Wendover Canal News

Restoration Biodiversity Well-being



WENDOVER
CANAL TRUST

2026 Winter
Issue 3



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 7th March 2027

Chairman's Column, Clive Johnson



At last, the news we have all been waiting for. An agreement has been made between Canal and River Trust and Wendover Canal Trust. This agreement is in large part thanks to a longstanding WCT member who has been negotiating on our behalf and has asked to remain anonymous. The major part of the "Remediation" (namely the removal of some waste from our work-site, as agreed between CRT and the Environment Agency) was completed on Friday October 23rd; it only took one week. All that is left is the results of some testing carried out by CRT, to ensure that the waste has been fully removed; these results are not expected for several weeks.

This excavation was completed by a CRT contractor, for which we have agreed to make a donation. By far the majority of the cost was taking the waste away and processing it, using the same waste contractor as we would have used ourselves. So we are optimistic that this will not cost much more than doing it ourselves.

Most of our future projects will be delivered using CRT's new Restoration Delivery Plan, working with CRT's newly-appointed restoration engineer. We are currently proposing the scope of the first project with him, namely the small amount of work needed before the restored section between the wooden footbridges (4A and 4) can be rewatered. The actual rewatering will not take place until CRT have enough water from Wendover to allow this to happen, so this actual rewatering will require a lot more rain. We have most of the paperwork ready for several more RDP projects, to be submitted following this pilot.

Recently Charlie Norman, the Inland Waterway Association Campaigns Manager, organised a gathering of boats at the beginning of the Wendover Canal at Bulbourne. This was to demonstrate the level of support for our work to reopen the Wendover Canal, especially the currently drained "Phase 1" section between the stop-lock and Little Tring winding hole. It was interesting to see a pair of full-length fuel boats setting off to try to get to the pumping station. Since they wouldn't be able to turn until Little Tring winding hole is rewatered, they were travelling back-to-back, so that one drove in and the other drove out.

Rothen have started work on their annual clearance of reeds, weeds and fallen trees, starting at Drayton Beauchamp and working towards Wendover. They have been disappointed to find this section is in a worse condition than this time last



year, despite the work they did last year. This should also be finished by the time you read this.

The fact that this has to be done every year and keeps getting worse, flags up a big problem with the sustainability of this section. It will be a long time before we can work on it, but I personally believe the following. I know that there are some who look at this section in Spring and early Summer, see beautiful clear water fed by a chalk stream, and wish it could be left untouched. But the reality is that every year the habitat is changed by the reeds and weeds, and then has to be further changed by the clearance of the reeds and weeds. Then the mud settles and the cycle starts again. I personally believe that the only long-term solution is the same as the rest of the canal network: dredge it to navigable depth, and then occasional passing boats acting like a mower to keep the reeds and weeds under control.

The Aylesbury Arm has had to be closed again due to lack of water, and passages through the top Grand Union Canal locks either side of Tring summit have had to be restricted. I look forward to the day when we can provide Tring summit with a reliable supply of water by gravity and without pumping.

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	Volunteers, Webmaster and Facebook: Ken Palfrey	volunteer@wendovercanal.org.uk and webmaster@wendovercanal.org.uk
	Council Member: Colin Metcalfe	colin.metcalfe@wendovercanal.org.uk
Finance	Finance Lead, Honorary Secretary and Deputy Chairman: Mike Beckley	honsec@wendovercanal.org.uk
	Treasurer: Paul Armstrong	treasurer@wendovercanal.org.uk
	Purchasing Manager: Peter Lockett	purchasing@wendovercanal.org.uk
	Membership: Jenny Johnson *Note: not a council member	membership@wendovercanal.org.uk
	Archivist: Chris Sargeant	archivist@wendovercanal.org.uk
Site Management Team	Project Manager: Steve Chapman	steve.chapman@wendovercanal.org.uk
	Site Management Team	Tony Bardwell, Peter Lockett and Ken Palfrey

IWA Nominee: To be appointed
Newsletter Editor: Carol Williams/ Janine Jones newsletter@wendovercanal.org.uk

Our AGM October 2026

Our AGM was again held in the clubhouse of the Dunstable and District Boat Club (DDBC), and we are very grateful for their help. They have been key supporters of our work for decades, and we were very glad for the use of their clubhouse. In addition, in the last year they have raised an amazing £534.20 for us, just over 10 pounds every week! They have done this by running a bric-a-brac stand at the back of their clubhouse, and from used ink cartridges.

At the AGM we announced that both Nigel Williams and Bob Wheal have stood down as trustees and Council members. They had planned to do this at the AGM, but this had to be hurried through on July 31st, when we suddenly discovered that we could not make our annual submission to Companies House unless every Council member had been through a highly technical process of proving their identity.

In the last newsletter we already said that Nigel would be stepping down, but not yet Bob. Both Bob and Nigel have given decades of service to the Wendover Canal Trust. Bob has filled many different roles over these years, including being Chairman for a while. They both deserve a longer appreciation, but we have a problem: they've been serving us for so long, there's no-one else to write it!

So instead I proposed, and the rest of Council unanimously agreed, that we should appoint them both as Vice Presidents, and they have agreed.

