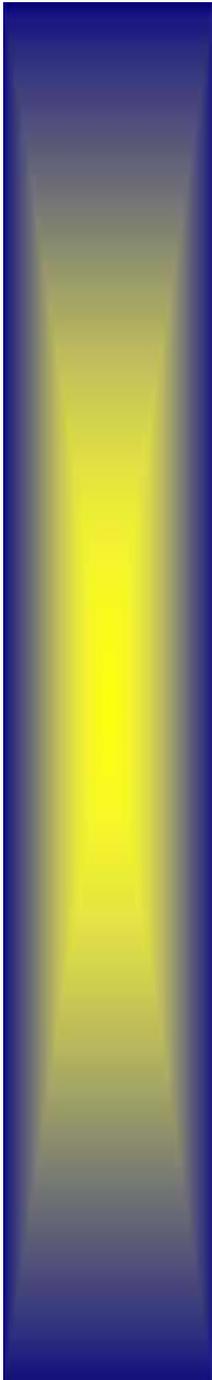




Registered Charity
No. 299595



Annual Report 2014-2015



**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
General Sir John Wilsey GCB, CBE, DL

Trustees during the year

Acting Chairman	Kathleen Hatton
Vice Chairman/Secretary	Christopher Coyle
Treasurer	Peter Kinsman
Directors	Raymond Aldridge
	Andrew Chapman
	David Cook
	Colin Fletcher
	Derek Flexer
	Douglas Harris
	Roger Holmes
	David Maloney
	Tim Pyatt
	David Stirling
	Brian Stovold
	Jennifer Stratton
	Edward Thomas

President's Foreword

Last year I wrote about the quiet progress that the Trust had made. I think that this year the progress is more visible, and the pace is certainly picking up.

One of the most significant decisions that the Trust has made in some time was to appoint Jock Mackenzie MBE to help with the masterplanning of the canal. This followed a great deal of thought about the pace at which we are achieving progress, and the ways in which we might increase it. We have made enormous strides as an organisation, and many people are amazed by what we have achieved with very limited resources. However we must not rest on our laurels. We have long had a reasonably clear idea of what was required for the restoration of the canal in engineering and physical terms. The purpose of engaging masterplanning assistance was to take our strategic planning to the next stage, i.e. to work out how we would generate the funding and the activities to put our plans into effect. By engaging Jock we are utilising the considerable experience he has in infrastructure development – and that is what we are essentially about.

While Jock has a brief to masterplan the whole canal, we have asked him to concentrate initially on the Melksham Link, the new stretch of canal to link Melksham to the Kennet and Avon Canal. The reason for that was quite simply that we had already submitted a planning application, which was working its way through, and we wanted to move on to the next stage. With his help we are developing plans for the canal corridor as a whole.

Canal & River Trust (CRT), formerly British Waterways, are a very different organisation now. Although they still have to give priority to the miles of canals that are currently navigable, they are becoming more and more supportive to canals under restoration. They have teamed up with the Inland Waterways Association to fund a small restoration team that is very helpful to groups such as ours. We are also able to tap into advice from other departments at CRT, such as engineering, heritage and development. This is a very welcome change.

Another significant achievement during the year was of course the acquisition of The Peterborough Arms at Dauntsey Lock. Following its closure by Wadworth, the Trust had the pub listed as an Asset of Community Value, and came to acceptable terms with Wadworth for the acquisition of this canal-side pub. The Trust is carefully planning its refurbishment and re-opening as an integral part of a comprehensive Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre.

One disappointment during the year was the fact that we could not secure a new Chairman, despite a number of attempts. I am hopeful however that we will have more success on this in the coming year.

Finally, 2014 marked the hundredth anniversary of the Act of Abandonment in 1914, which brought a formal end to the canal. One hundred years later we marked this anniversary with a very successful Melksham River Festival, putting out the message that the Wilts & Berks Canal is not dead; we are alive and making real progress in restoring the waterway for the benefit of the whole community.

