

WENDOVER ARM NEWS

Newsletter of the Wendover Arm Trust



Issue No. 43
April 2004

Price £1
Free to members

From the Wendover Arm Trust Articles of Association:

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

To promote the fullest use of The 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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TRING
Hertfordshire
HP23 5HN

Disclaimer

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

EDITORIAL

The power of the blank page! The blank page in the previous edition of "Wendover Arm News", caused by the lack of readers' contributions, produced an encouraging response; thanks are due to members Kevin Clausner, Nick Corble and Bernard Meldrum for adding interest to this issue.

Restoration activity continues, with much to report since last time. Not only is Phase 1 on track, but considerable progress has been made with advance work on Phase 2 (the dry section to Drayton Beauchamp) and consideration is even being given to making a start on Phase 3 (the watered section on to Wendover).

There is also good news on the membership front; memberships are up by 23% against last year. Our members are our ambassadors, helping to spread awareness of the delights of the Arm and providing vital support. Imagine what we could do if every member recruited just one more! See what you can do - our membership rates are so modest (but do cover the cost of producing and posting this magazine) that persuading people to join really is not difficult.

The main event, however, is the impending Tring (Wendover) Canal Festival to be held on 30 and 31 May. Last year's Festival was our best ever with a record attendance of some 15,000 people and a thumping record amount (£37,000) thus raised for restoration.

It was a lovely relaxed event, enjoyed by all those thousands who came along. This year's show is just as good and we hope all those satisfied customers will be back for more! Trust members can do so much to ensure that we have another success by:

1. coming to the Festival, and encouraging all your friends, relations, neighbours, family and work colleagues to come too.
2. displaying the enclosed posters wherever you can, for example in your local shop, pub or workplace. Further copies are available from John Savage (01442 827702).
3. buying or selling all your Grand Draw tickets and returning the counterfoils with cheque to Jo Leeson (address on tickets).

Thank you, and enjoy the Festival.

Front Cover: an early Spring scene, looking from the towpath on the Hertfordshire/Buckinghamshire boundary. The hedge separating the two fields is on the boundary, with Drayton Beauchamp (Bucks) to the left and Tring Rural (Herts) to the right. Wilstone Reservoir, now full, is in the background with Mentmore beyond.

RESTORATION NEWS

PHASE 1 (LITTLE TRING)

The lining with Benomat had to be suspended during the winter due to ground conditions, so efforts have been directed at excavating surplus spoil down to final bed level both in the channel and winding hole. Another job has been to erect a barrier along the offside alongside the winding hole. This is necessary because access to the tip, previously through the bed of the winding hole, needed to be moved to the offside bank; with dumper trucks driving along close to the canal bank a crash barrier is needed to maintain safe working. The barrier is now complete, enabling the final excavation and profiling of the winding hole prior to lining.

With the arrival of Spring, lining of the channel (working from the stop lock direction) has recommenced in earnest with weekly mid-week working parties. The lining is already through the bridge and as the team gain expertise in this job good progress can be expected; it is hoped to lay five metres of lining per week.

We must remember that the completion of Phase 1 is funded by the Tim Wilkinson bequest, awarded to the Trust by the IWA. To commemorate this (and fulfil a requirement of the

award) a plaque is to be erected near the farm crossing, west of Little Tring Bridge. The plaque will be mounted on a brick faced plinth and will be not less than two metres from the water's edge.

All is on course to substantially complete Phase 1 this year, ready for the official opening in 2005.

