

The Magazine of the
Wey & Arun Canal Trust
Issue 214 October 2026

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Photos in this issue were taken by Keith Lyall, Julian Morgan, Robin Gardner, Trevor Lewis and Jonathan Copeland.

Front cover:
Excavating Pallingham dry dock stonework and sill
Photo by Keith Lyall

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Issue 214 October 2026

News headlines

Digging up the past at Pallingham…

A two-week archaeological dig at Pallingham Docks confirmed much of what we believed to have been the function of the docks at the canal's southern end and threw new light on how they operated. A cill and grooves for stop planks showed for sure they were designed as dry docks for the building and repairing of barges. The floorplan of a carpenter's workshop was revealed, with confirmation that this use continued after the closure of the canal. Industrial and domestic items were unearthed. More digging, on site and in archives, will follow (p25).

…and digging out the future at Rooks Hill

Phase 2 of the Rooks Hill Project is under way. A totally new length of canal is being excavated, to join the existing canal at Birtley south to the nearly-completed new Rooks Hill Bridge. A new towpath along it will open up a fresh walking route, in association with the parallel Wey-South Path on the course of the old railway (P10).

Our Rooks Hill appeal passes £500,000

And we're still appealing for more! – see p16.

Tickner's Heath Road Bridge on hold

The building of the planned bridge on Dunsfold Road to allow two sections of canal to be reunited will not now start – for the present. It has to be built by a professional contractor – and estimates received for the cost would over-stretch our current resources (pp 5 & 6).

Towpath repairs

By the time you read this, work should be well under way on some small repairs at Bonfire Hanger, with further repair and improvement work in Loxwood to start in October.

Royal recognition for our volunteers?

We have been nominated for the King's Award for Volunteering, the highest Award given to local volunteering groups in the UK (p4).

Birtley Embankment strengthening

Steel piling and slope reinforcement at a vulnerable spot (p9) will prevent a recurrence of a nearby breach of fifty years ago (p8).

Annual Meeting - final reminder

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at 2:30 p.m. on 17th October 2026 at Pulborough Village Hall, Swan View, RH20 2BF.



Rooks Hill phase 2 - panoramic progress - see p10

King's Award for Volunteering

We have been nominated for the King's Award for Voluntary Service and, following an assessment of suitability in Surrey, our nomination will now be considered for a National Award later this year.

Created in 2002 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and previously known as The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS), the Award has been shining a light on the fantastic work of voluntary groups from all across the UK for many years. Equivalent to an MBE, the KAVS is the highest award given to local voluntary groups in the UK, awarded in perpetuity.

The process started with a good friend and supporter nominating us. The supporter completed the detailed nomination form and found two other people unconnected with us who thought we were a successful and worthy organisation to provide required letters of support. Deputy Lieutenants of Surrey then assessed the suitability of all the candidates, then we were interviewed and had to answer many searching questions.

On Wednesday 15th July, volunteers Dave Miller, Mark Feeney and Margaret Darvill attended a reception at Loseley House, hosted by Michael More-Molyneux CVO, the Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey, along with nine other groups who have been successfully shortlisted from Surrey.

Details of the ten organisations have now all been submitted to the Cabinet Office where they will be assessed against groups from the rest of the country. We will know on November 14th, on publication of the King's Birthday Honours list, if we are one of the lucky ones to receive the Award.

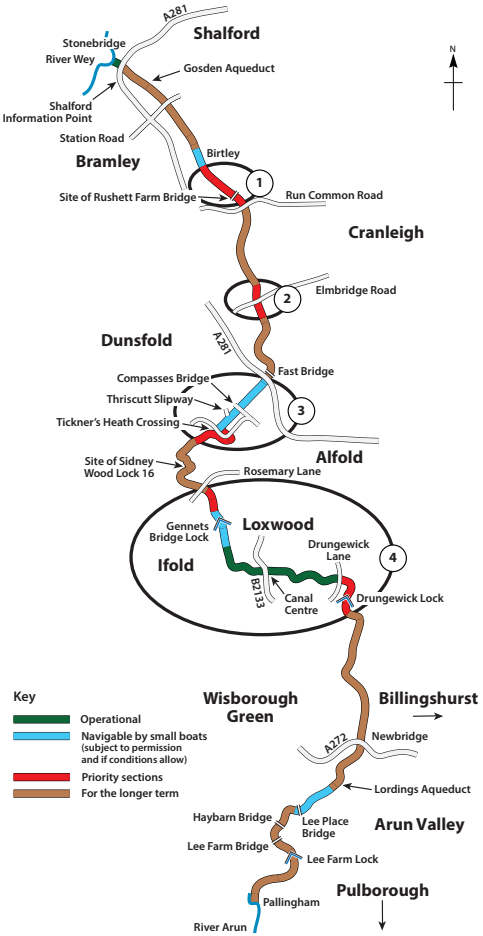
We are delighted to be recognised by Surrey for all the great work of our volunteers, the volunteering opportunities we provide and the positive impact we make in the local community.



