

# Claverton Pumping Station Group

## Annual report for AGM

### October 2022



## Overview

It has been a generally positive year at Claverton, with a few bits of bad news. It was delightful to have experienced a considerably more normal year than we could report at the last AGM. 2022 marked our first year of scheduled open days since 2019 with over 450 visitors. Maintenance activities have continued including the pond wash and replacing the packing on both piston. We have also had a number of new volunteers join to strengthen our group. As we look forward to the upcoming winter maintenance period we note that our volunteer car park is now gravelled making it accessible all year round. We have made great progress in improving and rebuilding access to Sheds 4 and 5. However, the replacement of Shed 6 unfortunately on hold due to a somewhat frustrating planning-related delay. We were also unfortunate enough this year to have suffered a break in where a number of tools were stolen, as well as vandalism of our car park gate by visitors to Warleigh Weir.

Unfortunately we have not finished the year with the the pumping station able to run. Two cracks have been discovered in the cast iron of the waterwheel. We believe that they are quite old cracks, but they look like they might be growing. We are in the process of making inspection plans and preparing to start fundraising for repairs that need to be made.

The groups finances have bounced back considerably since the pandemic. This is largely due to a £3,000 anonymous donation at the end of 2021 that covered our COVID losses. A crowd funding campaign and two grants have raised £3,200 for improving our winter storage. We are also in the process of renewing and clarifying our partnership agreement with the Canal and River Trust who have provided us a grant of almost £7,500 for the period April 2022 to April 2023.

We are also delighted to announce that a new Charity has been formed called the Claverton Pumping Station Trust CIO (Registered Charity Number 1200080). The current community group is looking to wind down over this winter passing operations onto the new charity. We hope that the new charitable structure will help with the fundraising needed to preserve Claverton Pumping Station for future generations.

## Governance and Finance

At this AGM we will be voting to amend our constitution so that when the community group is dissolved its assets will pass to the newly formed Claverton Pumping Station Trust CIO. The CIO was registered on the 16th of August of this year with five trustees: Julian Stirling, Deb Wray, Heather Higgins, Tony Wray, and Steve Denning. It is our hope that the Trust will be ready to take over operations at the pumping station at the start of the 2023 calendar year.

As the Pumping Station itself is owned by the Canal and River Trust (CRT) our relationship with them remains paramount. We are in the process of establishing a memorandum of understanding

with CRT to better define our relationship. We are hoping that this will clarify roles and responsibilities of each organisation, meaning we can work more cohesively. We are delighted with the £7,459 grant we received this year from CRT to help with operational costs, and we hope to establish a yearly grant to give the new trust some financial security.

We present the completed finances for 2021. The general income is far higher than the Year to Date figures provided at the 2021 AGM due to almost £2,000 of crowd funding income and a £3,000 donation during the winter maintenance period. Our income for 2022 has remained strong with general income recovering to pre-pandemic levels<sup>1</sup>, but a significant increase in grant income has helped our finances. In addition to the CRT grant we received £200 from the Bath and North East Somerset Council’s Ward Councillor’s Empowerment Fund, and £500 from Claverton Parish Council. These grants have been spent on rebuilding the access to Sheds 4 and 5.

Expenditure for 2022 has increased somewhat compared to previous years with projects such as the Engineman’s Walk and the Winter Storage Project making up the bulk of this extra expense. Unfortunately some of the expenditure was necessary due to vandalism and a break in. A full financial summary is provided in Table 1.

## Our activities

Our group is entirely powered by volunteers. The total number of on-site volunteer hours for 2021 was 3,674, for the first nine months of 2022 we have managed 3,750 (see Figure 1). This leaves us on target to reach 5,000 hours which is equivalent to three full time employees. These hourly totals do not include the number of hours that are put in off-site managing the finances, writing procedures and marketing materials, plus all of the paperwork necessary to form a charity.

### Machine maintenance activities

We undertook the first mill pond clean out in a couple of years. Considerable quantities of silt were removed from the mill pond taking the pond back to hard ground across almost its entire area. During the wash-out we removed hard-to-access vegetation from the stone work, and reattached one of the rollers for the curved sluice. We have noted that all sluice rollers

<sup>1</sup>General income was £4,415.46 in 2019.

