

An aerial photograph of a canal construction site. In the upper half, a large crowd of people is gathered on a gravel path. To their left, several orange construction vehicles, including a loader and two dump trucks, are parked on a dirt area. The background shows a steep, eroded bank. In the lower half, a large concrete structure is under construction, surrounded by scaffolding and wooden formwork. A green sign in the lower-left corner identifies the project. A large, stylized 'Wey & Arun' logo is superimposed at the top.

Wey & Arun

The Magazine of the
Wey & Arun Canal Trust
Issue 213 June 2026

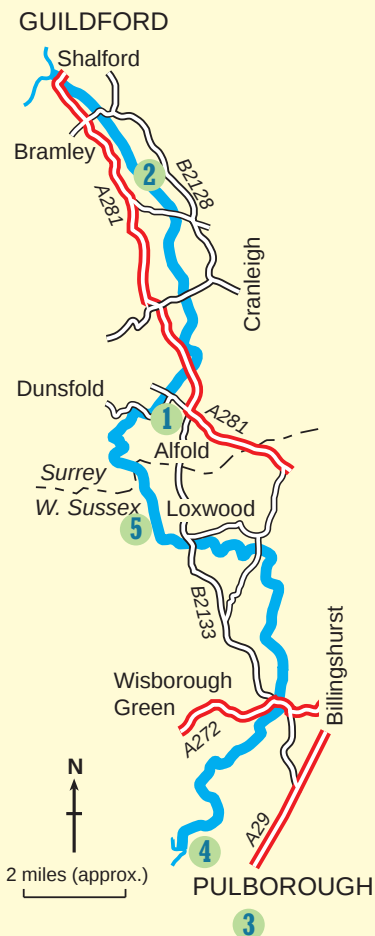
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Front cover:
*The bricklaying ceremony at Rooks Hill
on April 18th
Photo by Robin Gardner*

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News headlines

Our biggest-ever grant

At our Spring Meeting at Alfold on 18th April it was great to announce that we've won a huge £249,500 grant for Rooks Hill Phase 2 from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) administered by Waverley Borough Council. We believe this is the largest grant we have ever received from a government body. To date nearly all our funds have come from private sources.

Diary date

This year's Annual Meeting will be held at 2.30 p.m. on 17th October 2026 at Pulborough Village Hall. Formal notification and the Agenda can be found on page 10 of this magazine.

Arun Boat Rally

On Sunday May 17th we had a good turnout of adventurous paddlers to explore the section of the River Arun at the southern end of the canal route. Read more on page 13.

We're appealing!

With our wonderful new CIL grant representing 80% of the projected Rooks Hill Phase 2 cost, we're starting work immediately. Under the terms of the grant, we must raise the balance of £62,400 as well as a little more to finish off Rooks Hill Phase 1.

At the same time, we're also asking for more money for another scheme - starting the new Tickner's Heath Dunsfold Road bridge – but here, we're seeking interest-free loans to cover a £397,000 deposit we have to pay to Surrey County Council. This gets released back to us – and therefore back to you – as the work proceeds. See this edition's back cover.

Rooks Hill Phase 1

It is nearly finished, and in less than a year since we broke ground. We held a bricklaying ceremony at the new bridge on Saturday 18th April (see front cover and page 8). Sir Jeremy Hunt MP laid two bricks engraved with the names of two major benefactors of the Rooks Hill project.

15% discount at the Onslow Arms, Loxwood

Exclusive to our members – just show page 23 of this edition when sitting down to order food and drinks at our favourite canalside pub.

Another grant funds new equipment

Thanks to another successful grant application, this time to Loxwood Parish Council, our Midweek Working Party now has a sparkling new compact tractor. This new kit is already making management of canalside vegetation vastly easier. See page 11 for more.



We just can't resist those drone shots. This one shows another view of the Rooks Hill site on the morning of the ceremony on April 18th, looking south along the canal route. In Phase 2 the canal will be extended towards the camera.

Spring Meeting

Saturday 18th April 2026

Convened by Board director **Giles Eyre**, and with the drone of mowers preparing Alfold's cricket pitch filtering through the village hall's open windows, a hundred members heard our latest progress and plans at the 2026 Spring Meeting on a sunny Saturday 18th April. Many had come straight from the Rooks Hill Bridge bricklaying ceremony. Giles said that our organisation is a major operator which succeeds with only one full-time and two part-time employees. This was only possible because of the work done by our volunteers. More were always welcome – indeed urgently needed - especially for administrative duties.

Our three-year Priority Plan

Gordon Powell summarised the 'half-time' progress of the Priority Plan, as amplified by later speakers and as first shared at the 2024 AGM. Rooks Hill Phase 1 was started in June 2025 as soon as planning permission had been received, and much had been achieved in less than a year. Moving south to Cranleigh, both phases of the Rye Farm project to create 370m of new towpath had been completed, with the canal channel profiled and cleared. The adjoining landowner, in recognition of the more secure farm entrance thus created, had donated £25,000 towards the scheme.



The new Rye Farm towpath and bridleway

On Dunsfold Road, Thames Water had now diverted its main to our recent bridleway bridge, freeing up the road for the diversion needed for us to create the new Tickner's Heath Road Bridge. At Bonfire Hanger, the towpath had been resurfaced. The dams had been reinstated and the canal bed now held water.

A new pump was ready to raise river water from the Arun to the canal below Drungewick Lock, but restoration of navigation down from Drungewick Lane Canal Bridge was thwarted by continued water loss, despite known leaks having been plugged.

What will the Plan's 'second half' bring? Gordon says that we will finish what we had planned and started. We will extend the towpath north of Birtley Bridge 2 to enlarge a circular walk using the restored canal there. The canal itself will be fully rejoined to the pound south of the bridge by removing the causeway that had been retained in case it was needed for access to Rooks Hill – which had proved unnecessary. The canal at Birtley is in water because it is spring-supplied, but there is still a leak down into Cranleigh Waters, to be traced and plugged.



Bonfire Hanger and one of the dams

We will complete Phases 1 and 2 at Rooks Hill. Phase 3 – a new Fanesbridge Lock – will be started, with its completion linked to the land acquisition and to new plans and approval for the Rushetts pound to Run Common Road. At Cranleigh, we will work with Surrey County Council and its successor West Surrey Council for the widening of Elmbridge Road south of Rye Farm, to create a new navigable-height bridge. There are also landownership issues immediately to the south.

We will award the contract to build the new Tickner's Bridge, and a new cut will rejoin the severed summit pound beneath it. In the Loxwood area, there will be further repairs and improvements to the Bonfire Hanger dams. Sections of the restored towpath there still require attention. When we have cured the Long Meadow leak, we will reopen the navigation down to Drungewick Lock.

We are adding new elements to our Plan, pursuing new land acquisition, renegotiating existing leases as they expire, monitoring planning applications that might affect our future intentions (whether beneficially or adversely) and seeking recognition of the canal as a 'heritage asset' in the plans of local authorities. Our inspection and asset management processes will continue to be developed and the Board will annually review projected expenditure beyond normal levels of maintenance spend.

Finances – a good 2025 and major future expenditure

Newly appointed Finance Director **Mark Akers** took over, to review the provisional results for 2025 and plans for 2026 and beyond. 2025 income had been boosted by donations to the Rooks Hill appeal, by generous legacies and with the value of donated materials. Total income of £835,000 exceeded expenditure by £260,000. This had boosted our cash holdings to £1,105,000. Of this, £600,000 would be covering 2026's normal maintenance (£160,000), restoration projects (£255,000) and other expenses (£205,000). 2026 income would largely but not fully restore our funds, ready for the major future expenditure on The Tickner's Heath project..

Mark explained that we not only have to pay to build and pay for the new Tickner's bridge but we also have to lodge a large deposit of £397,000, before work starts, with Surrey County Council (which will ultimately own the bridge). This is released back to us in stage payments at certain project milestones. It is to protect the public purse should we not deliver what we promise. (We have never failed!). This is a temporary extra funding requirement, and we are asking members and other donors to help with interest-free loans – see back page for further details.

The three phases of Rooks Hill – as Bill Nicholson explained

Before Rooks Hill there was Birtley, where we restored 900m of canal and footpath between 2018 and 2023, including the two new lifting bridges and a circular walking route using the adjacent Downs Link / Wey-South Path.