Dr David Fletcher CBE

Acting Chairman's Report

The main focus this year has been to prepare projects for restoration and so a casual observer would say that there were no extra lengths in water which would be true. However restoration has to be very carefully planned and in fact the time getting a project ready is much, much longer than the actual time taken to do the final works. Take Studley Grange – the Trust has been working here for more than 20 years and at last it is all coming to fruition. It will be a lovely stretch of canal when finished and we hope to be able to raise the funds to rebuild Chaddington Lane Bridge soon so that we can connect up to the next section to Chaddington Lock.

As our President says the appointment of Jock MacKenzie to master plan the canal will make a big difference to our strategy. We did not know how we would find £18 million to build the Melksham Link but Jock's plans to set up enabling development along the canal corridor will give us the answer. There will be a lot of new tourist attractions for Melksham as well as canal-side housing and a marina. We are starting to work more in partnership with other organisations, like the Dorset brewery, Hall & Woodhouse, who love canal-side pubs. Melksham's furniture store, Leekes, were invaluable in their help with the River Festival costs last year.

There is a lot of impatience about re-opening the Peterborough Arms as soon as possible. Although this would be great and I understand that the locals are without a pub, we have a few hurdles to get over first – it is a listed building, and as such getting planning consent takes longer. It also needs considerable investment as not much money has been spent there for a while. It would not be sensible to reopen and then have to close again for renovation so the plan is to get it all done at one time. We aim to reopen Autumn 2016 if all the permissions and fundraising are successful.



Open day at the Peterborough Arms (John Minns)

The opening of a new Waitrose store alongside the canal near Kingshill in Swindon has raised considerably the profile of the canal, and the very successful boat trips that we run along that stretch. We are looking forward to extending the relationship we have built with Waitrose, as the whole urban development of Middle and East Wichel takes place over the coming period.

All of this, and the publicity that we are now receiving regularly about our activities, is of course continuing to raise our profile, and our credibility. I am very pleased to report that our membership continues to grow.

There were several events during the year – in June there were two Heritage Open days at Pewsham Locks, one for the local school children and the other for the general public. These were funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) Sharing Heritage programme and were a great success. A team from MCC branch led by Val Melville did a lot of work on this. There were activity days over half term at the Museum in February 2014 and then for the Open Days at the Locks the volunteers organised all kinds of canal related activity such as making bricks, puddling clay, sawing wood, spinning, making balsa wood boats etc. There was music and a stall where everyone could find out about the wildlife along the canal.

Then in September we held the Melksham River Festival and what a great event it was. Using the new slipway a number of Wilderness Trail boats were lowered into the river along with five steam boats. We brought nb *Dragonfly* over from Swindon and craned her into the river. Over the weekend a lot of local people found out that the River Avon is a fantastic asset on their doorstep. In 2015 there will be another smaller river event here in September in conjunction with the popular food festival.

Kath Hatton



Cheque for Studley Grange project from the People's Millions (Steve Walls)

Accounts

	<u>Designated</u> <u>funds</u> £	<u>Restricted</u> <u>funds</u> £	<u>Unrestricted</u> <u>funds</u> £	<u>Total this</u> <u>year</u> £	<u>Total last</u> <u>year</u> £
<u>Incoming resources</u>					
Donations		253,042	25,273	278,315	174,382
Investment income			308	308	591
Income from charitable trading		2,613	28,355	30,968	22,685
Members Subscriptions			26,728	26,728	23,154
Grants		24,889	25,481	50,370	24,064
Landfill Tax Credits		4,665		4,665	58,825
Tax refunds & Sundry		1,196	6,426	7,622	18,100
Total incoming resources	0	286,405	112,571	398,976	321,801
<u>Expenditure</u>					
Restoration	5,294	203,144	46,912	255,350	182,530
Fund raising and publicity	7,809	7,552	29,830	45,191	30,867
Management & Administration	96	21,278	13,271	34,645	30,062
Total expenditure	13,199	231,974	90,013	335,186	243,459
<u>Transfer between funds</u>	42,840	(41,473)	(1,367)	0	0
Net movement in funds	29,641	12,958	21,191	63,790	78,342
<u>Fund balances brought forward</u>	84,123	243,756	10,109	337,988	259,646
<u>Fund balances carried forward</u>	113,764	256,714	31,300	401,778	337,988

