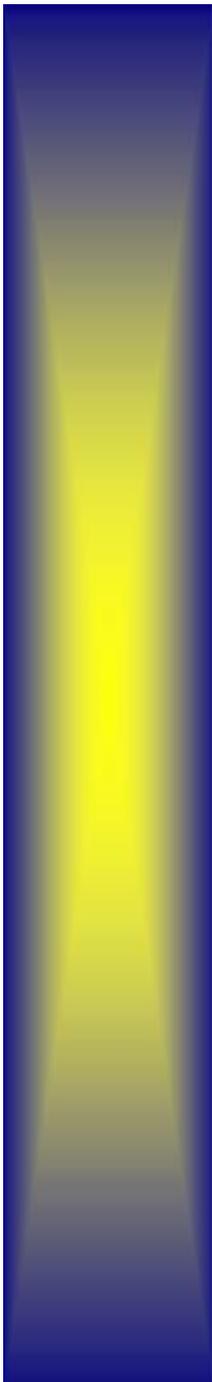




Registered Charity
No. 299595



Annual Report 2012-2013



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

The MBE for volunteer groups

www.wbct.org.uk

Mission Statement

Restoring in partnership the Wilts & Berks Canal through Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire.

Charitable Aims

To protect, conserve and improve the route of the Wilts & Berks and North Wilts Canals, and branches, for the benefit of the community and environment, with the ultimate goal of restoring a continuous navigable waterway linking the Kennet & Avon Canal near Melksham, Wiltshire, the River Thames near Abingdon, Oxfordshire and the Thames and Severn Canal near Cricklade, Wiltshire.

Objectives

1. Convince local authorities, government departments and local organisations of the benefits and feasibility of the proposed restoration.
2. Convince landowners, local commerce and the general public of the merits of restoration.
3. Secure the route of the waterway and adequate water supplies.
4. Establish the Trust as a key member of a partnership with local authorities and other bodies that will facilitate restoration of the canal.
5. Implement an agreed programme for full restoration of the canal.

Legal Structure

The Trust is a Registered Charity, No. 299595, and a Non-Profit-Distributing Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered in England and Wales No. 2267719. Its Registered Office Address is: Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA.

Patron

HRH The Duchess of Cornwall

President

Dr David Fletcher CBE

Vice-Presidents

Neil Rumbol (Founder)
Roger Crapper
John Laverick

Trustees during the year

Chairman	John Laverick
Vice Chairman	Kathleen Hatton
Secretary	Christopher Coyle
Treasurer	Peter Kinsman
Directors	Raymond Aldridge
	Matthew Allard
	Rachael Banyard
	David Cook
	George Eycott
	Colin Fletcher
	Derek Flexer
	Douglas Harris
	Robert Jones
	Mike Lang
	Mike Lee
	Melanie Parker
	Tim Pyatt
	Brian Roberts
	Douglas Small
	David Stirling
	Brian Stovold
	Jennifer Stratton
	Edward Thomas

President's Foreword

External recognition of the efforts of volunteer members of any organisation is most welcome in that it gives encouragement to those giving freely of their time. It also demonstrates that what they are doing is of value, in the case of Wilts & Berks Canal Trust volunteers - of value to local communities.

Trust volunteers come from a wide age range and include professional men and women of many disciplines, craftsmen and women in the fields of engineering, building and environmental conservation. Many have been involved for long periods of time but new people are continuously coming on board. Professionalism and care, markers of volunteer work, ensure that the finished excellence of their output brings benefit to the environment and to communities right across Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire.

Immediate benefit is gained from newly opened lengths of towpath and waterway providing access for all and the creation of much-needed new standing-water habitat. External recognition confirms for Trust volunteers, if confirmation is needed, that whether working in the field or at a desk they are participating in a worthwhile and stimulating project influencing the social, economic and environmental climate of local communities.

A greater understanding of local history and identity has emerged as research undertaken by some of the volunteers can now explain more clearly the part that rural Wiltshire and Berkshire played in the development of the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Economic improvements and opportunities that the waterway will bring to communities such as those at the market town of Melksham and the former railway town of Swindon are recognised by the Chambers of Commerce in both communities. By completing the restoration of the waterway and hedgerow from end to end, across Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire an exciting new wildlife trail will have been created providing linkage between areas of existing habitat and perhaps new routes of migration for creatures that might become endangered by the consequences of climate change.

Although the work of Trust volunteers is widely recognised by its peer organisations across the United Kingdom, it was a huge accolade for the Trust to receive in June 2012 "The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service". May I offer my congratulations to all past and present volunteers who have carried out work on the Wilts & Berks Canal and who in so doing have contributed to the Trust achieving this splendid national recognition of its work.

