

Quagmire

The newsletter of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust
Spring 2017

Contact: mdablack@btinternet.com

News...

It seems to be the season for personnel changes!

Roy Medcalf has reluctantly resigned as **Chairman**, owing to ill health. Trustees would like to thank Roy for the support he gave to the Trust in his role as Chairman but fully understand his reasons for handing the role to someone else. Unfortunately Roy has suffered ill health for some time and has been unable to give to the role as much as he would wish. However Roy, a keen fisherman, has taken on the post of **Fishing Officer**, so look out for occasional items from Roy in future editions of Quagmire.



Most members will know **Ivan Cane**, our archivist, who has stepped in as **interim Chairman**. Arguably, no-one knows more about our canal than Ivan and he will be invaluable in the role of interim Chairman.

There will be an official vote to appoint a permanent chairman at the AGM on 22nd August.

Many of our Trustees and Officers have more than one role and none more so than **David Revill**. David organises work parties, which involves liaising with owners and bodies such as the Environment Agency. He attends meetings on the Trust's behalf with the EA, Broads Authority, EAWA and others and always attends work parties despite the fact that recently he has been unable to do as much physical work as he would like. Therefore it is no surprise that David felt he must let one of his roles go and decided that he would like someone else to take over as **Media and Press Officer**.

The **very good news** is that Alex Hurrell will be stepping into his shoes. Alex is a very well known professional correspondent who has spent a number of recent years with the Archant Group and is no stranger to reporting about the Trust in publications of the Group, such as the North Norfolk News and the EDP. Alex and David have known each other, and worked together, over the past twenty years and we are sure that this co-operation will continue.

Thank you Alex for taking on this role and we look forward to seeing your professional touch appearing in your future articles for, and about, the Trust, our activities and our future plans.

Unfortunately, Helen has decided to take a break from her role as **Trust Secretary**. Helen's home life has become very busy since she and Brian now care for their three delightful grandchildren. We are pleased that Helen is not abandoning the Trust completely and is carrying on as Local Grants Officer.

Ivan has suggested splitting the existing role of Secretary and we have therefore been looking for a **Secretary** to deal with correspondence and a **Minute Secretary** to attend monthly meetings and prepare minutes and agendas. Two people have expressed an interest in finding out more about these roles but if you know of someone who may be interested please let the Trust know.

David Gosling, has recently been feeling the need for some assistance with his role of Treasurer and has decided to step down from the role at the end of this financial year. Barry Mobbs has kindly agreed to assist David in the meantime.

Excellent news is that **Tom Moore** (known to us as Dr. Tom) is now able to resume responsibility for Grants and Fund Raising. This will be an onerous task and we must thank Tom for volunteering to spend the necessary hours of work completing forms! Well, it will be a change from shifting tons of mud with his mini-digger...

Andrew Fryer, Trustee, has taken on the role of Boating Officer. He will be responsible for looking after the Trust's "fleet" including the pontoon and workboat, arranging crews, boats being available, trips, and reed-boat restoration.



Janet Richardson of *Towpath Talk* visited a work party in November last year. David Revill chatted to her about the Trust's aims and achievements before giving her a guided tour of the canal. She was clearly very impressed with the

work that has already been done by Laurie and volunteers, giving us a full page in the January 2016 *Towpath Talk*, and including nine photographs.

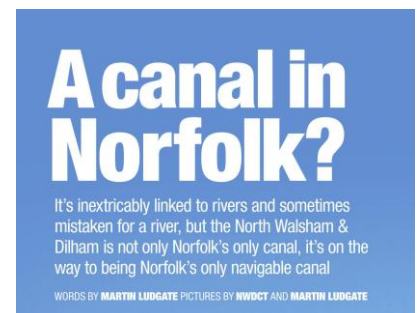
We should be very proud to have had such a comprehensive article in a national 'canal' newspaper, which is often full of restoration schemes, all of which are surely bigger and better funded than our own. (See *Waterways Elsewhere* in this issue.)

