

# WENDOVER ARM NEWS

Newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust



Issue No. 41  
Autumn 2003

Price 50p  
Free to members

## From the Wendover Arm Trust Articles of Association:

To promote the restoration of the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal linking the town of Wendover in Buckinghamshire to the Grand Union Canal at Bulbourne Hertfordshire (hereinafter called 'The Waterway' which shall include all waterways, buildings, works and structures associated therewith) to good and navigable order and to maintain and improve The Waterway for the use and benefit of the public.

To promote the fullest use of The Waterway by all forms of waterborne traffic and for all forms of local amenity, tourist and recreational and water-related activities for the benefit of the public

To promote, and educate the public in, the history, use and associated wildlife of canals and inland waterways generally and of The Waterway in particular.

To restore, reconstruct, preserve and maintain canals and inland waterways and works and buildings auxiliary thereto generally provided that such objects shall be carried out in a manner beneficial to the public and recognised by the law of England as charitable.

### Contributions to Wendover Arm News

Contributions are welcome on any topic related to the Wendover Arm, its construction, history, wildlife and restoration.

Letters, articles, photographs, drawings and maps are acceptable; all material will be acknowledged, credited if used and returned.

Please send any contributions to:

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#### Disclaimer

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

# EDITORIAL

Much has happened in the few months since the previous edition of *Wendover Arm News*.

A public announcement was made by our President, Dave Fletcher, at our Festival in May on the Trust's policy to complete the restoration of the Arm. This is a major step forward, and in view of the significance of the policy the announcement is reproduced in full on the back cover. Copies were made available to the media and attracted significant coverage both locally and in waterways publications.

Representatives of Local Councils present were supportive and discussion is to take place with Buckinghamshire County Council, which is the authority responsible for the road bridges at Bucklandwharf and Halton Village.

After there has been full consultation with the Parish Councils at Wendover and Halton a plan will be produced setting out how, and by when, restoration is to be completed.

Our Festival this year, as you will know if you came, was a great success; it was the best ever for both the number of people attending and funds raised for restoration.

Great progress on restoration can also be reported, with the first Bentomat lining being laid at Little Tring - the completion of Phase I is now firmly in sight.

Meanwhile, the new section of canal at Drayton Beauchamp is almost complete and was watered in August - the first time there has been water under Drayton Bridge for a hundred years!

Full details of all this, and more, in this edition.

All in all, incredible progress for our Trust and the Wendover Arm.

*Front Cover Picture: A view of the splendid new winding hole, with new line of canal (watered in mid August). See article on Aston Clinton By-pass for story.*

# RESTORATION PROGRESS

The Phase I restoration at Little Tring has now advanced to the stage where Bentomat lining is being laid.

All the 20 rolls of Bentomat needed to complete the job were delivered on 1 August; each roll weighs about 1½ tons, so moving them is quite a challenge. A 15 ton excavator and 3 ton swivel dumper had been hired for the occasion and had to be used to get the rolls from the top of the cart track because the very long articulated lorry which delivered them could not negotiate the turn to the work site. All but the two rolls required for this year were stacked and secured under large tarpaulins for the winter.

The work party then spent the next four days learning how to lay the Bentomat, and have defined a method to be used for the remainder of the section.

In short, the Bentomat is cut into the required transverse length and then transported to position using the swivel dumper. A scaffold pole is put through the core for support, and this is used to manhandle the roll onto axle stands. The roll can then be slid along the pole to the exact laying position and pulled out to meet the wall on one side. The other end is

then manually rolled up to the other wall and a pleat formed in the centre, to allow for any future shrinkage of the Bentomat.

Bentonite granules are mixed with water to form a putty like mixture which is used to seal both the edges with the walls and the overlap across the transverse joins. The Bentomat is then covered with 6" of concrete for protection; because this will be exposed to temperature extremes prior to watering expansion joints have to be provided.

A total of 26 metres was completed, adjacent to the stop lock, apart from a final layer of concrete and the spoil fill which will be added along the centre of the channel.

