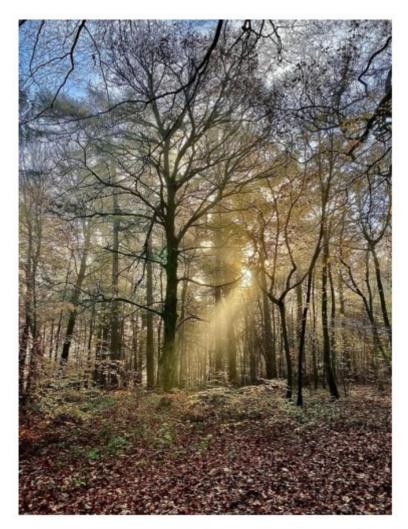
Wendover Canal News

Restoration Biodiversity Well-being





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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 Sunday 8th March 2026

Chairman's Column - November 2025

On the 18th of September, we signed a Licence Agreement (LA) with the Canal & River Trust! Great news you may think, does this mean that we have restarted? Well not quite. It's another important step, and we have even got as far as

setting some potential dates for working parties in November and December, but these may yet slip and may not have happened before you read this.

Before we can re-line another section of canal, there are several important steps which we need to complete. The first is to ensure that our work party compound at Little Tring and facilities for volunteers match 2025 standards for e.g. Health & Safety and the Licence Agreement – and they don't. We need to put a Heras steel security fence round the whole compound, and we need "Welfare Facilities" for our volunteers. Older hands will tell me that we have managed all these years without welfare facilities, so why do we need them? Simply because we have to meet the Health & Safety and Licence Agreement standards.

Then we must complete the "remediation" which CRT have agreed with the Environment Agency, which means removing small amounts of material from the work-site. We have



been working with Southern Testing to complete formal processes which have to be followed for this to be accepted by all parties.

Next there is a list of minor jobs which we have to complete,

across the work-site between Bridge 4 and the winding hole. Then, and only after further enormous amounts of planning and paperwork, should we be able to fully re-start. The Site Management team have been hard at work on all aspects of this.

I have recently met the CRT contact who is driving their Restoration Delivery Plan (RDP). They hope to start this on April 1st, if not, soon afterwards. Whenever this starts, it will supersede our Licence Agreement. The contact is Sean McGinley, who as well as being Ros Daniels' opposite number for CRT in Yorkshire and the North East, was 18 months ago given national responsibility for restoration.

He is proposing to employ a CRT engineer solely to work with groups like us, the cost of which will have to be recovered from us. I know that some of you don't

like the idea of paying CRT to restore their and our canals, and I don't either. I have been doing my best, including attending national meetings with the Inland Waterways Association and Waterway Recovery Group, but that is where we currently are. We appear to be ahead of any other group, because processes under the RDP will be quite similar to our LA, and we don't think any other group yet has the LA.

The work on Wilstone reservoir is advancing. They will have a huge amount of "Type 1" small stone available at nil cost, with free delivery to groups like us on condition that it is used on CRT land, some of which we will gladly accept.

The Aylesbury Arm has been shut for 4 months

due to lack of water, but the Wendover Canal annual reed clearance is already under way to deliver much-needed water to Tring summit. Sadly our "Phase 1" restored section from the stop-lock to the winding hole is not only closed, but a permanent-looking dam has been placed across it and fences either side. CRT sav that currently reopening this is not anywhere on their 3-year-plan of work. This seems to be because they have heard few if any complaints, so may I recommend that as many of us as possible contact CRT to explain how this inconveniences us especially boaters, use

enquiries.londonsoutheast@canalriv ertrust.org.uk

Planning and funding for an upgrade of part of the Halton to Aston Clinton towpath is underway – more on this in the next Newsletter.

Thanks to Colin Metcalfe, our 2026 calendar is available, and details are on our website at

https://wendovercanal.org.uk/the-2026-wct-calendar/

They make great Christmas presents and are great PR for us.

