

# WRG NORTH WEST 'BRUSH BASH'

A hidden gem of the Stockport Branch of the Ashton Canal was recently uncovered by volunteers from the Manchester & Stockport Canal Society helped by WRG North West.

Working near the junction with the Ashton Canal, a heavily overgrown section of the derelict canal was cleared. Joined by the local area officer of Manchester City Council (which owns this stretch of the canal line), workers revealed a long-neglected garden, complete with ornamental mini-obelisks laid out when landscaping was completed in the 1970s, following the infilling of the canal.

Close by, IWA Manchester Branch volunteers continued their programme of improving the Ashton Canal towpath. "We just need the Stockport Branch back in water to complete the job," said WRG North West volunteer John Foley, after working on the site.



ROGER BRAVEY

The site on the Stockport Branch before the WRG 'brush bash'...

...and after. Volunteers uncovered these ornamental obelisks beneath the vegetation.



ROGER BRAVEY

# IWA CHIEF EXECUTIVE ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

IWA's Chief Executive, Neil Edwards, has announced his retirement following a career spanning more than 24 years with the Association.



Neil Edwards

Credited with the creation of Canal Camps, Waterway

Recovery Group's week-long working holiday format, Neil has spent many years supporting the charity both as a volunteer and as a member of staff. He first volunteered with London WRG in 1979, joined IWA as an employee in 1995 and led the organisation during the dramatic Save our System campaign, taking on the direct management of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation, and through all of the discussions for the establishment and launch of Canal & River Trust. Since Neil began working for the charity nearly 25 years ago, over 210 miles of waterway have been reopened.

He advised trustees of his intention to retire in September 2019 and will step down as Chief Executive in the summer. In the meantime he will work closely on the appointment of a successor with a period of handover. Neil's extensive waterways knowledge and expertise will not be lost to the Association, as he will continue to volunteer on the board of Essex Waterways Limited, and will be retained by the Association to oversee the insurance arrangements for IWA's non-profit corporate members – a service which delivers enormous value to the restoration sector in particular.

Paul Rodgers emphasises the value delivered by Neil during his time with the Association: "Under Neil's leadership, IWA has developed an established reputation as champion and advocate of the restoration movement, and he has demonstrated an unswerving commitment to developing and improving the nation's canals and rivers and IWA's status as 'voice of the waterways'."

"Neil is a well-respected and admired waterways campaigner and will be very much missed by colleagues throughout the sector. We have been fortunate to have him as our Chief Executive and when he retires he will be leaving the Association in an excellent position to further support the regeneration of our waterways and meet the challenges of the future. We all wish Neil a long and happy retirement."