

WEY & ARUN



Quarterly Magazine of the
Wey & Arun Canal Trust

Issue 204 September | October | November 2023

The Quarterly Magazine of
The Wey & Arun Canal Trust

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The Wey & Arun Canal Trust is dedicated to restoring the former inland waterway route between the River Wey and the River Arun and to conserving and improving it for the benefit of everyone.

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

Issue 204

September | October | November 2023

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***Front cover: Our Midweek Working Party Canoe Group
seen through Southland Lock gates in early July.***

NEWS

Gennets Farm

We are delighted to announce that we have purchased another section of canal. This is the Gennets Farm section near Loxwood, south of Gennets Bridge Lock. With the Bonfire Hanger length that we acquired earlier this year and the section including the lock itself that we already owned, a continuous length of about 1.5km/1 mile is now in our ownership here. *(See page 4)*

Birtley Bridges

Our teams are continuing to prepare for installation of two lifting bridges later this year. At Bridge 1 (further south), the temporary fixed deck has been removed and a temporary footbridge is in place so that local people can still use the popular circular walk. At Bridge 2 the temporary dam north of the bridge has been removed. *(See page 10)*

Loxwood pumps and water levels

The malicious damage to pump control equipment at Loxwood in early April, as well as the dry weather, meant that all boat trips had to be suspended from mid-July. Our board has approved plans to 'build back better' and install upgraded equipment that will allow us to manage the water levels more efficiently. We expect this work to be complete by early 2024. The total cost will be in the region of £100,000. We are very grateful to everyone who contributed to our emergency appeal which raised over £50,000. *(See page 8)*

Brewhurst canoe landing stage

Small boat and paddleboard users will highly appreciate the new landing stage that we have just installed above Brewhurst Lock in Loxwood. Thanks to this landing stage and the ones installed by the week-long volunteer work camp in 2022, the canal route is now more paddler-friendly both north and south of the Canal Centre. *(For more about canoeing at Loxwood and a consumer test by our Midweek Working Party see page 16)*

Poddle

Our 50th anniversary Poddle (sponsored walk) from Petworth on 4th June was very successful and attracted more walkers than in 2022. Margaret Darvill has been the organiser since 2014 and has now retired from this job. We are very pleased that volunteers have come forward to take Margaret's place and organise the 2024 walk. *(See pages 11 and 14)*

Autumn Meeting - save the date

Please keep 28 October free for a celebration of our 50th anniversary at Bramley. Starting at 3.30pm there will be a tea at the Village Hall to which all members are invited. Please book via our website or the Northern Office **by 19th October at the latest** so that we know how many to expect. There is no charge but donations (by cash or card) will be welcome on the day. After the tea there will be a short update on progress and current projects – there will not be a formal meeting. Earlier in the afternoon there will be an event at Birtley (about 1 mile south of the Village Hall) where we are hopeful that the new lifting bridges will be in place. The exact details of the Birtley event will be announced by early September. *(See page 6 for directions to Bramley Village Hall)*

NEWS

QR Codes by canal sites

We have put Infoposts at various places up and down the canal. The latest versions include a QR code that you can scan with your phone to see more information, but until recently this was only some general historical material about the canal. Now thanks to hard work by Gordon Powell and Ashley Bowen you should see something specific to the site where you are. We hope to build further on this to grab the interest of the many walkers along our canal banks.

New calendar and Christmas cards available

Please see the flyer enclosed with this issue of Wey-South for details of our brand-new 2024 calendar and new Christmas card design. Please help us by buying lots of both.

Movement for Good - £1000 grant from Benefact

Back in March this year we asked you to nominate us for a possible share of a £1 million charity giveaway, Movement for Good 2023. We are very pleased that thanks to your support we were awarded a £1,000 grant from Benefact Trust.

Our new land acquisition - Gennets Farm

Once Eric Walker and his team had completed the rebuilding of Southland Lock, formally opened in 2014, it was natural that they should look further north and the next lock, some 800m on from Southland, was Gennets Bridge (Gennets is pronounced Jennets). As at Southland when Eric's team arrived, the lock site was barely visible on the ground. At Gennets there was a lock-shaped pond (which turned out to be full of newts). The landowner was enthusiastic for us to rebuild the lock. In 2018 we held a completion ceremony for Gennets Bridge Lock and the handsome arched bridge that carries the Sussex Border Path. By this time we had become the proud owners of the land around the lock and a short section northwards, thanks to a generous gift from a supporter.

But yet ... no amount of dressing up could hide the fact that the new lock was an 'island'. We didn't own the canal to the south (Gennets Farm) or to the north (Bonfire Hanger). We had a short-term lease on Bonfire Hanger (later ended when the property was sold), but this didn't allow any significant restoration work. There was no immediate prospect of large boats reaching Gennets Bridge Lock, so neither lock gates nor other equipment were fitted.

St. Catherine's Bramley

In early July we were pleased to welcome back a team from St. Catherine's School in Bramley who kindly did painting and tidying work at Loxwood for us. *(See page 22)*

Christmas Draw

There are big money prizes up for grabs in this year's Christmas Draw. For members who receive Wey-South by post, we have enclosed raffle tickets with this issue. But before you invest in a stamp, please consider entering online - this will also save us the heavy charges that our bank makes for paying in cheques. Just go to www.weyarun.org.uk/raffle. You can still return the counterfoils with a cheque made payable to Wey & Arun Canal Trust if you wish. The closing date for entries is 16 January 2024.

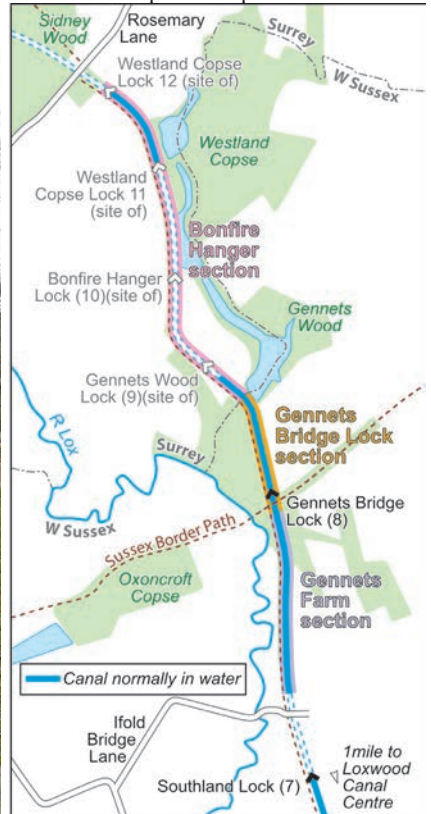
How things have changed in 2023! Within a few months Gennets Bridge Lock is now in the middle of a section of around a mile (1.6km) that we own on a freehold basis. We acquired the Bonfire Hanger section as a gift in March and early July we were able to purchase the Gennets Farm section. After 2018 a change of land ownership meant that we were able to carry out some work at Gennets Farm and we obtained a short-term lease.