Meanwhile progress has also been made with the walls, with the offside wall to the farm crossing now complete. Only the towpath side wall under the bridge remains unfinished, and this is scheduled to be completed in November.

Work recommenced in mid August on scrub clearance at Whitehouses, led by Peter Spary, who will continue to lead an extensive programme in order to complete this task over the winter. This is necessary as access to the Drayton Beauchamp end of the dry section, where Phase II restoration will follow on, will have to be via the dry bed from Little Tring.



*The Bentomat lined section, clearly showing the joints, looking from the stop lock. Only a final dressing of concrete and rubble fill in the centre now remains to be done. A thoroughly professional looking job which is a credit to our volunteer labour force.*



*The newly watered section at Drayton Beauchamp, looking towards Drayton Bridge. Although not to navigable depth, the canal certainly looks the part. The edges of the channel are lined with coir rolls until just before the bridge.*

# ASTON CLINTON BY-PASS

Tremendous progress has been made through the summer, and the new road is due to open during September 2003.

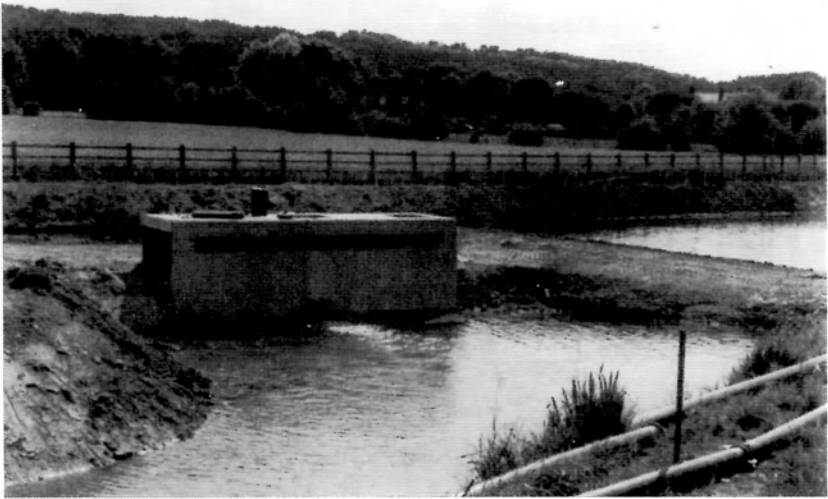
Excellent news is that, after further discussion between the Trust, British Waterways and Balfour Beatty, it was agreed that a winding hole could after all be provided at the Buckland end of the diversion. Not only that but the plan agreed also saved Balfour Beatty money against their original design. So, we get a winding hole at the end of the new section of canal at no cost to the Trust! (Remember that as provision of a winding hole is extra to the specification, the Trust would have to pay any additional cost of such provision).

The channel of the new section of canal is complete, and was watered during August. Water is thus now flowing into the new sump east of Drayton Beauchamp bridge and there is water under the bridge for the first time proper in 100 years! Although the water is not to navigable depth (it is about 15" off) it looks surprisingly deep and gives all the appearance of a navigable canal. The ugly structure over the old sump has been demolished - good to see the back of it!

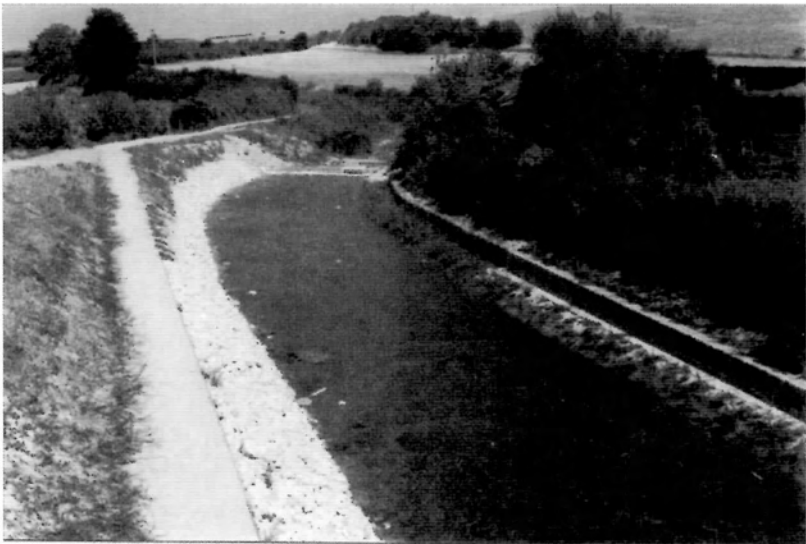
A concrete weir has been built where the old channel (to be the road drainage processing section) joins the new, and at the time of writing the old channel has been re-lined in preparation for its new role. Pipes carry the drainage water under the new A41 bridge, and there is also a direct discharge into the canal to take excess water in storm conditions.