Janet headed her article 'Local Support for Norfolk Restoration Scheme' and cited the approximately 3,300 signatures on our petition. Signatures are collected at events, talks and from walkers beside the canal, all from people who are genuinely keen to see the canal restored. In contrast, Janet's final sentence reads: *The Ebridge Lock to Honing Lock section is owned by the North Walsham Canal Company and the final stretch to Wymondley Bridge at Dilham by Bindwell Ltd, who have yet to come on board.*

If you would like to read the full article, David brings copies to work parties and our events.

Since that edition of *Towpath Talk*, another article has appeared in the.....edition. This is illustrated using the photo taken at our Christmas work-party, showing the volunteers enjoying mulled wine, mince pies and other goodies. And yes there was still much work achieved in the afternoon!

There is a truly fantastic article complete with photos and map in the latest copy of *Canal Boat*, which is Britain's best inland waterways magazine. They have been championing the UK's wonderful waterways and boating for well over a decade and provides news, views, practical advice, boat tests, cruising ideas and updates on canal restorations with every issue. Yet again we have caught the attention of a national magazine, thereby promoting interest in our canal.



You may remember that we received a £1,000 donation from the 2015 **Sandringham Flower Show**. The Trust was invited to send two representatives to a biennial event for organisations that have received a donation from them. Chris and Mary went along and were able to chat to other organisations and promote interest in the canal. One member of the committee who had voted for us to receive our donation was very enthusiastic and urged us to try again. Mary had prepared photos of Bacton Lock demonstrating the work that has been carried out and showing the metal for the bottom lock gate groins at **Bacton Wood Lock** which was paid for by the donation. No-one else had taken evidence of what their donation had been spent on and many people showed great interest in our photos. Chris & Mary chatted to a President of a Lions Club who suggested contacting the local Club, asking for a donation. The good news is that the Hoveton & Wroxham club has kindly donated **£50** towards the restoration.

The Trust has received **£500** from The Castaways singing group. This is part of their distribution of funds, following the dissolution of the original Group on the death of its lead person. There are no constraints on what the money is used for and no doubt it will be put to very good use.

Bacton Wood Lock news is that the bottom gates have been fitted! Laurie excelled himself yet again by calmly taking on the job of designing and making the gates (with a **little** help from work party volunteers). Temporary bridges were installed above the lock to assist with the installation, the gates being strapped to the bridges between manoeuvres. Several 2 day work parties were needed at this stage but everyone is so willing, good humoured and keen to work hard with a view to seeing the water return above the lock.



Looking down from position of top gates 2001...2009...



...and after top gates fitted



building the bottom gates



painting the quoins



back-filling quoins with lime mortar



clearing silt and debris



installing gates



gates almost installed (March 2017)

This achievement feels like a very positive step forward in the Trust's aim of restoring our Canal.

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Don't forget our very own greetings cards are available at £1.50 each + £1.50 p&p up to 12 cards. Publicise the Canal and its returning wildlife to your friends and family – the easy way!



Mute Swan



Emperor Moth



Small Copper



Banded Demoiselle

Recent Events



On Thursday, 30th March, the Trust held another successful **film evening**. This time a daring decision was made to hire The Atrium with its comfortable seating and sophisticated equipment. This is David Revill's press report:-

There were maps, finds and other items of interest available to view in the main reception/refreshment area and Trust officers to answer the many enquiries.

The show commenced with an introduction by the Vice Chairman, Chris Black, who thanked the many people for attending.

There were not many seats vacant in the auditorium when the first film rolled "Restoring the North Walsham and Dilham", made and edited by John Parker of Big Sky Productions. With a delightful commentary by Thordis Fridriksson, it depicted very many of the sites along the canal, which have been greatly improved, both visually and for the very apparent benefit of wildlife, through the work of the Trust and two of the four canal owners. Some of the shots were taken from an aerial camera, putting a whole, and very interesting, new dimension to the canal corridor. Once started, it seemed the 35 minute roll was over far too quickly, due to the superb photography, delightful commentary and the fascinating subject matter.

During the interval, delicious cakes, many home-made, were served by Mary Black and helpers with a choice of beverages for a very modest fee. The result of the work of our very own Raffle Queen Gisela was a handsome £166.90 which was down to the generosity of Tesco of Stalham, Sainsbury of North Walsham, Lidl of North Walsham and Morrison of Cromer, who had all shown their continued support for the Trust by providing the prizes. This was arranged, as was the whole evening, by Jane Gotts our main event organiser.

