

Quagmire

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

Contact: mdablack@btinternet.com

News...

The EAWA (East Anglian Water Association) held their AGM on April 23rd and David Revill's report on behalf of the Trust is reproduced here:

Activity in the year from April 2016 to April 2017.

For another year the work has been contained within the boundaries of Swafield and Ebridge Mill Lock. Albeit this is a relatively small length of canal, c2.7miles, a great deal of work has been attempted and worthwhile results attained.

Following heavy plant having had to pass along the canal banks between Royston Bridge and Swafield Bridge, the surfaces had become rather uneven. Using appropriate methods these banks were levelled and to make them more attractive to nature and humans alike, suitable grass seed was sewn. Rather amazingly these seeds appeared to germinate in record time despite there having been no rain during the period. The resultant grass is now doing rather well – but it has brought along another task – cutting it!

Immediately downstream of Royston Bridge, on the eastern side, lies a fair-sized marsh area with a back-soke running alongside it. The state of both was quite unkempt to say the least, with the water (being the total contents of the dried up canal at this point) running rather sluggishly through them. The first task here was to make access to both the marsh and the back-soke. This achieved, the main task began of clearing the trees growing in the water and on the banks to enable the water to flow in a correct manner. Once done, the marsh already covered in reed and, in season, Himalayan Balsam, had to be cleared. In keeping with local folk-lore, only about one third of the marsh has been cleared and as the season develops, we shall attack the Himalayan balsam and this will encourage new and healthy reed to re-establish itself for the benefit of the relative breeds of birds – and no doubt many other living members of the wild-life family.

On the other, western, bank is the spillway for this reach above Bacton Wood Lock. In a poor state and not fit to have water run over it, many man-hours have been put in to covering it with concrete at the correct slope. This has been completed but there is still the upright brick-work to be done, allowing the water to flow gently down into the back-soke, which here is the original course of the River Ant!

General clearance work-parties have been held to hold back the advance of nature, where deemed out of place along the entire stretch from Ebridge to Swafield.

On the construction side of things, apart from the spillway at Royston Bridge (above) consideration has been given to the restoration of the spillway at Ebridge and the 'minor' task of building from scratch the two bottom gates for Bacton Wood Lock! They have been built and located in the lock but there remain a couple of adjustments to be made before the water returns later this year. The canal is still dry from abeam Pigneys Wood to Bacton Wood Lock. The Trust has managed to achieve the attendance of the WRG Work Parties in August 2017 to attend to the spillway and possibly the lock chamber walls at Ebridge. Our pontoon, acquired earlier, has been painted, renovated and now has stanchions with connecting chains around the edges of the deck, which has been covered in non-slip material. A meeting was called to advise the NCC Bridges Engineer about the requirement to restore the head room under Royston Bridge. When water is returned this year to this pound, there will be only about 12" of head room, when it should be c8'3". It was also pointed out that Wayford Bridge is sinking and in any event the max headroom there is only c7' when it should be 8' 3" to be in accordance with the 1812 Act of Parliament re the canal. There is no money to spend on bridges!

A meeting was also held with an engineer of the WLMA (IDB branch) to discuss the drains around the Ebridge Mill Pond area, which are the responsibility of the WLMA (Water Level Management Association), with a successful outcome.

OTHER ACTIVITIES.

Talks are being given to both local and further afield clubs and societies, which have a desire to know more about our work. During the period, two double Open Days were held at Ebridge, one for Heritage Open Days (a nationwide scheme), Information Evenings, a couple of coffee mornings in North Walsham and the very well attended Film Evening on 30th March 17.

WORK PARTIES.

The established idea of holding a work party on every other Sunday has been maintained, with one or two changes (Easter, Christmas). However, a new pattern has now come to light in the shape of holding a 'two day' work party. This has come about due to a rather heavy work-load and the lengthy preparation of some of the sites. The volunteers seem to have all fallen into this habit now so maybe the canal will be finished in a quicker time.....?

