

# WEY SOUTH



**Quarterly Magazine of the  
Wey & Arun Canal Trust**  
Issue 197 December 2021/January/February 2022



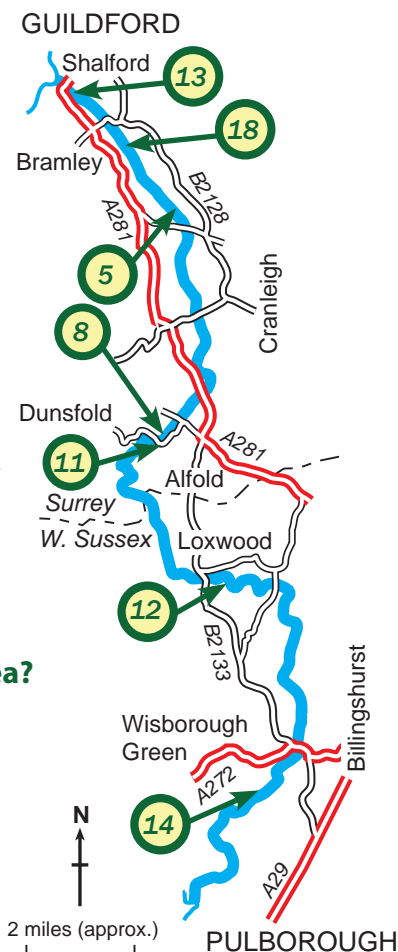
*The latter part of the year proved a busy one for the events team as shows, fetes and markets resumed. One of the highlights was the Surrey Wood Fair, an event celebrating all that is 'good about wood'. Our Drive a Digger attraction was a big hit, with queues across the two-day fair and an emergency run for more diesel when tanks ran low.*

*As well as raising funds through the sale of merchandise and memberships, events help raise our profile and publicise the boat operation. If you would like to be part of the events team in 2022, whether it's meeting the public, organising attendance or towing the Mobile Display Vehicle, please email [support@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:support@weyandarun.co.uk).*



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**Shalford (Northern) Office (Boat trips, Administration, Accounts and Publicity). Visitors by appointment only.**  
**01483 505566 ([support@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:support@weyandarun.co.uk))**  
**Bridge End, Somerswey, Shalford, Guildford GU4 8EQ**

**Wey-South team:**  
**Sue Batey (proofreader), Gill Davies,**  
**David Jessop (proofreader),**  
**Julian Morgan, Peter Winter**  
**(Working Party Roundup)**

**Trust website:**  
**[www.weyandarun.co.uk](http://www.weyandarun.co.uk)**  
**Facebook: [weyandaruncanal](https://www.facebook.com/weyandaruncanal)**  
**Twitter: [@weyandarun](https://twitter.com/weyandarun)**

**Front cover: A new canal route takes shape under the new footbridge at Tickner's Heath Road.**

## News from the Autumn Meeting

Less than three months after our postponed Annual Meeting, it was time for another update to members on plans and progress. At the Autumn Meeting held on October 23rd at North Hall in Loxwood Chairman Sally Schupke announced that on October 13th Waverley Borough Council's Eastern Planning Committee had voted to grant planning permission for the Rushett Farm and Run Common application (see right).

There could still be significant hurdles however. With the likelihood of many planning conditions to work through, there was a lot of work still to be done, "so please don't expect a shovel to go into the ground immediately," Sally added.

The first task of the project will be tree planting, and Sally was pleased to announce the success of a grant application to the Woodland Trust and the International Tree Foundation.

It was a special day too, thanks to the earlier unveiling of the latest addition to the fleet: a Wheelyboat. Members gathered to see the specially-adapted Mk III Wheelyboat named the *Walter Grove* (see page 12).

### Finance

Joint Finance Director Julian Morgan reported a better than expected year thanks to legacies, grants and a successful season of boat trips, particularly special events and charters.

He said the Trust has been in a spending period since 2019 and this year to date has spent more than in the same period in 2020.

While there are funds to complete current projects such as Tickner's Heath, new work is largely unfunded and the cost of work with planning permission granted or applied for will reach at least £5 million. "Beyond 2022 we will have to balance income and spending to stay solvent – it could mean some tricky decisions," he said.

***The Trust's latest addition to its fleet was officially named the *Walter Grove* ahead of the Autumn Meeting in October. The Wheelyboat is fully accessible and will be used on different areas of the canal. "The versatility that this boat offers is something we were looking for," Sally said.***



# Rushett Common and Run Common plans

The application that Waverley Council's Planning Committee voted to approve on October 13th is for 600m of new canal, a bridge, footpaths and landscaping between Run Common Bridge and Rushett Common (Hazel Wood) Bridge, 1.5km south of Shamley Green in Surrey.

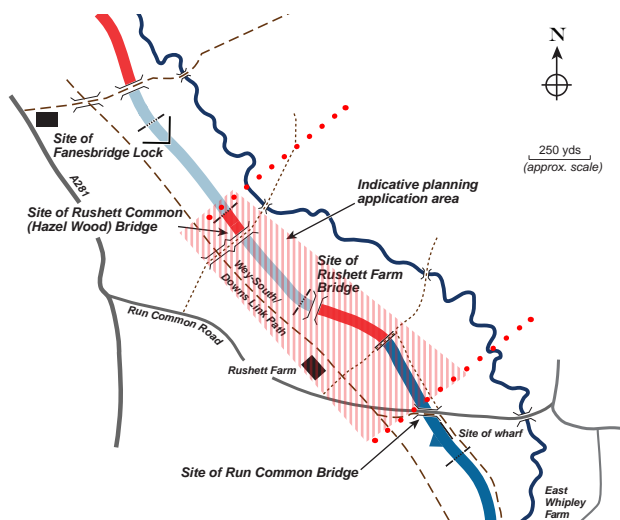
The project includes a new canal alongside the Downs Link, the route of the former railway between Horsham and Guildford, with the path subsequently relocated to the southern side of the canal.

The plans mean the Downs Link will be

retained and improved as a leisure and recreation facility for the future.

The new bridleway will be wider than the existing path and provided with an improved, free-draining surface. The route will also remain open throughout construction work.

The canal will run between the existing bridges, but a new bridge will be constructed at Rushett Farm to carry a farm accommodation track over the new canal. It is likely to be of concrete construction with either a steel or concrete deck.



**When Wey-South went to press, we had not received a Decision Notice from Waverley Borough Council for the Rushett Common application and so it would be premature to consider it as definitely approved.**

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.

