, 3rd Prize - £20. Prize values increase or decrease in proportion if there are more or fewer Club100 members.

The 50% of all subscriptions not distributed in prize money will go towards restoration funds.

You can make more than one membership; each subscription of £15 counts as an additional Club100 membership with it's own entry in each draw. You do have to be over 18 to become a Club100 member. Lucky winners will be notified by post, and results published in future Wendover Arm News editions, (expect lots of begging

letters if you win !).

To join Club100, complete one of the yellow application forms (if you don't have one, call any Council Member, or write to Barry Martin).

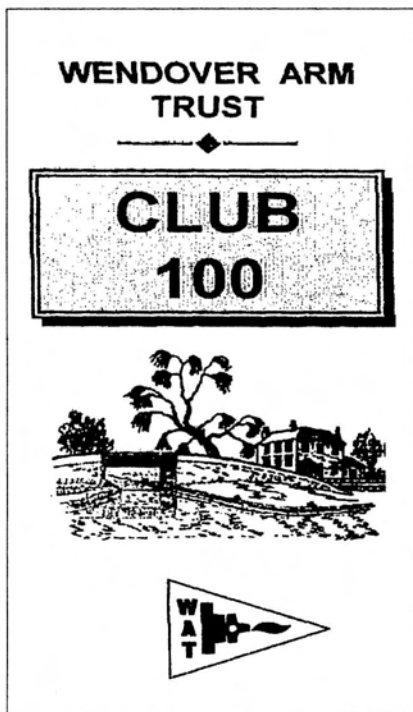
You don't have to be a member of the Trust to be a Club100 member, although if you are not, shame on you ! If you are a Trust member, please take some extra

forms and circulate them amongst your friends and acquaintances. The more Club100 members there are, the larger the prizes and the more the contribution to WAT funds.

Now that actual restoration is beginning at last, it is important that it is done properly. This means conserving and enhancing wildlife along the Arm and providing for public access, but with the minimum of disruption during the work. All this is expensive and Trust funds will be stretched to the limit,

so please help now by joining Club100.

Club100 is controlled by the Council of the Wendover Arm Trust. All decisions of the Council shall be final and binding on all questions relating to it's operation.



Bridge Options

Trust funds are now at the point where actual restoration can now start, and it is time to put the plans into operation. However, one important question has not yet been dealt with, and that is the design of the rebuilt Little Tring Bridge.

The original bridge was a traditional brick-arched span, with a narrow roadway. When it was demolished (apparently with some difficulty as the bridge was so well built), the arch



The Original Bridge at Little Tring

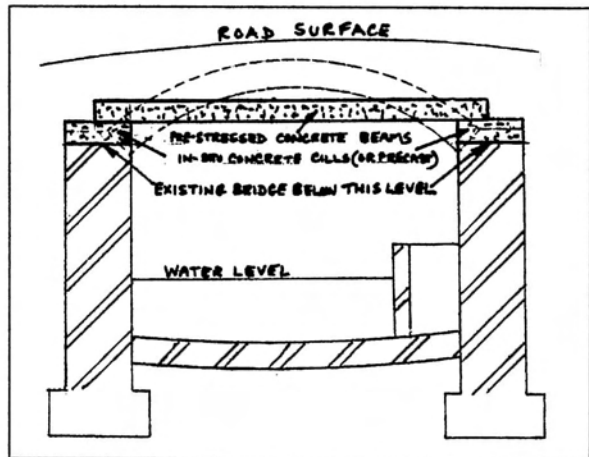
and parapets were removed, and the bridge taken down to below road level. At the same time the road was widened and slightly realigned.

It is believed that the original abutments are still under the embankment which is all that remains of the bridge today. However, it is most unlikely that the old foundations can be used for the rebuilt structure, and will have to be excavated and replaced.

Three options have been proposed for the new bridge; pre-stressed concrete beams, a precast concrete arch or precast concrete box culvert. Which of these is adopted will depend on several factors.