I would also like to record my special thanks to John Laverick, who retired as our Chairman during this last year. He has been an inspiration to us all during his seven years in office. His dedication, professionalism, and sheer hard work have been a major part of the Trust's recent success. We all wish him a continued recovery to full health, and look forward to his continued involvement as Vice-President.

Dr David Fletcher CBE

Chairman's Report

Several events in the year have demonstrated how the wider world views the work undertaken by volunteers of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust.

Les Amis du Canal du Nivernais during a visit to our waterway in April arranged by Mike Lee, expressed amazement at the sheer scale of work undertaken by volunteers. Very impressed with what had been achieved so far, representatives of the French organisation were in awe at the quality of work they had been shown and expressed the view that in their country there is a complete absence of a volunteer culture where individuals might come together to make improvements to the environment and create leisure resources for the enjoyment of the wider population.

Delegates at the AGM of the *Melksham Chamber of Commerce* expressed their thanks to the Trust for the tremendous volunteer effort that had already been expended in the interests of local people in drawing up the detailed planning application for The Melksham Link project.

In May the *Wiltshire Wildlife Trust*, *NHS Wiltshire* and *Wiltshire Council* jointly presented the report "State of the Environment Wiltshire and Swindon 2012". The presentation took part in open forum at WWT's new reserve at Langford Lakes. During the presentation the opportunity was afforded for WBCT to provide information on the type of activity its volunteers were engaged upon and how well these activities fitted with many of the aims set out in the report. Over lunch and during site visits in the afternoon very many of the delegates expressed their admiration for what WBCT was achieving and how well our efforts supported the report's wider aims, particularly the impact that the towpath project would have on the health and wellbeing of local communities.

It was of course with great delight and pride that members of the Trust who over many years have been working to protect, conserve and improve the route of the Wilts & Berks and North Wilts Canals for the benefit of local communities and the environment learned through an announcement in the London Gazette on Diamond Jubilee weekend that "Her Majesty The Queen has been graciously pleased to confer Her award in 2012 upon The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust in recognition of its outstanding voluntary work in the community". Could we have sought a more fitting accolade – I think not. Our letterhead and the cover of this report now proudly bear the logo of this award, providing as it does, State recognition of the value to local communities of the work of Wilts & Berks Canal Trust volunteers both past and present.

It was with much regret, following unexpected cardiac surgery, that I stood down as your Chairman at the Trust's AGM in October last year. I take this opportunity to thank all members, officers and directors for the input and support given to me and for your returning me as your Chairman for nearly seven years.

John Laverick

Acting Chairman's Report (October 2012 onwards)

It was with pride but a tinge of sadness that I accepted the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service on behalf of the Trust from the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire, Mrs Sarah Rose Troughton, in September. I was proud because this is a very prestigious award and to quote one of our members, it recognises those who have made the Trust into the force that it is today. The Award consisted of a domed glass crystal and a certificate signed by the Queen herself. I was sad because John Laverick was not able to be there, having fallen ill just 10 days before the event and I knew how disappointed he would be to miss it.

It was a splendid day on the canal at Swindon – we had chosen to hold the presentation on board nb *Dragonfly*, moored up at Kingshill, and hoped it would be an unusual venue for our Lord Lieutenant. The boat crew had cleaned and polished the boat and a good number of blue shirted volunteers turned up in support. Even the sun shone! After presenting the Award, Mrs Troughton commended the Trust for their work in restoring the canal and said that it is a wonderful leisure facility for all. The Mayor and Mayoress of Swindon were also there and the Mayor, Mr Mick Bray, said that the canal would be a real boost to Swindon. Speeches over, we all set off on a leisurely cruise “up the cut” with Mrs Troughton ably steering the boat on the return trip.



Queen's Award presentation (D. Small)

Progress on the Towpath Challenge has been impressive this year. All the mapping and information from Land Registry has given us a much clearer view of the ownership of the canal, identifying 400 landowners. The combination of overlaying modern GIS mapping on to the old 1890 and 1900 Ordnance Survey maps has given us an insight that we have not had before. Tim Pyatt and his partner Lynne walked as much of the route as possible in May last year (in the rain!), using nearby public rights-of-way when the towpath was not open to them. The parts of the canal that they saw inspired Tim to press on and get permissions to walk more of the route. So for this Easter, over the four days, Tim and Lynne planned the second walk the length of the canal and this time invited others to join them and to raise sponsorship. They still didn't choose the weather wisely as it was very cold, but the take-up was surprising – over 50 walkers signed up to walk parts of the canal and 16 to walk all four days. The walkers were able to use nearly 50 % of the actual towpath, due to extra permissions obtained for the walk only and around £5,000 was raised. A fantastic achievement Tim and Lynne.