Accounts (Continued)

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2015

	<u>Total this year</u> £	<u>Total last year</u> £
Total fixed assets	313,195	57,729
<u>Current assets</u>		
Stocks and work in progress	6,692	3,278
Debtors	171,873	20,374
Short term investments and deposits	16,772	136,476
Cash at bank and in hand	148,270	289,820
Total current assets	<u>343,607</u>	<u>449,948</u>
Short term creditors	29,024	35,189
Net current assets/(liabilities)	<u>314,583</u>	<u>414,759</u>
Long Term Creditors	226,000	134,500
Net assets	<u>401,778</u>	<u>337,988</u>
Designated Funds	113,764	84,123
Restricted income funds	256,183	243,756
Unrestricted income funds	31,831	10,109
Total funds	<u>401,778</u>	<u>337,988</u>

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31st March 2015.

The members have not required the charitable company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2015 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

(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 £2,000 has been received from Crapper & Sons and £2,709 transferred from Community First.

4. The Fixed Assets of £313,195 are made up of Land and Buildings at cost of £299,609, Plant and Machinery at a depreciated value of £9,083, Boats at a depreciated value of £3,880 and office furniture and equipment at depreciated value of £623. The major fixed asset cost this year was the purchase of the Peterborough Arms at a cost of £262,181.

5. Debtors at the end of this year mainly consist of HMRC £15,311 (VAT refund, Gift Aid and PAYE), Underwood Trust donation of £136,500 to Studley Grange Project and various deposits.

6. The charity had two part-time paid employees at the end of this year.

7. The Long Term Creditors of £226,000 represents the loan deposits received as at 31 March 2015 in respect of the purchase of the Peterborough Arms property.

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

9. There has been one transaction undertaken by (or on behalf of) the charity in which a trustee or connected person has a material interest. This has been £8,564 paid to Simul Consultants Limited (David Stirling) for professional advice on the Peterborough Arms Business Plan.

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.

Charities Trust	People's Millions
Community First	Pewsey Zixex Club
The Co-operative Bank p.l.c.	QTS Rail Ltd
J. Cox	Richard G. Wiltshire Limited
C. Coyle	RWB Methodist Church Friendship Group
Crapper & Sons Landfill Limited	P. & A. Smith
G. Eycott	Sovereign Housing Association Limited
J. Flanagan	B. Stovold
C. Fletcher	Thameswood Veterinary Clinics Limited
Hall & Woodhouse Limited	TransWilts Community Rail Partnership
Haydon Wick Parish Council	The Underwood Trust
Dr A Hollman Legacy	Vale of White Horse District Council
Inland Waterways Association	Viridor Credits Environmental Company
IWA Avon & Wilts Branch	Waitrose Limited
Intel Corporation (UK) Limited	B. Wallis
Land & Water Services Ltd	Wantage Round Table
Leekes Limited	Wiltshire Council
D. Maton	D. Worrell
Nationwide Building Society	Yorkshire Building Society
V. Osgood	

Restoration Progress

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

West (Colin Fletcher)

Forest Farm, Melksham. Almost half a mile of canal continues to be managed on a care & maintenance basis with volunteers keeping the towpath clear.

Naish Hill to Pewsham Locks. This year has been dominated by the spectacular blow-out of Cocklemore culvert where a substantial stream flows under the canal near Pewsham Locks. At the year end the culvert has been completely exposed, all suspect brickwork has been removed, about 25% of the culvert rebuilt and the towpath re-instated by a small team of volunteers.



