

WEY & ARUN



Quarterly Magazine of the Wey & Arun Canal Trust

Issue 191 June/July/August 2020

Visitors to Loxwood may recognise these sites. The postcards are from a collection by one of the Trust's volunteer speakers, Tony Pratt. Tony says: "I have collected postcards for the past 18 years since making the documentary *The Lost Way to the Sea*, when we used a number in the filming. I have concentrated on Sussex waterways and their surroundings to enliven the talks I give for the Trust which are based on many years walking and boating in the area.

"The early years of the 20th century were the golden age of postcards, with many millions published nationwide by a wealth of early photographers, many of them based in the south. They provided a social medium of their day with handwritten texts giving an offbeat insight into life at the time. A large proportion were collected unposted – of the 41 Loxwood cards I have 19 are unposted.

"If your appetite for old postcards of the area has been whetted you may enjoy more on my website *The Arun Valley Postcard Trail* at www.avpct.co.uk."



A view of the Onslow Arms seen from the south and showing two buildings in the foreground no longer present, also a horse-drawn cart indicating an early date, unposted.



Brewhurst Mill showing the mill pond, now vanished, and sluices. Posted in London in 1906 inviting a Mrs. Parsons to join the sender "tonight at 5 o/c", a reminder that there were frequent posts each day. The publishers were Aylward, Smith & Co, very well known for their Loxwood Series and later Vulcan Series and based at the Combination Stores in the High Street.



The Onslow Arms pub from the common with the Lox in the foreground. The building on the left is the Toll House. The bridge here would have been an important feature of the Turnpike from Newbridge to Alfold Bars which was established in 1757. Published by the R.A.P. Co Ltd in London (Regal Art Publishing Co) and unposted. The lorry in front of the pub looks to be 1920s build and gives a dating clue.

Contents

- 4 The 47th Annual Meeting**
Report from this year's online event
- 7 Hunt Nature Park**
The visitor centre moves a step closer
- 8 Harsfold Bridge**
An update on progress at the development
- 10 All change at the slipway**
- 12 Towpath repairs at Loxwood**
Repairing the damage done by winter's storms
- 15 Life under lockdown**
Trust staff kept busy despite restrictions
- 17 ZK restoration in photos**
- 18 Boat crew emergency training**
Volunteers find out how to cope in a crisis
- 20 A tribute to Kevin Crawley**
A look back at Kevin Crawley's achievements
- 21 A plea for equipment**
- 22 Wildlife in spring and summer**
- 24 Working Party Roundup**

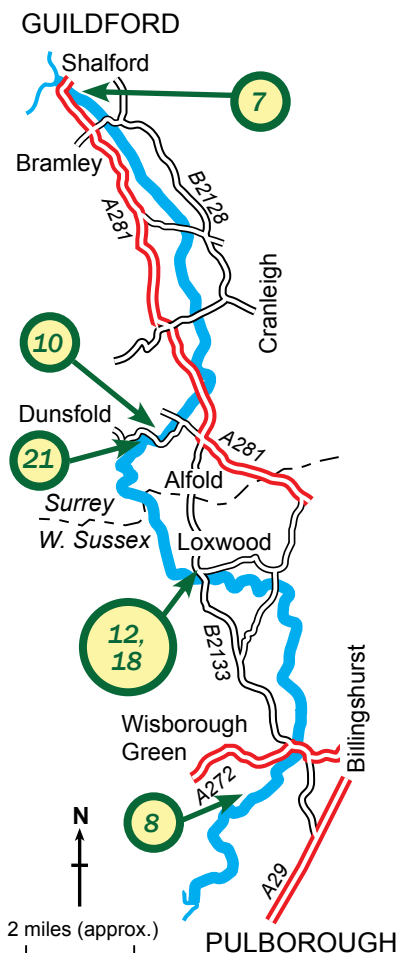
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Front cover: In early March, members of the Eric Walker Group (EWG) celebrate placing the steel beams for the deck of the new Harsfold Bridge. (Dennis Gillen)





The 47th AGM is held online for the first time

A very different Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday April 25th. Coronavirus restrictions meant the meeting was held via videoconference, with only two directors (from the same household) physically present.

All formal business was carried out according to the Trust's constitution with proxy votes submitted prior to the meeting. Apologies for absence were made, and the Minutes of the AGM on April 27th 2019 received and adopted.

Directors accepted the Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended December 31st 2019, together with the Directors' and Independent Examiner's Reports, and appointed the Independent Examiners for 2020. Copies of the Summary of Financial Position can be obtained by emailing support@weyandarun.co.uk.

Directors Tony Ford and Tony Coles stood for re-election and were duly re-elected, while director Phillip Oliver stood down. Directors offered their thanks to Philip for his tireless work as Bramley Link Manager.

Following the formal business the meeting was adjourned until October 31st at Bramley Village Hall, where if conditions allow members will receive updates on ongoing

restoration projects and hear about plans for the future.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Sally Schupke began by thanking all members, donors, sponsors and volunteers for the huge contribution they have made to the Trust in 2019. She also paid tribute to all those lost in the past year, in particular Kevin Crawley, Fanny Lines and Vice-President Peter Beresford. She also marked the passing of another Vice-President, Paul (PAL) Vine, author of *London's Lost Route to the Sea*, a work that greatly influenced the movement to restore the Wey & Arun Canal, Robin Higgs (awarded the OBE for canal and railway preservation) and John Russell-Hayes (who used his artistic skills to paint the canal and raise funds).

Sally provided a roundup of restoration activity over the past year, starting at the north end with planning consent for the proposed Shalford Visitor Centre.

"Our main activity last summer was at Birtley (south of Bramley) where the first of two bridges was started. The first, a lift bridge, saw major construction entirely by volunteers who went above and beyond during searing heat

to finish each week's planned work. Behind the scenes plans for the second bridge are being developed."