Other articles in this newsletter cover Jenny Brice and Peter "Pc" Bird who have both stepped down, and also please read about our new Membership Secretary.

Clive Johnson, Chairman



Council members 2025/26



Chairman & Talks: Clive Johnson

chairman@wendovercanal.org.uk

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IWA Nominee: To be appointed

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Jenny Johnson, Membership Secretary

Despite two newsletter appeals, we had no volunteers at all to take over from Peter "Pc" Bird as our Membership

Secretary. However just before the AGM, Clive's wife Jenny has offered to take on the role. She is currently being trained in this role for which she has no relevant experience. Jenny is a retired secondary school Maths teacher, who some of you may have met at AGMs.

It turns out to be much more complicated than Jenny or Clive had expected. Clive had innocently assumed that just because we had bought the Whitefuse membership package, everything would be automated and plain sailing. Very far from it! Jenny is learning to match up all your membership and Club 100 payments between our accounting package Xero, and Whitefuse. This goes to show how much effort Pc has been putting in over the last 5 years, thank you Pc, and thank you for offering to support Jenny with any problems she faces. (Until 5 years ago, Katherine Deaney was doing it all

manually, but that's another story.)

Jenny and I apologise now, if any of you face any membership issues in the next few

weeks, for example Whitefuse might automatically email reminders for payments which you have already made. If so, sorry, and we will get this right.

We will also be looking for small changes which would make Jenny's task easier. For example, it seems that processing direct debits is much easier for Jenny, while some other types of payment incur an administrative charge which comes out of your subscription. We will be updating you on this in due course. We intend to retain all payment methods, but will give clearer guidance on which are best for us.

Jenny has offered to trial this role for 12 months to see if she can cope with it. If she agrees to stay on (and this is not guaranteed!), we are likely to invite her to join the Trust's Council of Trustees at the next AGM.

Jenny Brice and Peter Bird – retirement

Speaking on behalf of the Executive Team at the AGM on 4th October, Peter Elwin said:

"We have one item of Any Other Business if I may, which is to wholeheartedly thank two retiring volunteers of Wendover Canal Trust:

Jenny Brice (and her husband John) have been longstanding supporters

of WCT since the days of the canal festivals, when John would be selling things we had found to raise money; for many years Jenny has been a work party attendee; she has organised countless events; she has been IWA's nominee on our Council, and has taken minutes for so many years.

• Peter Bird is a longstanding work party volunteer who very kindly stepped up to being Membership Secretary five years ago, taking it from being a wholly manual system to one that is online."



There was warm applause from all those present for the significant contributions of Jenny and Peter over many years.

Peter Elwin, Partnerships Director

Chiltern Society Walk 2025

Each year as part of the Chiltern Society Heritage Festival WCT are included as a guided walk with cream tea. This has been a popular event, and was well attended by 18 walkers.

Our starting point was Castle Park Road then crossing the park we picked up the PURSSELL PATH this was donated to the Wendover Society by Edith in memory of her late husband Frank. The intention was to keep the irregular strip on land green and stop further houses. Volunteers now keep the vegetation in trim.



At the Wendover Canal we encounter Olivers Bridge which was named after a former councillor. This was originally a railway bridge built in 1917 for the Royal Flying Corps by German Prisoners. Starting at Wendover Main Line Station to Halton this carried supplies to the Camp and on return timber for the war effort. The line was closed in 1963 and shortly after the bridge was demolished.

After passing over the bridge we continue to follow the old line of the railway, this is now through a wooded area. Branching right we follow the footpath over the fields towards the 3 schools now situated alongside the Canal. In the distance we could see a new building in progress off Tring Road, apparently this is a new club house for the cricket club funded by the HS2.

At Wharf Road a flat bridge denotes the start of the canal. The bridge parapet has recently been rebuilt by the WCT volunteers, it now highlights the canal to the road users. The canal was built to supply water to enable boats to travel

over the Chiltern Hills, as 100,000 gallons is lost each lock full. The water came from surface springs through the chalk bed into the Heron Stream.

