

## Robin Evans addresses Chiltern Branch

Chiltern Branch was pleased to welcome Robin Evans, Chief Executive of British Waterways, to give a presentation after the Annual General Meeting on 28th Match. He gave an insightful overview of the scale of the tasks and the diverse range of activities that are involved in managing our waterways. Robin said he was delighted that BW was moving out of direct government control. He explained that the arrangements for the new Canal & River Trust offered a great opportunity for the long term future of the



*Robin talks about the new Trust*

waterways, although the funding profile meant that the initial years would be challenging. He also provided very graphic details of the scale of current water shortages and the steps being taken to mitigate the problems. Robin stayed on after his presentation to participate in an open and lively discussion with members.

## Boxmoor Canal Festival called off

The Wendover Arm Trust has cancelled this year's Canal Festival to be held at Boxmoor on 3-5 June. With so many activities taking place over the Jubilee weekend, there was a lack of trade bookings and the threat of low water levels meant that boat bookings were also down. The Trust expressed its disappointment but felt it could not risk the event becoming a drain on its funds. Attention is now focused on turning 'Walk an Arm's Length' into the major fundraising event for the year. This will take place on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> of September. See page 8.

Chiltern Branch  
Newsletter  
Spring 2012



The Inland  
Waterways  
Association

# *Chairman's Ramblings*

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It's been a funny old start to the year with the Winter months being dry and warm and now Springtime is cold and wet. But we have to be glad of the rain and we need lots more of it, especially for the stretch of the Grand Union that passes through our area. As of late April, the Tring reservoirs were only 61% full compared to 89% last year and the recent rains had not led to any gains due to losses and opening the Aylesbury Arm for a weekend. Current projections are that if we have average rainfall over the coming months, then the Tring reservoirs will be dry by July.

So while closures to the Aylesbury Arm, the Leicester Line and Northampton Arm and restrictions on lock usage are inconvenient, they are needed. It is also really important that boaters on the Grand Union double up in locks to save water.

It was mid-March when we last ventured out on the canals. Once again we made the trip from Alvechurch down the Tardebigge to Worcester and then up the Severn to Hawford Junction to take the Droitwich canals back to Hanbury Junction and then up the incline to our marina. It's a lotta locks but it's a great trip. Although water shortages are not so severe in the Midlands, it was noticeable that the supply was being restricted as we climbed up the Tardebigge.

Included with this issue are tickets for the Wendover Arm Trust's Grand Draw. Please take part and buy one, some, or all 10 of the tickets at £1 each. Sell them to your partners, sons, daughters, grannies, whoever! All the proceeds go towards the restoration. Return the stubs (name and contact number written on the back)

together with payment; cheques made out to Wendover Arm Trust. The Draw will be on the day of the 'Walk an Arm's Length' event on September 2<sup>nd</sup> at Bulbourne.

So there's no Boxmoor Festival this year and no National either. There's been a lot of speculation about the future of the National Festival but Region Chairman, Paul Strudwick confirms that it is intended to hold a Festival in 2013 as promised. At the time of writing the IWA Festivals committee is looking at possible venues. They are trying to decide what we can offer in these difficult times and the Trustees are unanimous in their support for the Festival.

The lead article of the last issue of *Grapevine* proudly announced that Chiltern Branch had made its largest ever donation but neglected to mention the sum. In fact the cheque to Wendover Arm Trust was for £2000. I've had a stren word with the Editor and made it clear that he must up his game for this and future editions.

We've just completed our series of evening meetings with another fine presentation from Jeremy Batch. Attendances at these meetings have increased by 20% over each of the past two years and now average well over 40. I am sure you will join me in thanking Colin Bird for arranging such an excellent series of talks. He's already working on next season's programme and initial details are provided on the 'Diary' page.

Now summer beckons. Enjoy yourselves on or by the water and we hope to see you at one of our events.

*Peter Winter*

# News

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## **Chiltern Branch**

Committee: Following the Annual General Meeting on 28th March, the committee members agreed to continue in their existing posts as listed on the back page of this issue of *Grapevine*.

New members: Chiltern Branch is pleased to welcome the following new members:

Mr N Blackmore & Mr N Nancarrow  
Mr M Braley  
Mr M Collins  
Mr & Mrs W Collins  
Mr & Mrs G Croeser  
Mr & Ms S Hill  
Mr & Mrs P Jordain  
Mrs A Laker  
Mr R Hughes

Facebook & Twitter: Are you into social media? If so, we'd like your help to raise the Branch's profile using electronic media. Please contact Peter Winter.