**All communications and copy either by post to:**

Wey-South, Wey & Arun Canal Trust  
Bridge End, Somerswey  
Shalford, Guildford  
Surrey  
GU4 8EQ

**Or e-mail to:**

weysouth@weyandarun.co.uk

**Address changes, non-delivery, etc:** please notify the Membership Secretary at the address above or e-mail to:

membership@weyandarun.co.uk

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The Wey-South team always welcomes articles and pictures for possible use in the magazine.

**Issue 197**

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## Getting to grips with the leaks at Long Meadow

**E**WG leader Dennis Gillen updated members at the Autumn Meeting with the latest news from Long Meadow, the 1km stretch between Drungewick Lock and Drungewick Bridge, near Loxwood. It has been out of action for some time after it was discovered the canal was leaking into adjacent fields and while repairs to Drungewick Lock were made.

At the end of 2019 local firm Aquamaintain used electrofishing to remove more than 7,500 fish to safety and allow the canal to be drained and the canal bed to be monitored and investigated.

Dennis has been working with Maintenance Manager Kevin Baker to locate the cause of the leaks and find a solution. "There are about seven areas of leaks and more than 10 old trees that have been cut down and their stumps left in place," Dennis told members. "The stumps' roots have subsequently shrunk and created a perfect route for water to get through to the field," he explained.

The embankment isn't solid clay and so it was decided the best course of action was to line the banks using bentonite sheets.

A team of volunteers has been removing the tree stumps and lining the canal with the specialist matting. The bentonite clay liners contain a layer of sodium bentonite clay crystals sandwiched between a layer of polymer-type hessian and non-woven bonded felt material. When wet the crystals swell, creating a self-sealing waterproof membrane.

While the sheets provide a good seal against leaks, the five-metre wide and 40-metre long sheets weigh in at a ton and a half each, so moving them is a challenge. The sheets are first rolled out and cut into 6.6 metre sections, which are then transported by machine and then rolled out and dragged into place.

Before the sheets are laid, however, vegetation has to be scraped off the bank, roots taken out



and a smooth surface created. A trench is also dug at the top of the bank.

Once the material is laid out it is tucked into the top trench to anchor it and prevent it slipping down the bank, and the whole area is covered with soil and compacted to seal.

Dennis added: "Over time the moisture permeates through the bentonite membrane, which swells the crystals to about six or seven times their normal size and turns them into a gel to create a seal. The other good thing about the bentonite sheeting is that if any sharp stones or roots were to penetrate it, it is self-healing."

EWG hopes to complete the project by mid-December and then work will begin on removing the reeds that have grown up in the canal bed, to allow tripboats to use the section when cruises resume in the spring.

**Left to right and top to bottom: Dennis shows the effect of water on the bentonite sheets; The digger first scrapes the bank; A smooth surface is needed; The sheets have to be cut to size before moving as they are so heavy; Tree roots were found to be the culprits behind the leaks; The sheets are covered with soil and compacted.**



## Volunteers cut new canal channel at Tickner's

Project manager Tony Ford gave a report on work at Tickner's Heath at Alfold, revealing that an application for planning permission for the second stage of the project had just been submitted to Waverley Borough Council.

The footbridge is in place, and timber parapets and decking have been installed by the volunteer workforce. The parapets are at a suitable height for horseriders and cyclists.

Excavation on the north side of the footbridge, towards the existing canal, had begun and the first part of the training walls created, to take the realigned canal under the eventual road bridge. Tony said the next task would be to start on the temporary road diversion to take traffic away from the site of the new road bridge, which sits on the footprint of the existing road. "It is a rather annoying site because we can't do our preferred practice of building a new bridge offline from the existing road and diverting the road across, so we are having to do a temporary diversion."



**Top: The blue covering on the footbridge protects the hardwood decking.**

**Below: Surrey's newest section of canal.**

**Opposite page: The formwork used on the project was hired in specially for the job. It bolts together and is reusable, making it more sustainable and quicker to put together than the usual wood frames made in-house.**



***The new canal bed is reinforced with steel fixings and concrete. The additional piles on the training walls not only have a structural function but ensure those working in the hole have a secure working area.***





*We were lucky enough to welcome several visiting working parties in recent months. The Kent & East Sussex and London Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) teams lent a hand.*

*Volunteers are now continuing with the brickwork along the training walls, alongside starting work on constructing the temporary road diversion.*





## Tickner's Stage 2: the next phase

While it is all systems go on site at Tickner's, it has also been busy behind the scenes as preparations are made for Stage 2.

Tony Ford said that one of the features of this project is that it was on an extensive area of Common Land -- something we generally don't have to deal with. There is significant legislation attached to this status, part of which means the road alignment can't be moved and this has constrained the whole Tickner's Heath design. Common Land consent is now being sought – which isn't a quick business – and a planning application has been lodged with Waverley Borough Council.

The primary feature of the second phase is the extension of the canal cut along the west side of Dunsfold Road, to connect to the existing canal. In doing so, the forest track that leads to Sidney Wood will need to be realigned and a new brick-faced bridge built. The preferred style is an arch shape, which will use the same profile as that at Gennets Bridge.

Tony pointed out that the area is surrounded by rights of way and public footpaths, but to get from one to the other you need to walk along the road. "So we aim to improve this by creating two new paths, a towpath on the north side of the canal, and another which links back to Sachel Court Road which leads to Care Ashore and the Springbok Estate and the rights of way network into Alfold Village - quite an enhancement to the current rights of way provision."

He added that another difficulty of this project is that along the old canal route west of Dunsfold Road the canal falls away and water is retained by an embankment. The stretch has seen no attention since it was built and it leaks.

Tackling this is too big a task in the scale of this work, Tony said, so the Stage 2 work will conclude with a temporary dam and winding hole for tripboats.

Tony said the new cut was quite a detour from the original route but the redundant end of the canal would be filled in to create wetland and an area for replacement tree planting.



***Pictured left to right: Boat crew member Louise Osborne; Head of Boat Group John Reynolds; Wheelyboat Trust director Andy Beadsley; and Ian Hairs, cousin of supporter Peter Grove.***

## Wheelyboat officially named the Walter Grove

**W**ey & Arun Canal Trust members gathered ahead of the Autumn Meeting for the unveiling of the latest addition to the fleet: a Mk III Wheelyboat.

