

Wey & Arun Canal News

December 2021

A review of recent events on the Wey & Arun Canal

County Councillor opens new Information Centre

Shalford, south of Guildford, is where the Wey & Arun Canal meets the River Wey and the national waterway network. Here the Canal Trust has created the Hunt Nature Park along the banks of the Cranleigh Waters river. The Canal Trust has now improved the Park further with the opening of a new information centre, boardwalk and viewing platform close to the A281 Horsham Road.

Matt Furniss, Surrey County Councillor for Shalford and Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure, officially opened the new information centre on September 18th. Matt paid tribute to the Trust volunteers who had not only helped construct the centre but were also working along the length of the 23-mile canal to bring it back to life for the benefit of the public. He said: "The work done by members, volunteers and chairman Sally Schupke has been fantastic because it allows all of us, members of the public, to enjoy their hard work."

The centre will be a focal point for visitors. Volunteers will give out information on the Park, the local area and the canal, including the Trust's restoration plans. The Canal Trust plans to organise guided walks and educational visits, using the centre as a base.

Funding for the project came from Surrey County Council, local companies and Canal Trust supporters.



Surrey County Councillor for Shalford Matt Furniss with Wey & Arun Canal Trust Chairman Sally Schupke.



New versatile boat joins the fleet

The Canal Trust already operates three tripboats from its base at Loxwood, West Sussex. The Trust has now added another tripboat to its fleet: a versatile Wheelyboat. The boat was officially named the *Walter Grove* at a special ceremony on October 23rd and given the traditional spray of fizz.

The purchase of the secondhand boat was made possible by a generous donation from supporter Peter Grove and has been named in memory of his grandfather, who was master carpenter on the Wey Navigation from 1885 to 1930. Peter, who now lives in the US, was represented by his cousin Ian Hairs, from Alfold, Surrey, who named the boat on his behalf.

Walter Grove can easily accommodate groups of wheelchair users. It is light enough to be transported by the Trust's own equipment and will be ideal for use on the Summit Level, near Cranleigh and Dunsfold, where there are no canal locks. The boat was supplied and refurbished by The Wheelyboat Trust, a national charity dedicated to getting wheelchair users out enjoying the UK's inland waterways.

The seating and canopy for the boat were generously provided by the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust and the electric outboard, battery and charger by the Henry Smith Charity.



Top picture: Passengers including wheelchair users enjoy a trip on a similar Wheelyboat.

Lower picture: L to R - Boat crew member Louise Osborne, Head of Canal Trust Boat Group John Reynolds, Wheelyboat Trust Director Andy Beadsley and Ian Hairs (Peter Grove's cousin).

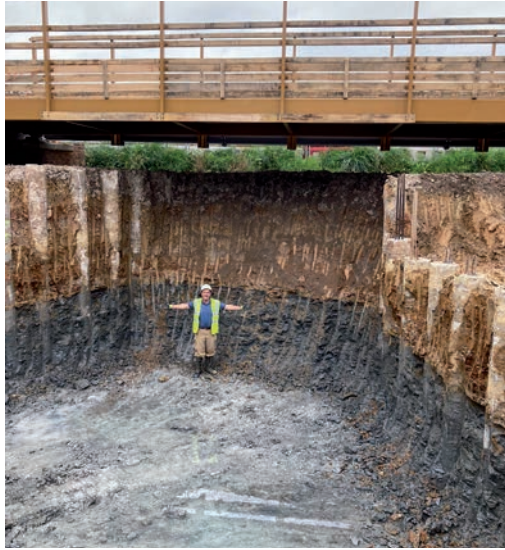
Great strides made at road crossing project

It was a milestone moment for volunteers at the Tickner's Heath road crossing project at Alfold, Surrey, when they excavated a new canal channel beneath the pedestrian bridge they have been constructing over the past year.

The existing route of the canal here in Surrey is blocked by a causeway on the road between Dunsfold and Alfold. A new road bridge is planned to take the road over the canal a couple of hundred yards east of the original crossing point. As the road over the new bridge will be no wider than the existing road, a separate, parallel bridge has been provided for the use of pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. In June a prefabricated steel bridge was craned into place and volunteers fitted the decking and handrails. With the pedestrian footbridge complete, volunteers began work on the base of the new canal channel and training walls. The easing of Covid restrictions meant the Trust could also welcome visiting working parties, who spent several weekends working alongside regular volunteers.

The next step is to create a temporary road diversion to allow work to begin on the road crossing itself.

In November the Trust submitted a planning application for Stage 2 of the project, which includes extending the canal cut along the west side of Dunsfold Road to connect to the existing canal, constructing a second bridge and enhancing the rights of way with two new paths.



Progress at Tickner's Heath near Alfold.

Lifesaver available on boat trips

The Canal Trust now has a second defibrillator for use on its tripboats, thanks to the generosity of two of its volunteer boat skippers.

The latest life-saving machine joins the one available for public use on the outside of the Loxwood Canal Centre and others used by Canal Trust volunteer working parties.

The second machine is needed when more than one boat is out at the same time. Having the machines to hand could be the difference between life and death for someone who is in sudden cardiac arrest, and they are simple to use. Defibrillators dramatically increase survival rates compared to manual resuscitation, so the Trust is pleased to be able to give the public the reassurance of having the machines available on boat trips.



Sussex towpath improved

Walkers visiting the canal at Lee Place (Harsfold) near Wisborough Green in West Sussex now have a much improved towpath thanks to the work of Canal Trust volunteers.

Severe flooding of the River Arun in previous years had caused the towpath and parts of the canal bank here to erode. Repairing the damage was a significant task however, as the level of the towpath had to be raised by more than a metre in places and areas of canal bank also needed strengthening.

As part of the project volunteers also replaced a wooden weir with a more robust concrete design. The work means this stretch of canal is now in much better shape to withstand extreme weather.