

WEX-SOUTH



The Magazine of the
Wey & Arun Canal Trust
Issue 211 October 2025

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Front cover:

*The new canal bridge at Rooks Hill begins to take shape.
Photo by Keith Lyall*

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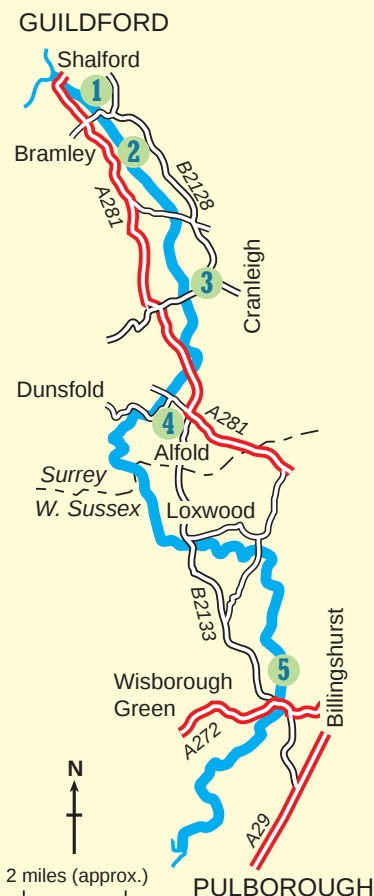


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Wey-South

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The Wey & Arun Canal Trust

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Issue 211 October 2025

Wey-South 211

News headlines

Rooks Hill - a new bridge is emerging

We have started extending the restored canal south from Birtley towards the site of Fanesbridge Lock. The granting of planning permission fired the starting gun for Phase 1 of this project – the construction of a new Rooks Hill bridge for pedestrians and riders over a realigned canal cut at the project's southern end. Within weeks, the bridge's concrete structure (to be clad with bricks – see below) has been completed, a new alignment of canal under it and southwards has been excavated and the outfall of the culvert under the canal's route has been rebuilt. See page 5.



Annual Meeting

This year's Annual Meeting will take place at Shalford Village Hall on 18th October at 2.30pm. The full agenda was published in the last (June) edition of *Wey-South*. The Annual Report and Accounts for 2024 are available on our website. If you have any questions on these, please let us know before the meeting (support@weyarun.org.uk) so that we can be sure to give a full answer.

Rooks Hill – please join the funders

We need to raise a further £110,000 to complete Phase 1 at Rooks Hill. At the time of going to press, we have already reached £155,000 of the expected £265,000 total costs. This includes your donations (for which many thanks), earmarked legacies and funds. It also includes a £30,000 grant from Asda, secured with the help of Bramley Parish Council as part of Asda's support for local projects, related to its recent fuel station and shop development in the village, and a generous donation of 12,000 bricks from Wienerberger (valued at £11,000) - enough to complete the facing of the new bridge and the rebuilt culvert head wall.

Cost savings of £21,000 have also been identified to reduce the expected costs from the original budget of £286,000. We are building quickly and we need the further funds soon. Your generosity (or help with fundraising) will be much appreciated. See our appeal on the back cover and information on Gift Aid on page 13.

Priority projects update

Tickner's Heath Crossing

Our Dunsfold Road footbridge (also for equestrian use) over what will be a new section of canal has reopened, following the

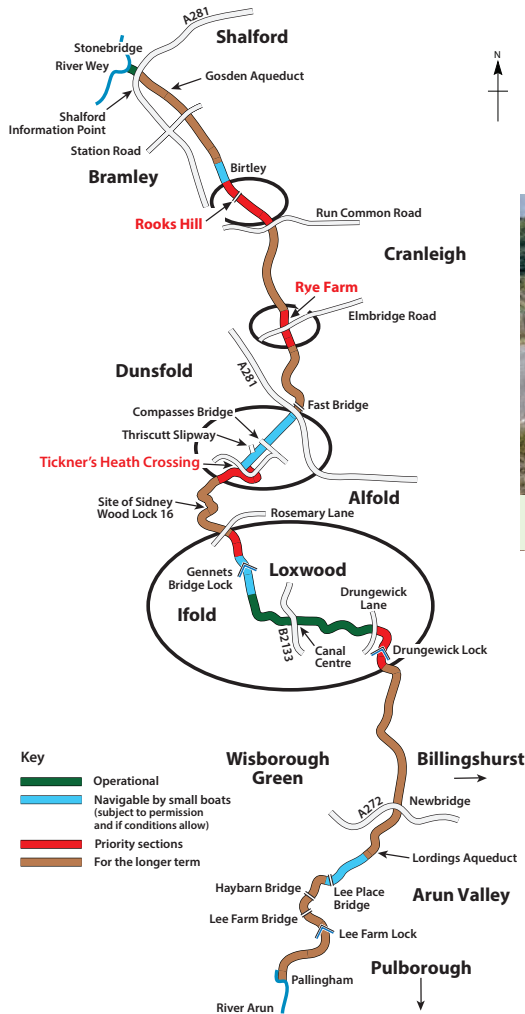


The footbridge and footpath at Tickner's Heath - repaired and back in use

conclusion of the work to reroute a water main along it. This means that most of the preliminaries have been completed, ready for the building of a temporary diversion of the adjacent length of Dunsfold Road. The canal will then be turned south under the footbridge and the existing route of the road.

Rye Farm

Work here creates a section of fresh towpath and brideway to the north of Elmbridge Road by moving it west into the canal itself, while leaving sufficient canal width for future navigation, as the picture opposite shows. Rye Farm - in the background - no longer has to share the previous public towpath alignment for its own access, which



can now be separate and secure. The final surface of the new towpath, created by our EWG team, led by Dennis Gillen, is fine granite aggregate laid over rolled Type 1 crushed aggregate.

The new towpath joins the existing brideway by rising over and through the treeline. The roots of adjacent retained trees required safeguarding against wear and tear from equestrian and vehicular traffic at this location, so multi-layer tree root protection was employed – a geotextile fabric base, then an aggregate-filled expanding cellular plastic membrane. Further geotextile is finished off with an aggregate topping.

It is hoped that Phase 2 of this project will have started by the time you read this *Wey-South*. A further length of towpath south towards the Elmbridge Road causeway over the canal will be added. The first task will be for the Midweek Working Party to remove trees that stand in its way.



The new Rye Farm towpath and bridleway

Rooks Hill

As soon as planning permission was granted, work started on the new Rooks Hill project - on the new bridge, on the length of canal beneath it and southwards, and on restoring the nearby outfall from a culvert under the old (and new) canal's route. As preliminary work, the Northern Working Party (NWP) spread fifty tonnes of Type 1 aggregate over the deck and approaches of the nearby bridge over the Downs Link /Wey-South Path – the old Guildford – Horsham railway line. This was then raked and rolled so that the 19th-century bridge whose deck also forms part of the Greensand Way was ready to withstand the heavy vehicles accessing the construction site along the track from the A281 main road.

The NWP used Heras-type fencing to delineate and secure the work site and to create a works compound nearby. Within the compound, a container was brought from the depot to be a tool store and a concrete pad was poured as a base for a tank for construction vehicle diesel fuel. A welfare unit was added for facilities for the volunteers. The compound was branded with a Wey & Arun banner and a public information board was posted on the Greensand Way that passes between the compound and the work site. Work could then start in earnest.

Only fourteen days after the first turf had been cut, the bridge site had been excavated and bulk-delivered ready-mixed concrete had started to be poured. By early August the concrete bridge foundations and canal base were in, and, above them, the concrete pouring into the formwork for the bridge's abutment walls was complete. The carcass of a new bridge now stands in a Surrey field. The line of the new canal has been excavated and the outfall has been rebuilt.