Hard work by our volunteer teams, especially EWG, transformed the derelict-looking Gennets Farm section into something looking more like a canal. Trees growing in the middle were removed, a large hole in the canal bed was plugged, the towpath was resurfaced and the causeway immediately below Gennets Bridge Lock was removed. There are still two causeways across the section. The more northerly one allowed the landowner to reach his field on the west bank. The other is at the southern boundary of the section and protects the neighbouring property from flooding.

Our acquisition of the Gennets Farm section includes the land west of the canal, so the north causeway is no longer needed and in time we plan to remove it. To link this section to Southland Lock and the operational section, we still need to cross Ifold Bridge Lane. This is not a small obstacle, but thanks to this year's achievements we are at least a couple of steps closer.

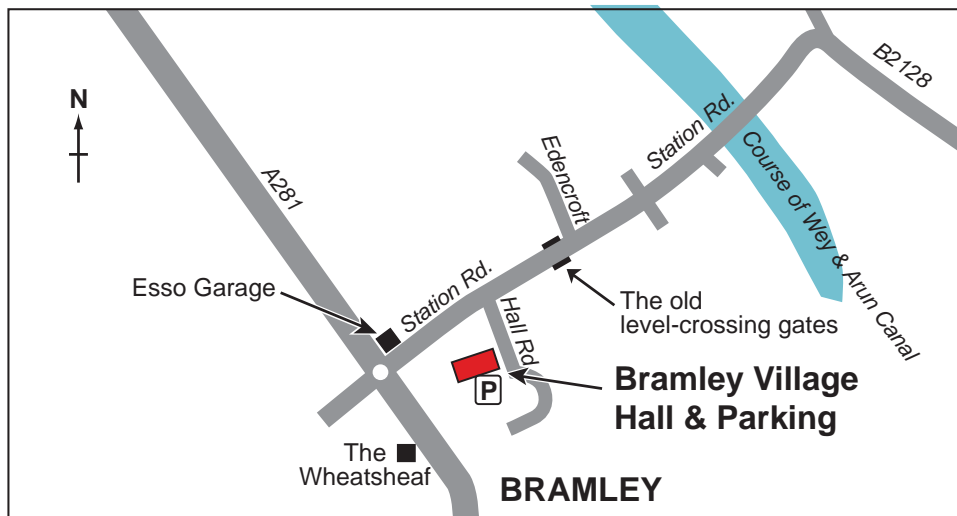


The Gennets Farm section: looking south from Gennets Bridge in April 2023



50th Anniversary tea and meeting

Bramley Village Hall is in Hall Road, just off Station Road in the centre of the village (GU5 0AX). If you are coming from the Guildford direction on the A281, turn left at the mini-roundabout on entering Bramley into Station Road, then take the first right into Hall Road. If you are coming from the south on the A281, turn right at the mini-roundabout after passing the Wheatsheaf and Jolly Farmer pubs. Bramley has frequent bus services from Guildford, Horsham and Cranleigh.



There is some parking at the hall itself. If this is full, you may be able to park in Hall Road or at the old railway station site (just off Station Road – look for the level crossing gates).

Canal vandalism - old problem, old solution

CXVI. And be it further enacted, That if any Person or Persons shall wilfully, maliciously, and to the Prejudice of the said Navigation, break, throw down or destroy any Bridge or Bridges, Bank or Banks, Lock or Locks, Erections or Buildings, or other Works to be erected or made by virtue of this Act, every Person so offending, being lawfully convicted, shall be transported in like Manner as Felons are directed to be transported by the Laws and Statutes of this Realm; or otherwise the Court before whom such Person shall be convicted, may in Mitigation of such Punishment (if they shall think fit) award any such other Punishment as the Law directs in Cases of Petit Larceny.

Wey and Arun Junction Canal Act, 1813, section 116

People

Noleen Welch

We welcome Noleen Welch who became our (part-time) Northern Office Manager earlier this year. In line with modern working practices, Noleen does not spend all her working time at a desk in Shalford, but will typically be there once or twice a week to deal with post, copying and so on. One of Noleen's main tasks is to handle our general email correspondence – jokingly we sometimes call this our “A&E Department” as we get such a huge variety of messages, ranging from very important to totally weird.

Noleen is originally from South Africa, where she acquired a Bachelor of Commerce degree. She has very broad experience from a number of work roles in South Africa and the UK. For a number of years she worked for Colgate-Palmolive in Guildford as a Legal Manager. Noleen lives in Godalming and has two daughters who came on one of our Easter boat trips from Loxwood this year. Noleen says “The girls loved their experience on the canal sitting in the front of the boat and were delighted by all the effort that was put into the Easter display. They felt very posh drinking tea while nibbling biscuits.” In her spare time, Noleen goes on walks with her dog and enjoys reading, drawing and spending time with her family.



Northern Office Manager Noleen Welch

Robin Hirsch

In June our board appointed Robin Hirsch as a director. We are very pleased to welcome Robin who is a Chartered Management Accountant, among many other skills and qualifications. Robin brings us some extremely useful experience as a Finance Director for major businesses and as volunteer Treasurer of charities with a larger income than ours. His most recent professional work was as a consultant with an emphasis on the rail industry. Robin lives in Loxwood.



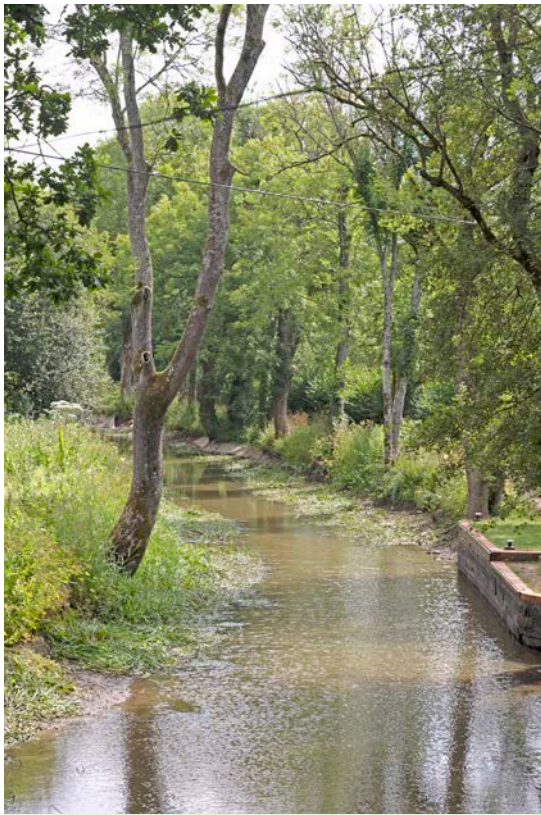
Robin Hirsch

Water levels and boat trips

The combined effects of the malicious damage at Loxwood in early April and the dry weather finally caught up with us in mid-July, when all boat trips had to be suspended. Our approach was to protect the trips that bring in the most revenue, as far as possible. To do this, we cancelled most public trips from June onwards but ran private trips up to and including a high-profile one for the National Trust at Petworth House. Only two private trips in July had to be cancelled. Operating in very low water ultimately raises safety concerns including the possibility of a boat becoming grounded.