One is the engineering requirement. The height of the road surface has to be kept as low as possible. It is already higher than the road immediately on the northern side of the bridge, and any increase in height will increase visibility and the exit slope. Another is the appearance. It is widely thought that a bridge design as similar as possible to the original would be best. However, this may not be possible with the feasible designs and would be very expensive. Nevertheless, many interested parties have commented that the bridge should be clad with brick if at all possible, to give a character most like the original.

Regardless of the option chosen, the spandrels, wing walls and parapets can be built in

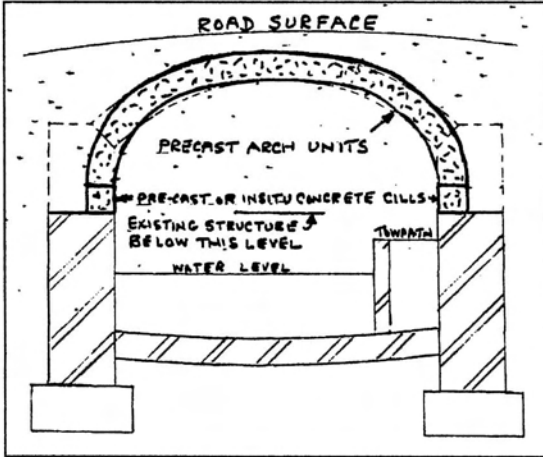


Bridge Rebuilt with Pre-Stressed Concrete Beam Flat Deck

brick. Waterways Recovery Group have expressed an interest in carrying out this work. Safety is an overriding requirement. Interestingly, it may be in the best interest of safety if the road carriageway is restricted to slow down the existing traffic. This would be

achieved with a single track bridge. On the other hand, this could mean traffic lights either side of the bridge (or better still on either side of Little Tring hamlet itself), and that would mean stationary waiting traffic. Alternatively, a 'Give-Way' arrangement could be enforced, but this is not likely to be as safe.

Perhaps the answer to this particular question could be to close the bridge to motor traffic completely (there are alternative routes). This would certainly cut the noise and increase safety, but would hardly make life more convenient for the local residents.



Bridge Rebuilt with New Pre-Stressed Concrete Arch Section

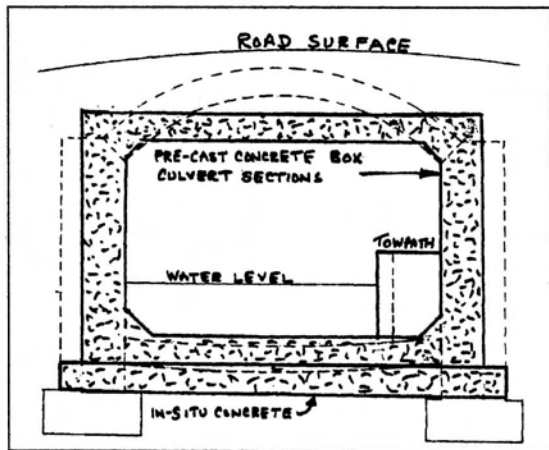
It is fair to say that opinion is divided on this issue, and more discussion is needed.

Whatever the safety or engineering aspects, the overriding factor which is likely to determine the construction method for the bridge is cost. The precast culvert construction is likely to be the cheapest, and also the method which can be completed in the shortest time.

As the new work for each of the designs is largely precast, there should be no problem in completing the building work within the road-closure limit time of about one month. What will (and must) take longer are consultations leading to a decision on the optimum design.

RLW

(drawings by R Leishman)



Bridge Rebuilt with New Precast Concrete Culvert Box Section

Memoirs of a Canal Boatbuilder - Part 3

One day I went down to fetch a boat with a horse. I walked down the arm with the horse which belonged to the miller next-door (William Mead then), and he sent one of his men with me. This man was not familiar with horses or boats. The boat was at the bottom of a very steep bank, about five or six feet deep, and I hooked the boat line on the boat and then on the horse and I told this man to stand on the canalside of the horse and keep its head over towards the hedge.