Work progressed quickly because much of it was done by visiting teams – the Waterway Recovery Group and the Kent & East Sussex Canal Restoration Group. It was also helped by the lack of rainfall, with conditions underfoot perfect for excavation and earth-moving. The excavations for the bridge foundations encountered a layer of blue clay from which the foundation trenches could be easily cut. The clay was recovered, for use later or elsewhere. The following pages show the various stages of the work so far - a picture diary.

Rooks Hill - the work begins



*Above: June 16th - Day 1 - Cutting the first sod.
Below: June 26th - Day 11 - Drone shot of excavation. Note the blue clay.*



Rooks Hill - continued



*Above: July 1st - Day 16 - Laying the bridge foundations.
Below: Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) volunteers beginning the formwork.*



Rooks Hill - continued



*Above: July 8th - Rapid abutment formwork progress by the WRG
Below: July 17th – just 32 days from digging the first sod, the bridge abutments are revealed*



Rooks Hill - continued



Aug 18th: The base of the first two wing walls are poured. Two trucks pour concrete simultaneously to avoid the clay wall between the two slabs collapsing. Clever thinking by our EWG team!



Rooks Hill - continued



Above left: Aug 7th: Starting work on the brickwork for the culvert outfall.

Right: Aug 28th: All wing wall bases completed and work continues on the access track.

Below: Sept 4th: Aerial view of bridge showing progress on the wing walls and wet surfaces following the first rainfall for many weeks, creating some more challenging site conditions.



The first Rooks Hill Bridge – still with us

Alan Johnson, Technical Liaison Officer updates his Wey-South article (No. 195, March 2021)

At least three of the original bridges crossing northern sections of our canal are known to have been swing bridges, designed by the canal's engineer, Josias Jessop, and factory-built by his family's Butterley Co. business in Derbyshire. Their decks pivoted on a ball-race. Of these, one remains, as a fixture (not accessible to the public) near Whitley Manor. The remains of the sub-surface abutments of another were excavated and studied in preparation for our building Birtley No 2 Bridge. Nothing of its deck survives.

Between these, at Rooks Hill, the 8m cast-iron longitudinal beams of the swing bridge were repurposed at some time to take what is now the Greensand Way over the Cranleigh Waters stream, 170m downhill from its original location. Its current concrete deck has been formed above corrugated shuttering placed on the beams. Iron railings (perhaps original, certainly old) rooted in sockets cast into the edge beams are still in place, but for safety are functionally superseded by modern galvanised-steel 'Key-Clamp' railings. The structure is supported by an intermediate pier in the bed of the stream, apparently for extra support because one of the beams appears to have fractured, possibly when moved to this location.

We believe that the brickwork abutments of these bridges were built to Jessop's design as part of constructing the canal. Once the northern end of the canal was open for navigation, the iron components were then transported by inland waterways from the Butterley Co. works on the Cromford Canal, to Brentford on the Thames and thence to their Surrey sites via the Wey, for assembly and commissioning.



Above: The old bridge in its new location



The pictures above and below clearly show the old railings and the supporting beams



Your canal needs you!



Do you have a bit of time you could give us? There are a number of projects we need help with – such as:

- promoting and running one of our events
- providing support and ideas on potential funding sources
- monitoring email and phone contacts from the public
- joining our team in expanding our membership
- helping to exploit our existing facilities for data storage and access and assist in developing an intranet
- joining our skippers and crews on the tripboats or helping develop new activities using the boats

- and many more.

Whatever time you have, wherever you want to work, we need you! Join the team!

Contact volunteering@weyarun.org.uk or any of our directors.

Christmas Raffle 2025

The countdown to Christmas has begun! Details of how to order our 2026 calendar and a selection of Christmas cards can be found in the attached flyer with this magazine.

Some of you may be wondering why we have not included any raffle tickets to buy this year. With the majority of purchases now being online we have decided not to print tickets this year but that doesn't mean you can't enter the raffle by post.

Wey & Arun Canal Trust
Registered Charity No. 265331

CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

First Prize: £200

Second Prize: £100
Third Prize: £75
Fourth Prize: £50 M&S Voucher, Fifth Prize: £40
Sixth Prize: £30, Seventh Prize £25 M&S Voucher

The draw will take place at **Eight Dormers, Snowdenham Lane, Bramley GUS ODB on Tuesday 20th January 2026**

Promoter: Margaret Durrah Bridge End, Somerswey, Shalford, Surrey GU4 8EQ
Registered under the Gambling Act 2005 with Guildford Borough Council Licence No. SL345

Tickets £1 each

Wey & Arun Canal Trust
Name _____
Address _____
Telephone _____
Do you know you can enter online at weyarun.org.uk/raffle? It will save you a stamp and save us bank charges for paying in cheques. If you are unable to enter online, please send cheques payable to "Wey & Arun Canal Trust" together with counterfoils to the promoter.

There are two ways to purchase your "tickets":

Head to our website and go to our raffle page weyarun.org.uk/raffle. Entering the draw via our website saves us both manpower and money and is done very easily.

- Write a cheque and put it in the post to us at WACT Raffle, Bridge End, Somerswey, Shalford, Guildford GU4 8EQ. Please ensure you mark the envelope "Raffle" and cheques should be payable to Wey & Arun Canal Trust Ltd.

All entries received by January 14th 2026 will be entered in the draw. One entry will be created and drawn electronically for every £1 given.



Gift Aid and tax relief on donations

Gift Aid makes an important contribution to our finances – typically, it represents more than 5% of our income.

When you elect for Gift Aid to apply to your subscription or donations, we can claim tax relief from HMRC equal to the standard (20%) rate of tax. A gift of £100 is treated as being worth a total of £125, of which £25 is the tax relief we will claim and add to what you have given. Put another way, every £4 that you give benefits us by £5 when we reclaim the extra £1 from HMRC.

You can Gift Aid your contributions via the website, under Donations. This will then apply until you change your instruction. It will also apply to contributions in the last four years, unless you say otherwise.

If you are fortunate enough to have a higher or additional rate tax liability, you can recoup extra tax relief for yourself, being the difference between your actual tax rate and the standard rate. This will not affect the tax relief we claim under Gift Aid. When you receive the extra tax relief, you can then gift that as well, if you want!

In applying for Gift Aid to apply, you are saying that your taxable income is enough for you to have an income tax liability of at least the value of the Gift Aid we will claim. (If not, HMRC may claw the tax relief back from you.) That income tax liability can be either for the current tax year or the previous tax year.

Gift Aid can also apply to Capital Gains Tax (CGT). This would be relevant if you sold an investment to fund a donation and had to pay CGT on the proceeds. We can reclaim this tax. (It is best to seek professional advice about this.)

Ewhurst brickworks visit



On 28th May a group of eleven volunteers took up a kind invitation from Wienerberger UK to visit its Ewhurst Brickworks, just one of its 14 manufacturing sites across the UK. The Ewhurst plant, at Walliswood, just south of the village, is a mixture of ancient and modern – an automated factory producing standard building bricks and the old plant still making hand-made tiles under the Keymer brand and some of the company's range of 83 different hand-made brick designs – the moulds for which can be seen on the racks in the picture. Our visitors were encouraged to chat with the operators hand-making individual roof tiles and even to try making some themselves.

We are delighted to continue our long and fruitful relationship with Wienerberger which dates back to before 2009 when Wienerberger bricks were used for facing the new Loxwood Lock and Horse Bridge. In 2009 the project was shortlisted in two categories "Innovative Use of Brick" and "Best Refurbishment Project" for the Brick Development Association's Annual Awards. The publicity that resulted was a great benefit for us and for Wienerberger.

