

Wendover Canal News

Restoration Biodiversity Well-being



WENDOVER
CANAL TRUST

2025 Spring
Issue 2



BRADLEY & JONES

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

Deadline for the next issue is 13th July 2025



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We recently hosted a visit from Ros Daniels and Charlotte Wood of the Canal & River Trust, to show them in detail our work-site and the specifics which we have been discussing. The picture shows myself, Chris Sargeant, Charlotte Wood and Ros Daniels of CRT, and Peter Lockett, and was taken by Steve Chapman.

CRT has reached agreement with the Environment Agency and ourselves, about what “remediation” we need to do before our canal restoration can recommence. We are currently finalising detailed proposals for how we will do this limited amount of work. This has to include supervision by an external company, to provide confirmation to CRT and the EA that our work has been completed in accordance with all regulations.

We also need to complete our contractual negotiations with CRT. We have signed the Heads of

Terms agreement which we have previously mentioned here, and we are about to receive the more detailed document which sits below it. We will review this document and agree any necessary changes with CRT’s legal team.

There have been discussions with CRT about updating the design of the remainder of our relining, including additional rows of concrete blocks. These discussions will now progress to a conclusion. We will then be ready to complete the final process, bear with us while we explain a lot of acronyms.

Contaminated Land: Applications in Real Environments (CL:AIRE) is a widely used independent organisation with a Definition of Waste: Code of Practice (DoWCoP) which we need to follow. This will

include a Materials Management Plan (MMP), which is already part-completed and describes how we move material for re-use within the work-site. Someone



known as a Qualified Person (QP) will take this to the EA for approval.

We are delighted to welcome a new volunteer Colin Heal, who will be our new Site Manager, leading a Site Management team who will be implementing all of the above. Our previous Site Manager Mikk Bradley stepped down from this role a few months ago and is also no longer on our Council, but he remains a much-valued member of our Site Management team alongside several others. We have also welcomed onto Council Colin Metcalfe, who single-handedly organised the production and distribution of our

calendars at the end of last year. However we now need a volunteer to take over as Membership Secretary, see elsewhere.

Our Phase 1 restored canal from the stop-lock to our new winding hole remains drained, but we are about to hold a video call with CRT's engineers to hopefully understand in detail what needs to be done. We handed Phase 1 back to CRT after we completed our work in 2005, so CRT are responsible for the repairs. CRT have told their Navigation Advisory Group that the work will cost £200,000, which they cannot afford for some years to come, but we hope to work with CRT to help deliver this work more quickly and economically.

CRT have a serious issue with government funding, but on top of this they have had to commit six million pounds to strengthen Wilstone Reservoir. In case you haven't already seen it, we have reproduced their press release elsewhere in this newsletter.

CRT have just issued a stoppage notice to close the towpath at Little Tring, between the stop-lock and Little Tring Bridge, to install safety fencing. There are paths both sides



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along this section and we are unclear which will be closed.

Following our volunteers' reconstruction / repair of the two sets of steps at Drayton Beauchamp, they have just completed the construction of new steps up a steep embankment near Bridge 4A – see Steve Chapman's article in this newsletter. All three steps projects

have been widely praised by local residents and other walkers. Our volunteers have also managed the growth in the Pocket Park around Whitehouses.



Clive Johnson, Chairman

Volunteer Opportunity



Membership Secretary

We need a volunteer to be our Membership Secretary. We are very grateful to Peter Bird, who after five years in the role, has asked to step down at our AGM in October.

This is a vital role which we must fill! Please could you consider whether you or your partner could help us?

This involves maintaining and updating the list of our members. We use an online system named WhiteFuse to make the process as easy as possible.

If you have any questions, please contact Peter at membership@wendovercanal.org.uk, who can also share a more detailed description of what he has been doing for us.



Council members 2025

Chairman

Chairman & Talks: Clive Johnson

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Partnerships Director & Deputy
Chairman: Peter Elwin

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Publicity: Nigel Williams

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Council Member: Bob Wheal

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Council Member: Colin Metcalfe

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and Deputy Chairman:
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Archivist: Chris Sargeant

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Restoration

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Note: not a council member

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IWA Nominee, Council Minutes Secretary:
Jenny Brice

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Newsletter Editor: Carol Williams/ Janine Jones

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Wendover Canal Update

This article explains which sections of the Wendover Canal have been worked on in the past by the Wendover Canal Trust, together with sections which we plan to work on in future. It also covers work carried out by other contractors in 2003. None of this information is new, but I thought it would be of interest particularly to our newer members.

The 2003 work

In 2003, the A41 which used to cross the Wendover Canal at Buckland Wharf on Bridge 6, was diverted onto a new dual carriageway bypass on the Drayton Beauchamp side of Bridge 6, now known as Bridge 5a. This bypass crosses the original line of the canal close to water level, so the Highways Agency built a new loop of canal to the south of the original line, allowing the new bridge to be built with navigation headroom at a point where the new road was higher.