**Table 1: Financial summary**

	2020 Full Year	2021 Full Year	2022 Year to 31st of September
<b>Opening funds</b>	<b>£6,596.46</b>	<b>£4,221.28</b>	<b>£8,991.08</b>
General income	£344.24	£7,304.20	£4,476.70
Grant income	£0.00	£2,200.00	£7,959.00
Expenses	(£2,782.44)	(£4,734.40)	(£7,870.8)
<b>Movement of funds</b>	<b>(£2,438.20)</b>	<b>4,769.80</b>	<b>4,564.90</b>
<b>Closing funds</b>	<b>£4,221.28</b>	<b>£8,991.08</b>	<b>13,555.98</b>

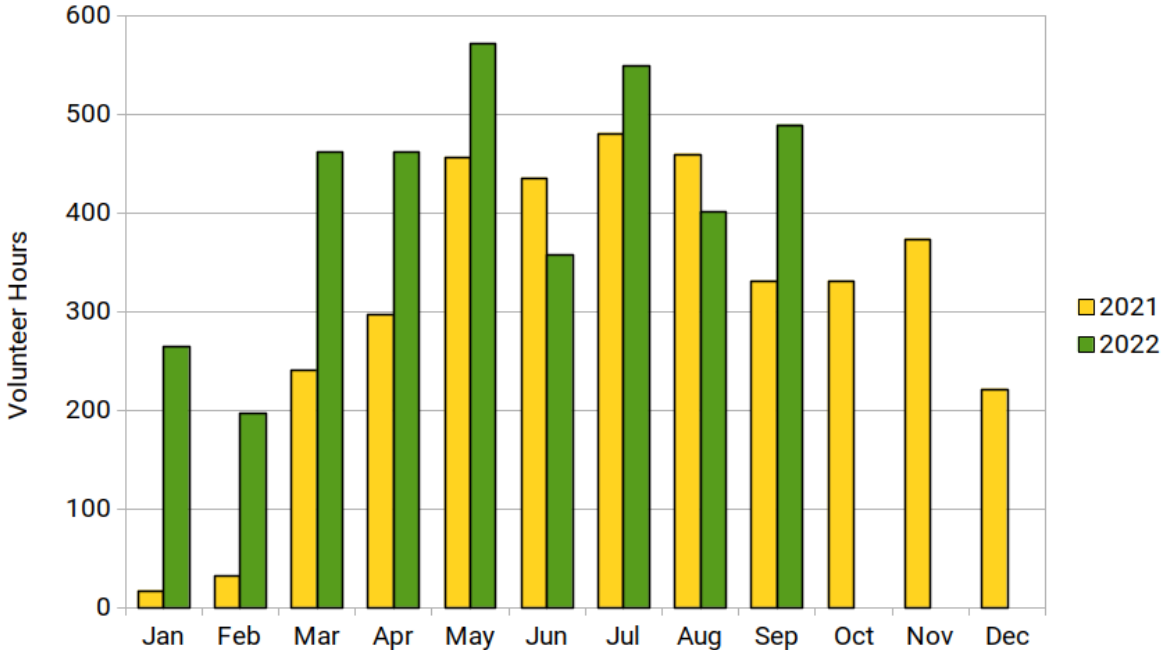
are in need of clean up, and of new split pins. In addition to this we have noticed that the filter grille for the waterwheel is in need of repair, as is the retaining wall of the mill pond on the railway side. These activities will require the mill pond to be drained which will affect the electric pumps maintain the Kennet and Avon Canal water supply.

The piston packing was also replaced on both pistons this year. While this is a fairly regular task, many of the current regular volunteers had never performed the task. This year we had a large turnout which allowed many of the volunteers to gain experience with the piston replacement. Both pistons appear to be sealing well, but the field side pistons is not sniffting, which is probably an issue with a blockage in the pipe below the snifter valve.

During inspection of the waterwheel keys a crack was found in the webbing between two spokes on the rim of the waterwheel closest to the railway. This crack both had paint in it and didn't look fresh. The machine continued to be run with careful monitoring of the crack between runs. In mid September it appears that the crack has grown when compared to original photos, due to the location of the crack it is hard to know for sure. The crack sits between spokes 6 and 7, these spokes are on different castings, the lap joint on the outer rim of these castings shows no sign of movement (see Figure 2). During the inspection of this crack, some delamination of the keys has been found, but with no obvious movement detected. A smaller crack was found in the same place (between spokes six and seven) on the central rim of the railway side half-wheel. Inspection of the machinery and repairs to these cracks must be completed before the machine can run again, this may mean that we do not run next year.