This year Wienerberger has helped us by supplying clay for plugging a canal leak at Drungewick and have generously donated 12,000 bricks for facing the new Rooks Hill Bridge and the culvert outfall headwall. Historically the locks and bridges from Southland Lock (north-west of Loxwood) northwards were built of bricks made locally. On detailed Victorian Ordnance Survey maps a 'Brick Works' is shown north of the canal and east of Tickner's Heath Farm. Further south the builders used stone blocks quarried from near Pulborough for the locks, but we think that transporting the blocks to north of Loxwood was too long a journey on the terrible roads of the time.

‘If it moves, salute it. If it doesn’t move, paint it.’



Work in progress, afloat on Zachariah Keppel and ashore - and work completed on Wiggonholt (note the low water level).

Our headline is of course an old army saying. In fact, a friendly wave from the towpath will suffice when encountering one of our tripboats going about its business.

However, trips have had to be suspended during the summer's drought. With the fleet immobilised – see how the water level has fallen – there was a window for a Boat Group team to repaint their upper works and panels, to look smart for when the rains return and trips resume.



Josias Jessop, our canal's designer - his later career

The Wey & Arun Junction Canal was officially opened on 28 September 1816. Josias Jessop died ten years and two days later, not yet 45. In those years he had designed another canal, coastal docks, harbours and breakwaters - and railways. He next engineered a 7½ -mile 6-lock western extension to Newport of the Montgomeryshire Canal, completed by 1819. This was his last major canal project, but he saw canals as still having a role compared with horse-drawn railways. (Steam locomotive power was still in its early stages.) Replying to railway engineer Robert Stephenson in 1823, Jessop wrote:

'You ask the advantages of Railways over Canals, this I conceive cannot be definitively answered depending altogether on situation, that is, the nature of the trade & the modes of conveyance with which they are to be connected. In a flat Country which will hold water & which is well supplied with it a Canal is preferable; where there would be much lockage, a porous country short of water or a descending trade a Railway has decided advantages besides the saving of expence in the first cost, this is of course a matter of calculation when an Engineer has to consider between the two modes.' Note that a horse-drawn railway is taken to be cheaper to build than a canal.

Carrying coals to Mansfield

Next was indeed a railway, for the horse-drawn transport of coal to Mansfield which then had none, from Pinxton on the Cromford Canal where it was plentiful, a distance of eight miles. To keep the trucks on the track, Jessop's Mansfield & Pinxton Railway was an early adopter of flanged truck wheels, as opposed to the older 'plateway' system of flanged track.

The Mansfield & Pinxton Railway, later upgraded for locomotive operation and now part of the national rail network, is claimed to be the oldest commercial railway in continuous use, and to have the world's first railway viaduct, 'a beautiful five-arch bridge constructed under the direction of Mr Jessop, the engineer.' Jessop's King's Mill Viaduct is now preserved as a scheduled ancient monument and is Grade 2 listed. It is accessible as a footpath, as the railway has been diverted from it.

Coastal projects

Jessop's early involvement with the construction of Bristol's Floating Harbour had resulted in his appointment by the Navy Board in 1812 (overlapping with his designing our canal) to a committee to examine the expansion of Sheerness Dockyard. He later joined engineering teams for other coastal projects – a jetty at Newhaven and the great one-mile Plymouth Breakwater. The Navy Board then commissioned him as a solo project to visit Bermuda in 1819 to make recommendations for the building of a naval station and dockyard, which were acted on.



*Jessop's Kings Mill Viaduct,
Mansfield*

Over the top

Josias Jessop had been involved from its inception in the most significant railway project before the age of steam locomotion – the Cromford and High Peak Railway. Manchester in the 1820s needed Derbyshire's coal and minerals, but the Trent & Mersey Canal route was slow and circuitous. A railway was needed, from the Cromford Canal and rising 988 feet to cross the Peak District and descend to the Peak Forest Canal at Whaley Bridge, a track-length of 33 miles.

*The Jessop family
memorial in Pentrich
church*



a long-term appointment, but brief because of his death, as consulting engineer to the infant Liverpool and Manchester Railway, brought in to offset the technical shortcomings of its builder George Stephenson.

Some sources say that Josias died 'suddenly', others refer to it as following a short illness. Did his brief management of the difficult Stephenson raise his blood pressure? Did a latent tropical disease contribute to his death? Josias had spent much of 1821 in Barbados on a private contract to recommend improvements to the sugar plantations of Sir Henry Fitzherbert, Bt. of Tissington.



The resulting gradients were far beyond what any horse or the primitive steam locomotives of the time could master. Appointed the railway's design engineer, Jessop's solution comprised long almost level horse-drawn sections interspersed with short, steep inclined planes powered by steam-driven winding engines pulling endless ropes. Five such inclines lifted or lowered trucks at the Cromford end, with four at the northern end. The summit level, at 1,266 ft, was higher than any of today's English railways. Later converted for locomotive power, it survived into the 1960s.

Early death

Jessop died in 1826, shortly after construction began. His death has been ascribed to exhaustion from overwork on the Cromford and High Peak. This must be treated with scepticism. Josias's greatest input there would have ended in 1825 with passing of the Act authorising the railway. Construction was now in the hands of the resident engineer he had recruited—and who was competently implementing Jessop's plans. The multi-tasking Jessop was already moving on, to further work on the Plymouth breakwater and to other railway projects. This included what would have been

Below : Josias's burial register entry

BURIALS in the Parish of <i>Pentridge</i> in the County of <i>Derby</i> in the Year 1826				
Name.	Abode.	When buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
<i>Josias Jessop</i>	<i>Butterley Hall</i>	<i>October 4th</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>Wood</i>

No. 533.

Had he lived longer, Josias Jessop might have been spoken of in the same breath as his father William, the Stephensons, the Rennies and Telford. Josias is commemorated on a memorial to him and his parents in his local church, St Matthew's at Pentrich, Derbyshire (or Pentridge as the then vicar spelled it). Perhaps a greater honour is the inscription on a portal of the Cromford and Peak Forest Railway's summit-level Newhaven tunnel, pictured left, of 'JOS^S JESSOP ENGINEER', placed above the grateful company's crest.

Thank you Roger Beazer

His recent 80th birthday seemed a good moment for Roger Beazer to slow down just a little. Since 2018 he has been in charge of the Mobile Display Vehicle (MDV) team that travels out to local events to publicise our aims and achievements. Roger has a background in sales and marketing as anyone who visits the MDV will soon discover. Few leave without being signed up as a member or buying some merchandise!

He has now passed the tow-hitch to Phil Short but will continue to assist at events.

Roger has been a member and volunteer for over 20 years. After moving to Cranleigh he signed up for Dave Evans's 'third Saturday in the month group' who were working on the Compasses Bridge project at Dunsfold.

He continues to turn out for the Northern Working Party Tuesday Group, organises local log deliveries and has been instrumental in developing the relationship with Plastecowood, whose products we have used on several projects. Roger was awarded a Volunteer Cup at our April 2023 Annual Meeting.



Meet the volunteer Phil Short - and the MDV

With Roger Beazer standing down, Phil has taken over organising our Mobile Display Vehicle, often abbreviated to 'MDV'. Phil answered *Wey-South's* questions.

What's your background?

I'm retired, after a career in Sales in Building and Construction. I worked for a variety of national and local companies. My wife's also retired, from a career in Nursing. We have lived in Chichester for 28 years.

How did you become involved with the canal?