This left 2 short stubs of the old canal disused; the stub on the Buckland Wharf side is used to filter drainage from the new road which runs into the canal. Perversely this drainage water then reverses direction to run back under the new bridge.

In the same year, CRT's predecessor British Waterways paid Nuttalls to reline the next section of canal through Drayton Beauchamp bridge 5, to a nearby location. This is the location of the sump where since 2003 canal water falls into the under-bed pipeline. It also marks the beginning of WCT's Phase 2 canal relining.

Description of Wendover Canal from Bulbourne to Wendover

- The canal from Bulbourne Junction past Tringford Pumps to the stoplock has always been navigable and WCT have not worked in it.
- The stoplock and the canal to the current winding hole (which included the rebuilding of Little Tring Bridge 3), were excavated and relined by WCT in a project known as Phase 1, and handed over to British Waterways in 2005.

- The major part of WCT's Phase 2 is to excavate and reline the canal from the Phase 1 winding hole to the 2003 sump as described above.
- Phase 2 also aims to deliver navigation through not only the section WCT are relining, but also along both 2003 sections described above. There will be a new winding hole just Buckland Wharf side of the new A41 bridge 5A, at the point where the new canal loop rejoins the old canal.
- To achieve the Phase 2 navigation objective and also to achieve the much bigger objective of the Wendover water supply resuming flowing by gravity, the whole Wendover Canal needs to be at the current Grand Union Canal Tring Summit level. This is not such a major change as it might appear, since occasionally after heavy rain or during reed blockage, the rest of the Wendover Canal has been noted as being higher than this level already.
- Beyond this new winding hole and well into the future, restoration to full navigation to Wendover is usually referred to as Phase 3. Navigation is obstructed by dropped bridges at 5b Wharf Row, 6 Old A41, 9 Halton, and a tiny wooden footbridge near Wendover known as Oliver's Bridge 11. There is also a very low live sewer pipe next to Perch Bridge 10. It will all require dredging to navigation depth, which together with the occasional canal boat should avoid the need for CRT to clear the reeds and weeds every year. Of course none of these prevent the water level being set to Tring Summit level, as required at the end of Phase 2.



Clive Johnson, Chairman

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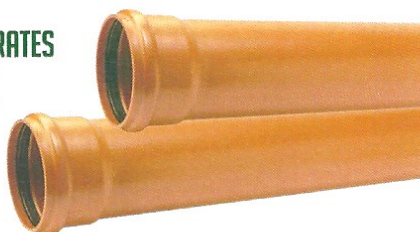
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Club 100 Lottery

The winning numbers were selected from 178 paid-up subscribers tickets. The Club 100 draw was made prior to the WCT executive meeting on 21st April 2025 in front of four members of the WCT Council.

The Lucky winners are...



Alison Woodhams, £190.80



Robert Wheal, £79.50



Robert Wheal, £31.80



Congratulations to our winners and thank you to all members who take part in the Club 100 lottery. **The next draw will be in July 2025.**

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.

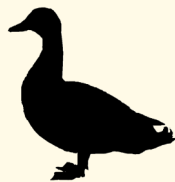
£15 per year buys a lucky number which is entered into 4 quarterly draws throughout the year. The total prize fund is slightly over half the subscriptions, so the more members, the bigger the prizes! The remaining income goes directly to canal restoration funds.

Wilstone Reservoir

CRT have begun a 15-month programme of statutory works to strengthen the embankments at Wilstone Reservoir. The embankments at Wilstone Reservoir are one of the longest of the 71 major reservoirs in their care. The project, estimated to cost £6 million, started in January with site preparations. Work will begin in May to install two thousand 11-metre-long steel sheet piles into the reservoir's two 200-year old embankments.

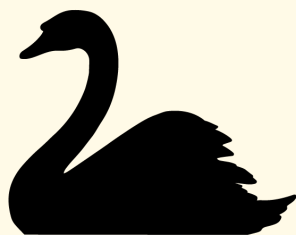


Built in 1802 to supply water to the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal, Wilstone Reservoir is the largest of four nearby reservoirs at 119 acres (48 hectares). It is up to 18 feet (5.5 metres) deep and has the capacity to hold over one million mega litres of water, the equivalent of over 300,000 Olympic sized swimming pools. The reservoir has two five-metre wide embankments stretching for a total of 1,350 metres and ranging in height from two to eight metres.



Ros Daniels, CRT's London & South East director, explains: "Wilstone Reservoir provides an important place for water storage to feed the Grand Union Canal and has also become a popular site for angling, walking and bird watching. This winter we began a programme of essential maintenance work to strengthen the reservoir's embankments, securing it for the future. These are statutory safety works required under the Reservoir Act. To minimise disruption, the reservoir won't be drained during the works, but the water level will be lowered by 0.5 metres below capacity. The reservoir will continue to supply water to the canal, and the water level in the reservoir will slowly reduce throughout the summer, as usual. Our engineering project team will use land-based equipment to carry out the works and, to minimise disruption, will include a silent piling machine.