Other projects are progressing through their various stages: the planning application for the Melksham Link was submitted in September and we await news from Wiltshire Council planners; a planning application has also been submitted early this year for Pewsham Locks and again we await the result. Plans are being drawn up and studies done for an extension to the Templars Firs section at Royal Wootton Bassett and the plans to excavate the canal alongside the Biffa site at Studley Grange are progressing well with detailed drawings done. At Swindon a project has been set up to line the bed of the canal at Moulden Hill, finish the lock and extend the length of the section. Finally at Grove, an in-depth study has just been commissioned to determine the route that the canal can take through this complex section. We have had three new project leaders come forward – Paul Lenaerts for the Melksham Link, Guy Robinson for the Templars Firs extension and Rod Hacker for Moulden Hill and I would like to thank them for all the hard work they are putting in. I should also include a thank-you to Martin Stubbs who is heading up the Pewsham Locks project and helping with CAD drawings and advice for several other projects.

In March we hosted a meeting of the Southern Canals Association at Swindon. It was well supported by a number of other canal societies and there were interesting talks from John Dodwell, Trustee of Canal and River Trust and Les Etheridge, National Chairman of IWA. Despite some snow in the morning, we managed to take everyone to see the new canal at Wichelstowe.

I am pleased to report that John Laverick is recovering very well and although he has stepped down as Chairman of the Trust, he has accepted the role of Vice-President and so he will still be involved in some ways. Doug Small and John Minns have stepped down from Events Co-ordinator roles and as yet no-one else has come forward to take this on. Regrettably Matt Allard did not have the time to continue as Communications Director and so this post is also vacant. Sue Grier, a new volunteer, has come forward for the post of Finds Officer, replacing Mo Norrington. A list of current vacancies is printed in each edition of *Dragonfly* magazine.

Despite the setback this year of John Laverick's illness, the Trust is growing in strength and the support for the project from many quarters is increasing. It is an exciting time on the Wilts & Berks!

Kath Hatton

Accounts

Statement of Financial Activities for Year ending 31 March 2013

	<u>Unrestricted</u> <u>funds</u> £	<u>Designated</u> <u>funds</u> £	<u>Restricted</u> <u>funds</u> £	<u>Total this</u> <u>year</u> £	<u>Total last</u> <u>year</u> £
<u>Incoming resources</u>					
Donations	7,692		33,580	41,272	56,843
Investment income	1,130			1,130	1,014
Income from charitable trading	22,641			22,641	17,946
Members' Subscriptions	24,023			24,023	20,858
Grants	1,000		20,626	21,626	32,585
Landfill Tax Credits			42,225	42,225	31,574
Tax refunds	5,287		1,644	6,931	7,333
Total incoming resources	61,773	0	98,075	159,848	168,153
<u>Expenditure</u>					
Restoration	31,706	(3,241)	46,276	74,741	94,661
Fund raising and publicity	23,007	7,609	401	31,017	29,943
Management & Administration	6,346	(4,017)	25,088	27,417	24,048
Total expenditure	61,059	351	71,765	133,175	148,652
<u>Transfer between funds</u>	0	0	0	0	0
Net movement in funds	714	(351)	26,310	26,673	19,501
<u>Fund balances brought forward</u>	22,071	61,820	149,082	232,973	213,472
<u>Fund balances carried forward</u>	22,785	61,469	175,392	259,646	232,973

Accounts (Continued)

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2013

	<u>Total this</u> <u>year</u> <u>£</u>	<u>Total last</u> <u>year</u> <u>£</u>
Total fixed assets	35,478	38,103
<u>Current assets</u>		
Stock and work in progress	4,839	2,030
Debtors	41,261	26,907
Short term investments and deposits	135,902	134,775
Cash at bank and in hand	78,734	58,719
Total current assets	<hr/> 260,736	<hr/> 222,431
Short term creditors	36,568	27,561
Net current assets/(liabilities)	<hr/> 224,168	<hr/> 194,870
Net assets	<hr/> 259,646	<hr/> 232,973
Restricted income funds	175,392	149,082
Designated Funds	61,469	61,820
Unrestricted income funds	22,785	22,071
<u>Total funds</u>	<hr/> 259,646	<hr/> 232,973

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31st March 2013.

The members have not required the charitable company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2013 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for

(a) ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and

(b) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small charitable companies and with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008).

Notes to Accounts

1. These financial statements have been extracted from the set of accrual-based accounts prepared for submission to the Charity Commission. An examination of those accounts has been carried out by our accountants, Morris Owen, in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. A full set of those accounts is available on request and for a small administration fee.