A gauge at Wharf Road has measured water flows since 1841, the oldest in the UK. This highlighted that the south suffered winter drought conditions during the late 1800's.

The Canal was built in 1797 for commercial traffic but leaked due to its chalk bed and despite various remedies closed to navigation in 1904. This caused consternation at Wendover as



it affected their livelihoods. The leaking section was replaced by a pipe to continue to supply the Heron Stream water to the summit.

WCT was formed in 1989 to restore the dewatered section and bring back navigation to Wendover. Continuing along the towpath we were escorted by swans, ducks and moorhens all hopefully looking for any food tip bits. The wides are the wharf area where the boats were loaded and unloaded during the time of the navigation. Coal and timber were carried with manure from London for fertiliser and straw back to London for the horses in the city. The wide section at this point enabled the long narrow barges to turn.

The towpath has recently been upgraded and is accessible for wheelchairs and mobility aids, this has been greatly appreciated by the community.



Branching off diagonally left through the meadow we can see a well defined path used by many regular dog walkers. This connects back to the Purssell path for our return to Gusto for our tea and cakes.

These Heritage Walks give publicity to WCT, and we have been included for the last 3 year I have covered various sections of the Canal. The Chiltern Society will be contacting us in the Spring to see if we are contributing in 2026. We need a volunteer to

continue, all you need to do is identify a 3 mile stroll which includes a section of the canal which you guide on an agreed date in September. The Chiltern Society sets up a convenient venue for the tea, makes the bookings and publicises the event to its vast number of members.

And best of all you get a free cream tea!

Jenny Brice

Photo's and front cover picture by Katy Todd,
Chiltern Society

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Roger, the Wendover Arm & Rickmansworth Waterways Trust

The Life and Times of Historic Working Boat Roger

based at Batchworth Lock, Grand Union Canal



boat based business to use feeder ditch. established himself on the Wharf. Soon modern practice. after the millers James Grover and his son William set up a flour mill, Late in 1935 construction was started and now Heygates Flour Mill.

During the 1800's the Wharf became a Harvey-Taylor. millers, wharfingers and butty of all types of River and Canal in Spring 1936. Craft'. It prospered during this late

Victorian era and in 1912 was handed down within the family to Charlie and Joe Junior. During the mid 1900's the wooden boatbuilding industry declined and with lack of demand, in 1952 they ceased to build boats and turned to fabricating cabs and bodies for commercial vehicles.

Within the customer base Bushells built a number of motor boats and buttys for small and medium sized carrying Bushell Brothers was probably the last companies. One of these was the the Ovaltine company of Kings Langley Wendover Arm and built boats for and included the butty Princess built in commercial and private use at the 1931. They took advantage in the early boatyard alongside Gamnel Wharf, 1930's as Government money was New Mill, Little Tring. Originally a available to revive the use of canals the Arm became and expanded the yard. All craft were navigable in 1799 and at that time coal built on the wharf bank parallel to the merchant and barge owner James Tate canal and launched sideways unlike the

acquired by the Heygate family in 1944 on a new cargo-carrying narrowboat commissioned by the Aylesbury based carrier and coal merchant Arthur Arthur named his centre for a diverse range of services motor boats after male members of the and individuals: coal merchants, water family and the accompanying carrying boats after boatbuilders. In 1875 Bushell Brothers members. Hence when the motor boat was founded by Joseph Bushell, was ready it was duly named Roger advertised as 'Tug, Barge and Builders and launched into the Wendover Arm for a cargo of circa 25 tonnes along Monkey Quarry with the power to pull a load of 30+ tonnes in the butty.