Number of Work Parties	32
Volunteers attendance days	374
Approx hours	2,400

THE FUTURE.

Before the water is returned to the Bacton Wood Reach, through to Pigneys Wood, some more works need to be attended to. Some areas of canal bank need to be raised somewhat to ensure that the water will not overflow. As mentioned elsewhere, the Royston spillway is to be completed and a general check made of the entire reach to ensure that all is in order. There are several pieces of land drain to be replaced near to Ebridge and of course the two sets of gates made to fit that lock. All this after the lock chamber walls have been renovated! Stop boards are now being planned to fit both locks in this area. MONEY appears to be the key and so far we are working steadily along but we must go for the 'BIG ONE's before we can venture into the major planning stage.

David Revill

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David Gosling has served as the Trust Treasurer for many years but has decided to retire from the post. David has cheerfully managed the accounts, dealing with bags of money from events and issuing cheques for purchases, insurances and so on. A lot of the Treasurer's work goes on 'behind the scenes' and the Trust is very grateful to David for the many hours of work he has spent on behalf of the Trust. Trustee Barry Mobbs has agreed to take over from David as Treasurer.

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Trustee Andrew Fryer has been appointed as Boating Officer. Andrew is a keen sailor and spends many hours crewing for yacht races. His duties for the Trust will include looking after the trip boat, pontoon and workboat. He will be responsible for arranging and training crews, maintenance, availability of the boats and encouraging other volunteers to assist. A longer term project is the restoration of the reed-boat.

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The Trust is looking for a Secretary. Meetings are held in the North Walsham area. You do not have to be qualified, but having an interest in the Trust's work helping to restore Norfolk's unique Canal would be beneficial. You will need access to a computer and be computer literate; having an email account is preferred. This is a voluntary post but some expenses are paid. The main job of the Secretary is to support the Chair with the official business of the Trust. The Secretary will keep an eye on the dates and needs of official returns and correspondences, which will include the organisation of the AGM and other meetings. The Secretary will help the Trust progress to become a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) so that it has the correct charitable status for its future needs and aspirations. This will include form filling and responding to paperwork generated by other organisations.

If you can help or know someone who can help please contact us by email on secretary@nwdct.org or to discuss the post please call the Interim Chair, Ivan Cane, on 01328 862435

The exciting news is that we could soon be holding work parties below Honing Lock! Ivan Cane has been consulting with Luke Paterson of Bindwells Ltd, owners of the stretch from below Honing Lock to the junction with the Smallburgh River and Luke is keen to clear this section once again. Volunteers who have seen enough of bricks and cement over recent months will be able to cut trees, clear brash, plodge about in water – all the stuff we have been missing recently! The last work party there was 2½ years ago so there should be lots to do.

Trustee Barry Mobbs recently arranged for a three-page article about the NW&D Canal to be printed in *The Merry Mawkin – The Friends of Norfolk Dialect Newsletter*.

Their website is www.norfolkdialect.com. The more people who learn about our canal the better as we still find that most Norfolk folk have never heard of a canal in their own County!

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Our appeal for canal photographs to use as greetings cards resulted in the three lovely scenes shown below the ever popular wildlife series. We thank member Lizzie Guilbert for the two stunning sunset photos and our ICT Administrator, Julie Kelleher for the peaceful daytime view of the canal.

The A5 greetings cards are all photographed on the Canal, are blank inside and are a reasonable £1.50 each. Canal information is printed on the back and the cards are a delightful way of publicising our canal.