Currently some of the pumps that maintain the water levels are out of action and others have to be operated manually, which is very labour-intensive for our team. In any case, it is only possible to pump water from the rivers when enough is available, which it isn't at the moment (late July), so we have to make the most of what is already in the canal. Some of this will inevitably be lost thanks to evaporation and through the roots of the bankside trees.

Our approach was to bring water up the canal when it was available, then progressively close off the lower sections as the levels became too low. From late June onwards, navigation was only possible north of Brewhurst Lock, so all trips headed for Devil's Hole and Southland. We can't drain the canal completely as this would be catastrophic for fish and other wildlife, and we do our best to keep some sections available for canoes and paddleboarders.



July 23rd and hardly any water at Brewhurst

Before the events of early April we had already begun planning for an upgrade of the Loxwood pumping equipment (the pumps themselves and the all-important controls). Because canal restoration at Loxwood has been an evolving story, each installation is different and some are near the end of their lifespan. Failures were frequent and even when everything was working fine it was a skilled job to maintain water levels correctly. The new equipment that the board has now authorised should make it substantially easier – but most likely not until early 2024. This is specialised equipment, electrical and other safety requirements are stricter nowadays and we have to build in a range of security features.

Cream Tea Trips

As mentioned in the last Wey-South, we are having to think creatively about revenue from Loxwood boat trips. One fairly surefire moneymaker is the Cream Tea trip – even with less money to spend, customers seem to think this is a treat they can afford. To make the most of the early part of the season, when water was fairly plentiful, we organised a series of trips every Friday afternoon from the start of May until 9th June. These were a tremendous success, with nearly every seat sold. On some days we ran two boats. We also offered Cream Teas on Mothering Sunday and Easter Sunday. Then someone found out that 30th June was National Cream Tea Day, so an extra trip went into the schedule.



Cream Tea trips don't "just happen" – they are a huge amount of work for the team which mainly means Lyn Nash and Sally Schupke masterminding Canal Centre and boat crew volunteers. The Onslow Arms provides the food, but putting on the show is down to us. For a real sense of occasion, the offer includes fresh flowers on each table and a traditional tea set including decorated tiered plates. Every tea set is different and they were either donated by members who scoured their cupboards or acquired from charity shops. A decorated plate was clearly a popular souvenir and a recent trip featured the unlikely tourist destination of Northampton Town Hall as well as Southend-on-Sea and Llandudno.



Whether we can run more trips in 2023 depends on how effective our rain dances are.



*Above : Our collection of tiered plates
Left : The tables set out for the trip*

A major new navigable length at Birtley – nearly there!



Bridge No 2 – today's finished abutments (above)

The (re)opening of this newly-restored 900m section is coming closer. The new section butts up to Bramley from where a fresh route north will be needed, to reconnect with the Wey at Shalford, replacing the old alignment lost under newer developments. While it will therefore remain detached from the Wey as well as from other restored sections around Loxwood and Dunsfold, it will offer fresh leisure opportunities in its own right for walkers and paddlers.



Bridge No 1 – 2019 work in progress, then with finished abutments and temporary bridge deck, 2022

Together with some desilting, our two new lifting bridges will remove obstacles to navigation. At the site of our southern Birtley No 1 Bridge, there was no bridge in the canal's operational days. We installed a temporary bridge deck laid across the completed substructure abutments of the lifting bridge. To give access for installing the lifting mechanism and deck, this in turn was removed and replaced with a parallel temporary pedestrian scaffold bridge across the canal itself, immediately to the north. Once the final bridge is in place, it will be possible to remove the temporary bridge and the causeway some 200m north of the bridge site.

To the north, Birtley No 2 lifting Bridge is on the site of Josias Jessop's original swing bridge. Here we put down a causeway immediately to the south, to maintain the east-west right of way while the new bridge substructure was built. That too will be dug out to restore the through navigation after the lifting superstructure is installed.



Bridge No 2 – from 2019 beginnings (left), via groundwork in 2022 (right)

The bridge substructures were the product of four years of volunteer labour, even including the relocation of a gas main under the canal at No 2 Bridge.

The default position of the installed bridges is 'down', but the beams (see page 28) mean that lifting and lowering the bridges will require a minimum of effort.

As we go to press in late August, we are very optimistic that installation of the lifting decks at Birtley will start around the time this issue is published (mid-September). The plan is then for the hydraulic components to follow around the end of September. But then predicting the future is even more difficult than usual when it comes to our canal.

If the Birtley section will be available only for small boats, why are we installing lift bridges now?

By law, and as enshrined in the Planning Permission, we have to maintain the right of way across the canal at the northern bridge, and the southern bridge gives the riparian landowner access to the west side. The water level at Birtley has been kept deliberately low until now. Restoring the proper navigational depth will mean that there would be insufficient air draft (headroom) under any temporary fixed structure across the substructures at the two locations, even for kayaks and canoes, so lifting structures are needed from the outset. They are durable, unlike perishable wooden lock gates which we hold off installing at restored locks until navigation becomes possible.

Petworth Puddle

A walker asked us if the 2023 walk used the route of the 1985 Petworth Puddle. The honest answer was ‘no’, although both started and finished at Petworth House. The 1985 walk was 18.6 miles, via the canal at Pallingham, with a lunch stop at Fittleworth after 11.3 miles. Today’s walkers would expect to have the finish line in sight after 11 miles.

In 2023 we had a higher than expected turnout – more than 140 walkers, an increase on 2022. The weather was excellent, if a little hot in the afternoon.

The start and finish were at The Battery House inside the Petworth House complex. This has nothing to do with artillery but contained the vast arrays of batteries needed to power the house before mains electricity. Later it accommodated early motor cars and their chauffeurs.



Great views on the Puddle, but it coincided with a tractor rally !

The pre-lunch stage was in the countryside near Lurgashall, with great views of the Downs – and a local tractor rally. When a small team tested the route on a rainy day in March, they detected a dodgy footbridge. Not too helpfully, West Sussex Council closed the path and didn’t announce the closure. This led to a last-minute panic and some rapid diversion planning by Chris Tavener and Jim Nunn.