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of some nine pairs, Roger was matched Daphne. Initially her new life was carrying goods Brentford from Docks. World War Two came but Bargees were exempt military service and for the majority of her working life, documented from 1941, Roger was skippered and managed by Arthur Bray a fine boatman, together with his supplies at a ticket office in Hayes. second wife Rose and her son from her first marriage, Ernie Kendall. Arthur The bargees and family operators often at the tiller of the butty and Arthur, for hire. managing the logistics to ensure as full a load as possible upstream the locks.

Her main cargo was coal from South Warwickshire largely to the West London factories including the Kearley and Tonge jam and marmalade factory at Southall located on the Paddington Arm half a mile from Bulls Bridge junction, a journey which took three to four days. She also carried sand and gravel, roadstone and granite from the Midlands to south Buckinghamshire / Hertfordshire and Greater London.

Roger from bow to stern was seventy Return loads were varied and included two foot long, seven feet wide and chalk from the Harefield Chalk Quarry, weighing in at about eight tonne, ready this is depicted today as the Hanging

After the outbreak of war in 1939 to the war-effort Roger Daphne's loads changed and return cargos included bagged wheat from the The Harvey-Taylor Fleet was made up London Docks, barrels of beef or fruit pulp, pre-fabricated houses for the up with and assigned the Butty bombed-out victims of Coventry, bulk aluminium to be turned into aircraft engine blocks at the Shadow Factories near to the Grand Union Canal in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Bedfordshire. Bargees unable to register at one shop for food rations, collected travellers vouchers and dry

and Rose lived in the cabin on the had to hand shovel their cargo off the Butty Daphne and Ernie had his boat, though they received an extra bedroom in the cabin on Roger. It was payment for doing this - some wharfs usual to find Ernie steering Roger, Rose had labourers and stevedors available

and Despite the boatmanship and business downstream, and the task of working acumen of Arthur Bray supported by his family, it became difficult for the Harvey-Taylor carriers to maintain a good flow of business, suffering from increasing competition from railways and road hauliers, and so the carriage of cargo by canal went into a gradual decline. Clearly operating the canals in the immediate post war years against an underlying poor economy which was moving away from the traditional industries, an overall fall in the demand for coal, increased unionisation with demands for working hours

rapid fall in business.

- 3 -

a 1930's prototype Lister but the lack of aboard his own boat. manufacturers markings on the block components and maior investigation difficult. The cabin was with a timber cabin conversion rebuilt with a porthole and bulls eye, operated out of Rickmansworth as a typical of the Braunston pattern and private leisure boat for the Thompson different from the Bushells pattern family. which had neither.

butty Raymond. The ongoing demise shape she of the canals in the late 1950's was Hertfordshire money, the opening of the motorways, until 1993. a rise in the popularity of road haulage operating under the British Services (BRS) so that by 1962 the Company Acquired Samuel Barlow Coal

unsuited to canal transport, all led to a to the Blue Line company, also based at Braunston and took onboard limited coal.

Roger was decommissioned as a Alongside this background, we guess working boat in October 1968 holding Roger had little planned maintenance the distinction as the very last wooden although she ran continually for long working boat on the Grand Union hours each day. In 1955 Arthur Bray Canal. She was replaced by the steel reach retirement and Roger along with hulled NB Nutfield. Although officially the rest of the fleet was sold to the Arthur had retired in 1955 from the Braunston-based operator, the Samuel Harvey-Taylor company we find that Barlow Coal Company. Before she he and Rose had continued to work the could be integrated into this fleet, she boats until the Blue Line closed their was taken to their yard at Braunston, books. The couple finally retired from where the engine room and cabin were active work continuing to live on the changed and a rebuilt Lister JP2 butty Raymond as this was their only installed. It is possible that this engine home. Rose's son now working for was a marriage of one or more units to British Waterways lived with his wife

make Roger was sold into private hands and They experienced stranded during the Canal closures throughout the long drought of the A few years later the butty Daphne by summer of 1976. Sold on once more to now in a poor state was replaced by another family, then in very poor was bought by a businessman Tim rapid, helped by the lack of central Woodbridge, and continued in use