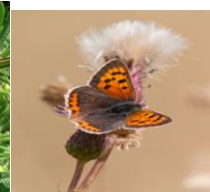
Mute Swan



Banded Demoiselle



Emperor Moth



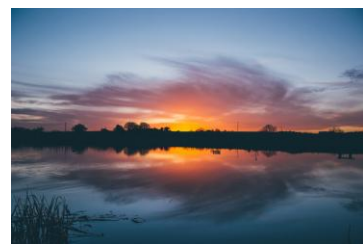
Small Copper



Picnic bench



Sunset 1



Sunset 2

Cards are available by post via mdablack@btinternet.com Postage & Packing £1.50 for up to 12 cards

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Recent Events



The open weekend held at Ebridge on 3rd and 4th June was another great success with visitors showing a keen interest in the restoration. It is always surprising that even local people are still unaware of this gem on their doorstep! Another open weekend in conjunction with the **Heritage Open Days** will be held on **9th & 10th September**. Come and meet the people you read about in Quagmire, Trustees, work party volunteers and supporters.

The photo shows visitors enjoying a trip on our work pontoon.

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Royston Bridge Spillway

Back in August 2010 the work party volunteers were busy clearing trees on the west bank near Royston Bridge when suddenly a cry went up ‘is this brickwork?’ At first it seemed unlikely as there were no structures in that area indicated on maps but of course everyone was intrigued and started uncovering what, eventually, would prove to be the spillway on the Bacton Wood Reach of the canal. The Canal is continuously fed with water and therefore each reach has a spillway, vital to control the water level.

The spillway was in a very poor state of repair and would have been expensive to have professionally re-built. However, the task was completed at cost of materials alone with the Trust’s volunteers providing the labour.

Instead of replacing the brickwork Laurie installed sheet piling on the canal side, set to the required height. Sheet piling was also installed at the back of the spillway at a much lower height, to hold back the bank. Some of the initial restoration work was carried out with the assistance of the Waterways Recovery Group volunteers, and the spillway was temporarily made level to enable machinery to cross in order to raise the height of the banks.

In 2012 Trust volunteers helped Laurie install a two foot wide slab of concrete behind the piling (on one of the hottest days of that year!). In order to be able to carry out a water level test it was imperative to complete the restoration of the spillway and this has been carried out over recent months.

The top slab of concrete is 70ft long by 12ft wide and 6” deep – almost 420ft³ (12m³) of concrete. Volunteers assisted Laurie mixing, barrowing, leveling the concrete to a consistent 1” in 12ft gradient. Following that the back slope into the soke-dyke was faced with approximately 3000 semi-engineering bricks laid edge-on. The bottom of the soke-dyke was filled with 3” crushed concrete up to the level of the bottom of the brick face to avoid heavy flood water washing away the opposite bank of the soke-dyke. At the ends of the brick back slope small retaining walls were built to keep water on the spillway and at each end of the concrete slab, concrete was laid up the slope of the bank and formed to ensure that the earth bank adjacent to the spillway cap is not washed away.

Because the spillway had to be completed in a relatively short space of time, it was by far the most labour-intensive task that the Trust volunteers have been involved with to date. The Trust is extremely grateful to the volunteers who cheerfully turned out day after day, working hard to achieve the restoration of this vital structure. The volunteers spent 868 hours in total over 15 days!

During the mini heat-wave in June frequent water-breaks were called and a tilt was erected above the volunteers as they laid bricks.

It is now possible to cross the spillway with mowing and maintenance machinery.

Chris Black, Work Party Leader.



August 2010 Discovery of... ‘a structure?’



Sept 2010
Clearing trees and brash



February 2011
Laurie working in the canal bed



July 2011
Burning last of trees



April 2017
Concreting behind the piling



August 2012
Work starts to reconstruct the Spillway



April 2017
Concreting the top slab



June 2017
Bricklaying under a sun-shade



July 2017
FINISHED!.

Wildlife on the canal by Perry Hampson

Purdy's Marsh

Laurie Ashton and I had a meeting with Aaron Brown (Norfolk Wildlife Trust), at Purdy's Marsh on Monday 8th May 2017.

Mr Brown spent the best part of two hours on site, surveying the soil type, the current vegetation and the general aspects of the marsh and the surrounding area.

He is of the opinion that it is worth pursuing the development of the marsh for Swallowtail butterflies and other reed-bed wildlife.

