

A photograph of a canal lock system. In the foreground, a brick wall with a concrete top and a metal handle is visible. The water in the lock is brown. In the background, a brick bridge with a crowd of people on top spans the canal. The background is filled with trees.

WEY-SOUTH

Quarterly Magazine of the
Wey & Arun Canal Trust

Issue 183 June/July/August 2018



Two old but new features at Gennets Bridge Lock are sure to be a talking point for visitors.

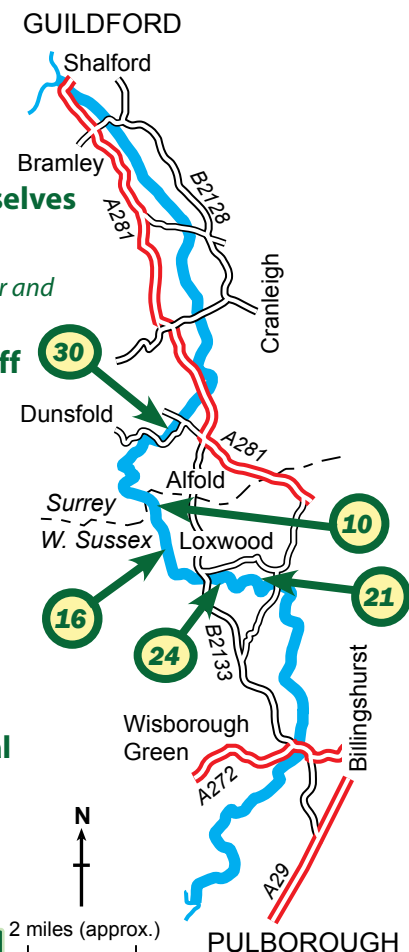
Above: The wooden seat built from the former lock gates.

Below: The stone seating and picnic area are made from a bed of sandstone (part of the Weald Clay Formation, Cretaceous Geological Period) excavated in the location of the original lock to allow the formation of the concrete base for the new lock.



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**Front cover: Members gather for the Completion
Ceremony at Gennets Bridge Lock on 21st April.**

Annual Meeting at Loxwood - 21st April 2018



Our Secretary was worried that Loxwood North Hall would be too small if huge numbers of members turned up. On the day, though, everything was fine, including the weather, giving us the chance to expand our stands and display space outside the hall. The hall was fairly full but no-one went short of a seat. Members heard a full update from the Chairman and the financial position is encouraging. There were some questions about dredgers and dredging (see page 34 in this issue). We elected two new Directors to

the Board, bringing the total to 11. We agreed some minor changes to the Trust constitution to allow us to build new sections of canal.

In his presentation, Philip Oliver concentrated on showing how a huge amount of work on flood modelling demonstrates that a new canal route in the Shalford/Bramley area is workable. New staff members Dave Evans and Kev Baker gave short reports on their work and Louise Smith, Heritage Programme Leader, introduced herself to members.

The Chairman reviews the last 12 months

Sally Schupke reported to members on a year that started well and got better.

Owning the canal route

During 2017 the Trust acquired four sections of land that are important to our restoration plans. They include Gennets Bridge Lock and the surrounding area. In all cases the price was either nothing or a nominal sum, although we had to pay legal costs. We are immensely grateful to the landowners who made this possible. We are pursuing more land acquisitions and hope to report more good news to the next meeting.

Compasses Bridge finished

It took more than a year after the official opening to finish the landscaping and other tidying-up work but by the end of 2017 everything was done and the site looks really good.

Summit Slipway - well advanced

We are well on the way to completing the Sydney Thruscott Slipway and hope that an official opening will be possible in 2018.

Summit Level - don't believe everything you read

You will have read that Dunsfold Park's application to build 1,800 houses on the airfield site has crossed another hurdle. You

may also have seen in a local paper that Surrey County Council plans to improve Elmbridge Road near Cranleigh. These developments could possibly benefit the canal but it is really too early to comment in detail.



Elmbridge Road - the green sign shows where the canal route goes under the road.

Gennets Bridge Lock - construction finished

The ceremony earlier on the meeting day celebrated the completion of construction work. Fitting of lock gates and other equipment needed for navigation has to wait until we have landowner permission to connect to another navigable section.

Drungewick Lock - difficult and expensive

Our engineers are busy developing plans and costings for the repair of Drungewick Lock, which is currently out of use because part of the west wall has become unstable. The indications are that this will be a complex and expensive job.

Harsfold Bridge - permission granted

Planning consent has been granted to rebuild Harsfold Bridge, near Wisborough Green. Currently a causeway blocks the canal route here. Before construction can begin we have to complete legal agreements and other formalities.

Rushett Farm

Rushett Farm is south of Bramley. This is slightly similar to Harsfold - a farm track currently blocks the canal route. We are developing plans for a new bridge that will remove this blockage.

Bramley Link - no longer crazy

We have recently been told that we are doing one of the most challenging pieces of canal restoration work by any volunteer-led organisation in the country. There is some

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The Wey & Arun Canal Trust

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The aim of the Wey & Arun Canal Trust is the preservation and restoration of the former inland waterway route between the Rivers Wey and Arun, with a view to reopening this to navigation.

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If at all possible please e-mail copy by attachment in Microsoft Word format. Typed copy is also acceptable. Photos are always welcome – prints or hi-res digital please.

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way to go to convince all the authorities and statutory bodies. However, by going through the huge amount of detailed work needed for formal applications, we are now convincing them that we are serious about the project.

It is encouraging to review how far we have come since the project's start many years ago, when many thought the whole idea was crazy. We now own or lease a large part of the potential canal route, including land transferred from Surrey County Council. In the last year Thames Water has granted us £12,000 for planning work and the canal should have a firm place in Bramley's Neighbourhood Plan.