The main work now outstanding is the completion of the towpath along the new section, together with the associated public footpath diversions. These should be complete in time for the opening of the new road in late September. A diagram of the final position of the towpath and revised public footpaths will be published in a future edition.

This splendid new length of canal, including the section rebuilt by British Waterways, is a tremendous boost towards full restoration of the Arm and provides the Trust with a wonderful incentive to get water back into the remaining dry section. The money invested by The Highways Agency and British Waterways is a positive statement that our canal is expected to be fully restored to navigation.



*The weir where the processed drainage will join the canal. In normal conditions the water will flow through the pipe at the bottom, but in time of flood it can weir through the slot near the top.*



*The view from Drayton Bridge towards the new sump, just visible where the water ends. Phase II restoration will start here, relining the dry section in stages towards Little Tring.*



*A view that will not be possible for much longer! This is taken from the middle of the new A41, looking towards Tring Hill with the canal bridge in the foreground.*



*The old line of the canal, on the Buckland side of the new road, relined ready to become the reed bed which will process the road drainage. The direction of flow in this section will be reversed, to flow towards the photographer.*



## DONATION FROM TRING MASONONS

Mr Roger Lewis, Vice President of the Trust, recently completed his year as Master of Tring Lodge, part of the Masonic organisation. The Freemasons have a policy of supporting needy causes and, on the recommendation of the outgoing Master, make donations to local charities. Roger took the opportunity at this year's Canal Festival to hand over the Tring Lodge of Freemasons' generous donation of £1000 towards the restoration work of the Wendover Arm Trust.

The accompanying photograph shows Roger passing the cheque to Trust Chairman Bob Wheal at a presentation attended by local dignitaries, local councillors and representatives from national waterways bodies.

During Roger's year as Master other charities that have benefited from donations made by the 60 members of the Tring Lodge include: £1000 to Keech Cottage Children's Home, £750 to the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, £750 to Iain Rennie Hospice at Home, £500 to MIND in Hertfordshire as well as £2,700 to Masonic Charities, a total of £6,700.



# FESTIVAL 2003 -- BEST EVER!

This year's Annual Festival broke all previous records. An estimated 15,000 visitors thronged the site, the car park was full up with cars queueing to get in and the bar was virtually drunk dry!

The atmosphere was excellent with lots of family groups enjoying the many attractions. The entertainment was much enhanced this year, with one of the highlights being the impressive falconry display. There was always something going on and hopefully the many visitors will want to come back next year.

The restoration site was also busy with huge interest being shown in the ever more impressive progress.

Our new President, Dave Fletcher, came along in his boat and made the important announcement about the completion of restoration to the many representatives of the Local Councils and other organisations present. They all seemed very supportive. We were pleased to see David Suchet at the opening lending his continued support. Also there was Robin Evans, the new Chief Executive of British Waterways, who was duly impressed by how such a small

organisation can stage such a large and successful event!

Well, I hear you ask, what's the bottom line? WE MADE A RECORD £37,539 NET PROFIT, A SUPERB ACHIEVEMENT.

A tremendous vote of thanks is due to the Festival Committee who work away for most of the year planning the next Festival, and toiling over the Festival weekend to make it all happen. It may all appear to 'just happen', but to operate so smoothly requires a huge amount of work behind the scenes. The Committee was chaired jointly by John Brooman of the Trust and Caroline Houghton of British Waterways and both organisations, with invaluable assistance from the IWA's Waterways Recovery Group, share the effort in making it all work.