I was always aware of it and interested in it. When I retired, I started volunteering with the Monday Working Party. I took a break when Covid hit, and I resumed when it died down, but now with Roger and the MDV at local events. I also help at the Loxwood Canal Centre once a week.



What is the MDV?

It's a trailer display unit we keep at the Depot and tow to various events. It opens out to reveal displays about the canal. It's not new, but we keep it in good condition, inside and out. The displays are updated to reflect our latest projects – so we are currently featuring Rooks Hill.

Where does it appear?

We attend about eleven functions a year in Surrey and West Sussex, from the Wey River Festival at Dapdune Wharf, Guildford in the north to events at Amberley Museum near Arundel in



Phil Short and the Mobile Display Vehicle at Amberley Museum this August

the south. Perhaps the largest is the September Surrey Wood Fair at Cranleigh. However, at the Amberley Museum, we 'treble-dipped' by attending the Communications Day in mid-August – from semaphore to fibre optics. I then returned for a normal museum day in the following week, which culminated in our remaining for the 'Taste of Sussex' event over the bank holiday weekend, featuring local artisans, producers and creatives. We plan to be back at Amberley again for its October 'Autumn Gathering'.

Amberley Museum is fascinating even outside special events. You can explore southern England's working past in a former quarry and limeworks, located in the heart of the South Downs National Park. There are over 40 exhibit areas to discover, including a narrow-gauge railway, historic buses, rural crafts and extensive communications displays - something for everyone.

How do we get the canal message across?

I have a team of volunteers who take it in turns to attend – there's a core of seven of us, but we always welcome more hands to share the load! It seems to suit former working party members like me, but all are welcome. We get a good reception and lots of questions at the events. We promote awareness, interest, understanding and support. We sell canal items. We actively sign up new members – perhaps you were one of them? Typically, we recruit about five to ten at each event. Some are happy to join just to learn and be supportive. Others are actively interested in volunteering for our working groups and support functions. We pass on their details to the relevant contact.

The Poddle 2025

Another successful fundraising walk (says organiser Chris Tavener) - but he asks for more help in 2026

‘Over 100 people walked the Poddle on June 1st. The route this year was entirely along the canal (either restored or awaiting restoration) from the A281 at Fast Bridge, via Tickner’s Heath and Sidney Wood to Devil’s Hole Lock at Loxwood, from late morning to late afternoon. Poddlers said they were very pleased with it. They commented especially on the masses of purple flowers at the rhododendron plantation in Birch Copse woods. This Poddle included the mile-long restored section at Dunsfold airfield which is not open to the public at any other time. A regular feature of the afternoon part of the walk is the ‘period’ refreshment stop provided for many years by Richard and Vanessa Smith who dress accordingly and display an amazing selection of delicious cakes, to be washed down by freshly brewed tea and coffee.

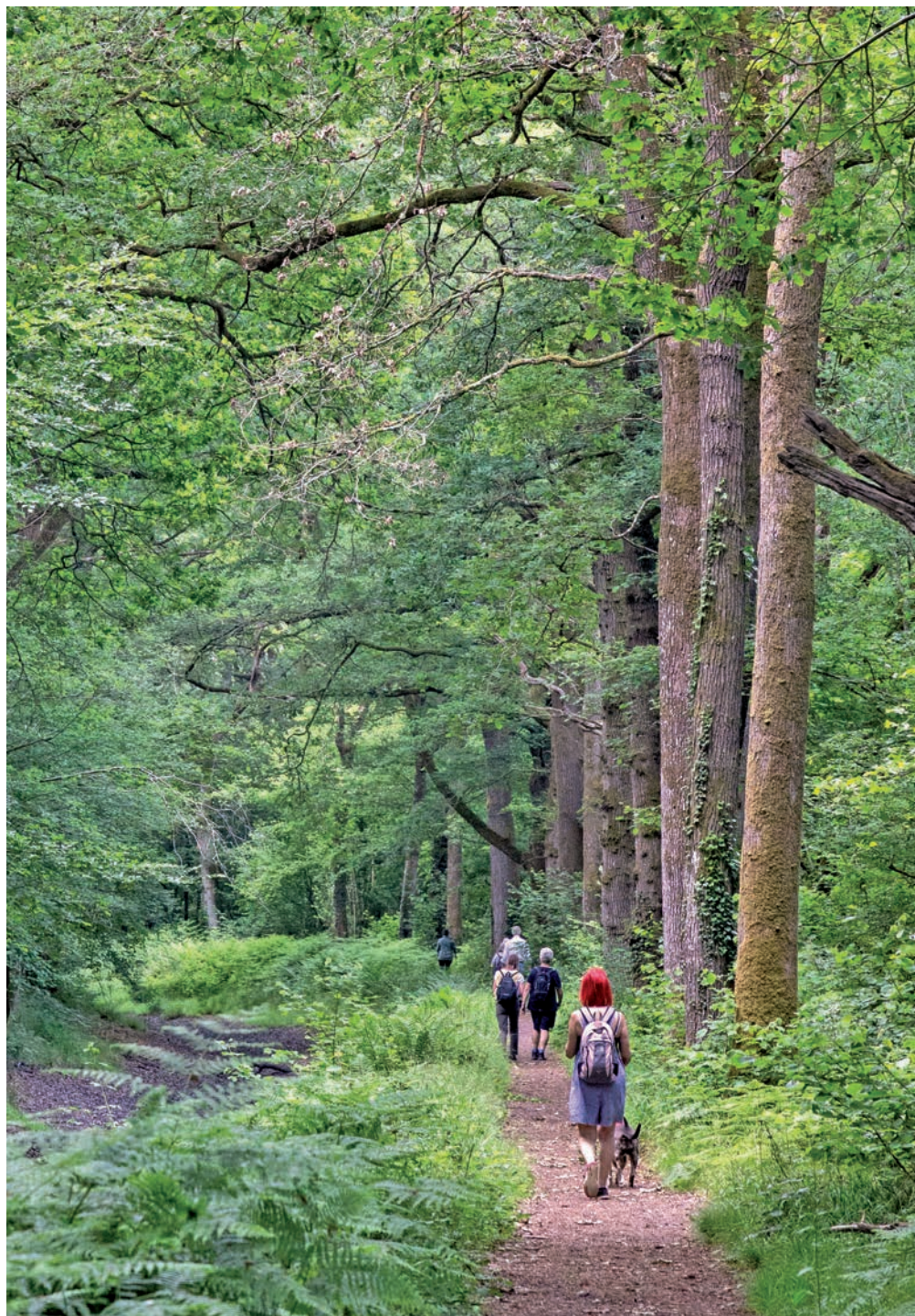
‘Once again, we were reliant on, and truly thankful for, the army of volunteers, both in the planning and on the day, without whom there wouldn’t be a walk each year. Indeed, if we are to have a walk next year, we need a volunteer to take on the role of planning the location of the cautionary road signs, and then putting them up the day before, where walkers will either be walking along the road or, in many places, crossing it. This is an essential safety task.

‘We will also need help at the walkers’ sign on/sign off location, an important role to make sure walkers are checked in and their sponsorship amounts recorded.

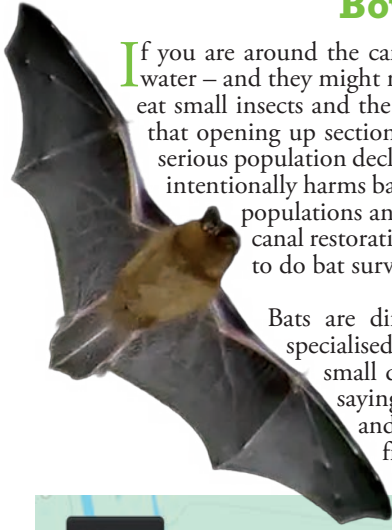
‘It would be welcome too if we could have a new volunteer to lead on the provision of the food for the lunch stop, and then co-ordinate volunteers on the day to prepare and serve it.’