Boosting our staff

The generous donation from Peter Flatter's estate has given us the confidence to increase our staff numbers. Dave Evans and Kev Baker now work full-time for the Trust - Dave primarily to support Summit Level projects and Kev to upgrade our Loxwood Link section, where we are well aware of a long backlog of tasks. From the start of the year, Louise Smith has joined as a part-time Heritage Programme Leader specifically engaged for the Bramley Link project.

Eric Walker MBE - an unequalled restoration record

Eric retired from his Project Manager role at the end of January. Undoubtedly Eric's projects have opened up more miles of the canal than any others since restoration started. The

Trust will always be grateful for his dedicated volunteer work, most importantly on the Drungewick Canal Extension and Loxwood High Street projects.

More help = more progress

The amount of work currently going on is extraordinary but the management team is a small one, so there are definite limits to what is possible. It is excellent news that Dennis Gillen and John Reynolds are joining the Board. Dennis is taking on some project management and Health & Safety responsibilities. John will be involved in conservation and education. All our directors are fully committed; if we want to do more we have to find more help from somewhere.

Where do we hope to be next year?

This is being really optimistic but it would be nice to think it might look something like (from north to south):

- Gun's Mouth Island channel - approved
- Shalford Visitor Centre - approved and started
- Bramley Link Phase 1 - application submitted to Guildford Borough Council
- Rushett Farm - approved
- Sydney Thriscutt Slipway - completed
- Tickner's Heath Crossing - approved and started
- Drungewick Lock - repairs started
- Harsfold Bridge - construction started

Trust Finances - gearing up for some big spending

Joint Financial Director Julian Morgan presented a very encouraging picture to the Annual Meeting. 2017 turned out to be anything but a normal year because of the wonderful grant of £500,000 from Peter Flatter's estate. As predicted at the start of the year, our spending on restoration projects in 2017 was quite modest, as current projects approached completion and more planning work is needed before new major work begins.

Our Auditor gave our 2017 Accounts a clean report - a full audit (rather than an Independent Examination) was needed because our income was over £1 million.

Some highlights from the figures were:

- Our 2017 income as shown in the accounts was just over £1.06 million. This figure includes sponsorship (such as our Land Rover provided by Harwoods) and our Boat Group's income before expenses.

- At the end of 2017 we had available funds of just under £1.26 million, believed to be the highest figure in the Trust's history. Nearly all of this is assigned to specific projects.
- Our total spending was just over £0.33 million (including Boat Group expenses), of which



Julian Morgan reports to the Annual Meeting. His expression suggests the news is good.

about £0.21 million was directly on canal restoration and maintenance.

As far as immediate future projects go, we are clearly in a strong financial position. However, when our ambitious plans for the Bramley Link and Summit Level get the go-ahead then our current funds will most likely feel like

small change - we will need quite a few more millions from somewhere.

It is not our policy to build up long-term reserves. We are ready to spend (nearly) every penny we have on canal restoration projects. Currently there are frustrating delays getting some of those projects to the starting line. At the moment our best prediction is that unless something really unexpected happens we will end 2018 in a similar financial position to 2017 and big spending will start in 2019 onwards.

Louise Smith introduces herself

The Trust has recently employed me to develop learning and engagement opportunities for the local community. Benefiting the community and building strong community support for the canal is an end in itself, but it is also a means of acquiring funding for the more complex and costly

sections of the canal. Community benefit is a requirement of all funders.

Part of my role will be building on the work the Trust is already doing in protecting and enhancing the environment around the canal, creating green corridors for wildlife and improving habitats for the many protected species in the area; creating pathways, cycleways and of course waterways, so that the public can get out and enjoy the tranquil and ecologically rich environment around the canal.

In addition to this I'll be working to develop new projects exploring the history of the canal; this will involve a research project, seeking out and collating relevant maps, engineering drawings, trade documents, newspaper articles, photographs and first-person accounts, and sharing everything we find with the public on site and online.

There will also be opportunities to educate and enthuse a younger audience in waterways engineering, and around all of this (the ecology, heritage and engineering) we will be developing courses and workshops for all ages.

Once we have identified a site for an initial project I will be in touch with all the volunteers to identify who has the experience and/or desire to get involved in the research and learning programs, and to also find out what new skills or knowledge volunteers may like to gain themselves through these projects.



The hall fills up just before the meeting. (All Annual Meeting pictures by Stephen Batey)

Cups awarded to dedicated volunteers

Each year the Trust honours two outstanding volunteers with one of the trophies presented in memory of pioneers from the early days of the canal restoration project. This year's winners were Chris Tavener and Martyn Baker.

Margaret Darvill, organiser of the Poddle, presents the John East Trophy to Chris Tavener in recognition of his hard work on researching, planning and exploring routes for the annual sponsored walk.



Below: Dennis Gillen (right), joint co-ordinator of the Thursday & Sunday Group (TSG), presents the Jack King Cup to Martyn Baker. Martyn has been a key member of the TSG for many years, specialising in the painstaking 'setting out' work that is needed before any construction work begins. Martyn has a formidable reputation for accuracy.



New Main Board Directors elected

Dennis Gillen

Initially as a surveyor and latterly as a project director I spent over 40 years in the construction industry. Seven years ago my wife and I moved to Surrey from our native Northumberland and, being retired, I wanted to find a volunteering activity which would use the experience I gained during my career.



Dennis Gillen

I found the Wey & Arun Canal Trust. There are no canals in my home county and I knew very little about their history or construction, so I was keen to find out more. I joined the Thursday and Sunday Group (TSG) and since then I have been fortunate enough to be involved in the construction of Southland and Gennets Bridge Locks. I hope in future, as a Director, to contribute to the success of the Trust in its aim to restore a wonderful social and environmental facility in the Surrey and Sussex countryside.