The boat was officially named the *Walter Grove* at a special ceremony in Loxwood on 23rd October and given the traditional spray of fizz to welcome the 17.5ft long wheelchair-accessible boat to the canal. 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, who christened the boat on his behalf.

Up to seven passengers (including a maximum of five wheelchair users) can be accommodated in comfort on the *Walter Grove*. 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 locks, offering another option for boat trips for small groups.

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. Director Andy Beadsley said: "We hope lots of wheelchair users will be able to enjoy life on the canal as much as their able-bodied counterparts, thanks to the new Wheelyboat."

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.

## Shalford Information Point gets its opening ceremony

**M**att Furniss, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure (and local Councillor for Shalford), opened our new information point at Shalford on 18 September.

Matt cut the ribbon on the wheelchair-accessible building, boardwalk and viewing platform, which has been constructed by volunteers and contractors over the course of the past year within Hunt Nature Park.

Matt paid tribute to the Canal Trust team, saying: "[This opening] is a tremendous result. Last year has been difficult for everyone, but the work done by members, volunteers and chairman Sally Schupke has been fantastic because it allows all of us to enjoy their hard work. The towpaths in particular were a lifesaver when we were allowed out for our single piece of daily exercise last year."

The building will play a key role in informing the public about our plans for Bramley and the



**Fran Hodgkinson (David's widow) spoke at the opening. She is seen here with David's son Andrew (left) and Matt Furniss.**

northern end of the canal. It is hoped to offer guided walks from the information point as well as educational visits for schools.

The project was helped by a legacy from long-time supporter David Hodgkinson, and his widow Fran and son Andrew were present.

## John Lewis staff select Trust for £500 award

***The Wey & Arun Canal Trust was the lucky recipient of a £500 donation from John Lewis in Horsham this autumn. Each year the retail group donates to good causes and the award to the Trust was voted for by retail colleagues at the Horsham store.***

***The environment and sustainability award was presented to Canal Centre Manager Lyn Nash by selling partner and Community Matters team member Georgina Shinkawa.***





## Going full circle with restoration at Lordings

Volunteers have been following in the footsteps of restoration pioneer Winston Harwood as they continue restoration at Lordings Lock and Orfold Aqueduct (these are a single structure) and the waterwheel. Here on the Arun Navigation the canal is carried over the river via a three-arched aqueduct, while the waterwheel - powered by the river - lifts the water into the lock. It is the only directly feeding waterwheel on the national waterway network.

Brian King has been spearheading the wheel's current restoration after recent vandalism and deterioration rendered it unworkable, with a grant from a charitable trust funding the project. A mechanical engineer by profession, Brian has carried out much research to find the best way forward, consulting widely and working with fellow volunteer Edward Stratton-Woodward on the design work.

Brian found that the wheel's central support bolts had sheared, so were no longer able to hold and contain the stub shafts and the whole wheel had dropped onto the brick base. After lifting the wheel up, a full assessment of

the damage was undertaken. The solution was to commission a bespoke single stainless steel shaft with associated end flanges to locate and support the wheel. These were manufactured to exact sizing and fixed accurately in place by a specialist engineering contractor. New bearings were also installed to ensure free movement of the wheel.

All the peripheral steelwork had to be painstakingly removed, then brushed up and rejuvenated with a special underwater paint. The stainless steel buckets that move the water also needed rewelding, another specialist task. Brian has also replaced the chute from which water flows into the aqueduct with a Cor-Ten steel equivalent; the previous one made of wood had rotted through. The current rubber seals used to prevent water loss between the buckets and the stone wall have now been removed and replaced with a unique stainless steel lip.

Work also uncovered leaks in the waterwheel chamber wall, which was letting in water from the river into the wheel pit. Kevin Baker set about getting the river down to a level that allowed him to investigate further and then repair the wall by slowly removing the aqueduct's weir boards over four days. The



***A specially designed stainless steel shaft was commissioned, and a replacement chute fitted.***



***Volunteers tackled the training walls at the tail of Lordings Lock, finishing the job before the site became inaccessible.***





***The waterwheel in full operation in previous times.***

weir boards were found to be rotting and so 16 new oak boards were fitted.

Alongside the waterwheel restoration, work has been ongoing on the lock. Last September the team managed to excavate the lower entrance and gate recess areas of the lock

## Volunteer info days attract new talent

**T**he new Shalford Information Point was put to good use recently when it hosted a series of volunteer info days.

Bill Nicholson co-ordinated the three events, which had the aim of attracting more volunteers to our Boat Group, Canal Centre, Mobile Display Vehicle and working parties, where more help was needed.

Interested parties got to hear about the Trust's plans for the future as well as the difference their volunteering can make, with a decent number signing up for various groups. Existing volunteers were on hand to relate their experiences, why they enjoy volunteering, and what they get from it.

Those interested in joining our Boat Group were invited to join a taster trip before embarking on training in the spring.

and found extensive damage to the end of the entrance walls. Enter the volunteer bricklayers who managed to complete the job before the weather turned.

Working on the Lordings section in the latter part of the year really is a race against time, as when the weather deteriorates and water levels rise accessing the site and getting machinery there becomes just too difficult as surrounding fields flood.

Work is now on hold until the better weather in the spring, but Brian and Kevin are both happy with the progress made. "I am so pleased to be able to work on this project," says Brian. "I've been intrigued by this waterwheel since I first saw it five years ago. I'm very keen to get it operating again so as to show everyone how it works. It is a wonderful asset for the Wey & Arun Canal."



## To divert or not to divert

A member (Eric Brough of Shalford) has commented that, when planning some recent schemes to re-establish the canal, the Canal Trust has been too ready to propose diversions to the original route. He thinks that we are proposing diversions as an easier alternative to working with the landowners who control the canal route, so 'taking the easy way out'.

Our board welcomes debate on this subject or any canal-related topic. We always present proposed schemes in detail at a General Meeting where all members are welcome – and we always invite questions. We report everything presented at a meeting in the next issue of *Wey-South*, although not usually in as much detail as the presentation.

If members would like more detail on any proposals they only have to ask. (If possible ask the appropriate project manager, but if you don't know who it is, send an e-mail to support@weyandarun.co.uk.) "Letters to the Editor" are welcome as well – if your 'letter' is actually an e-mail it's fine.

Developing a proposal for re-establishing the canal always means looking at a wide range of options. In principle we prefer to use the original route wherever possible. But members will know there are some sections where using the original route is really impossible because houses and gardens have been built on it.