## **London Region**

Commercial Road Lock: The campaign to keep this lock open during the period of the Olympics has succeeded. Pre-booked passage will be available for two hours each day.

Donations: The Wendover Arm Trust and the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation will each receive £500.

## **Head Office**

IWA's headquarters in Chesham provides a service to IWA Branches and other organizations by offering use of its bulk mail facility. Volunteers are needed to help with stuffing envelopes. If you can spare a couple of hours now and then, please contact Tracy Higgin on 01494 783453.

## **British Waterways**

Drought Restrictions: In mid-April Tring Reservoirs were at only 61% of capacity. Restrictions on lock opening hours around the Tring summit have reduced usage but if there is only average rainfall, the reservoirs will be dry by the end of July. Additional backpumping is being installed and 20 lock gates will be relined in the March to May period.

License Evasion: South East Area continues to make good progress with only 1.9% of boats now unlicensed compared to 12.8% six years ago. The average national evasion rate is 3.4%.

## **Canal & River Trust**

John Best, former Chief Executive, Milton Keynes Council, has been appointed Chair of the South East Area Partnership. Recruitment of members is now in progress.

### ***PLEASE Sign up for IWA Chiltern e-News***

Postage costs go through the roof from May, so why not get your news by email and receive an enhanced version of *Grapevine* as well as regular bulletins about what's going on. This means that you get a better service while reducing costs. That has to be good, so sign up at:

[www.waterways.org.uk/regions\\_branches/london/chiltern](http://www.waterways.org.uk/regions_branches/london/chiltern).

# Conserving the Roger

## **Fabian Hiscock explains urgent work on this historic boat**

The Rickmansworth Waterways Trust has spent the last eight months on an essential project to eradicate major and unexpected rot in our historic wooden working boat *Roger*, well known to many Chiltern Branch members.

The problem first came to light last year, when what appeared to be a relatively minor problem suddenly developed into a very significant issue. After advice from Jem Bates on what had to be done it became evident that the cost was going to be much more than the Trust could afford. So work began to raise the funds for the conservation of this fine heritage boat.

This effort paid off and by the end of the

the bottom planking, both fore-end flashes and the fore-end capping. And the hull survey which had started the whole exercise showed that one of the top planks on the starboard side should also be replaced. It's typical of the issues of wooden boats that about 2 feet of damaged heartwood had to be replaced with a 22 ft plank! The amount of work, and the skill required for what seems a simple statement of a few tasks, has been considerable. All sorts of issues surfaced, as they always do, and some presented interesting challenges. In the end we were in the dock for two complete months, and used all that time to the full.



*The new stem post*

*Roughly cut...*

*...now shaped*

*and being installed*



year the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Arts Council England and Three Rivers District Council had agreed to provide most of the funding. Work was able to start at Bulbourne in January; we just got in before the summit was closed.

Over the following two months, these grants allowed the stem post to be replaced completely, along with 14 feet of

In addition to work funded by the grants, other jobs emerged. For example, in the last few days before undocking we found the whole of the cabin back bulkhead waterlogged and had to replace it all!

Once the specialists' work was done, the normal jobs of the boat owner remained.

The ballast, which had to be cut up to allow the survey, had to be reloaded; we had to clean out the bottoms and preserve them, and we got some of the painting done before undocking, especially the running gear which was left behind at Batchworth. We've been continuing that ever since, along with re-fitting the side cloths and other things.

Importantly, we also progressed the Heritage Learning package, for which we're using dozens of photos and a couple of hours of film footage. It is a condition of the HLF grant that requires Heritage Learning to be produced from any project they fund. This makes sure that as many people as possible benefit from their generosity, and we'll take this great opportunity to do exactly that for the conservation of wooden boats. We are, after all, a Heritage Education charity, and it's what we want to do. So it



*Caulking seams of the new side plank*

may be that, later in the year, members of Chiltern Branch and others, can benefit from the work we've just done.

But for now, our thanks go to Three Rivers District Council for their Capital Grant, to Arts Council England and to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their generosity. The *Roger* is back in good shape and ready to be enjoyed by all.

## *Kingswear Castle Outing*

Following the outstanding presentation by Roddy McKee about Britain's last two surviving paddle steamers we have made arrangements to have one day coach trip to Chatham for a special sailing on the Kingswear Castle on **26th May**.

This visit is being planned in coordination with the Paddle Steamer Kingswear Castle Trust (Trading) Ltd and is organised not only to experience this historic steamer but also to witness the Medway Barge Race.