The Rooks Hill project will take us a further 400m south, with our first-ever new length of canal. Phase 1, now nearing completion, is the new bridge carrying the Greensand Way bridleway, with 100m of canal bank retaining wall, an overflow weir and a repaired culvert beneath the canal bed.

Spring Meeting (contd.)

Phase 2, about to begin with Waterway Recovery Group summer camps, will create 300m of new canal to join the Birtley section to Phase 1, with a 3m-wide towpath as a permissive footpath, plus associated new hedge and tree planting. As at Birtley, the new towpath will create new walking opportunities in combination with the old railway track that now forms the Downs Link / Wey-South Path. The towpath side of the canal will be reinforced with gabions secured between Plastecowood piles (donated by John Lewis & Partners) and topped with rolls of coir.

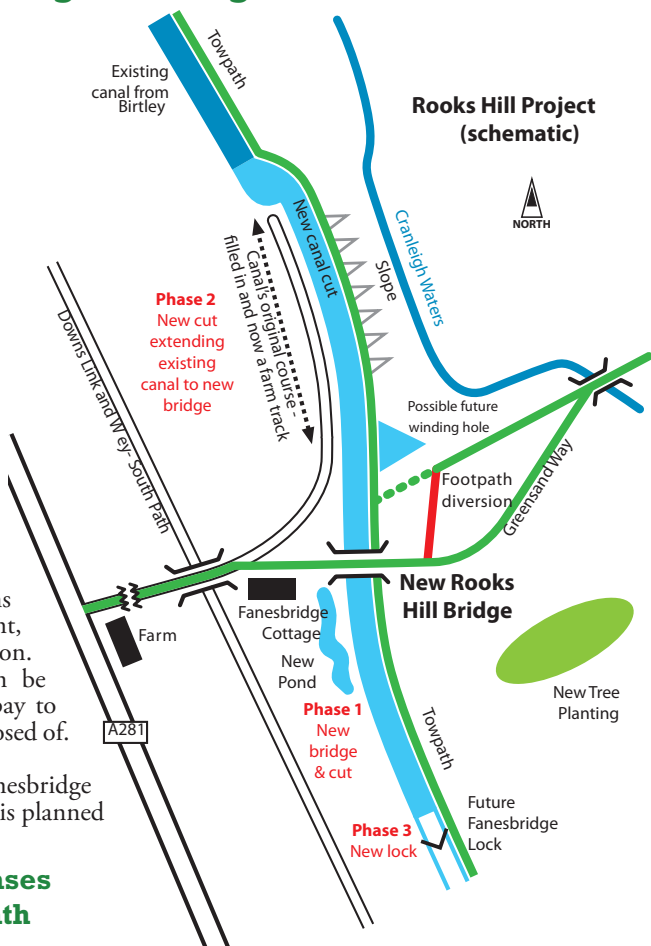
The new Phase 2 canal cut adjoins the canal's original alignment, which is unsuitable for restoration. Some of the excavated soil can be reused on site, but we have to pay to have the rest taken away and disposed of.

Phase 3, the rebuilding of Fanesbridge Lock and connection to Phase 1, is planned to start in 2027.

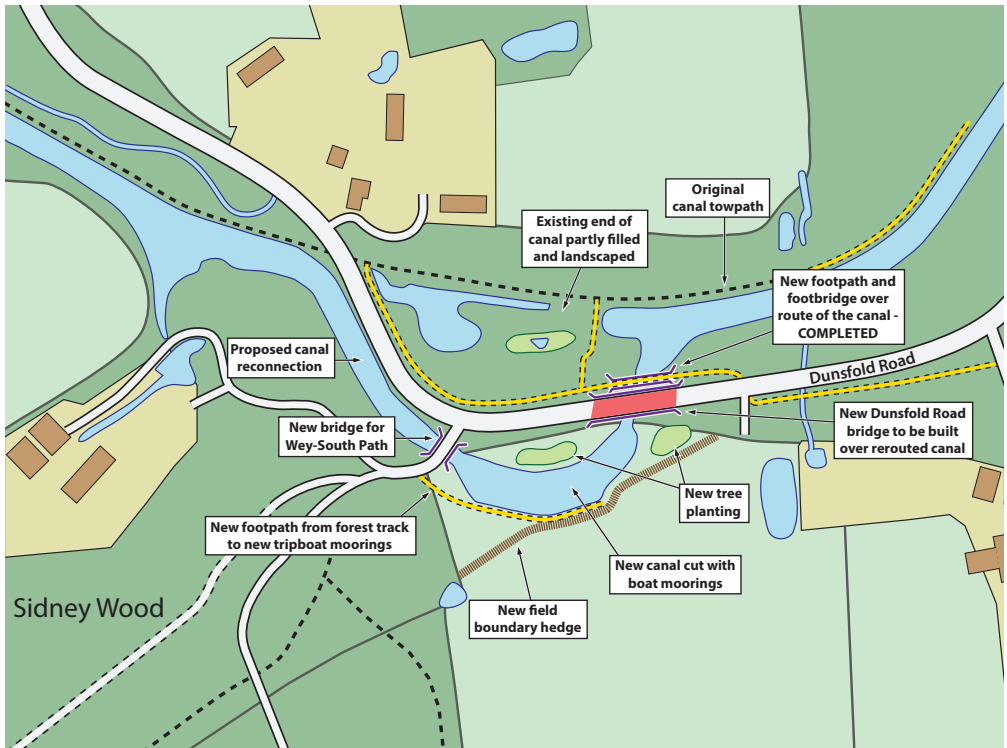
... and the Two Phases of Tickner's Heath

Tony Ford told us that Dunsfold Road crosses the canal on a solid causeway, and the location is unsuitable for it to be replaced by a road bridge if navigation is to be restored. We therefore have to build, as Phase 1, a road bridge at a more suitable nearby location and create new canal beneath it. Dunsfold Road is first being temporarily diverted around the new bridge site. The bridge will be built for us by a professional contractor, to the satisfaction of Surrey County Council and its successor West Surrey Council, the bridge's ultimate owner. The bridge designs have been finalised with the Council, and the water main along Dunsfold Road has been diverted at the new bridge site onto the parallel pedestrian-and-horse bridge, completed in 2022, over what will be the new cut. We are hoping that the new bridge can be finished as early as 2027.

The rerouted canal under the new bridge will enter a basin area, from which, as Phase 2, further new canal will head north-west under a new bridge similar to Rooks Hill Bridge to carry the Wey-South Path over the canal. Our volunteers will build this bridge and the new cut. Planning permission has been applied for, including revisions to improve biodiversity and reduce ecological impacts.



When finished, our new waterway will leave and rejoin the original canal alignment in a southerly loop. A very pedestrian-unfriendly length of public highway will be substantially improved for non-motor users, including access across the bypassed length of old canal to its north towpath side, extendable east to the future Dunsfold Park development.



Raising the money – great news, but more needed

Gordon Powell returned, to explain how we will finance our projects. The Rooks Hill Phase 1 Appeal was within £20,000 of its target, and members were encouraged to kindly donate to fill the final gap. Caroline Roberts our Grants specialist had built on her previously reported success where she raised nearly £90,000 for Bonfire Hanger and for equipment and repairs. Now, she had won funding from the local authority Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) of £249,500 for Rooks Hill Phase 2, which will cover 80% of the cost, to be released in stage payments. We believe this is, by a long way, the biggest grant funding we have ever received. We were able to convince the Council largely because of the new access routes and recreational opportunities that the project will open up.

And so we are now launching an appeal for the 20% balance - £64,400 – of the cost of Rooks Hill Phase 2.

And then there's our separate call for interest-free loans for the £397,000 temporary bond with Surrey County Council to enable the Tickner's Heath Road Bridgework to begin – see back page.

Rooks Hill Bridge – a ‘triumph of community spirit’



From left to right: Cllr Jane Austin, Sir Jeremy Hunt, Margaret Darvill (with her back to us), Bill Nicholson and Graham Hawkes

Saturday April 18th 2026 was an ideal date for a ceremony at our new Rooks Hill Bridge, as the facing of its concrete structure with bricks donated by Wienerberger Warnham was just at the right moment to incorporate two ‘named’ bricks, one in honour of John Compton, whose family moved to Rooks Hill in the 1920s. He very kindly sold us the strip of land from Birtley Bridge No1 to his boundary, which has enabled us to extend the canal.