2. The definitions of the categories of funds are as follows:-

Unrestricted - Those funds that the Trustees should spend on any of the charity's purposes.

Restricted - Those funds that the Trustees are obliged to spend on only particular purposes.

Designated - Those funds which the Trustees have earmarked for particular purposes.

3. Net Landfill Tax credits of £35,998 have been received from Crapper & Sons and £6,946 transferred from Community First ex Hills Group.

4. The Fixed Assets of £35,478 are made up of Land at cost of £8,062, Plant and Machinery at a depreciated value of £7,629, Boats at a depreciated value of £18,496 and office furniture and equipment at a depreciated value of £1,288. No major assets were purchased this year.

5. Debtors at the end of this year mainly consist of Gift Aid Tax refund of £2,874, VAT refund of £5,520 (both from HMRC), Wiltshire Council grants of £19,598 (all paid in May 2013), prepayment of £10,956 for materials, £304 office deposits and £1,917 owed for returned materials.

6. The charity had one part time paid employee at the end of this year.

7. There has been no remuneration or other benefits paid by the charity to the charity's Trustees, or people connected with them.

8. There have been no transactions undertaken by (or on behalf of) the charity in which a Trustee or connected person has a material interest.

Peter Kinsman

Grants & Donations

Once again, the Trust would like to register its thanks to all those who have contributed to funding projects; some of the major funding sources are listed below. This list in no way ignores all of the smaller organisations, individuals and trusts who have contributed to the restoration of the Canal.

G. Adamson
J. Arnott
Awards for All
Braunston Marina
M. Buckland
A. R. Clyde
Community First
J. J. Cox
Crapper & Sons Landfill Ltd
G. Eycott
D. Flexer
J. B. Gordon
F. G. H. Griffiths Estate
J. Henn
Inland Waterways Association
Inland Waterways Association (Avon & Wilts Branch)
Inland Waterways Association (North & East London)
O. Mable
Oxfordshire County Council
Paradigm
Pewsey Zixex Club
Y. Ray
Swindon Borough Council
Swindon Pressings Workers Charitable Fund
The Underwood Trust
Vale of White Horse District Council
Waitrose Charity Green Scheme
Wantage and Grove Lions
The Waterways Trust
M. Watson
Wessex Water Services Ltd
W. West
Wilts and Berks 200 Club
Wiltshire Council

Restoration Progress

The Trust has organised its work into four areas. Each area has a Director responsible for managing the projects.

West (Colin Fletcher)

Forest Farm and Queenfield Farm. About half a mile of canal on these two farms continues to be managed on a care & maintenance basis with volunteers keeping the towpath clear.

Naish Hill to Pewsham Locks. In April we completed the final stage of dredging to Pewsham bottom lock and later commenced work on the lock landing in the same area; this was completed in March 2013. The water mains beneath the canal at Naish Hill have been re-routed and laid much deeper to avoid damage. We are very grateful to Wessex Water for removal of this obstacle to navigation. A significant length of canal clearing was carried out by branch volunteers between November and February, opening up a new section of towpath near the A4.

Calne Lock and rewatered section. This widely-used length of canal in the heart of the town is maintained by our volunteers and kept in a good state of repair.



Calne Town Lock (D. Small)

North (Vacancy)

Foxham top lock. The Trust is very grateful to local landowner Ian Chatterton, who owns the land at Foxham top lock, who on his own in odd half hours throughout the year has cleared the "in water" canal on his land, and also on his neighbour Rob Peglar's farm, so that he can ply his boats up and down the section.

Foxham. A large amount of time has been involved in the demolition and reinstatement of the wooden lift bridge on Robert Peglar's farm at Foxham.

Dauntsey. Over an extended period we have cleared the culvert under the canal at the Peterborough Arms and repaired the three holes in the brickwork with the help of "culvert King" Rob Brotherstone.

Seven Locks. A lot of time "off canal" has been spent on satisfying conditions that are necessary for the planning application for the Lock 2 road bridge at Bowd's Lane.

Dunnington Aqueduct. In late winter the work party cut down plant growth on the aqueduct. The Easter towpath challenge walk had permission to walk the canal route through Dunnington Farm so walkers were able to see the work done.

Wootton Bassett Council Depot. After many years of discussion the Wiltshire Council depot at Templars Firs is being sold. Wiltshire Council is discussing transferring the track of the canal to the Trust, separately from the sale. The Trust is in the process of putting together a planning application to extend the canal from the existing watered section to the road. Once we have that we intend to restore the length from the canal to the fence of the depot as phase 1. Bushes that would be on the canal route were cut down in the winter.