"Unfortunately, the nature of the work will mean that the reservoir's footpaths and car park will need to be temporarily closed, as well as some local roads for short periods of time. It won't be possible to fish at the reservoir during the main construction element of the works from May 2025 to March 2026. The reservoir is an important wildlife site and we'll be making a number of habitat improvements to the reed beds, as well as replacing nine small and medium-sized trees which unfortunately will have to be removed in order to carry out the works. We'll also have to coppice a section of hedgerow."



Building steps on the embankment near bridge 4A

In April Wendover Canal Trust's volunteers built a flight of steps on Hertfordshire County Council's footpath 49 to make it easier for pedestrians to walk up or down the last section of the path from Wilstone Reservoir, where it goes up the steep embankment to meet the canal towpath near bridge 4A. It is difficult enough in the dry but slippery when wet.



Before

Our friends at Chilterns National Landscape helped us to obtain funding by suggesting we apply for a grant under the Farming in Protected Landscape (FIPL) scheme, administered by Defra. We have now completed four projects as a result of these grants. Given that we have not been able to work on the canal itself this has been a good way to help the local community and provide a project to keep our volunteers going.

We submitted a plan to Dacorum Borough Council, which was approved, based on using materials similar to those used in rebuilding the steps at Bridge 5 at Drayton Beauchamp. The FIPL grant paid for materials, while we supplied free volunteer labour. Here's how it worked out.

We initially assumed the path was on land owned by Canal & River Trust (CRT) and that we would work under the supervision of their volunteers department, but very much to our surprise they said it

wasn't their land. Review of various maps and websites showed that, strangely, for a distance of about 330 metres from this point to near Bridge 4, the canal embankment up to the towpath is owned by Hertfordshire County Council, administered by Dacorum BC, with footpath 49 forming the western boundary.

Dacorum's Countryside Access Officer agreed to our doing the work, though on viewing our Method Statement he asked us to use heavier and wider oak steps than we had planned, but otherwise there were no issues. A handrail was not required.

Clearly, we would have to organise it, but how to get the materials to site? Well, if we couldn't get there along the level towpath perhaps we could bring the material across - and particularly up - the fields. Gordon Nicholls of Upper Farm in Drayton Beauchamp very kindly said it could be done. We set a date in February for a work party and arranged for the materials, including 5 x 800 kg bags of type 1 and 12 oak 'sleepers', to be delivered to the farm. Then it rained - and rained - such that a few days beforehand Mr Nicholls had to tell us, 'sorry but there is no way that we can get our machines up the slope to deliver the bags and timber'. Fortunately we had not yet delivered the materials to the farm.

We needed a plan B, so we asked another farmer Simon Mead, from Wilstone, if he could get the materials to us across his neighbouring fields which had a definite trackway up a slightly easier gradient. He said he would give it a go, so our suppliers delivered to Meads farm. But there was more rain and in the end he too said he would not get up the slope with his telehandler. We would have to wait until the ground froze for a while or it dried out. Meanwhile he kindly agreed to store the materials temporarily on one of his farm trailers.

There was much head scratching around further short-notice options, for example could we get up the slope using a tracked excavator? No, we would churn up the field trackway, and we would have to beware clearance under the 7000 volt power line across the access route.

This left no choice but to cancel the February work party, a disappointment as we had over 10 volunteers each day, and now no forecast as to when it might be back on.

Then a new problem arose - the farmer was putting in a new fence and hedge near the site and there wasn't going to be much time left to get material over it.

Time passed, but it didn't freeze. At last the rain stopped, and stayed stopped. In late March Simon Mead called and said, 'The field is dry so we've delivered the materials.' Hooray, we were back in business and a work party was arranged for 14th - 16th April, which attracted 5 volunteers on each day.

We took tools, signs and postcrete in barrows from our main site. We cleared Old Man's Beard vegetation from the side as it was a trip hazard, and levelled the surface to lay the revetments either side, giving us an even gradient and spacing to lay the 'sleeper' steps, screwing the revetments to them.



Next was the hard work to hand-auger the 24 x 400mm holes for the step retaining posts: carrying 3 tonnes of type

Progress at the end of day 1

1 and fines in buckets up the slope was exhausting too! Finally we put type 1 on the open side to help hold the revetments, and spread / tamped fines over the treads and by the towpath. We had a bag of type 1 left over which Simon Mead will recover: there was no waste.

We will need to return in about a month to check the level of

material and 'top up' some of the fines as necessary to ensure the treads have only a minimal lip.

So, a success despite setbacks: indeed we completed this 3 day job in only 2 days. Thanks to all who helped with the work and in securing the funding.

Steve Chapman
Site Management Team

PS : Do park / eat at Mead's Farmhouse Kitchen, and walk round the reservoir before CRT closes this round trip for the major strengthening works that are due to commence shortly. The route comes up the new steps to the canal and down again at bridge 4.



View from the top of the steps



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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.

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