"At Rushett Farm (near Shamley Green) we have submitted a planning application to Waverley Borough Council. Our thanks to Gary Courtnadge for steering this project."

Sally reported that the public consultation day for the Elmbridge road crossing project was successful with a large majority in favour of the development which includes road widening and a new canal bridge with sufficient height for navigation. "We are now close to submitting a planning application," she added.

Planning consent has been granted for the next major road crossing, at Tickner's Heath between Alfold and Dunsfold. This scheme needs Common Land consent and the Trust is waiting for the Secretary of State to determine the application, scheduled by late summer. That will be the trigger to establish a works compound in the area next to the canal which is now owned by the Trust.

The canal section at Gennets Farm near Loxwood (south of Gennets Bridge Lock) has now been cleared with the permission of the landowners, and the route of the canal can at last be clearly seen from the bridleway.

Desilting of the Drungewick Pound by Land & Water was completed in 2019. At Drungewick Lock we obtained formal landowner permission to proceed with repairs. It is now a question of when work can resume after Covid-19 restrictions.

At Harsfold (near Wisborough Green) great progress has been made in the construction of a new canal bridge to replace an existing causeway blocking the route. The bridge deck is in place and again we are waiting for work to be resumed after restrictions have been lifted.

Sally concluded: "In 2019 we have seen several significant activities kick-off. We are very fortunate to have money in reserves because undoubtedly the Covid-19 emergency will have an impact on us from the loss of fundraising activities and maybe our sponsors and donors will feel the pinch as well. We received a legacy of about £73,000 from the late Peter Anderson in early 2020. This will help us through a difficult period and we are very grateful for the bequest."

Continuation of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Wey & Arun Canal Trust Ltd is scheduled to be reconvened at the Village Hall, Bramley on Saturday 31st October 2020 at 2.30pm.

The Quarterly Magazine of

The Wey & Arun Canal Trust

Registered Charity no. CC265331

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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membership@weyandarun.co.uk

Material published in *Wey-South* represents the views of the contributors and should not, unless specifically indicated, be assumed to be the policy of the Trust.

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Wey-South is normally published in the 2nd week of March, June, September and December. Please submit copy by the end of January, April, July and October.

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.

Issue 191

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August 2020

Financial statement

Julian Morgan outlined the Trust's financial position, explaining that there tend to be spending years and saving years. 2017 and 2018 were saving years in which resources were accumulated for future projects, while 2019 was a spending year when we were able to go ahead with activities that demanded significant funds. They included:

- Surveys, studies and planning advice for Phase 1 of the Bramley Link project.
- Restoration on the Birtley section, south of Bramley (acquired in 2018), and building the abutments of a lift bridge.
- Desilting the Summit Level between Compasses Bridge and Tickner's Heath (including acquisition of equipment).
- Land acquisition and design/preparation work for a canal crossing at Tickner's Heath.
- Completing a major upgrade of our Tickner's Heath Depot.



- Starting the construction of the new Harsfold Bridge, near Wisborough Green.

Julian pointed out that most of the Trust's financial strength is thanks to generous grants and legacies. In 2019 grants amounted to £104,000 and legacies to £4,700. Underlying income, from subscriptions, regular donations, fundraising and trading activities, is usually some £200,000-£300,000 per year. In 2019 trading activities produced more income than in 2018, thanks to hard work by Boat Group and other volunteers. Trading income increased by about 30% on 2018.

Trust awarded substantial grants in 2020



The Trust has recently been awarded generous grants from Loxwood Parish Council and the Canoe Foundation.

A generous £5,000 has been granted by Loxwood Parish Council towards the costs of maintaining the towpath along the restored section at Loxwood, an area particularly popular with walkers, horse riders and cyclists.

Chairman Sally Schupke said: "The Trust has had to carry out substantial restoration of parts of the towpath due to this year's storms, so this generous grant is much appreciated and it is an acknowledgement of how much the canal is valued by the local community."

A spokesperson for the Parish Council added: "Restoring the footpaths along the canal will be a valuable asset to the many parishioners who regularly walk the canal and to those who visit our parish from further afield."

A further £1,000 grant has come from the Canoe Foundation, which aims to support enjoyment of paddling on waterways. The Trust will use the funds to add further landing stages along the canal.

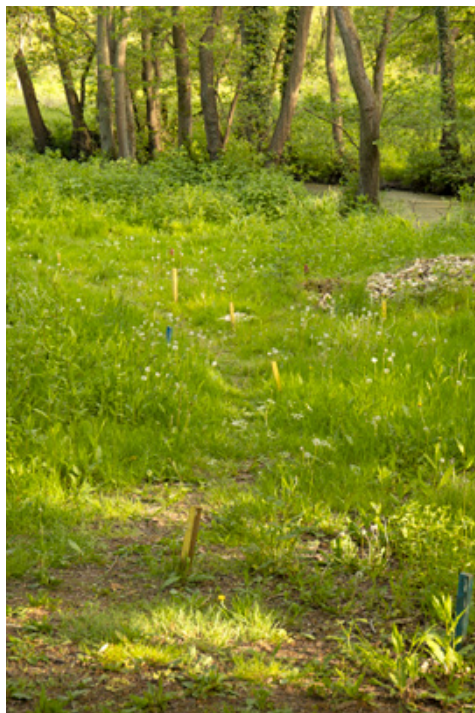
Sally added: "We very much appreciate this contribution of these grants, particularly with fundraising events cancelled and loss of income from the postponement of our boat trips at Loxwood due to coronavirus."

Hunt Nature Park

Plans to construct a visitor centre at Hunt Nature Park in Shalford are moving forward. The plot has now been pegged out and the Trust awaits a Protected Species Licence as Great Crested newts may be present.