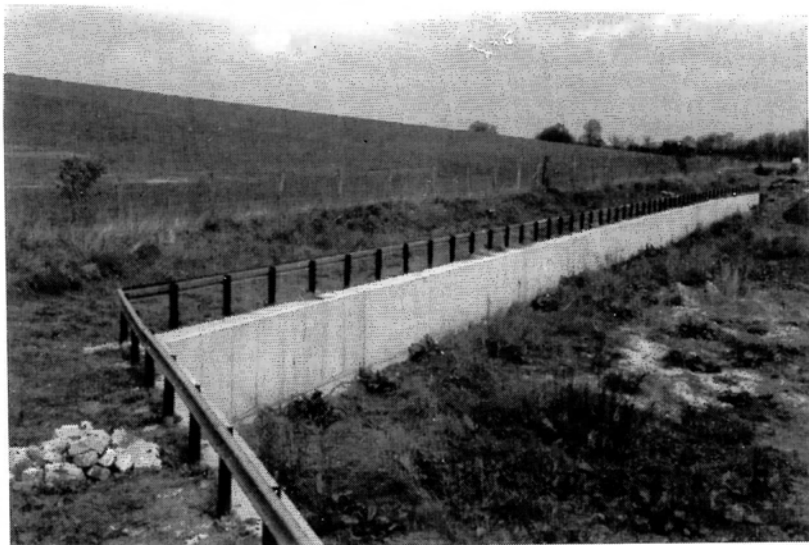
PHASE 2 (DRY SECTION, LITTLE TRING TO DRAYTON BEAUCHAMP)

The winter pause in lining on Phase 1 allowed our volunteers to make spectacular progress on advance works for Phase 2. The entire dry bed on the 1¼ miles from Little Tring to Drayton Beauchamp has now been cleared of 100 years scrub growth and the channel re-profiled as necessary. (When the pipeline was laid under the dry bed in 1911 the original profile was disturbed).

Because it is necessary to replace the pipeline as this section is rewatered, work will start at the new sump at Drayton Beauchamp and work in stages towards Little Tring. The only access for vehicles is at Little Tring, so any vehicles needed will have to drive along the dry bed from there. This would pose a considerable



Phase 1 Progress: the completed lining has advanced under Little Tring Bridge, and should have extended further still by the time this magazine appears.



Phase 1 Progress: this is the protective fence along the offside of the winding hole. Dumper trucks will now be able to access the tip along here in safety, without the risk of falling in the new canal!

problem for readymix concrete lorries so a method of lining without the use of concrete is being designed. The proposal is to lay the Bentomat and cover it with gabions (wire cages) for protection. The loose fill for the gabions (which could be any inert material, hopefully cheaper than concrete) would be easily transportable by dumper truck along the already cleared route.

There is an issue about what to do with the pipeline as it is replaced; options are to break it up, fill it with grout or cover it with some sort of raft.

The Trust Council has authorised the lining of a trial section at Drayton Beauchamp to test the proposed method. Subject to technical approval from British Waterways it is planned to do this trial length during 2004.

PHASE 3 (WATERED SECTION, DRAYTON BEAUCHAMP TO WENDOVER)

The completion of channel lining in Phases 1 and 2 is a specialised job which does not require a mass labour force. With the completion of scrub clearance in Phase 2 there may therefore be scope for non-specialised working parties to commence work on Phase 3. We would of course need to carefully consult with all interested parties before doing anything, but perhaps clearance of obstructing

vegetation and spot attention to any bank erosion could be undertaken.

LAST EDITION'S COMPETITION

The competition in the previous edition, to name the (civil) parishes through which the Arm passes in the correct order, produced no correct entries. Not surprising really when you see the answer!

For the record, the answer is (starting from Bulbourne Junction):

Marsworth (Bucks)
Tring (Herts)
Tring Rural
Drayton Beauchamp (Bucks)
Buckland
Aston Clinton
Halton
Weston Turville
Halton (again)
Wendover



Phase 1 Progress: the winding hole takes shape. The offside bank in the foreground will have a soft edge, planted with aquatic vegetation.



Phase 2 Progress: there it was, gone! After all those years of 'scrub bashing', breakthrough has occurred and the 1¼ mile dry section is now clear (apart from the odd large stump) and re-profiled ready for lining.

BOOK REVIEW

WATERSIDE WALKS IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE by Nick Corble
ISBN 1 85306 856 X

Published by Countryside Books, 2 Highfield Avenue, NEWBURY,
Berkshire RG14 5DS Price £7.95, available from bookshops.

