

# Wendover Canal News

Restoration Biodiversity Well-being





**BRADLEY & JONES**

**FUNERAL DIRECTORS**

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If you have an article, or an issue you want to share, send it to [newsletter@wendovercanal.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wendovercanal.org.uk) for possible inclusion in a future edition.

Deadline for the next issue is 11th April 2024



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## Chairman's Column

Our canal re-lining remains suspended. We delayed this newsletter a month in the hope and expectation that we could tell you the outcome of the coal tar testing. But we still can't; sadly this testing has taken much longer than anticipated. The on-site sampling was done in early October with an expected report in 4-6 weeks, but we are not now expecting the report until week ending January 12<sup>th</sup>. After that, it has to be reviewed by CRT before we can (hopefully) restart full restoration. For the latest news, please keep an eye on your emails or our website. Many of us have spent a long time trying to speed this up, but it hasn't worked.



has probably been our greatest-ever public relations success.

But some pictures of this re-surfaced towpath show that a recent problem has come straight back. For the second time in a

calendar year, much of the canal between Wendover and Drayton Beauchamp has become blocked by reeds. This time it might not be quite as solidly blocked, because there is evidence that some water might somehow be getting through.

Nevertheless what should be a beautiful length of biodiverse canal is having its environment ruined by the reeds, and what has to be done to clear them.

We reported the return of the reeds to CRT, and again they have been using a "Truxor" machine in the bed of the canal. Ironically our towpath success has made the reed clearance harder, because they used to just dump some of the reeds on the bank, which they don't want to do onto our nice new surface. At the time of writing, this reed clearance is still not complete. And the reeds show every sign of growing straight back. This is likely to continue until we can restore the canal to full depth, which remains a few years away.

At our AGM in October, there was clear support for us to expand the trial length of towpath re-surfaced by volunteers near Tring. Many of our volunteers were very happy to be back on-site, even if it was on the towpath rather than in the canal. You can read all about this in Mikk Bradley's report, and we also have a personal account from Steve Chapman about what it's like to do this work. Mikk has now volunteered to be a council member.

By far the best news is that the contractors have completed resurfacing the towpath from Wendover to Halton Bridge. This work has proved to be very widely popular across our local community, and it's all thanks to years of effort by Peter Elwin raising the funds. Well done Peter! This

At our AGM, we were glad to reward two of our restoration volunteers for their service. John Reynolds will no longer be organising Tidy Friday, but we have relied on him for many, many years for much more than this. He has





been one of our regular restoration “team leaders” organising a day’s work, and has often used his carpentry skills. He is also one of our two IWA-certified trainers who can train other volunteers on the use of our heavy plant. If this wasn’t enough, he has also been making things to sell, as you can read elsewhere. We awarded a life membership to John to thank you for



his service.

We also awarded a 5-year membership to our other trainer, Will Mathew, for his service to date and in the future. Will has asked to step down from being a trustee/ council member, but he remains a regular restoration volunteer.

**Clive Johnson, Chairman**

## Club 100 Lottery

Thanks to your support the scheme has raised well over £20,000 for restoration funds since it began in 1997. Please consider joining Club 100.

We need every penny and the winner could be you!

The winning numbers were selected from 178 paid-up subscribers tickets.  
The Lucky winners are...



Peter Lloyd - £208.80



Graham Watts - £87.00



David Ager - £34.80



Congratulations to our winners and thank you to all members who take part in the Club 100 lottery. **The next draw will be in late January 2024.**

If you would like to be in with a chance of winning next time, joining Club 100 couldn't be easier. We encourage you to join or manage your Club 100 membership through our online system which is available on our website.

£15 per year buys a lucky number which is entered into 4 quarterly draws throughout the year. The total prize fund is slightly over half the subscriptions, so the more members, the bigger the prizes! The remaining income goes directly to canal restoration funds.

## Council members 2024

### Leadership

Chairman, plus Twitter & Talks:  
Clive Johnson

[chairman@wendovercanal.org.uk](mailto:chairman@wendovercanal.org.uk)

Deputy Chairman, Partnership  
Director: Peter Elwin  
Deputy Chairman, Honorary  
Secretary: Mike Beckley

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Treasurer: Paul Armstrong

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### Finance Group

Purchasing Manager: Peter Lockett

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IWA Nominee, Minutes  
Secretary: Jenny Brice

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Archivist: Chris Sargeant

[archivist@wendovercanal.org.uk](mailto:archivist@wendovercanal.org.uk)

### Restoration

Site Manager: Mikk Bradley  
*(Mikk Bradley is now a council  
member.)*

[site.manager@wendovercanal.org.uk](mailto:site.manager@wendovercanal.org.uk)

Restoration Project Manager:  
Steve Chapman

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(Ken reports to Peter Elwin)

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Newsletter Editor: Carol Williams/ Janine Jones

[newsletter@wendovercanal.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wendovercanal.org.uk)

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Towpath pictures above

## Bench near Saxon Bridge

During Autumn 2023, WCT volunteers restored the bench near Saxon bridge (A41 bypass).