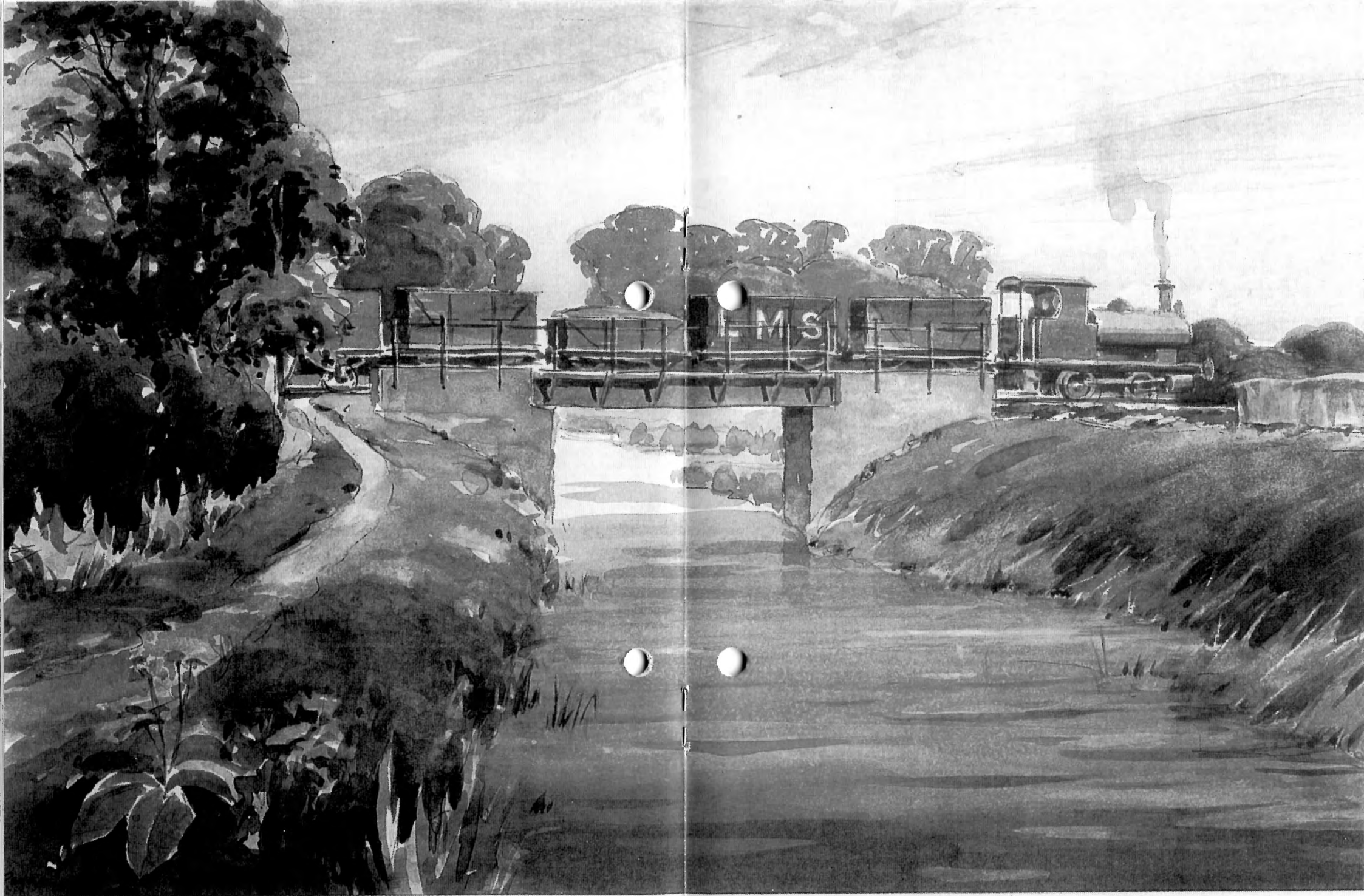
It would be unfair to single out individuals for particular mention as so many put in so much effort. Thanks again to them all, who can be well satisfied with that £37,539 towards further restoration. ....meanwhile, the Committee has already met to start planning next year's event..... (when the canal is fully restored perhaps they can take over painting the Forth Bridge?)