Cocklemore Brook Culvert undergoing repair (Peter Henden)

North of Pewsham Locks. 1,000 metres of canal leased from the Bowood Estate is being managed under a cautious clearing regime following an agreed environmental strategy.

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.

Foxham. The upper section of the site is now ready for dredging. This has been achieved thanks in part to the acquisition of Tirfors from the Trust's 200 Club funding, but mainly by the enthusiastic and dedicated support of the small but effective work party, who turned out every Sunday come rain or shine. With the purchase of two pulleys the combined pulling power of the available Tirfors has been about 30 tons and even this has been insufficient on occasions. Ian Chatterton (a local resident) has managed to get his electric motor powered boat from Foxham top lock along the

“Duck Pond” for about 700 metres. This he intends to do frequently to stir up the water in order to discourage water plant growth. With our additional 400 metres it’ll make over a kilometre in water.

Dunnington Aqueduct. Savills (on behalf of Oxford University) again gave us a licence to work on Dunnington Aqueduct in the winter months to remove vegetation growth that would damage the brickwork. The aqueduct structure itself is deteriorating and needs more serious restoration.

Templars Firs Extension. Wiltshire Council have not yet sold the depot site. Our focus is on the section of the new route that is between the existing canal and the depot boundary. Tony Key is in discussions with Wessex Water to try to find a solution to the problems of waste pipes crossing the new canal.

Templars Firs Restored Waterway. Many work parties in the summer were occupied with clearing weed from the canal. The small boat was used wherever possible but most of the clearance was done using the weed cutter tools from the bank. There were the usual problems with leaks near the blockhouse. It is hoped a permanent solution to these can be found as part of extending the canal.

Chaddington. Restoration of the length below Chaddington lock was completed by hire of a large digger last summer to spread the dredgings from below the lock over the field where they had been left to dry out and then covering them with topsoil. This part of the field is now regrowing but will have to be mowed frequently to suppress the weeds and return it to meadowland.



Restored section below Chaddington Lock (John Minns)

Studley Grange. During the year a lease was signed with Biffa which has opened the way to fundraising and project planning for restoring the length of canal which runs along the edge of the landfill site. Land and Water Group have been given the contract for the excavation, in conjunction with WYG Plc. During last May environmental contractors trapped and removed water voles from this area and scraped out the sides of the stream to discourage others from moving in. We have since trimmed the banks a number of times. This winter we spent several work parties clearing undergrowth and overhanging branches from the towpath area of this stretch.

Central (Rod Hacker)

Mouldon Hill. This project is the subject of a planning application where we are resolving issues raised by the Environment Agency.

Wichelstowe. The Wichelstowe Link from East Wichel to the old line at West Leaze is on hold while we await the appointment of a new development partner by Swindon Borough Council.

River Key Aqueduct. The aqueduct carrying the North Wilts over the River Key just south of Cricklade was restored several years ago and is somewhat isolated but is on the edge of Dance Common. The recently formed Dance Common Management Group has cleared around the aqueduct as part of a scheme to restore the common and open up footpaths.

East (Brian Stovold)

Station Road Bridge. Restoration of the towpath has continued.

Pocket Park. Work was undertaken on the new path with the ground levelled and stone laid for half the length.

Wantage. East Vale branch officially opened the Sack House Museum at Wantage Wharf since when it has been opened regularly (with a pause over the winter) and also occasionally welcomed special groups. We have been involved in the process of preparing the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan.



The Sack House (Brian Stovold)

Childrey. Preparation work continued for the Childrey Bridleway bridge and negotiations also continued for a lease over a length of canal between the Challows. We have been involved in discussions with developers on housing to the north west of Wantage which resulted in their plans being altered to accommodate a new route for the canal and provision for transfer of ownership of the land required once we get planning permission.