as project bγ withdrew from canal carrying. That Rickmansworth Waterways Trust based winter with a frozen canal network for at Batchworth Lock she was then lifted over three months was probably the out of the water to allow preparations last straw. Some of the boats and their for her reconstruction by the Trust, crews including Roger were transferred which started in 1997 and completed in

later owners. As there is neither gas Southern Grand Union Canal. nor electricity very little adaptation was required to meet BSS requirements Today's link with the Wendover Arm is replication so each plank was replace Conservation original by an unbroken history as she and replacing rotted is proudly the last wooden commercial additional unexpected work. on the Register of Historic Ships. The for care and an expert crew. restoration was spearhead and undertaken by Chris Collins who had restored Albert, one of the Ovaltine's fleet of wooden boats.

the timbers can be as little as twenty years. Today are replaced in skippering and crew duties. She is able (much cheaper than seasoned planked

May 2000. The conservation method to carry 12 seated guests under the he 'reconstruction' enabled Roger to be unfurled sheets which expose the hold returned to the as-built state with the area and offer outings on Heritage livery of Harvey-Taylor and not that of Days, maybe a two hour trip along the

other than engine room and cabin maintained in that every two years signage. Funding was raised in 1997 under the RWT planned maintenance from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a of Roger, we detail skippers and crew varied group of sponsors. All the to journey from Batchworth, across timber and some of the iron and steel two / three days to Jem Bates Boatyard components were replaced and the by the lock at the junction of the engine stripped and rebuilt. Great care Wendover Arm. To attract investors was taken to ensure that this was and satisfy the Trustees overseeing the indeed a 'reconstruction' and not a Charity there is a full ten-year rolling Management 'in situ', with a template carefully taken Plan. Following dry-docking a full strip first. Roger today is truly linked to the and replacement of caulking, cutting motor boat working the Grand Union skippering of Roger devoid of the 8 Canal and a nationally important vessel tonne of balast for this round trip calls

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Many steel hull boats of Roger's vintage exist but wooden boats like Roger was a huge restoration project, Roger are rare. Construction can needed complete require circa 800 feet of sawn oak refurbishment given that the life of planking (11 inch x 2 inch), and 160 feet wooden cargo carrying narrowboats of three inch thick elm. Key timbers twenty five years on from the 2000 Conservation Management Plan and relaunch Roger is a fully operational there are timbers seasoning by the boat. Yearly travelling to London's Wendover Arm ready for the next Little Venice for the May Bank Holiday decade. A large section of the Keelson, IWA Canalway Cavalcade and other the spine of Roger, has deteriorated major festivals. She has a team of over the last twenty-five years so volunteers 'Team Roger' responsible several years ago RWT asked Jem Bates for maintenance, signage and painting, to source and buy a suitable oak tree oak) which is being seasoned ready for the 2026/7 planned maintenance programme. All very close to the Wendover Arm.

Rickmansworth Waterways Trust would be delighted to host members of the Wendover Canal Trust to a Heritage Experience and short trip on Roger. Just as you are restoring the Wendover Arm to its splendour in the 1800's, we continue to make Roger a living boat from the 1930's.











Bob Patey, Volunteer Rickmansworth Waterways Trust Batchworth Lock Grand Union Canal



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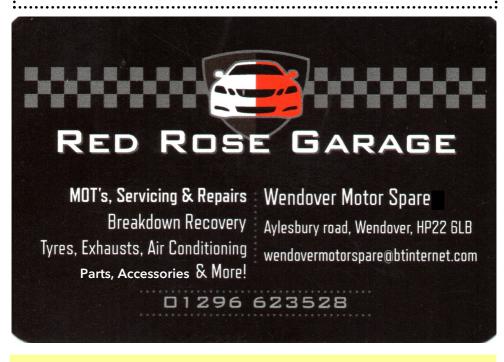
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