CANAL CLEAN-UP FAQs

Milton Keynes Branch

Supported by Canal & River Trust, The Parks Trust and Wyvern Shipping Co.

These FAQs are intended to help volunteers get to know how our Clean-ups work, and know what to expect. After you have read this, we hope you'll decide to volunteer on our next Clean-up. The Grand Union Canal in Milton Keynes is one of its greatest assets - a peaceful haven for people and wildlife. IWA Milton Keynes Branch, and the organisations that support the Clean-ups, very much appreciate your help in keeping it attractive and safe for everyone!

WHO CAN VOLUNTEER?

We welcome help from:

- Individuals and families. If you are under 18, you must be with your parents or with a supervised youth group;
- Outside organisations, e.g. Companies, Youth Groups and Colleges. The Clean-ups are an opportunity for local businesses to boost their "green" and "community" credentials! We much prefer small groups of up to six, plus a supervisor, so that we can give you proper attention "on the day".

For Health & Safety reasons, **WE NOW ASK ALL VOLUNTEERS TO PRE-REGISTER** at least five days before the event. Please see **HOW DO I VOLUNTEER?** below.

HOW OFTEN DO THE CLEAN-UPS TAKE PLACE?

Our Clean-ups are held twice a year, in Spring and Autumn. Each one lasts two days, usually a Friday and a Saturday. You can volunteer for one day, or both days.

WHERE DO THE CLEAN-UPS TAKE PLACE?

Most of our Clean-ups cover the canal through Milton Keynes itself, Northward from Fenny Stratford to Wolverton. Less often, we work Southward from Fenny Stratford to Leighton Buzzard. Here are the two usual itineraries:

Northward Clean-up – Fenny Stratford - Giffard Park - Wolverton

Friday: Fenny Stratford to Giffard Park
6 miles, with 2 refreshment breaks, and refreshments on request at finish point

Saturday: Giffard Park to Wolverton
4 miles, with 1 refreshment break, and refreshments on request at finish point

Southward Clean-up – Fenny Stratford - Globe Inn - Leighton Buzzard (Grove Lock)

Friday: Fenny Stratford to Globe Inn
6.5 miles, with 2 refreshment breaks, and refreshments on request at finish point

Saturday: Globe Inn to Grove Lock
2.7 miles with 1 refreshment break, and refreshments on request at finish point

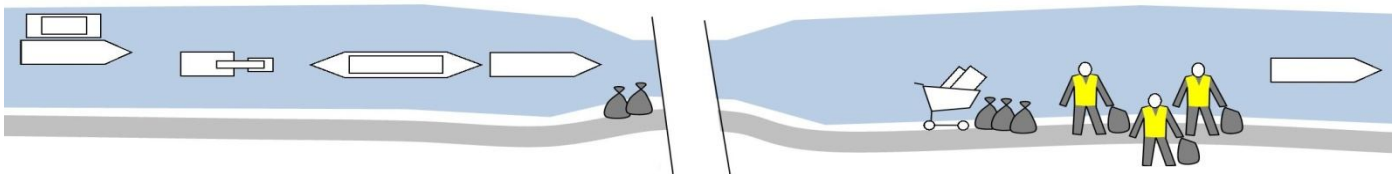
WHAT JOBS CAN I DO ON THE CLEAN-UP?

Most volunteers litter-pick from the towpaths and hedges, and leave full bags of rubbish to be collected by the workboat crew. We encourage volunteers to work in pairs when possible, and help each other, especially with heavy items. Have a fun day, but don't take risks!

We have a very limited number of places on the workboats, from which rubbish is grappled from the water and collected from the opposite bank. The workboats also collect the rubbish gathered by the Towpath Volunteers. Workboat volunteers must be fit, strong and agile. We provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) which you MUST wear, and you MUST wear your own steel-capped work boots.

HOW DOES THE CLEAN-UP WORK?

Here's a diagram of the Clean-up convoy, moving to the right:



PAN & TUG, usually at rear, collecting rubbish from the far side.

DREDGER assists hopper crew with heavy submerged items.

HOPPER & TUG Crew grapple items from the water, and collect rubbish left by Towpath Volunteers.

RUBBISH FROM TOWPATH AND HEDGE Towpath volunteers leave rubbish under bridges if possible. If too far from a bridge, leave rubbish at the water's edge well away from moored boats.

TOWPATH VOLUNTEERS Keep ahead of the hopper, but don't pass the Tea Boat!

TEA BOAT usually leads the convoy.

The Tea Boat takes the lead, and makes for the first (or next) refreshment stop. The other vessels follow. Towpath volunteers should keep ahead of the hopper, so that your rubbish can be collected. The pan is usually at the rear. Other boats, such as private narrow boats or canoeists, may also take part.

WHAT IF THE WEATHER IS BAD?

The Clean-up goes ahead regardless of the weather. Dress appropriately for the weather, and wear stout footwear. Clothing can easily be damaged while you are working, so wear old, warm clothes. If we consider that you are not adequately dressed for the conditions, we may advise you not to take part.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I ARRIVE?

First, we ask you to sign in. Towpath volunteers collect a Hi-vis tabard, protective gloves, a litter-picker, some plastic sacks, and a ring to hold a sack open. You will be given a leaflet with safety advice and other information, and you will also receive a verbal safety briefing. Workboat volunteers receive their own safety briefing. Then we set off.

CAN I ARRIVE LATE?

No. All volunteers must sign in, collect their equipment, and receive the safety briefing. If you arrive late, we will not be at the start point, and you will probably not find us. The Clean-up is a moving event.

CAN I LEAVE EARLY?

If you want to leave before we reach the finish point, you MUST tell us you are leaving and return your borrowed equipment. If you leave early, we CANNOT help with transport.

IS IT HARD WORK?

Yes, it can be, but there's a great sense of achievement at the end! If you are litter picking, you are in for a long walk (see the itineraries above), but we break the day up with refreshment stops.

WHAT ABOUT REFRESHMENTS?

We provide tea, coffee and snacks at breaks, and at the finish point on request. Please bring your own packed lunch.

WHAT ABOUT TOILETS?

There are toilets at the start and finish points, but very few between. Wet wipes, and limited toilet and hand-washing facilities are available on participating boats. They are privately-owned boats, so please treat them with respect. Be prepared to take your shoes off if requested.

IS FIRST AID AVAILABLE?

We have some qualified First-Aiders, but we especially welcome additional First-Aiders from outside organizations.

WHAT ABOUT TRANSPORT?

It's best if you can be dropped off at the start point and collected at the finish point. There is limited parking at these points. We try to have a few vehicles at the finish point to take people back to the start, but places will be limited.

HOW DO I VOLUNTEER?

For Health & Safety reasons, **WE NOW ASK ALL VOLUNTEERS TO PRE-REGISTER** at least five days before the event. This helps to make sure that all volunteers know how the event is organised, and know what to wear and bring. It also allows us to do the paperwork in advance, so that we have less to do on the day.

INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES: Please email Pat Durham at pat.durham@waterways.org.uk , or phone on 07510 195918. When emailing, please give a telephone number, and state which day (or days) you can offer. If you phone, you will be asked for an email address. After you have registered, we will send you Arrival Information - when and where to come, and what to bring and wear.

COMPANIES, YOUTH GROUPS, COLLEGES: Please contact Pat Durham as above. You will be asked to decide which day(s) your Group will take part, and nominate someone as your Group Co-ordinator. We ask that person to display our poster, collate the responses from interested volunteers and pass their details to us, and help with signing-in / out and marshalling at the event.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AT THE NEXT CLEAN-UP!