Nick Corble is a Trust member and well acquainted with our local canals. His new book, however, covers walks alongside various stretches of water throughout the County including rivers and lakes as well as, of course, canals both in use and otherwise.

There are 20 walks of between 3¼ and 6 miles and, being mostly alongside water, are generally flat. They are therefore particularly suited to families or those who seek a pleasant, but not too strenuous walk. For more serious walkers the book is useful in providing ideas for interesting walks including features perhaps undiscovered.

Canals are well covered with walks including the Grand Union, Aylesbury, Wendover, Slough and Buckingham Arms. The rivers are the Thames, Great Ouse, Ouzel, Wye, Thame, Chess, Misbourne and Colne plus some lakes for good measure. Maps and descriptions are good and nearby places of interest are given.

Even those, like myself, well familiar with the County will find something here new to explore and the book can be recommended.

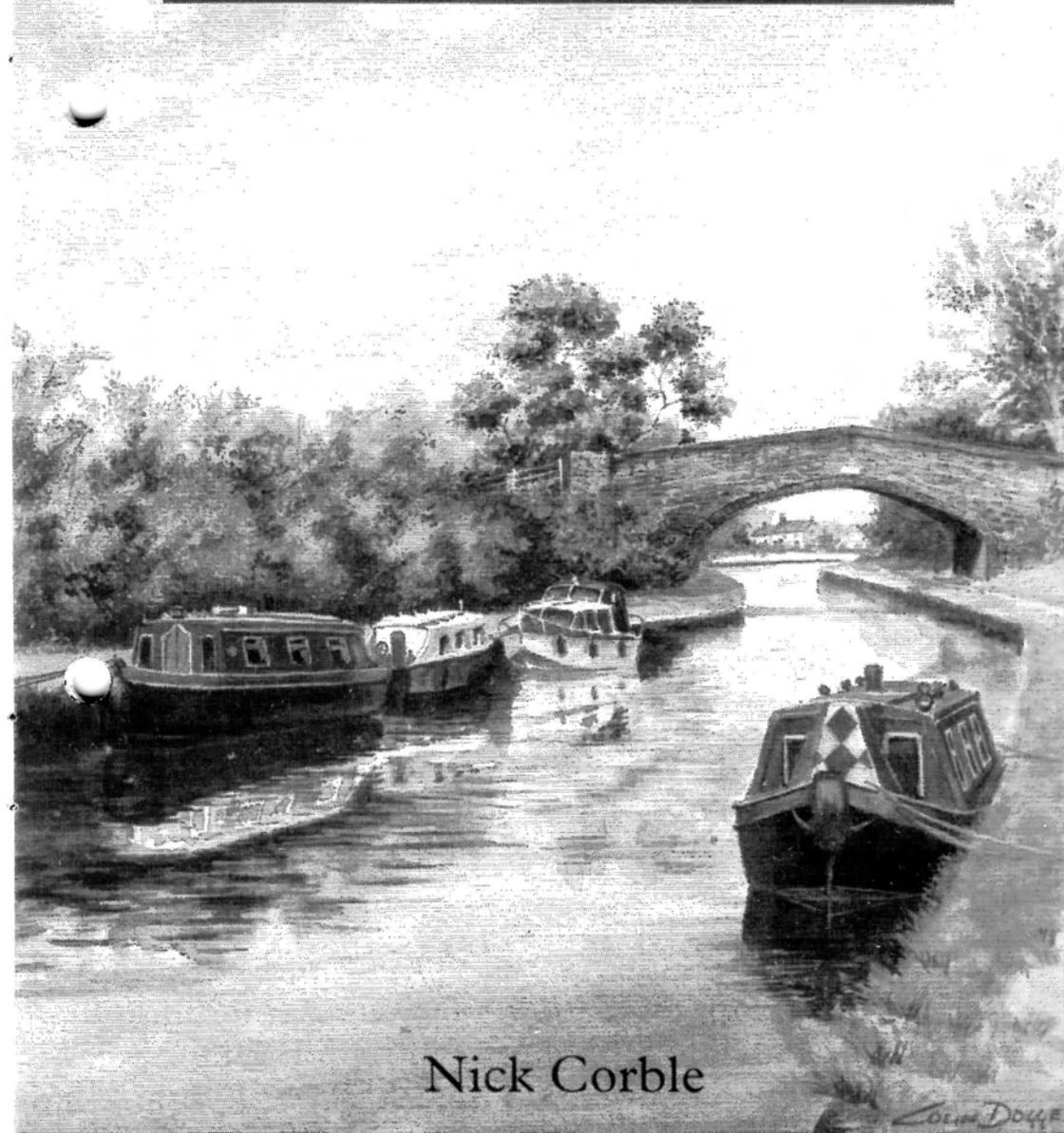
JAS

READER OFFER

"Wendover Arm News" is able to offer the book at a discounted price of £6.95 (POST FREE).

Send your cheque, payable to Countryside Books, to the address above quoting the title of the book and mentioning "Wendover Arm News".