Fundraising

In my report last year I wrote about the proposed purchase of the Peterborough Arms at Dauntsey Lock. I am pleased to say that everything went to plan and members and supporters loaned or gave sufficient funds for the Trust to buy the pub and the deal was finalised in August 2014. Since that time volunteers have been tidying up and are currently decorating the skittle alley. This has been temporarily turned into a meeting room with one end partitioned off as the Engineering Office. The Trust is holding most of their meetings at the pub now. No beer, but cups of tea! We have received planning permission for some preliminary works like making the Pub Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant with a toilet for the disabled and new wider entrance from the car park. We hope to gain consent for the wider works and extension later in 2015 and I will be looking to raise some of the funds from European programmes.

Back in May we put in a bid for the People's Millions, a joint grant scheme between BIG Lottery and ITV. Following a second application and an appearance on local ITV news in October there was a day of frantic voting which resulted in us winning £50,000 for the Wildlife Trail at Studley Grange. The Studley Grange project has occupied a lot of time this year, complex engineering, seeking planning consent, getting a long lease from Biffa, putting out tenders to find a contractor and fundraising. Just at the end of the financial year we heard that we were successful with the largest grant that the Trust has ever secured - £349,500 from the Landfill Communities Fund via Viridor Credits. Along with a large sum from the Underwood Trust, there were grants from the Inland Waterways Association and the local Area Board as well as donations from members which will enable us to carry out this project in 2015.

A new funder to the Trust is the Yorkshire Building Society (YBS) that gave us £10,000 to re-build the culvert at Pewsham that carries Cocklemore Brook under the canal. This had breached at Christmas in 2013 and when I heard that YBS was offering grants of £10K for Lasting Legacy projects I thought a 200 year old culvert might fit the bill. Following some great support from members and the general public in voting for us, we secured the £10,000. Volunteers from Melksham, Calne and Chippenham branch of the Trust are making a fantastic job of rebuilding the culvert using the grant to buy the materials, they tell me it is going to last another 300 years. Employees from the local YBS office have been out to see our progress and are going to volunteer with the Trust.

The slipway in Melksham was another project funded by Viridor Credits. This was completed in late Spring 2014 and was well used for the River Festival in September. It was a beautiful weekend and all the visitors really liked to see the river in Melksham being so busy with boats.

2014-2015 was a very busy year but that seems to be normal now. Next year will be incredible!

Kath Hatton

Events

The centenary of the abandonment of our canal took place in 2014. An extraordinary effort was made to publicise our work and tie it into marking (but not celebrating) the centenary.

Wilts & Berks River Festival at Melksham

This was the show case event to mark the centenary. It was a Trust-wide event hosted by the Melksham, Calne and Chippenham branch to tie in with the proposed development of the Melksham Link which will see canal traffic on the River Avon in the centre of Melksham. The plan was to give a taste of what this will be like.



View from the River (Gabrielle Flexer)



Some of the team (Miriam Zaccarelli)

The two days had a real festival atmosphere helped by a glorious weekend. The boat trips on nb *Dragonfly* and *Damselfly* were very popular; by mid-afternoon on each day we had sold the complete trip allocation. The river activities included a parade of boats with the Wilderness boats and the steam launches making a really attractive scene, the Trust is grateful to these boat owners for making the effort to come and add to the river festival atmosphere.

The “try canoeing” sessions proved very popular and the Canoe Club subsequently reported a boost in membership. There were also displays from the Fire Brigade and Bradford-on-Avon Diving Club. Throughout both days we were entertained with folk music played from the balcony of the Activity Centre. A sizable crowd made themselves comfortable on the grass to listen to the music and take advantage of the adjacent beer tent.

The standing displays, food stalls and fairground were also kept busy all day. A great weekend made really special by the way all the branches contributed to the event by staffing stalls, selling programmes, running boat trips, managing the money and hosting VIPs. A special thanks to the boat team who had the logistical problem of not only moving nb *Dragonfly* from her home mooring but making sure the hull was cleaned, so as not to transfer alien species from canal to river.