The second film "Who wants to be a Volunteer?", again by John Parker, showed some of the activities our volunteers and others, working in all sorts of varying locations and situations along the canal. A particular incident, showing a JCB attempting to cross the canal in Swafield, caused a few laughs and gasps when it inevitably got stuck and was sinking in the mud! Needless to say, the expert driver, Jeremy, extracted himself and the JCB back onto dry land! This film showed the many sides of work which are carried out, from simply cutting grass to dismembering a fallen tree and holding a bonfire to dispose of the brash, constantly reminding ourselves of the needs of nature.

In conclusion, Chris Black again thanked all those attending and introduced David Revill, the Work Party Organiser, who explained some of the plans of work coming up in the near future. There were several questions raised and answered in a satisfactory manner. David explained that not all the work was carried out alongside the canal, but behind the scenes, for example secretarial work. He asked if there were any volunteers present who would like to take on the post of Secretary or a Minutes Secretary, as both are needed. Thankfully two such persons came forward.

The Trust's thanks go to the organisation team of the Atrium who all helped the evening to be such a wonderful success in bringing the attention of many to the only canal in Norfolk.

David Revill

A DVD of the film 'Restoring the North Walsham and Dilham' is available for purchase at £6.50 plus £2.00 p&p from mdablack@btinternet.com

This film, professionally narrated by Thordis Fridriksson, is a brief account of the restoration between Ebridge lock and Swafield Bridge. Profits from the film support the NW&DC Trust.

David Revill gave a talk to the **North Walsham Historical Society on Thursday evening on 2nd March** with helpers Gisela Revill Roger Hopkinson and Brian Wexler. Following the talk, the Society gave David a cheque £40 towards our funds and 20 of our booklets were sold. Various talks are given by Trustees, as shown in the 'Dates for your Diary' item in this newsletter. These talks are a valuable way of informing people about the Canal and its restoration. Very often, there are only one or two people who are even aware of the Canal's existence. If you know of a group who would like a talk and/or presentation, please contact the Trust via the website. Of course Trustees are very busy with all aspects of the Trust's work but are only too happy to 'spread the word'.

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Chris Black writes:-

Ivan asked me if I would like to accompany him to the **Northern Canals Association meeting** on Sunday 19th February 2017.

You may be asking why a Norfolk Canal Restoration Group would be invited to attend and give a short talk on the North Walsham & Dilham Canal to a Northern Canals Group, but in geographical terms we are within the Northern Canals area! The meeting was held at the Lichfield Cruising Club which is located on the Hatherton junction of the Coventry canal.

Jenny Black, Volunteer Co-ordinator IWA, gave a talk on 'The Restoration Hub' a new system to improve co-ordination between voluntary groups and the CRT, IWA etc. This could be very useful for our Trust.

Julia Tinker, CRT Restoration Co-ordinator, introduced us to a new online tool developed by her to allow restoration groups to work out the cost/benefit of a canal restoration. Generally this is not an easy task but it is vital to be able to demonstrate the worthiness of supporting a project. This tool, being relatively simple, will help us in the future. Indeed we were asked for just such an analysis of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal when we met with Norfolk County Council a couple of years ago.

Following a hearty lunch prepared by the Club members, each group gave a report on the progress of their restoration project. Ivan had prepared a short visual presentation about our canal project which was well received – especially the restoration of Bacton Wood Lock.

The day finished with a visit to three sites on the Lichfield/Hatherton Canal. This is a major canal restoration project involving a great deal of money and a lot of volunteer labour. Much of the canal route was lost, with locks filled in and the line of the canal almost invisible. However the team behind the project has restored a significant portion of the canal to a very high standard. This is major project involving new tunnels, the re-routing of parts of the old canal and the building of a major aqueduct across the M6 Toll which looks quite incongruous at present, stranded high above the motorway.

It was a very useful day out, keeping important bodies such as the CRT and IWA aware of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal – even though for me it was a 17 hour day!

Chris Black, Vice Chair NW&DC Trust

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Photo challenge.

The **caption challenge** from the last issue



Another photo challenge to get you thinking - where is this? (There is a tiny clue...)