**Engineman’s walk and car park project**

During the last year the car park area was gravelled. The steps leading from the car park to Ferry Lane have been completed, as has the path from these steps towards the final steps that lead up to the towpath. The final flight of steps to the towpath is the largest remaining work to be completed. Whilst path is essentially complete it requires periodic maintenance to suppress weed growth and maintain surfacing and edging. A number of trees lining the path have died



*Figure 1: On-site volunteer hours by month for 2021 and the year to date*

and will need to be replaced this autumn.

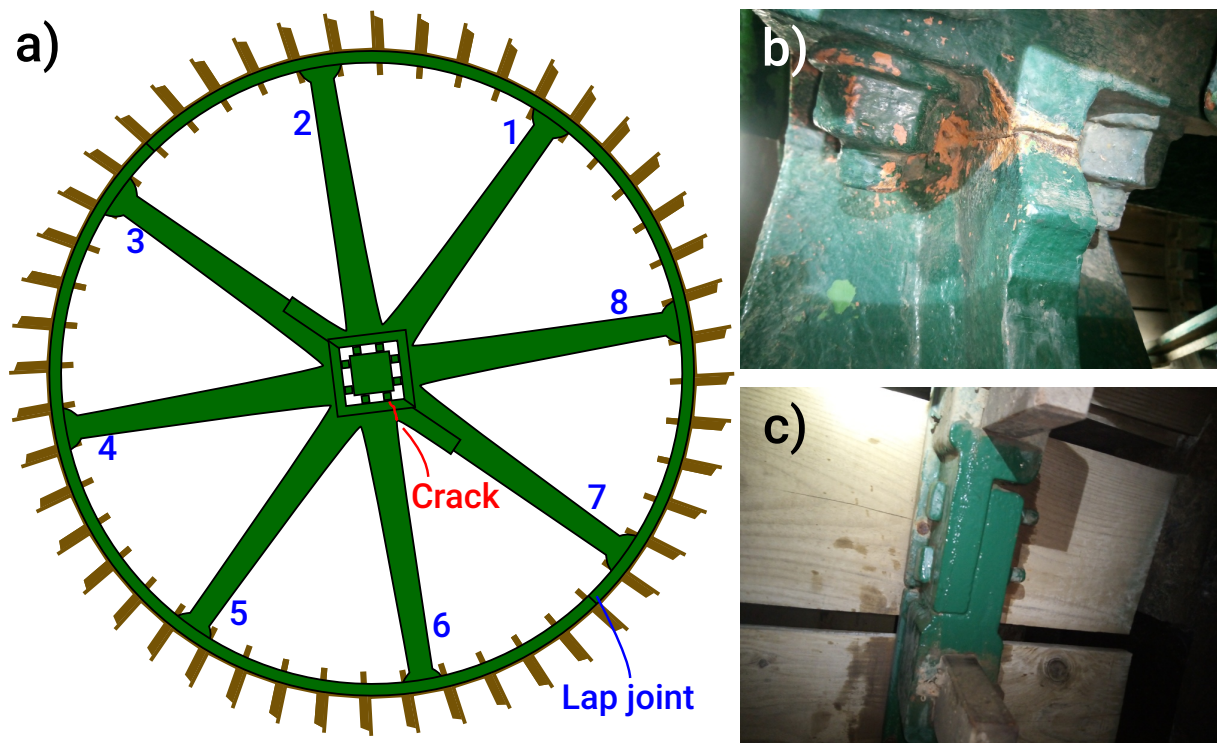
A scan of the towpath steps location was recently completed by CRT, allowing work on the steps to proceed over the winter maintenance period. The design and setting out of steps connecting to the towpath is complete. The top flight is on site in two sections. This is to be modified to suit the site restrictions as these steps were originally intended for another site. The material for the lower flight is on's order with CRT and is awaiting delivery. The remaining posts, handrail and postcrete are to be ordered and delivered in batches. Material for fencing at the towpath is to be ordered, but we will supply the gate and fittings. The extent of this boundary area has been set out on the updated plan drawing.

