Wilts & Berks Canal Trust

RWB Branch Newsletter, August 2026

Household Recycling Centre News

It now looks as if the old Council Depot will not become a Household Recycling Centre, opening the way for the site to be sold. However, Wiltshire Council has announced that **the HRC could be built along a lane south of the Salt Depot**.

While this will not directly affect the canal, it would affect traffic levels along Marlborough Road. **Mark Hopkins, RWB Town Council chief officer**, has written an open letter to **Cllr Helen Belcher, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Regeneration and Assets at Wiltshire Council**, expressing the town's misgivings about the proposal. Key among them are the Highways and Traffic Impacts:

"Our principal concern relates to the impact of the proposed facility on the local highway network. Household Recycling Centres generate a substantial volume of vehicle movements, particularly at weekends and during periods of good weather when residents are more likely to undertake home and garden projects.

"The proposal risks adding considerable traffic to roads that already experience congestion, particularly at peak times. Increased vehicle movements, including cars towing trailers, vans, and commercial vehicles, could create delays, increase queuing, and place additional strain on junctions and access routes – the site access is on a blind bend.

"This is especially concerning if vehicles queue outside the site, potentially obstructing local roads and affecting nearby businesses and residential areas, as happens already with the facility at Stanton St Quinton, Chippenham."



A copy of the Open Letter (dated 31st July) **has now appeared on the RWB Town Council website**.

Work Party Update

There have been five work-parties during July, but three of them finished early at lunch-time because of the forecast excessive heat. On 1st July, our youngest volunteer **Brendan Bennett** steered the aluminium work-boat while our newest recruit **Roger Francis** operated the battery-powered weed-cutter, seen overleaf in mid-channel.



There was plenty more to cut in subsequent weeks, and by the end of July a channel had been cleared up to Noremarsh Footbridge.

There is still plenty more to clear between this and the end of the section of canal used by the RWB Angling Club.

If allowed to grow, the invasive yellow water-lilies carpet the canal from bank to bank. A saving grace is that the bees and butterflies love them, as do the water-voles.





The team returned to Templar's Firs on 8th July, concentrating on the towpath and northern path because there were not enough volunteers to operate the work-boat safely.

The photo on the left shows the spread of yellow water-lilies east of Noremarsh Footbridge on the 8th.

On the 15th and 22nd, the team met at Studley Grange, widening the towpath where it had been encroached by Norfolk Reeds.



The Norfolk Reeds were cleared from the towpath beside the methane monitoring point on the 22nd.



The effective width was more than doubled, and the mown reeds created a carpet along the path.



Sheep on the landfill mound at Studley Grange were taking water from the canal.



The channel leading from Studley Grange to the culverts under the lane has completely dried up.

On the fifth Wednesday, the 29th, the work-boat was in action again at Templar's Firs. On the right, it can be seen just before 9am on the 4-wheel trolley beside the slipway, ready to be lowered into the canal.

Note the yellow water-lilies spread right across the channel in the distance.





The work-boat seen from the towpath near to Noremarsh Footbridge. (Photo: Gareth Penn). A large team was needed to gather the cut lillies for disposal.



At the end of the morning, it was too hot to continue, but by then there was a clear channel, resulting in dozens of barrow-loads of cut vegetation.

If you would like to join our work-parties, please e-mail our Work-Party Organiser **Neil Lazenby** on **neil.lazenby@wbct.org.uk**. For more details..

Nonsuch

Professional engineer **Brendon Hossack** had visited the canal in mid-June to work on Nonsuch, which has had trouble starting. He removed various components to send them away for servicing and testing. He and **Martin Palmer** returned on 1st July. The engine was started successfully, but it caused vibrations because the front engine mounts had sheared off. Brendon had brought his trailer, equipped with HIAB, in case the engine needed lifting out.



The extreme hot weather delayed further work on the boat until the 30th, when the engine mounts were finally replaced. This time, Brendon brought a manual hoist which allowed him to lift the engine within the engine bay.



He diagnosed the cause of difficult starting: too much fuel was being pumped when the engine was cold. This can only be fixed if the engine is taken out for further work on the bench; there's simply not enough room to access the component within the engine bay.

However, in the meantime Brendon found a novel way to limit the fuel, by using the Engine Stop rather like a Choke, he got the engine running. When it settled down, there was hardly any smoke. Can our crews master this method?

Despite the prolonged extreme heat in late June and in July, the water level at Templar's Firs is only down slightly. Let's hope that we'll have rain soon, so that Nonsuch can be tested before public trips re-start.

Events

A reminder that the **Royal Wootton Bassett branch meetings** are held on the third Monday of the month, at the **Angel Hotel in the High Street at 7:30pm**. The next meetings will be on **17th August, 21st September** and **19th October**. If you cannot use the stairs, let us know in advance, and we shall ensure that we meet on the ground floor.

The **Branch Quiz** is scheduled for **Wednesday 19th August at The Angel, meeting at 6:30 for a 7pm start**. We need teams of up to four players.

The **Trust AGM** is at the **Sixth-Form block at the RWB Academy on Saturday 17th October**. If you would like to help to host this event or act as a guide on the morning site visit, please let us know. We still need **someone who can drive a hired minibus** during the morning - please check if your driving licence has current validity against **'Category D1'.**

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Restoring all 70 miles of the Wilts & Berks canal in Oxfordshire and Wiltshire to create a public and wildlife waterside park for walking, cycling, fishing and boating.

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