He has provided some suggestions as to how the ground might be prepared and the method for introducing the required variety of new plants, i.e. Milk Parsley, Ragged Robin, etc..

Kingfisher nest?

Following a report from a member of the public, I have attempted to locate a possible Kingfisher's nest downstream of the fallen willow without success. I have recently seen a Kingfisher along that section of the canal, but could find no evidence to support nesting activity nearby.

Water Vole Survey

I took part in the National Water Vole Survey on behalf of the Trust in 2016. I have surveyed exactly the same area again this year. On a designated 500 meter stretch of the canal, no signs of Water Voles were found. Signs such as 'latrines' and feeding areas are taken as evidence of the presence of Water Voles at a given location. Burrows, of which there are many, do not count as it is not possible to tell which are currently in use. Water Voles still appear to be relatively plentiful along the canal – just not in my survey area!

I began 'officially' **recording the wildlife along the canal** on the 14th February 2015.

I store all the records on a dedicated computer database which makes it easy to produce the data in whatever form it is needed. Many of my records go to the relevant County Recorders as well as various Local or National recording schemes.

The following figures are my results only, and do not include species that have been seen by others and reported to me, such as Eel, Crayfish, Red Kite, etc.

Total no. of records	2,195
Total no. of species	387
Birds	87
Mammals	9
Butterflies and Moths	186
Dragonflies & Damselflies	16
Hoverflies	18
Caddisflies	8

The above groups total is **324** species. The remaining **63** species are made up of all the other groups; i.e. Beetles, Fish, Plants, Flies, Reptiles & Amphibians, etc.

It appears that the pair of **Mute Swans** whose territory is from Ebridge to Bacton Wood Mill lock have failed in what is hopefully only their first attempt at nesting this year. Another pair, whose territory is on the Pigney's Wood/Swafeld section, have been successful and have been reported with cygnets on the canal.

Following the clearance of lots of Willow scrub from **Purdy's Marsh**, I was concerned that the colony of Red-tipped Clearwing moths, (National Scarce B) might have suffered. Thankfully this does not seem to have been the case. I have located some in Willows along the drain at the back of Purdy's Marsh, and more in the Willows of the opposite side of the road.

Perry Hampson, Wildlife Officer

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Membership issues

At a recent Trust meeting a few of those present were embarrassed to discover that they had forgotten to renew their membership! Our hard-working Membership Secretary, Andrea has found that sometimes members have changed address or email details and she is unable to send reminders or Quagmire. Could you please spend a couple of minutes checking that Andrea has your correct details and send any amendments to her at membership@nwdct.org.

Quagmire has become a ten-page newsletter and therefore is very expensive to print and send by post. If you receive your copy by post but would be willing to receive it by email the Trust would be very grateful. The Trust tries very hard to minimize overheads as every penny counts. It may seem that we benefit from large grants and donations at times but usually these are given for a specific purpose, for example the bricks for the spillway or the timber for the lock gates.

Membership fees are essential to keep the Trust running and it would greatly assist Andrea if you would consider paying fees by Standing Order using the attached form.

North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust Membership Subscription

Standing Order form – Please send to your bank

'Online Banking' – please use the Bank Sort code and Account Number below.

Bank Standing Order Mandate Form

To: The Manager

Your Bank Address:

..... Postcode:.....

For the credit of: The North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust

Bank Address: NatWest Bank, 9 St. Nicholas Court, North Walsham, NR28 9YY

Sort Code: 60-15-54 Account no.: 72562498

For the sum of: £..... (Membership plus any donation*)

Commencing / / and thereafter on the **1st January** each year.

Please debit my account accordingly.

Name of account to be debited:

Your Sort Code: ____ - ____ - ____ Your Account No: ____ _

Special instructions

Your Signature:

Today's Date: / /

*A donation can also be added to your membership fee to help further the Trust's aims

Thank you

Queries and Questions!