I then got in the boat ready to steer it. Well this horse wasn't used to boats and it pulled the slack line up that laid on the path and then, of course, it suddenly went tight. The man was on the hedge side of the horse instead of the canal side because he was frightened and when the horse felt the sudden tug of the line it threw its back feet round and went 'wallop' down the steep bank into the water on its back. It was a beautiful, very big horse, and I had to get in the canal, unharness it, and walk it up the canal until I got to a place where it was low enough at the bank to get it out. They put it in a stable lined with straw and made specially warm, (the hospital they called it), because it was shivering with cold, and they gave it brandy and bran mash, but it caught pneumonia, partly through the shock and partly through cold, and it died the next day - I saw it die. In those days a horse like that was worth about £400.

We used to turn out narrowboats like sausages from a sausage machine! There was a frame made of posts set in the

ground, standing up about 20 inches from the ground and then there were big hefty pieces of timber round it so that it was roughly the shape of the boat. We laid elm planks, 3 inches thick and 15 inches wide (average), and more than the full width of the boat. These elm bottoms were already cut and we got them from Easts at Berkhamsted but the planks that followed up came from Berkhamsted in the raw state with the bark round the edges, 13/4 inches thick, 14 inches wide and 30 feet long. To tell you in detail how a boat was made is very complicated indeed, but that was how we started off.



The narrow boat (or monkey boat) was the one that was mostly built and used, but we did build one boat which was twice the width of the normal boat, and it was called the Progress. The designers said that it was the boat to beat all boats and they were going to have big fleets of them. It was 14ft. wide instead of 7ft and it had special decking over it with hatches and a big beam right down the centre of the boat, above the height of the boat, and tarpaulins laid over, so that it was like a ship really. After we had built it, it was taken to a place called Hatton to open a new flight of locks. The Duke of Kent was at Hatton and we had to go there and put seats out with the names of all the important people who were going down in the boat and lay a red carpet and make all the preparations. We had a rehearsal and one of my bosses took the part of the Duke

of Kent. The next day was the real thing with champagne and everything but we weren't there that day so we did not have any champagne. Unfortunately, the people who designed the Progress did not take into account the fact that two boats of her size could not pass anywhere on the canal, so more like her were never built, and she ended her days as a mud boat on the River Thames.

At the yard we also built other boats. We built a big tug during the war, which could pull as many as ten hundred-ton barges behind it. It was called the Bess and it was so huge that we did not build it on a frame, but on the ground. It was 72 ft long and 14 ft wide. We had to build a half-section of it first, from fore to aft (lengthways), full size!! We built it with what we called 'harpings'

which were much like outside plaster lathes, exactly as the finished boat would be, and this was then used to take measurements from as guides in building the actual boat. This was because although narrow boats could be produced with ease as so many were made, something as unusual and large as this posed more of a problem. When it was launched all the school children had half a day's holiday to watch the launch and it just wallowed down in the mud at

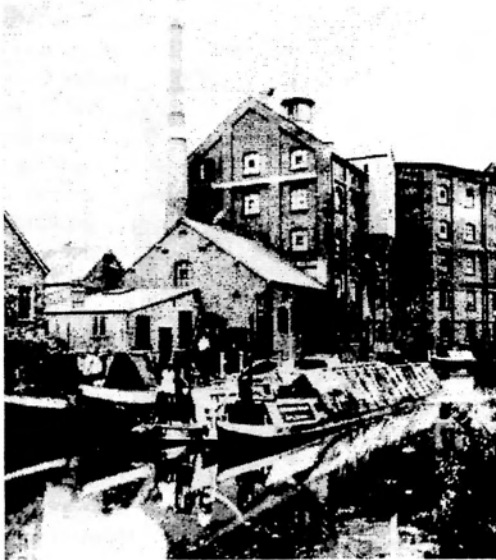
the bottom of the canal and all the schoolchildren hung on to a rope and helped to pull it out of the mud again! As there were no engines or boilers in it at this stage the nose of the tug stuck up in the air, so sand was put in the nose to weigh it down, and it was such a big boat that it took twenty tons of sand. They had to bring the nose down to get the tug under the bridge to get it down onto the main canal, and when they got to Wink-

well they had to take the strips of wood off the sides and take the Swing Bridge off as well, to get the thing through. It was towed along by horse as the engine and boiler had still to be put in. Later, though the engine and boiler were taken out and it was converted to diesel.

