

WENDOVER ARM NEWS

Newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust

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*new Trust publication now
on sale - order form enclosed*

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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 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
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Disclaimer

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

WATER FROM WENDOVER

Our book was duly published in time for the Festival in June and is now on sale in many local outlets.

Initial sales have been encouraging with the Wendover and Tring bookshops leading the field. It is clear that most sales have been to the general public rather than canal enthusiasts; this is exactly what the book was intended to do.

It is vital that the Trust promotes interest in and awareness of the Arm. This leads to public knowledge and support and hopefully increased membership. Ultimately we hope it will all lead to more funding to help us finish the restoration now so successfully being achieved.

The production of the book is a major investment by the Trust and we hope that every member will wish to buy a copy for themselves. We would also ask you to act as salesmen to you friends, neighbours, family and anybody else. They make excellent gifts, so start thinking about who might appreciate receiving a copy!

PLEASE USE THE ORDER FORM ENCLOSED TO BUY YOUR BOOK(S) DIRECT FROM THE TRUST.



WATER FROM WENDOVER

THE STORY OF THE WENDOVER ARM CANAL

RESTORATION NEWS

There has been good progress through the Summer, boosted by an eight day joint working party with WRG BITM (Waterways Recovery Group, Bit in the Middle) from 27th July to 3rd August. Roger Leishman, our Restoration Director, reports that the work completed during that week surpassed all expectations.

The public footpath between Little Tring Bridge and the stop lock was re-opened on 29th July, enabling work to start on the towpath side between those points. Dacorum Borough Council have agreed to provide 10 tonnes of roadstone to surface the reinstated path; this will be laid and rolled during October once the new fill has had time to settle. The old wall on the towpath side was completely demolished, using a 5 ton excavator and hydraulic breaker, and a trench excavated ready to start construction of the new wall.

Also achieved during this week was substantial excavation of the winding hole, completion of backfilling the winding hole wall and topsoiling the banks by the bridge on the south side.

Many thanks are due to our volunteers and especially the members of WRG BITM, without who's help such remarkable results could not have been achieved.

Priority will now be given to pouring the wall bases between the lock and bridge and the walls to complete the 'S' bend west of the bridge. Once the wall between the lock and bridge is complete, the channel can be excavated of the temporary roadway, lined with ash from the old tip and Bentonite lining laid with concrete and excavated material as cover -- we shall have our first completed section of new canal! (minus the water until 2004.....)

FORTHCOMING WORKING PARTIES

Saturday 5 October
Sunday 6 October

Thursday 10 October
Friday 11 October

Friday 18 October
Saturday 19 October
Sunday 20 October

Saturday 2 November
Sunday 3 November

Thursday 21 November
Friday 22 November

Thursday 28 November
Friday 29 November

IMPORTANT: new volunteers are welcome BUT MUST contact Roger Leishman (01442 874536) in advance of any working party as it can be difficult to manage unforeseen people on the day.



Looking from the stop lock along the newly excavated towpath side trench after demolition of the old wall and prepared ready for construction of the new wall. The re-instated public footpath is behind the paling fence on the left.



The newly excavated winding hole at Little Tring, showing completed walls.



The final part of the Little Tring Bridge Contract was to build steps for the public footpath from the road to canal level. These smart new brick steps were installed by Priory Construction during July.



The 'S' bend in the offside wall, west of Little Tring Bridge takes shape.

KALAALLIT NUNAAT - the land of the people

by Nigel Williams (n.b "Carianne")

Following a visit to Iceland in 1992 and a holiday in the Faroe Islands in 1997, I gave some thought to a possible trip to Greenland in 1999. A chance comment by a friend who mentioned he had flown over Greenland on the way from America, created the base for further investigation. This was not to prove very easy.

First some basic facts. Greenland has a population of about 55,000, it is the world's largest island and the most northernmost country. The area extends to over 1.8 million square kilometres with over 95% of the land being beneath a sheet of ice up to 3,000 metres thick. All but the southern quarter lies north of the Arctic Circle.

Some basic literature was available from the Danish Tourist Office in Copenhagen and this was forwarded without delay. However, it transpired that few U.K. companies offered this destination. After a number of telephone calls I tracked down a firm in the Isle of Wight who offered a 9 day package, via Iceland. Only when we commenced the holiday did we discover the Greenland sector was packaged by another company from Copenhagen.