Some members may have noticed that the water level near Ebridge was very low recently. There were leaks in the banks that required many hours of work by Laurie to repair. This led to the following question from a member:

What impact does draining the canal have on fish?

Obviously it is sometimes necessary to drain a canal, for example for maintenance. **The Environment Agency** states that ‘canals can drain down and fish will return naturally’.

On the subject of fish, we are grateful to David Hurman for posting photos to our facebook page of pike caught in the canal.



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Items of interest to members:

Member Peter Moore contacted us from Cyprus to say that he enjoyed reading the Spring Quagmire. Peter grew up near Ebridge and has been writing his memoirs. The following short extract refers to Ebridge Spillway (referred to here as the overflow).

The overflow becomes one of our favourite places – even when we are older and the thrill of the forbidden is lost, we still love it. Its mood changes from season to season. At times it's dry and accessible in its entirety, at others it's slippery and impossible to climb except for the intrepid who take to the edges and battle reeds and nettles to reach the top and the very edge of the river itself.

During dry times we can lay face down on the top and watch the goings on at the mill. We are screened by tall reeds along the river bank and delight in 'spying' on the adult world. It's the perfect secret place and an excellent source of good straight reeds that we use for arrows. We are all members of a tribe of Indians (native Americans) and we all have our home-made bows and arrows.

Peter Moore

Thank you, Peter for your memories of the canal. Perhaps other members have memories they would like to share?

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The following is taken from an article in the April edition of **Towpath**.

Ministerial answers in Parliament have failed to convince campaigners that the Environment Agency will keep open all its Anglian waterways, even where it has a duty in law to do so.

The Inland Waterways Association, the charity working to protect and restore all of Britain's 6,500 miles of canals and rivers, has asked Waterways Minister Thérèse Coffey for reassurance that proper funding will be available to prevent further waterways being closed and to reopen those already closed.

In response to questions asked in the House of Commons by David Mackintosh MP in February, Dr Coffey – the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Defra – said: "If there is a safety risk to members of the public then repairs will be undertaken to remove the risk or the asset will be closed."

IWA points out that this ignores EA's statutory obligation under Section 8 of the Anglian Waterways Authority Act 1977 to maintain the main navigable channels and navigation works for recreational navigation.

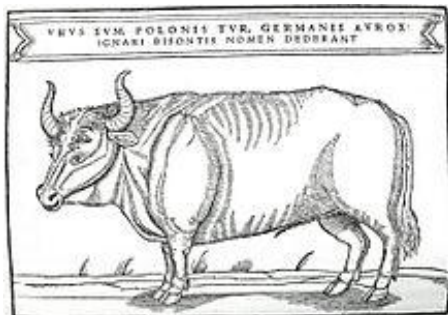
Dr Coffey went on to say: *"The Environment Agency will consider the restoration and re-opening of closed navigable waterways depending on the amount of future funding available and the importance, such as the level of use, of the waterway to be re-opened."* *

In response, IWA says that "the level of use" should not be a significant factor in whether or not a waterway is reopened, particularly on those waterways with a statutory right of navigation. It also maintains that the level of use is often low only because waterways have been so poorly maintained in the past as to make navigation extremely difficult or even impossible for all but the smallest craft, such as canoes.

* In the case of the NW&D Canal, the EA will not be responsible for funding the restoration.

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Diana Velhagen posted the following information on the North Walsham & District Community Archive:



The North Walsham and Dilham canal has its own fossil! The skull of an **aurochs** was dug up during the building of the canal and presented to the new Norwich museum in 1826. It was the first item to be donated to the Norwich museum by a company rather than an individual. It's still on show in the Natural History room in the "Early Days" cabinet.

Diana Velhagen

The picture shows what an auroch looked like – do you fancy coming across one of these Perry?

Diana also forwarded to us an item that appeared in the Norwich Mercury on 29th October, 1825 which reported that a human skull had been dug up. "From a fracture on the left temple, apparently made with some blunt instrument, there is every reason to suppose that it belonged to someone who was murdered".

