

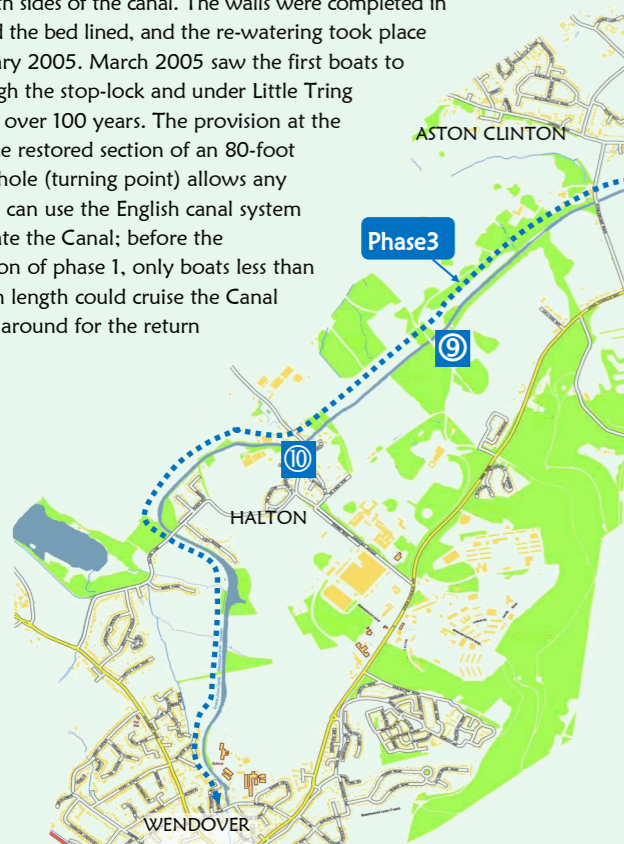
Phase 1

The quarter-mile at Little Tring

The construction work to restore Phase 1 began in earnest in 1997 following ground clearance.

As part of the restoration of Phase 1, Little Tring Bridge (1), demolished in 1973, had to be rebuilt. Volunteers undertook the clearance work but re-building of a road bridge necessitated the use of professional contractors. Pictures on the fly-leaves show the progression from ground clearance through construction to completion. The bridge was completed in 2001 and is a concrete box brick-faced in traditional style.

While the bridge was being rebuilt restoration of the first quarter-mile of canal began; owing to various requirements laid down by the local authority and British Waterways concrete walls had to be built along both sides of the canal. The walls were completed in 2004 and the bed lined, and the re-watering took place in February 2005. March 2005 saw the first boats to go through the stop-lock and under Little Tring Bridge in over 100 years. The provision at the end of the restored section of an 80-foot winding hole (turning point) allows any boat that can use the English canal system to navigate the Canal; before the completion of phase 1, only boats less than 30-feet in length could cruise the Canal and turn around for the return journey.



- ← Phase 1 – Little Tring Bridge and winding hole
 - Phase 2 – the 'dry' section
 - restoration complete, re-watered in 2009
 - restoration complete, re-watered in 2015
 - Undergoing restoration
 - ← Phase 3 – from Drayton Beauchamp to Wendover
- The numbers in brackets in the text relate to points on the map

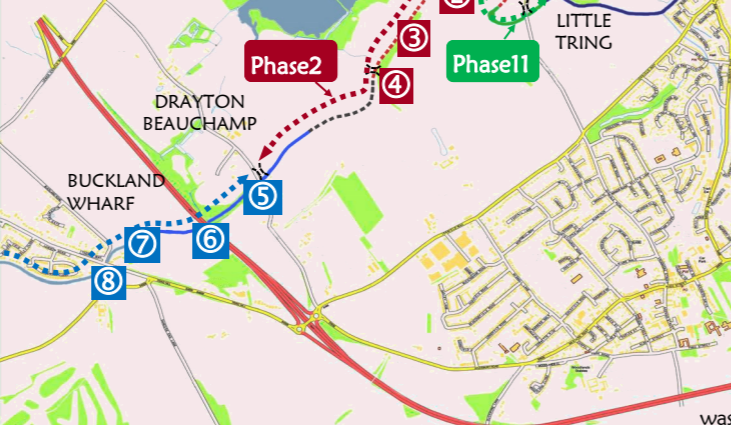
Acknowledgments: The map contains Ordnance Survey data ©Crown copyright 2014

Phase 2

The 1½ miles from Little Tring to Drayton Beauchamp Bridge

With the successful completion of Phase 1 the Trust began work on the dry section between Little Tring and Drayton Beauchamp.