The outline itinerary is:

Amersham Pick up	7.45am
Historic Dockyard, Chatham	arrive 9.30am
Embark on the Kingswear Castle	10.00am
Leave Chatham	5.00pm

The cost of the trip is £50.00 per person including coach travel and steamer tickets. For further information or reservations which must be made in advance contact Colin Bird Tel: 01932 248178, email [colin.bird@waterways.org.uk](mailto:colin.bird@waterways.org.uk).

# *My Exciting Day at Marsworth*

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Well August arrived and as usual there was a flurry of activity as my family prepared to go on holiday. I started my holidays too but I didn't have far to travel and I didn't need to take much with me as I stayed with my friend over the road, who always has everything ready for me. My usual gold coat suited me fine although I did give it a bit of extra attention and another quick wash before I came over.



*That's me with Carolyn and Hilary*

I arrived and devoured my welcome treat; I'm quite partial to marrowbone rolls. I thought that I would have time for a nap after my early morning walk but I saw that I was wrong as I got into the car.

Car journeys often mean going to Tesco, well this is OK as I have a ringside seat on all the comings and goings in the car park but we'd already driven too far so I knew this might be a bit of a treat.

The car came to a stop. I woke up and looked around recognising this car park as one that I had visited before. It's the one

near the water they call a canal, and I was full of eagerness as I remembered all the fun I had last year.

As I climbed up the steps memories came flooding back. It was interesting to note that the swans I growled at last year still remembered me and ignored me; my growl definitely did the trick to stopping them hissing at me. Then I saw people I knew and got very excited as I greeted them. Even though I am not a puppy anymore I still love meeting people and like to let them know I am pleased to see them. I also met some new people which was nice as I like making new friends.

Carolyn picked up a bucket and said we were going for a walk; Hilary also picked one up and joined us. We left the others playing with the boats but I find exploring and meeting people much more to my taste. After last year I knew the ropes and let folks say hello to me and stroke me whilst Carolyn and Hilary collected donations and talked to them about the canal.

Everyone kept on saying how low the level of the water was and I agreed with them as it was too low for me to have a dip. I could get in but wouldn't easily get myself out again. I had to reserve this pleasure until I got to one of the reservoirs, where I could climb down. I was quite shocked though as the water was quite far from the edges where it had been last year and there was lots of debris and stuff at the water's edge. Carolyn tells me that things are even worse this year; I suppose it is because I have had so many walks in the dry this winter that the reservoirs haven't filled up. I enjoyed my dip and ran back to continue my exploring and collecting.

Carolyn and Hilary also did interesting things like investigating the overflowing litterbins that folk were complaining about. I wasn't sure whether there were enough of them or if it was that they weren't emptied often enough but Hilary said Peter would sort it out. We walked quite a long way along the canal and back and then we had some lunch. I amused myself exploring and running over the lock gates, which is great fun.



*Some working boats came through*

The others continued to talk to people and help boats through the lock. There seemed to be more boats than last year but less people on the towpath. This was probably due to the heavy showers, which curtailed some of my antics on the lock gates as they became slippery. However I was able to talk to my old friends while sheltering from the rain and

they told me what a nice dinner they had at the Anglers' Retreat, the previous evening. I was disappointed to have missed this as I really enjoyed the chips last year.

We went on another walk along the canal and collected some more money. In total we raised over £400 during the weekend, which was a good result considering the weekend was so showery. So the day came to an end. I thanked John for organising such a lovely time for me again and was sorry that I had to say goodbye.



*Always lots to talk about by the canal*

Still I hear on the barkvine that there's another lock ransom this year and I am really looking forward to it. It will be a little later than usual due to the Olympics, so it will be at the beginning of my holidays. It will be held on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> August at Marsworth Bottom Lock. I do hope that you will come and help me to raise lots more money for canal projects.

**Chuckle the Labrador**

# Walk an Arm's Length

## Jenny Brice introduces this sponsored walk

Since there's no festival this year, the Wendover Arm Trust is looking to this event as its major fundraiser. Support the Trust by joining this sponsored walk for a £10 fee plus as much sponsorship as you can raise. It is 6¾ miles from Wendover to Bulbourne and when you register you can notify whether you will need a return

coach to your car. The route is full of interest and a working party will be operational, so there's a chance for you to stop and rest while seeing and hearing about the restoration. Your walk will pass the newly watered section, onto the work in progress section and then past the dry section. You then arrive at the winding

hole which was completed in 2005 and is well used by visiting boats. All this restoration work has been achieved by volunteers either working on the canal or fundraising.

I will be walking BOTH ways, stopping en route for home made refreshments at Halton provided by the wives of the restoration team and then for a BBQ lunch at the Grand Junction Arms at Bulbourne.