Project manager Brian King says he is currently looking at selecting contractors to take care of piling. Then the structure itself will be made up elsewhere and delivered to the site in pieces where volunteers can fit it together.

Brian said the centre, which will normally be unstaffed, will not only offer a place to view wildlife but would house education boards detailing information on the different species to be spotted.



Hunt Nature Park provides a rich habitat for wildlife and the new visitor centre will illustrate the flora and fauna common to the area.

Harsfold Bridge

The team building the new bridge at Harsfold, near Wisborough Green, haven't had things easy. Torrential rain and subsequent flooding made life tough over winter, so the milestone of getting the steel beams in was one to mark in early March. Sadly, the celebrations didn't last long as plans to move to the next step were thwarted by coronavirus and the shutdown of all working parties. The team are all hoping to get back to work as soon as it is safe to do so.





The wing walls are in on both north and south abutments and the steel beams have been installed. Once working parties resume the concrete pour of the bridge deck will be the next step.



**Tickner's
Compound**





Preparation for work on Tickner's Heath road crossing meant it was wagons roll at the Thriscutt Slipway in March. Legacy Haulage Services was brought in to help move the seven cabins from the slipway to the Tickner's Depot, ready for when work will commence once coronavirus restrictions are lifted.

Loxwood Repairs



When the River Lox overtopped earlier this year it caused a substantial damage to the canal towpath.

Below Brewhurst Lane the towpath needed a lot of new surfacing, but Baldwin's Knob Lock was particularly hard hit; a section of towpath and bank collapsed and there was a potential serious breach. Kevin Baker and his Canal Maintenance team along with the Monday Group first installed a series of sandbag walls to stop any further water ingress and fenced off the area for safety. The two teams then worked hard to clear the overgrowth on both sides of the canal to allow Kevin to see what needed doing. With the banks stabilised and a leak from the canal stopped Kevin could begin permanent repairs.

A solid wall to shore up the bank was needed. Concrete foundations were laid and giant concrete 'Lego' blocks installed to provide height and stability. Now all that's left is to backfill.





Photographs by Kevin Baker and Dave Evans.



Special events get new dates in 2021

The coronavirus pandemic has taken its toll on Trust events planned for the early part of this year, including the IWA National Trailboat Festival set to run at the end of May and the Poddle sponsored walk scheduled for June.

The good news is that it has been agreed that the Trust will host the Trailboat Festival in 2021 instead. The new date is the first May Bank Holiday weekend, May 1-3.

Much preparation had already been made for the event, which means the organising team will be fully prepared for next year's date.

The main aim of the Festival has always been seen as publicity for the canal, not fundraising, and therefore very little money had been spent on the 2020 event that can't be recovered.

Dredging on the section has begun and the upside of the postponement of the Festival is more time to continue this work. The Tickner's Heath Crossing

project should also be further along, providing another illustration of ongoing restoration for visiting trailboat owners.

A new date has also been set for the Poddle. The event will take place in 2021 on Sunday June 6th. The sponsored walk attracts more than 100 walkers each year and would have raised a significant amount for the Trust. If you would still like to contribute there are several ways to help:

- Sponsor the route checkers (who will be walking the route when conditions permit). All you need to do is complete the sponsor form (enclosed with your last *Wey-South* or download at weyarun.org.uk/events48 and indicate if we can claim Gift Aid on your donation).
- Go on any walk and sponsor yourself.
- Give a donation towards the work of the Trust. See www.weyarun.org.uk for details of how to do this.

A case of 'keep calm and carry on' during the pandemic

While the country was on lockdown and working party members were putting their feet up (or forced into doing those long held-off DIY jobs at home), it was business as usual for several Wey & Arun Canal Trust staff members, albeit under different conditions.



Loxwood Link Maintenance Manager Kevin Baker was kept extra busy with fewer lengthsmen to call on and no working party assistance. Sadly, Kevin's job also had to entail

policing the southern stretch as vandals took advantage of the quieter conditions.

Not only was he repairing the landslip south of Brewhurst Lock, he was working at Drungewick scraping silt off the Long Meadow field before resurfacing 600m of towpath there. He also headed to Lordings Lock, excavating to find out how deep the lock is (7ft 6in to be precise).



Press and Publications Manager Gill Davies might have been confined to her home office instead of being out and about along the canal, but the need to provide 'good news' stories to the press ramped up as

publications looked to fill their pages with anything other than coronavirus cancellations.

"I may not have been promoting boat trips, the Trailboat Festival or the Poddle as I had expected, but that didn't mean there was any lack of news to report - there is always lots going on behind the scenes at the Trust that's worthy of promoting.

"The extra time at home for everyone and reliance on technology also meant use of social media skyrocketed - some marketers

suggest Facebook use was up by 70% on pre-lockdown levels. That gave both Dave Verrall and myself an opportunity to post more often.

"Particularly successful was a series of posts showing photos of places along the canal to visit when we get back to normal, along with a little history. They helped reach people who may not know about the canal, and bring back fond memories for those familiar with the sites.

"Dave's wildlife shots also helped provide a reminder of the diversity of wildlife along the canal and give those at home something cheery to look at."



Dave Evans may have had the hardest task of all, though, juggling planning for forthcoming working camps and the Tickner's Heath project with homeschooling his kids.

"I've been doing loads of backroom work while at home - pre-planning, method statements and risk assessments - all the boring, but necessary stuff. Timelines needed to be done for Tickner's Heath Crossing along with forward planning for WRG Camps this year and next."

Dave has also been able to assist Kevin several days a week. "I've been helping by delivering machines and assisting with towpath repairs. We've been surveying the condition of the whole towpath."

There are some jobs, of course, where two pairs of hands are needed and Dave also helped Kevin with the concrete pour as part of the towpath repairs at Loxwood.

