



Wilts & Berks Canal

On The Button

Welcome to "On The Button", the electronic newsletter for the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. If you have any suggestions or items you would like to include in the next edition please email editor@wbct.org.uk

New Vice President

We are delighted to announce that Robert Buckland QC MP Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor has accepted our invitation to become one of the Trust's Vice Presidents. Robert has been MP for South Swindon for the last 10 years and lives within a mile of the canal. He has been supportive of the Trust for many years, and most recently wrote in support of our application to Highways England for the proposed M4 crossing.



In response to the invitation, he said "I am hugely grateful, and I would be honoured to become a Vice-President"

Gordon Olson, CEO of the Trust, said: "We are engaged in the biggest and most complex canal restoration in England, with Swindon at its hub. It is very welcome that Robert Buckland MP has volunteered to lend his support to our 2,000 members as we strive to create 100Km of tranquil linear waterside park for the public benefit."

Message from the CEO

I hope you and yours are all safe and well. I am very aware that many of you are itching to get back to work on our hugely ambitious restoration project just as soon as the Covid-19 lockdown eases. We'll continue to keep you updated on the best guidance for safe working. Branch chairs and WPOs are as keen as you are to get you safely back to work in the great outdoors. Meanwhile, for those of us who can work at home, there's plenty going on. We've made a big push to refresh our website at www.wbct.org.uk. We've had very positive feedback about the cleaner and smarter appearance we now present to the public. We have an in-house Comms Team, ably headed up by Chris Barry, and we're now communicating regularly with all our members by email in a drive to make sure everybody has a clearer picture of where we're going and who is doing what. For those not yet on board our great adventure we're using Facebook and Instagram to make them curious enough to walk and cycle our towpaths. We tell them about our upcoming M4 crossing project and the wildlife and flowers that live next to our waterway. Every one of

Melsham's 'lost' canal

Hardworking volunteers have taken the first steps towards uncovering a former waterway on the edge of Melsham. The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust has started to clear a stretch of the line in countryside off Lower Woodrow, on the northern edge of the town. In 2018 the charity purchased six acres of land which, combined with landowner permission to access adjoining fields, allows volunteers to work on more than a kilometre of the former waterway. Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, workparties removed several abandoned outbuildings which were once used by local farmers. Once the lockdown ends, local volunteers will then start removing dead trees and clearing their way along the towpath.



those messages contains a link to our website which results in new joiners and a steady stream of enquiries about what the Trust is planning to do next. All of this is directed to raising our public profile and ensuring that we have ongoing support for the effort and hard work being done by the volunteers and members, whether they be "dirty boots" or "clean shoes". Keep up the good work and let's look forward to being able to socialise in the real world once again.



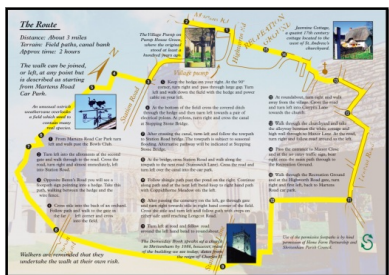
Gordon Olson, CEO.

Shrivenham Canal Park

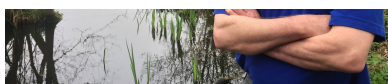
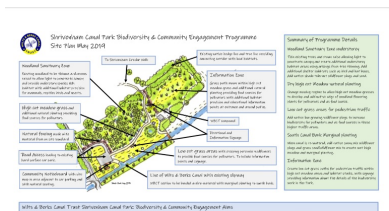
Shrivenham Canal Park is a cosy pocket park located south of Shrivenham alongside the canal line. The park is easily accessible from Stainswick Lane and car parking is readily available.



The park is well known for its dog walking routes and slipway into the canal. As seen below there is a circular walk that can guide you around Shrivenham, through the pocket park, and along the canal.



Shrivenham Canal Park has been central to plans to turn it into a community park full of biodiversity and re-water a section of the canal with a solar pump from a nearby water source. As seen below in our artist's impression of the future project the park will provide: habitat piles, community signs, re-watered canal sections, wildflower plantings, community wildlife garden, and pedestrian pathways throughout the park. In 2019 we put up a series of bird and bat boxes made by the mental health charity TWIGS; additionally, the park is home to a collection of bird boxes made by the Shrivenham & Watchfield Cubs and Scouts.



