#### The Boat

An old photo, circa 1893 (see line drawing on front of leaflet) was found bearing on the reverse; the canal opposite Beckett House, Shrivenham, but where was it taken? Closer examination revealed the unmistakable horizon of White llorse Hill in the background, and a distinctive group of trees. This enabled us to pinpoint the location. The trees are still there, one has died, but its skeleton is supported by its neighbours, and of course the others have grown quite a bit. They are located where Tuckmill Brook crosses the canal.

#### Beckett House

Originally the seat of Viscount Barrington. Easily visible, a quarter of a mile to the north, through the trees. It now houses the library of the RMCS. Many documents still exist outlining the long history of the estate. Briefly; the manor of Becote in the hundred of Shrivenham was mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086. King John was in residence in 1204. John Shute was created first Viscount Barrington in 1720. The old building stood to the north of the present one. The 'modern building' was constructed between 1831 to 1834 during the heydays of the canal, and this is why it is mentioned here. An old map of Shrivenham dated 1844 shows a roadway from the Longcot Road where the present footpath joins it, down to the canal on the apex of the curve. Previous maps do not show it nor do later ones. Why? As it was contemporary with the building of Beckett House we believe that the large quantity of stone etc. necessary to construct such a large house was transported here by canal barge. A small wooden wharf and a hand cranked crane would be all that was required. No documentary evidence exists, however some brickwork, albeit sparse, is still to be found. Perhaps dredging will provide further evidence.

## Tuckmill Brook A queduct

Again no documentary evidence exists about the aqueduct apart from an invoice relating to the cost of building an aqueduct with a seven feet arch, assumed to be this one. However heaps of bricks and stonework are scattered around the site, so it must have been large. A new culvert will be needed for the restored canal to cross Tuckmill Brook.

The Iron Boat by the car park is reputed to be an old reed cutter of the type used on the W & B. It was discovered sunk in the Oxford Canal near its junction with the Thames, Whether it was used on this canal is not known.

Hedgelaying all the towpath hedge between Shrivenham Arch Bridge and Tuckmill has been restored. Some has been replanted, and all the old overgrown hedgerow has been laid and gapped up. The work was funded among others by the Countryside Commission, and Civic Trust with labour provided by local volunteers aided by BTCV, WRG and Swindon Dunbar Conservation Group.

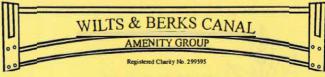
## The Canalside Park.

The site was always too wet and boggy for agriculture and in living memory was never used. Old maps always show a brook and a pond and when the canal was cut through here in 1802 a new culvert was laid to carry the water beneath it. The old culvert can still be seen but is collapsed and silted up. (see map) A new concrete pipe culvert alongside the old one was installed in 1997. After it was abandoned the canal here was used as the village tip, being filled with mainly domestic rubbish and fire ashes. (circa 1920-1940) In the 1960's a new stormwater sewer was laid through Shrivenham. This produced vast quantities of waste subsoil. With a view to increasing the height of the land, so it would become drier and could again be used, this waste was dumped over the entire site including the in filled canal. However the soil was poor and contained a lot of debris, so the field remained unusable. In 1992 whilst a contractor was working on our first dredging to the west of Stainswick Lane we asked for an estimate to dig out the 100 metres of infilled canal to the east and to dispose of the spoil. The estimate was astronomic, so we felt that it would have to wait. However in 1994 we learnt that the field was to be sold, and it was thought that it might be possible to dig out the canal and to dispose of the spoil on site. Enquiries were made to the local authorities and this proved to be the case. Even allowing for the purchase of the land it would greatly reduce the cost of restoring the canal. So we set about raising the money. About 70% was raised, and the branch took out a loan for the rest, and in early 1995 we became the proud owners. However we realised that it would be several years before we could do any work on the site as any funds we raised would have to be used to pay off the loan. So we confined our activities to planning how the site could be used after the restoration of the canal was completed. Gradually the idea of a canal side park emerged. Facilities planned included a small car park, boat slipway, picnic site, and lots of trees and shrubs. Several months were spent preparing a proposal to submit to the local authority for planning approval. Discussions took place with the parish council and other interested local groups, the school, the highway authority and the county bridges engineer. environment agency, Thames Valley police etc., Finally our proposals were submitted. They received wholehearted approval so much so that the Vale of the White Horse District Council Leisure Services offered to pick up the lions share of the cost of all the initial heavy works required. So progress on the park was unexpectedly, very rapid. All the work was done in summer 1997. The boat slipway is to be constructed in 1998 as a memorial to Ron Martin, a long time stalwart of the Inland Waterways Association.

Contact Numbers:



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WEST VALE BRANCH



The Canal opposite Beckett House, Shrivenham - circa 1893

# EAST TRAILS from Canalside Park

# Useful Notes

First Aid: Elm Tree Surgery High Street, Shrivenham. Tel.0 1793 782 207/784440

Public Tephone: opposite The Prince of Wales, Shrivenham Places to eat in Shrivenham

The Victoria Tavern, Station Road, Tel.01793 783443 The Prince of Wales, High Street, Tel 01793 782268

#### **Public Notices**

The canal runs through private property, access is given by kind permission of the landowners. Please keep to the designated footpaths.

Follow the Country Code

Guard against all risk of fire. Fasten all gates. Keep your dogs under close control. Take your litter home. Help to keep the water clean. Protect wild life, plants and trees. Make no unnecessary noise. Be aware of the danger of deep water and overhead power cables. No fishing or kite flying. The W&BCAG cannot accept responsibility for any loss or injury, however caused.





Blackthorn (sloe)



Field Maple

Hawthorn

Trail from Canalside Park to Tuckmill Brook - distance 750m (800 yards)

Circular Walk 1 (shown →) via towpath to Tuckmill and on to Longcot road turn to left onto footpath to Stainswick Lane. Approx. distance 2km (1¼ miles)

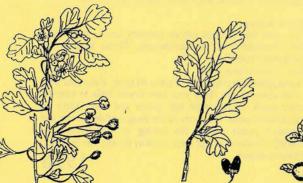
Circular Walk 2 (shown ⇒) via towpath to Tuckmill and right along brook return to Stainswick Lane and Canalside Park. Approx. distance 2 km (1¼ miles)

Trees to look for; 2 oaks on Canalside park 2 oaks at Savernake Brake Scots Pine at Tuckmill Wild Plum **0** Maple (field) **2** 



Wildlife to look out for, all seen from time to time along the canal in Shrivenham (some are seasonal)

Fox Roe deer Water Vole
Cuckoo Kingfisher Heron
Jay Long tailed tits Magpie
Moorhen Woodpecker Minnows
Newts Sticklebacks Tadpoles



Oak





Willow