In other cases using the original route is just not feasible, for example at Tickner's Heath where a busy road crosses the canal very near to the water level and on a sharp bend. The only way to use the original route would be to raise the road level considerably. A humpback-type bridge would not be allowed for road safety reasons. Engineering the road crossing to meet safety standards would be extremely expensive and would encroach on neighbouring properties.

Our engineers are extremely thorough and explore every practical option. But they have to consider factors including cost, engineering feasibility, ecology and access to land.

Environment Agency rules severely constrain what will be allowed in a flood plain. We have been very successful in patiently persuading landowners to grant access to the canal route (preferably via a lease or sale), but there are sections where we have tried this approach but have been unsuccessful – it could take a number of generations. We are very careful to respect the privacy of landowners and neighbours. We do not discuss negotiations in public. We do our best to maintain contact with landowners.

We are by no means unique in proposing diversions to overcome obstacles. They feature on the Huddersfield, Lichfield and Cotswold Canals, among others.

The board doesn't have evidence that many members oppose the idea of diverting away from the original route where necessary. Members consistently tell the board that they want to see physical progress on re-establishing the canal. The board would like to put forward a vision for achieving as much continuous canal route as possible, and within a realistic number of years. Remember that in the 1970s the original enthusiasts thought that the whole Wey & Arun Canal could be restored in 5-10 years. 50 years on, we understand the challenges much better. Unless we seriously want to admit there are sections that will **never** be restored, we feel we must look closely at diverting around some of the blockages.

But your comments are welcome.

## Walking on Heritage Open Days

Heritage Open Days in England were established in 1994 as part of an international initiative of 50 signatory nations to the European Cultural Convention. The wide range of free events offered has been described as 'The country's largest community heritage festival', its purpose being to raise appreciation of Europe's rich and diverse cultural assets and their need for care and protection. In many cases this results in throwing open the doors of historic monuments and buildings, particularly those normally closed to the public.

At present there is no historic building in WACT ownership, but there is scope for access to land owned by the Trust, an opportunity we have offered to the public on a Heritage Open Day each year for the past 10 years.

At the outset Surrey County Council's gift of land forming the Hunt Nature Park granted the chance for residents and visitors to use the riverside footpath created by the Trust as part of a guided walk between Shalford and Bramley, during which surviving structures of the canal were highlighted and explained. In intermediate years and following the approval of a private landowner, it proved possible to visit another structure surviving from construction of the canal otherwise hidden, via a circular walk at Shamley Green.

Today the opportunities for special access to parts of the canal long isolated from public paths have been greatly increased by WACT's purchase of land located between the former railway bridge on the Downs Link path at Birtley and the Greensand Way/Bridleway 270 which leads east towards Shamley Green from the A281 at Rooks Hill Farm.

Hence on the afternoon of Sunday 19 September – the final day of Heritage Open Days 2021 – visitors gathered at Birtley Courtyard for a circular walk taking in the towpath of the Birtley reach and onwards along the canal's former alignment through meadow

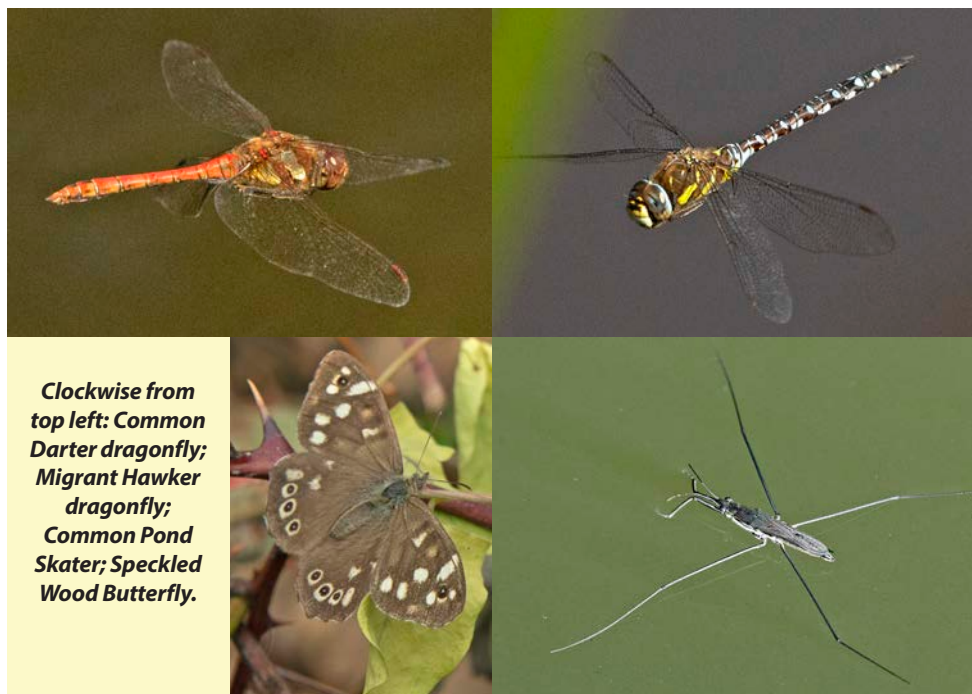


to the right turn towards the Downs Link path at the Greensand Way. A morning of heavy rain put off a few, but a good number of walkers turned out, with four WACT trustees acting as guides/back markers to two groups. As most were viewing the otherwise 'hidden' canal for the first time, keen interest in its history and restoration was expressed.

In publicising the walk WACT was greatly assisted by its inclusion in Guildford Walkfest, which spans September each year, as well as the list of Heritage Open Days events published by Guildford Borough Council. Out of 48 events offered by Walkfest in 2021 ours was runner-up in hosting 28 participants. Thanks go to Bill Nicholson, Julian Morgan and Giles Eyre for helping to impart the history of the canal.

**Alan Johnson**  
*Technical Liaison Officer*

*Photographs by Stephen Batey.*



***Clockwise from top left: Common Darter dragonfly; Migrant Hawker dragonfly; Common Pond Skater; Speckled Wood Butterfly.***

## A late flurry of insects after a poor start to summer

**I**t was an extraordinary end to the summer on the canal as dragonflies and butterflies made up for lost time after poor weather earlier in the season. As late as the last week of October, dragonflies could still be seen flying around the canal banks, sometimes in mating pairs.

The navigable section of canal between Devil's Hole Lock and Southland Lock was a favourite area in September. There were often remarkable numbers of Southern Hawkers visible at the same time.