Dave Maloney is the chairman of the Melksham, Chippenham & Calne branch of the Trust.

He said: "The former outbuildings were unused and in a very poor state of repair when we acquired the site, so the safest option was to take them down and recycle the materials."

"Our next step will be to remove several of the dead trees while ensuring there's no disturbance to local wildlife. Once that work has been completed, we can start clearing the undergrowth to reveal the towpath – you can still see much of the original line and it's even possible to walk along several sections."

Dave added: "Longer-term, with further funding, we want to dredge this stretch of the canal and refill it with water – despite the length of time which has passed, several of the culverts are in a surprisingly good condition."

"The Trust has already restored a similar section between Reybridge and Pewsham, providing a new wildlife corridor and a popular attraction for walkers, runners and cyclists, so it would be fantastic if we could create something similar on the edge of Melksham. Ultimately, if we can attract support from other local landowners, the various stretches would then be joined together to create a fully navigable waterway for the benefit of the whole community."

Chaddington Lane Bridge

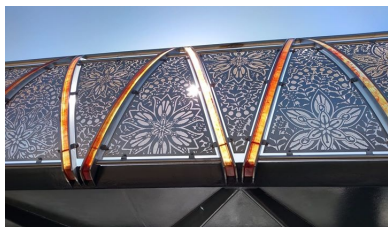
We have a funding bid lodged at Biffa Awards for the replacement of Chaddington Lane bridge, formerly and confusingly called Bincknoll Lane bridge. This project is a key part of the high level plan to reconnect Royal Wootton Bassett and Swindon on the canal. The existing bridge was infilled many years ago, the only connection between the Chaddington and Studley Grange sections in water is via a couple of small diameter culverts. OK for swans and ducks, but that's about all.



The new bridge, for which we have planning approval, will remove this obstruction and enable us to link the Chaddington and Studley Grange sections to produce an initial 1.8Km of continuous waterway. This is an expensive project because we have to provide a temporary bridge whilst the existing one is demolished, and the replacement is being constructed. Not for nothing is the Wilts & Berks restoration known as the most complex and challenging in England!

Wichelstowe Award

The development at Wichelstowe is one of 12 shortlisted by the Institution of Civil Engineers for their South West's best Civil Engineering project.





Shrivenham Canal Park is a great base to park your car up and have a walk around the canal line!

East Vale News

The branch AGM would normally be held in May however could not take place as usual this year. It is planned therefore to hold the AGM on Weds 2nd September. Only WBCT members registered as members of East Vale branch will be able to vote. If you are a supporter but not yet a member and you wish to take part, please go onto the Trust website and join up.

Other East Vale news:
It is going to be "all hands to the pump" later in the year with much maintenance work to do on the canal towpath around Wantage and Grove. If you wish to join the team please contact me at brian.stovold@wbct.org.uk



TOWPATH NEWS

The towpath between Wantage and the Challows has been well used during the lockdown. The ongoing saga of the two duck families and the newer family of moorhens plus chicks has gripped the population. The fairies seem also to have taken occupation in the trees judging by the appearance of a strange red door on one trunk and at least one child marked a family calamity by producing a poster which reads "Mummy fell in here" (on the causeway of debris which crosses the canal by the new houses (and out of our ownership)

Please Donate

One of our volunteers had the bright idea of working out how much they'd saved as a result of Covid - fuel, not eating out, that kind of thing - and donating the result to the Trust. Obviously not everyone has been in that fortunate position, but in this person's case it came to a healthy three-figure sum. Clearly the Trust's income has plummeted since lockdown, so if you would like to give us some much-needed meaningful support in the form of a donation, you can easily do so by clicking on this link, which takes you to the relevant part of our constantly updating website. www.wbct.org.uk/get-involved/donate



Please click on the link below; you'll need to scroll down to the bottom, as they're listed alphabetically.