If you cannot walk, then **SPONSOR ME**. You can do it online using the link shown opposite or send a cheque made out to the Wendover Arm Trust to:

Jenny Brice  
Woodstock  
Cedars Close  
Chalfont St Peter  
SL9 0LL

**Go with the flow...**

**WALK AN ARM'S LENGTH!**  
Sponsored Canal Walk

Wendover to Tring  
**Sunday 2nd September 2012** Register NOW!

Please help us raise funds to enable our volunteers to continue restoring the beautiful Wendover Arm canal. To find out more visit our website:

[www.wendoverarmwalk.org.uk](http://www.wendoverarmwalk.org.uk)  
or call: 07547 181857

**Wendover Arm Trust**  
Restoring canal history in the Chilterns.  
Registered charity number: 801190

# *Weekend Away to York*

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This year's outing is extended to four days from 21st to the 24th September so that we can visit the attractions of York and the surrounding area. The brief itinerary is:

## **Friday 21st September**

- 08.00 Depart Chesham
- 08.15 Depart Amersham
- 08.45 Depart High Wycombe
- 11.30 Meet the Chairman of the Grantham Canal Society, who will be our escort for the visit. We will view the turning point and landing stage at our arrival point before continuing to Harlaxton and the restored wharf. From here a short journey will take us to Woolsthorpe and a towpath stroll to view restored locks
- 13.00 Pub Lunch at Woolsthorpe
- 14.30 We continue to one further site where locks are under restoration.
- 16.00 Rejoin the coach and continue our journey to York.
- 18.30 Arrive at the Holiday Inn York
- 20.00 Dinner in the Hotel

## **Saturday 22nd September**

- 09.00 Leave for the Pocklington Canal, where a member of the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society will act as our guide.
- 13.00 Pub Lunch
- 14.00 Resume our Pocklington tour .
- 16.00 Return to the Hotel
- 20.00 Dinner in the Hotel

## **Sunday 23rd September**

- 09.30 Depart for our visit to the National Railway Museum.
- 12.45 Depart for the King's Staith to board the 'River Duchess' for a 3 hour cruise on the Yorkshire Ouse, during which a cold fork buffet will be served.
- 16.30 Arrive back to rejoin our coach and return to our hotel.
- 20.00 Dinner in the Hotel.

## **Monday 24th September**

- 09.00 Check out of the Hotel and then visit York Minster.
- 11.30 An early snack lunch.
- 13.00 Rejoin coach for the journey home.
- 19.00 Approximate arrival time in High Wycombe

## **Costs and Booking**

The cost for members is £300 per person based on two sharing. This includes all coach travel, three nights half board accommodation, River Ouse Cruise with buffet, Entry to York Minster and coach driver's gratuity. The single room supplement is £45. A deposit of £50 per person is required to reserve your place.

For full details and reservations, contact Colin Bird, Tel: 01932 248178, email: [colin.bird@waterways.org.uk](mailto:colin.bird@waterways.org.uk).

# Join us at Ricky

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## The Rickmansworth Festival

20 years on!

May 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 2012



**Rickmansworth Aquadrome**  
and along the canal between  
Batchworth and Stockers Locks

Open from 10:30 until 22:30 Saturday and until 17:30 Sunday

*Admission donations please of at least £2 per person towards the cost of the Festival and the work of the Trust*

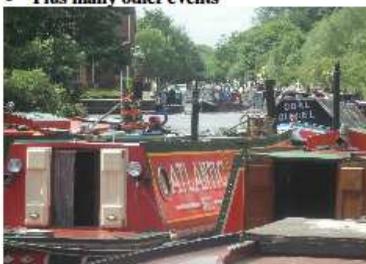
### Along the Towpath

- Lots of Working and Pleasure boats
- Scores of demonstrations, competitions,
- Canal Boat Tug-of-War
- Interactive showcase of the Education work of the Rickmansworth Waterways Trust

**Music and Dance** - a full programme on four stages including Main stage and Owlsworld Acoustic Stage

### Also

- Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Spitfire on Saturday
- The Three Rivers District Council Environmental Fair
- Medieval living history display
- Harvey, a Clydesdale horse
- Appreciating Animals (supported by The Feathers)
- London Transport Heritage Train Sarah Siddons and Bus service (on Sunday)
- Beer Tent, Catering and all sorts of Trade Stalls
- Funfair
- Plus many other events



The Festival is organised by  
**Rickmansworth  
Waterways Trust**

Exciting and informing people about the heritage and value of the canals around Rickmansworth.