Having made our reservation in January 1999 for a departure in August, we were advised about a month before that the departure date had been brought forward by three days owing to a change in the ferry schedule within Greenland. With effectively no roads, the only form of transport is boat or helicopter. Fortunately, we are both self employed and this posed no undue problem.

So on Friday 13 August (!) we departed from Heathrow on a scheduled flight by Icelandair to Reyjavik. The following evening we arranged a taxi to Reyjavik City Airport which handles domestic flights but also Greenland. We had expected an Air Iceland flight, by reference to the flight indicator, but a BAe 146 from Atlantic Airways (this airline is owned by the Faroese Government) arrived to take us.

The weather was excellent with clear skies on the approach to Greenland and a superb view from my window seat of the ice cap, fjords and icebergs. The stewardess commented it was extremely rare to have such superb weather. After about two hours we landed at Narsaruaq international airport in South Greenland. The existence of this airport, the only one in the area able to take full sized jets, is a result of World War 11 and the Americans.

In April 1941, after the invasion of Denmark by Nazi forces, a treaty was signed by Denmark and United States calling for temporary US supply bases. The uninhabited delta of Narsarsuaq was finally chosen. The base was named "Blue West One" and was constructed and completed five months before the US had entered WW11. It became Greenland's largest settlement with some 12,000 people. Even a large hospital was constructed.

The base was closed in 1958, when the Danish Government failed to take up an offer to purchase, but the following year a civilian airfield was established on the site. Today there are only about 180 inhabitants, most working for the local hotel, which is surprisingly large, but the airport is used both for tourism but also as an emergency diversion. A local museum has been created in one of the old buildings and is accessible through the village bar/cafe! A visit is to be recommended since it gives a pictorial view of local life.

The following day a strong 50/60 knot wind closed both the airport and the small harbour. Only the icebergs floating in the fjord alongside the runway appeared unaffected.

The wind finally abated early the next morning and we made our way to the harbour at 1 p.m in order to take the passenger ferry to Qaqortoq, a journey of about 5 hours, allowing for a stop en route. This was the *Aleqa Ittuk* operated by the Arctic Umiaq Line, a 36 passenger vessel, built in 1983, 19.6 metres in length with a beam of 5.8 metres, having a 270 hp diesel engine and crew of three. It transpires that the operation of such ferries is largely a degree of luck with weather conditions and other operational factors often resulting in timetable changes. For this reason it is advisable to have ½ days in hand if connecting with any international flights. Should problems result it is often possible to helicopter back to the start point, providing seats are available, but this is considerably more expensive.

We spent three days in Qaqortoq. This is one of the larger coastal settlements with a population of about 3,500. The only Tannery in Greenland is sited by the harbour and most of the seal skins are brought in by individual hunters. We decided against the tour of the factory on offer to visitors. In Qaqortoq it is best not to voice any disapproval. The local museum has a small display of kayaks - the last one being used in 1970. Nowadays the hunters use small dinghies with outboards and rifles.

During our stay we visited Hvalsey church ruins which are the most extensive and best preserved Norse ruins in Greenland. Records show that the last use of this isolated church was in 1408 for a wedding with the ceremony taking place over three Sundays. Our visit was on the *Polarfox*, a 10 metre 17 ton twin screw motorboat, built in 1979, but re-engined with twin 260 hp Caterpillars. This is licenced by the Danish Maritime Authority for 17 passengers with a normal cruising speed of 12-13 knots. This was in the capable hands of Fritz Johansen, a veteran with some 38 years' experience of these dangerous waters. *Polarfox* was to be our mode of transport for most of the remaining days.

Our final destination was Alluitsup Paa about 2 hours cruise south-east of Qaqortoq. This is Greenland's largest village with a population of some 800 and largely sustained by fishing. By this time the size and number of icebergs had increased significantly and at one point where the channel narrowed between two islands we had to slow down to virtually tick-over in order to negotiate the very narrow width available since a number of huge icebergs had drifted into the middle. Some concern was expressed when a number of passengers decided to watch the diminishing depth available via the echo sounder. However, Fritz succeeded to our relief.



Moored by the hot springs of uunartoq



Approaching Allupitsup Paa, South Greenland

We were met at the larger harbour and taken immediately to the only hotel in the village which is in two buildings, some quarter of a mile apart. The newer bedroom accommodation, completed only a year or so ago, is all en suite and directly faces the sea. The Proprietress suggested we kept an eye open for whales that had been seen in previous days. The following morning I looked out around 7 a.m and was astonished to see a dozen or more Minke whales cruising gently up and down the channel. This was a highlight for me since I have only seen whales once before in the Azores.