John Reynolds

I have had an interest in canals going back over 40 years. I have taken numerous canal holidays on hire boats. I was an active committee member of the Inland Waterways



John Reynolds

Association (IWA) Milton Keynes Branch and a member of a Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) involved with the rebuilding of Great Barford lock on the Great Ouse in Bedfordshire.



Does the Board know what they're playing at? (From left to right): Philip Oliver (Bramley Link Project Manager), Tony Tyrrell (Hon. Secretary), Sally Schupke (Chairman), Tony Ford (Summit Level Manager).

I joined the Wey & Arun Canal Trust as a life member in 2013 and was immediately involved with TSG and the Boat Group. After starting as a crew member, I am now in my third season as a skipper and assist with boat maintenance.

With a degree in Applied Biology I have a strong interest in conservation and happy to be involved with this and the use of the canal as an education tool. I believe the canal should be regarded as a system for use by all and not just a boating route.

I am a member of both IWA and Canal & River Trust (CRT) and also a Trustee of Sandgate Conservation Society in Storrington.

Over the last year, together with Dennis Gillen, I have represented the TSG at Board meetings and Restoration Group meetings. I am now pleased to be elected as a Director.



Gennets Bridge Lock

Above: The Gennets Bridge project would have been very much more difficult without the support of local landowners Nigel & Fiona Gibbons. Here Nigel unveils the plaque at the Completion Celebration (21st April).

Below: It's his fault! Members of TSG point out Eric Walker at Gennets Bridge - probably to make sure that the right person gets the cards and presents. (Stephen Batey)





Above left: Eric Walker shows off a signed print of a Bengal Tiger by local wildlife artist David Shepherd. Above right: Eric holds up the card signed by a huge number of members, with a picture of himself taken by Janet Phillips. Below left: The special members' boat trip at Southland Lock. Right: There were some sticky patches but thanks to a week of warm and dry weather the towpath between Southland and Gennetts did not cause too many problems.





The south end of Gennets Bridge on 21st April. Above: Looking north, showing the new bridge (Geoff Thomas). Below: Looking south from the bridge. (Stephen Batey). The causeway and the piling will be removed as soon as conditions permit.



Gennets Bridge Lock - where next?

The ceremony held at Gennets Bridge Lock (GBL) on 21st April was not an 'opening', but a celebration of the completion of the construction phase of the project. We all hope that it will not be long before we can celebrate the opening of the lock, when it becomes part of the operational canal.

The Trust's Board gave approval for the GBL project to go ahead while being fully aware that landowner permission was not available to connect GBL to the operational Loxwood section. GBL has not yet been fitted with lock gates and other equipment needed for navigation; this will follow when the lock is connected to the navigable section. Lock gates will deteriorate if not kept in water. At GBL we have created a showpiece that demonstrates a firm intention to restore the canal. We are now the freehold owners of the GBL site and the adjoining canal to the north. This would not

have happened without our investment in the lock rebuilding.

It is the Trust's policy to respect the privacy of our neighbouring landowners. We do not comment on any negotiations that may be in progress. It would be wrong for us to predict any date for the restoration of the section between GBL and Southland.

North of GBL, the Trust leases the canal route through Bonfire Hanger to a point not far south of Rosemary Lane. There were originally four locks (numbers 9 to 12) between GBL and Rosemary Lane. Our lease over this section allows maintenance work but not major construction.

We are all keen to extend the GBL restoration but we can only do this with the full co-operation of our neighbours.



The overflow weir in Gennets Wood (on the left of the picture), a short distance north of Gennets Bridge Lock, marks the boundary between Sussex and Surrey. Thanks to channel restoration work by TSG and plentiful water, on 21st April small boats were able to navigate the section between Gennets Bridge (lock no. 8) and the site of Gennets Wood Lock (no. 9) and so complete an intercounty canal journey that has not been possible for many years. (Geoff Thomas)



Dave Evans (left) and Kev Baker seen in corporate colours at the Gennets Bridge Lock Completion Ceremony on 21st April.

WACT boosts its team with two experienced full-time canal workers

In her report to the Annual Meeting on 21st April, Sally Schupke explained that the marvellous grant from Peter Flatter's estate, plus other income, has given us the confidence to increase our staff significantly. We have been fortunate to obtain the services of two experienced workers, both well known to us as valuable volunteers. Kevin (Kev) Baker and Dave Evans both started their new full-time staff roles on 26th February. We wish them every success with the Trust.

Kevin Baker

Kevin (Kev) Baker has been our volunteer Loxwood Link Maintenance Manager for a number of years. He has been involved in the restoration of our canal since the 1980s. It has become clear that it is unreasonable to expect any volunteer to manage a 3-mile section of operational canal. Kev will now be able to

concentrate on the long list of maintenance tasks, mobilising volunteer teams as required.

Kev is qualified as an electrician, plumber and heating engineer. In the canal world, Kev has worked for a hire boat company and a boatyard, so knows his way around boats extremely well. Although not currently on our skipper roster, Kev has skippered many trips on the Wey & Arun Canal. Some specialist training will soon be on his agenda so that he is formally qualified for chainsaw and weed-spraying work.

In his new role, the Loxwood operational section will be Kev's priority, but you can also expect to see him on other parts of the canal and assisting our volunteer working parties. Kev has already successfully completed his first major task - managing and supervising the two-week deployment of the Truxor

amphibious machine on the Loxwood section, with at least four volunteers helping each day.