Supported by  
Three Rivers District Council, British Waterways, Hertfordshire Police, and The Inland Waterways Association.

**Rickmansworth Waterways Trust Ltd**

Batchworth Lock Canal Centre, 99 Church Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 1JJ:

T: 01923 778382 - [www.rwt.org.uk](http://www.rwt.org.uk) - [enquiries@rwt.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@rwt.org.uk)

Registered in England No 2674596 Registered Charity No. 1024322

Rickmansworth Waterways Trust Ltd. A Company Limited by Guarantee.

# Diary

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**19th & 20th May**

## ***Rickmansworth Festival***

See opposite.

**26th May**

## ***Trip on the Kingswear Castle***

See page 5.

**18th & 19th August**

## ***Marsworth Lock Ransom***

**2nd September**

## ***Walk an Arm's Length***

See page 8.

**21st to 24th September**

## ***Weekend Away to York***

See page 9

**29th September**

## ***IWA National AGM***

Chelmsford

**26th September**

## ***The Waterways of France & Northern Belgium***

**Roger Squires**

An interesting travelogue of the journey between Dunkirk and Ostend.

**24th October**

## ***The North Walsham and Dilham Canal 1825-2025***

**Ivan Cane**

The history of Norfolk's only locked canal.

**28th November**

## ***Haunted Canals and Waterways***

**Allan Scott-Davies**

Spooky tales of ghosts and hauntings on the waterways.

**12th December**

## ***Christmas Party***

Our usual yuletide extravaganza.

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## ***Chiltern Branch Meeting Venue***

Evening meetings of the Chiltern Branch are held on **Wednesdays** commencing at 8.00pm at the Amersham & Chiltern Rugby Club, Ash Grove, Weedon Lane, Amersham, Bucks, HP6 5QU. Tel 01494 725161. When arriving at the club, it is best to use the entrance on the right after you have passed the club house. Directions are:

### **From the north:**

- Follow A416 through Chesham, past 2 garages opposite each other, over a small roundabout and up the hill towards Amersham.
- At next roundabout (1½ miles) turn right at into Copperkins Lane.
- Take 2nd left (½ mile) into Weedon Lane. Take first right (¼ mile) into Ash Grove. The club is at the end of this road (100yds).

### **From the south:**

- Take A416 from Amersham to Chesham and over roundabout (Boot and Slipper pub on corner).
- Turn left at the next small roundabout (¼ mile) into Copperkins Lane.
- Take 2nd left (½ mile) into Weedon Lane. Take first right (¼ mile) into Ash Grove. The club is at the end of this road (100yds).

# The Backdoor

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The IWA is a registered charity (No. 212342) whose work is supported by member's subscriptions. The IWA campaigns for development of Britain's waterways for use by all.

The IWA may not agree with the opinions expressed in this Newsletter but encourages publication as a matter of interest. Nothing printed may be construed as policy or an official announcement unless stated, otherwise the IWA accepts no liability for any matter in this Newsletter.

## Advertising Donation Rates

*Single Three*

*Issue Issues*

- Full Page A5 £40 £100
- Half Page A5 £25 £65
- 1/4 Page A5 £15 £40

*Members small ads £1 for 12 words. Extra words 10p. Send payment with the advertisement to the Editor.*

This is your Branch and *Grapevine* is your newsletter. We like to hear your views about what's happening on the waterways and on what the Branch is doing. We also welcome any suggestions for new activities.

We'd particularly like to hear more stories from you about your boating experiences. Whatever your contributions are in terms of articles, letters, photographs etc. please send them to:

Peter Winter

Grove Cottage, Church Road

Penn, High Wycombe

HP10 8NX

Tel: 01494 819065; Mob: 07722 184117

Email: peter.winter@waterways.org.uk

## Your Committee

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### Chairman & Newsletter Editor

Peter Winter

01494 819065

07722 184117

peter.winter@waterways.org.uk

### Secretary

Liz Norris

01438 238187

liz.norris@waterways.org.uk

### Treasurer

Ken Aylmer

01923 232515

ken.aylmer@waterways.org.uk

### Programme Secretary

Colin Bird

01932 248178

colin.bird@waterways.org.uk

### Fundraising & Waterway Events

John Brice

01494 873298

07740 733241

john.brice@waterways.org.uk

### Planning Officer &

### Membership Secretary

Carolyn Leonard

01628 526512

carolyn.leonard@waterways.org.uk

### IWA representative to WAT

Jenny Brice (non-committee post)

01494 873298

jenny@johnbrice.co.uk