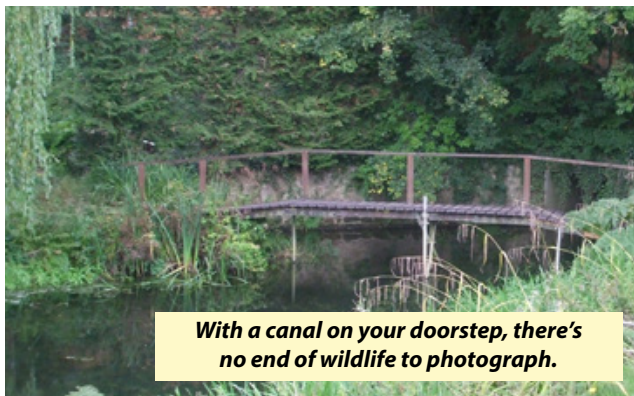
The Northern Office in lockdown

As a back-office volunteer with the Trust, the reward is mainly a warm feeling inside, but normally there are compensations. The cream on the cake, and you can tell yourself you've earned it, is when you can actually emerge blinking from your solitary indoor tasks and enjoy some time on the real canal, meeting working party volunteers or going on boat trips. Just lately it's been kinda quiet in Northern Office land, without the usual procession of canal people dropping by for a catch-up. But we have been able to get on with our jobs as never before.

For Finance and Admin people, the main excitement of March and April is putting together last year's Report & Accounts. A key pillar of our success is demonstrating to our funders and supporters that we are a well-run bunch. And the first thing most funders will ask for is the latest Report & Accounts so we do need a professional document to hand out and give to Companies House and the Charity Commission.

For as long as most people can remember, our professional accounts person has been Nigel Singleton. Nowadays he's called the Independent Examiner unless we're lucky enough to turn over more than £1m in a year, when he becomes the Auditor. Nigel lives in Dorset, but has online access to everything he needs. Nigel starts his work by asking a pile of questions – the answers can range from “yes” to “yikes, I'll need a day or so to pull that lot together”. Gradually, the questions get dealt with and the final document starts to emerge shyly into the spring sunlight. Then colleagues and the proofreader get stuck in, suggesting improvements until all are happy.

When we're not down the Accounts mine, there can be some more fun jobs. With time not



With a canal on your doorstep, there's no end of wildlife to photograph.

in short supply, it seems like a great idea to update the *Wey-South Path Guide*. Frighteningly enough, it is over 11 years since the last edition hit the streets. Fortunately the Path, which is marked on Ordnance Survey maps, comes within yards of the Northern Office on its 36-mile route between Guildford and the South Downs Way, near Amberley, so we have been able to roam our local sections as part of our permitted daily exercise, taking photos, recording the route using GPS and noting points of interest. Sadly, our range became a bit more limited after one of us crashed his bike.

One of the big pluses of the Northern Office is, of course, the canal in the garden. When there's a camera lens around then no bug is safe. That's been true more than ever this year, with the progress of spring being recorded in minute detail, from frogs to tadpoles, the first butterflies and damselflies of the year.

We've become well used to videoconferencing and it's the nearest we'll get to sitting in the same room as our colleagues.

We did miss all the traditions that go with the normal physical meetings, though – ‘put the urn on, please’ during the last item on the agenda and passing the cakes down the table for the post-meeting chat sessions [did I hear someone say ‘where all the real work gets done’?].



Boat repairs

ZK repairs underway

Zachariah Keppel has been at the 4 All Marine shed at Chertsey in Surrey since January and has now been completely stripped out and some rusty internal fittings replaced.

The MCA surveyor attended the ultrasonic hull test in early March to measure hull thickness. Some of the plates around the propeller boss cutlass bearing had wasted away from 5mm to 1.6mm thickness and it was only a matter of a year or so until this area would have opened up, causing practice emergency abandon ship exercises to become a real event.

The defective plates have been cut out and re-plated and the hull buffed off internally and externally, primed and painted with black bitumastic paint. The engine has been removed and will be fully serviced and replaced, along with the worn prop shaft.

The forward and after decks will be made waterproof with overside draining scuppers. When transported back to the Canal ZK will also have her ballast and floors replaced.

It was hoped that the boat would have been returned by the end of April but coronavirus restrictions have put this on hold.



Boat crew
training



***Clockwise from top left:
Mark Eyre observes rescue
efforts in Brewhurst
Lock; the casualty –
none the worse for
multiple dunkings in
the canal; David Bush
completes the rescue.***

Boat crew emergency training gets real

Julian Morgan recounts how this year's emergency training brought home the importance of knowing exactly what to do should the worst happen.

There are always the canal trips you'll never forget – a few of them for the wrong reasons. In my first season I was driving a boatload of teachers, parents and girls from one of our top local private schools when the propeller jammed and the boat stopped dead in the middle of the canal.

On another trip I reached for the pole to push the boat across a lock – don't ask me what happened next but I found myself swimming in the canal with no crew on board to rescue me. Now imagine a trip far, far worse than any of those distant memories – in just one short journey between the Onslow Arms and Brewhurst Bridge a small child falls in not just once, but several times. Rescue efforts are hampered by a hysterical parent. Then the engine fails (twice) and everyone has to be evacuated via the gangplank. All of this happens in the morning and, believe it or not, again in the afternoon.

A happy outcome

Fortunately, at the end of these trips everyone was happy. Even the soaked child was still wearing the same ambiguous expression – that's because he (or she?) was just a dummy and everyone on the boat was a skipper or crew member, practising our emergency routines in situations we hope will never happen. This was a new requirement from our friends at the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) after their visit late in 2019.

Normally Boat Group members attend pre-season training in a local hall and in recent years this has included splitting into groups and discussing an emergency scenario put forward by the training team. But this year



everyone agreed there is no substitute for hands-on work, actually stopping the boat in a hurry, deploying the lifebelts, then trying to bring the victim back on board without falling in yourself. Then you have to bring the boat to the bank without the engine, tie up safely and escort everyone across a narrow gangplank (you have to imagine the smoke and flames adding a bit of urgency at this point – normally it's safer to stay on the boat and arrange for help).