This event has also proved to have a lasting legacy within the town who are much more aware of the Trust’s activities and have engaged more proactively. This was a great example of teams from across the Trust coming together to create a great weekend with lasting benefits - the perfect outcome.

Pewsham Locks Open Days

As well as hosting the Melksham River Festival, the Melksham, Calne and Chippenham Branch held its own big event to mark the centenary. This was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to help us build stronger community links, the theme was the working life of the Wilts & Berks Canal and it centred on the activities that would have taken place at Pewsham well over 100 years ago. A lot of research was carried out to get the details of the people who worked and lived there when the canal was in full operation.

On the first day 120 local primary school children visited the site dressed in Edwardian costume which added to the atmosphere with the volunteers and stall holders also dressed in Edwardian period dress. The children were told stories about the people who lived and worked at the site, tried their hand at making bricks, understanding how clay is used to hold the water in a canal, sawing logs with a double handed saw, making metal hooks in the blacksmith’s workshop and much more.



Hand weaving (Doug Small)

The following day the whole exercise was repeated for over 300 members of the public. This time they were joined by Frankie the canal horse who was also dressed in traditional tack.



Frankie the horse & Phil Newbury (Diane Vose)

Inland Waterways Association Campaign Festival, Chester

Doug Small and John Minns kindly represented the Trust taking the Trust display to the Campaign Festival in Chester during May 2014. It was a very busy weekend and gave Doug and John an opportunity to review the possibility of taking on the mantle of supporting the external Trust events once more – I am delighted to report that they have indeed volunteered to do so for 2015/16.



IWA Trail Boat Festival, Chester (Doug Small)

The Vale

Brian Stovold and the team from East Vale attended Newbury Waterways Festival, the White Horse Show at Uffington, the Old Berks Country Show and a number of village fetes. The walks laid on by East Vale Branch for the Wantage Summer Festival were, as ever, a success with a variety of short and longer routes using the canal towpath in part.

Swindon

Rod Hacker and the team from Swindon worked to raise our public profile in the area, especially to drive membership growth, by taking their marquee and display materials to various events around the town. They increased the number of local events attended to nine compared to three the previous year. One of the big events was the opening of the Waitrose store in Wichelstowe where they drew great interest by exhibiting over a weekend. They plan to do at least as many events in 2015. They are also fortunate to have nb *Dragonfly* raising the profile in the Swindon area.

Royal Wootton Bassett

Jenny Stratton and the team from Royal Wootton Bassett put on display tents at Open Farm Sunday at Vowley Farm (Chaddington Lane) and at Sacred Heart Church Fete. They also hosted a sponsored walk, kindly promoted by the Thameswood Veterinary Clinic. And there was a BBQ at Vowley Farm.



Display at Open Farm Sunday (Jenny Stratton)

Melksham, Calne and Chippenham (MCC)

Malcolm Hitchinson chairs the Events and Planning committee for the MCC Branch and he and his team did a terrific job, pulling out all the stops to help mark our centenary year. To make things a little different, instead of “blues”, the Branch decided to dress in period costume at all our public facing events. It proved to be a great conversation starter and the stands were well supported.

The team held activity days in conjunction with the Chippenham Museum, providing three canal related activity days for children during the February half term. This is the second year we have held this event and we had children making rope dragonflies, designing t-shirts, colouring paper plates in the style of narrow boat art, and making model narrow boats. This event is part of a coordinated plan to develop ways to build closer ties with the local community and to strengthen our education theme.

In March, the team held a charity auction, the second time we have held such an event, having secured 85 lots including a unique visit behind the scenes of the Yeovilton Historic Flight Hanger, items of jewellery, tickets for folk festivals, food hampers, works of art and, courtesy of our Patron, a trip round the gardens at Highgrove House with a champagne tea in the Orangery. The star lot turned out to be John Laverick’s offer of a trip on his steam launch, where the winner would be able to steer the boat and fire the boiler. This lot alone went for £400 and boosted our

total on the night to over £3,000. The branch is very grateful to the Angel Hotel and Auctioneer, Gordon Brockman, for their support and especially all those who donated auction lots, without which, there would have been no auction.