The other brick remembers Martin Foster. Originally from Enfield, he lived for a time at Birtley Rise, a short distance from the canal route. In his last months Martin made several generous gifts to his favourite causes including us, and his wish was for his gift to contribute to a traditional canal bridge.

The bricks were laid by Sir Jeremy Hunt MP, member for Godalming and Ash – his constituency includes all the northern part of our canal. He was accompanied by family members and by Jane Austin, District Councillor for Bramley & Wonerish. Sir Jeremy was pleased to be able to attend a totally non-political function and he compared his role at an event of this type to the late Queen Mother. He described our project as ‘an unmitigated triumph of community spirit.’



Director Margaret Darvill thanked the donors present and the volunteers who had created

the bridge and canal there, including the visiting restoration groups – the Newbury Working Party Group, the Kent & East Sussex Canal Restoration Group and the Waterways Recovery Group. We had also been greatly assisted by materials suppliers Axtell and Guildford Tipper. The Compton family and Simon and Kirin Alder of adjoining Fanesbridge Cottage were thanked.

Guests were then accompanied down into the new canal cut, to inspect the bridge arch still resting on its wooden formwork, the culvert outfall and the complex bank engineering. The dry weather made the underlying natural clay walkable.

Many of those attending had parked at Birtley Courtyard and had walked from Birtley Bridge No 1 to the site along the marked-out line of the future canal extension from Birtley to Rooks Hill. This was a special arrangement for the event. If you want to visit the site, the nearest suitable parking places are at Bramley Station to the north and on Run Common Road to the south. In either case, the Downs Link / Wey-South Path takes you, with a climb at a bridge, to the Greensand Way close to the site.



*Opposite & right : The two memorial bricks
Top right : Sir Jeremy lays John Compton's brick
Below : A rapt crowd*



Notice of our Annual Meeting

AGENDA OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE WEY & ARUN CANAL TRUST LIMITED 17th October 2026 at 2.30 p.m.

1. Apologies for absence.
 2. To receive and adopt the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 18th October 2025.
 3. To receive the Chairman's Report.
 4. To receive the Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ending 31st December 2025, together with the Directors' and Independent Examiner's Reports.
 5. To appoint the Independent Examiners for 2026 and to authorise the Board of Directors to determine their remuneration.
 6. Election of Directors:-
 - a. Alan Johnson, Tony Coles and Tony Ford, in accordance with Article 30 of the Trust's Articles of Association, retire and Alan Johnson, Tony Coles and Tony Ford are eligible for re-election. Mark Akers, who was appointed by the Board of Directors in the course of the last year under Article 33, retires and is eligible for election.
 - b. Candidates nominated in accordance with section 30 of the Trust's Articles.
 7. To receive a Report from W&A Enterprises Ltd.
 8. To transact any other business proper to an Annual General Meeting.
 9. Date of next meeting – date and venue to be confirmed.
 10. Close of formal meeting.
 11. Award of Jack King Cup and John East Trophy
- Break for Tea**
12. Presentations and Restoration Update

Notes:

1. Apologies for absence should be sent to the WACT Office (support@weyarun.org.uk) before the start of the meeting.
2. Copies of the previous (2025) Minutes will be available at the meeting. If you would like a copy in advance, please contact the WACT Office (support@weyarun.org.uk).
3. Copies of the Report and Accounts will be available on our website and at the meeting. If you would like a hard copy in advance, please contact the WACT Office (support@weyarun.org.uk).
4. We warmly welcome new candidates for election as Directors. The formal requirements are set out in Article 31. In summary:
 - a. A paid-up member may propose in writing a candidate for election and the candidate must sign the proposal to indicate willingness to be appointed.
 - b. The proposal must reach the WACT Office (support@weyarun.org.uk) at least 14 clear days before the meeting – that is, by Friday 2nd October 2026 (the WACT Office has a proposal form although you are not obliged to use it).
5. All members have the right to appoint a proxy under section 324 of the Companies Act 2006 and Article 20 of our Articles of Association.

Annual Meeting - venue

Our Annual General Meeting (see formal notice opposite) will be held at 2:30 p.m. on 17th October 2026 at Pulborough Village Hall, Swan View, Pulborough RH20 2BE.



A new grant-funded tractor

Our Monday Group and Midweek Working Party can now use a new compact tractor and flail which was 75% funded by Loxwood Parish Council. Six volunteers attended a training and familiarisation session and are putting it to good use. Being not much more than a metre wide, it is able to access most of our towpaths. Activities such as trimming a towpath, canal bank or hedge will now take much less time, allowing our teams to work on more sections of the canal.

This is another success for our Grants specialist Caroline Roberts (who featured in the last Wey-South), to add to other equipment grants she secured last year.



Stuart Dawson manages our operations

Stuart has been in post as our Operations Manager since July 2025. He is a lucky catch for us, as he was looking for a new challenge – and he lives in Dunsfold. He came to the UK from South Africa in 1998 with a geology degree and worked for several consultancies in geophysical engineering, investigations and surveys. Further job moves took him to engineering positions with Crossrail (now the Elizabeth Line), at Heathrow Airport and on the new HS2 rail line.

Although he lives near the canal, he was not much aware of it until his wife Jane drew his attention to our job advertisement. The opportunity to bring his skills to a move from 21st century transportation back to the 19th was intriguing, especially as it was on his doorstep.

Based at the Depot, his main Board contact is Margaret Darvill. He meets her and other directors at a monthly Operations Meeting, to plan forthcoming work, allocating jobs to the appropriate volunteer groups and ensuring that all equipment, tools and materials are ready for them on the day – so interaction with Depot Manager Mark Feeney is crucial. Stuart is delighted with our extensive plant and machinery – we are largely self-sufficient, and we have invested wisely, he believes.

Stuart is keen to bring in more female volunteers and also younger volunteers. He sees himself as a facilitator rather than the ‘boss’. He is gently working on the existing superb skills of our volunteers to enhance efficiency and cost-awareness. He encourages Group leaders to develop their own work planning.

He is also passionate about enhancing safe methods of working for volunteers, but, again, gently. When he sees your questionable technique, he will encourage you to ask yourself, ‘What is the worst that could happen to me?’, and let you figure out a better way for yourself. This leads through to a better behavioural-based site-safety culture for the whole Group.

Stuart enjoys meeting members of the public on the towpath - their enthusiasm for the canal is encouraging. He himself likes walking, watching nature and fishing and tasting fine red wine!



Fighting the mighty Arun

As Ashley Bowen reports that 22 paddlers braved the upper Arun on Sunday May 17th in our Annual Wey & Arun Small Boat Rally. Ten launched from the Swan Bridge in Pulborough after availing themselves of the 'memorable bacon butties' from the adjacent Macklyn's Bar. The rest joined a mile upstream at Stopham, using the Pulborough Paddles slipway— our thanks to them for making this possible.

Water depth was better this year than in previous years. This was a double-edged sword - the event is scheduled for boats to reach Pallingham on the last of the flood, but a strong flow overrode the incoming tide and seven boats did not get there.



Fifteen therefore made it the remaining 2½ miles to Pallingham (where our canal joins the Arun) and back. The forecast showers stayed away, although there was a strong headwind on the return journey, as well as vocal objections from a goose protecting her young.

Useful contacts were made with canoe club officials. Thanks are due to all the marshals whose stewarding made the event possible, as well as to our IT Support Officer Tom Crawshaw who had created and controlled the online booking system, including initial emails to previous years' participants and website registration.

First prize for ingenuity went to a beamy dinghy which employed three non-standard means of propulsion – a small sail scavenged from a rubbish tip: a length of scaffolding used as a punting pole; and 'sculling' with a paddle in a rowlock on the transom, wagged from side to side for propulsion.



Earthworks at Rooks Hill

Designer Nigel Yarwood explains modern techniques

At Rooks Hill, we are benefiting from modern knowledge and modern materials to lay a new length of canal up to 7 metres above nearby Cranleigh Waters, despite a steeper slope than at first built, as it is closer to the river. Our analysis of slope stability shows we exceed international safety standards, while allowing for flood conditions. A totally natural canal bank would be a hostage to fortune for our successors – yet we wanted to soften ‘hard’ edges wherever possible as this was not compatible with the image of a rural canal setting and would not enable wildlife to thrive.