The first of these exercises was before Christmas 2019 ahead of seasonal trips. The second was on March 7th when the weather was mild and coronavirus was something they had in China.

If any passengers get to go on boat trips this season they can be confident they are in even safer hands than before. No one could remember the last time a real passenger fell in, but crew members have got their feet wet in the past and there have been several engine failures. Everyone who attended these exercises is grateful to Mark Eyre, our Training Manager, for his careful preparation and calm, constructive feedback.

Kevin Crawley 12th June 1938 - 27th March 2020

Not only does the Trust have a lot to thank Kevin Crawley for, but so too do the many thousands of passengers who climb on board *Wiggonholt* each year, as it was Kevin who helped design the boat back in 2009.

Kevin and his wife Pat found their way to the Wey & Arun Canal Trust like many through their love of narrowboats, and joined in 1997. "We became hooked on waterways," says Pat. So much so that the pair eventually sold their own narrowboat as they were spending so much time volunteering with the Trust.

Kevin, an electrical engineer "who could turn his hand to anything", became a skipper. As a man who clearly liked to be busy – he looked after staging for the local amateur dramatic society and helped the Scouting Movement for 35 years – he also took on the role of training new skippers and crew. "He didn't stand any nonsense," Pat recalls. "But he was fun as well and people always came away smiling."



Kevin on an Easter trip in 2009.

His eye for detail made him perfect for creating the detailed spec for *Wiggonholt*, but volunteering also brought Kevin and Pat great reward. "The draw was also mixing with other people, doing something useful and raising money for a worthy cause," Pat says.

Dusty Miller pays tribute

I first met Kevin when he was showing some friends around the canal. Some weeks later I asked for volunteers with boat building knowledge to join a group to examine thoughts about a new boat to add to our small fleet. Kevin volunteered and I was soon awash with ideas.

Unlike modern designs ZK had a v-shaped hull. Kevin's research and drawings clearly showed the limiting effect this would have on passenger capacity and we concluded a new build was going to be needed. We received a very generous financial offer which made a new boat a clear favourite but the benefactor was keen for the boat to be electric. This gave rise to a lot of research and difficulty in finding a contractor. Kevin laid down a very clear spec, based on the current usage of ZK and how we might go forward. To Kevin's credit we still have some headroom in the way we operate Wiggonholt and, after more than 10 years, we are still using the same batteries.

One of the limiting factors was the width of the canal bridges. Kevin took up the challenge and cajoled myself and Mike Anderson into an experiment one Sunday morning. To the amusement of those on the towpath we navigated ZK down the cut with bamboo canes sticking out at weird angles, while Kevin took measurements of clearance through the bridges.

Kevin also helped reorganise the Boat Group's training, earning unexpected praise from the MCA for his approach which they recommended to other organisations.

He excelled in all he did and will be sorely missed by many, including myself.

Woodworking tools needed

Over the past two years the EWG group has worked on updating the Trust's depot, bringing it up to modern standards and to conform with Health and Safety regulations. The primarily structural work included removing dangerous buildings and any unnecessary asbestos roofing, and lining the remaining Nissen huts to insulate and waterproof them. The team also built a new scaffold store, solvent store and bulk material holding pens and a new welfare unit. Mains water and electricity were also installed so the depot is now suitable for the 21st century.

The other half of the building is available for repairs to our ever-increasing fleet of diggers and dumpers. It is also provides a large space where fabrication of such items as concrete shutter moulds, reinforcing beams prefabricated timber bridges etc can be made in the dry and relative warmth.

While the workshop is well equipped with small hand and power tools there is a growing need for more commercial/industrial scale tooling. The Trust is still having to buy in pre-prepared and cut timber, resulting in spending more than necessary. It would save the Trust if we could cut and prepare our own sized timber from rough sawn material.

And here comes the plea! If you have or know of any friend or business that has the following



The EWG team could make good use of more woodworking tools.

commercial machines to donate we would be most grateful. Needs are for:

- A floorstanding circular saw with 10in-plus blade.
- A floorstanding band saw, throat depth at least 12in.
- A table-top radial arm saw.
- A floorstanding thicknesser/planer capable of handling at least 9in board and 6in thickness.

Please send any details or questions to me, tony_tyrrell@weyandarun.co.uk.



These wooden eggs were created by the team at Tickner's Depot and painted by local artist Diana Briault. They were to have been placed along the canal ahead of Easter boat trips, but instead adorned the windows of the canal centre for walkers to enjoy.

Spring and summer wildlife

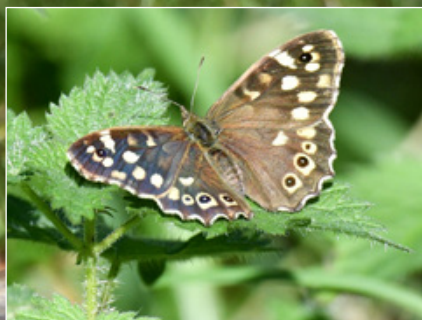
I am writing this in the middle of April whilst we are all in lockdown, but I am hoping that during the summer we can once again visit the canal to see the wildlife. Here are a selection of photos previously taken by myself and Julian Morgan.

Summer is a wonderful time of the year to see the butterflies, damselflies and dragonflies that benefit from the habitat provided by the canal. Last summer many Painted Lady butterflies were seen in the UK. They flew here from Africa. I wonder if we will see them again this year?

Grey Wagtails are often spotted at the locks looking for insects. At this time of year moorhens, ducks and other birds may be seen in the canal with their youngsters.