## Wendover to Halton towpath upgrade June-November 2023

The upgrade of the 2.7km / 1.7 mile towpath from Wendover to Halton was completed at the end of November. Wendover Canal Trust first initiated this upgrade work in December 2020 at the suggestion of Wendover Parish Council. WCT then negotiated the funding for it over the next two years and worked with Canal & River Trust who managed the project last year through its contractors Kier and The Rothen Group.

The resulting all-weather, 1.5m-wide path along this green corridor has been universally praised by pedestrians, runners and cyclists. Large numbers of children are now using the path to get to and from the schools on the

Wendover Campus at Wharf Road. Wheelchair users are delighted as this is the first time ever that they have been able to go down this beautiful stretch due to its previous muddy and uneven condition. Likewise there have been excellent reactions on social media – this post on our web site over the new year is typical: “Huge thanks to all at the Wendover Arm Trust for the restoration of the towpath between Wendover and Halton. It makes a very pleasant walk an absolute breeze for

people of all abilities. It is also very popular: we walked it Boxing Day and found that by midday it was full of people enjoying themselves. Well done!”

The upgraded towpath will be formally opened via a celebratory walk, with associated entertainment and



refreshments, on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June. This will be the final day of John Colet School’s ‘Focus Week’ of extracurricular activities, and it will play a major part in the organisation of the day’s events, which will also be attended by children from local primary schools. A wide range of organisations will be invited to the event, including the project’s funders, MPs, local councils, local charities, CRT and its contractors, the Inland Waterways Association, those on our e-Newsletter distribution list



come from the HS2 Chiltern AONB Review Group, chaired by the Department of Transport, for which we have received excellent support from the Chilterns Conservation Board. Other funders of the towpath upgrade, railings and signage have been Wendover Parish Council, Wendover Community Board, Lionel Abel-

and the media. EKFB (Eiffage, Kier, Ferrovial Construction & BAM Nuttall) will also be supporting the event through its Schools & Further Education Engagement Coordinator. We hope that our President and Patrons will be able to attend, and as many WCT members as possible.

Smith Trust, EKFB and Halton Parish Council.

Gagan Mohindra MP visited the Wendover to Halton towpath on 12<sup>th</sup> January in order to see the extent of improvement that could be achieved with the towpath in Hertfordshire.

Three related projects will be completed by our volunteers prior to June: the fitting of new railings at Wharf Road, the building of a new brick wall for these on the pavement-facing side, and the fixing of new signage in CRT format along the towpath between Wendover and Halton.

90% of the funding for this project has

**SAVE THE DATE**

Grand opening of the upgraded Wendover to Halton towpath

**Friday 28th June**  
**All Welcome!**

**Peter Elwin**  
**Partnerships Director.**

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# Operations Report

## December 2023 Work Party Report

The two-week work party started on 1<sup>st</sup> December and concentrated on laying 200m of towpath at little Tring.

A total of 79 volunteer days during the work party.

## Health, Safety and Environment

When lifting one of the bulk bags of Type 1 one of the strops snapped. The strop had been inspected by the independent test house ISI and carried an up to date tag. Other strops were inspected and some have been withdrawn to be destroyed. As a result, chains were used to lift the bulk bags.

## Towpath

Advance warning signs were placed at each end of the towpath (at Bridge 4 and at the site entrance) on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November.

At the start of each day warning signs were placed at the ends of the towpath where work was being carried out. Work was stopped to allow members of the public to pass through the work area. In this way the towpath was kept open.

Starting from the end of the section of towpath laid as a trial earlier this year, 200m of towpath was set out. This was the maximum distance that could be reached using a 13t excavator running along the bed of the canal to lift bulk bags of Type 1 onto the towpath.

A 1t excavator was used to scrape the shoulders of the existing path to create a 1.5m wide stone path.

The ground was covered with a geotextile to prevent stone punching into the ground below the path.