Templars Firs watered section. The weed cutting boat is used regularly to control the water weed. The towpath and offside is cut and the hedge trimmed. There has been work on mending high level leaks.

Chaddington. Work has continued to restore the canal below Chaddington lock.



Canal below Chaddington undergoing restoration (D. Small)

Studley Grange. Negotiations continue with the owners of the landfill site with a view to restoring the canal through the site as it moves towards closure. The owners are supportive in principle and have suggested an option agreement for a lease, dependent on the Trust obtaining planning permission. We have agreed in principle to this, subject to confirmation. Negotiations with the owner of the eastern section could not be concluded on terms acceptable to both sides.

Central (Ray Aldridge)

West Leaze. A section of canal has been dredged to the correct depth, this involved the use of an excavator with a 20 metre reach.

Moredon. Over 1000 saplings were planted at Moredon along the towpath where the hedgerow needed to be created as a lot of the previous planting many years ago had not taken. The new hedgerow plants and saplings are growing well with only a few having been eaten by the wildlife.

Much time was spent maintaining the sections we have, and some good news was the increase in external company volunteers that visited.

East (Brian Stovold)

Steppingstone Lane. Work continued on Steppingstone Lane Bridge together with negotiations over a lease of a significant section of the canal to the south and west of Shrivenham. Permission from the land agents was sought and obtained enabling work to begin on clearing the towpath between Bourton Wharf and Steppingstone Lane Bridge which should lead to the eventual opening of a permissive path. Our thanks go to Smiths Gore for their help and co-operation. Many businesses in the Swindon area have seen the towpath work parties as a great way to aid the local community. Over 600 trees have been planted in hedgerows and spinneys alongside the canal.

Challow/Childrey. Negotiations continue for a lease over a section of canal between the Challows and at West Challow/Childrey the project to rebuild the Childrey Bridleway Bridge moved on with the installation of the temporary bridge over the canal.

Wantage. Work began in earnest to bring the interior of the Sackhouse at Wantage Wharf up to a suitable condition for opening as a museum. Donations were received from Wantage & Grove Lions as well as from Waitrose under their green tokens scheme. A grant of £1,000 was obtained from Oxfordshire County Council through our local county councillors for the installation of an electricity supply into the building.



Opening of the Sackhouse (D. Small)

Grove. With the landowner's permission the East Vale branch cleared an overgrown section of towpath near Grove and the improved path is much appreciated by walkers. The regular Monday Mob strimming and mowing sessions continue to keep this and other sections of path well-maintained.

Abingdon. The extension of the canal from Jubilee Junction at Abingdon is still subject to a decision by Thames Water about whether they are going to build a new reservoir on the historic route. If so they will be obliged to provide an alternative route for the canal around the reservoir. Their consultation document Draft Water Resources Management Plan 2015 to 2040 has been published and in October 2013 Thames Water will publish a summary of the responses to the consultation.

Land Ownership

The Trust is conscious that its restoration activities are usually carried out by kind permission of the landowners concerned. The Trust wishes to take this opportunity to thank those landowners who have assisted the Trust in its aims by giving such permission. The Trust also wishes to remind all members and workers of the need to respect the landowner's rights when allowed on to such land.



Fundraising

As the number of new restoration projects increases along the length of the canal, the need for all kinds of fundraising is increasing too. At local level, branches can hold events, which raise the necessary cash for small works and maintenance of their sections and these events are also excellent for publicity and for recruiting new members. I am always happy to help branches apply for slightly larger amounts, like £10K from Awards for All, or in Wiltshire, money from Area Boards for example. In Swindon last year, the branch raised £20,000 for repairs to the bank and towpath at Kingshill from several different sources and MCC branch raised £6,300 from events and donations.

I have been in post for nearly 3 years and I am still on a steep learning curve. I reinstated the annual draw for the Trust which has made around £5,000 for the past two years. The first year was for restoration and this was split between several projects. Last year was for the Towpath Challenge and this year is for the Land Fund. Two MCC members, Jeff and Linda Dawes, came up with the idea of running a 200 Club for the Trust – now in the second year, it gives 50% of the fund in prizes and the rest after expenses goes to the branches to buy equipment. This year we have 247 members – maybe the 300 Club next year?

The Trust is now registered with BT Donate for online donations. This was set up in time for the Towpath Challenge at Easter and proved invaluable. We also are registered for giving by text with JustTextGiving – see the website for details. Giving by either of these methods is not complicated and the Gift Aid is claimed for us which gives an extra 25%.