Dave Verrall
dv@weyandarun.co.uk





***Opposite page: Azure damselfly (top),
moorhen and chicks (below).***

***This page: Broad-bodied Chaser
dragonfly (top), Grey Wagtail (left),
Speckled Wood butterfly (upper right),
Painted Lady butterfly (lower right).***

Working Party Roundup

Over a period of four months the adverse weather was the major factor in the lives of our volunteer work parties. Storms Ciara, Dennis and Jorge caused considerable disruption and wreaked damage to some areas of the canal. In the end February turned out to be the wettest on record, so we were all hoping for drier conditions when the skies cleared in March and we were ready to catch up with the work plans in preparation for a hectic summer.

And then coronavirus appeared and led to an inevitable shutdown of all our activities. Let's hope that the lockdown is effective in bringing the pandemic under control so that social activities can resume in general and that our work on the Wey & Arun Canal can get underway again.

Last year WACT volunteers chalked up 5,659 hours in the first quarter, 7,118 in the second, 6,573 in the third and 8,061 in the fourth. That's over 27,000 hours or the equivalent of 17 full-time staff. Well done! It might be a stretch to beat that in 2020.

Peter Winter

Monday Group

In February the group completed clearing the towpath and bank in the 'gap' between 100 yards south of Baldwin's Knob Lock northwards towards Brewhurst Bridge, some 800 yards. We also installed a new information board at Gosden Aqueduct and cleared two of the culverts of heavy logs using a grapple and rakes. The flow in Cranleigh Waters now goes under the aqueduct unimpeded.

At Kevin's request we spent a day at Loxwood clearing the bank between the towpath and the car park from the Canal Centre to the steps down to the car park. The latter was partly flooded following Storm Ciara.

The rain, wind and flooding resulted in damage and a potential breach in the canal bank just above Baldwin's Knob Lock. We helped Dave



The Monday Group helped with towpath repairs at Loxwood following flooding.

Evans and Kevin Baker to clear the hedge on both sides to allow machinery to get in to repair the damage and cleared the culverted stream on the offside which had been flowing into the canal rather than under it.

The following two Mondays we concentrated on clearing the towpath of flood debris from the Barnsill side of the spill weir all the way to the Drungewick winding hole, some 400 metres. All the debris was barrowed back to Drungewick for disposal – quite a task. At the spill weir the flooding had accumulated all the debris against the fence to a height of 4ft, more effective than any beaver could achieve!

Nick Wood

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Hedgelaying Group

Like all the other working parties, the Hedgelaying Group was stood down in March. Unfortunately, this came just a few weeks before we should have finished for the year. Hedgelaying always has to take account



The Hedgelaying Group tackled the hedge below Brewhurst Lock before lockdown.

of disturbance to nesting birds and the need not to damage the hedgerow plants by cutting when the sap is running.

The coronavirus restrictions meant that we just could not finish what we intended - all very frustrating! The good news is that across this winter, we completed laying the section of hedge below Brewhurst Lock. It was a major undertaking as we reversed the direction of lay, which meant that most of us were working back to front, but good for our one left-handed hedgelayers, who came into his own – thank you, Alistair!

We also welcomed a number of new volunteers. We can only take on a few new people each year, as we really need to offer one-to-one, or possibly one-to-two training, and hedgerows tend to be confined working spaces, meaning that keeping people apart is a priority for safety reasons (hedgelaying tools are necessarily very sharp), even before social distancing came into common parlance!



Thankfully the team managed to finish the job before their season came to a halt.

One question that comes up is how long does it take to learn hedgelaying? The answer is that I do not know as I am still learning after 40+ years (as the team will concur). Preparation takes about 90% of the time, then actual laying about 5-10%, so if you are agitating for quick results, hedgelaying is probably not for you.

More recently, we started to lay the new hedge planted by the Canal Trust (in 2007) as part of the work to allow the canal to pass under the new bridge at Loxwood. This lies upstream from Brewhurst Lock and on the opposite bank to the towpath. Thanks to the landowner for allowing us to access the adjacent field, where one of our experienced hedgelayers, Dave Picknell, discovered three adders basking in the March sunshine. This is yet another example of how important the canal is for wildlife – these reptiles are under huge pressure, so non-towpath banks, with no disturbance, are important for their survival.

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Midweek Working Party

Our first visit of February was to Birtley. WACT eventually received the Felling Licence to take down three ash trees with ash dieback. Dave Evans felled them for us and MWWP cleared up the logs. Two of the trees were relatively small, but the third one was large (as the picture shows). Five of the group had to go back two weeks later and remove the trunks from the canal and log it.

The third Wednesday four of us went to Hunt Park and cleared up some of the mess left by the flood. The Cranleigh Waters overflowed the bank and was within a foot of the Downs Link. Two trees came down and a number of branches needed to be cleared.

Then most of the group went down to Harsfold and began cutting down the hedge next to the building of the new bridge. It is a very thick blackthorn scrub which has not been touched for years.

The team had good numbers and worked really hard in March until we were stopped by government restrictions. We have been to several different places: the first was finishing the job at Harsfold Bridge with most of the group which we had started a fortnight before. The hedge looking down towards Lordings from Harsfold Bridge is looking very tidy and the ditch is now clear. The landowner is very pleased with the new look. It is at least 15 years since it was cut.

A small group worked at Hunt Park clearing the trees that had come down during the storms and the brash left from the tree surgeon's work. We then started to clear from Farnhurst Bridge to Fast Bridge on the aerodrome side in preparation for the planned IWA Trailboat Festival. The job was far bigger than I thought and we were planning to go back the following week. However, Dunsfold decided to cut the hedge over the weekend and as a result birds moved into the piles of



The MWWP helped deal with three ash trees with ash dieback at Birtley.

brash so that job will have to be finished in the autumn or next spring.