Margaret Darvill, Mark Feeney (left) and Dave Miller receive a certificate from Surrey Lord-Lieutenant Michael More-Molyneux

Priority Projects update

Back in April, at our Spring Meeting (and covered in the last *Wey-South*), Gordon Powell outlined the progress on our three-year priority plan and the plan for the next three years. Since then, excellent progress at Rooks Hill has continued, but a difficult decision to pause the work on the Tickner's Crossing project has been announced.



South of Bramley

Work on Rooks Hill phase I is nearing completion and visiting work-parties helped us kick-start work on phase 2. A full report can be read on pages 10 to 15. Planning for phase 3 is underway and a grant application is being prepared to contribute to the costs of building a new Fanesbridge lock.

To continue the restoration to the south, additional land is required and negotiations are underway.

At Birtley, an engineering assessment was completed to understand the risk associated with two steep sections of embankment and a programme of work agreed to strengthen the embankment. A report can be found on page 9. Plans to reinstate the towpath north of Birtley Bridge 1 and to create a new circular walk to the Downs Link are being developed.

Cranleigh / Elmbridge

On Elmbridge Road, we are working to secure a road crossing with navigable height, which requires an agreement with Surrey County Council for the rebuilding of the road bridge. This is tied to developing a new approach for property and land purchase. It is a complex challenge, but we have an experienced team focused on finding a solution to unlock this important road crossing and open up a new restoration opportunity.

Dunsfold and Alfold

In June, we announced that we will reluctantly place the Tickner's Crossing Project on hold, after tender costs for the construction of a new road bridge came in much higher than expected, due in large part to recent substantial increases in construction materials costs.

The Trust's Board has concluded that it cannot proceed with the project at this time, as the costs would exceed the organisation's available cash and reserves of £0.9 million. Moving ahead would also put other projects at risk and deplete our Property fund, limiting the Trust's ability to respond quickly to future land acquisition opportunities.

A major factor in initiating the Tickner's Crossing project was the continuity it would provide with the Dunsfold Park development of new housing and a country park including a 2km restored section of canal immediately to the north of the planned crossing. However, that development has not progressed, so the canal remains within the airfield site and is not yet open for public access. It is currently unclear when it will be possible to run boats along this section.

At Tickner's Crossing, the completed footbridge and bridleway route will remain in readiness for future completion of the project. The Trust will clear and tidy the rest of the site and temporary road, and temporarily reinstate the area as a green space. A report of the work our volunteers are carrying out to "put the site to sleep" can be found on the next page.

Loxwood

Re-opening the navigation below Baldwin's Knob Lock down to Drungewick Lock remains a key priority. Investigations continue to identify and assess the work required to resolve several sections where water leaks are thought to be taking place. When this investigation is completed, the work required to address these issues will be announced.

The long, dry summer has, of course, had a big impact on water levels and has made leak detection even more difficult.

Towpath improvements are planned for this Autumn.

Land Acquisition and Route Protection

Several land acquisition discussions are taking place and the work of the Landowner Liaison Group continues to build relationships and open up future acquisition opportunities. We hope to have news to share next year.

Asset Management

An increased focus on inspections to ensure we protect and maintain previously restored sections is a key area. Work to anticipate future problems, such as the embankment work at Birtley, will mean that we are likely to spend more money on maintenance in the coming years.

Christmas Cards, Calendars and Raffle

The countdown to Christmas has begun! Details of how to order our 2027 calendar and a selection of Christmas cards can be found in the flyer enclosed with this magazine.

Raffle tickets are also included along with the magazine. There are two ways to purchase tickets:

Head to our website and go to our raffle page: weyarun.org.uk/raffle Entering the draw via our website saves us both manpower and money and is very easy to do.



Or write a cheque, include the raffle ticket counterfoils and put them in the post to us at WACT Raffle, Canal Centre, Onslow Wharf, High Street, Loxwood, Billingshurst RH14 ORD. Please ensure you mark the envelope "Raffle". Cheques should be payable to Wey & Arun Canal Trust Ltd.