Type 1 was delivered to site in bulk bags and carried along the bed of the canal using the 13t excavator. The bags were lifted to the towpath and slit open to allow the Type 1 to be discharged. Spreading the Type 1 was done using spades and rakes. The Type 1 was laid in two layers. Each stone layer was compacted using a pedestrian drum roller.

During the work party, Herts County Council offered 20t of loose Type 1. This was delivered and transported to the work area using the bucket of the 13t excavator.

Once the two layers had been compacted the surface was dressed with 6mm to

dust stone to bind the surface. The fine material was compacted using the roller. Surplus Type 1 has been bagged-up and stored on site.



**Lifting Type 1 to the towpath.**



**Finished section of towpath.**

### **Bridge 4, expansion joints.**



Loose silt and sandbags were excavated by hand from the back of the stop planks and the tarpaulin released and thrown over the stop planks with the top batten still attached.

The joints in the bed of the canal were exposed for inspection. Water was pumped out so that the bed joints could be seen.

## Back of the stop planks with the bed joints exposed.

The wall joints between the concrete bridge hole and brickwork were inspected. It was found that the sealant did not cover the full joint. The concrete make-up piece at the end of the bank blocks was broken out and showed no sealant.

The sealant in the wall joints was chiselled out so that a full inspection could be made.



**Towpath joint**



**Offside joint**

Proposals for the repair of the joints have been sent to Canal and River Trust. The repairs involve taking down some of the brickwork to form a better edge then installing the approved sealant. It is not intended to carry out any work to the joints in the bed of the canal.

## General

The green netting along the towpath was checked and secured. A section of the netting had been thrown into the canal.

The black polythene was replaced on the exposed Bentomat where strong winds had disturbed it.

The stockpile of bricks was reloaded onto pallets and moved into the compound area.



Two loads of scrap metal were disposed off site to a scrap metal merchant.

There was a general tidy up of the compound area with rubbish removed from site in a builders skip.



**Cabstar loaded with scrap metal**



**Bricks stored in compound**

### **Tidy Friday**

A tidy Friday event was held on 10<sup>th</sup> November to prepare an area at the triangle by the winding hole to be planted with trees. Wendover Canal Trust have received 420 trees and 120 hedging plants from the Woodland Trust.

On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> November scouts helped plant 210 trees.

A second Tidy Friday event was held on 15<sup>th</sup> December and was spent planting more trees in the triangle area.



**Scouts (and parents) planting trees.**

**Mikk Bradley, Site Manager**

## Use of tubes from the middle of the Bentomat rolls

We have quite a number of left over tubes that are the centres of the bentomat rolls that we use for lining the canal with. I have thought long and hard as to what we could do with these, rather than skip them which I thought was a waste.

So I have been making various designs to recycle them .

With the sales skill of John Brice from IWA Chiltern Branch we have been selling these at various venues. John started off at the Rickmansworth Festival and sold £100.00 worth.

He has sold another £150.00 worth at the Dunstable and District Boat Club and the WCT AGM, plus £20 from elsewhere



1 tall strawberry / flower planters

So in total £270.00 have been sold so far, we hope to start selling again next year when the festivals start again, all proceeds go to WCT.

All materials used are left over bits and pieces from site so costs are Zero ,just my time to make the items and John's time to sell them.



2 trough style strawberry/flower planters

If anyone can come up with another design to use the tubes I would be very interested to see if I could make it, or anyone

is more than welcome to use the tubes to make and sell for WCT offers.



3 Bird nest boxes

At the moment each design is selling for £10.00 and by our sales it seems as though that's about the right price.

Comments and ideas would be very welcome.



4 Bird feeders

Thanks

**John Reynolds**  
**07787 355 515**

# 1<sup>st</sup> Aston Clinton Scout Group

## Completing the Canalside Copse

The local Scouts had offered assistance with our annual planting of trees. These are supplied free of charge to charities to increase biodiversity in their area.



Unfortunately, these are bare root and always supplied in November, so the fact that on leaving home we had to de-ice the car was not unusual. Coming over Wendover woods hill the vast Aylesbury plain could be seen, decidedly icy. This did not deter the enthusiastic Scouts, a couple of parents and two Scout Leaders. These with the four WCT volunteers made up the morning's work party.

After loading the barrows with the tree whips, bark chippings and spades we set off via the Tringford Pumping Station to avoid the dangerous canal bridge. At the triangle of land alongside the winding hole a quick demonstration of planting was given, and the volunteers soon assumed their roles. The Scout leaders and WCT volunteers digging the holes, while the scouts rushed around planting the

whips and canes. This was finished off by a hefty boot, to ensure the trees were kept straight and the roots covered. Then the bark chippings were shovelled around to keep the weeds at bay.