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Dates for your diary:

Events.

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

Thursday 10th August. Coffee morning 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! **The agenda is attached at the end of this newsletter.**

Saturday & Sunday 9&10th September Open weekend in conjunction with Heritage Open Days. Films, photos, finds, wildlife, teas, bar-b-q, ice cream, boat trips etc. Sat-nav postcode NR28 9NG.

Saturday 7th October Film Evening at Poringland Community Centre. 7pm for 7.30 start. Not everyone lives near North Walsham so we are branching out! Films of the restoration will be shown followed by a presentation of photos to watch with tea and home-made cakes! All the usual photos, maps, booklets, finds etc and Trustees will be available for a chat. Numbers for this event will be limited, ring 01508 492025 or email mdablack@btinternet.com to reserve tickets. The cost of £5 will include drink and home-made cake. Tell your friends who live in, or south of Norwich to take a look at this lovely venue on www.poringlandcommunitycentre.co.uk

Talks & Presentations 2017

23rd September	Broadland 41	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.

Work Parties



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 davgis@live.co.uk to send him an email. Just bring a packed lunch, gloves and a willing attitude!

Photo shows Alan Bertram removing **Himalayan Balsam** at Honing Staithe in 2013. Of course Alan is well known for his love of working in water, but willing volunteers will be needed to remove the dreaded **Himalayan Balsam** from the dry area at Purdy's Marsh. It is an easy job to pull up the plants as they are shallow rooted.

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

As mentioned in the last newsletter and on the website, 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.

Last issue's caption competition



Thanks to David Revill for this suggestion

STOP PRESS

Don't miss the next edition of Quagmire when there will be very exciting news to share with members!

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

The North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust

Agenda for the 9th Annual General Meeting

To be held on **Tuesday 22nd August 2017**
at Honing Village Hall, 7pm for a 7.30pm start

1. Welcome by the Interim Chairman
2. Apologies for absence
3. Declaration of interests - all Trustees
4. Minutes of 8th AGM held on Thursday 25th August 2016
5. Matters Arising
6. Interim Chairman's Report – Ivan Cane – Adoption of Report
7. Presentation of Accounts - David Gosling – Adoption of Report
8. Report on accounts for current year – Barry Mobbs
9. Officers' reports:
 - i. Chris Black - Vice-Chairman
 - ii. David Revill & Chris Black - Work Party Update.
 - iii. Tom Carr - Chartered Surveyor and Special Advisor
 - iv. Ivan Cane - EAWA Archivist for the NW&DC records
10. Election of Chair for the Trust – nominations, seconded, may be received by the Secretary* in advance of the AGM, or taken at the meeting. (This item will be chaired by the Vice Chair)
11. Re-election of Trustees . The following Trustees offer themselves for re-election: Julie Kelleher (2013), Barry Mobbs (2013), Chris Black (2008), David Revill (2008), Brian Wexler (2008), Roger Hopkinson (2008), Andrew Fryer, 2015), Jane Gotts (2017). If any other member wishes to become a Trustee, please notify the secretary*.
12. Proposal:

That the structure of the Trust should be changed to that of an association model Charitable Incorporated Organisation, and that all memberships, Trust assets, and archives are transferred to the new CIO. Following completion of the transfer, the original NW&DC Trust be closed.
13. Presentation by Aaron Brown, Conservation Officer, Norfolk Wildlife Trust
14. Close of meeting.

Raffle and refreshments during rolling presentation of 400+ canal photos old and new

Members and guests are encouraged to attend this AGM to find out what has been happening on the canal over the previous year.

There will be displays by the Wildlife Officer, Perry Hampson, ICT Facebook display by Julie Kelleher, Archival display and "finds" display by Ivan Cane and Chris Black. And finally, Jane Gotts, the Events Officer will have the Trust's Merchandise on sale

Take the opportunity to chat with Trustees and other volunteers over refreshments!

* Please contact the secretary on secretary@nwdct.org