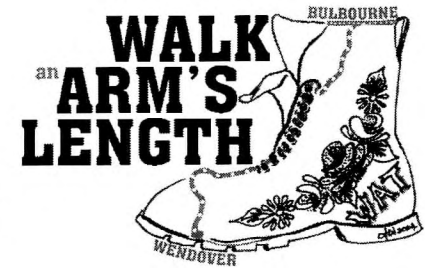
WATERSIDE WALKS in Buckinghamshire



Nick Corble

Colin Dore

Walk an Arm's Length



You can

- Explore the whole length of the Wendover Arm Canal
- Keep fit
- Raise funds for restoration

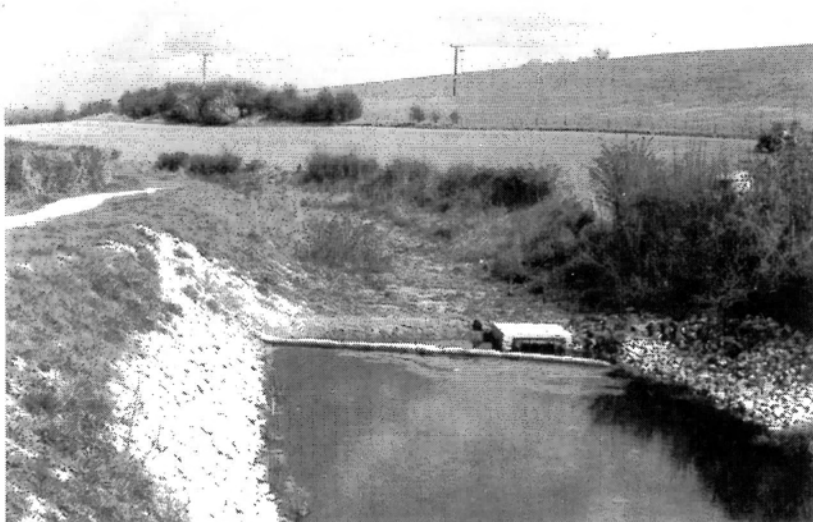
in a day

Make a note of the date: **Sunday 12th September 2004**, when a Sponsored Walk is being held on the Wendover Arm Canal. Charitable organisations are being invited to raise funds to be shared 50/50, and individuals will asked to make a contribution. People can join at any bridge, and walk the whole 6.75 miles, between Wendover and Bulbourne; any part, or there and back!

Full details will be available at the Festival, at the Raffle-Ticket table, and will also be mailed to W.A.T. members in good time.



Phase 2 Progress: look out for these marker pegs, put in by Roger Leishman, restoration director. They indicate the distance from Bulbourne Junction in metres, so this is the 4 Km point.



Phase 2 Progress: the section of trial lining will be done here, from the new sump at Drayton Beauchamp

NAVIGATING THE UPPER REACHES OF THE ARM

In the previous edition, in the article about the official opening of the Aston Clinton By-pass, we wondered when there would be the first navigation under the new 'Saxon Way Bridge'.