After a number of iterations, we have developed a design of a ‘softer’ bank which has a vertical edge of 750mm and the remaining depth below water having a 1 in 2 slope. The upper vertical section is made up from a 600mm square gabion topped with a 300mm diameter coir roll. Both of these are permeable and will mellow as flora and fauna move in. They are held in position by 150mm-square Plastecowood piles, 2.75m long on the canal edge and 1m long on the land side. These are sunk into pre-augured holes at 1m intervals. The piles, donated by John Lewis & Partners, are made from recycled plastic but look like dark wood. The inner and outer piles are secured to each other with long bolts and protected from future water traffic by a fender arrangement.



‘Plastecowood’ piles support gabions and coir roll

The towpath runs directly behind this edge and therefore it has to resist quite high pressures from our vehicles and equipment. The piles are not capable of supporting the edge alone without being tied back into the ground below the towpath. We have achieved this by anchoring the top of the ‘inshore’ piles into a layer of geotextile which is laid under the towpath.

At the new bridge, the canal beneath has concrete sides and a concrete base, with vertical walls. This vertical treatment has had to be continued for a distance south. How could this be softened? How could it be made suitable for construction by volunteers? We rejected more bulk concrete or steel piling. Instead, we chose precast interlocking concrete blocks, locally made, 1.5m x 0.6m x 0.6m and weighing a tonne each, which is manageable by our equipment.



Parallel rows laid on a concrete base form a 1.5m cavity wall, to be filled with concrete and mesh reinforcement, and therefore robust and water-tight. This is topped with a row of gabions, the rubble filling of which has been carefully sorted by our volunteers for the best appearance from the water. None of the blocks, so visible at present, will be seen once the towpath and bank are landscaped and the water is let in.

Further south of the bridge, the canal curves back toward the original alignment. On the west side there, the original bank has settled by around 300mm and now contains a number of trees, with the adjacent ground below canal level. Rather than disturb the original bank which contains the land boundary which we cannot infringe, a bund edge detail has been developed which allows the ground behind to drain naturally and not disturb the original embankment. It is built up from mattresses of locally excavated material wrapped in permeable geotextile and faced with gabion mineral-filled mattresses (*photo overleaf*).

The southern earthworks on the canal's east bank become more complex as the ground drops away to a stream which has passed under the canal within a brick culvert. The culvert has been extended and a new headwall around its exit has been constructed. Between the canal bank and the new headwall, a new slope is set at a proven safe angle. To avoid encroachment into the river flood plain, gabions are positioned at the base of the slope alongside the new culvert headwall. Overall stability of this configuration has been verified at a series of cross sections and either side of the culvert. To give security at the canal bank, the hard edge described above has been adopted. An overflow weir, piped down to the stream, has been included.

So, within 100m of new canal length, four different engineering solutions had to be found for the banks.



Interlocking concrete blocks and gabions in the wall leading to the new bridge

Earthworks at Rooks Hill - continued



*Above : two types of mattresses will hold the western canal bank in place
Below : the overflow weir, which will pipe surplus water down to the stream*



We cannot build a new canal the old way

When canals like ours were originally built, the locks and bridges were in brick or stone, but most of the intervening waterways were merely dug out with sloping sides and waterproofed with clay 'puddling'. With horse-drawn barges and narrowboats, no protection against wash was needed. Later, of course, with powered boats, various types of bank protection against erosion became necessary. Stone and brick were added, and, in more recent times, steel sheet piling.

To cross uneven land, a mixture of cuttings and embankments were needed, such that excavated material could create necessary earthworks nearby, given the limited means of transportation available. Much of the Wey & Arun is a 'contour canal', set into the slope running along and above Cranleigh Waters in the north and the Lox in the south. The embankment forming the towpath on the 'river' side exaggerates the land's natural slope. Civil engineering was not yet ready to design these structures scientifically. The materials used and the inclinations so created have a legacy of failure, as recently on the Llangollen and the Bridgewater Canals. Our own canal has not been immune from embankment breaches, which will not be a surprise to anyone looking down the steep slope from the towpath to the Cranleigh Waters at Birtley.

As we have proved before at Loxwood and today at Rooks Hill, we can use modern engineering and materials to build a waterway that is beautiful, durable and safe.

Dennis Gillen shows visitors newly installed gabions and 'Plastecowood' at Rooks Hill



Discover the Surrey Hills National Landscape



The Wey & Arun Canal from Birtley down to Rowly runs through the Surrey Hills, which includes the North Downs and the Greensand Hills. We are a member of Surrey Hills Enterprises, the business and community network within the wider Surrey Hills National Landscape family, bringing together businesses, charities, partners, and local organisations to support a thriving sustainable rural economy. Our current Rooks Hill restoration project sits firmly within the area.

Just south of London, the Surrey Hills opens out into a landscape of rolling chalk ridges, ancient woodland, winding lanes and picture-postcard villages. It is a place where dramatic views, deep-rooted history and rich wildlife come together, offering a countryside experience that feels both timeless and surprisingly close at hand.

Surrey Hills is one of England's protected National Landscapes, the modern name for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The legal designation remains the same, but the new name better reflects

the national importance of these treasured places and the role they play in protecting nature, heritage and public wellbeing.

National Landscapes

National Landscapes exist to conserve and enhance natural beauty, but that beauty is about far more than scenery alone. It includes geology, landform, habitats, farming traditions, historic settlements and the cultural life that grows from them. Because National Landscape teams do not own the land, their work depends on collaboration with local authorities, landowners, communities and partner organisations across the whole area.

Designated in 1958, the Surrey Hills was among the first protected landscapes of its kind in the country. Today it remains one of the most distinctive, with an unusually varied character that shifts from open downland to heath, river valley and dense woodland, often within just a few miles.

Although the Surrey Hills is now one of the UK's most wooded protected landscapes, with extensive tree cover shaping much of its appearance, it is far from uniform. Its character comes from contrast: steep hills and sheltered valleys, chalk grassland and heathland, traditional mixed farmland, sunken lanes, market towns and villages that seem to have grown naturally from the contours of the land. It is little wonder that the area has long inspired artists, writers, musicians and designers.

Geographically, the Surrey Hills is a rich mosaic. The chalk spine of the North Downs runs from Farnham through Guildford and Dorking towards Reigate and Oxted, creating a landscape of open slopes, wooded escarpments, combs and striking viewpoints. To the south, the Greensand Hills rise into well-known beauty spots such as Leith Hill, Black Down and the Devil's Punch Bowl. Between them lie the valleys of the Wey, Tillingbourne and Mole, while the southern fringe fades into the wooded fields and hedgerows of the Low Weald.

This is not simply a beautiful backdrop. The terrain contains internationally and nationally important habitats that support protected species, and it remains a working landscape shaped by farming, forestry, conservation and rural communities. Its appeal lies in the way nature and human history are woven together rather than kept apart.

What makes the Surrey Hills especially compelling is its sense of place. Here, farmland, woodland, commons, heaths and downs form a landscape mosaic that feels unmistakably English yet wholly distinctive to Surrey. It is grand in some places, intimate in others, and always layered with stories — of geology, craft, settlement, creativity and care for the land.

Nature Recovery Strategy

In response to declarations of Climate Emergency, Surrey Hills has committed to develop a nature recovery strategy for the area. As landowners/managers and custodians of the habitats and environment we oversee, we have the responsibility, privilege and opportunity to make a positive difference. The strategy is aimed at making space for nature, what they aspire to deliver; how they will collaborate to create positive change; who will be involved; and how we plan to fund it all.

To guide collective efforts to nature recovery, a set of seven habitats has been identified that are important to the Surrey Hills. Along with these they have selected a number of indicator species relevant to each habitat.

The Greensand Way which crosses the canal at Rooks Hill, follows the ridge of greensand rock across Surrey and Kent, starting in Haslemere and finishing in Hamstreet, just short of the Kentish coast. This sandstone rock, containing the green coloured mineral glauconite (also known as 'green sand'), gives the route its distinctive name.

More information

Surrey Hills Enterprises runs local functions, including the annual Surrey Hills Wood Fair, Sept 12th & 13th at Cranleigh, where we will be exhibiting as usual - see the events in the excellent 'surreyhill.org' website. As we reported in the last issue of Wey-South, the presence of part of our canal in the Surrey Hills area enabled us to obtain two grants of nearly £12,000 for equipment from DEFRA's 'Farming In Protected Landscapes' scheme.