When the sun shines, dragonflies are on constant patrol, swooping over the water as they hunt for smaller insects to eat. This makes them difficult photo subjects as they rarely settle long enough for a clear shot. Capturing dragonflies in flight is a rewarding technical challenge. Common Darters are not so shy and will often sit obligingly for close-up shots.

Boat crew are familiar with the illusion that it is raining a short distance in front of the boat. This is caused by large groups of skimming insects such as Common Pond Skaters. You don't have to go far to find them (they are often right in front of the Loxwood Canal Centre) but to get a good shot is more difficult than it seems; they are highly sensitive to movement and leap away as soon as they come into the viewfinder. Also their bodies are tiny in comparison with their massively long legs.

On the whole it was a poor summer for butterflies, although some species did much better than others. The Speckled Wood butterfly is supposed to have benefitted from climate change and expanded its range, becoming common in our area, but this year's sightings have been quite rare.

Some countries have 'climate' but here in the UK we have 'weather', meaning every year on the canal can be different from the one before.

***Julian Morgan***

## Ash dieback forces major tree work at Loxwood

As most members will be aware, native ash trees in Britain have been devastated by ash dieback disease, and those growing along the canal are no exception.

It is forecast that the disease, caused by a fungus imported from Asia, will kill about 80% of ash trees across the UK, and both young and mature trees are affected.

Dying and dead trees can pose a risk to the public and canal users as their branches become brittle and trunks pappy, making them unstable, so the Trust brought in an arboricultural expert to survey the Loxwood stretch to identify those trees suffering from ash dieback and create a plan for their safe removal.

Independent tree consultant Mark Welby inspected the canal from Barnsill Bridge to Gennets Bridge and has provided us with a comprehensive guide to the condition of trees in that area.

As a result all ash trees that appear to be in decline as a result of ash dieback have been identified for removal over a three-year period. Those that appear to be healthy will be left in the hope some may have a degree of

resistance as a small percentage of ash trees will be tolerant to the disease.

A tree felling licence has been obtained from the Forestry Commission and over the coming months Trust volunteers and contractors will be carrying out the remedial work needed.

### Ash dieback symptoms:

- Leaves develop dark patches in the summer.
- They then wilt and discolour to black. Leaves might shed early.
- Dieback of the shoots and leaves is visible in the summer.
- Lesions develop where branches meet the trunk. These are often diamond-shaped and dark brown.
- Inner bark looks brownish-grey under the lesions.
- New growth from previously dormant buds further down the trunk. This is known as epicormic growth and is a common response to stress in trees.

Source: Woodland Trust

***These trees previously felled along the canal show the telltale signs of ash dieback. A three-year programme to remove diseased trees will soon begin at Loxwood.***





## Welcome aboard

*Becoming a boat crew member involves commitment and training and we are delighted that eight volunteers have recently completed the internal qualification required to join our crew on tripboats, while three new skippers are nearing the end of their training.*

*Boat crew are placed under the guidance of a experienced mentor to learn how to operate locks, handle ropes and ensure passenger safety in a two-part procedure that culminates in an assessment by one of our experienced volunteers.*

*For skippers the training is longer, typically involving four or five six-hour sessions and covering not only boat handling but also administration, fire safety, first aid and water safety. A medical is also required before an MCA Boatmaster's Licence can be granted.*

*Here Steve Prebble (top and right) and Mike Edwards (centre) are showing off the skills they have learned ahead of an assessment by Head of Boat Group John Reynolds and skipper Ken Broomfield.*





*Wiggonholt heading back to Loxwood from Southland in September, when most trips went north from the Canal Centre.*



*Top and above: Wiggonholt looking smart ahead of a special invitation cruise to Southland.*

## A different approach

*Three years ago a scorching summer and drought brought a halt to summer boat trips in Loxwood. While most of this summer was meteorologically unremarkable, September was the second warmest on record for the UK and rainfall was below average for the month. This had an impact on water levels in the canal.*

*Usually water is extracted from the nearby River Lox and the River Arun at Drungewick, but with water levels low in the river and Drungewick drained for maintenance the decision was taken to change the course of most boat trips and head north to Southland.*

*The move meant a pleasant change of scenery for crew and passengers.*

*As summer drew to a close, attention turned to Halloween with the special trips proving a sellout. Tickets for Santa Cruises were also in demand, with most seats sold out by the beginning of November.*

## Tripboats given their annual health check

*The annual inspection of our tripboats dawned at the beginning of November, when the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) carry out the inspection needed to grant us a passenger certificate. This year it was Wiggonholt's turn to be taken to dry land, facilitated by the Trust's heavy machinery. The move out of the water to the slipway at Drungewick provided the opportunity for volunteers to give the areas normally under water two coats of protective black bitumastic paint.*

*Surveyor Vlad Chorbazhiev of HMS Surveys was contracted to carry out an ultrasound test of the hull to determine its thickness, under the supervision of the MCA's Rob Shaw. Thankfully, the results were positive.*

*Once all the on-land checks had been made, WH was put back into the water in order to demonstrate person overboard and evacuation drills, as well as for Rob to observe how the boat handles. ZK, which last year underwent extensive repairs, was also assessed, with just a few minor actions needed.*



**Right: Ken Broomfield prepares WH for its inspection. Below: The experts consult.**





*John was presented with a map of the Cheshire Ring by Tom Close on behalf of the team.*

## The end of the Empringham era for Monday Group

The first working party of the week may have various guises – Keeping Up Appearances, The Mrs Bucket Group, or simply the Monday Group – but one thing has been constant for the past 16 years: its leader John Empringham.

Now that is about to change as John is stepping down, taking a back seat in the group to allow new hands to run the weekly sessions where tidying up the public areas of the canal are the order of the day.

His longevity in the role is illustrated by the fact he is just the second Monday Group leader, having taken over from its founder Brian Crossley in 2005.

The group were lucky to have him – when John began looking for volunteering jobs after working abroad he had thought he would join the National Trust. However, already a canal fan, a recruitment tent at an IWA event caught his attention and so the stately homes of Surrey and Sussex lost out and John instead trained as a skipper (with Finance Director Julian Morgan no less). “Restoring a canal sounded much more exciting,” John says.