Clive Johnson, Chairman

2027 Wendover Canal Trust Calendar

The 2027 Wendover Canal Trust calendar, is on sale now in the High Street in Wendover at:

- NO. 1 Wendover
- Just Ethical Trading
- Chiltern Brewery, Nash Lee Road, Terrick



A Famous Day in the City – WAT at the 1996 Lord Mayor's Show

In 1996, the Wendover Arm Trust enjoyed one of the most memorable moments in its history: taking part in the world-famous Lord Mayor's Show. The invitation came directly from our late President, Roger Cork, who that year became the 669th Lord Mayor of London. Known for his energetic, outward-looking approach to civic life, Roger's motto "Making Britain Even Greater" aligned perfectly with our own mission to restore Britain's historic waterways.

A full year before the parade, a float work party was formed under Ron Pittaway, and planning began in earnest. The Trust adopted the slogan:



"Restore Britain's Great Canals."

The float design showed a narrowboat behind a pile of rocks, with volunteers digging their way "towards Wendover" — a humorous nod to our ongoing restoration work.

Building the float

Support from local businesses was tremendous:

- Grebe Cruisers donated their day boat Dabchick.
- RG Jellis & Son of Ivanhoe supplied the articulated lorry.
- Two Massey Ferguson diggers came from the Sharps Cheddington dealership.

Ten days before the event, a small team transformed the basic lorry and boat into a colourful, balloon-covered float. On arrival at Smithfield, it was inspected by police — including a check for explosive devices — before being cleared for the procession.





Volunteers in Full Colour

Our volunteers made a striking impression:

- WAT volunteers in white or blue overalls with blue hard hats.
- WRG volunteers in red overalls and red hats.
- Wheelbarrows and spades in hand, ready to "dig through to Wendover."

WAT members lined the route to cheer the team on, adding to the sense of pride and celebration.





The Parade

The 1996 Lord Mayor's Show was one of the largest ever staged:

- 104 floats
- 19 marching bands
- 22 horse-drawn carriages
- And the magnificent Lord Mayor's Golden Coach

The three-mile procession attracted 500,000 spectators and an estimated 3 million TV viewers. The WAT float carried civic leaders from Dacorum, Tring, Aylesbury Vale and Wendover — a strong show of support for the Trust's work.
After reaching the Law Courts, all 5,000 participants were treated to lunch. On the return route, the new Lord Mayor gave the WAT team a cheerful wave from Mansion House.

Thirty Years On

Many of our long-standing members still recall the thrill of that day.
"Were you there? Thirty years on, the excitement of taking part in a London parade lives on."

The 1996 Lord Mayor's Show remains in the Trust's story - a moment when our volunteers, our mission, and our community spirit were celebrated on a national stage.



Scottish Canals Trip

In the previous edition of WCT News there was an advert for a six day tour of the above in October. This was organised by David Edwards-May who lives in France and is currently managing editor of Inland Waterways International.

I decided to join and met part of the group in Edinburgh airport having flown from Heathrow airport by BA for the amazing cost of 50p, using many of my Avios.

The group totalled 22 participants from France, Belgium, Switzerland and the USA with members of the Inland Waterways International and Alliance des Rhodaniens.

Those participants arriving at Edinburgh airport were taken by coach to Glasgow with later arrivals being met also in Glasgow. A tour of the city centre and along the banks of the River Clyde followed.

Day 2 involved a guided walking tour of part of the Glasgow branch of the Forth & Clyde canal followed by stops to see the Maryhill lock staircase.

The journey continued through the landscape of the Highlands, passing Loch Lomond and a visit to Inveraray Castle before arriving at the Crinan Harbour where we were able to view Puffer VIC 32 currently being restored at the boatyard with detailed information provided by Jim Hay, Trustee of the Puffer Preservation Trust. VIC stands for Victualling Inshore Craft. Another of the surviving craft, VIC 27, affectionately named "Auld Reekie" (incidentally a nickname for the city of Edinburgh).



The Crinan Canal

The Crinan Canal is one of three sea to sea canals built in Scotland and is often called "The Most beautiful Short Cut in the World".

We then continued along the coastal road to Oban for an overnight stay in the centre. I observed that four craft of the Majestic Line were moored in the harbour which reminded me of previous trips to both the Inner and Outer Hebrides with this company.

Day 3 involved a lengthy drive along the west coast from Oban to Inverness and a visit to the spectacular site of the eight Banavie Locks near the Southern entrance of the Caledonian Canal. A lunch stop at Fort Augustus, built around the five lock staircase, was followed by a visit to Urquhart Castle on the shores of Loch Ness. Despite every hope "Nessie" was not seen! Overnight stop in Inverness.

Day 4 comprised a visit to the canal in Inverness starting at the four lock staircase at Muirtown in the company of Russell Thomson, a former Caledonian Canal Manager.

Some participants then walked to the Clachnaharry Sea Lock which opens into the Firth of Moray.

Day 5. Leaving Inverness we travelled to Blair Castle, near Pitlochry, which was built in the 13th century with the last renovation in 1872.