Our last outing was to Rushetts where we cleared the base and banks of the canal. It was looking beautiful when I walked down there.

Margaret Darvill

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Eric Walker Group

At Harsfold the wet weather and flooding continued during the February so progress was slower than planned with some of our working days having to be cancelled or shortened. The overall programme slipped to be four weeks behind schedule. However, we were able to progress the brick/block wing walls to both the north and south bridge abutments. Critically, scaffolding was constructed between the abutments which enabled installation, as per the programme, of the steel bridge deck beams. This was achieved despite wet and cold weather by a small team led by Richard

Meinertzhagen. Getting the beams in place was a crucial element of the construction schedule as this is essential before an 18m³ concrete pour of the bridge deck.

So we had the beams in place and most of the formwork set up and everything was ready to go ahead on March 26th but, of course, we had to cancel all activities on Monday March 23rd to comply with the government's lockdown announcement.

Meanwhile, at Drungewick Lock, it had already been determined that the commencement of work would have to be delayed beyond the planned March start. The EWG team would have had to be split in order to carry out the preparatory works prior to the Platipus ground anchor installation, but a full team commitment was required at Harsfold to catch up the delays caused by the weather. When work recommences, Drungewick Lock repairs will only be undertaken after Harsfold Bridge is substantially complete.

Dennis Gillen

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Tickner's Heath Depot

Here at the depot we have been beavering away producing a replacement bridge for Baldwin's Knob Lock. Timber has been cut to length and where required the ends have been shaped as per the requirements of Kevin Baker's master drawing.

Most of the carpentry work has been done by Mick Jones ably assisted by our own quality controller Richard Powell. Measurements are always double and in some cases, triple checked so that the bridge will fit neatly and precisely into its place on the canal. The next part of the project for us is to make and fit the uprights and handrails together using mortise and tenon joints. The whole structure can then be drilled and bolted together. The plan is to assemble and paint it at the depot, then dismantle the whole thing and transport it to Baldwin's for installation.

John Smith

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Maintenance (South)

This winter's floods provided more water than the River Lox could hold or get rid of, and as a consequence it overflowed, flooded the fields and spilled into the canal in several places. From Loxwood south the river has done substantial damage to the canal towpath.

The car park in Loxwood has seen the worst floods that I can remember and it's been very difficult to get the drainage work done. Currently, we have installed the drainage grid in the gateway, dug and installed three of the four new drainpipes and put the concrete bases into the new inspection pits. Sadly, the Hanix excavator has developed a fuel supply issue and is awaiting a repair. We hope we can keep the old girl going a bit longer, especially as it was nice to meet Mr Clark of E P Clark Ltd the other day who was amazed that after he donated it to the Trust many years ago as a dead unit, it was still going! A fitting testament to the late Dave Kersley who spent many hours rebuilding it. Thanks to Hall & Woodhouse for contributing to the costs of the drainage and to the Canal Centre staff for assisting in manning the pump that keeps the gateway dry.

Kevin Baker

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Boat Maintenance

With *Zachariah Keppel* being up in Chertsey, the main attention of the Maintenance Department has been focused on *Josias Jessop* and *Wiggonholt*. David Nott, our expert diesel engineer, has had JJ's four injectors reconditioned and replaced. It is hoped that this will cure the excessive exhaust smoke. I have had to cancel JJ's proposed slipping to have her hull washed off, primed and painted in black bitumastic due to the regulations on self-isolating. JJ also needs a part of her saloon deck replaced where it is rotten. Unfortunately, that too will have to wait.

In advance of boat crew emergency training we fitted a new arrangement for the escape ladder on *Wiggonholt*. Holes were drilled

for the pins in the foredeck too, so that passengers can be picked up over the bow.

We had a strong team of volunteers to clear out *Wiggonholt's* passenger saloon, patch the rotten areas in her deck, rub down and stain the wooden sides adjacent to the hull and give two coats of pebble-dash floor paint to the deck. Sadly we discovered that most of the deck in the toilet had rotted, and that is yet to be fixed. Ian and I had intended to replace this on March 26th and replace the painted and repaired seats in the cockpit forward. When we do manage this after lockdown we will also put a coat of yacht varnish on the boat hooks and punt pole. We can't risk our crews getting splinters when we do start operations again!

David Arnold

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Boat Group PEST Working Party

Activity in February was principally in the section between Barnsill Bridge and the Slipway. First, the canal from Loxwood to the slipway was cleared of fallen tree debris following storms Dennis and Ciara. We then moved on cutting back overhanging branches from the offside going north from the slipway.

Once this urgent work had been completed we started on the major task of cutting back many years of outgrowth from the offside bank north of the Slipway. The use of power tools in the form of hedge cutters borrowed from the MWWP and the low working platform provided by *May Upton* were essential. Eventually, the bank was exposed and a metre or two of additional canal width was obtained. The team will gradually clear more of this section of the offside bank in the future.

Activity in March was both North and South of the Canal Centre. Heading south, our first task was to clear floating debris from the canal that resulted from the recent floods. Happily most of the larger debris seemed to have been swept away from the canal into the



The winter storms provided the PEST working party with plenty to do.

flooded adjacent fields. With this completed we continued with the major task of cutting back many years of outgrowth from the offside bank north of the slipway. The team hopes to be able gradually to clear more of this section in the coming months.

To the north we again cleared flood debris from the canal and then moved to the 'chicane' north of Devil's Hole Lock. Here we continued clearing outgrowth from the bank which both narrowed the channel and obscured skippers' view of the navigation.

With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic the team considered the government guidelines on social distancing. The nature of our work means that we operate on a boat in close proximity to each other making it impossible to comply with the guidelines. After a poll of our members it was decided that we should suspend operations, even before the Government announcement.