One of the first tasks



was to build two new wooden bridges (2) (4) over the line of the canal to divert footpaths that had, since de-watering early in the 20th century, crossed the canal bed, these were installed in 2006 – see pictures on fly-leaves.

Simultaneously a 60-yard section was restored at Drayton Beauchamp to test the practicability of various restoration techniques and this section was re-watered in 2008.

With the restoration technique defined and agreed work began in earnest to continue to restore the canal back to Little Tring. The work consists of several stages: first the under-bed pipe that takes water from Drayton Beauchamp to Little Tring has to be capped to prevent any problems should it collapse after the canal is re-watered; then the banks are profiled and mooring bays constructed. Following this a layer of the waterproof material Bentomat® is laid down the banks and across the bed. The Bentomat® is held in place on the walls with dense concrete blocks and on the bed with a covering 300mm of spoil. At water level coir rolls on top of the blocks provide a habitat for water-margin plants.

440 yards was completed and re-watered in 2009 and the next section, 440 yards in length to Bridge 4a (4), was completed and re-watered in 2015.

The old pumping station site at Whitehouses (3) was also cleared, the wharf wall rebuilt, a nature trail constructed and a viewing area provided.

Phase 3

The ¾ miles from Drayton Beauchamp

Although still in water and not subject to the leakage problems historically experienced by the section of canal covered by the Phase 2 restoration there is much work to do along the Phase 3 section before the restoration to Wendover is complete.

Achievements to date:

- 1990-2003: The Trust argued successfully for the provision of a navigable bridge (6) under the A41 Aston Clinton bypass. Initially the Trust would have had to acquire land so that the canal could be diverted under the bridge; in the end the Department of Transport did this to avoid having to build balancing ponds for storm water from the new road and 440 yards of new canal as far as Drayton Beauchamp bridge (5) and a new winding hole (turning point) was constructed.
- 1992: The Trust was instrumental in preventing the demolition of Rothschild bridge (9) and its subsequent restoration.

The work necessary to achieve full restoration to Wendover is as follows:

- **T o w p a t h s a n d b a n k s :** Over the years the towpath and banks have been subjected to wear and erosion. Although not serious whilst the water is at its current low level it will not be possible to raise the water level to its correct, navigable depth if the banks and towpaths are left at this level so work will have to be done to raise them to their correct height.
- **B r i d g e s :** There are several bridges that over the years have been removed and replaced with concrete culverts or low bridges and these will all have to be replaced with fully navigable alternatives. Two examples of this are at Buckland Wharf (7) and Halton (10). Other obstacles include the old A41 bridge (8) at Buckland Wharf, at present simply a low arch that will require raising. There are various pipes that cross the canal at low level, installed after the canal was abandoned which will need work. Finally the Canal will need a general clearance and dredging. When Phase 2 is complete and the work to raise the towpaths and banks along Phase 3 has been done, boats will be able to navigate from Bulbourne to the west of Drayton Beauchamp providing a very enjoyable cruise through a little over three miles of the Chiltern countryside.

The problems faced in Phase 3 are very different from those faced in Phases 1 and 2. However, in Phase 1 there was the problem of having to rebuild Little Tring Bridge which the Trust accomplished with great success and is confident that the same will be achieved in Phase 3.