The lunch stop was at Lurgashall Village Hall and the local MP Andrew Griffith and his dog arrived after doing the morning part of the walk.

The first 4 miles or so of the walk went through the vast Petworth Park, laid out by ‘Capability’ Brown, then through the Leconfield Estates, owned by Lord Egremont who is also the 7th Lord Leconfield.



Local MP Andrew Griffith and dog at the lunch stop, after the morning walk

On the afternoon route, the planners expected some comments about the steep climb to Upperton Common on the edge of Petworth Park. They weren't wrong – but at least the reward was Richard & Vanessa Smith's refreshment stop with home-made cakes – now firmly a Poddle tradition.



Early arrivals could also view a classic car rally with entrants from Belgium and Switzerland.



The last stage was across the front of Petworth House where perhaps we could imagine the 3rd Earl of Egremont discussing the view with JMW Turner. Turner painted the Chichester Canal but not the Wey & Arun – so far as we know.

The 3rd Earl couldn't make it in 2023, but he did send his distant descendant Max, our President and the 2nd Baron Egremont, to meet the all-important support team and some of the walkers.

The walk raised at least £10,000, including Gift Aid, and these funds will be used for repairs to the Loxwood pumping equipment that was damaged in early April.



Battery House (Petworth) - Sally Schupke, Lord Egremont, Gayle Davis-Tyrrell, Mark & Lorraine Feeney, Margaret Darvill

Margaret's 10 glorious years as Poddle organiser

Margaret Darvill took over from former organiser Jo Holcombe in 2014 – so 2023 makes how many Poddles? It's a slight trick question as there wasn't truly a Poddle in 2020, but Margaret and some others walked the route – from Loxwood North Hall – on what should have been the Poddle day (7th June) in groups of no more than six as prescribed by the Covid regulations at the time. The same route was then used for the 2021 Poddle, saving a lot of planning effort.

Everyone will agree that Margaret has done a heroic job, although she will tell you that she couldn't have done it without her team of helpers – route planners, waymarkers, caterers, refreshment stop volunteers, road marshals, checkers-in, cartographers ... the list is a long one. Then there's the little group that tests the route in March or April, sometimes in atrocious weather, trying to puzzle out from the draft instructions where to go.

Each Poddle brings in around £10,000 and sometimes more, so that's the best part of £100,000 under Margaret's leadership – a fabulous result.



*Top
2018 - Poddle from
Warbleton - at Ford
Church with Sally
Schupke*

*Centre
2015 - Amberley, with
Sally Schupke and
Jo Holcombe*

*Bottom left
2014 - Shalford, with
Di Miles*

*Bottom right
2017 - Poddle from Five
Oaks (Ingfield Manor)
- route planning walk at
Malham Lock*



Fight cuts to national canal funding!



The Pontcysyllte aqueduct on the Llangollen Canal

Many of the canals and some of the rivers of England and Wales are run and maintained by the Canal & River Trust, set up as a charity in 2012 to succeed the nationalised British Waterways. This does not include the Wey, the Arun or our canal, but many of us will have experienced and enjoyed the 2,000-mile Canal & River Trust network. The Canal & River Trust has been a great improvement on its

predecessor, being more customer-focused and welcoming help from volunteers.

The Canal & River Trust is funded by boat licence and mooring fees and also by government grant. It is alarmed by a proposal to cut its government funding from 2027 to 2037 by over £300 million in real terms, a 40% reduction that, the Canal & River Trust says, will 'have devastating consequences on our canals and the people and wildlife who rely on them - such a steep reduction will inevitably result in a decline in the overall condition of our waterway network, and, alarmingly, the possibility of canal closures. It puts at risk invaluable natural habitats, historic infrastructure and cherished public spaces.'

The Canal & River Trust will be actively fighting these cuts. There's time and opportunity to try to change minds about this.

Also fighting against the cuts is the Inland Waterways Association (the IWA), via its 'Fund Britain's Waterways' campaign. The IWA was formed in 1946 when canals were neglected and under threat of closure, and it was public's main voice while the network was nationalised. It says it is 'the only independent national charity dedicated to supporting and regenerating Britain's navigable rivers and canals as places for leisure, living and business.' Much of the 1,000 miles of canal restoration achieved or in progress could not have happened without the IWA.

The Wey & Arun Canal Trust is a corporate member of the IWA. The IWA has been of great assistance to our canal, including visits from its Waterway Recovery Group, whose volunteers have joined us at weekends and sometimes for longer 'Canal Camps'.

We support these campaigns. Will you also support these campaigns personally? The Canal & River Trust website at canalrivertrust.org.uk gives more information about the cuts and includes an 'easy to use online tool to voice your concerns'.

The IWA invites you to sign its 'Fund Britain's Waterways' petition via waterways.org.uk, and if you are not already an IWA member you can join on the same website. As well as all the other benefits of membership, your subscription can help with this campaign.

Midweek Working Party go on a canal break

It's shocking but true – even our Midweek Working Party (MWWP) members get a break from time to time. Particularly in summer, work can run a bit short as it's birdnesting season. So on Wednesday 5th July a small group interested in canoeing got clearance from leader Margaret to go on a canal break and explore the Loxwood section. Wey-South's reporter/photographer went along to watch the fun and check how canoe-friendly the canal is now, after work on landing stages in 2022 and 2023.

Launching was from outside the Loxwood Canal Centre where the “canoe steps” have been there for a while now.

First stop for organiser Ashley (rear of boat) and canoe newbie Alan was to inspect the new canoe landing stage above Brewhurst Lock. This is a great addition for boaters and should be very popular. It even has its own gate to the towpath.



Going southward from Brewhurst Lock would have been challenging because of low water levels so the team headed north towards Southland Lock.



Next on the route was Loxwood Lock. A low-level shelf was built at the same time as the lock itself and is ideal for small boat users. Our tripboat crews rarely use it as they normally walk between the lock and the Canal Centre wharf. In the picture below we see Ashley and Alan

getting ready to walk their boat past the lock while solo kayaker Simon has just arrived.

At the new (2022) landing stage above Loxwood Lock the third crew, Paul and Steve, caught up with the flotilla. *(Top next page)*





On the right the group is seen between Loxwood Lock and Devil's Hole.

Also built in 2022 was a completely new landing stage below Devil's Hole Lock, with a high-level section for tripboats and a low level for small boats. (*Below*)



Above Devil's Hole, yet another landing stage built in 2022 makes this attractive section much more accessible. (*Right*)



Midweek WP Canoeing Trip - contd

Southland Lock is similar to Loxwood Lock for paddlers, with a shelf that can be used for landing. The group did not land or explore the lock itself which looked rather shallow. As the canal above the lock was completely dry, some unusual pictures looking through the bottom gates were possible.