*Above: Richard and Vanessa Smith provide afternoon refreshments at High Bridge
Right: Poddlers make their way through the beautiful Sidney Wood, alongside the canal*



Bowled over by bats



If you are around the canal at dusk you may well spot some creatures flying over the water – and they might not be birds. There are 18 species of bat in the UK. All of these eat small insects and the canal is an ideal place to fly and find them. We like to think that opening up sections of canal contributes to conserving bats which have suffered serious population declines over the last 100 or so years. It is illegal to do anything that intentionally harms bats or to damage or destroy their roosting places. Identifying bat populations and mitigating any risks to them is a necessary step in any major canal restoration work. Periodically we have to employ professional ecologists to do bat surveys as part of our planning applications and before tree work.

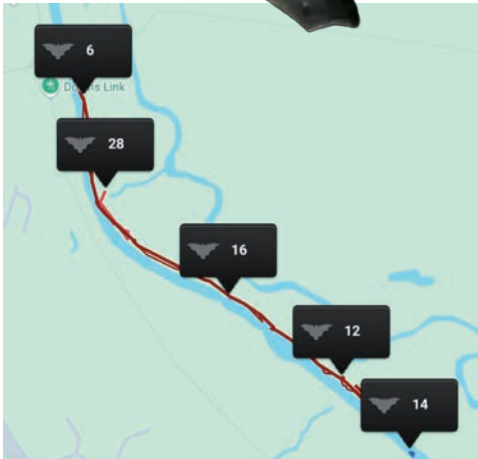
Bats are difficult to photograph without extreme patience and some specialised lighting equipment. But detecting bats is not too hard with a small device that plugs into a mobile phone or tablet. Although the saying goes “blind as a bat”, bats have good eyesight but for navigation and hunting in the dark they rely on echolocation. The highest frequency sound that a human can hear is around 20kHz and the calls of British bats are between 20kHz and over 100kHz.

The frequency, interval and rhythm of a bat’s call are a “signature” that identify its species.

For this article I visited various places on the canal at dusk – Shalford, Birtley and Loxwood (Drungewick) and in all of them I detected bats very quickly. With my amateur-level equipment, the most definite identifications were relatively common species – the noctule, common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle. The soprano pipistrelle is very similar to its common cousin but its call is in a distinctively higher range. These are tiny, delicate creatures. Their body length is typically around 40mm (1½ in), with a wingspan of about 200mm (8 in) and a weight of up to 8g (0.3 oz).

After this investigation and the one into moths (in the last *Wey-South*), I’m starting to think the real wildlife action on the canal only begins when the sun goes down.

Julian Morgan



Top: Common Pipistrelle in flight

Centre: Bats located near Birtley

Below: Plug-in bat detector for a mobile phone

Right: Common Pipistrelle



Tannery Lane Bridge middle arch

– facts and rumours

At one time it was “common knowledge” that Canadian engineers had demolished all the old canal locks north of Loxwood while practising their explosives skills. But is it a fact? Absolutely not – the only lock where this happened was Devil’s Hole, which was built of stone and partly destroyed. All the locks north of this were built of brick – and these bricks were taken away and reused around the 1920s. And we know this because in 1994 our members Steve Jones and Geoff Perks researched the subject and found out all about the demolition of Southland Lock in 1925-26 – the name of the landowner, his agent and even where the bricks were reused. So those are the facts. Anyone who tells you about a string of locks going sky-high in Sidney Wood is just repeating a rumour, which happens to be wrong.



Now comes the embarrassing part because in the last *Wey-South* we repeated a rumour when we said that the middle arch of Tannery Lane Bridge in Bramley was “for a railway siding”. A local member questioned this and almost certainly they are right. We have no hard evidence that a siding was ever intended or built. And unless we get any hard evidence – like a map or photograph – to show otherwise, the truth is that we don’t know what the purpose of the middle arch was. If you know better, we’ll be pleased to hear from you.

From the Thames to the Channel

Wey-South has learned from Bristol postman and explorer Tom Dymond of the role played by our canal in his solo voyage with a 17ft trailable sea kayak from Bristol to the Black Sea, paddling via inland waters wherever possible.

Tom reached our canal via the Kennet & Avon, the Thames and the Wey. He then took four days in May 2025 to traverse our canal’s route and the Arun, paddling restored waters whenever possible and portaging when not. In the process, he managed to fall in at Gun’s Mouth and to be ambushed by a herd of cattle near the Arun. Throughout his journey, he was taken with the water-side flora and fauna and by the benefits that our waterways bring to waterside properties: he hopes that the landowners through whose land the canal passes will have the same perception.

When not able to paddle, Tom was trailing his kayak along footpaths and bridleways, sometimes with difficulty, and was grateful for access given by a resident family to get access across a garden to the south end of the canal at Pallingham. He appreciated help and advice from our team at the Loxwood Canal Centre and he was impressed by the dedication of our volunteers, even though they might not see the full restoration of our canal.

Finishing this leg at Littlehampton, Tom took a Newhaven ferry to France to continue his expedition. He wonders whether he was the first person since Mr Dashwood in 1872 to traverse the full length of our canal (or its route) by water wherever possible. No doubt our readers will know. [The video “The Lost Wey to the Sea”, released in 2002, tells the story of Tony Pratt’s voyage along the canal route.]

Tom’s full account of this trip is posted on our website under Latest News.

Some of our Yesterdays

The Wey-South team continue our occasional series, looking back at our reporting in older editions, but now also enlisting your help in identifying a team of volunteers 44 years ago.

Spring 1981

We recently received an email from Nick Catford who described himself as a “former short lived press officer for the W&ACT”. He attached “a couple of pictures of a working party on the W & A in spring 1981 (44 years ago) that you might like. I don’t remember who is seen but I guess someone there might recognise the faces. I didn’t record the exact location but as the next negative on the strip is Gosden Aqueduct I guess it’s probably close by.”

The “exact location” is of course the Tannery Lane Bridge, between Bramley and Shalford, with volunteers repairing a hole in the bricking-up of the later road bridge (see p 23) over the Guildford-Horsham railway that took up half the width of the original canal bridge. They are standing on the half that survives as a footpath. Impressively our archivist Lorraine Feeney has unearthed from our records a picture of the hole before it was filled.

So we know the place but we don’t know who the men were. Can anyone help us identify these three volunteers? Do please email us at weysouth@weyarun.org.uk



*Above: Who are these three men?
Below: The hole they were patching.
Left: Gosden Aqueduct in 1981*



Issue 129, December 2004 to February 2005

Twenty years ago *Wey-South* carried a progress report on the steel-framed swingbridge acquired from the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in 2001 without, it seems, knowing exactly what they were getting or what they would do with it. This is a precis of that report.

It took a couple of years but eventually it was decided that Haybarn, close to the southern end of the canal, would be a good place to put it, where there was an existing concrete farm bridge. It was too low for navigation, so it would have to be replaced. The article says :



Above: The old bridge

Below: The new bridge on opening day in 2005

“The demolition of the existing bridge proved much harder than anticipated, and despite the application of a 5 tonne excavator with pecker attachment and two compressor-driven breakers it took three weekends to complete the task. The original bridge was allegedly built by German prisoners of war and they were probably instructed to make it bomb proof.”