At our request, enquiries were made within the community to establish whether there was any boat able to take our group of eight to the offshore hunting islands. This proved successful and at 1 pm. the following day we assembled at the smaller harbour to be taken on a 2 hour trip on a 7 metre motorboat, crewed by two of the fisherman/hunters. The weather was glorious and the scenery superb. We landed on one of the islands and made our way carefully up and over the rocks to a small patch of level land where a number of timber huts have been put up. These are occupied by the hunters during May and June when the culling takes place. These are rudimentary buildings without water or sanitation but, fortunately, there is a freshwisher spring nearby. A number of unsuitable skins had been discarded which brought home the realities of this activity. Foreign environmental groups have effectively destroyed the sealskin market in Europe although Greenpeace have withdrawn objections to subsistence hunting.

Our return trip to Narsaquaq was aboard *Polarfox* with the maximum allowed compliment for the Alluitsup Paa/Qaqortoq sector. Upon arrival at Qaqortoq there was a degree of unpleasantness when a group of four young Danish men and women, with confirmed and paid for tickets, were refused onward passage and had to leave the boat with their luggage. Fortunately they spoke several languages fluently and it was obvious there was going to be a major row. When we finally reached Narsarquaq, some five hours later, they were ensconced in the hotel having extracted helicopter tickets, paid for by the ferry company. Whether we should have fared so well is doubtful with our limited language capability.

Clearly Greenland will never attract mass tourism - we were the only two English people on this trip despite being readily available through specialist operators. For me the untouched, unspoilt natural scenery will remain a memory for many years.

Ed - thanks to Nigel (a Trust Member) for this article on boating with a difference. Fortunately we should not have to worry about icebergs on the Wendover Arm.....

ASTON CLINTON BY-PASS

Major construction work continues and the new canal cutting west of the line of the road has now been excavated. Disappointing news is that the contractor has asked for £33,000 for design and construction of the winding point detailed in a previous 'Wendover Arm News'. Both the Trust and British Waterways consider this amount excessive (if not exorbitant) and the proposal for the contractor to build it has therefore been dropped. Instead, The Trust will enlarge the channel to provide a winding hole at a later date during Phase II restoration.

The statement in the last issue about the loss of the paddle (adjacent to the present sump) at Drayton Beauchamp did not tell the full story. Whilst it is true that the present paddle, which allows water to be run into the stream towards Drayton Beachamp, will no longer be usable a replacement is to be provided on the new section of canal, connected to the stream via a pipe. This is necessary to maintain a water supply to the stream which in turn supplies the ancient moat in the village.

It has also been confirmed that the ugly structure over the present sump will be removed.



A view from the point where the new canal joins the old line, west of the new A41 road crossing, showing the recently excavated cutting which will take the new section of canal.

NEWS IN BRIEF

● Chief Executive of Waterways Trust Visits the Arm.

Roger Hanbury visited the Arm in May, hosted by Roger Leishman and John Savage. He was shown the restoration progress at Little Tring, the by-pass work at Drayton Beauchamp and the major bridge obstacles at Bucklandwharf and Halton Village. Roger has subsequently written to us and we look forward to the Waterways Trust supporting W.A.T. in any way that they can.

● Roger Leishman wins award.

The Christopher Power Prize is awarded by the IWA to the person, society or trust that has made a significant contribution to the restoration of an amenity waterway. The award has been made to Roger Leishman personally (not the Trust) in recognition of his work. Knowing, as we do, the tremendous job Roger does for the Trust it is very satisfying that it has been recognised nationally - congratulations to Roger! The Prize carries a £700 cash award which Roger has generously donated to the Trust.

● **2002 Tring/Wendover Canal Festival.** The sun shone (well on the Sunday anyway....) and the Festival went smoothly. Attendance was good on the Sunday but numbers were down on Monday (there were

competing Jubilee events in just about every neighbouring town and village, so we were fortunate to do as well as we did). We can, however, be grateful to The Queen for moving the Bank Holiday; the weather at the previous weekend when we would normally have held the Festival was absolutely dreadful. The Festival made an overall profit of £19330 so the effort was well worthwhile.

● **Moorings Scheme on the Arm.** Nothing further to report; a decision on the Outline Planning Application is still awaited from Dacorum Borough Council.

