

Wey & Arun Canal News

June 2018

A review of recent events on the Wey & Arun Canal

Celebrating Surrey/Sussex border progress

The Surrey/Sussex border near Alfold (Surrey) and Loxwood (Sussex) was the scene of celebrations on 21st April. A short ceremony marked the completion of volunteer work on rebuilding Gennets Bridge Lock. After the ceremony, small boats were able to navigate across the county boundary, possibly for the first time since the late 19th century.

The Canal Trust has invested about £375,000 and a huge amount of volunteer effort in the lock rebuilding project. Local landowner Nigel Gibbons unveiled a plaque on the bridge and commented that when the Canal Trust had first approached him the project manager had promised to create a showpiece site. That promise had certainly been fulfilled and the surroundings looked magnificent in the warm spring sunshine. The lock is faced with locally made bricks so that its appearance is similar to the original lock that disappeared in the early 20th century. Earlier, volunteer colleagues had presented a card and gifts to inspirational project manager Eric Walker MBE, who had seen the Gennets Bridge project through from conception to completion. Eric retired from his leadership role earlier this year.

As well as rebuilding the lock, the volunteer team constructed a new arched bridge to take the Sussex Border Path across the canal and restored the canal channel northwards towards the Surrey border (the Border Path is some 200 metres south of the actual boundary). After the completion ceremony, Trust Chairman Sally Schupke boarded a canoe and paddled to a point near the next lock site - Gennets Wood - this is in Surrey, in the Waverley Borough Council area. This was a short but historic voyage, marking another milestone in the restoration of the canal link between London and the South Coast.

Plans for future canal restoration in the area depend on successful negotiations with local landowners, fundraising and of course the continued co-operation of the Trust's local authority partners.



Above: Nigel Gibbons has just unveiled the commemorative plaque at Gennets Bridge.
Below: The Chairman sets off from Sussex - destination Surrey.



Huge funding boost for Surrey restoration

Late in 2017, the Wey & Arun Canal Trust was delighted to receive a significant legacy from a former member and Vice-President, Peter Flatter. The Trust will use the donation of £500,000 to fund canal restoration in Surrey as a permanent memorial to its generous friend and supporter. Peter Flatter arrived in the UK as a young child fleeing from Nazi persecution in Austria. He founded a successful business and became a great lover of the British countryside's unique character. He was quick to recognise the value of the green corridor created by the restored canal in Sussex and Surrey, preserving and improving the natural environment for the benefit of everyone. Peter helped and encouraged the Canal Trust to launch its first electric-powered passenger boat in 2009. Building on the success of the award-winning Compasses Bridge project that removed a causeway blocking the canal near Alfold, Surrey, the Canal Trust is developing plans to extend and improve the navigable section in Surrey by removing other current blockages. Peter Flatter's legacy will go a long way towards turning these ambitious plans into reality.



Spring flowers along the peaceful canal banks near Alfold, Surrey.
(Inset) Peter Flatter.

Canal Trust grows its full-time staff

In February 2018, the Wey & Arun Canal Trust announced the appointment of two new full-time staff. Both were previously valuable and dedicated volunteers. Dave Evans, who played a key role in the Compasses Bridge project in Alfold, Surrey, is taking on the mission of accelerating future restoration projects on the Summit Level of the canal near Cranleigh and Dunsfold. Kev Baker's core task is to tackle the vast range of jobs needed to keep the Trust's showpiece section of canal near Loxwood, Sussex, in first-class condition. For example, the harsh winter has left sections of the towpath needing major repairs and damaged trees must be removed before they pose any danger to walkers and boat passengers.



Dave Evans (left) and Kev Baker at the Gennets Bridge Lock Completion celebration on 21st April.

The creation of new staff posts does not in any way reduce the importance of volunteers to the canal project. In fact, volunteers are likely to find themselves in more demand as Kev and Dave mobilise teams for some of the larger jobs. In the two weeks before Easter, the Trust used a hired amphibious machine for an intensive programme



The amphibious machine at work pumping silt out of the canal near Loxwood.

of canal maintenance on the Loxwood section. The versatile Truxor machine was operated mainly by volunteers, pumping silt out of shallow sections and removing reeds from the canal channel.

The Canal Trust has always been proud of its contribution to the local economy in Sussex and Surrey. Restoration projects mean substantial orders for local businesses, the canal has become a significant visitor attraction and now the Trust is creating more local employment opportunities.

The Wey & Arun Canal Trust Ltd
Bridge End, Somerswey
Shalford, Guildford
GU4 8EQ



Permission granted for Sussex bridge

On 24th January Horsham District Council granted planning permission for the rebuilding of Harsfold Bridge, on the Arun Navigation section of the canal near Wisborough Green, Sussex. Today a causeway carries a farm track that blocks the canal at the bridge site. Removing this blockage will open up a canal section of about 2km; on either side the Canal Trust has already carried out extensive



Waiting to be joined up - a peaceful section of the canal near Harsfold Bridge.

restoration work. To the north, at Lordings, the Trust has restored an unusual turf-sided flood lock and rebuilt an arched bridge. To the south, at Haybarn, the Trust has replaced a fixed farm bridge with a swing bridge. Construction work will start at Harsfold when various formalities including a legal agreement are complete.

Easter fun on canal



Cold and wet weather did not stop the Canal Trust's volunteers from running Easter Bunny boat trips over the holiday weekend.

The first weekend in April marked the start of the boating season. Public 'turn up and go' boat trips run from Loxwood every weekend and public holiday until the end of October. There are also special trips such as Pirates & Princesses Adventures and groups can hire boats (complete with crew) for private expeditions.

Staying up to date

Website: www.weyandarun.co.uk

Facebook: [weyandaruncanal](https://www.facebook.com/weyandaruncanal)

Twitter: [@weyandarun](https://twitter.com/weyandarun)

Shalford office: 01483 505566
Email: northernoffice@weyandarun.co.uk
Loxwood office: 01403 752403
Email: office@weyandarun.co.uk