We also made Rothchild's fishing punts - dozens of them.

They were just a

flat boat with 'swim' ends - that means that the ends went up at an angle. Across the middle of these boats was a tank, and they used to put the fish they caught in this tank, and in the sides of this tank were holes so that the water from the reservoir filled the tank. People used to wonder why this did not sink the boat - but the tank was sealed off from the rest of the boat and the water in the tank only came up as far as the water on the outside of the boat.



Bushell's Boat Yard & The Mill

They used to catch perch, roach, pike and so on. I used to go down with my old boss and row him round to catch pike, etc. he used to trail his line behind the boat and every time he caught a fish I used to have to get on my bike and bring it up home to show to the rest of the chaps.

One day a boatman came to the yard with a 'butty' boat (that is a boat with no engine which is pulled by the motor boat), and he wanted it altered into a motor boat. We had to build another cabin on it for the engine and a chap came over from Holland to put the engine in. I helped him to do it - he only had one arm.

I must explain that these engines went round at 300 revolutions a minute and they had a long lever that went right back to the steering compartment. When you wanted to reverse the engine and propeller and stop the boat you slowed the engine down to its minimum revs and then pulled the lever and let it go. Then hopefully the engine itself (not a gearbox) went round the other way. Well, this Dutch engineer had been shown how to do this on shore, but had no proper lesson on the canal. Well, he took this boat off with the new engine and when he got down to the bottom of the arm the main canal crossed it at right angles, with a concrete wall the other side. He pulled the lever, but forgot to slow the engine first, so nothing happened at all and the boat shot straight across the main canal. The impact dented the side of this boat right in so that it touched the other side, but if it had not been there he would have smashed right into the concrete wall and completely demolished his boat. As it was we had to build another fore-end on it!

The boat people messed about with their engines, and they always had bits to spare when they had finished, but the engines always seemed to go - they were sturdy old engines.

There were steam engines first, they were lovely old engines - very quiet. Then there were 'semi-diesels' which had to be pre-heated. They had a bulb on them and this had to be heated up with a blow lamp to start with and then it kept going with its own heat - they were very crude old things.

Then there were the more modern diesel engines and these started just like a car.

For many years there was a Crossley gas engine at Bushell's yard and that drove all the machines, (a bandsaw for cutting round corners, and a circular saw). It had a long belt to drive the circular saw which went through a hole in the side of the building that the engine was in and then went thirty feet down to the circular saw.

Most people used to put the belt on when the engine was stationery but that made the engine hard to turn to start, so I used to throw the belt on when he engine was running. One day a ragged piece of the belt caught in my jumper and it took me through the hole! I was knocked and bruised, but not badly hurt. Later electric motors were fitted individually to each machine and I used to do all the electrical work, this would have been in about 1920. We had this big hand drill and everyone else was frightened of it, so I used to use it as I was used to electrical work. One day I was on the top of a cabin on a boat drilling a hole through it and the drill caught in a nail or something like that



- swung round - and threw me right off the top of the cabin into the water! The drill broke off like a carrot!

The Bulbourne yard was the maintenance yard for the length of the canal from near Rugby to Bulls Bridge at Brentford, which was a long stretch. They used to make lock gates, the ironwork for the lock gates and all general maintenance on the canal itself. When the lock gates were made (they weighed about three tons each), they were dropped into deep, narrow tanks full of creosote which would then soak right through the wood. That is why lock gates never rot. The huge piece of wood, usually oak, that went on top of the gate and overhung the towpath for about 15 feet was called the balance.

If the water on the top side of the gate was only one inch deeper than in the lock, then the gate could not be opened. The boat people found a way of hooking their boat line on to the gate, then to the mast of the boat and then back to the gate, in such a way that when the horse started off the rope went through this sort of pulley system and opened the gates for them!