He almost joined the Midweek Working Party (but couldn’t find them) so it was that the Monday Group became his working party of choice, where he has remained for more than a decade. Things have changed somewhat since the initial days back in 2003, he recalls. “As more parts of the canal get finished we have more work to do,” John laughs. “But it is good to see things looked after. The public appreciate the work we do.”

Meeting the public is one of the things John has enjoyed about his role, as is the exercise it provided – “there’s no need for the gym”- and the friendship of other members of the group.

“I have absolutely enjoyed my time with the group. I’ve had some brilliant members in the team and met a huge variety of people,” he says.

The esteem in which John is held was proved by the sendoff he was given, with members past and present treating him to a celebratory lunch and a framed print and plaque.

John will still be showing his face once in a while, but he’s happy to take a break and leave the group in the capable hands of Tom Close and Margaret Darvill.

## Working Party Roundup

**I**t seems that we have been settling into a new normal, with regular boat trips and charters as well as our work parties being out every week. Vegetation became an increasing challenge for many of the teams, although Kev Baker did manage to acquire a new mower that promises to be a great asset.

As summer drew to a close it was the end of an era for the Mrs Bucket Group with the retirement of John Empringham. We wish him well and welcome Tom Close to the role.

While the Trust's own work parties make steady progress, the impact from visiting groups is most welcome.

**Peter Winter**

***peter\_winter@weyandarun.co.uk***

### Monday Group

**I**n the late summer, 'keeping up appearances' was undertaken at Compasses (a major job), Tickner's, Gennets Bridge, Southland (twice), Devil's Hole (twice), Loxwood (twice), Drungewick Aqueduct, and Drungewick Lock including widening the towpath to four metres all the way from the road bridge to the lock. A new information post was also installed at Drungewick.

A lot of attention was given to Loxwood during September, clearing the ditch and culvert in the overflow car park, attention to the garden around the Canal Centre, litter picking and the usual mowing and strimming. The group also made a second visit to Malham, with much brush cutting and clearance needed. An overdue visit was made to Newbridge, while Southland and Devil's Hole Locks received our ministrations too.

September 27th was an all-change day for the Monday Group. After more than 16 years as leader, John Empringham has handed leadership to Tom Close who will work closely with Margaret Darvill and her MWWP to maximise maintenance effort. John has been a most inspiring leader and I can say



***Sidney Wood before and after the Monday Group treatment.***



from personal experience it has always been a pleasure to work with him. This sentiment is reflected in the continuance of the group and the 'staying power' of the volunteers against a background of many volunteering opportunities in the wider world. We wish him well in his 'retirement' and expect to see him as a member of the group in the future.

In October Gennets, Devil's Hole, Brewhurst and Baldwin's Knob Locks were all visited. The Tickner's triangle and roadside as far as the bridge work site were cut and a start made in Sidney Wood. The Group made two visits, starting at the Firtree Copse end, and have got as far as the first bend. It is quite likely that three more visits will be required.

**Nick Wood**

***mondagroup@weyandarun.co.uk***

**The PEST Group in action  
keeping the canal clear.**



## Boat Group PEST

Nature provided the team with plenty of work. Both vegetation on the banks and reeds in the water were encroaching on the navigation, so to fight this we sent work parties both north and south.

Around Southland Lock vegetation was cut back from the banks from the winding hole back to the lock in preparation for the Special Invitation boat trips and charters. To the south, the workboat *Wasp* was used for the first time, towed by *Josias Jessop* so that a team could set to work reducing the growth of reeds in the narrow section before the Drungewick slipway. Subsequently we tidied up the bank opposite the Canal Centre around the boat moorings which had been neglected for some time.

In October we set off on *May Upton* to look at reported problems with the bottom gates at BKL and to remove logs, branches and general debris in the cut below the lock. Going down through BKL we could barely start to open the offside bottom gate. We estimated that there was about 600mm depth of twig clusters in the chamber. Eventually both gates were freed completely.

Work is continuing to prepare the workboat *Wasp* for use by the PEST team.

**Chris Jones**

**[chris\\_jones@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:chris_jones@weyandarun.co.uk)**

## Boat Maintenance

In sunshine, squalls and showers, *Wiggonholt's* repainting was completed. Some of the green paint assumed a hammered finish as the rain got to it before it dried properly, but she now looks very smart.

All 18 of the saloon tables have been scraped, sanded, stained and varnished, with 12 four-person tables in place plus three square-ended ones for serving and three spares stowed under them.

On *Wiggonholt* all battery terminals except one have been disconnected, cleaned and reconnected during the summer. The exception was the main outlet terminal on the port battery which was so badly corroded as to impede the conduction of electricity and thus slow the boat. Brian Hewson estimated this as a two-day job, and we had to wait until *WH* was not carrying passengers to tackle it. *WH* is somewhat sprightlier in response to the throttle than heretofore. She was moved to the slipway on November 1st where the hull was washed off and painted and the ultrasonic bottom survey was carried out in the presence of the MCA surveyor.

Our attention turned to *Josias Jessop* where the for'd bilge pump's automatic switch had failed. This was replaced with a new one and the entire area cleaned and painted with black



***A new seat for JJ  
underway in David  
Arnold's workshop.***

bitumastic. The seat had rotted and a new one was cut out of the old wooden tables that were taken off *Zachariah Keppel*.

*JJ* is now being chartered regularly for family parties and has been withdrawn from PEST duties except as an occasional tug. We have touched up the inside paintwork, filled cracks in the seats and painted over the fillings, cleared and tested both bilge pumps and tightened up the leaking shaft seal so work on her is now completed for the year.

Various bits of tidying-up work have been done on *Zachariah Keppel* including painting the after door green and fireproofing the engine room. Ian has fitted vertical poles by the starboard side entrance to assist passengers when they use the steps there, which can be a little difficult. *ZK* is now ready for her afloat survey in November.

***David Arnold***  
***david\_arnold@weyandarun.co.uk***

## **Midweek Working Party**

**M**WWP has had good numbers out each week, sometimes more than 30. We have completed the work at Rye Farm to clear the base of the canal and it is now ready for the planning application to be submitted when the ecologist has completed her report. As this part had not been cleared for over 10 years there was a huge amount of work to do.

Much work was also achieved in Hunt Park in preparation for the opening of the Shalford Information Point. As well as vegetation clearance, work has been done inside the building on shelving and security. As there is still a great deal of vegetation growth, this will be an ongoing job.

Northlands Farm is another area where very little has been done in the past 10 years. Many large branches have been cleared from the water and it was looking beautiful, but unfortunately winds brought down another large tree which we will need to clear. The area has been so flooded that no more work can occur until next year.