Surface repair to the car park and weeding is being carried out periodically. A hand rail for the step flight to Ferry Lane is to be completed, and the car park edge is to be redefined with a low level timber post and single rail fence.

The Engineman's walk and car park project is lead by Robert Hoskins, with Kim Morse taking an active role in organising the supply of materials for the towpath steps from the Canal and River Trust. In addition to the supply of materials for the towpath steps and fence, the Canal and River Trust have also provided funding for the project as part of their grant to the group.

### Winter Storage Project

During the successful fundraising campaign to replace the collapsed Shed 6, parts of the access platform for Sheds 4 and 5 also started to give way. During the year the rotten access platform was removed revealing that the sheds were sitting on an unstable bank. Though grants from Claverton Parish Council and BANES Council we replaced the access platform with a concrete block structure that retained the bank. This structure was clad with wood removed from Shed



**Figure 2:** a) Schematic showing the location of the crack. b) Photo of the crack on the webbing of the rim closest to the railway. The crack extends down to the keys on both sides. c) Photo the lap joint on this rim showing no movement.

6 so that it blends in with the surrounding area. This access platform was extended over to Shed 6 as the access to steps to Shed 6 also were rotting. This provides a storage area for items that are not adversely affected by flooding.

The raised base for Shed 6 was squared-up after the removal of the step access and was raised by one block to reduce the regularity of flooding. The main structure has been framed on the footprint of the squared-up base and is awaiting roofing and cladding. Despite our previous understanding that a like-for-like replacement of a collapsed shed was permitted, we have now been advised to seek planning permission before continuation of the project. This is unfortunate as the storage space in Shed 6 allows us to keep the site tidy and functional when items are evacuated from the lower floor in preparation for flooding.

### **Other site maintenance activities**

Other site maintenance activities have, as always, been dominated by gardening and painting. Much of the outside railings and perimeter fencing have been painted over the last year. As have some sections of the pit wheel.

In addition to keeping on top of general overgrowth this year has seen a committed effort by Matthew Butcher to remove all Himalayan balsam from the site. We expect that fighting of Himalayan balsam will continue as the invasive plant is well established on the land that surrounds our site. However, the extensive work at clearing the balsam that established itself over the pandemic will hopefully lessen the task in future years.

### **2022 Opening Season**

We had fourteen scheduled open days for 2022 between April and October. Consisting of seven running days on the second Saturday of the month and seven static open days on the second Tuesday of the month. We were only able to run on five of the seven running days. In August the machine was not run due to a failure of the railways-side packing. In October the machine was not run due to the crack in the cast iron.

In addition to the scheduled open days we ran three special visits. *Ad hoc* tours were also provided on maintenance days when activities allowed. These tours were advertised by a the towpath sign and a blackboard by the site.

We had 471 paying visitors through 2022. 235 on public open days, 49 on special visits, and 187 on *ad hoc* tours. Saturday open days averaged 22 people, Tuesday open days averaged 11. The average for Saturday open days when static was still 22.

### **The Year Ahead**

As we look forward to next year, our core priority is to move operations over from this community group to the Claverton Pumping Station Trust CIO. The trust will then create a long-term strategy laying out its priorities and fundraising plans.

As next open season will likely only include static open days, we will concentrate on improving signage and displays inside the pump house. This will enhance visitor experience, especially for those who prefer not to have a guided tour. Funding for this signage is part of our Canal and River Trust grant. We will look to increase visitor numbers. This will rely on a more complete marketing strategy, with Paul Smirthwait taking charge of marketing.

Our core maintenance task for the year will be surveying machinery and repairing the crack in the cast iron. We also will look to finish both the Engineman's walk and the winter storage

project this year. We will then need to make plans repair of the retaining wall of the mill pond and repair of the filter grille.

## **In Summary**

The year has ended on somewhat of a down note with the discovery of the crack in the casting forcing us to cancel the last running day. We shouldn't let this drown out the many successes of the year and the great progress that all our volunteers have contributed towards.

**Report prepared by the Claverton Pumping Station Group Management Committee**

**Julian Stirling**  
Volunteer Group Leader

**Deb Wray**  
Secretary

**Heather Higgins**  
Treasurer

**Tony Wray**  
Committee member