Dave Evans

Until recently Dave had only made few appearances on the canal south of the Surrey/Sussex border. Dave first worked on the Wey & Arun Canal in 2010 as a visiting Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) volunteer. It was while working with WRG and Newbury Working Party Group (NWPG) that Dave

Compasses project took three years - from late 2014 to 2017.

While working long hours on the Compasses and Thriscutt Slipway projects, Dave also had a full-time job, most recently with the Forestry Commission as a Forest Craftsman. When we learned that Dave was looking for a career move, the opportunity to engage his energy and practical skills seemed unmissable.

Dave went to school in Woking and later acquired formal qualifications in Forestry and



Dave Evans tests the amphibious capabilities of the Truxor machine on the Drungewick slipway.

met Bill Nicholson. Bill suggested that, rather than touring the country with WRG, Dave might like to concentrate his energies on his local canal restoration project. Not long after this conversation, Dave was also introduced to Tony Ford, Project Manager for the rebuilding of Compasses Bridge. Dave took up the demanding volunteer role of Site Manager, organising materials, contractors and volunteers. Work on the ground for the

Countryside Management at Merrist Wood College near Guildford. Dave brings us his knowledge and experience with current Health & Safety rules and practices, so essential for everything we do these days. He is also used to working with ecologists and wildlife rangers to plan work on sensitive sites. He is an accredited WRG instructor for a range of equipment including diggers, dumpers and rollers.

Dave describes working for the Canal Trust as his ideal job. His priority will be assisting Tony Ford with Summit Level projects, most importantly the Tickner's Heath Crossing. However, you can expect to see him on all

parts of the canal and helping with volunteer working parties and larger Loxwood Link tasks. Dave has already added Truxor operating to his long list of skills.



15th March 2018 - believed to be the first time a boat has passed through the top gates at Southland Lock since rebuilding. Taking advantage of exceptionally high water levels, Kev Baker very cautiously backed Wiggonholt a short distance in the direction of Gennets Bridge Lock. This was a test run before the start of the 2018 boating season. (Martin Smithers)



**New
look for
boat and
crew**



Above: Taking advantage of a short window of warm and fine weather in mid-April, Boat Maintenance Manager Martin Smithers mobilised a team to repaint the exterior cabin of Wiggonholt in house colours (Buckingham Green).

New paint in the waterline area followed in mid-May. (Martin Smithers)

Below: Skipper Steve Harmes and crew member David Murrell show off the new boat crew 'uniform' T-shirts while relaxing before the members' boat trip to Southland Lock on 21st April. Softer on the eye than the previous luminous green version and made of a more comfortable material, the new shirts convey the important message that all our Boat Group give their time freely as volunteers. (Stephen Batey)







***Our Midweek Working Party (MWWP) celebrated its 25th birthday with a lunch on 14th March at Foxbridge Golf Club, Kirdford, organised by Di Miles.
Above: The group photo from this year's lunch (thanks to Nick Houston).***

The two lower images are believed to be the first MWWP pictures that appeared in Wey-South (now reproduced in colour for the first time). Left: (September 1994) - MWWP members join Eric Walker's group to Install the capping at Cook's Bridge. Right: (November 1993) A MWWP outing - a cruise on the River Wey organised by Peter Wilding (standing in foreground boat).



The early days of the MWWP

In *Wey-South* issue 81 (early 1993), Colin Gibbs wrote: *During December [1992] a small group of Trust members were due to meet at the Onslow Arms for a leisurely walk and an even more leisurely lunch. The group was inspecting sites in the Loxwood/Alfold/ Cranleigh area, with a view to general maintenance, bank and towpath clearance, jungle bashing and tree planting. Initial indications are that the group will meet midweek, on average once a month. It is hoped that the group will grow from its present size (around ten) so that a choice of work and sites will be available.*

Writing in the foreword to the 2010 edition of *A Guide to Restoration Progress*, Colin Gibbs tells us: *When I first joined the Trust I attended the Navvies' Reunion at Lee Farm, where I happened by chance to meet the Secretary, John Wood. I said, "It's a shame you've not got a midweek working party". John made the obvious retort and so the group, affectionately known as the MWWP, was born.*

In *Wey-South* issue 82, we read: *The first two gatherings of the midweek working party took place on 15 January and 15 February [1993], both on British Aerospace property north of Tickner's Heath. Work concentrated on towpath and bank clearance, both north and south of Simmonds Bridge [near the Thriscutt Slipway - the causeway here was removed in 1994], with well over 100 yards opened up. At the same time, about a dozen trees were winched from the canal bed.*

In the group's early days, the joke was that its initials meant "Might Work - Weather Permitting".

New Restoration Progress Guide available

Thanks to hard work by Julian Cheek and Geoff Thomas, a new and fully revised edition of *A Guide to Restoration Progress on the Wey & Arun Canal* is now available. This A4

A Guide to Restoration Progress on the Wey & Arun Canal



WEY & ARUN
Canal Trust

booklet evolved from the set of 10 reference maps produced by Midweek Working Party founder Colin Gibbs and cartographer Hazel Lintott. The previous version, produced in 2014, was the first to declutter the maps, which used to be annotated with information about work in each location. The new format allows the description of each section to spread across several pages, with room for a wide selection of archive and current photographs.

Of course describing our progress is like trying to hit a moving target but the new edition features a picture of the completed Compasses Bridge on the front cover and brings the restoration story right up to date.

The new edition costs £6.00 and is available from the Loxwood Canal Centre or by mail order from our website (<http://weyarun.org.uk/shop/>).



***The two weeks before Easter saw a hired Truxor multi-purpose amphibious machine hired from Land & Water for silt and reed removal on the Loxwood section.
Above: The machine being delivered at Roger Dimmick Lane.***



Above and below: The machine was quickly driven off its trailer by Land & Water's operator, then down the slipway and into the cold waters of the canal at Drungewick.