A Surrey Hills Water Vole

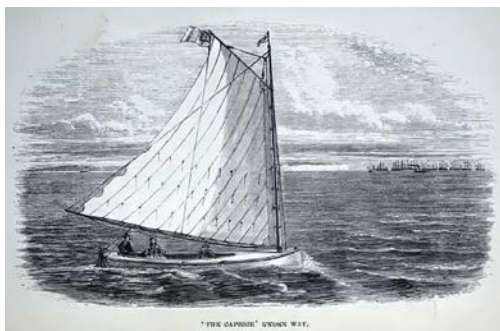
Election news

May 2026 saw the first elections for the 'shadow' West Surrey Council which from May 2027 will combine the responsibilities of our District Councils such as Waverley Borough Council and of Surrey County Council. This new 'unitary' council will be our single contact point for the likes of Planning, Highways and Leisure. (Parish and town councils are not affected.) Liberal Democrats will form the West Surrey administration with 56 out of the 90 elected councillors.

From Gennets Wood south, we're in West Sussex, where the recent 'normal' elections took the county from being Conservative-run to 'no overall control', with Reform and the Liberal Democrats each taking 23 of the 70 divisions. Our canal passes through six West Sussex county divisions, two being Liberal Democrat and the rest Conservative.

Some of our yesterdays

In our October 2025 edition we included a short mention of a trip down the length of our canal by a man in a sea kayak. In the article he subsequently wrote - which can be read in full on our website - he suggested that he might have been the first to manage the feat for 152 years, when J B Dashwood did so in his una-rigged boat 'Caprice'. We asked whether any reader knew this to be accurate, or had anyone else attempted it in that time? We did rather give the game away though as we mentioned Tony Pratt's video of 2002, a film of his own attempt at navigating the whole of the canal, and on to Portsmouth. How many people have tried, and how many have succeeded? We take a look.



Dashwood's voyage

Mr Dashwood of course was not the first person to navigate what was then the Wey & Arun Junction Canal, what many now call 'London's lost route to the sea', but he was amongst the last, for at about the time he made his journey, 1867*, permission to formally close the canal was being sought. He would though have been one of the earliest to make the trip for pleasure rather than for the necessity of work. His book "The Thames to the Solent or The log of 'the Caprice'" was published in 1868 but seems not to have been a roaring success.

Dashwood's una boat 'Caprice' nears Portsmouth

'The Spectator' did at least carry a short and begrudging review but could only say :

'He does not seem to have as ready a pen as some other adventurers of the same class, and makes out his little volume with scraps from guide-books, which we could well have been spared. Few persons, we fancy, will care to follow his route, which the number of locks, all to be opened by the navigator's own hands, must make tedious.'

Some might wonder if J B Dashwood was inspired to make this journey and to write his small book by the publication of Jerome K Jerome's famous 'Three men in a boat', but his predates that story by more than twenty years. The humorous novel was not written and published until 1889. His adventure was really very early in the history of pleasure boating and adventuring, and perhaps as notable was the fact that his new wife accompanied him on their exploration, not a commonplace activity for a lady in mid-Victorian Britain. They also took with them their dog, a Pomeranian called Buz, and in doing so set a precedent for others who have followed after them.

**not 1872 as we incorrectly said in October.*

Jack De Manio

We know of no further attempts to navigate the length of the canal - successful or otherwise - for the next next hundred years. The one we do know of is covered by this extract from John Wood's 2012 book 'The Wey South Project' :

Another event which brought the plight of the canal to people's attention in 1967 was the attempt to sail the canal by Jack de Manio (a popular radio broadcaster of the time) to mark the centenary of Dashwood's epic voyage through the canal..... De Manio's attempt was at the instigation of P A L Vine and the AA's 'Drive' magazine. The story of this and the difficulties encountered appeared in the Autumn 1967 edition of 'Drive'.



Jack De Manio poses for the camera in 1967. The boat may look something like J B Dashwood's 'Caprice' (opposite page) but he claimed it was borrowed from Regent's Park boating lake.

It seems to me that this piece of journalism, well written though it is, was little more than a PR exercise and in those terms it made for an excellent article that must have raised awareness of the canal and the attempt to restore it. His trip was never going to be a serious attempt at navigating the length of the canal however, as all involved will have been well aware of the obstacles he would face, which is underscored by the fact that Mr De Manio describes his acoutrements thus :

Among Dashwood's requirements were a pony and groom (in case he needed a tow) and a keg of beer. I too had a horse and groom standing by - plus an outboard motor and (for reasons which will become apparent later) a five-ton Ford lorry. The beer was a must and I added a bottle of rum in case the nights turned cold.

Given that the Guardian's obituary writer said of Jack de Manio : *'Hugely popular for his, erm, relaxed style, he would often require sobering up before broadcast and was seemingly unable to read the time.'* we should not be surprised at his priorities. And the lorry was, of course, to carry the boat pretty much the length of the Wey & Arun Canal.

By the way, for his trip De Manio's dog of choice was a harlequin Great Dane named the 'Maharajah of Jaipur'.

Tony Pratt

Tony Pratt, one of our members, wrote a preface to a 2004 reprint of Dashwood's book in which he touched on his own 2002 attempt to retrace his steps, writing :

"This account of a journey through the route while it was still in its first incarnation has always been a vital part of its history. It has inspired many including myself to become a member and it also provided the basis for a modern journey on video, "The Lost Wey", retracing much of Dashwood's own experiences.

.....I visited many of the places described in the original book while making the video and found much of the scenery barely changed since 1867. Dashwood's words fit the scenery today almost as well as they did then, a testament to the timeless attraction of journeys by water in a small boat."

Tony's plan was to replicate J B Dashwood's journey accompanied by a film crew, and make a serious attempt to navigate the canal.

His video is still available to purchase – we still have a few copies – and it's well worth watching, not only because it's well made and Tony is an excellent narrator and star, but also because he appears to have covered much ground. The film was made sufficiently long ago for the improvements that have been made in the last twenty or so years to be striking. And he does seem to have attempted to use his folding boat wherever possible, and when it wasn't he can be seen trudging along, pulling the boat behind him on wheels, with *his* accompanying dog (a Rough Collie called 'Rowan') attached to the boat by collar and lead bringing up the rear.



Tony Pratt - in striped jacket and boater - re-enacts Dashwood's trip with dog Rowan.

Tom Dymond

Tom is the Bristolian mentioned in our introduction, who tackled the southward trip in May 2025. He reached the Wey & Arun via the Kennet & Avon, the Thames and the Wey. He then took four days to traverse our canal's route and the Arun, paddling restored waters whenever possible and portaging when not. In the process, he managed to fall in at Guns Mouth and to be ambushed by a herd of cattle near the Arun at Wisborough Green - Dashwood suffered a similar attack - as he described it : *"I came upon a field with cows in.... When I entered the field they were a couple of hundred yards away. By the time I was halfway through it, they were upon me. Whether they thought my kayak, rumbling and clattering along behind me, was food or foe I do not know. What I do know is that when a herd of cows starts running at me, I will not hang around. I dropped my precious cargo and sprinted for the cover of a tree astride the canal side. From this relative safety, I watched aghast as the cows approached my kayak at first tentatively - which by now must have looked very much like a trough full of lunch - and then go quite mad over it."*

Fortunately no real damage was done and Tom was able to continue on his way and did eventually reach the sea at Littlehampton. But he wasn't the first since Dashwood. That was Tony Pratt.

P.S. We have recently had one further possible journey brought to our attention, by one John 'Rob Roy' MacGregor in 1868. Details are very sketchy, but we will investigate.

So who was J B Dashwood?

As a result of an assertion by Paul Vine in his book 'London's Lost Route to the Sea', for over 40 years it has been understood that our man's middle name was 'Bacon', but Vine did not say how he knew this or list his sources. Since then those who have researched further naturally followed his lead, thus identifying Jarrett Bacon Dashwood, the son of a London surgeon. This man lived in a variety of places, latterly Beckenham, Kent, and had a similarly varied career path - warehouseman, poet, teacher, estate agent... He died in 1907 aged 75 and his wife Maria lived for another 28 years, dying in 1935 at the remarkable age of 105. However Vine and others extracted a few important details about the man, from Dashwood's account of his voyage, which don't all fit comfortably with Jarrett Bacon Dashwood. In recent weeks a new and different candidate has emerged whose life and residence more closely match the details J B Dashwood gave, and research continues. We hope to let you know more in our October edition.