The next stop was a visit to the 30m high Kelpies, completed in 2013, which flank one of the locks on the Queen Elizabeth Extension Canal.



Queen Elizabeth Extension Canal

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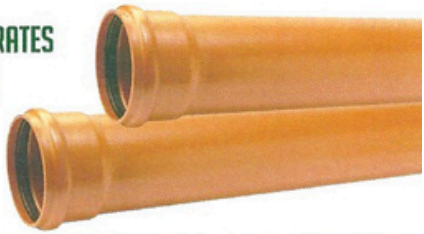
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Day 6. Coach departure for the Falkirk Wheel with a stop at Lock 16 on the Forth & Clyde canal to see the £6 million lock renovation works in progress. Upon arrival at the Falkirk Wheel we boarded the trip boat which was lifted some 35 metres passing through the structure and tunnel above, and then turned before the two Falkirk top locks. This is the only rotating boat lift in the world, replaced a flight of eleven locks and was opened in 2002. It links the Forth and Clyde Canal to the Union Canal. Previously travellers had a day's heavy work operating and closing 44 lock gates to complete the journey between the two canals. When one gondola is lowered the opposite one rises, keeping the vast 1800 tonne boat lift in balance. The transfer only takes a few minutes and uses only 1.5kWh for each rotation.

The final day was spent in Edinburgh with time available to visit various attractions before some participants departed by rail and myself to the airport. The remaining participants were to stay overnight and depart to European destinations the following morning by flights from the airport..



Nigel Williams



Summer 2026 newsletter - correction & apology

We have been made aware that the photograph accompanying "A Short History of the Wyvern Shipping Company Limited" on page 25 of the last newsletter was incorrectly identified as Ocean Princess.

Our sincere apologies for this mistake. The correct photograph of Ocean Princess on Loch Ness in 2004 is shown here.



Bridge inspection - Warwickshire

In October, four representatives from WCT went to inspect a Lift Bridge at Nelson's Wharf on the GUC in Warwickshire. It had been kindly been offered, free of charge, by Stephen Vaughan, a Director of Nelson's Wharf Ltd., to any restoration society that could use it. Unfortunately, a majority of the visiting WCT assessors decided it did not meet our needs and so we did not take up this generous offer.



Club 100 Lottery

The winning numbers were drawn from 136 Club 100 subscriptions. The draw took place before the AGM on 17 October 2026 in the presence of the WCT Council. The lucky winners are...





1st £163.20 - Robert Plampin

2nd £68.00 - Gary Kimble

3rd £27.20 - Michael W. Wright

Congratulations to our winners, and thank you to everyone who takes part in the Club 100 lottery.

Why not join too? Club 100 is an exclusive fundraising lottery for Trust members. For just £16 a year, you'll receive a lucky number entered into four quarterly draws. Half of all subscriptions go into the prize fund, so the more members who join, the bigger the prizes. The remaining funds go directly towards canal restoration projects.

To enter, visit the Club 100 Lottery page on the Wendover Canal Trust website, where you can find full details.

Visit www.wendovercanal.org.uk and select Support Us > Club 100 Lottery.



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Remediation 19th - 23rd October

On Monday October 19th the Rothen Group, Canal & River Trust's contractor, arrived on site at Little Tring to start removal of spoil from two sites. It was a clear dry day.

The first operational task was to clear and level a way over the ash down to the 'trial hole' near the Narrows, where soil was to be excavated with a 9 tonne machine and taken away. The soil was in a 5m square V-shaped trench terraced on two sides with a curved slope on the other two. We had photos of the original infilling so the excavator driver could compare, while the underlying chalk was a lighter colour than the soil being removed.

The job was done in about 5 hours, the soil being taken by dumper to the temporary timber loading platform made of 'bog boards' and old stop-planks that had been constructed at the top of the accessway from the road. The empty trial hole was then secured with Heras fencing.



One of the first lorries being loaded

A 13 tonne excavator arrived at midday and loaded about 35 cubic metres on 3 lorries that arrived that afternoon, for reprocessing in the Midlands. Lorries approached the site from the north and reversed up the access, avoiding the need for a turning space at the top.

Rothen also started the second - much larger- task of clearing the two main piles of soil that were on the upstream side of the loading platform. The 13 tonner loaded 2 dumpers from these piles, the dumpers going back and forth to discharge on the loading platform, moving another 30 cubic metres of soil by Monday evening to be ready for loading on lorries due the next morning.



This process was repeated on Tuesday. The weather was not good but they got it done and again recharged the platform afterwards. Fully filled the platform held 4-5 lorry loads.

On Wednesday it was extremely wet. Two people from Canal & River Trust arrived to take samples to confirm the trial hole was now clean.

This loading and recharging continued for the rest of the week, so that by 10 on Friday morning the last 2 of 22 loads had been removed, totalling around 420 tonnes. The site of the two heaps had been levelled, and the access track along the canal smoothed off.



The larger of the two above ground stockpiles being removed



The stockpile at the top of the ramp, completely removed

Steve Chapman
Site Management Team

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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: : 07547181857
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Advertising Enquiries:

Contact the Peter Lockett, contact details listed on page 6.

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