Above: After training by Land & Water, our own staff and volunteers took charge of the machine. Here Dave Evans is mastering the controls.



***Above: The machine goes to work pumping silt out of the section near Drungewick Lane.
Below: Getting to grips with the notoriously shallow Birch Copse section.***





Above: “Like driving a waterbed” was how Brian King, seen above at Brewhurst Bridge, described the Truxor experience. Below left: In the winding hole below Brewhurst Lock - as well as the operator, at least three people were needed on the bank to manipulate the pipe. Below right: Moving south through Birch Copse to Baldwin’s Knob.



Truxor pictures by Julian Morgan, Martin Smithers and Geoff Thomas.

Easter Bunny Cruises



Easter Bunny Cruises suffered from this year's terrible weather. Sunday 1st April, when these pictures were taken, actually had the best weather of the weekend - which is not saying much. Congratulations to the volunteers who kept smiling to deliver some Easter magic to our guests over the three days of special trips. (Pictures by Dave Verrall and Julian Morgan)





Photographing Wildlife on the Canal

I first became interested in wildlife photography about four years ago. I was on a walking holiday near the Stratford Canal in Warwickshire. I saw quite a few butterflies, damselflies and dragonflies but I was disappointed that I was unable to take good photos with my pocket digital camera. When



Kestrels

I returned home, I purchased a bridge camera and started to take much better wildlife photos. I began to visit local nature reserves. Very soon I bought a DSLR camera and a zoom lens. Wildlife photography has now become a passionate hobby of mine. It is more than just photography. I have learnt and I am still learning about wildlife. I have made new friends through my visits to local nature reserves.

I also take wildlife photos along the Wey & Arun Canal. The canal corridor through the beautiful Sussex and Surrey countryside provides a natural

link between a rich variety of habitats. This supports a wide range of wildlife which has improved as restoration of the canal has progressed.

The Trust has a wildlife photo page at www.weyarun.org.uk/wildlife. As well as photos, the page has seasonal information about what wildlife may be seen along the canal. Our Nature, Ecology and Conservation leaflet can be downloaded from the wildlife page. The leaflet is available at



Kingfishers are not rare but are difficult to spot and photograph.

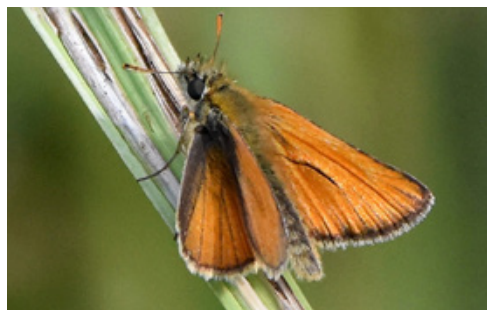
Loxwood Canal Centre, where Nature Guides may also be purchased.

The Trust would like to encourage people to take photos of wildlife that they see along the canal. Please send your pictures to me and we will add the best to our wildlife photo page.

Dave Verrall
(dv@weyandarun.co.uk)



A male Common Blue butterfly.



Clockwise from top left: A Grey Heron making a strike for a fish, Marsh Marigolds, a Soldier beetle, a swimming Grass Snake, a male Banded Demoiselle damselfly, a Skipper butterfly. (All pictures on these two pages by Dave Verrall)



Garth Allan - second Wey & Arun watercolour

After waterways artist Garth Allan died in 2017, his friend Keith Adamson acquired his stock of postcards and greeting cards, with approval from Garth's son Tim to sell them in aid of charity. Keith and Garth had known



each other since the age of nine. It is thanks to Keith that we found a copy of the second watercolour that the Wey & Arun Canal Trust commissioned from Garth Allan in 1997. This picture, the original of which was presented to retiring Chairman Peter Beresford, shows *Zachariah Keppel* above Brewhurst Lock.

Canal Centre Manager Lyn Nash recently visited Keith Adamson and brought away a large number of reproductions of Garth Allan's work which she is now offering for sale in the centre.

Wey-South Path Roundels

The Wey-South Path is a 36-mile route linking Guildford in Surrey with Amberley



in Sussex, following the route of the canal as far as possible on public footpaths. It is marked on Ordnance Survey maps and is a tremendous publicity asset for the Trust.

Recently our age-old stock of waymarker roundels started to run out and we decided to update the design. The new version uses house colours and has been approved by West Sussex and Surrey County Councils. The discs are made of strong rigid plastic. We are grateful to Geoff Thomas for design work and to Amanda & Neil Mariner who are now installing the new roundels along the route.

Working Party Roundup

I was amused to see the reference in *Wey-South 182* to a letter from three volunteers published in the 72nd edition in 1990. The signatories were concerned about an apparent lack of direction from above, with 'secrecy' and no opportunity for ordinary members to influence decisions. I would totally agree with the editorial comment in *Wey-South 182* that "We don't get letters like that nowadays, if only we did!" and the additional remark that the authors would soon be encouraged to help out. Of course, one of the signatories was Eric Walker – and we know what happened to him (though even as a Director of the Trust he was still keen to question the others' decisions).

The point behind this is that questions and comments about the Trust's restoration policies are very welcome indeed. Looking back to the 1990s there was much to be queried – most of the official decisions were made for very good reasons and we knew that they didn't always reflect the ideal way forward. There were (and still are) considerable barriers facing complete reopening. But it is all too easy to just sit back and accept the status quo, and think that "the Board must know what they are doing". We need people to step in and ask "why are you doing it like that?" Such questions can often point to better solutions.

The big difference now is that there are carefully worked out plans for overcoming the obstacles. Whereas 25 years or so back the policy was much more to wait for the obstacles to go away – and many of them have, through changes in circumstances, changes of ownership, or the efforts of people like Eric Walker.