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Spring boat trips

Sadly, by the time you read this another year of dry weather will probably mean that Loxwood boat trips are restricted or even suspended. Probably this is just the way it is nowadays and we have to adapt as best we can. However this year's season did get off to a successful start with Mothering Sunday trips on 15th March, then a long weekend of Easter trips and as many private and public trips as we could manage. As we all know, we had to endure endless weeks of grey skies at the start of the year, but 24th April was a rare fine day and Keith Lyall took full advantage to capture some fine pictures of a trip on *Wiggonholt*.



Heading north from Brewhurst Lane Bridge



Here Loxwood Lock is in the background

Skipper's cake



Chris Jones, one of our tripboat skippers, wrote to us recently saying ‘You might be interested in this picture of the amazing cake that my partner Barbara commissioned for my 80th birthday celebration. *Wiggonholt* recreated in cake in amazing detail. I was delighted, of course.’ And quite right too. We understand the cake was commissioned from cake maker Clare Abson whose website is afancypiece.com.

Exploring the canal the Wey-South way

Since the spring of 2024 the Wey-South team has been exploring the canal on foot – to show you what you can see of the canal from public rights of way. With this final piece, we have covered the whole 23 miles, in eight sections each of which you can easily explore in a day's walk. We didn't cover the route in order, but here are the sections from north to south:

Wey-South 210 (June 2025) – Gun's Mouth (Shalford) to Rooks Hill (south of Bramley)

Wey-South 211 (October 2025) – Rooks Hill to Elmbridge (near Cranleigh)

Wey-South 212 (February 2026) – Elmbridge to Fast Bridge (near Alfold)

Wey-South 206 (March 2024) – Fast Bridge to Tickner's Heath Road

Wey-South 209 (February 2025) – Tickner's Heath Road to Rosemary Lane (near Alfold)

Wey-South 213 (this issue) – Rosemary Lane to Drungewick Lane (near Loxwood)

Wey-South 208 (September 2024) – Drungewick Lane to Newbridge (near Wisborough Green)

Wey-South 207 (June 2024) – Newbridge to Pallingham

If you are missing any of these magazines, our back issues are on our website (we post the latest issue roughly a month after publication).

We have kept the best until last, as the Loxwood section (*see overleaf*) is the only one where you can go along the whole towpath on public rights of way – nearly all of it is a bridleway so you can take your bike (or horse) if you wish.

Rosemary Lane to Gennets Bridge

A canal walkthrough

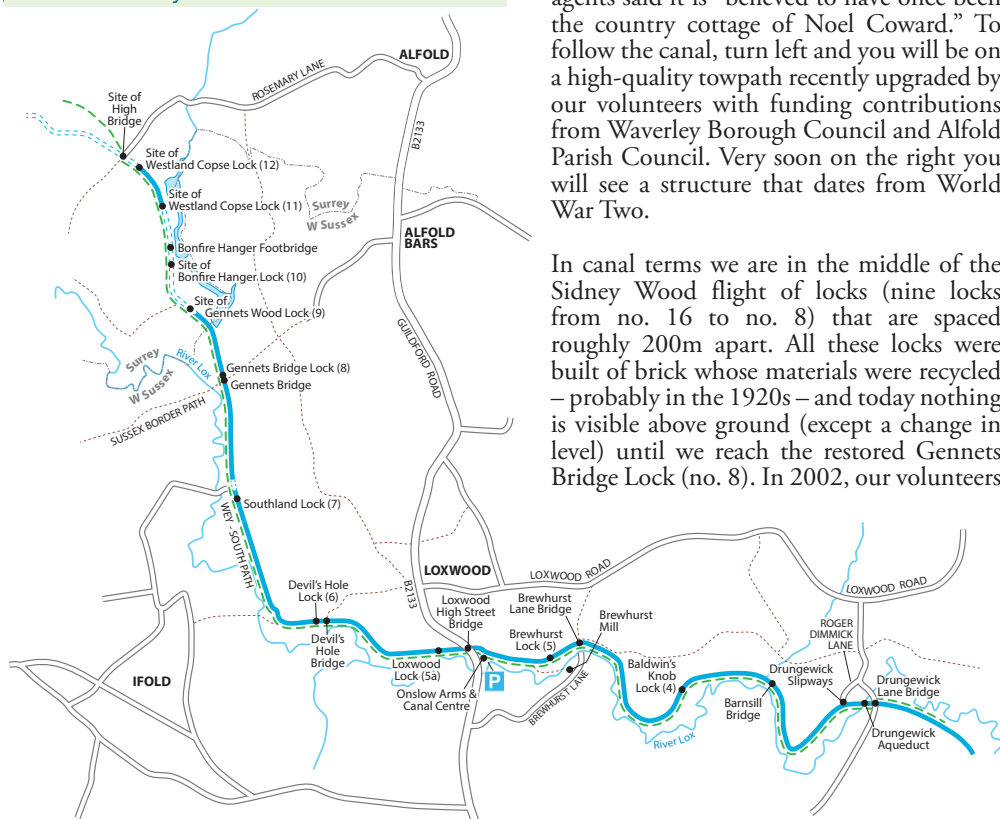


*The start of the walk -
Rosemary Lane crosses the canal*

Rosemary Lane is a winding single-track road leading west from Alföld village to the canal route. It is a public road from Alföld to the canal (and continues as a bridleway along the farm track beyond the canal), but we don't recommend driving as parking opportunities are very limited. It would be best to start from Loxwood or Alföld. The Loxwood area is very well off for footpaths – some circular walks including the canal are available on our website, but there are many other options.

Where Rosemary Lane crosses the canal route was the site of High Bridge – nothing of the bridge is visible today. If you have come from Alföld then Sydney Lodge is on your right and the canal route is in its garden. The last time this house was sold the estate agents said it is “believed to have once been the country cottage of Noel Coward.” To follow the canal, turn left and you will be on a high-quality towpath recently upgraded by our volunteers with funding contributions from Waverley Borough Council and Alföld Parish Council. Very soon on the right you will see a structure that dates from World War Two.

In canal terms we are in the middle of the Sidney Wood flight of locks (nine locks from no. 16 to no. 8) that are spaced roughly 200m apart. All these locks were built of brick whose materials were recycled – probably in the 1920s – and today nothing is visible above ground (except a change in level) until we reach the restored Gennets Bridge Lock (no. 8). In 2002, our volunteers



built dams at the sites of locks 9, 10 and 11, but after some flooding problems the planks in the middle of the dams had to be removed. Late in 2025, our Thursday Group worked on the dams again, aiming to retain some water so that this section looks like a canal.

On the opposite side on the canal from the towpath, you will see fishing lakes that were created in the 1990s. If you wish to explore in this direction there are several public footpaths including one that crosses the canal on a footbridge between the sites of Locks 11 and 10. After the site of Lock 9 (Gennets Wood), you will soon see a sluice on the right – this is the actual boundary between Surrey and West Sussex. The Sussex Border Path, a long-distance footpath, crosses the canal at the restored Lock 8 (Gennets Bridge). This lock was rebuilt mainly by our volunteers and completed in 2018. To save precious funds, we will not install lock gates until navigation here is possible.

Gennets Bridge to Devil's Hole Lock

The section beyond Lock 8 was greatly improved by our volunteers between 2018 and 2023. Still to be tackled is the short section on both sides of a causeway where Ifold Bridge Lane crosses the canal. Just beyond the causeway is Southland Lock (no. 7) which was rebuilt mainly by our volunteers and opened in 2014. This lock is fully operable but to date it has only seen a very few boat movements. Most boat trips from Loxwood turn round at the winding hole just south of the lock, although sometimes we



One of the temporary dams north of Gennets Bridge Lock



The bridge at Devil's Hole Lock



Loxwood Lock, bridge and towpath

land passengers immediately below the lock where we recently rebuilt the steps.

The canal continues in a straight line until it reaches the double bend known by our boat crews as the 'chicane'. In very wet weather, restoring the channel here was exceptionally difficult. The towpath side was a quagmire where a large digger got stuck and had to be rescued. Rather than deal with the morass, our team decided to take advantage of a widened section on the opposite side (probably an original winding hole) for a slightly new canal route. Just after the bend comes Devil's Hole Lock (no. 6) which was restored by our volunteers and officially reopened in 2010. This was the northernmost stone-built lock on the canal and was badly damaged by Canadian troops practising for the Dieppe Raid in 1942.