A group in the south has been working their way from Toat to Cook's Bridge. The work has included brushcutting and strimming the extreme growth we have had this year and burning a huge number of logs that have come downstream in the winter rains.

The next group have been taking ash trees down on the towpath from Lee Place (Harsfold) Bridge to Haybarn. The landowner has obtained a felling licence and we are either building hibernacula or burning the brushwood and unsuitable logs. We will be planting small whips to replace the trees lost.

More recently a small group cleared the footpath at Gosden Meadow and near the noticeboard at Gosden Aqueduct. Work has also been done at Rooks Hill and Fanesbridge, clearing the new growth and timber that has fallen over the year. We had a group just inside Dunsfold airfield clearing the towpath and taking trees out of the canal, and two more groups clearing the towpath and cutting the hedge at Haybarn and Lee Farm Bridge – a long job due to excessive growth this year. Another group has been working from Cook's Bridge to Pallingham Quay, clearing the new growth and any logs that have come down the canal because of the strength of the water.

***Margaret Darvill***  
***margaret\_darvill@weyandarun.co.uk***

***The EWG turned their attentions to repairing leaks at Drungewick. How to manoeuvre the very weighty Bentomat sheets posed a challenge.***



## **Eric Walker Group**

**W**e have now completed the repairs to the towpath between Lee Place (Harsfold) Bridge and Big Bend. We received dozens of compliments from passing walkers and positive support from the landowners. The towpath is now in excellent shape following multiple lorry loads of material being spread and then topped off with limestone. With the new weir in place, this section is much better placed to deal with the impact of weather and associated flooding.

The setup at Lee Place was wound down, so that the group could concentrate on repairing the leaks in the stretch of canal from Drungewick Lock to Drungewick Bridge. Most of the leaks were occurring where trees have been previously felled leaving the stumps in place, and the water is finding its way along the roots which have shrunk.

Once the trunks and roots have been removed, the operation involves stripping the clay from the bank, laying Bentonite matting and covering the membrane with clay to create a seal. Fortunately we had three-and-a-half rolls of Bentomat at Tickner's Depot. In total there were seven areas where leaks were identified and almost 1,000sq m of Bentonite was laid.

**Dennis Gillen**  
[dennis\\_gillen@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:dennis_gillen@weyandarun.co.uk)

## **Canal Maintenance Unit**

**T**he maintenance team has been busy as usual with repairs and general work. But first the subject of grass! As the Trust acquires more sections of canal, so the need for mowing increases. With that in mind, we acquired a secondhand Ferris Flail, which has proved more than fit for purpose. Over three miles of towpath were cut in a single day; that equates to about 8 miles of cutting and, yes, my legs ached the next day!

Elsewhere we made and fitted some stop planks to Lee Farm (Middle) Lock which with a very heavy rainfall overnight filled the Lordings to Lee Farm section to the exact level of the new weir at Lee Place. This gave a perfect opportunity to look at the levels throughout the section. There was a minor overflowing at Haybarn (two places where we have already put in some 15 tons of material) but other than that the banks were holding the water, which is great after the work of EWG/CMU on the section. Another lorry load will fill the low spots.

The team moved to Lordings for the late summer where we have been busy with further refurbishment work on the lock and aqueduct while providing First Aid cover to the waterwheel team and ensuring no-one was left on their own while on site. Brian King has masterminded the waterwheel repairs and



**New boards were needed at the weir at Lordings waterwheel.**

he raised concerns about the significant leak through the wall from the river into the wheel pit where it was found that the weir was in a terrible state and that the boards were rotting through. A quick call to our friendly sawmill owner saw 16 new oak boards made and then we fitted them before applying wood shavings to seal them. It was not an easy task to lower the thick beams down a slot from above.

While in the culverts under the aqueduct minor repairs were made to the brickwork and the source of the leak to/from the aqueduct was identified as the joint between the two halves of the culvert from the waterwheel. This can be fixed in the fullness of time, weather permitting access to the culverts.

In October the weather threw a deluge of water into the Arun Valley, causing flooding that exceeded anything I've seen in recent years, but we finally completed the repairs to the training walls at the tail of Lordings Lock and made a good start on clearing the site ready for the winter. The lock itself remains to be excavated, but that can wait until the spring.

As always team co-operation between CMU, EWG and the waterwheel team has produced some fantastic results in the area, and I have to say a big thank you to JJ Price for turning up day in, day out to lay brick after brick on a wall that has been a challenge due to the damage done to it in the past.

**The training walls taking shape at Tickner's Heath.**



The team will now turn its attention to winter maintenance around Loxwood and the navigable sections.

**Kev Baker**  
[kevin\\_baker@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:kevin_baker@weyandarun.co.uk)

## Northern Working Party

**I**n August and September our work has been exclusively on our main project at Tickner's Crossing. During August, work on the footbridge was completed – comprising the remaining decking, the handrails and the brickwork. This still leaves the ramps to construct. Some material for the eastern ramp has been put in place, but the western ramp won't be built yet as it would restrict the site access.

Also during the month, the area of the proposed bridge forebay was excavated down to base level and the extracted material placed into the section of canal that will become redundant once the new route is complete. This will be transformed into a nature conservation area with some of the old canal retained for water-based ecology. Later in August a blinding layer of concrete was put in place ready for the main base slab to be shuttered and cast.

September saw a mass of activity. Volunteers have worked in support of Dave Evans and Adam Rayner on Mondays, Tuesdays and



***The NWPG returned to finish work on Birtley Bridge in October. There are now just a few small sections of fence wire to reinstate before the circular walk can be opened.***

Thursdays of each week, plus the 1st and 3rd Saturdays. Now that volunteers can once again sleep on village hall floors, the KESCRG group made a welcome return for a weekend with over 14 volunteers attending. This is KESCRG's second visit this summer and, as per the first, they achieved a tremendous amount.

Work completed during the month included pouring the main concrete base sections of the forebay/approach channel, setting up the hired shuttering panels and steel supports for the side training walls, steel fixing and shuttering for the wall extension, erecting scaffolding prior to pouring the ready-mix concrete and removing the scaffolding and shuttering.

In October the scaffolding was re-erected to allow the brickies to start work on the brick facing above the waterline. Additional brickwork is also being progressed on the southern footbridge abutment to accommodate the water main that crosses the bridge in a slightly different position than had been envisaged!

