

MARCHAM SOCIETY

An illustrated talk on the Wilts & Berks Canal was given by Mr. Orph Mable, a Director of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, to the Marcham Society on Tuesday 16th March.



RESTORING THE WESSEX WATERWAYS THROUGH WILTSHIRE AND OXFORDSHIRE

The speaker presented a number of slides describing the history of the canal, its present state and future proposals for the rebuilding of the 67 mile waterway. The members were told that during the industrial age 2500 miles of waterways were created in the U.K. to move goods, carried in barges, across the country. By the end of the 20th century many canals were in a state of dereliction and unnavigable. The stretch of the canal running south of Marcham was part of the network linking the Kennet & Avon Canal to the towns of Chippenham, Calne, Swindon and Abingdon. The main Wilts & Berks Canal was completed in 1810 and the smaller North Wilts Canal, which linked Swindon via Cricklade to the Cotswold Canal at Latton Junction was opened in 1819. Trade began to decline after the construction of the Great Western Railway and the canal company ceased business in 1914. The land was given back to the farmers and landowners for agricultural purposes. The remains of derelict locks, aqueducts and the occasional stretch of water could still be seen in the landscape and in 1977 a group of enthusiasts formed the Wilts & Berks Amenity Group to protect the line of the canal from further destruction and to promote the route as a recreational amenity. Between 1991 and 1998 three studies were commissioned to assess the feasibility of restoring the waterway. In 2002 the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust was founded, headed by a Council of Management and at local level groups managed by members of the Trust. With help from others they carry out the clearing of the towpath and waterway and the repair of locks and bridges. The work of the Trust is supported by the Local Authorities, including the Vale of the White Horse, British Waterways, the Inland Waterways Association, the British Countryside Agency and other canal trusts. The feasibility study of 1998 concluded that the restoration of the canal was a viable and affordable scheme. Where the line of the canal has been lost due to the construction of new roads and housing, new routes have been proposed. The restored waterway will form the core of the Wessex Waterway Network forming a continuous waterway linking the Kennet & Avon Canal near Melksham, the Thames & Severn Canal near Cricklade and the River Thames near Abingdon at Culham Cut. The meeting was well-attended by members of the Society and canal enthusiasts who enjoyed the speaker's enthusiasm and

commitment to canal restoration. The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust welcomes new members and further information can be obtained on their Information Line; 01628 544666 or from leaflets in the local library.

EW

MARCHAM SOCIETY WALK

Midweek Walk, Thursday May 6th

Following on a very interesting and well attended talk on the Wilts. and Berks. Canal, we will be incorporating a look at lengths of the canal into our walks from time to time. The first of these will be on the first Thursday of May and we will meet at the Crown in Marcham at 12.15 pm to eat before catching the 13.06 bus into Abingdon. We will start out along the River Ock Walk and then follow the line of the canal where practical back to Marcham, a distance of about 4 miles. New walkers are always very welcome. Members free, non-members £1. Ring Eric Dunford on 391439 for lifts and further details.

SUNSHINE CLUB

April: Our social table this month was *anything* and as always our thanks to those who kindly gave and brought to make table and interesting assortment. Our social part was a very enjoyable time with a talk on aromatherapy by Jenny Gresty. You will have seen her write up in the March MADnews – very talented lady. We were all very interested with lots of nice smells going round the room. Several people put in orders for help with bad backs, necks, loss of sleep etc. We look forward to another visit hopefully before too long. This was followed by a nice ham salad which is a favourite with members. Evening ended with the raffle.

We hope those with birthdays this month had a nice time each received a card from the club – no specials this month.

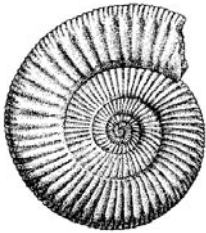
On April 27th we are going to The Lantern at Steventon, this was for Peggy Tarasewicz and as she always enjoyed going there it was decided to have a "tea party" for her using donation given, she would really have liked that, being remembered by all her friends. We feel sure the family would have liked this, she will always be remembered.

Florrie is still in Marcham Road Hospital, I have been to see her and took some flowers from the club for which she sent her thanks and is hoping to return home soon.

Afraid some more bad news: just heard that Violet Brown died today, Sunday 11th. She had been ill for sometime and would have been ninety in July. She really enjoyed coming over to the club, our thoughts are with June and the family, a card of condolence has been sent from the club.

It has been decided to change meetings back to evenings, these will start Mondays on May 3rd at 7pm, also socials starting Thursday May 6th at 7pm. So look forward to seeing you all on these dates. We hope everyone enjoyed Easter each in their own way.

JOY CROOK

 <p><i>The Marcham Society</i></p>	<p>Come and hear members talking about their research and the latest update on the dig near the Noah's Ark</p>
<p><i>The Institute, North Street Tuesday May 18th 2004, 7.45pm</i></p>	<p>Non-members £1 Further details: Eric Dunford (391439) or Judith Fontaine (391275)</p>