The towpath below the lock, where there is now a winding hole. Before the canal, the River Lox flowed in a loop through this area. Rather than building expensive aqueducts to carry the canal across the river and then back again, the canal engineers straightened the course of the river, to keep it on the south side of the canal.

Loxwood to Drungewick Lane

Around Loxwood High Street we completely changed the landscape between 2005 and 2009. Originally the road crossed the canal on a hump-backed bridge. After the canal closed, the bridge disappeared and was replaced by a causeway. Building a new hump-backed bridge in the 21st century to carry a busy public road was out of the question. The canal had to go under the road. So we now have a new Loxwood Lock (no. 5a) and Loxwood High Street Bridge (officially a tunnel) where the canal level is 1.8m (6ft) lower than previously. Formally speaking, the towpath under the bridge is not a public right of way, but a permissive footpath. The bridleway route crosses the road on the level.

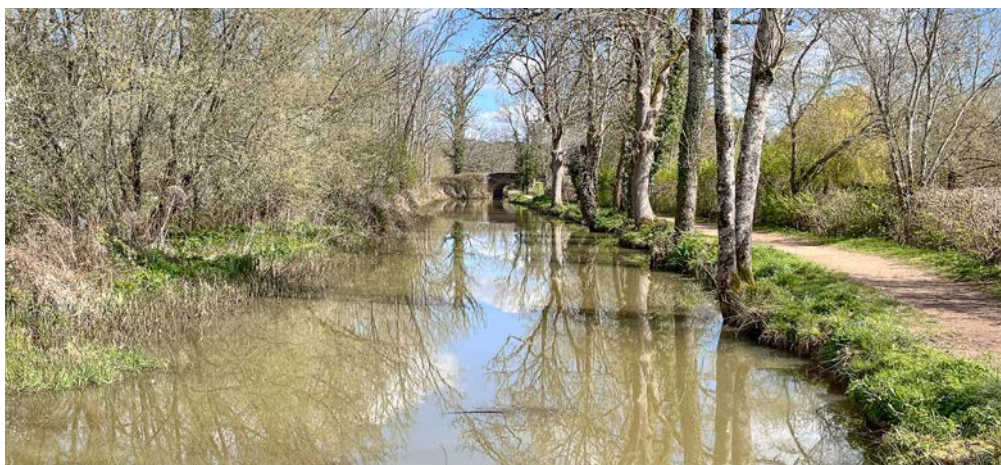




The Canal Centre, with our fleet of tripboats moored - Wiggonholt at the front

Just past the bridge is the centre of our tripboat operation, where our boats are moored opposite our Canal Centre (opened in 2012) and next to the large winding hole. Next to the Canal Centre you will find our orientation board and a Loxwood History board showing historic sites in the village. Round the next bend on the canal is Brewhurst Lock (no. 5). Our locks were generally built with a rise or fall of about 2.4m (8ft). At Brewhurst, after the High Street work, it is now about 0.6m (2ft). We decided to conserve the bottom lock gates – they are still their original height. Entering the lock on a boat from Loxwood, you can imagine that you are at the foot of a rising staircase lock flight rather than descending a single ‘downhill’ lock. We opened Brewhurst Lane Bridge after rebuilding in 1995 – like several other rebuilt bridges it is a modern concrete structure designed to look like a traditional canal bridge.

The canal stays close to the River Lox and follows its curves through the Birch Copse section. Here we have a pumping station allowing us to take water from the river (subject to Environment Agency limits). After another long bend is Baldwin’s Knob Lock (no.4), which was the first restored



lock on the canal to see regular operational use (from 1995, when our tripboat operation started). Barnsill Bridge (opened in 1989) was the first bridge to be rebuilt on the Loxwood section. Next to the bridge was our first slipway, where our tripboat *Zachariah Keppel* was launched in 1994. Round another sharp bend, the canal approaches Drungewick Lane. The restoration of the canal in this area was our most ambitious project before the Loxwood High Street one. It involved our first rebuilt bridge on a public road (Drungewick Lane) and a new aqueduct – the original was destroyed by floods – which we officially opened in 2003. In 2004 we added the double slipway – the one on the left can be used to pull our largest boats out of the canal for maintenance and the one on the right is for smaller boats that can be towed behind a road vehicle.



The Loxwood section shows the public what a restored canal is like and demonstrates our impressive skills and resources. It could not have started without Peter and Gordon Foulger, who bought two farms at Loxwood in the 1980s and began the restoration of the section. Peter served as our Chairman from 1997 and 2009 and we are forever grateful to him and his father.

Meet the volunteer Mark Akers - our new Finance Director

What's your personal background?

I grew up in West Sussex living in Billingshurst and Drungewick Lane before moving away, so I have a strong connection to the area around the canal. My father volunteered on the Canal's boat trips so I guess the canal must run in the family.

What's your career background?

After qualifying as a Chartered Accountant, I had a long career on the Finance side of the oil business in exploration and production companies operating in the UK North Sea and internationally in Asia and Africa. I ended up as Chief Financial Officer and during my career I held a variety of positions including commercial roles and public relations.

When and how did you first get involved with the canal?

I began working in the Mid Week Working Party (MWWP) at the end of 2023 when the main task was clearing bonfire Hanger in preparation for the upgraded towpath. Since then, I have been to many of the canal locations, mainly for clearance and maintenance of the canal and footpaths.

What's been your working party experience?

I have enjoyed being part of the MWWP. I like the variety, the camaraderie that is created when a group join together in a common purpose and the experience of being out in the fresh air in one of our many beautiful locations. All I had to offer was a handsaw and loppers but there is always plenty to do whether you are operating machinery or not. Getting soaked to the skin occasionally is an occupational hazard best avoided if you can!

What are your initial impressions of your new Finance Director role? What are the challenges?

The role of Finance Director had been vacant for some time, so its responsibilities had been shared amongst other Board members. The rigours of the financial calendar meant there was only a short time to reintegrate the role. I was quickly thrown into the preparation of the Financial Statements for 2025, along with the day to day running of the finance function of meeting payments on time, recovering VAT on our expenditures and reclaiming Gift Aid tax relief on the donations we receive. (Recovering VAT and reclaiming Gift Aid tax relief are important tax concessions we enjoy as a charity.) Reporting to the Board on budgets and cost control and preserving the wishes of our donors by segregating funds for the projects they particularly wished to benefit are also important aspects of the role.



I have been impressed with the quality of the people giving their time to a multitude of different roles, and how they are able to work together to keep our activities moving forward. This applies on the administration side, in the working parties and at our various locations such as depots and the Canal Centre.

What's your message to anyone thinking of volunteering?

Joining a working party is a good way to see the various parts of the canal and to understand how the overall task of opening up the route is being undertaken. If you are fit and want to contribute a day a week there is no better way to get out and feel you are contributing at the same time.

On the administrative side, the canal always needs a wide range of skill sets and the experience volunteers can bring. You will find like-minded and motivated people willing to work with you.

Apart from the canal, what are your other interests?

I like to get away skiing in Austria for a week every winter and I play golf intermittently (and badly!) around the year. The rest of the time I enjoy walking with my wife and travel, especially seeing my children and grandsons who live overseas.

Restoration and Maintenance News

Ten teams of volunteers are out most weeks, restoring the canal and maintaining what we've restored. They're backed by the Tickner's Depot volunteers. Come and join us!

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

Spring brings out the workers

Both the Midweek Working Party and the Monday Group reported an excellent turnout of volunteers during April – as many as 31 for the MWWP, which Margaret Darvill says is a record. Many Groups have put in shifts at Rooks Hill. The Thursday Group has been adding Plastecowood rails to the gabion basket banks which had been piled (also with Plastecowood) by our EWG team. The Northern Working Party has been bricklaying, concreting and filling those gabion baskets – likewise the Saturday Group. The MWWP cleared the track from Birtley Courtyard to Rooks Hill for members attending the bricklaying ceremony.

Loxwood Lock clog blog

It was fortunate that a problem with Loxwood Lock was detected by Boat Group PEST in good time for tripboat workings not to be hindered. The team was in transit on *May Upton* from Devil's Hole Lock back to the Canal Centre. One top gate could not be closed, despite prolonged efforts, and the Northern Working Party was called in.