A much earlier 'mini-mutiny' by some rank and file members spawned *Working Party News* back in the 1970s. This is still going, albeit in a slightly less irreverent form, and we welcome members to subscribe. You don't have to be a working party member, though they remain the target audience. *WPN* is a monthly e-mail newsletter reporting the latest developments 'on the ground'. Just send a 'WPN subscribe' request to listadmin@weyandarun.co.uk, or if you can't receive the electronic version, a supply of stamped addressed envelopes to the Loxwood office will get you paper copies. *WPN* can also be accessed via the Trust's website.

Bill Thomson

Midweek Working Party

The MWWP, which meets on Wednesdays, has been working hard in Hunt Park clearing debris from the river and around the aqueduct. This was a difficult job, thanks to a very large log across one of the entrances which had to be winched out, as well as numerous branches and

excess timber along the border fence. March additionally saw a visit to the navigable section at Loxwood, clearing blackthorn at Brewhurst Bridge and cutting back brambles in preparation for a towpath upgrade.

In April the group went to Haybarn, tidying the hedge before bird nesting started and removing a large branch from Lee Farm Lock. A return to Hunt Park saw the group clearing dead branches on the school side of the Cranleigh Waters and tidying up after an ash tree had been cut down at Gosden Aqueduct, removing the remaining tree roots from the aqueduct structure.

As well as work, the MWWP members, along with guests from other groups and partners enjoyed the annual Navvies' Lunch. 51 people sat down at The Foxbridge Golf Club, for excellent food, good company and a day off from trudging through the mud.

**Contact Margaret Darvill, 01483 894606,
margaret_darvill@weyandarun.co.uk**

Thursday and Sunday Group

Things have become a little quieter following the completion ceremony at Gennets Bridge Lock. With Eric Walker's retirement, leadership of the group has been taken over by Dennis Gillen and John Reynolds.



One of TSG's winter jobs was to apply a non-slip surface to the bridge at Gennets, responding to concerns that horses might struggle in icy weather. (Dennis Gillen)

Leading up to the ceremony, the group undertook the final landscaping and cosmetic touches, despite the very wet April weather severely affecting the spreading of topsoil and planting work. Fortunately things changed to warmth and sun in the week prior to 21st April, permitting a determined effort by the volunteers.

The group has now moved on to do some work at Tickner's Heath Depot and assisting Kev Baker with some of his maintenance projects.

In the next issue the heading of this report will change as from 20th June the group will meet on Wednesdays and Thursdays and will be known as the EWG (Eric Walker Group).

**Contact: Dennis Gillen or John Reynolds,
dennis_gillen@weyandarun.co.uk, or
john_reynolds@weyandarun.co.uk**

Hedgelaying Group

Now and heavy rain in February meant that we only worked two Tuesdays, so the low turnout of slaves only managed 15 yards of laying, 30 yards of trimming and half a bonfire, whatever that might be.

March was much better and more productive. The group laid 45 yards and thinned another 20 yards of hedge, and had 1½ bonfires (well, had to make it up to two somehow). The worst bit was slipping and sliding in the mud, and getting more and more tired thanks to the growing accumulation on boots.

The wildlife – so much a feature of the hedgelaying group's work - appeared. A large mass of frog spawn became tadpoles. Marsh marigold and blackthorn began flowering. Buzzards, skylarks, geese, tits and chaffinches were all heard.

By the end of April the total length of hedge laying for the year was 180 yards, despite one cancellation due to weather. Such long strides, and not all because the canal was overflowing through a dip in the towpath. The wheelbarrow almost became a boat

which would have been difficult as Keith doesn't possess a Master's Certificate.

The team thinned out another 15 yards, and future laying work depends on the birds. The nightingales are back, with three males spotted. If they go quiet suddenly it means they are nesting and laying will have to stop.

**Contact Keith Nichols, 01403 753882,
hedging@weyandarun.co.uk**

Northern and Summit Working Party

Three months on from the last *Wey-South* and the weather during February and March has put back the hoped-for early summer completion of the slipway, writes *Bill Nicholson*. The main problem has been the ground conditions following the frequent spells of heavy rain. Wealden clay and water combine to form an almost impassable quagmire. When dry it is as hard as concrete.



The wharf next to the slipway - and those walings. (Bill Nicholson)



The slipway close to the end of NWPG's early May visit. (Bill Nicholson)

short anchor piles about 5 metres back from and parallel to the canal edge. These will be tied to the front piles by steel rods and should assist in preventing movement when vehicles are driven onto the wharf. The next task here is to pour the long concrete beam along the back of the front piles – a task that had been scheduled for the Newbury Working Party Group (NWPG) visit in early May.

Other work close to the slipway has seen some poorly ash trees removed from the canal bank; excavation work on either side of the slipway so that vehicles can traverse north and south along what will eventually be the

Having said that, progress has been made – in particular during four days of work in mid-April when (temporarily as it happens) the ground dried out enough to take machinery to the slipway. The side walls of the slipway are now complete and sport smart bull nose brick copings. At base level (under the as yet to be built ramp) lateral reinforced concrete beams have been cast that will assist in holding the two walls apart. The concrete was mixed by the team with the mixer and materials being placed at the top of the slope. The mix was then delivered direct from the mixer down a chute to where it was needed thus avoiding barrowing it through the mud. The result is that it currently looks as if we have been building a waterfall; however when completed it will be filled and covered with a concrete roadway to form the slope down which trail boats can be launched and extracted.