(Left and front cover)



Back at Devil's Hole Lock, it was a busy scene as a group from St. Catherine's School in Bramley, with Dave Evans supervising, were painting the lock beams and fences. Then Wiggonholt arrived on a private trip.



At Loxwood Lock, former Junior Canoeing Champion Janet Phillips caught up with the group and the enlarged fleet headed off to Brewhurst Lock for the group photo.



It was a highly successful trip and all agreed the new landing stages made it vastly easier than before. Over a post-trip wrap-up Ashley told us that the group started in 2021. They had planned a trip to Drungewick Lock in mid-May this year, but there had been a minor problem – no water! Instead the team was given the job of tidying up the dry canal bed. For future trips they are interested in Dunsfold, Birtley and maybe Hunt Park in Shalford.

Two of the group used inflatable two-man craft and two came with rigid kayaks. There are lots of pros and cons for each type. An inflatable is vastly easier to transport, but once you arrive there is the time needed to blow it up. The rigid craft users tended to think that their boats were more robust, faster and easier to steer.

Fluid Adventures

If while walking the towpath you come across a fleet of happy kayakers, it could well be a session run by Phil Smith's firm, Fluid Adventures Ltd, which has been running paddle-based trips and courses for ten years. Phil is former sailing instructor who saw a growing opportunity in paddlesports. (An early location was our 'sister' Chichester Ship Canal, a surviving stub of the Portsmouth & Arundel Canal that completed the 'route to the sea'.)

Phil is based at Sidlesham, near Chichester, and offers experiences at a wide range of offshore and inland locations in the south of England. There are graded courses in kayaking, canoeing and paddleboarding, accompanied tours for up to 12 people and pre-booked equipment hire.



Business has been firm since the pandemic. Phil notes that the lockdowns and suspension of foreign travel excited interest in domestic outdoor activities. Fluid Adventures was able to reopen while other doors remained shut, and the trend has continued.

Paddleboarding is growing. Wey-South wondered whether buying paddleboarding sessions had been impacted by the equipment being relatively cheap to buy and easy to transport – were people now just 'doing it themselves'? 'Quite the contrary,' says Phil. 'Many people, having bought a board, are coming to Fluid Adventures for the training they now realise they need. We can start them off on sheltered waters – the Wey & Arun Canal is ideal for this. With us, they can progress to rivers and the sea.'

Phil says he is in awe of what we have achieved in restoring the canal and encouraging its use for paddlesports. Drungewick is a great location for him, and the new Brewhurst canoe landing stage extends his operational range. Such a pity then that Fluid's use of the canal is on temporary hold because of low water levels – but Phil wants to restart as soon as he can.

The White-legged damselfly – a canal native

Biodiversity means basically lots of different animals and plants. Right now it's the goodest of good things and we on the canal want to promote it. But what does that mean specifically? Step (or fly) forward the white-legged damselfly. It is described as “quite scarce nationally” but “locally abundant”. It has been exciting to discover some of that abundance up and down our canal.

Otherwise known as the Blue Featherleg (although only the males are blue-coloured), and typically about 36mm (1.5 inches) long, the White-legged damselfly loves slow-flowing water. It can be quite hard to distinguish from other similar types, such as Azure and Common Blue damselflies.

You will see these in large numbers around the canal banks.

We have spotted plenty of White-legged damselflies in the Hunt Nature Park at Shalford and also a good number at Loxwood.

Let's celebrate the White-legged damselfly – hero of biodiversity.



*A pair of White-legged damselflies at Loxwood
(male on left, female right)*



A female White-legged damselfly by the canal at Shalford

Haybarn footbridge replacement

Members who walk the southern stretches of the canal will be pleased to learn that the public footpath that crosses the Arun near Haybarn swing bridge on the canal may soon reopen. A stretch of footpath south of Wisborough Green approximately 725 metres long has been closed for a number of years because the footbridge over the Arun, known by some as the Japanese Bridge, had become unsafe. This stopped a circular walk in this beautiful and tranquil area that incorporates a section of the canal towpath from Lee Place (Harsfold) Bridge to Haybarn lifting bridge.

One of our members recently asked West Sussex County Council (WSCC) what their plans were and was delighted to receive a very prompt reply saying “This has been a major replacement project with significant cost and environmental considerations hence the unfortunate delay in delivering the work. I am pleased to say that, after several years, finances have been secured and a new bridge designed, with appropriate consent from the Environment Agency (EA) to install and this is due to start imminently.”

The current bridge was constructed in 1988 so given the annual flooding of the area it has lasted well and WSCC hope the new bridge will last even longer, providing an important crossing point over the Arun well into the future.

Full marks to WSCC public footpaths department, who have been most communicative and have since sent an update to say that the contractors are laying a temporary access track over the adjacent field and the old bridge is due to be lifted out in the week commencing 14th August.

We will update members and publish details of the circular walk once the footpath is reopened.



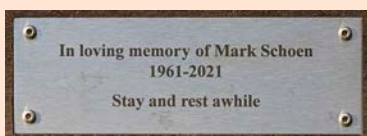
The “Japanese” bridge, a photo taken a few years ago when it was still in use

New bench in Hunt Nature Park

The Hunt Nature Park in Shalford has become extremely popular with local people. If your aim is to get from Shalford to Bramley on a traffic-free route as quickly as you can, you will naturally go along the nearly straight old railway route – and many cyclists do exactly this. If you have a bit more time to spare, or want to keep out of the way of speeding cyclists, you will probably prefer the path created by our volunteers that closely follows the curves of the Cranleigh Waters river.



Denise Schoen sitting on the bench we installed in memory of her husband



As a bonus for riverside path users, we have installed a new bench close to the viewing platform, a gift from Denise Schoen in memory of her late husband Mark. Brian King's Odd Job Group installed the bench and Ian Joyce (Hunt Park Manager) made the arrangements. On June 5th, we inaugurated the bench with Denise.

Devilish work by the girls of St. Catherine's

Fourteen volunteers from St. Catherine's School for Girls, Bramley took on smartening up the Loxwood section's Devil's Hole Lock over four days in July. This was a repeat of a 2022 visit from the school, and several pupils from last year were amongst this year's party – clearly a popular project.

The girls, from years 10 and 11, sanded and rubbed down the new fencing, balance beams and paddle gear, then painted them. They cleaned and tidied the lock site. This was despite battling with continuing bad weather. The lock is now putting on its best appearance for passing walkers, and for public boat trips when these resume.



St. Catherine's students smarten Devil's Hole Lock

A short boat trip for them was the least that our own volunteers could give as a 'Thank You'. You did great work, girls, and you told us you enjoyed it. Come back next summer!

Remembering Martin Foster

In the last issue of Wey-South we mentioned that our member Martin Foster had died in April 2023. With the kind help of Martin's friend Roger Amerena, we have been able to pull together some more information on Martin's life.