● **Grants Officer.** Good news! We have a volunteer, David Andrews. Thank you David and we look forward to hearing about your efforts.

● **Wendover Arm Features on British Waterways Video.** In recent years BW have produced a video to be shown at their Annual Meeting. This year the Trust was invited to participate and John Savage spent some time with the film crew and BW Chief Executive, Dave Fletcher. A sequence duly appeared on the video and shows Ray Orth's boat in the stop lock and John Savage speaking with Dave Fletcher at Little Tring Bridge.

NEWS IN BRIEF (Continued)

● **Herts IWA Donation.** Thanks are due to Herts IWA for a donation of £450 (of which £350 comes via the Rickmansworth Waterways Trust).

● **Collection Boxes at Little Tring.** Ray Orth's smart collection boxes, put up when working parties are in action, have raised another £60. The passers-by at Little Tring are clearly impressed with what they see!

● **1790 Map of the Arm** We hope to soon finalise details of how to obtain copies for members to purchase. We envisage a variety of sizes being available, from the full size reproduction (about 2'6" x 3'6") to 8" x 10". Would any members who wish to express an interest please write to John Savage (address inside back cover) who will then contact you with prices when available.

The Trust's full size copy has been beautifully framed by member Brian Pitman, who very kindly offered to do it free of charge. Thank you, Brian, for the splendid job which is greatly appreciated.

● Footpath Closure

Buckinghamshire County Council has formally notified the temporary closure of the public footpath along the towpath at Drayton Beachamp, to enable the canal diversion work to take place. The closure will take effect from 11 September 2002 for six months or when the work is completed (whichever is sooner). Alternative routes will be advertised.

CLUB 100 DRAW

The summer draw took place on 30 July and the winners were:

First Prize £110.40
Miss H M Biggs

Second Prize £46.00
Mr H Matraives

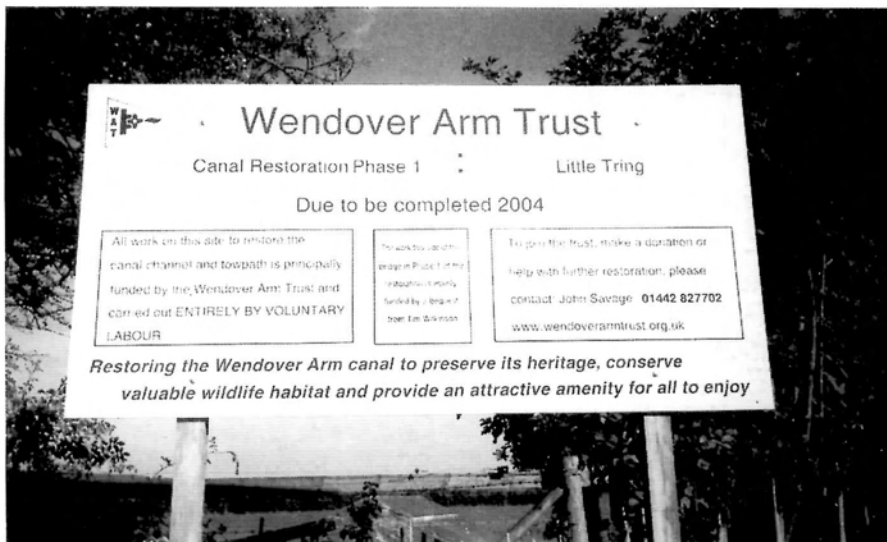
Third Prize £18.40
Mrs A B Franklin

The next draw will be at the A.G.M. - if you wish to subscribe, or take an additional number to increase your chances, contact Barry Martin (address inside back cover).

NEWS IN PICTURES



.....more new steps on the arm. These are at Gamnel Bridge and have been built to provide access to a Water Level Monitoring Sensor installed there.



This is one of the Trust's new notice boards, put up by Little Tring Bridge to tell the public about the project.

Wendover Arm Trust

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*THE AGM OF THE TRUST
WILL BE HELD AT 8 pm ON
TUESDAY 29th OCTOBER 2002*

at

*THE ASTON CLINTON SPORTS
& SOCIAL CLUB*

(entrance off A41, just west of the 'Duck In')

All members are very welcome, please do make the effort to come along to share in the proceedings of YOUR Trust.

There will be a 'ploughman's supper' after the formal business and before the entertainment, a presentation on the Bedford - Milton Keynes link.