If you feel this wonderful development deserves the award, PLEASE VOTE! Voting closes on July 18th, so do it now!!
<https://www.ice.org.uk/about-ice/near-you/uk/south-west/awards/civil-engineering-awards>

Membership Numbers

We conceived a plan back in the winter to double our member numbers by the Spring of 2021. After a tricky start that plan is now a project to recruit 2020 new members in 2020. He's mad, I hear you say.

My reply is that the number is memorable and ambitious and meets our key need to grow our membership so that the Trust is self sustaining financially for all its core costs, insurances, rents, leases, utilities, and our very small payroll.

We launched our 2020 campaign on June 1st, on Facebook and our website. Over the three weeks since then we have added 50 new members to take our total to 2050. MCC and Swindon branches are neck and neck in the race to be the biggest gainers in 2020 and win the Tony Davy prize.

The messaging on Facebook and Instagram is working as planned, reaching a younger demographic, and prompting them to visit our website and become members. We have a totally new membership records system, courtesy of our Head of IT, Martin Stubbs, and we now have the analytical tools to tell us what messages have the best outcomes in terms of new joiners.

Dave Thomas, son of the legendary Eddie, tripled the membership at the Natural History Museum and is now our membership adviser. He says our online joining process is one of the smoothest and slickest he's ever seen. Only another 1,970 joiners needed to reach our target.....

www.wbct.org.uk/join

If you can, please let us claim gift aid on your donation. This will allow the Trust to increase your donation by 25% with no cost to you. Thanking you in advance!

WBCT Recruitment

Do You Speak Engineer?



The restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal is a massive undertaking that requires many skills. Before repairing structures such as locks and bridges we need structural surveys, engineering designs and engineering drawings. We currently have a small team of skilled and committed engineers who work on these tasks but new members of the team will always be welcome.

Are you able to help us with any of these tasks?

Please contact Rod Hacker, rod.hacker@wbct.org.uk if you can spend some of your time helping us restore our historic waterway.

Engineer

We are looking for engineers preferably with qualifications in civil or structural engineering to join our diverse team working on the design and construction of restoration projects and long lengths of new build canal which are needed to replace the lengths which have been lost since the closure of the canal 100 years ago. Tasks range from restoring old structures to creating detailed new routes to gaining planning consent and then building them.

Small restoration projects and maintenance works are often undertaken entirely by volunteers including design and construction. Professional consultants and contractors are engaged for large projects in which case the engineering team usually prepares the outline scheme and then supports the Trust executive as the client.

Our volunteers work in our central teams and in project teams according to the task. The engineering team members meet to exchange information and knowledge, plan for the tasks ahead and agree on practices and standards.

Volunteers with appropriate skills and experience at all levels in the construction industry are needed. Moderate computer skills are a given and having experience or own capacity to work with CAD or industry standard software will be advantageous. Qualifications or experience in the water sector would be an advantage for some tasks. Tasks can be carried out mainly at home with field work, site inspections, supervision and meetings etc, as necessary.

Environmentalist

The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust is seeking to expand and improve its activities by forming a small team of environmental specialists. We are looking for volunteers with practical experience or qualifications in the environmental sciences to strengthen the capability of the Trust to understand, interpret and create the environmental plans and projects which are as central to the aims of our trust as are our restoration and construction projects. The enhancement of the biodiversity associated with our canal restoration is essential.

We need volunteers who can contribute to at least some of the tasks: understand the biodiversity issues raised by our activities and those of proposals by other parties, identify environmental risks, carry out field surveys, develop mitigation and improvement proposals, guide construction of good habitats, and monitor results. "Environment" is a wide field, volunteers will most likely specialise in one or more areas of it.

Our volunteers work in our central teams, in project teams and in our local branch teams centred on the towns along the route according to the task. The voluntary roles can be carried out at home with field work, site meetings etc, as necessary. The tasks can often be designed to suit a preference for a locality or timeframe. Basic computer skills are essential.

Volunteer Hours

The WBCT keeps a record of our volunteer hours which are submitted by everyone who volunteers. These volunteer hours can be used for match funding when we apply to some grant funders so it is very useful to keep a record of them.
Those of you who volunteer for the WBCT please submit your volunteer hours to Juanita Poulton at log.sheets@wbct.org.uk

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