Martin was born in 1938 and was originally from Enfield. In 1940 his father was concerned that the armaments factory nearby would attract enemy action. They moved to Birtley Rise in Bramley, Surrey, a short distance from the canal route. Martin remembered tanks being stationed nearby and meeting Canadian soldiers. In 1942 Bramley had an air raid on a train at the station and Martin remembered seeing the damaged carriages.



Martin Foster

After a spell in South Africa, Martin went to school on the Isle of Wight and then to college in Brighton where he qualified as a chemist. While working at Teva in Eastbourne he was a senior member of a team that innovated Imodium, so the world has to thank him for that.

From the early 1970s onwards Martin lived in Brighton and made a huge contribution to conserving and protecting the city's historic buildings and environment. He joined the Wey & Arun Canal Trust in 1975.

Martin was a champion of many causes. His involvement in efforts to save Brighton's West Pier ended when he was voted off the board (and sadly the pier is now a ruin), but the Royal Alexandra Hospital building was successfully rescued. In 2012 Martin became a founder Trustee of the Brighton & Hove Heritage Commission.

Martin had a tremendous knowledge of churches and claimed to have visited anywhere up to 4,000. He was known to refer to himself as an "ancient monument" but his advice on conservation was highly respected. Martin organised and led coach tours of historic places throughout London and the south-east. He loved train travel and went everywhere by train. He had a fear of flying.

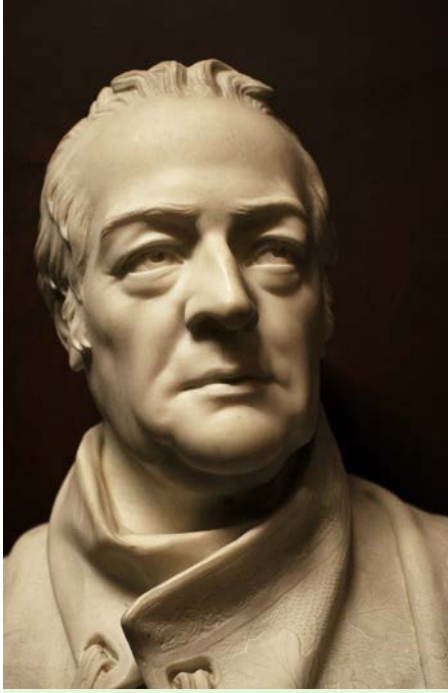
In his last months Martin made several generous gifts to his favourite causes, including our canal. We plan that his gift will fund a new brick-built traditional bridge at Rooks Hill (Fanesbridge), not far from his childhood home.

Martin was somewhat of an institution and he will be much missed.



The story of our canal

The Earl of Egremont



Lord Egremont

George O'Brien Wyndham, the regency third Earl of Egremont, of Petworth House, Sussex, decided that his estate would benefit from a better navigable connection to the recently improved Arun Navigation. He employed the survey and design services of the engineer Jessop, an Act of Parliament was obtained and the waterway was built. This was NOT our north-south Wey & Arun Canal which was twenty years away, but the west-east 1791-4 Rother Navigation from Midhurst down to the Arun at Stopham, near Pulborough – and the engineer was William Jessop, father of 'our' Josias Jessop.

Wyndham, born 1751, had inherited the earldom aged 11. In his younger days, his immense inherited wealth supported a palatial townhouse in London and the social life to go with it - and two 'grand tours' of Europe accelerated his life-long passion for acquiring art. He had little active involvement in politics and increasingly the focus of his attention moved from London to Petworth House and his estates.

While he may have become tired of London, the Earl was certainly not tired of life. He supported the painters Turner and Constable, amongst many others. Egremont seems to have been universally popular. He was a respected employer. P.A.L. Vine (London's Lost Route to the Sea) speaks of his hospitality, kindness and extreme modesty. His horses won the Derby five times and the Oaks five times. He stamped out bear-baiting in the area.

The Earl was a fellow of the Royal Society (FRS). He was a generous benefactor to local causes and to needy individuals. With rural unemployment increasing because of the Inclosure Acts and the intensification of farming, he sponsored emigration to Canada via a scheme largely funded by him and managed by the Reverend Thomas Sockett, his Petworth rector: 1,800 people benefited between 1832 and 1837.

Domestic Matters

His personal life was unusual, even for his era. He fathered many children – at least forty, some say - with women to whom he was not married. Some were already married to others, but most of his offspring were with unmarried mistresses who lived with him at Petworth House, often at the same time. The arrangements appear to have been consensual rather than exploitative. The Reverend Sockett tutored the children. The National Trust, the custodian now of Petworth

House, records Elizabeth Ilive, mother of eight of his children, as ‘...principal mistress of [the Earl] and the unofficial chatelaine of Petworth. Mrs Wyndham, as she was known before her marriage, “took great delight in painting”’. An artist herself, she commissioned two paintings by William Blake (both in the North Gallery), and was also an amateur scientist, who set up a private laboratory at Petworth. She was an engineer in her own right, being awarded a silver medal by the Royal Society of Arts for designing a stone-moving device.



Elizabeth Ilive

Egremont’s children prospered, the females by good marriages and the males often as Army officers. At the age of 50, Egremont married Elizabeth and the new Countess bore their last (and first legitimate) child – but she died in infancy, the marriage collapsed (possibly because Egremont would not give up his polyamorous ways) and the Countess left him.

Lord Egremont builds a waterway

Egremont developed the farming of his estates at Petworth and elsewhere with vigour, applying the new crop-rotation techniques of the Agricultural Revolution to improve productivity. Land no longer needed to be left fallow between crops and fertility was maintained with lime – which was a driving force behind the Rother Navigation. Lime is the product of chalk and heat. At Petworth, chalk had to be brought in by road and land had to be set aside to grow the wood to burn the chalk. The Rother Navigation changed this. South Downs chalk now came to near Petworth by the bargeload from the Earl’s quarry at Houghton on the Arun. Coal, a far more effective energy source, could now be shipped up from the coast, freeing more land for cultivation. One of the new crops was the opium poppy for the production of laudanum.

Taming eleven miles of the Rother required eight locks and two miles of cut, under Jessop Snr. No company needed to be set up to build and run it, since Lord Egremont was its sole funder and owner – indeed, it was constructed by his own employees. The whole catchment of the lower Rother benefited, with a ready supply of coal for domestic heating and cheaper transport costs for exporting corn, timber and marble. A mill wheel raised and lowered three beams that in turn powered the pumping of non-potable river water from Coultershaw north into Petworth to supplement the town’s spring-fed drinking water. (The beam pump, albeit a later replacement, is still in working order and a visitor attraction.)

By 1794 the Rother Navigation had given Egremont a connection by water to the South Coast. The Earl now considered whether he could connect it north into the Thames and to London.