As previously mentioned, we have also been building a wharf – a few metres to the south of the slipway. The timber walings (yes those again!) have all been fixed in place and with some selective tightening of nuts the line of piles has been straightened to look presentable to the naked eye. On a separate occasion a small team set in concrete a line of



A supporter has kindly donated a secondhand Yanmar mini-digger, now nicknamed 'Teaspoon'. The machine should be very useful for jobs such as towpath repairs.

towpath; and reprofiling of the mountain of spoil on what is known as the Burnsite.

Looking forward to the mid-summer months, we will continue to work at the slipway until it is finished. We are advanced in our planning for the NWPG summer camp in

early July where the main focus of our work will be supporting the Trust's Loxwood Link Upgrade Project. Dave Evans and his team have identified a large list of varied tasks that should well suit the skills of the NWPG team. After that we await the go-ahead on the Hunt Park Visitor Centre, towpath improvements at Birtley and ultimately the Tickner's Crossing. So there is plenty to keep the team busy.

**Contact Bill Nicholson, 0779 1097773,
bn@weyandarun.co.uk**

Monday Group

Nick Wood writes: The quarter began with a busy day for 10 volunteers at Loxwood and Brewhurst, finishing repairs to the fence by the lock, brush cutting the overflow car park, replacing the rotten support post of the flagpole at the rear of the canal centre and a lot of hedge trimming around both locks. Two more meetings in February were held at Malham Lock, brush cutting and trimming on both sides of the lock and on the steps down to the canal edge. We replaced the fence on the meadow side with 10 double-wired posts, having first disentangled all the old wire mesh from the thick bramble hedge and roots. Back again in early March, to clear the brambles on the meadow side and add two more wires to the new fence to make it even stronger.

At Kev Baker's request we made a visit to Gennets Bridge lock to clear both sides of the towpath north of the lock as far as the overspill weir. A lot of thickly grown brambles and low hanging tree branches required considerable effort to clear.

Late March saw a return to Sidney Wood to complete the clearance of the towpath vegetation and overhanging branches from lock 16 back to the second causeway from Firtree Copse, and to clean culverts 1 and 3.

After the Easter break we revisited Run Common for the usual task of clearing

rubbish left by the great British public over the winter, then to clean signs and seats at Drungewick, Loxwood and Devil's Hole locks, including the picnic table and milestone at the latter. On the month's second outing a large number of volunteers helped Kev Baker



On 23rd April, staff and volunteers from several working groups attended a special First Aid course at St Mary's Church in Shalford. As well as normal First Aid topics such as emergency resuscitation, the course covered the specific risks of forestry work.

again, this time at Loxwood, clearing rubbish, tidying the car park, cutting back the bank by the bridge, cleaning seats, mowing and strimming the lock. We found time to work at Drungewick, Compasses and Devil's Hole, where we installed two spur posts to stabilise the noticeboard.

For the third April meeting we continued with 'keeping up appearances' (hence our Mrs Bucket nickname) at Southland, Devil's Hole and Loxwood locks, as well as strimming around the trees between Southland and Devil's Hole and cutting vegetation at Compasses Bridge and Run Common.

**Contact John Empringham, 01483 562657,
mondaygroup@weyandarun.co.uk**

Tickner's Heath Depot

John Smith writes: Well, we are still awaiting the better weather so that we can get started

on the many tasks we put aside until the warmer stuff arrived. But we have managed to do something for the Trust, honestly!

Mick Jones and Richard Powell have continued with their task of refitting the container we at the Depot had hijacked from those brought back from Gennetts Bridge Lock (GBL). They have added some of the recently donated racking - no sooner was that in place than it began to fill up with items found elsewhere at Tickner's. At least that makes space elsewhere.

Richard Powell was then dragged away from his container refurbishing and turned his engineering skills to replacing the plug on one of the depot's trailers which had become entangled in its jockey wheel with disastrous effect. The plug was replaced, and the electrics were checked with the world-renowned Wellerd STIFO (side, tail, indicator, fog) box - Francis, you really should patent it - and all was found to be in order.

During the early part of the year John Piper took on the task of producing an inventory of items in our fuel store. This has had the added advantage of highlighting what we can dispose of. Items such as cans of old oil and tins of out of date paint, for example, were taken by John to his local tip and the contents of the store have now been greatly reduced and present less of a fire hazard.

Our man of many talents David Robson has been busy repairing the leaflet holder from the MDV which was looking decidedly worse for wear. He reinforced the back so that the securing screws now do their job, and added another couple to make the stand more stable. Now it should give a better image of the Trust at the various sites that the MDV attends.

Work goes on to try and find out exactly what caused our generator to misbehave. After his exploits in the fuel store John Piper set to and explored every circuit, switch and plug of the beast. We did reach a point where I thought enough is enough, and that we should consign it to the skip. But John and the rest of the crew thought it still worth trying to salvage

the beastie, so we haven't as yet given up on it. John has even picked the brains of a local expert and formulated a cunning plan, but, to be fair, it hasn't shown much of a return as yet. What it really told us were things we already knew, but that is progress in itself, I suppose. .

The Land Rover has been back to Harwood's but only because it was due its annual service. We had hoped that would have been done in October last when the MOT was due, but unfortunately the message must have got lost in translation at Harwoods. Then of course we chose to collect it on the coldest day of the year, but the old girl is now back with us and has been giving sterling service ever since.

As usual I do have a customary moan and that is could members please not bring their unwanted household items to the depot. To date we have inherited obviously unwanted things like four plastic patio chairs and a roll of carpet underlay, all placed by our bonfire site. Please note our licence does not allow us to burn plastic at the depot, so do please take redundant items such as these to your local recycling centre.

**Contact John Smith, 01903 235790,
depot@weyandarun.co.uk**

Numbers Game

The Numbers Game makes a very useful contribution to Trust funds as well as giving subscribers a monthly chance to win £100. There are three winners every month and members contribute £3 by standing order for each number they hold.