Thanks to Tom Carr for a suggestion that led to this refinement from member Sheena Gill

Queries and Questions!

When will the water return to the canal above Bacton Wood Lock?

How far have you got with restoring the canal?

Trustees and work-party volunteers have been asked these questions many times by people who are genuinely interested in the restoration of the Canal, but have little concept of the complexities involved.

Factors that influence the decision as to where work will take place include such things as the bird-nesting season, the weather, ground conditions, canal-owners permissions, availability of materials... and significantly the availability of funds.

An example is the quay heading beside the old Wherry Inn which needed replacing but would cost a significant amount of money to buy the timber, tie bars and so on. Once the money was available the items had to be ordered, a work-party capable of the work organised, the Canal Co. taking plant and materials to site and the owners of the old Inn needed to be involved.

Another important factor is the encroachment of nature. Sites along the section from below Honing Lock to below Ebridge Lock used to be kept clear, which involved cutting out and clearing growth from the channel and the back-sokes, the Staithe at Honing and the millpond at Briggate. It was no good just clearing these places once and then moving on, allowing nature to take over again. But of course this is exactly what has happened now that the owners of this section of the canal have withdrawn their support for the restoration. Many of you know that the spillway at Ebridge has been cleared *many* times as it is self-defeating to allow the roots of weeds and new trees to get a firm hold, thus lifting the old concrete screed and the bricks beneath. Together with the restoration comes the maintenance of the restored areas such as grass cutting and weed removal – an annual task in the Canal and Ebridge mill-pond!

Fortunately the Waterways Recovery Group will be working for us at Ebridge in August to help with the restoration of the Ebridge Lock and spillway.

Some operations require brain as well as brawn such as the installation of the bottom lock gates at Bacton Wood Lock, which has taken countless hours of Canal Co. and work-party time. The gates weigh some 4 tonnes each but have to be positioned to fractions of an inch.

The Trust work-parties will soon be concentrating on helping Laurie with various tasks including completing the spillway near Royston Bridge, removing spoil from Swafield to raise banks near Pigney's Wood, making stop-boards, clearing the chamber wall at Ebridge Lock, constructing an access ramp at Ebridge spillway and clearing the canal bed above Bacton Lock prior to re-watering.

Hopefully you can now appreciate how much is involved in getting back the Canal water!

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Items of interest to members:

Ebridge Spillway – The Story so Far.



When the North Walsham & Dilham Canal was constructed, in 1825, all watercourses within 1000 yards were diverted, so as to provide a water supply for the Canal. These various streams and ditches feed water into “sokes” that flow alongside the canal, occasionally under it in culverts, until they feed the canal itself below each lock.

The North Walsham & Dilham Canal was a late cut and fill canal, hence the canal is on embankments on the approach to each lock. On this embankment a spillway was constructed, so that any surplus water from one reach (pound) would then be carried by the soke to the next reach.



During the decline years of the Canal, the levels were allowed to drop, resulting in the spillways becoming overgrown, and disappearing under the brash and trees. The broken lock gates then acted as weirs, until they too collapsed. At Ebridge Lock, so as to maintain a head of water for the mill, bags of cement had been placed above the lock gates, acting as the overflow.



In 2005, the Ebridge spillway was discovered under a foot of spoil, with trees growing out of the middle. Its length was of surprise. Over the next couple of years, the spoil and brash were removed.



Records had shown that the spillway was repaired in the 1940's by the War Department, when the Canal formed part of Norfolk's Defence Line No 1. When clearing part of the debris, the date "1941" was found carved in the render.



It was not until after the refilling of the Canal, following de-silting by the owners – the Old Canal Company – that the spillway reverted to its proper use.



Unfortunately, the E.A. Stop Notice in 2012, prevented the OCC undertaking repairs. Since then the water and frost have worked to lift much of the 1940's rendering and egress through the underlying 1826 bricks. This is the task given to the WRG Camp – to make good!



Other work may be undertaken on the lock itself.

The spillway at Swafeld has been uncovered as part of the "archaeological dig" on the abandoned part of the Canal. At Royston, on the dry section, the structure has mainly been re-built by the OCC, in preparation for the re-watering. Briggate spillway is still to be found. At Honing the railway company moved the spillway to Dilham Lake, and it now lies at the edge of a field.