We did not have long to wait, as Trust member Kevin Clausner with his daughters Georgina and Amber did just that, by canoe, in November. The article which follows is Georgina and Amber's illustrated account of that epic voyage. Well done to all of them!

Another member, Bernard Meldrum, has also been having thoughts about navigating the upper reaches of the arm by canoe, and his letter is published following the article. Please do write the editor with your comments on Bernard's suggestion; it sounds a great idea but are there enough canoeists around to make it viable?

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A canoe trip under Saxon Way Bridge



This is the new bridge that was built over the canal for the new A41 bypass. It was completed in October of 2003. We are members of the trust and read in this newsletter that no boat had yet been under that bridge. But what they didn't know was we had, so we wanted to tell you our story....

We have a canoe, it is 17' long and it is moored at the back of our garden in Bishops Field, Aston Clinton. On Saturday the 29th of November 2003 at 3pm Kevin, Georgia (11) and Amber (9) went on a canoe trip to the 'Saxon Way Bridge'.

We rowed up to the long tunnel bridge which the old A41 runs over, when we went under this bridge as we talked it made a loud echoing sound. Unfortunately we found lots of rubbish along the way and threw some of it to the side of the canal.

Then we carried on to the Bucklandwharf Bridge which is very small. There was quite a lot of weed but the canoe seemed to go through it easily. Before we reached the new bridge the canal opens up and almost becomes a lake.

We were all very tired as we went under the Saxon Way bridge so we stopped for a rest and some drinks. The Bridge looks very modern. There is a sign on it that says it was finished in October of 2003 (see pictures).

We soon needed to head back as it was getting dark and we only had one torch. On the way back from the bridge we saw two horses in a field they were very friendly. Also on the journey back to our house we found a badgers hole and moorhen nest. More recently we even discovered a moorhen's nest with 6 eggs in (see photo). On the canal there were lots of ducks and we also saw a few fish and a newt in the water.

Once we got out we were ever so wet. We were sent straight to bath. It was great fun and we can't wait to go back again in the summer, this time with a picnic!

Written by Georgia and Amber



To The Editor

Beryl and I have been exercising our three Golden Retriever dogs along the Wendover Arm for many years: they particularly enjoy swimming in the crystal clear water along the recently re-watered stretch from Drayton Beauchamp Bridge to the new winding hole the other side of the A41. My 14-year old dog regularly swims under the A41 without pausing.

I recently parked my car at the Wendover Basin and walked with the dogs to Green Park and back. We observed the pair of nesting swans at the Wides and will return in May to see the young. The next day I parked at Green Park and walked to Little Tring and back. I was surprised at the amount of work that has been completed over the winter months, the canal bed can now be seen, and one of my dogs walked along the dry bed all the way from Drayton Beauchamp Bridge to the works at Little Tring. The working parties deserve to be congratulated.

At the Wendover basin I met a couple, a father and son I assume them to be, the father must have been in his sixties, the son in his forties. We spoke of the time when people would be arriving at Wendover on the water. The father turned to me and said "Although they are doing all that work near Little Tring, no boats of any sort carrying people will be arriving at Wendover in my lifetime." The son joined in "Nor in mine!"

It occurred to me that canoeists could use much of the canal at present from Drayton Beauchamp to Wendover if some of the debris and overhanging branches were removed, and this could be developed into a fundraising event. The canoes may need to be lifted out of the water to cross one road. There is not enough width to make a race of any competition so it would have to be a timed trial against the clock: so I suggest a scheme with a timed journey, with sponsorship **for every minute a target time was undercut**, from Drayton Beauchamp to Wendover Basin. The target time to be set by a fairly fit 50 or 60 year old well known personality completing the course well before the event; *it would be self defeating if the target was too rigorous or too difficult to achieve*. This could then become an annual fund raising exercise for the Trust.

