

AGM March 22nd 2023



Chairman's 2022 report

Welcome to the IWA Chiltern Branch 2023 AGM.

This has been a difficult year for IWA due to unplanned changes in senior staff and the board of trustees; however, we now have new management in place and I am pleased to welcome Dave Pearce, IWA CEO to our AGM. Further, the lease on Island House expires in March 2023 and staff will be moving to new premises but still in Chesham.

Whilst Covid has not dominated our lives, coupled with the move to Rickmansworth it has had a lasting effect on attendance at branch meetings. We are trying several different ways to increase numbers and would welcome input and help from the floor. Our 2023/24 programme of talks is almost complete and soon to be posted on Chiltern branch web pages.

Last year I spoke of the Hornbeam tree we had planted at Wendover Canal Trust's Whitehouses picnic area; we are delighted to be able to show you the seat built in 2022 by Chiltern branch volunteers and installed by WCT in March 2023. To remind you, the tree seats at Lock 39 and now Whitehouses, are in memory of Carolyn and Geoff Leonard of IWA Chiltern Branch. Having last year decided that we could not build at Green Park, we are working with Wendover CT to find a new site to build the long planned slipway into the Wendover Canal.



The branch trip in 2022 to the Norfolk Broads took in a cruise on Southern Comfort from Horning basin, a very different trip on the North Walsham and Dillon Canal, the Bure Valley narrow gauge railway, the Broads museum and a wonderful trip back in time to the 1940s with the North Norfolk railway at Sheringham and Holt. (Due to the current economic situation it has proved impossible to obtain reasonable quotes for hotel accommodation for 2023; so instead we will plan for one or two one day trips for the coming year.) We must thank Colin Bird for his sterling efforts over the best part of 30 years of organising Chiltern branch weekend trips away!

You will by now be aware the IWA board recently announced a significant increase in membership subscription fees, the first since 2012. For too many years expenditure has exceeded IWA core income; IWA funds have been bolstered by legacies from past members. The board agreed the risks associated with continuing this practice were no longer acceptable. We are also faced with the very challenging need to mount a strong campaign to ensure adequate funding on our Inland Waterways. We are really going full circle; from being the charity that first saved the waterways from destruction during the 40s, 50s and 60s, to inspiring and supporting so many restoration groups and now must start again to prevent the deterioration and apparent neglect that would arise from a lack of funding. It should be noted that CRT funding was only inflation proofed for the first 10 of 15 years and took no account of the historical problems that arose from the collapse of the Toddbrook reservoir near Whaley Bridge. **IWA remains the only national charity committed to campaigning for the protection and restoration of our Inland Waterways.**

Finally, again I would like to extend my thanks to the Chiltern Branch committee members for their continued support and to remind members that we do still need to strengthen our committee.

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