Pictures courtesy of the National Trust. To learn more about the Earl of Egremont, why not visit the National Trust’s Petworth House?

Restoration And Maintenance News

Ten teams of volunteers are out most weeks, restoring the canal and maintaining what we've restored. Come and join us! You'll use your skills, learn fresh skills and make new friends. Learn more about each team under 'Volunteers' on our website.

The full story of these efforts is recorded monthly in Working Party News – see under 'News' on our website – or send an email to listadmin@weyandarun.co.uk to receive an electronic version. Working Party News lists the contacts for each team.

Loxwood Damage - Repairs and Improvements

Several of our work groups have been involved in activities to repair the malicious damage at the beginning of April. The opportunity is also being taken to make improvements so that the canal is easier to manage in the future and additional security measures are being built in.

A new twin pump concrete outlet for Drungewick Lock has been constructed from scratch by our volunteers. Bearing in mind the complexity of the shape, we were very pleased to find that it came out, as designed, in just the one pour!

The first phase of trenching to lay new ducting for electrical cables has been completed and the towpath reinstated. In addition our bricklayers have been busy, building new shelters for the new pump control equipment.



New twin pump concrete outlet

New seat - very old timbers !

The site of the new northern Birtley bridge was the location of an original swing bridge. Original timbers from it have been reclaimed, and a bench seat made from them by David Beadman. This is now set in place on the west ('railway' bridge) approach.



A bench seat made from reclaimed timbers

Fleet Maintenance – a surprisingly busy time for our ‘Navy’

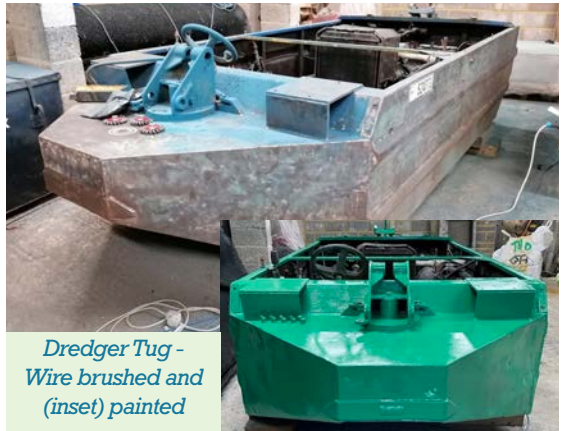
Our water problems inhibit boat use, but open a windfall maintenance window.

There was noise and dust from a pneumatic drill, when Wasp came ashore for heavy maintenance by the Odd Job Group, starting with chipping and chopping out her concrete ballast that was laid directly in her bottom. The hull beneath emerged in surprisingly good condition.



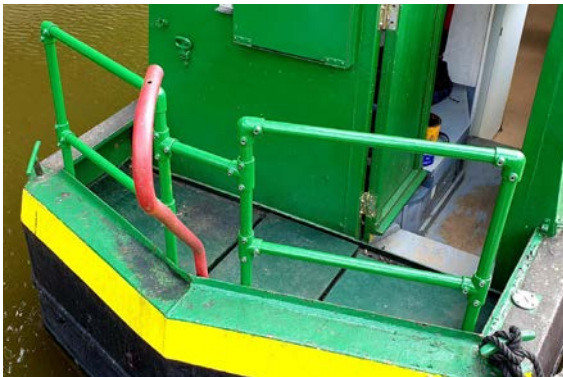
Repairing ‘Wasp’ - a slow process

Our dredger tug, too humble a craft to warrant a name of its own, is nevertheless a vital part of canal maintenance. Its age and heavy use now mean that it needs restoration as much as does the canal it serves. The Odd Job Group and the Dredging Team have it ashore and have started work on wire-brushing the hull back to bare metal. The Health and Safety limit to do this using power tools is only 30 minutes a day per person, so it is a slow job, with more noise and dust – offers of help would be gratefully received.



Dredger Tug - Wire brushed and (inset) painted

Wiggonholt’s wooden decking is in need of replacement, a fact drawn sharply to the Boat Maintenance team’s attention when a section unexpectedly gave way underfoot – no harm done, fortunately, and promptly attended to with fresh planking. The longer-term solution is plasticised and resinated sheeting, reports David Arnold.



Zachariah Keppel is now a better place to work, with an after rail now fitted for improved crew safety – not a simple installation, given restricted space and access for its securing below the deck.

Spreading the word



How did you first get to hear about our canal? For many new members, it is by coming across our volunteer team at local events where we set up a pitch using our Mobile Display Vehicle (MDV). We give the latest restoration news, we sell canal merchandise and we encourage people to join us, to volunteer and to donate.

We attend events throughout the year. This autumn's programme includes:

- Sat 2nd – Sun 3rd September: Macmillan Vintage Rally, Balls Cross, Petworth
- Sat 9th – Sun 10th September: Surrey Hills Wood Fair, Cranleigh
- Sat 16th September: Wey River Festival, Dapdune Wharf, Guildford
- Sat 4th November: Cranleigh Artisan Market, The High Street

It's an interesting alternative (or addition) to 'mud-plugging'! If you could help at future events or by towing the MDV to and from events, Roger Beazer would love to hear from you via: roger_beazer@weyandarun.co.uk

The Birtley Beams

Most of the lifting superstructure elements, costing £150,000+ of our funds, have been manufactured by Beaver Bridges Ltd, at their Wigan factory. However, their heavy concrete counter-balance beams were cast by EWG volunteers at Tickner's Depot, and then sent off to Beaver for trial operational tests before installations at Birtley begin.



The first two of ten balance counter weights

Northern Working Party Goes Underground

A new towpath trench was dug for new cable ducting followed by making good, for the upgrading following the Loxwood vandalism. Literally for improved convenience, a flexible waste discharge pipe has been buried along the Loxwood fleet moorings, for on-moorings pumpouts for our passenger fleet.



Membership Report

34 new members joined us in the last quarter and our membership now stands at 2,873. We would like to extend a very warm welcome to the following new members.

Libby & Nigel Anton

Sally & Stuart Beake

Diana Compton

Michelle Edwards

Angus & Louise Frew

Steve Gentle

Gary Greenfield

Jane Higgs

Malcolm & Suzanne Grinstead

Clive & Vivienne Knight

Ian & Lesley Lauder

Keith Miller

Ian Montgomery

Jonathan Myall

Tim Pedrick

Bev & Mark Reed

Hannah Reid

Matt Rich

Lisa Lush

Luxmi Selvarajah

Austin & Rebekka Smith

Arthur & Bonita Thomson

David Unwin

Carol & Leslie Wareham

We have learned with regret of the death of John Hedger.