Work also started on the temporary road that will take traffic along Dunsfold Road to the south of the existing road when the main bridge is built. A 22-tonne digger together with the Trust's 13-tonne machine are working

in harmony to remove large quantities of clay which are being taken away in tipper trucks. Once complete, the excavation will be filled with an estimated 65 lorry loads of hardcore and compacted prior to the top surface being laid. Connections back onto the highway await completion of the formal Section 278 agreement with Surrey County Council.

London Waterway Recovery Group joined us for two days at the end of the month, erecting the tricky curved shuttering formwork that will enable the last section of wall on the north side of the forebay to be poured.

On the same weekend the Newbury Working Party returned to Birtley to complete the final works before the Trust can open its circular footpath route. A team of 10 installed three new gates and railings on the bridge approach ramps as well as providing a level surface to enable safe use of the bridge. The hired-in three-tonne digger crossed the bridge a number of times, which proved its strength! What the team did learn was that working on the Downs Link to install the pedestrian gate was not easy – a warning to us for when we start work in earnest in this area over the coming years.

**Bill Nicholson**  
[bill\\_nicholson@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:bill_nicholson@weyandarun.co.uk)

# Christmas Draw tickets still available to buy

It's not too late to buy your Christmas draw tickets, which this year are available online as well as in traditional paper form.

You can enter at [www.weyarun.org.uk/raffle2021](http://www.weyarun.org.uk/raffle2021) until the closing date of January 18th or return paper counterfoils by post with a cheque made payable to Wey & Arun Canal Trust.

## Volunteer Opportunities

We are looking to fill some gaps in our back-office and management teams. Since the loss of Tony Tyrrell last year, we have not had anyone to organise our membership meetings - normally two a year, in April and October.

Could you help? The tasks needed for a meeting include booking a hall and liaising with the hall management to make sure that everything we need is in place. On the day of the meeting you would need to be present and work with the Chairman and colleagues to make sure things go smoothly.

Another gap we have needs one or more people with Health & Safety experience, ideally relating to construction and similar work. You need to be comfortable with Risk Assessments and similar requirements. As well as working at a desk, you will need to go to work sites and become familiar with how our teams approach jobs.

To find out more please contact [chairman@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:chairman@weyandarun.co.uk).

## Membership Report

Our Mobile Display Vehicle attended various events over the summer, and this helped to bring on board another 59 new members in the last quarter, taking our total membership to 2,941. We would like to extend a very warm welcome to the following new members.

Richard Adams	James & Victoria Bailey	David & Mary Barton	Chris & Krissy Bell
Judith & Steve Bell	David Bennett	Fiona & Jonathan Bishop	Philip Blanch
John Carr-Jones	Mike Carvil	Eric Clark	Stuart Cleevly
Catherine Day	Helen Earnell	Jamie & Sally Eason	Kathy English
Simon Evans	Adrian & Sarah Foster	Chris Gledhill	Barbara & Mike Goolding
Jonathan Hill	Caroline & Simon Hodge	Andrew Holdaway	Jane Hooper
Trevor Ingman	Wendy Ireland	Jane Makepeace	Guy Morton
Debby & Trevor Porter	Gazidden Qazi	Julie & Neil Sadle	Jennifer & John Standish
Christopher Starr	Jonathan Startin	Ashley Steer	Frances & Nate Tauzer
Dennis & Shirlene Taylor	Bruce Thirkettle	Peter Waller	Janice Weaver
Greg Wheeler	Ruth Wilkinson	Meint Wouda	Nigel Wright
Kevin Young			

We have learned with regret of the death of:

Bill Eccleston	Mrs G. Chamberlain	Mr D. Dudman	Colin Dymott
Martin Adams	Sheila Bryden	David Barrell	Richard Drysdale
Mence Wilkinson	Maurice Watts	Michael Elgie	Jane Hedgeland
Ian Jenkinson	Tim Kelly	Rosalyn Turner	

For members currently paying by cheque, please can you consider changing to payment by standing order or direct debit? It would help reduce our administrative costs and effort.

**John Tovell**  
[membership@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:membership@weyandarun.co.uk)



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

***In 2020 boat group volunteers raised funds to purchase an AED to take out on public cruises, and have now added a second for times when several boats are out at once.***

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

***Thanks go to St John Ambulance First Aid trainer and Trust member Penny Bridger, who provides training for skippers on a volunteer basis. Penny arranged with WEL Medical Ltd of Farnborough to supply the AEDs at a favourable charity price.***



# YOUR WILL COULD MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE

**LEGACIES MEAN FASTER PROGRESS  
ON MAJOR CANAL PROJECTS**



Removing blockages on the canal route is an expensive business. At Loxwood High Street in Sussex, Tickner's Heath in Surrey and in many other places, legacy funding has opened the way to exciting progress. A gift in your will ensure our future successes and a faster pace of change.

**[weyarun.org.uk/donations](http://weyarun.org.uk/donations)**



## HAVE YOU MADE YOUR WILL?

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*Making a will ensures that your money and property go to people and organisations you choose to support, with no uncertainty for those you leave behind. Leaving a financial gift to the Trust will help secure the projects that are needed to complete the canal's restoration, bringing back the link with the UK's inland waterway network and London's lost route to the sea.*

*If you have already made a will and would like to include the Trust as a beneficiary, a simple codicil (amendment) can be added. A form can be downloaded from the Donations page of our website, [weyarun.org.uk/donations](http://weyarun.org.uk/donations), or please e-mail [legacies@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:legacies@weyandarun.co.uk) or call 01483 505566.*

## INHERITANCE TAX CAN BE REDUCED

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*Leaving charitable gifts in your will can help you to reduce the value of your estate liable for Inheritance Tax as charitable bequests are tax-exempt, so a gift to the Wey & Arun Canal Trust could reduce the amount to be paid after your death.*

## ASK FOR A DONATION IN LIEU OF FLOWERS

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*Floral wreaths last just days, but can be replaced with a longer-lasting tribute to a loved one. Asking friends and relatives to make a donation to the Trust in lieu of flowers supports an enterprise intended to last hundreds of years.*

Find out more at [weyarun.org.uk/donations](http://weyarun.org.uk/donations)  
or write in confidence to: Legacies, WACT Northern Office, Bridge End,  
Somerswey, Shalford, Guildford, Surrey GU4 8EQ  
E-mail: [legacies@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:legacies@weyandarun.co.uk) Tel: 01483 505566  
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