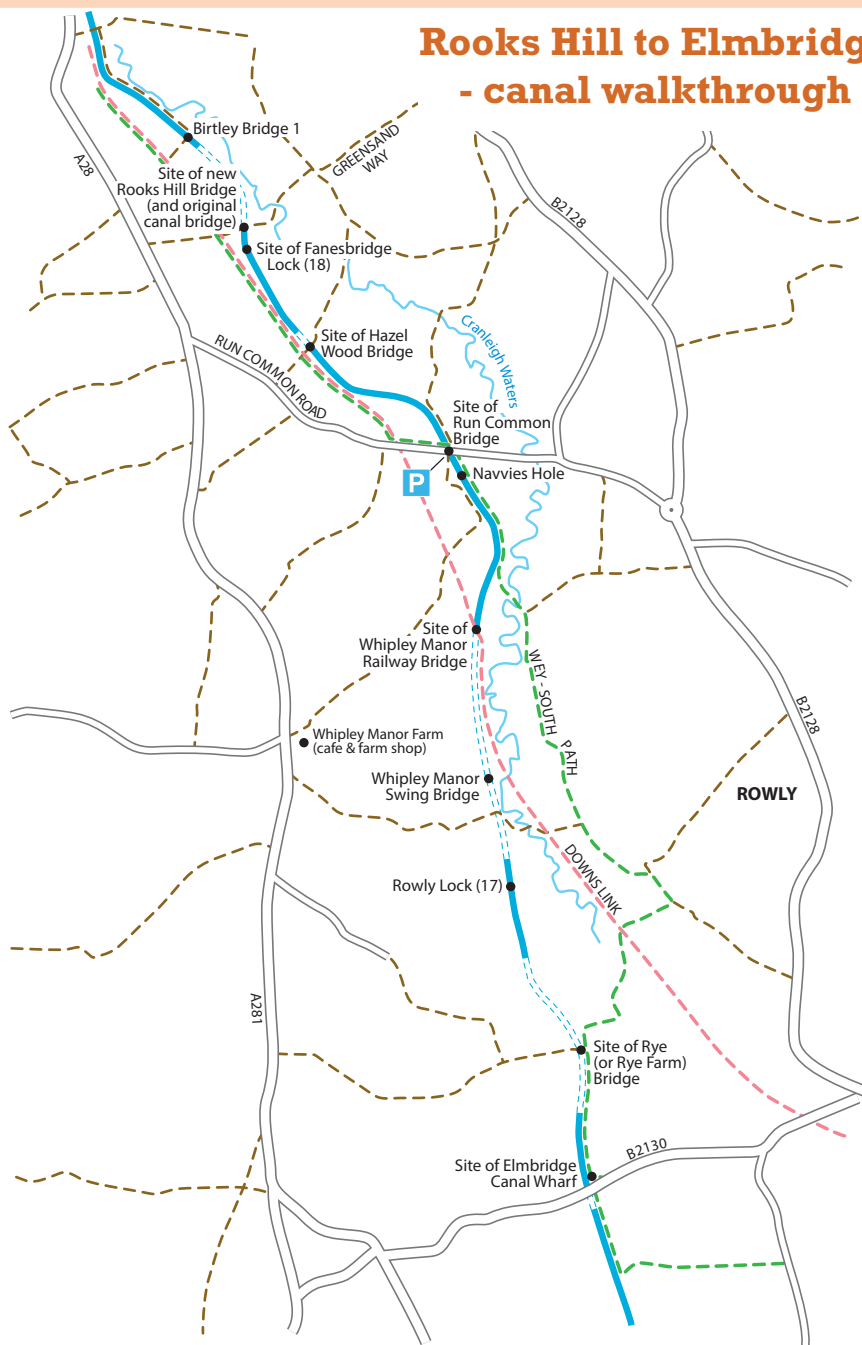
Meanwhile, offsite at Wharf Farm, where the ‘new’ bridge was being refurbished, it “was jacked up on to metre high stollidges to enable the underside to be accessed, and the timber deck (which proved to be rotten) was removed so that the steelwork could be inspected. The news was not good! Some of the lighter sections had rusted through and the entire structure was badly corroded. It was therefore necessary to carry out extensive needle gunning and three separate Dig Deep* teams spent very dirty and tiring weekends carrying this out, also using hand held hammers to chip away at the more difficult areas.”

As my Granny used to say, ‘Never buy what you do not want just because it’s cheap’, but nevertheless they battled on and eventually the restored bridge was hauled to its new home on a 16m low-loader, a journey that, it seems, was itself quite a saga, although space doesn’t permit....

The restored bridge had an ‘official opening’ in July 2005, with guest of honour Francis Maude, then MP for Horsham, officiating. The photo above shows the bridge on that opening day.

**Dig Deep was an umbrella organisation for the various visiting volunteer waterway restoration groups at that time*

Rooks Hill to Elmbridge - canal walkthrough



The Wey-South Path route does its best to follow the canal through this section, but to see everything possible from public rights of way you will need to make some diversions as well.

The starting point for this walk is the site of the former canal bridge at Fanesbridge. The bridge site is currently the focus of our restoration efforts at Rooks Hill. It is on the Greensand Way long-distance footpath south of Bramley and a short distance from the Downs Link (the old Guildford-Horsham railway which here is also the Wey-South Path route). Parking near here is not easy. As a visitor you must not drive along the track to Rooks Hill Farm. There is no official parking, but you may be able to find a parking space off the A281 near the entrance to Rooks Hill Farm. Other options are to park in Lordshill Common to the east (access from Shamley Green) or off Run Common Road further south.

From the bridge site near Fanesbridge Cottage, walk west for about 100 yards. At the old railway bridge, go down the steps on the right and turn right (south) on the Downs Link/Wey-South Path. Very soon the site of Fanesbridge Lock (Lock 18) is in the trees to your left. Nowadays there is very little to see. Next to the lock was one of the wind-driven pumps that were supposed to help with the canal's water supply. The pumps did not work well and at Fanesbridge the redundant equipment was sold by auction in 1853. We did a small-scale archaeological dig in 2020 but found very few remains.



The Fanesbridge mini-dig in 2020



Looking south from site of Hazel Wood Bridge

Downs Link or Wey-South Path ?

As you continue south on the Downs Link the canal route runs parallel to the old railway on the left. After about 400 yards there is another bridge over the railway. Here the canal's Hazel Wood Bridge was immediately to the left. There are no obvious remains of the bridge but if you stand at the site you will clearly see the canal route heading south across a field (this is private land). You need to continue on the Downs Link until the next railway bridge at Run Common Road.

Now you have a choice. You can continue on the Downs Link or the Wey-South Path. On the Wey-South Path you will see the canal section both sides of Run Common Road, but you will then leave the canal route for a long (but very attractive) diversion across farmland. On the Downs Link you will see the site of Whitley Manor railway bridge and an original metal canal bridge.

Wey-South Path

Let's take the Wey-South Path first. Here you need to turn left off the old railway immediately after Run Common Road. After about 200 yards you will reach the site of Run Common canal bridge. To the north the canal section is regularly maintained by our working parties and usually holds water in the wetter months. On our website there is a circular "Fanesbridge Walk" that will take you back north across country from here. South of Run Common Road, follow the footpath along the canal route. Soon you will come to a winding hole (boat turning place) called the "Navvies Hole". This became a popular spot for "wild swimming" after the canal closed. The Wey-South Path leaves the canal route at a stile and continues past East Whitley Farm and Rowly Farm. (We won't describe this route here – see Ordnance Survey maps or our Wey-South Path guide.)