Apology:

In the last edition of *Wey-South*, we reported the death of Andrew Ritchie. We should have made clear that this was Andrew Ritchie of Loxwood, as we had two Andrew Ritchies in our membership. Our apologies to the other Andrew Ritchie, who is very much alive, for any distress this caused to him and his friends and family.

John Tovell
membership@weyandarun.co.uk

Meet The Volunteers

Wey-South spoke to **Chris Tavener**

When and how did you start volunteering with us?



In 1971 there was a feature in the local paper on the Canal Society's proposal to restore the canal. I contacted the secretary John Markwick, who came to our home to explain and I was inspired to join the Society and attend my first working day at Rowner Lock.

In 1973 I joined the Southern Section Committee where I helped organize fundraising events such as jumble sales and barn dances.

As part of the Midweek group, you get to visit lots of different sections of the canal – which have you enjoyed most?

Most memorable was the half-mile, totally overgrown section from Cook's Bridge to Pallingham, where, following clearance, the original stone entrance walls and the layout of the docks emerged. This was real 'jungle busting' which we rarely get to do so much now as annual maintenance becomes more important on the many cleared sections.

You have been involved with the Poddle organisation for many years - how did that start?

I took part in the first Poddle as a walker, on a wet Sunday 22nd July 1973, starting at the Three Compasses Inn, Alfold, with a mid-way stop at the Onslow Arms and finishing at Rowner Lock. 16 walkers took part, raising the princely sum of £50.85. This year we had 145 walkers and raised approximately £10,500.

Subsequently, I was involved in the walk in various ways, such as marshalling, and then, around 20 years ago, I helped put out the road signs warning motorists of walkers in the road, something I still do. I plan the sign locations and put them out the afternoon before the walk.

In 2014 I took on Poddle route planning, the first being the 2015 walk starting/finishing in Amberley. Finding interesting routes that are about 12 miles in length and have two halls (for the start/finish and a lunch stop) is the annual challenge. I write the Walkers' Guide for the proposed route and, on the day, walk as 'Last Man', collecting the waymarker signs en route to ensure nothing is left behind.

What have you learnt through your volunteering? Do you have any special role?

I have gained skills in using equipment such as chainsaws and brushcutters. I have been the lengthsman for the section from Pallingham Lock to Lee Farm Lock for about 10 years, which includes responsibility for landowner liaison where we do not own or lease the canal. It is important to maintain good relationships. We obtain permission to clear the section on their land by explaining our aims and objectives and get agreement on the extent of what we are able to do. We must comply with any requests on how we work, where we park, and ensure we do not do more than agreed.

What has kept you going so long? What do you enjoy most?

To see the restoration make such significant progress and play my small part in it. I get the satisfaction of the results of our regular working party efforts.

Looking back, what changes have you seen in how we organise the work parties?

Initially, there were Northern and Southern section working parties who generally worked on Sundays. Those involved were typically in their 20s and 30s, in full-time work, and some had young families so had to fit in canal work around this.

Today there are more work parties, specializing in different types of work (construction, maintenance, clearance etc) working at any location as needed. Most working members now are retired and most work is on weekdays.

What other hobbies or interests keep you busy?

I have a passion for Riley cars, especially from the 1930s, and bought my first one in 1973. In recent years I have served as the chairman of the Riley Register national committee, and then the chairman of their Spares company. I am currently chairman of the Horsham Film Society. I am a Brighton & Hove Albion season ticket holder and a supporters' coach steward.

My wife Jenni and I have a plot of land in Slinfold with a hazel copse which our hedgelaying team visit each autumn to cut stakes and binders for their laying activities along the canal. They have generously laid the hedges around our plot as well!





From our archives:

how we have transformed Loxwood High Street.

Top: Looking south across the road in 2002 - on the far side is the winding hole (boat turning area) built in 1996.

Middle: Looking north across the road probably in early 1996 (the noticeboard announces that work on the winding hole is about to start).

Bottom: Also in the 1990s - what is now the site of Loxwood Canal Centre (opened 2012) and the car park - where the horse is.



The Wey & Arun 2023 Christmas Card and 2024 Calendar are now on sale



- * A5 size card with envelope
- * The inside of the card reads "Season's Greetings"
- * Picture on front of card (Northlands Bridge) is by Oliver Lake
- * Price: £5 per pack of five
- * Postage for up to two packs: £2.50



Back of card



The Wey & Arun Canal Trust 2024 Calendar

- * Large (A4 size) wall calendar
- * One page for each month with a large box for each date
- * Limited edition - order yours now to avoid disappointment
- * Supplied with envelope for posting
- * Price: £8, Postage for up to three calendars: £3



- On sale at the Loxwood Canal Centre, (01403 753999, canalcentre@weyandarun.co.uk). Open Friday, Saturday & Sunday 11am-3pm, until the end of December.
- Or visit the Trust's website and buy online:- www.weyarun.org.uk/shop.
- Or to order by telephone please contact the Loxwood Canal Centre, details as above.
- Or to order by post please use the form below.
- The cards & calendar will be on sale at the Autumn Meeting at Bramley on Oct 28th



To: Wey & Arun Canal Trust, The Granary, Fritchfold Farm, Loxwood RH14 0RH

Please supply Packs of Christmas Cards at £5 per pack (&/or) 2023 Calendars at £8 each

Name:-

Address:-

.....

.....

Telephone:-

Email:-

- Please add £3 postage for up to three calendars and £2.50 postage for up to two packs of cards.
- For a combination of cards and calendars or extras please contact the Loxwood Canal Centre to confirm postage.
- Cheques payable to: W&A Enterprises Ltd.
- For card payment contact the Loxwood Canal Centre.

Christmas Raffle 2023

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WEY & ARUN
Canal
Trust
Registered Charity No. 265331

CHRISTMAS DRAW 2023

First Prize: £200
Second Prize: £100
Third Prize: £75
Fourth Prize: £50 M&S voucher
Fifth Prize: £40, Sixth Prize: £30, Seventh Prize: £25 M&S voucher

*The draw will take place on Tuesday 23rd January 2024
at the Northern Office, Bridge End, Somerswey, Shalford GU4 8EQ*

Promoter: Sally Schupke, Bridge End, Somerswey, Shalford, Surrey GU4 8EQ
Registered under The Gambling Act 2005 with Guildford Borough Council. Licence No. SL292
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For members who receive a printed copy of *Wey-South*, we have enclosed Christmas Draw raffle tickets with this issue. Of course this isn't possible for electronic subscribers. However, the raffle is also running online. All tickets will be entered into the same draw.

Entering via our website saves the Trust both manpower and money and can be done so easily at weyarun.org.uk/raffle. If you would like to buy paper raffle tickets, please contact the Northern Office (northernoffice@weyandarun.co.uk, 01483 505566).

Only tickets purchased by 16th January 2024 will be entered into the draw.