Look closely - there's a man behind the lock gate

The stop planks stored at the lock were slotted in so that the chamber could be drained for inspection. A piece of wood was found jammed in the mitre. The obstruction and some silt were removed, restoring the lock to good working order.

Tracmaster flail meets its match

The Tracmaster is hugely productive when clearing undergrowth, but it won't win against hidden barbed wire. So it was back to the depot for untangling and removal.



Don't do this with your Flymo at home!



Dredging – little and often (unfortunately)

Why is so much dredging needed in such a lightly-used canal? In many places, the nearby River Lox will regularly flood and deposit fresh silt into the canal. It may even wash the arisings from our dredging, carefully deposited on the bank, back into the canal whence it came. More silt comes from run-off from adjoining fields. Our Dredger Group's efforts are self-limited. Ideally, a tub would be filled nearly to the gunwales, to be taken away for emptying nearby. In practice, we are dredging only because it is shallow, which means we can use only a quarter of the tub's available capacity most of the time.

Dredger Pauline gets some TLC



Have clay, will travel

The new canal at Rooks Hill is being dug through canal-quality clay – and there's a surplus of it. The Thursday Group took a truckload to Drungewick to infill a section of eroded towpath bank opposite the slipway.

Hedges – a lesson for all of us?

At home, our default cross-section for a hedge is usually rectangular. Nick Baxter's Hedgelaying Team has better ideas for our canal hedges, where a profile tapering to a narrow flat top is preferred. This 'A-shape' promotes growth at all heights, not just at the top. Regrowth of a properly-laid hedge near ground level keeps the hedge thick, stock-proof and attractive to birds.

Nick's team allows 2 – 3 years between cutting top layers to provide enough upward growth to lay the hedge properly. Flailing may be the quickest method of removing growth, but it renders the stripped branches open to rot and fungus and it encourages gaps at lower levels. It has to be used thoughtfully, and only as a part of hedge maintenance.



How not to do it!

Register

We have been saddened to hear of the deaths of ...

Derek ‘Dusty’ Miller



Derek Miller, known to all as “Dusty”, passed away in 2025 at the age of 85 after a long period of poor health. His active “WACT career” spanned 25 immensely eventful and successful years from 1993 to 2018. We remember Dusty most of all for his long association with our trading company (W&A Enterprises Ltd). He became a director of the trading company very soon after it was set up in 1995, then Chairman from 1999 to 2015.

Dusty worked for the BBC for 41 years, starting as a Technical Operator and retiring as a Production Facilities Manager. Although Dusty was a highly effective manager, he was also very much hands-on and was a member of Eric Walker’s TSG (now known as EWG). Dusty was not afraid to put on his waders and get stuck into lock repairs. Wearing a jacket and tie, he had proud moments in the spotlight at naming ceremonies for our tripboats *Wiggonholt* (2009) and *Josias Jessop* (2010).

Dusty was an enthusiastic boater; he and his wife Mary had their own narrowboat for many years. The impressive progress of our

boat trip activities since the mid-1990s owes a great deal to Dusty’s leadership. In his time, our tripboat fleet expanded from one boat to four (for a short time when we had the small electric cabin cruiser Pete Wynn) and the funds generated rose in proportion.

Pat Crawley

We are sad to report the death of Pat Crawley. She & Kevin Crawley (Kevin passed away in 2020) were very much a team. They were keen boaters and together they took charge of boat crew training for many years. Among others that they trained in 2004 were Sally Schupke & Julian Morgan, who are still on the crew register today. We recognised Pat & Kevin’s contribution by jointly awarding them the John East Trophy in 2009. One job they very happily took on was bringing a small narrowboat from Farncombe Boathouse to Gun’s Mouth in Shalford for boat trips on the morning of our Annual Meeting in 2013. Outside boating, Pat & Kevin were scout leaders and involved in an amateur dramatic group – they were never short of costumes for special events such as Christmas and Easter. Every visit to the canal meant a trip from their home near Sevenoaks, an exceptional commitment in itself.

Sandy Henney served as a director of our trading company from 2016 until 2019, years that included the most profitable period in our Boat Group’s history. Sandy’s contribution included a very successful boat crew recruiting campaign. Probably this was just slightly less challenging than Sandy’s previous role as Press Secretary to the then Prince Charles from 1993 to 2000, a turbulent era that saw Charles and Diana’s divorce and Diana’s death.

We have only just learned that Sandy Henney’s husband **Bob Marsh** passed away in 2025. Bob volunteered with us as a tripboat skipper. Like Sandy, he had retired from a very demanding job – in Bob’s case this was as head of the Metropolitan Police’s Royalty and Diplomatic Protection Group.

Another former Boat Group volunteer who is sadly no longer with us is **David Smart**, who served as a boat crew member.

Membership report

24 new members have joined us in the last 4 months, taking our total membership to 2,680. We would like to extend a very warm welcome to the following new members.

<i>Neil Baker</i>	<i>Nick Christian</i>	<i>Bob Fennelly</i>	<i>John Fevyer</i>
<i>Thomas Fulda</i>	<i>Chris Garner</i>	<i>Graham Harris</i>	<i>Viv Holder</i>
<i>Peter Jewson</i>	<i>Keith Kingham</i>	<i>Justine Keet-Mayers</i>	<i>David Pillinger</i>
<i>David Prout</i>	<i>Stephen Richards</i>	<i>Michael Robinson</i>	<i>Terrence Sheppard</i>
<i>John-Paul Smith</i>	<i>Anthony Smith</i>	<i>Caroline Soubry-Smith</i>	<i>Leigh Smith</i>
<i>Janet Turner</i>	<i>Paul Whatley</i>	<i>Alan Yewer</i>	<i>Rana Yewer</i>

We have learned with regret of the death of:

<i>Tony Barron</i>	<i>Tony Simmons</i>	<i>Peter Fryer</i>	<i>Dusty Miller</i>
<i>Ray Parsons</i>	<i>Ray Spry-Shute</i>	<i>David Smart</i>	<i>Angela Acott</i>
<i>Mrs BM Hopkins</i>	<i>John Davies</i>	<i>Rosemary Browning</i>	<i>Sandy Henney</i>
<i>Bob Marsh</i>	<i>Tony Lewis</i>	<i>Pat Crawley</i>	<i>Mrs G Goldsmith</i>

The more members we have, the stronger our voice in discussions with local authorities and other stakeholders. Please tell your family and friends about the canal and recommend joining us.

John Tovell
membership@weyarun.org.uk

Wey-South is the magazine of the Wey & Arun Canal Trust which 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.

From 2025, Wey-South is published in the second week of February, June and October. Please submit copy by the end of December, April and August.

All communications and copy either by post to *Wey-South* at the Office, or by email to weysouth@weyarun.org.uk.

Address change, non-delivery, etc: please notify the Membership Secretary at the Office or email to membership@weyarun.org.uk.

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

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Donate? or lend? or both!

With your generous donations, we are close to completing Rooks Hill Phase 1. We now want to start Phase 2 this summer. We also need your help with a second project.

Donate for Rooks Hill

We are appealing for £84,000 to fully fund Phases 1 and 2 of the Rooks Hill project. We are moving straight on to Phase 2 to create the new canal extension from Birtley. We have a generous Council grant of £249,500 (80% of the projected cost), but that is conditional on us raising the remaining 20% (£62,400) and we still need just under £22,000 to fully fund phase 1.

To make your valuable
contribution to our Rooks Hill
appeal please go to:
[weyarun.org.uk/
backdrop/rooks-hill-appeal](http://weyarun.org.uk/backdrop/rooks-hill-appeal)

Lend for Tickner's!

To start building the new Tickner's Road Bridge taking Dunsfold Road over the canal, we first have to pay a £397,000 deposit to Surrey County Council, the highway authority. This is returned to us in stage payments as the construction proceeds.

Just as we did when building and upgrading Loxwood High Street Bridge, and providing we receive a suitable tender for the bridge construction, we will be asking for interest-free loans of £3,000 or more to help fund this deposit. We will pay back your share from the stage payments as soon as we receive them. The timing of this cannot be guaranteed.

If you think you can help and would like more information, please contact Mark Akers at mark.akers@weyarun.org.uk

Read about progress on our projects throughout this magazine