MCC also held their first music night, the events team are always looking at different ways to raise money to support the efforts of our work party. In October they put on an Irish folk night with local group Finnegan's Wake. 85 people arrived and the hall was soon filled with the sounds of hands clapping and feet tapping to traditional Irish songs and tunes.

Finally, other events run or supported by the MCC Branch events team included: Calne Bunny Hunt organised by Castlefields Canal and River Park (CARP) where the branch ran boat trips; the annual sponsored walk to The Bell Inn at Lacock; Chippenham Folk Festival on the Whitsun weekend where we had an information display gazebo and ran two boats on the River Avon for each of the 3 days; Melksham Food & Drink Festival - with the continuing developments regarding the Melksham Link there is always a lot of interest in the display; Melksham Party in the Park; Chippenham River Festival; Calne Bike Meet and Kennet & Avon Carnival on the Canal.

We must all give thanks to the fantastic efforts of all the many who help plan, support and staff these activities across the Trust.

Derek Flexer

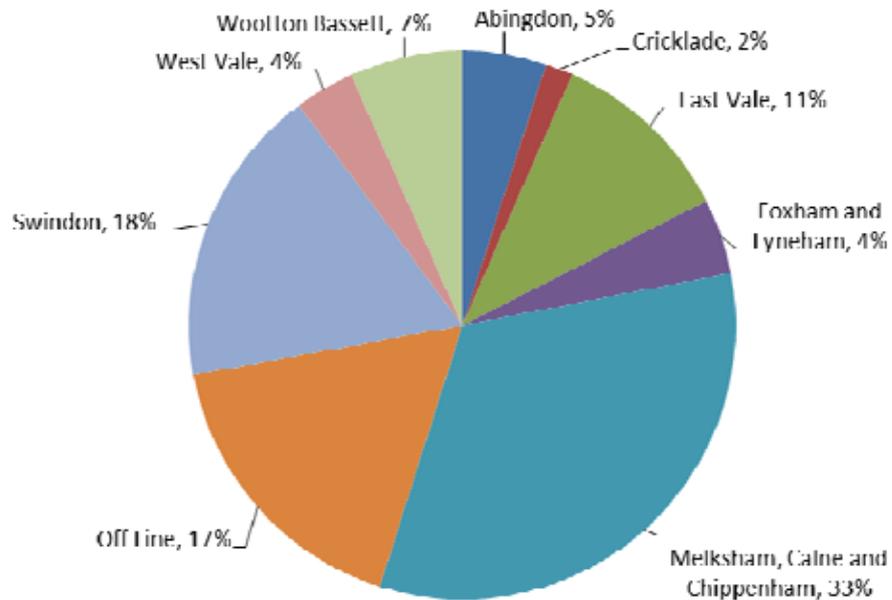
Land Ownership

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.