The ground was surprisingly soft and everyone made good progress. Two hundred were planted which gave a good covering to this area. The Scouts were seen admiring the trees from the planting which was completed two years ago. This year's variety comprised of Blackthorn, Rowan, English Oak, and Silver Birch.

Our task finished we loaded the tools back in the barrows and made our way back to the car park. This morning's activity for the attending scouts counted towards their Community Service Badge. We thanked all the Scout volunteers and we hope they will be encouraged to return next year when further hedging will be required along the canal.



**Jenny Brice**





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# WCT Wall Calendar



No, this is not an advert asking you to buy a 2024 calendar (although if you **do** want one, we may still have a couple left). Instead, it is to give you an opportunity to have **your** photo featuring in next year's edition.

Our 2024 calendar has achieved what was intended - we wanted it to raise the profile of the Trust. When we started putting the calendar together we had to decide how many to print, what they should look like, what they should cost, etc, etc. Our sale effort was helped by Robbie Cumming, our newly appointed Patron, allowing us to show him in a promotional advert holding the first copy of the calendar to come off the press.

Comment from purchasers has been complimentary. In particular, the photos were singled out for praise. All were submitted by supporters and featured some aspect of the Wendover Canal.

For the 2025 calendar we need a similar supply of good quality pictures. Photos represent the month they are associated with, so it's not too early to think about taking a Winter picture, somewhere along the Wendover Canal. There are often plenty of Summer pictures, but not so many taken at this time of year. That means if you can produce a good quality photo taken in the next month or so, it has a better chance of inclusion.

To help you, just note the following:

- Have your photo definition as high as possible, with the file size at least 1 MB.
- Photo can be of anything (structure, feature, wildlife, nature) as long as it is associated with, or taken on the Wendover Canal. A canal vista would be nice.
- Your picture will ideally be in landscape format.
- Send your photo with a brief description and your contact details to [calendar@wendovercanal.org.uk](mailto:calendar@wendovercanal.org.uk)
- This appeal for photos is open to members and non-members alike.



When the submitted photos are reviewed, your photo will be considered for including in the 2025 calendar. Selected photos will be credited.

**Bob Wheal, Head of Marketing & Sales**

## A days work on the canal in December



6.45 alarm : shower, porridge, sandwiches, make coffee and get away to be there for 8.15. Traffic ok but always an unexpected temporary traffic light. It's grey but not raining. The wind is pretty strong and easterly too. Dick and Peter are already here and the lorry's just tipped its 20 tonne load of type 1 stone for the towpath onto the boards we'd put down yesterday.

Hello, hello, tick off names, check qualifications, put yellow jacket / trousers and safety boots on, and talk about what jobs we've got lined up today. Towpath is the main event but others too e.g. tidying the HCC land and completing the fence. Some cake has been left from yesterday so we help it to get consumed.

Plan is to use the 13 tonne excavator to scoop type 1 into bulk bags and take them down two at a time shackled to its arm, but a better idea emerges after a first attempt. The excavator's bucket is so big it will take nearly a bagful 'loose'. This will be safer, won't waste bags by cutting them open and not least will save us much hard work as the excavator can drop the stuff on the path right where it is needed. Let's give it a go !



So we pile the trolley with rakes, spades, backpacks and signs and split up, with two going down the towpath and one remaining to tidy the HCC. Don't forget the roller - ah, that's my bundle of joy this morning. I check the diesel but it won't start, at least until I turn off the battery isolator. Take the ear defenders, this thing pushes out 85 decibels. We leave Pete to scoop a bucketful of type 1 from the pile - he's soon on his way.

The machine trackway over the infill is a thick gooey squelch, while down on the concrete there's a foot of muddy water : glad we're up here getting to site along the new towpath.

First off is to fill in a small length of the newly-prepared path which has no type 1, then put a second layer over the rest, and hopefully put the top layer ('finings' ) on too, but will the delivery idea work ? Answer is yes, and very well too, so we're working hard to spread the type 1 between deliveries, but it doesn't take long. An unanticipated consequence is that we're then standing around in the cold easterly !

The roller is very effective, though I've noticed occasionally it does what I set it to do rather than what I meant it to do. Where is AI when you need it ?



Tea is at 10.30-ish so we sit down on the conveniently-placed bench and





warm up inside. At least the wind is behind us.