If you would like to join in, Tim Lewis, the game's administrator, will be pleased to hear from you. Contact him via the Northern Office (details on page 3) for an application form.



Dredging and dredgers

At the Annual Meeting, some members asked questions about the Board decision to dispose of the dredger *Penelope* that we acquired (secondhand) in 2009. One opinion was that this was a wasteful move and that the dredger could have been repaired quite cheaply and easily.

We would like to move the discussion away from possible solutions and towards the problem we are trying to solve - the removal of silt from the navigable section of canal. Last year we asked Boat Group skippers to identify priority sections for silt removal. Certainly there are some shallow spots but it would be wrong to think that they are a serious threat to the boat operation. In other words, there is a problem that we need to manage, but we don't think it is a critical one.

Our volunteer dredging team, led by Charlie Coxwell, has done a great job but the sad fact is that the amount of silt actually removed from the canal has been small. This does not reflect in any way on the team; they have had to deal with unreliable equipment and a method of silt removal that is quite inefficient. The amount of time that the volunteers were able to contribute was understandably limited, meaning that the equipment has stood idle for long periods - this does not help its reliability.

When the dredger suffered a serious failure in the second half of 2017, we asked a specialist firm, Rouden Hydratek, to take a look and advise us. The firm has a very professional approach but their estimates could only be approximate until the failed parts had been removed and assessed. It looked as if in the best case we faced a bill of £3,700 for parts alone, plus an unknown amount for labour. In the worst case, if major components needed replacement, the cost could have risen to £20,000 or more.

At the same time we had an offer of a secondhand dredger in good condition that would be more suitable for us, but we assessed that it would cost us at least £35,000, including transport and additional equipment, before the first handful of silt had been removed from the Loxwood canal. These are heavy costs when compared with the income that the navigable section produces, perhaps in



A long-reach excavator (operated by a contractor) in use on the Summit Level in 2012.

the region of £45,000 in a good year, once we have paid the cost of water, electricity for backpumping, tree and towpath maintenance. Our income will reduce in the short term as we tackle the maintenance backlog. This is in no way a criticism of our hardworking Boat Group who continue to do a magnificent fundraising job for the Trust.

In restoration work the Trust is a heavy user of hired equipment. We prefer only to own equipment when we will use it intensively and it is reasonably easy to maintain the kit and obtain spare parts. If hired equipment fails, the hire firm will usually supply a replacement and we do not lose valuable volunteer time. Our current evaluation is that owning a dredger is not cost-effective for us; it is difficult to maintain and we will not use it intensively enough.

Another approach we looked at was to employ contractors to carry out a silt removal programme. The costs we have been quoted

are high (maybe £50,000 or more) but the main problem is that a large-scale 'industrial' operation is not well suited to the Loxwood section. Basically we have nowhere to put a large quantity of silt. Generally the Environment Agency will permit dredgings to be deposited on the banks, but if it has to be taken further away then the material is treated as potentially contaminated and there are permits, soil surveys and additional disposal costs involved. We now think that 'little and often' is the correct approach for Loxwood, rather than a 'big bang' approach.

We have not solved the silt removal problem but currently we believe we need to think beyond large specialised dredgers (for operational sections - sections being restored are different). We have experimented with the option of a lightweight amphibious machine and a long-reach excavator working from the bank could be another viable approach.

There is room for more discussion but we will continue to focus on the specific problems we face both now and in the near future.

Membership Report

Our membership stands at 2,966. We would like to extend a very warm welcome to the following new members.

Chris Badham
April Bennett
Michael Bowen
Alistair & Maggie Brown
Thomas & Sarah Close
Roger Deason
Barbara Hatch

Barry & Maria Hatton
Ian James
Geoffrey & Katherine Lovell
Richard Lucas
Adrian & Ann Maunders
Daniel McLynn & Sue Binks
Mary Peach

Carolyn & Anthony Phillips
John Pocock
Ian Rees
Ninetta Reindl
Louise & Andy Senior
James Tanfield
Mark & Rachel Trickey

We have learned with regret of the death of:

Colin Attle
Brian Tanner

W J M Beckwith
Roger Wilton

Keith Jarred

Andrew Shelley Frank Sorrell

Alan Dyer, Membership Secretary
(membership@weyandarun.co.uk)

Dates for your Diary

Friday 22nd June *

Thursday 28th June *

Saturday 30th June

Tuesday 17th July *

Thursday 26th July *

Tuesday 7th August *

Thursday 9th August *

Wednesday 22nd August *

Wednesday 5th September *

Wednesday 19th September *

Saturday 20th October

Midsummer Supper Cruise at 7.30pm.

Cream Tea Voyages at 2.15 and 4.30pm.

Coach Tour to Kennet & Avon Canal, organised by Mark Anderson
01403 784934 (markwanderson@hotmail.co.uk) for more details.

Cream Tea Voyages at 2.15 and 4.30pm.

Pirates & Princesses Adventures at 11am and 2pm.

Cream Tea Voyages at 2.15 and 4.30pm.

Pirates & Princesses Adventures at 11am and 2pm.

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Cream Tea Voyages at 2.15 and 4.30pm.

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Autumn Meeting at Bramley Village Hall.

***For all boat trip information please contact the Loxwood Office (details on page 3). Bookings can be made with the office or online at weyarun.org.uk/trips. Booking is essential for all special trips.**



Above: Our smart new (secondhand) van, seen here at Gennets Bridge Lock, has already found its way to sites all the way up and down the canal route. (Dave Verrall)

Below: A few days after the completion ceremony and yet more heavy rainfall means that any boats approaching Gennets Bridge from the south will find it a squeeze to enter the lock.