*After the announcements and presentations at the opening of the Festival, Johanna Wheel offers refreshments to Trust President Dave Fletcher and David Suchet, who we were delighted to see again lending his support.*



*One of the highlights of the hugely successful festival was the falconry display, with one of the stars seen here and the multitudinous crowd in the background.*



Wendover to Halton Railway c 1930

## NEWS IN BRIEF

- Boater's Raffle.

Many thanks to the boaters who donated prizes. The Raffle, held in conjunction with the Festival raised £355.

- Donation.

Special thanks to the Herts Branch of the IWA, who have kindly and generously donated £500 to the Trust. Very much appreciated!

- Proposed Conservation Area at Halton.

Aylesbury Vale District Council have proposed a Conservation Area at Halton Village to include the canal and surrounding buildings of architectural merit. The Trust visited their exhibition in the village and have made a submission to the Council. We broadly welcome the enhanced protection the proposed designation would provide; the setting at Halton is one of the most attractive on the Arm and we would wish to work with the Council to enhance the visual environment. However, we do of course wish it to be recognised that the canal is to be restored to working order. The present bridge at Halton is out of scale and keeping with its surroundings and its replacement by something more attractive is an objective of the Trust.

- Computer Equipment.

Oliver Revel, who kindly maintains the Trust's website, is in need of another computer (PC) for the purpose. If any member is intending to upgrade their system, please consider donating the old one to the Trust. Ideally it should be a Pentium 150+ or a Pentium 2 or 3. It should have a hard drive of at least 20 to 40Gb, modem, CD-ROM drive (CD re-write would be better), 100+ Mb ram and any original drivers and original operating systems CDs. If you can help, please give Oliver a call on 01494 726246 (after 6pm) or email at [oslsc@tesco.net](mailto:oslsc@tesco.net).

- Summer 2003 Club 100 Draw.

First Prize (£111.60) went to Mr C M Jenkins, Second Prize (£46.50) to Mrs K W Deaney and Third Prize (£18.6) to Mrs M Leishman. As ever, numbers may be obtained from Barry Martin (contact details inside back cover); this is an excellent way of supporting the Trust whilst standing the chance of winning a worthwhile prize.

*Centrefold picture: a lovely watercolour by Brian Paine of Wendover, depicting a train on the Halton Camp railway crossing the Wendover Arm.*

- Towpath at Wendover.

The towpath on the initial stretch from the basin at Wendover has eroded and requires attention. Various options have been explored but, after representations by Wendover Parish Council, Buckinghamshire County Council (Rights of Way Team) and British Waterways have agreed to make the necessary improvements. Soft edging of the canal is to be used to maintain the wildlife benefits.

- Social Evening with the Aylesbury Canal Society.

There is to be a horse racing evening on Saturday 1st November, at the Sports & Social Club, Wendover Road, Aylesbury. All the action takes place on screen with full betting facilities and instant payouts after each race. The race card, including admission, is only £2 per person on the night. Sounds like good fun! All Trust members are warmly encouraged to go along; if you have any queries or need more information please call Nick Swain on 01442 828276.

- Support from Tring Town Council.

The following letter has been received from the Clerk of the Tring Town Council:

"On behalf of the Town Council I write to express its continuing support for the work of the

Wendover Arm Trust. The Council has been a corporate member of the Trust for many years and has followed progress with enthusiasm. The Council has contributed to the Trust, not just with modest funding but also by the Mayor's attendance at fund-raising and profile-raising events, and by giving publicity to its work.

The Council looks forward to seeing the completion of the project and, meanwhile, urges as many organisations as possible to give it financial and practical support."

This expression of support is very welcome indeed and will help us realise our Plan to finish the job. We thank the Council most sincerely.

- Fundraising Vacancy.