All entries received by January 15th 2027 will be entered in the draw. One entry will be created and drawn electronically for every £1 given.

Putting Tickner's Bridge site to sleep – for the moment

The unexpected postponement of the Tickner's Heath Road Bridge project came as work to complete the temporary road to bypass the site of the road bridge construction was getting back underway.



Our volunteers have now been tasked to progress the groundworks for the temporary road to a stage where they could be safely covered over, to mothball the site. In addition, work is being carried out to remove and recover construction materials and tidy up the site, so the signs of the incomplete construction are minimised.

The Northern Working Party and our Saturday Group have laid roadside drainage in two trenches and back-filled them with shingle. The sub-base of the road is being laid and compacted, and should be complete in the next few weeks.

On the northern side of the pedestrian / equestrian bridge, construction fencing has been removed and less intrusive fencing put up around the short new section of canal that was excavated. Currently, a very nice nature pond! Elsewhere, old formwork has been cut up and removed and a general site tidy-up begun.



Shuttering south drainage at Tickner's Heath

The Birtley breach

The canal's embankment at Birtley where it rises close to and above Cranleigh Waters was the location of breaches that had occurred by 1973, blamed on a particularly active local spring, near the spot where fresh preventative work is now happening. Plans for an immediate properly engineered restoration were sidelined, in favour of a temporary plugging of the gaps. It was clear that the wrong decision had been made in those early days of restoration, when these repairs were washed away into Cranleigh Waters in December 1974.

The 'right thing' was then done in 1976. Peter Orriss, our Engineering Manager, determined that a whole length of towpath would have to be replaced because of its sandy nature; and that the work was too complex and too urgent to be tackled by volunteers. The section had been isolated by a causeway dam across the canal, later removed when the work was complete.

Canal luminary John Wood, writing in his 2012 book *The Wey-South Project*, tells us: 'Peter, whose day job at that time was Deputy Borough Engineer at Crawley, through his many contacts with the civil engineering world, was able to find a company prepared to do the job in just 10 days. WACT had to pay the wages of the digger and dumper drivers, fuel and the cost of transporting the equipment to and from the site. This company was CEDAC of Crawley and their first job was to construct a temporary road along the towpath in order that the dumpers and lorries could safely reach the site. Then the sandy towpath bank was dug out and carried away by the dumpers into the water meadows below the canal, where another digger levelled the spoil.

'Over 1,000 tons of good quality clay was donated by the Redland Brick Company from their works some 20 miles away. This was transported to Birtley in a fleet of three enormous tipper lorries supplied by G. Haskins & Sons of Emsworth, who provided this transport at a greatly discounted rate. The breach was repaired in just seven days and was followed by the volunteers constructing French drains in the hillside to catch the outflow from the spring and direct it into the canal rather than undermining it. Approximately 2,500 sandbags were filled with dry concrete mix to give extra reinforcement to the canal banks (*on both sides: Ed*). The WACT volunteers were assisted in this by pupils of the Guildford Royal Grammar School, also the Horsham Venture Scouts.' Later, a proper overflow was constructed nearby.



Volunteers work with concrete filled sandbags in 1976

Birtley embankment leak prevention

Civil Engineer Simon Gates explains how we will stop a repeat

Where and what is the problem?

Near the location of the 1976 breach, there are two areas of risk, where the canal's steep embankment slope is close to Cranleigh Waters which has been scouring its foot. There has also been damage from cattle traversing the slopes between pastures. Messrs Jessop, Keppel and May designed and built the embankment from locally excavated material, laid over natural impervious clay. They had no other option. There is also a nearby spring, and the canal there is in water. After prolonged rainfall, the upper layers of the embankment become saturated, while the stream below, in torrent, is eroding its base. Somewhere and at some point of time, another breach could occur.

What have we done about it?

First, we have arranged for cattle to be kept well away. We have carried out topographical surveys over several years, where we regularly measure heights above ordnance datum very precisely at a network of points. We also probed vertically into the slope. Some movement has been detected.

What next?

Our volunteers will be restoring the embankment slopes, creating a less steep profile. Separately, steel piling will be professionally driven into the water's edge of 15m of the towpath at a particularly vulnerable spot, in case, despite our efforts on the slopes, there were to be an embankment failure. The volunteer work should take about eight weeks, but we would like to take a few days to do the piling first, which also involves volunteer clearance work to enable the heavy piling machinery to be brought down from Rooks Hill.