Over the year we have received several Landfill Community Fund grants from both Hills Group and Crapper & Sons. This is a very useful source of funds and we register most of our new projects with ENTRUST, the overarching authority on landfill monies so that we can seek funds from landfill companies. Some of the funds from Crappers are going towards dredging at Royal Wootton Bassett and the money from Hills bought an old BW workboat that MCC branch is restoring.

For the future I would like to increase the number of legacies and in memoriam donations that the Trust receives. Although many people give to charity when they are alive, only 7% leave a charitable legacy in their wills. Gifting money to the Trust can mean that one's loved ones can have a permanent memorial in the shape of a plaque on a structure that is being restored.

Thank you for all your support during the year – I am sure that next year will be just as challenging as the last one.

Kath Hatton

Events

As always events covered on behalf of the Trust were at venues where it was felt that the presence of a display would not only enhance our standing within the general waterways network but also bring our project to the attention of a wider audience.

We started in April with a one day event at Dauntsey Lock, which was extremely busy, followed in May by the Abingdon Air Show, where, surprisingly, we always get a lot of interest. June 2nd – 4th saw us with two marquees at the “Stroud on Water” Trailboat Festival. This was a chance to see the progress that the Cotswold Canals Trust were making and to emphasise our joint aims and need for continuous co-operation. June 23rd – 24th had us back at the Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally where we again received a generous donation from the organisers. Then on to Chesterfield, 30th June to 1st July, to help celebrate their latest achievements. The 22nd of July saw us a bit more local in Victoria Park, Newbury, supporting the K&A event there. August 26th to 27th was the Uffington White Horse Show; very, very wet and extremely muddy, both car and trailer having to be towed out at various times, but an event that we should continue to support.



Presentation of donation from Braunston Marina (D. Small)

For the first time for many years we attended the Royal County of Berkshire Show at the Newbury Showground (15th - 16th September). This was certainly the biggest site we had ever been on and the interest shown in our restoration/conservation project was extremely satisfying. Even more rewarding was being named the “Best Conservation Display” in the show and being presented with an engraved silver plate (unfortunately we can’t keep it!). Most of the credit for this award has to go to John Minns, who not only designs our display posters but also prints and laminates them as well.

Our penultimate outing, this time with display boards only, was to the towpath at Westleaze, where the Trust was officially presented with the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service on board nb *Dragonfly*. We ended our year at the Trust AGM at Bourton.

There was no IWA National Festival in 2012 due to their involvement with boaters at the Olympic stadium, otherwise we would have been there for three days as well.

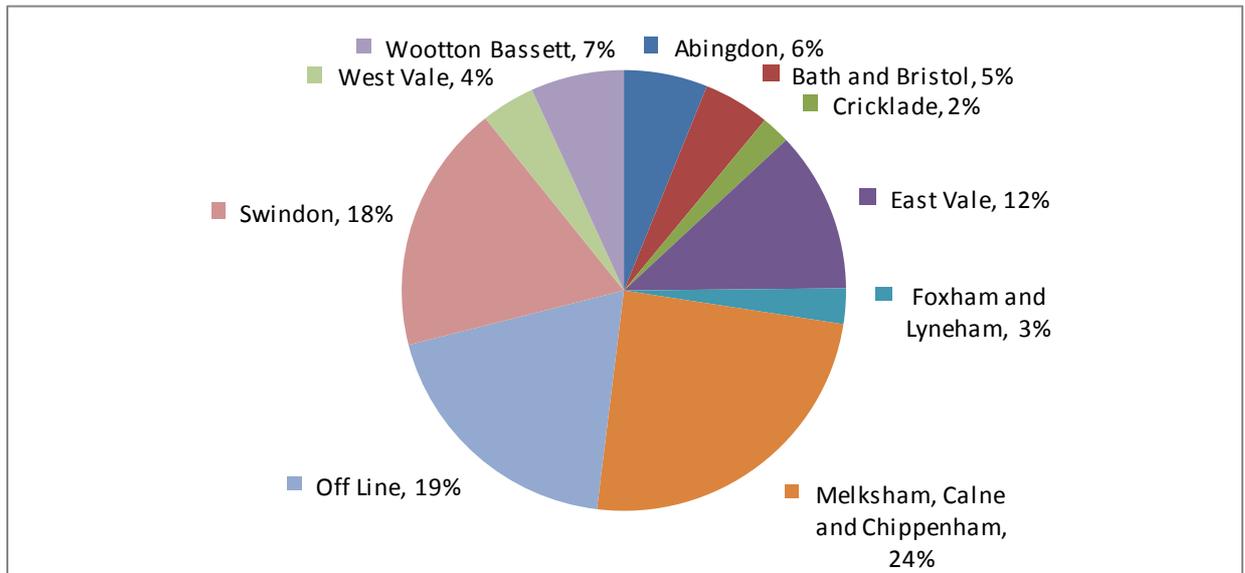
After due consideration I felt that after five years of attending events I was not fit enough to commit to a further year, I contacted the acting-chairperson to submit my resignation from both the Events Team and as a Director. After some discussion John Minns also decided that he needed a break. John and I like to think that over the five years we have undertaken this that we have made many good friends for the Trust. We have relied on a small band of regulars to help out at some events; it is hoped that from our increasing membership others will come forward to take up the reins, and John and I will provide as much assistance as possible.