Properly marketed it could attract entries from over forty entrants, each carrying considerable amounts of sponsorship. Beryl and I would be willing to donate a cup, **to be competed for in the name of the trust**, to the fastest entrant. Whilst not raising anywhere near the amount raised at the Canal Festival each year, the contribution, properly marketed could provide a four to five figure sum each year.

It would be necessary to run the competition outside the nesting season, so it would not be appropriate to be held at the time of the canal festival, the August Bank Holiday, or early September, would be a suitable time.

Do the readers of Wendover Arm News agree with me and support the idea?

Bernard Meldrum

NEW FUNDRAISING DIRECTOR

More good news is that the Trust has a new Fundraising Director, Hubert Prescott. This is a vital position, as it is essential that money is available to fund the continuing restoration; it would be unthinkable if our volunteers had to hold back through lack of cash!

The major challenge ahead is to fund the rebuilding of the three lowered bridges in Phase 3 and we wish Hubert every success in his new role.

We hope that Hubert will tell us something about himself and his ideas in a future edition; meanwhile his details appear inside the back cover. Please do get in touch with him if you have any suggestions on how funding may be obtained.

BRIAN PAINE'S WATERCOLOURS

Some members so liked the paintings featured in the previous two editions that they asked for copies. Through the generosity of Trust member Rod Saunders, who is now the proprietor of The Copy Shop in Tring, and Brian's kind permission to reproduce them we can supply colour copies. If you would like a copy of each please get in touch with the Editor; all we ask is a minimum donation of £5 to Trust funds.



Phase 2: the beautiful rural setting of this section is evident from this view, showing the line of the canal as it hugs the contour around the hillside.

NEWS IN BRIEF

● HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

In recognition of the sterling work done at Wendover Basin (see previous "Wendover Arm News") by Angus McKechnie, the Trust Council has awarded him a year's Honorary Membership. Thanks again, Angus, and keep up the good work. (Incidentally, Angus has paid his subscription anyway, which has been converted to a donation).

● NEW NOTICE BOARDS

There are now so many people walking alongside the sections of canal under restoration interested in what is going on that the Trust has decided to provide three new notice boards. These are to be located at the public footpath crossing near Whitehouses and at Whitehouses itself. The third one will either go by the other public footpath crossing towards Drayton Beauchamp or at Drayton Beauchamp. They will give details of the Canal, its history, the current restoration and the Trust. Specific features local to particular boards will be mentioned. These boards represent a significant investment by the Trust, but we felt they were essential to inform people of the Trust and the canal.

● BRITISH WATERWAYS MOVE

The BW administrative and managerial staff based at Marsworth have now moved to the new South East Waterways Office at Milton Keynes. The address is: South East Waterways, British Waterways, Ground Floor, Witan Gate House, 500 - 600 Witan Gate, MILTON KEYNES, MK9 1BW Telephone (general switchboard): 01908 302500.

Operational staff remain based at Marsworth, and the public reception there is currently still maintained.

● MEMBERSHIP OF TRUST FLOURISHES

In the past year membership of the Trust has burgeoned; the figures are:

	Last Year This Year		
Single	146	196	
Family	190	219	
Corporate	14	16	
Hon/Spl	10	12	
Memberships	360	443	+23%
Total members	556	668	+20%

Wendover Arm Trust

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TRING(WENDOVER) CANAL FESTIVAL 2004

Sunday 30st May and Bank Holiday Monday
31st May

Following the capacity crowd at last year's most successful Festival, new and improved attractions have been arranged for this year.

This is the 'must visit' event for all Trust members and supporters of our canal with something for everybody.

Boat, caravan and tent booking enquiries to John Hopkins, publicity and general enquiries to John Savage (details of both inside back cover).

Remember to buy or sell your Grand Draw tickets and return the counterfoils with cheque to Jo Leeson at the address on the tickets.

SEE YOU THERE, AND
ENJOY YOUR VISIT!

tringcanalfestival.org.uk or wendovercanalfestival.org.uk