Ivan Cane 19 December 2016.

(The **Waterways Recovery Group** will be at Ebridge in August as detailed below.)

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'Build It And They Will Come' - The Swallowtail butterfly.



In the last issue of Quagmire, I mentioned that I was hopeful that the ongoing restoration of Purdy's Marsh might eventually lead to colonisation by the Swallowtail butterfly, *Papilio machaon*.

Arguably Britain's most spectacular butterfly, its National distribution is very limited, but its main stronghold is Norfolk's Broadland area. I have seen them at Wayford Bridge, Smallburgh, so they are already on part of the Broads river system not too distant from the North Walsham & Dilham Canal and linked to it by waterways. A big contributing factor to its

restriction is the lack of suitable habitat in which the foodplant, Milk Parsley, *Peucedanum palustre*, will grow.

To that end, enquiries have begun to find an individual or organisation with the necessary knowledge and expertise to give us the best chance of creating Swallowtail-friendly habitat on Purdy's Marsh.

To purposely misquote a line from the rather aptly-named movie, 'Field of Dreams', "Build it and they will come." It is a dream of mine to see Swallowtail butterflies floating over Purdy's Marsh, so I really hope that if we build a suitable habitat, they will come!

We have already had a couple of fairly positive responses to my enquiries. We are very aware that this is not going to be an easy thing to achieve, but I feel it is very worthwhile trying.

I'm still gathering information about the cultivation of this slightly mysterious plant, so if you can help, or know someone who can, please get in touch.

Perry Hampson Wildlife Officer

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Taken from a Book...

The North Walsham & Dilham Canal. R.S. Joby 1977

This booklet was kindly re-typed by R.J.Bunton who sent it to member Kevin Thomas.

This short extract is taken from the section describing the celebrations that marked the opening of the canal:

At this time upwards of a thousand people were afloat, and the road from North Walsham to Witton, and the banks of the canal, thronged with thousands of spectators, amongst them all the fashion and beauty of the neighbourhood, highly delighted with the novelty of the scene. After remaining at this place an hour and a half the vessels again got under weigh, and proceeded through the remaining three locks, and on passing through the last entered a most beautiful piece of water on the domain of Lord Suffield (on which it is intended to establish an annual water frolic) and arrived at the termination, at Antingham, at four o'clock; from whence the company returned in procession, to the King's Arms in North Walsham...

Coincidentally we recently received a query from a member of the public regarding 'Water Frolics' that used to take place on the Canal and we would love to hear from anyone who has photographs, press cuttings or anecdotes that have been passed down regarding these Frolics! Our own investigations have not discovered any mention of them.

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~~~Waterways Elsewhere~~~

Pocklington canal



David Tomlinson at
Briggate 2011

Coincidentally in the same issue of *Towpath Talk* containing the article about our canal, there is a double-page spread on the Pocklington Canal. Some of the old-timers on our work parties will know David Tomlinson who has long been a staunch supporter and sponsor of both the Pocklington and our canal. David used to attend our work-parties, which involved travelling from Yorkshire and staying overnight in a hotel!

The Pocklington Canal is about the same length as the NW&D canal, with nine locks. Their restoration project has been awarded nearly £500,000 from Heritage Lottery Fund and has had a grant from the People's Postcode Lottery.

Chris and I once had a holiday in the area specifically to visit the canal (yes, we've got the anoraks) and we would recommend a visit to walk alongside this lovely canal.

Mary Black

New Reach Working Group – Halesworth – Work Punt Launching

Ivan Cane and Chris Black attended the launching of the Work Punt and this is Ivan's report:

Chris Black and I crossed the border to Suffolk on Tuesday 31st January, to support the naming and launching of the Group's new work punt from the canal towpath. Around 15 supporters had gathered to witness the event, despite the cold wind.



Apparently the Queen had been asked to "do the honours", but was unable to do so, instead she was present in effigy, devolving the launching efforts to Gillie and Jane, who discharged their responsibilities magnificently. The unveiling showed the punt to bear the name "Patrick Stead", and two bottles of Halesworth Ale were then used to baptise the punt.