Chris Jones

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Portsmouth & Arundel Canal Bridge threatened

We have received a request from a member of Friends of the Ford to Hunston Canal group who are working to save a feature of the Portsmouth & Arundel Canal in Yapton which is threatened with demolition to make way for a housing development. They ask if any of our members who have information or photographs relating to Burndell Bridge, between the new development at Navigation Drive and Downview Close, could please get in touch with Andrew Saunders at ajsanders007@gmail.com or on Facebook at the Save and Restore Burndell Bridge group.



The threatened Burndell Bridge.



You can't get more locally produced than this willow planter woven from the produce of the osier bed in Hunt Park, now outside the Northern Office.

New till technology set to save time and money

Thanks to the help of member Colin Edwards, the Trust is set to see significant cost savings and efficiencies with the installation of a new electronic point of sale (EPOS) till system.

The system, which makes processing credit card and debit card transactions easier and cheaper, has been put into place at both the Canal Centre and Granary Office to help when taking boat trip bookings and selling merchandise.

Colin reached out to the Trust, offering his help after retiring from Worldpay (Worldpay accepts/processes about half of the credit and debit card transactions accepted in the UK) last January. His experience was too good to pass up and Colin was challenged with looking at the way the Trust was accepting card payments last October.

Colin says: "Early on I was impressed with what the Trust had put together to accept customer transactions but we realised that a number of quick wins and improvements could be made."

After some research Colin recommended a till/EPOS system supplied by Eposnow. It is connected to a PIN pad which connects to Worldpay, who will be processing all the



The system makes taking payments cheaper.

credit and debit card transactions accepted. The system is much easier to use with a large touchscreen and an on-screen help facility.

"The system avoids our volunteers having to re-key customer transactions into a separate card machine. It now works just like the solutions found in places like Sainsbury's, Marks & Spencer and Tesco."

Colin added: "The fantastic thing is that once everything has been implemented and we get back to normality, the Trust will be paying significantly less and gaining so much more than it did with its previous suppliers. We should see payback on the equipment within seven to eight months."

Gift Aid: boost your donations at no extra cost

Most of you kindly allow Gift Aid to be claimed against any donation/membership fee. The Trust claims 25p for every £1 donated, so £5 on the membership fee of £20, for example.

Last year the Trust received about £17,500 from the government at no cost to the individual. The only requirement is that you are a UK income tax payer and pay sufficient tax to cover the amount claimed.

While most members have signed Gift Aid declarations a number have not, this may

$$£1 + \text{gift aid} = £1.25$$

be because you pay no tax or that you pay insufficient tax to cover any donations.

If you do pay income tax, however, and have not signed a Gift Aid declaration then would you consider doing so? It will help the Trust no end, particularly at this time. If you need more information please email tony_tyrell@weyandarun.co.uk for details and a form.

Thank you for supporting the Trust.

Boat group raises funds for third defibrillator

The Trust has added to the number of defibrillators it has available thanks to an appeal among boat group volunteers.

The third defibrillator will be stored in the Canal Centre in Loxwood and taken onboard each boat trip. It joins the machine housed in a cabinet outside the Canal Centre and that used by the Midweek Working Party.

The cost of just under £900 has been met by donations from Boat Group members. Thanks go to Derek Wright for initiating the push and Penny Bridger for organising the purchase.

The group aims to have a machine on each of the trip boats. If you would like to donate to the appeal, go online at <https://weyarun.org.uk/defib-appeal>, or send a cheque made payable to "Wey & Arun Canal Trust" to Defib Appeal, The Granary, Fritchfold Farm, Loxwood RH14 0RH.



Mike Anderson and Brian Crossley

The Trust has learnt of the sad passing of Mike Anderson and Brian Crossley.

Both were longstanding members and volunteers. Mike Anderson had been a member for more than 20 years and was a former Treasurer of trading company W&A Enterprises Ltd, as well as playing a leading role in training skippers and crew. Brian Crossley joined the Trust in 1995 and was a former leader of the Monday Group.

A full tribute to their valuable contributions will feature in the next issue of *Wey-South*.

Trust receives a generous legacy

Peter Anderson of East Molesey, Surrey, died in August 2017 and earlier this year the Trust received a generous legacy of £73,000 from his estate.

He was a longstanding member, having joined the Trust in 1978, and had been a member of the Milestone Club.

Membership Report

Our membership stands at 2,882. We would like to extend a very warm welcome to the following new members.

Roy Allibone
Peter Harrison
Frank Ward

Nigel Cribb
Dave & Sheila Miller

Jon Dane
David & Sheila Pearce

Mike Fellows
Peter Tod

We have learned with regret of the death of:

Martin Thompson
Ian Baldwin
Kevin Crawley

Sonja S Hawkins
Mr J Seller
Derek Hayes

Gunter Severit
Mr R. Ellwood
Mike Anderson

Alan Crouch
Mr D.H.L. Chant
Brian Crossley

For members who pay by standing order, please remember to adjust your standing order to the new rates if you have not already done so. That is £15 for individual and £20 for joint members.

John Tovell
Membership@weyandarun.co.uk



The tranquillity of the canal and its natural beauty provided an uplift for many members on their health walks during the lockdown. Clockwise from top: April showers at Sidney Wood (photo sent in by John Lee); Birtley looking beautiful (photo by Kevin Baker); The hedge springing to life at Brewhurst (photo by Penny Line).





PLAY

THE NUMBERS GAME

WIN

A CASH PRIZE EVERY MONTH

Do you want the chance to win a cash prize every month and benefit the Trust at the same time? If so, the WACT Numbers Game is for you.

The game

- Three prizes are up for grabs each month with a top prize of £100.
- Numbers cost just £3 a month each.
- Numbers are drawn by computer program.
- Winners are notified by email or post. Prize money is paid directly into winners' bank accounts.
- To join up – or add more numbers – email support@weyandarun.co.uk, or call 01483 505566.