Doug Small

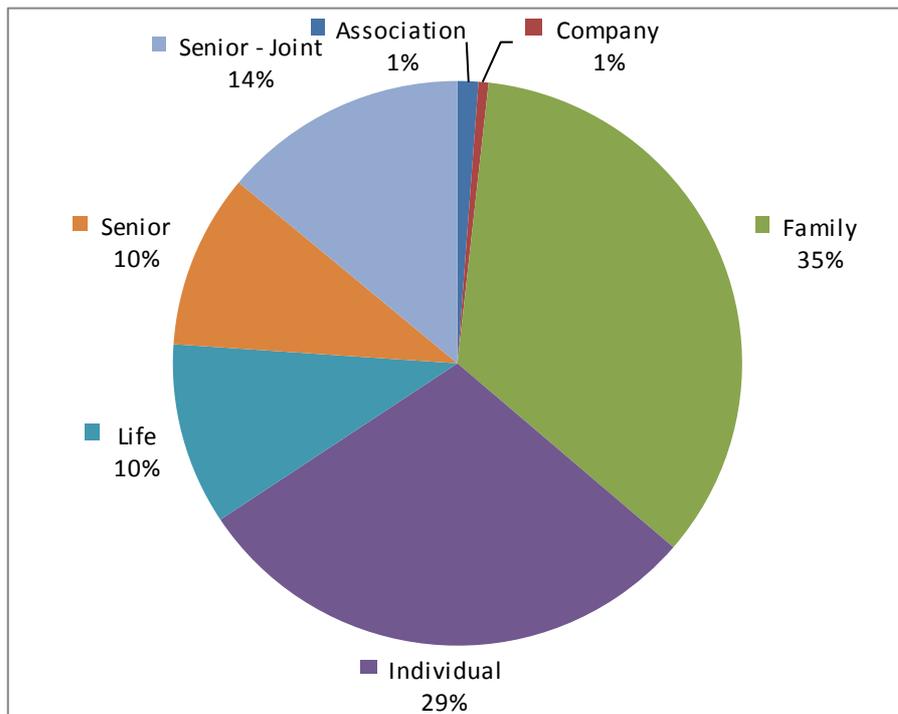
Membership

This year saw 171 new members of the Trust bringing the total at the close of the year to 2,295 members.

The following chart shows the membership broken down by branch. Note that three of these branches (Abingdon, Bath & Bristol and Cricklade) are currently not active, however, existing members have been left allocated to them pending the re-activation of these branches unless they have requested otherwise.



The following chart shows the membership broken down by type. Note that for clarity, the various "Life" categories (Normal, Honorary, Joint, and Honorary Joint) have been merged.



Trip Boats

The 2012 season for nb *Dragonfly* started with a very quiet Easter followed quickly by a “deployment” to the Stroud on Water Festival marking the opening of a significant length of the Stroudwater Navigation.

nb *Dragonfly*, together with nb *Perseverance* (the Cotswold Canal Trust trip boat), were the first narrowboats to pass through the restored Ryeford Locks on their way to the moorings in Stroud. Then followed an extremely busy three days of trips during which passengers were taken along the newly opened canal.

On returning to Swindon, the summer trips, together with various charters, continued and some 424 adults together with their children were carried as nb *Dragonfly* provided publicity for the canal and the Trust to the people of Swindon and the surrounding area. In addition, running the boat on the canal has ensured that it remains weed free.

As Christmas approached, Father Christmas chartered the boat and 151 children enjoyed meeting “the man”. Their parents enjoyed mince pies and mulled wine whilst one commented – “the most relaxing Father Christmas trip ever”.

Early in January, nb *Dragonfly* was again “on the road” this time to the MINI plant Swindon. For over two months, she sat in the tool room whilst the apprentices installed a wheelchair lift. She returned to the canal on 22nd March to be available for duty starting with the Easter weekend. The Trust owes an immense debt of gratitude to the staff at MINI Plant Swindon and especially to the apprentices who have done a magnificent job. nb *Dragonfly* is now wheelchair accessible.