Following its launch into the water, Gerald Burns was able to punt across to the other side of the canal, to collect the first litter – a plastic bottle, one of the jobs that the punt and crew will undertake over the coming months.



The New Reach is a section of the waterway that passes through the centre of Halesworth. It once formed part of the Blyth Navigation, which ran from seven miles from Halesworth to the port of Southwold. It was built in the mid 1700's, to take keels, but later wherries were the main traders. This part of the navigation originally finished at a large basin, and for many years enjoyed by townsfolk for rowing. Unfortunately the basin was filled in, possibly in the 1950s and housing was built in 2010.

In 1837, the navigation had been extended, by the building of a lock joining the New Reach to the Town River. This was undertaken by Patrick Stead, so that the wherries could sail up to his maltings in Bridge Street. At this time there was a growing demand from the London breweries for Suffolk's celebrated pale malt, and the coal for the heating of the maltings came upstream from Southwold. However, by the mid-19th century, silting of Southwold Harbour prevented craft entering the port, and to the decline of through trade, although the wherry *Star* traded into the 20th century as far as Wenhamston.

The New Reach Working Group's aims are to maintain the stretch through the town, enhancing the Town Park and Millennium Green, hence the need for a work punt to de-litter and control weed and reed growth. Later aims include enhancing the Patrick Stead Lock remains, maintaining the water levels through the town and clearing Halesworth Town Lock of tree growth that is eroding the walls of the 1760 early example of canal engineering. Following a talk with Gerald and others, Chris and I took advantage of the Group's *Halesworth New Reach Trail* leaflet, to walk down to the Town Lock, of which there are remains of the brick walls and wooden uprights that once held the lintels over the lock gates.

It was an enjoyable morning, and a pleasure to join another local restoration group to support their efforts. The Group hope to visit the North Walsham & Dilham Canal in the coming months – to gather some inspiration.

Ivan Cane.

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Dates for your diary

Talks & Presentations 2017

22nd April	East Anglian Cruising Club	Ivan Cane
13th June	Buxton Womens Institute	David Revill
18th October.	Park Farm Probus.	Chris and Mary Black.
2nd November.	Wissey U3A.	Ivan Cane.
14th November.	Trunch Friends.	Ivan Cane.
24th November.	Broadland and Coastal Cruising Club	Ivan Cane.

Events.

Saturday & Sunday 3rd & 4th June Another Open Weekend at Ebridge! Volunteers to help erect tents early on the Saturday will be very warmly welcomed! Open times are 11m - 5pm on Saturday and 10am – 4pm on Sunday. All your favourite exhibits plus activities on the water and possibly a couple of new features!

Saturday & Sunday 29th & 30th July The Trust will have a stall at the Worstead Festival

Thursday 10th August. Coffee morning at at St Nicholas Room, Vicarage Street, North Walsham. 9.00-12.30.

Tuesday 22nd August Trust AGM. It has been necessary to **change the date of the AGM** and will now take place on **22nd August**. Please put in your diary now! Details and **agenda** will appear in the next Quagmire.

Saturday & Sunday 9&10th September Open weekend in conjunction with Heritage Open Days.

Work Party dates

It is not feasible to list work party dates here as Quagmire is issued quarterly. Work parties are usually held every alternate Sunday but sometimes weekend and mid-week parties are organised for particular reasons. If you would like to come along to a work party, contact David Revill (Work Party Organiser) on 01603 738648 or click [here](#) to send him an email. Just bring a packed lunch, stout gloves and a willing attitude!

Saturday 12th August - 19th August 2017 and Saturday 19th August – 26th August 2017.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the **Waterways Recovery Group** will be spending two weeks working on the Ebridge spillway. Click here secretary@nwdct.org for further information and to book a place if you wish to join them.

Photo Challenge Solution



Looking north from Spa Common Bridge 2015.
(Of course I cut off the sheds - a dead giveaway)

New Caption Competition



Suggestions please to mdablack@btinternet.com

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The Quagmire is a newsletter for all members of NW&DCT and members are encouraged to make suggestions for future items.

The deadline for items for inclusion in the Summer2017 Quagmire (at the Trustees' discretion) is the first week of July. Contact mdablack@btinternet.com