Downs Link

The Horsham-Guildford railway opened in 1865 when the canal was already in steep decline. There was much discussion about the "expensive bridge" across the canal at Whitley Manor. Clearly the railway company would have liked to fill in the canal and avoid building the bridge. But in the end they were forced to build a long girder bridge that crossed the canal at a very narrow angle. Apparently the bridge moved alarmingly as trains crossed and was known as the "Rock 'n Roll" bridge. The railway closed in 1965 and soon afterwards the bridge was removed for its scrap value. You can still see the brick bridge parapets and we have installed an interpretation board. A small-scale dig in 2015 revealed that some of the horizontal bridge beams were left in place.



*Above: Run Common looking north in 1990
Below: "Navvies Hole" – also 1990*



*Below: The canal bed and the site of Whitley Manor
Railway Bridge to the left of the picture, looking south*



The canal route now closely follows the railway on the right (west) side. Look out for a gate and a bridge across the canal. The bridge itself is on private land but you will probably be able to see it from the path. We believe this is an original canal swingbridge designed by Josias Jessop, although the old maps suggest that it was moved southwards when the railway was built. After this bridge the railway and canal routes gradually separate. The railway crosses the Cranleigh Waters and shortly afterwards there is a public footpath on the right that crosses the canal route on a wooden footbridge. South of the footbridge the canal route has mostly been infilled and the site of Rowly Lock (Lock 17) where we invested so much effort, starting in the 1980s, is completely inaccessible. Go back from the footbridge to the Downs Link. (If you continue on this footpath you will eventually reach Whipley Manor Farm on the A281 where there is a café and a farm shop.)

Back on the Downs Link, soon the Wey-South Path crosses the railway and you should follow it west across the Cranleigh Waters, eventually reaching the site of Rye Farm Bridge on the canal. Nothing remains of the bridge, but south of here the canal route becomes visible again as the path passes Rye Farm. This is the site of our recent work to create a new canal towpath, away from the farm's driveway.

Just before the path reaches the busy Elmbridge Road (B2130) there was a canal wharf on the right and the canal superintendent lived in one of the houses here. In about 1860, the superintendent moved to the house which is now "The Wayside" on the south side of the road.



An archive picture of the Josias Jessop bridge near Whipley Manor, with less vegetation than today.



Rowly Lock (Lock 17) and bridge - sadly not currently accessible.



This picture was also taken at Run Common, but in 1973. Eagle eyes will see the boat name is 'Ditchcrawler' and its owner is 'Wey and Arun Canal Society'.

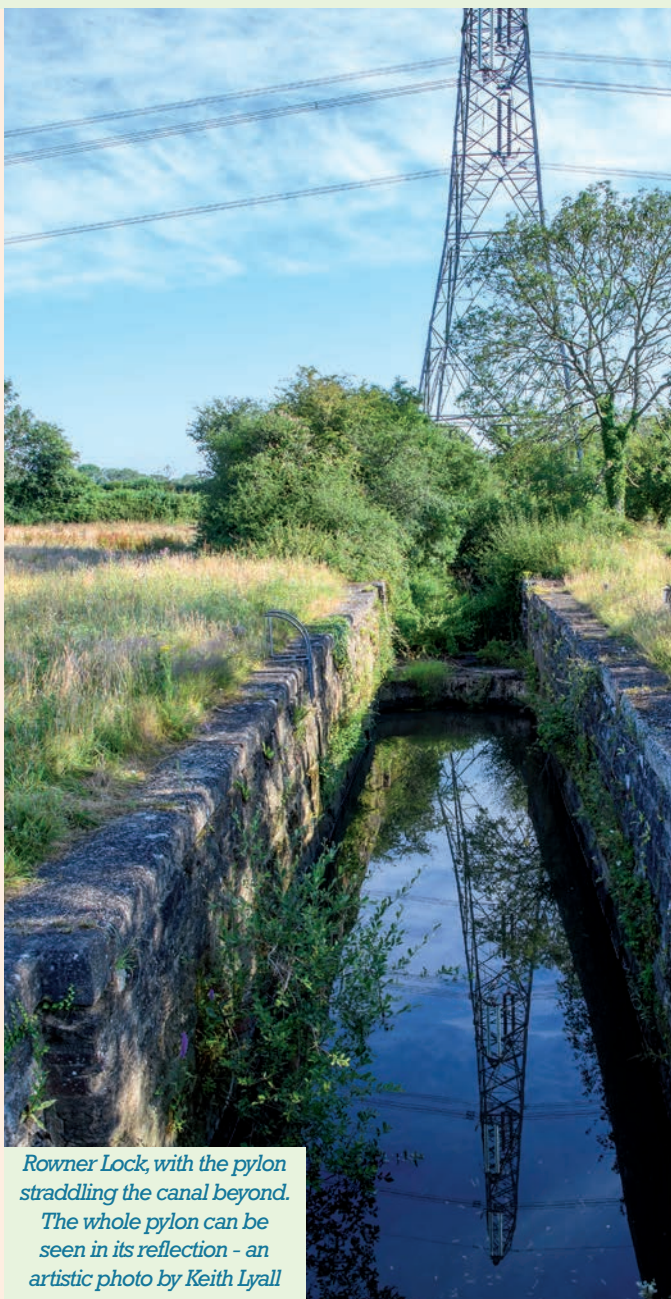
A Tale of two pylons

Grid line pylons and waterways often go together. On the Wey, for example, you are never far from a pylon, from Weybridge all the way to Guildford. But a pylon straddling a canal is a rarity – and we have one on our canal. Boat Group volunteer Brian Andrews writes:

‘We have a pylon with legs on each side of the canal north of Rowner Lock, on the restored stretch northwards from Newbridge. In the early days, it was thought to be a bit of a showstopper, but fortunately the electricity people were pragmatic and decided that there was nothing to stop boats navigating between the legs and therefore under the structure, provided that no attempt was made to moor to them. It therefore remains a notable feature of our canal and a curiosity that will interest boaters in the future, when the navigable length is eventually extended to the Arun at Newbridge.

‘I have long believed that it was unique: it turns out that this is not the case, as I recently discovered. A similar pylon straddles the restored Huddersfield Narrow Canal at Heyrod, near Stalybridge, alongside the site of the former Hartshead Power Station. The locals there too believe that their pylon straddling the canal is unique. Of course, as regards a stretch of canal in regular usage, this is probably true, but it shouldn't be in the future, when our own canal becomes operational once more through Malham and Rowner Locks.

‘Perhaps we should contact the Huddersfield Narrow Canal Trust and suggest twinning the two pylons!’



Rowner Lock, with the pylon straddling the canal beyond.

The whole pylon can be seen in its reflection - an artistic photo by Keith Lyall

Restoration and Maintenance News

Ten teams of volunteers are out most weeks, restoring the canal and maintaining what we've restored. They're backed by the Tickner's Depot volunteers. Come and join us!

The full story of these efforts is recorded monthly in *Working Party News* – see under 'News' on our website – or send an email to support@weyarun.org.uk to receive an electronic version. Working Party News lists the contacts for each team.

Devil's Hole Lock – now with improved walls



Devil's Hole wall priming

As noted on p 23, the Abandoned Devil's Hole Lock chamber suffered considerably from demolition training for Canadian sappers during World War II. The lock's restoration took fourteen years, reopening in April 2010. It was extended, as with our other restored locks, to be able to take a 70ft narrowboat. The rough surviving walls were saved by being faced with hundreds of thin rectangular concrete slabs – effectively tiles – cast by our volunteers, with a size and finish to resemble stone blocks.