Mike Lang

Wilts and Berks Canal Towpath Project

Throughout 2012 and Spring 2013 work continued on identifying and mapping all the landowners along the canal. This was made easier and more professional by using GIS (Geographic Information Systems), which is used now by many organisations such as the Land Registry, Environment Agency and Local Authority Councils. As a result the whole route from Semington through to Abingdon has a set of detailed maps showing all the land parcels and owners that are available from the Land Registry.

The Towpath Project has given the Trust GIS capability and this has also been useful in several other areas.

- Defining and mapping the proposed canal route to the south and east of Swindon as a GIS layer, which has been used by Swindon Council.
- Mapping the full proposed and historic canal route, which is used by the Trust, and also is now used by Wiltshire Council.
- GIS layer showing accurately all the locks and major bridges.
- New, detailed maps for the new event posters.
- Maps, boundaries and title information for landowner discussions.
- Maps to support several projects.

The Towpath Project has led to a resurgence of the discussions with landowners. A small team of experienced land negotiators is now talking to several landowners about land purchase, lease, licences and option agreements.

As we obtain more leases and licences for new sections of towpath, there is a natural desire to use them. The work parties in several areas did a fantastic job over the past 12 months, especially in readiness for the Easter Challenge Sponsored Walk. MCC branch cleared over 2km of thick overgrowth in two months, mostly in the snow and cold. The Foxham & Lyneham teams obtained several permissions to walk their sections. Up in Royal Wootton Bassett a team was working hard to clear the towpath and aqueduct on the Dunnington section. Around Swindon, work parties had been working all year on the Southlease and Coate Water sections. In Shrivenham a phenomenal effort has been made by the Swindon and West Vale teams to clear the section from Bourton Wharf, through Steppingstones to Station Road. In East Vale, special permissions were obtained and the clearance continued. In total the work parties cleared over 5km in the months before the walk.

The 2013 Towpath Challenge Walk took place over the four days of Easter, with the objectives of:

- Raising awareness of the Trust's objectives of restoring the whole canal
- Raising awareness of the Trust's plans to restore the towpath by 2017
- Encouraging people to get fit
- Encouraging people to walk beautiful sections of the canal
- Raising important funds for the Towpath Project
- Providing the project team with an annual target to achieve goals
- Celebrating the achievements of the Towpath Project
- Fostering and encouraging a culture of Trust-wide, cross-branch team working.

The event has been seen by most as a huge success and exceeded our expectations. Over 50 walkers took part for some or all the walk and were able to see towpath, canal and structures they may not have seen before. I had hoped to raise £1,000 - £2,000 for the Towpath Project, but in the end we raised over £4,000, which will be nearer £5,000 with Gift Aid.

The walk was hugely enjoyable passing through beautiful countryside, following where possible, the towpath of the Wilts & Berks canal (nearly 50%). Special permission had been obtained exclusively for this weekend only, to walk sections of the canal that are currently inaccessible to the public. We finished with a sense of achievement but also a sense of camaraderie. We have received a lot of comments from people who really enjoyed the experience and this was reflected in the amount that was raised and donated.



Walkers at Jubilee Junction after walking the length of the canal. (D. Small)

The walk would not even have been able to start without the support teams, the clearance work parties, the landowners who gave their permission over their land, the sponsors and the weary walkers who endured the cold, mud and me driving them on mercilessly.

Tim Pyatt

The Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership

The Trust has advanced the Wilts & Berks project considerably during the year with really good progress on the Towpath Challenge. The contact with the many landowners and the organisation of the Easter Walk are positive steps towards restoration.

The Trust's activities go from strength to strength with many of the projects shown elsewhere in this report. The Partners chose the Melksham Link as a priority scheme and this is progressing well with the planning application now being considered by Wiltshire Council.

During the year we have welcomed the Melksham Chamber of Commerce & Industry who have joined the Partnership adding further support from the business community. We continue to value the support of all Partners and look forward to working with the newly formed Canal & River Trust who have taken on the work of British Waterways.

Members of the Partnership at March 2013:

Canal and River Trust	Melksham Without Parish Council
Canoe England	Nationwide Building Society
Chippenham Vision	Oxfordshire County Council
Cooper Tires	Swindon Borough Council
Cotswold Canals Trust	Sustrans
Cricklade Town Council	Thames Valley Chamber of Trade
Environment Agency	Thames Water Utilities Ltd
Inland Waterways Association	Vale of White Horse District Council
Kennet and Avon Canal Trust	Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
Melksham Town Council	Wiltshire Council
Melksham Community Area Partnership	Royal Wootton Bassett Town Council
Melksham Chamber of Commerce	

Fleur de Rhé-Philippe
Partnership Chairman