How will we reinforce the slopes?

There are two areas of concern, 120m apart. Where we can, we will be laying stone-filled gabions at the foot of the slope, behind which we will add material to create a less steep slope. Where we cannot, we will be laying fresh material over geotextile. There is also a culvert which needs a proper headwall, as did the culvert further south at Rooks Hill. Nigel Yarwood's design is very efficient, both for cost and the resulting improved stability.

Why are we using piling? Why not gabions, as at Rooks Hill, or bagged concrete as at Rye Farm?

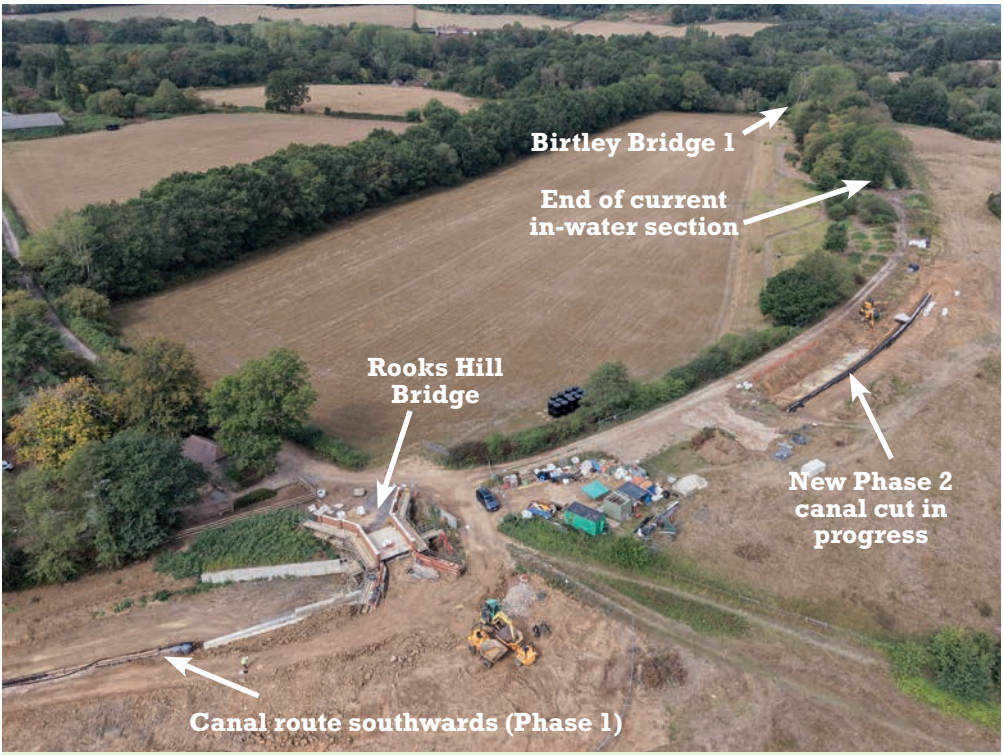
We need to drive the piles in 5.5m to ensure the canal is retained even in the event of an embankment slip. Piling is the only way of achieving that depth of protection. The towpath at Birtley will be a little wider as a result, but once the vegetation behind it grows, it won't be visible for walkers.

Are there any problems with piling?

Yes. First, we have to engage a contractor with the right machinery – where, for piling, the bigger the rig the better. However, the ideal 24-tonne plant would be physically too big for the location, and the power of its blows could destabilise the towpath on which it is working. We have identified a 14-tonne unit as the best compromise. Being less powerful, it might encounter difficulties when driving to full depth due to friction, or when encountering hard spots. We can hope to overcome resistance, if necessary, by pre-auguring a hole for the pile, slightly narrower than the pile itself, which have only the resistance of the walls of the hole to overcome. We also hope it won't be necessary.

Rooks Hill

Phase 2 well under way, Phase 1 nearly finished



The drone shot tells the story. Phase 2 is mainly the new canal cut that will soon link to the Birtley section further north. Two consecutive week-long camps in July (featuring the Newbury Working Party and the Waterway Recovery Group) got Phase 2 off to a rapid start. Taken in early September, this drone shot shows the results of their work and its continuation by our own volunteers.

This year's summer weather was highly favourable for work at Rooks Hill. Completion of Phase 2 will be very much weather-dependent. The underlying ground is largely clay – great for a watertight canal when finished, but very difficult to work on after rain. How we would deal with the excavated soil was a major worry for Phase 2. At worst, we would have to pay heavily to have it removed. In fact it has worked out better than expected and so far we have been able to use the material on the site or nearby.