With the tripboats (and therefore the lock) out of action

because of the drought, there was a window for the Thursday Group to address an area of damaged lock wall. There was a resulting overhang which could trap boats whilst filling the lock. Cement for this was available as surplus left over after the re-grouting of Baldwin's Knob Lock. Our structural specialist Simon Gates recommended that a bonding agent should first be applied as a primer after tiles had been removed. The cement was applied by skimming it 10mm at a time to build out the depression. The tiles were then reaffixed. Their top edge has been chamfered so that a boat in a filling lock will rise up without its gunwale getting trapped under a lip.

Baldwin's Knob Lock landing stage rebuilt

This landing stage, used by tripboats and paddlers, had become unstable. The Thursday Group completely dismantled and rebuilt it, with a mix of modern and traditional materials. New Plastecowood post pilings were driven into the canal bed and Plastecowood bearers were attached. Decking boards of 'real wood' were laid on them. With the lock itself now waterproof after the re-grouting of its walls and the new backpump installed, Baldwin's Knob is ready again for business.



The smart new landing stage at Baldwin's Knob Lock

Restoration and Maintenance News (continued)

Progress at Long Meadow



The dredger was used to work over a tonne of puddling clay (kindly donated by Ewhurst Brickworks) into a significant canal leak on the Drungewick Pound. We hope that when the rains return we will finally have a reasonably watertight canal as far as Drungewick Lock.

Maybe not the most comfortable of seats, but a pretty good way to work on the canal bank

Weir waterproof again

The stop planks forming a weir on the Arun downstream from Lordings Aqueduct were leaking. Pending a more permanent solution, the Thursday Group packed the leaks with clay and sawdust, and added plywood sheeting. The restoration of the water level upstream has pleased local anglers.



Above: Before the weir repairs. Below: After completion.





The relaid towpath at Bonfire Hanger.

Type 1 makes the Bonfire Hanger path A1

The towpath at Bonfire Hanger from near Gennets Bridge to Rosemary Lane was relaid last autumn. Heavy rainfall proved that the locally-quarried material used for part of it was substandard, being too soft and the going remained muddy. That section of the path has now been relaid for better drainage with a harder material, the universal Type 1 crushed aggregate – 0mm-40mm graded material - as also used extensively for the new towpath at Rye Farm. The work was done by the visiting Kent & East Sussex Canal Restoration Group.

At the Depot : One step forward...

Parking at the Depot has been radically improved by the laying of concrete slabs, with expansion joints and a drainage channel, to form a large pad for vehicles, trailers and boats.



The new parking area at the Depot.

...and several back

The diesel engine in *Sally*, the 13-ton excavator, housed at the Depot, was on its last legs. A reconditioned 'short engine' (block, pistons, crankshaft, con-rods and bearings) was obtained, but then a crack was found in the old cylinder head after cleaning and machining – so that too had to be replaced with a reconditioned unit. When it then came to refitting components from the old engine onto the new one, it was found that some would not fit because of design changes – so further items had to be procured. Auxiliary equipment, just refitted, then had to be removed to enable the engine to be lowered into the engine bay.



Register

Jeremy Watts

We were sad to hear of the death of Jeremy Watts in August 2025. Jeremy joined as a member in 2008 and we very soon recruited him to our board. Often volunteers don't want to continue their professional roles in retirement. Jeremy was an exception; after a long career in company administration, most recently as Company Secretary with British Car Auctions Ltd, he took up the less demanding role of (volunteer) Company Secretary of The Wey & Arun Canal Trust. Jeremy held this job until 2020 although he retired from our board in 2013.

Jeremy applied great energy and enthusiasm to the canal cause. His experience in land issues and other legal matters was really valuable to us. Jeremy was no invisible back-office worker; he was a member of the Midweek Working Party and many older members will remember him as our announcer at important events including the opening of the Loxwood High Street Crossing (2009) and the reopening of Devil's Hole Lock (2010). His excellent speaking voice and calm authority made him ideal for this high-profile job.



At the official reopening of Devil's Hole Lock in 2010. Left to right: Sally Schupke (Chairman), Lord Egremont (President), Lady Egremont, David Hopkinson (Poling Trust – supporter - in red jersey), Col Paul Rutherford (Canadian Army), Jeremy Watts (in hat).

(Picture credit Peter Savage)

Membership report

46 new members have joined us in the last 3 months, taking our total membership to 2,798. We would like to extend a very warm welcome to the following new members.

<i>Sarah Jane Adams</i>	<i>Sue & John Burton</i>	<i>Christine Caffrey</i>	<i>Greig Channon</i>
<i>David Cordingley</i>	<i>Heather & Raymond Clements</i>	<i>Joy & Steven David</i>	<i>Paul Dowson</i>
<i>Ian & Marianne Evans</i>	<i>Alexander & Samantha Duncan</i>	<i>Richard Foulsham</i>	<i>Deborah Gaskell</i>
<i>Alan & Nadine Froggatt</i>	<i>Anthony Graves</i>	<i>Stephen Halloran</i>	<i>George Heron</i>
<i>Rod James</i>	<i>Cathy & Steve Holloway</i>	<i>Christine & John Jones</i>	<i>Larry Lamb</i>
<i>Danielle & Daren Jones</i>	<i>Christine & Richard Leathem</i>	<i>Peter Matthews</i>	<i>Kirsty McLaren</i>
<i>Mary O'Brien</i>	<i>Pelham Olive</i>	<i>Simon Quail</i>	<i>Susan Risby</i>
<i>John Slocombe</i>	<i>David & Vicky Thompson</i>	<i>Mrs DM Smith</i>	<i>Rachel Tinsley</i>
<i>Clare Turvey</i>	<i>Lisa & Paul Withers</i>		

We have learned with regret of the death of:

<i>Robert Mitchell</i>	<i>Barry Hanreck</i>	<i>John Savage</i>	<i>Michael Dixon (of Shoreham)</i>
<i>Judith Hunter</i>	<i>Jeremy Watts</i>	<i>David Way</i>	

The more members we have, the stronger our voice in discussions with local authorities and other stakeholders. Our membership numbers have declined slightly since the pandemic, so we would ask all our members to do what they can to spread the word about the canal and to encourage new recruits.

John Tovell
membership@weyarun.org.uk

Wey-South is the magazine of the Wey & Arun Canal Trust which is dedicated to restoring the former inland waterway route between the River Wey and the River Arun and to conserving and improving it for the benefit of everyone.

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All communications and copy either by post to *Wey-South* at the Office, or by email to weysouth@weyarun.org.uk.

Address change, non-delivery, etc: please notify the Membership Secretary at the Office or email to membership@weyarun.org.uk.

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Email: support@weyarun.org.uk Tel: 01483 505566**

URGENT – £110,000 to complete Rooks Hill Phase 1 – please help!

The Rooks Hill fund now stands at £155,000 including a £30,000 donation from Asda and a donation of 12,000 bricks from Wienerberger valued at £11,000. Cost savings of £21,000 have been identified to reduce the expected costs of Phase 1 to £265,000. This leaves us needing to raise a further £110,000.

Our members and supporters have a wonderful record of giving when these big projects come around and many of you have already made generous donations. We will be building at pace - we need funds at pace. Will you help us raise the difference? Remember, we are a charity so each £1 of your gift-aided contribution will be worth £1.25 to us. Higher-rate tax-payers receive further tax relief.

Group donations welcome

Donations are also welcome from clubs and other bodies, public and private, that recognise the leisure and conservation benefits we are creating in the area.

To make your valuable contribution to our Rooks Hill appeal please go to:

weyarun.org.uk/backdrop/rooks-hill-appeal



Read about our project's progress on page 5 of this magazine