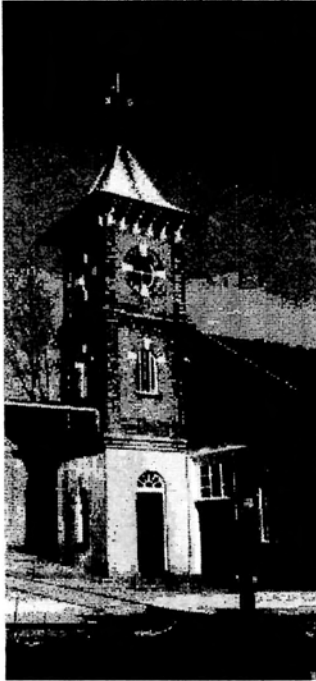
Another job done from Bulbourne was the repairing of paddles, which lift up to let the water in and out of the locks, or into the side locks. These were wound with a windlass which the boat people would stick through their broad belts (worn by both men and women), when they walked

along ahead of the boats to get the lock ready.

When we built the boats, we had to fit the inside with all the furniture as well, and this would all be painted with the traditional castles and roses. The boat people would not have accepted pictures of anything else, they always insisted on the traditional castles and roses. I learned by watching the older men do these pictures and copying what they did, and then I took it over and did that sort of thing and the sign writing on the boats.

I did quite a lot of work in the Bulbourne yard, including painting names on boats - names like 'Three Brothers', 'The Roger', and 'The Golden Spray', which was the loveliest boat we ever built. We built it for Tooveys at Kings Langley, Corn Merchants, and it was built and painted as well as any boat could be. I painted the name 'T.V. Toovey, Kings Langley', all in gold leaf. The Golden Spray was not a narrow boat, however, it was 14 feet wide instead of 7 feet wide. There were two boats, the Golden Spray and the

Langley, and they were the pride of the canal. I don't know what happened to them - I suppose they either fell to pieces or became mud boats on the river, (that was where a lot of boats ended up).



Bulbourne Yard

- to be continued -

Council Matters

February

- ◆ BW's Regional Manager is to be asked to confirm that BW still supports the restoration to navigation, as per 1987 letter.
- ◆ J Rowe undertook to chair liaison meetings with local residents and others.
- ◆ It is believed by BW that planning permission will not be required for Little Tring Bridge.
- ◆ R Leishman has authority for on-going expenditure in connection with Phase 1 Restoration. Any expenditure to be submitted to Council for approval.
- ◆ The Treasurer reported that current Trust funds should be sufficient to cover restoration up to and including Little Tring Bridge.

March

- ◆ The Trust is having difficulty finding an Auditor.
- ◆ WAT Council has been asked by Tring Town Council for suggestions and ideas to mark the Millenium.
- ◆ 1996 workparties completed 1,016 manhours, equivalent when seeking grants to £5,000 in matchable funds.

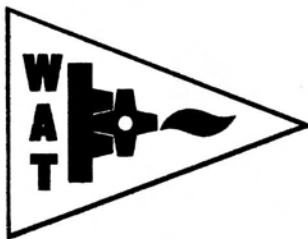
- ◆ R Leishman presented the status of current restoration work and outlined further plans.
- ◆ The taking of Canal Bed Core samples and sample trenches was discussed.
- ◆ British Waterways will start talks with Dacorum DC about rebuilding Little Tring Bridge.

April

- ◆ The Trust is still having problems finding an Auditor.
- ◆ Restoration plans were well received by Tring Town Council members in a meeting with WAT Councillors on 26th March.
- ◆ WAT will attend the BW Open Day at Bulbourne in June with the Trust marquee
- ◆ A consultation meeting has been arranged between WAT and the Little Tring & Miswell Society to discuss the local impact of restoration and identify open issues.
- ◆ R Leishman undertook to produce a recruiting leaflet for working parties, fund raising and other volunteers.
- ◆ Council agreed to set up 'Club 100' to raise restoration funds.

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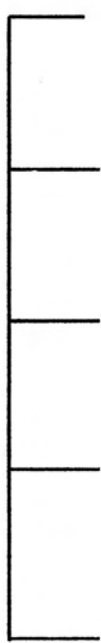
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