Achievements and Milestones

- 1989 **TRUST FORMED:** The Wendover Arm Trust formed
- 1990 **ENGINEERING SURVEY:** A full engineering survey was carried out so that a restoration plan could be put together
- 1990 **ENQUIRY INTO A41 ASTON CLINTON BY-PASS:** This resulted in the route of the canal being protected and preserved when the new by-pass was built and completed 2003
- 1992 **ROTHSCHILD BRIDGE IN HALTON RESTORED:** The Trust was instrumental in preventing the demolition of this unique bridge and the campaign for its subsequent restoration
- 1997 **WORK BEGAN IN EARNEST TO RESTORE PHASE 1:** Construction work began following several years of clearing scrub and preparation of the canal bed
- 2001 **LITTLE TRING BRIDGE REBUILT:** Little Tring Bridge was demolished in 1973 and replaced by an embankment cutting off the canal. The bridge was rebuilt in 2001
- 2005 **PHASE 1 RE-WATERED AND OPENED TO NAVIGATION:** The first section of the restoration was completed in 2005 allowing full navigation from Bulbourne to Little Tring with boats passing under Little Tring Bridge in 2005 for the first time in a hundred years
- 2006 **WORK STARTED ON PHASE 2:** Construction began on the second section to be restored, from Little Tring to Drayton Beauchamp
- 2006 **TWO FOOTBRIDGES BUILT BY THE TRUST ALONG PHASE 2:** Two footbridges were constructed to carry footpaths which had crossed the dry bed, up and over the canal
- 2008 **TRIAL SECTIONS OF PHASE 2:** A 500-yard section re-watered
- 2013 **WHITEHOUSES REBUILT COMPLETED:** The wharf wall reconstructed and a nature trail built from Bridge 4
- 2014 **437 YARDS OF PHASE 2 REWATERED:** Drayton Beauchamp as far Chiltern Bridge (4a) was re-watered in 2015
- 2016 **OPEN DAYS** held in June and Sept with guided visits
- 2017 **OPEN DAYS continued.** 'Tidy Friday' work parties started sapling planting programme. In 5 years, 1400 trees planted
- 2019 **FAMILY CAMP** planted 2000 snowdrops
- 2020 **COVID stopped work for 6 months.** Whitehouse work completed and area landscaped. Wildflower mini park area created
- 2021 **CANAL** rewatered to Bridge 4. Wendover Canal Trust name adopted with a new logo
- 2022 **NARROWS** constructed at Little Tring, next to finished phase 1

...now



Resurrection (2001)

and opened for boats (2005)



The restored wharf wall (2012) and, 2006, one of the new footbridges (4)



Restoration complete between Drayton Beauchamp (5) and the new A41 (6)



Reopened with ceremony

and still looking a gem 20 years on



WENDOVER
CANAL TRUST

The aim of the Trust is to restore the 6¾ miles of the Wendover Canal to full navigable order from its junction with the Grand Union Canal at Bulbourne through to Wendover.

The Trust was formed in 1989 as a registered charity to promote and implement the restoration of the Wendover Canal. In 1997, exactly 200 years after the Canal first opened, work began on its restoration, the first stage being to rebuild Little Tring Bridge demolished less than 25-years previously and to construct a ¼ mile section of canal from the stop-lock at Little Tring to a new winding hole (for turning boats) beyond the new bridge. In 1990 the Trust was involved in the A41 Aston Clinton bypass public enquiry that resulted in the construction of Saxonway bridge over the canal and restoration of a short section of canal from there to Drayton Beauchamp bridge.

In 2021 the Trust adopted the working name Wendover Canal Trust.

Current restoration work is focussed on re-profiling and lining the dry section of the canal from Drayton Beauchamp to Little Tring. Regular work parties are held; to see the restoration volunteers at work check for the dates at:

www.wendovercanal.org.uk/key-benefits/restoration

We welcome visitors to view the restoration work and our volunteers are always happy to answer any questions. Park in the public car park at Wilstone reservoirs (P). Walk around the east side of the reservoirs to a track, turn right along it then, after 200 yards, left onto the footpath to the towpath at bridge 4 (2). Turn right, walking along the towpath you will see sections of canal that have been restored and Whitehouses (3) and continuing towards Drayton Beauchamp.

Turn left when reaching the towpath at Bridge 4 (2) and continue along the towpath towards Little Tring to see more recent restoration activity.

A guide to the history of the canal can be found in our booklet:
A Brief History of the Wendover Arm 1793-1968

The Trust is run by volunteers and is a membership organisation. There is no local or national government subsidy and the owner, Canal & River Trust, is only permitted by legal constraints to carry out essential maintenance to keep the towpath clear and to ensure the supply of water. All monies are raised through grants, donations and fund-raising activities. For more details visit our website

www.wendovercanal.org.uk

Once completed the Canal will provide a wonderful local amenity to be enjoyed by all including fishermen, walkers, boaters, and all who enjoy and appreciate this unique area of the glorious Chiltern countryside.

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Front cover picture: the almost completely rebuilt canal seen from bridge 4 (Whitehouses) RLV31022

Wendover Canal Restoration - a Brief Guide



A pictorial record from then until. . .



Little Tring Bridge (1) – going

and gone (1973)



Whitehouses (3) – scrub clearing

the wharf wall at Whitehouses (1993)



At Drayton Beauchamp (5) in the 'dry'

and restoration underway (2006)



Rothschild Bridge (9) saved from demolition and under repair (1992)