We keep an eye out for pedestrians and bikers. Occasionally the cry goes up, work stops and we use the opportunity for another lean on the shovels. Kind words from walkers go down well, this is something where they can see progress. We apologise as they anticipate a muddy slip and slide towards Bridge 4,

explaining why we can't currently build any further.

We're going well, though it's now started to rain. Occasionally Pete brings a bag of finings - digging out shovelfuls and spreading it keeps us warm. Is there enough? Pace it out - ah..

Soon we're reaching the end of the path. Enough type 1, but not enough grey finings. A search later finds some red finings in a bulk bag but the lifting loops are no good. Delay as we shovel it across to a new bag and Pete delivers it to the end of the towpath. Just have enough to finish off with Mike rolling it out.

Rain stops and it brightens. We scoop and shovel the remaining type 1 into seven bulk bags, made easier by Ken's suggestion of adapting the brick-lift supports - this also worked very well. At last the whole area is clear, bags are stacked by the new fence and the boards are piled on a pallet.

Then it is clean up / pack up / warm up time as it's all put away, Happy Christmas and New Year all round. Doors and gates are locked by 15:30.

A hot bath beckons.



Will you join us same time tomorrow? Complete the fence, fill the skip, move pipes, prepare the brick lift, clean the excavator - lots to do...

**Steve Chapman, Volunteer**

## WCT/IWA members Support the Westminster “Fund Britain’s Waterways” Campaign”

Following successful campaign cruises in Birmingham and Gloucester the Westminster cruise was arranged for the afternoon of Tuesday the 14<sup>th</sup> November.



At about two pm, the NB’s could be seen approaching under the bridges. A police boat had meanwhile been hovering around the parliament balcony. The campaign cruise obviously needed surveillance.

As the ten boats adorned with posters came from beneath the bridge a large cheer went up. Much flag waving followed and on the dot of eleven minutes past two, the various boat horns sounded. These were accompanied by the deeper growl of the commercial working boats who had joined the flotilla. This was to draw the attention of

On a very soggy afternoon, we arrived at Westminster Bridge – where were the campaigners. Oh! About eight stood huddled under umbrellas awaiting the boats. At this point it was mentioned that on the NB’s making their way upstream it would not be a too comfortable journey either.



Parliament and the general public to the need to safeguard the future of Britain’s Inland Waterways. The boats slowly made their way past the Houses of Parliament and turned to retrace their steps

back to their moorings in the West India Docks.

We donned our high viz and joined the group, steadily this increased as participants from Restoration groups, IWA branches, Boat clubs, RYA, NABO, CRT Volunteers, and Local Councils arrived.

Sue O’Hare (IWA) one of the organisers of the Westminster Fund Britain’s Waterways campaign collected the high viz tabards and thanked everyone for attending.

Amazingly, the sun was now shining.

Jenny Brice

## Restoration Working Parties

We hold regular volunteer restoration working parties managed by our Site Manager, Mikk Bradley.

### Next Restoration Working Parties

Restoration working parties are held throughout the year, usually starting on the first Friday of the month, listed below.

- **February:** Monday 5th to the 16th
- **March:** Friday 1st for 14 days



### Tidy Friday Working Parties

Tidy Friday work parties are light work to keep our canal, bridges and towpath looking spick and span and cared for.

They are 9am to 2pm on one day each month. The provisional days are below, and come after the main work parties above.

- **Friday 16th February**
- **Friday 15th March**



We need further help for this highly rewarding work; for further information, please contact us at [volunteer@wendovercanal.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@wendovercanal.org.uk)

Any help will be greatly appreciated.



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# WENDOVER CANAL TRUST

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**Sir David Suchet CBE & Robbie Cumming**

Wendover Canal Trust, the operating name of Wendover Arm Trust,  
A Company Limited by Guarantee.  
Registered Charity No.801190.

Its **AIMS** are: To promote the restoration and maintenance of the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal, (including all waterways, buildings, and related structures), to good and navigable order and to promote the fullest use of the waterway by water-borne traffic (subject to the regulations of The Canal and River Trust) and for local amenity, recreational and water related activities for the benefit of the public.

To restore, preserve, maintain and educate the public in the history, use and wildlife, of canals and inland waterways generally and the Wendover Arm in particular.

**General telephone number:** 07547 181 857

**Website:** [www.wendovercanal.org.uk](http://www.wendovercanal.org.uk)

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Contact the Publicity Director, please find the contact details on page 6.

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