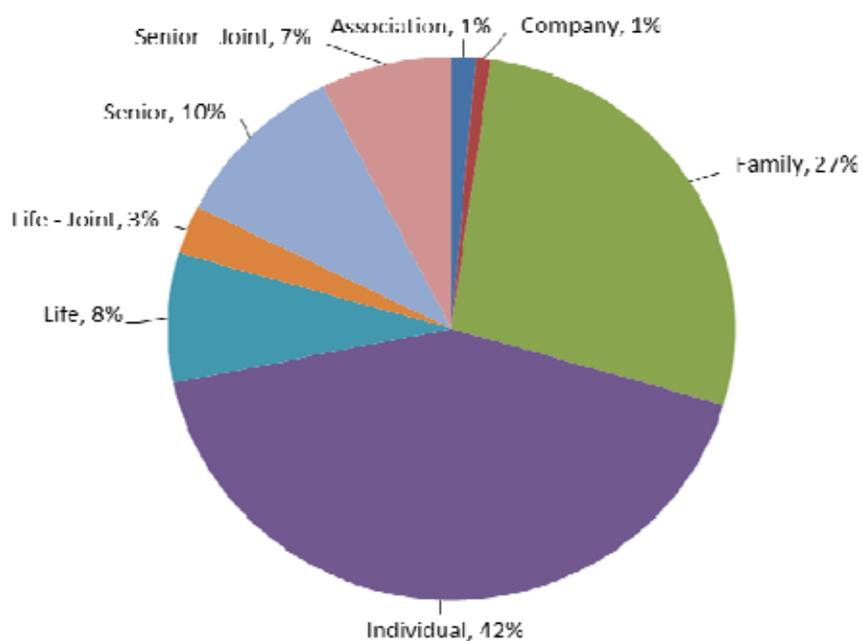
Membership

This year saw 368 new members of the Trust bringing the total at the close of the year to 2,580 members.

The following chart shows the membership broken down by branch. Note that two of these branches (Abingdon 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 Junior membership is not shown as it is under 1%)



Trip Boats

Dragonfly had a successful year generating £4689 in cashflow, this is after payment of £501 for repainting. 586 people paid £5 to take a trip and in addition there were 24 charters. We now have a small number of gifts and souvenirs for sale on the boat.

Santa trips proved as successful as ever. We have to limit the earliest date that we can take bookings - Santa 2015 will be open for bookings from October 1st. The reviews we receive are proof that this formula works. One family have joined us each one of our four years of running Santa, and many have been for three years. The parents & grandparents are kind enough to send in their happy photos to be shown on the Trust web site. This year's figures were: 270 children, 321 adults, 55% profit on turnover, 32% increase in turnover, £2437 profit. As always the common remark is that people did not know there was a canal so near to the centre of Swindon. Obviously there are a limited number of Saturdays and Sundays we can ask Santa to be on the canal and the weekdays trips are not so popular. Therefore we hope simply to maintain this level of profit.

We are a small team with only 8 skippers, their partners and a band of volunteer crew. It is therefore amazing that we are able to carry out this volume of activity. We operate Saturdays and Sundays with 4 trips each day plus an occasional charter for a variety of parties, school children, Brownies, birthday parties plus a large number of disadvantaged groups. Vouchers for canal trips are often auctioned to raise funds.

In August nb *Dragonfly* was spectacularly lifted out of the canal and left Swindon to attend the Melksham River Festival where many people enjoyed a trip on the river. Grateful thanks to all who have helped, skippers, crew and those who carry out the less glamorous jobs.

A good year gained through much hard work by our volunteers.

Sue Paine

The Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership

Local Plans have been the great debate among the partners during the last year. Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy was adopted in the early part of 2015. Swindon Borough Council's Local Plan is only a few months behind in process and both protect the route of the canal to allow restoration plans to be completed.

In Swindon partners are concentrating efforts to plan the integration of the canal with the emerging scheme for the Eastern Villages.

There is a bigger challenge in Oxfordshire where the Vale of White Horse District Council's draft Local Plan (pt1) will be put before a Planning Enquiry by early Summer 2015. Partners continue to work hard to reinforce the need for a more robust canal policy in this Local Plan.

The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust team working on the Melksham Link planning application has been augmented by work on a masterplan to create sufficient enabling development to finance the construction of the canal.

The opening of the waterside Waitrose store in Swindon's Wichelstowe development has attracted much more local public interest in the canal and plans are well advanced to construct a landing stage for the Trust's trip boat.

Elsewhere the Partnership continues to support the Trust on restoration projects at Royal Wootton Bassett and Pewsham where progress on the ground will hopefully be very visible in the coming year.

Members of the Partnership at March 2015:

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

*Fleur de Rhé-Philippe
Partnership Chairman*