Unfortunately our Fundraising Director, David Andrew, has had to resign following a move to permanent residence in France. David has brought much to the Trust in his short term in office and has helped to focus the way forward towards seeing the project completed. We thank him greatly for his contribution and wish him well for the future.

We urgently need a replacement. This is a vital role for the Trust at this time so if you think you may be able to help (or know somebody who can), please get in touch with Bob Wheel or any Council member.

# CLEAN UP COMMENCES AT WENDOVER WHARF

The Trust has set up an informal group to investigate, promote and study the water flow gauge and historic records relating to the flow measurements taken by British Waterways and predecessors at Wendover. The group includes representatives from the Trust, The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Wendover Parish Council, The Chiltern Society (Rivers & Wetlands Group) and British Waterways. A full story of the outcome of the group's activities will appear in a future edition of *Wendover Arm News*.

Meanwhile, it is pleasing to be able to report an excellent spin-off from the group's activities.

One of the local parish representatives, Angus McKechnie, who has a lifelong interest in the basin and canal volunteered to take on the cleaning of the caged area at the head of the Arm. The cage encloses the present gauging equipment and tank together with the outflows from the Heron Stream and wells. The caged area has suffered from litter and rubbish being thrown into it over the fence; the rubbish, being inaccessible has remained there creating an

unattractive sight at the otherwise picturesque basin.

British Waterways has responded splendidly by providing Angus with a key to the cage, tools, waders, bin bags and have done the necessary risk assessment and safety training. They are also helping to remove the rubbish Angus has collected.

Angus has so far removed most of accumulated litter, cleared the bed of the gauging tank and has made a start on clearing vegetation to gain access to more rubbish and rubble. It will take some time to complete the initial clearance of heavy rubble and lumps of concrete that have been dumped, and then Angus will continue to maintain the area in good order.

This is a wonderful example of community spirit and Angus deserves our grateful thanks for his dedication. Well done and keep up the good work!



*Angus McKechnie, sporting his BW waders, gloves and rake, busy cleaning out the gauging tank within the cage at Wendover Wharf. What a pleasure it is to see somebody who cares so much about the canal that he is prepared to put in time and effort to look after it.*



*There it was, gone! The site of the former ugly building, now thankfully demolished, over the old sump.*



## PLEASURE PURE AND SIMPLE

*Trust member Elsie Adams writes of the delights of living by the Arm at Aston Clinton.*

We have only lived by the canal for three springs, since November 2000 to be precise. Our back garden faces the canal as it leaves Bucklandwharf, walked by people of many ages; youths heading for Green Park, walkers, cyclists and people with their canine companions.

Our first spring brought a pair of swans and five cygnets - they all came into the garden but we treated them with respect, although they did allow me close to the young ones.

Last spring we helped a lovely mother duck raise eight ducklings for up to twelve weeks before they left for bigger territory. I had great pleasure from their visits, sometimes three or more times a day, although it took about ten days before they could all climb the bank and cross the garden and tell me they wanted feeding. They even progressed to coming into the conservatory when weather permitted the door to be left open. I watched every feather arrive, feet and bills change colour and they seemed to grow with every visit. I felt so privileged to be trusted by mum, who had visited with dad prior to nesting.

This year the same happened when mum and dad came in February/March to be fed and then went away. I kept a careful lookout for them and, sure enough, eight weeks later they returned with eleven ducklings. I needed to go down to the water's edge to establish the bond, and after that they came to me. I realise they are wild so I only give them an easier start and send them on their way.

*Ed: many thanks to Elsie for her story; it's a delight to be able to recount the simple pleasures to be enjoyed from the canal.*



*Elsie's friends on the canal, and in the garden.*



# NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the twelfth Annual General Meeting of the Wendover Arm Trust will be held at the Aston Clinton Sports & Social Club, Aston Clinton, on Wednesday 29th October 2003 at 8pm..

## AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the eleventh Annual General Meeting held on 30 October 2002
3. Chairman's report
4. Individual Trustees' Reports
5. Honorary Treasurer's Report
6. To receive and, if though fit, approve the report of the Committee (Council of Management)
7. To receive and, if though fit, to approve the Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet of the Trust for the year ended on 5th April 2003, and the report of the Honorary Auditor thereon
8. To re-appoint Mr F W P Lea F C A as Honorary Auditor
9. To elect Members to the Council (see note 1 below)

By order of the Council

John Hopkins  
Secretary

Registered Office:  
129 High Street  
BERKHAMSTED  
Herts HP4 2DJ

21st September 2003

Note 1 Under Article 39, nominations for election to the Council may be received by the Secretary up to seven clear days before the ate of the meeting. Nominations must be in writing and signed by the proposer and the person nominated, confirming his/her willingness to be elected. Only members qualified to vote at the meeting may make nominations or stand for election. A list of Council Members standing for re-election and other members standing for election will be given

at the meeting.

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

**THIS IS THE AGM OF YOUR TRUST:  
PLEASE DO COME ALONG TO GIVE YOUR  
SUPPORT AND SHARE IN THE SUCCESS  
OF WHAT WE ARE ACHIEVING.**

**THERE WILL BE AN INFORMAL  
PRESENTATION AFTER THE AGENDA  
BUSINESS AND WE HOPE TO PROVIDE  
REFRESHMENTS.**

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU  
THERE.**

# RIVER CANAL RESCUE

River Canal Rescue are sponsors of our booklet "Water from Wendover", which continues to sell well, has covered its production costs and is now contributing profits to the Trust. RCR have paid £750 sponsorship, for which we are grateful and thank them.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a copy of River Canal Rescue's brochure and membership application form, which the boat owners amongst you may find of interest.

## BRITISH WATERWAYS & HIGHWAYS AGENCY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

This Agreement provides for the future integration of the trunk road and waterways networks by creating opportunities for people to transfer travel from road to waterways, whether by boat, cycle or on foot as well as facilitating the transfer of freight from road to water. It was signed on 14 July 2003 by Robin Evans, Chief Executive British Waterways and Hilary Chipping, Director, Strategy The Highways Agency.

What's this got to do with the Trust?

Well, as a shining example of co-operation between BW and the HA the A41 Aston Clinton By-pass was chosen as the venue for the signing and media event. After the signing ceremony, all those present (including John Savage representing the Trust) were conveyed by Balfour Beatty to the new bridge over the Arm; the new length of canal had had water specially pumped into it for the occasion so looked good for the photo shoot.

This was an excellent occasion to keep the Trust in the forefront and recognised the boost to the restoration of the Wendover Arm that the new 750m of canal has provided. Incidentally, it turned out that Hilary Chipping lives in the area, knows the Arm well and is very supportive of our activities.

# Wendover Arm Trust

Registered Office: 129 High Street, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 2DJ  
A non-profit making company limited by guarantee. Registered in England No. 2353392  
Incorporated 1989. Registered Charity No. 801190

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Vice President: Mr. Roger Lewis

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# MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE FURTHER RESTORATION OF THE HISTORIC WENDOVER ARM CANAL

David Fletcher C.B.E., President of the Wendover Arm Trust, today announced that the Trust planned to complete restoration of the canal as far as the A41 road crossing by 2010.

This will entail lining and re-watering the remaining 1¼ mile dry section beyond Little Tring to link up with the new length of canal, built as part of the A41 Aston Clinton by-pass works, due to be completed later this year.

The dry section will be restored in five stages, commencing in 2005, at a cost of approximately half a million pounds. The work will be done mostly by the Trust's voluntary labour force.

Beyond the A41, onward to Halton and Wendover, major work is necessary to three overbridges, two at Bucklandwharf and one at Halton Village. The channel, already in water, will require some attention, and a gradual raising of the water level. It is intended that there will be little noticeable difference in the appearance of this section where conservation and enhancement of the wildlife habitat will be a priority.

The Trust will be fully consulting with the relevant Councils over the coming months before issuing a Plan for final completion of the restoration. The Plan will be extensively communicated amongst all the communities along the canal.

A major fundraising initiative will be launched as part of the Plan, to raise the money necessary to restore both the dry section and for the costs (principally the three bridges) to be identified on the remaining section to Wendover.