Phase 2 in figures

- Total length of Phase 2 works - 425m
- New cut being created - 290m (includes a 'chicane' to join the new cut to the current in-water section south of Birtley Bridge 1)
- Towpath upgrade to existing canal - 135m
- New cut dug by early September - 75m
- New cut fully profiled by early September - 45m



Creating and profiling the new Phase 2 canal cut. Reinforcing the bank on the right (towpath) side, using gabion cages and plastic 'wood', is needed because the ground slopes away towards the Cranleigh Waters on that side. The puddles show that the lining is already doing its job and retaining water. The view below shows the future towpath.



Rooks Hill - continued

Meanwhile … on Phase 1



The south end of Phase 1 works. Where the grassy canal bed rises in the background is the site of Fanesbridge Lock. We have planning permission to rebuild the lock, but this will not be considered until Phase 3.



Rooks Hill Bridge approaching completion in early September. The scaffolding should have been removed by the time you read this. The completion of Phase 1 is being slightly delayed by late delivery of materials, thanks to the Gulf conflict.



Our 'brickies', essential as always on our construction projects, apply brick facing to the concrete structure of Rooks Hill Bridge.



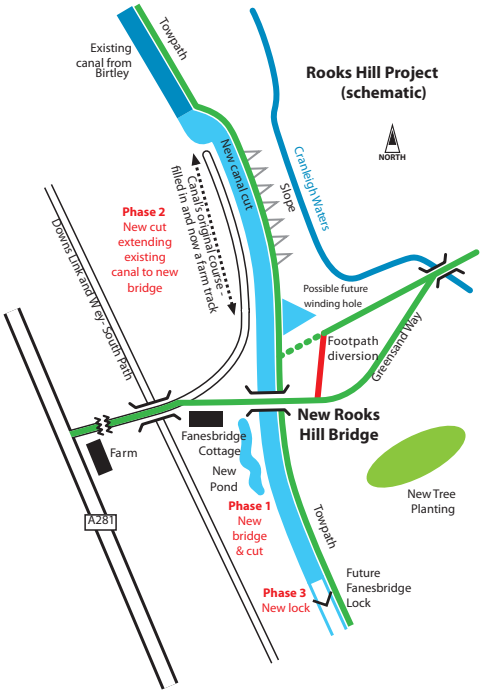
Rooks Hill - continued

Creating a better environment

As with all our developments, we are creating major community benefits long before the restored and rebuilt canal ever sees a boat. The new length of cut will be particularly attractive, running as it does along and above Cranleigh Waters, with beautiful views across the valley.

We're creating a towpath on the east bank of Phases 1 and 2, continuing from Birtley to the new Rooks Hill bridge and a short way beyond, to just short of the site of Fanesbridge Lock. The towpath will be at least 3m wide from Birtley to the new bridge, then probably wider beyond that, to enable access for heavy machinery for rebuilding the lock.

As with the existing Birtley towpath, it will be a 'permissive' footpath – i.e. we'll permit (indeed encourage) people to use it, but it will not be an official right of way. It will not be available for horseriders. The new towpath will substantially add to walking opportunities, along with the existing Birtley circular walk, the Greensand Way and the Wey-South Path/Downs Link.



We cannot yet give a date for the opening of the footpath, as this will depend not only on the completion of Phase 2 but also the timing of Phase 3 – rebuilding Fanesbridge Lock – as access for the work affects both sides of the bridge.



Future footpath - eventually walkers will be able to cross this field. Here we are looking southwards towards the Rooks Hill Phase 2 works. The footpath will not be along the access track on the right, but on a new towpath roughly in line with the earth bank on the left.

Rooks Hill - the leaders



Another section of new footpath will be along the future towpath on the right-hand side of the canal. Here we are looking north towards Birtley Bridge 1, just visible in the distance.



Dennis Gillen, seen here with an augur for boring the holes for plastic 'wood' piles, leads our EWG team who are our construction project experts.



Bill Nicholson MBE, director, retired planning officer and lifelong canal enthusiast, is in overall charge of the Rooks Hill project.



Richard Meinertzhagen is our onsite Project Manager.

Rooks Hill Appeal Fund passes £500,000



Our combined Appeal for Phase 1 and 2 is now within £60,735 of our target for full funding, with further generous donations from our supporters pushing the fund past £500,000.

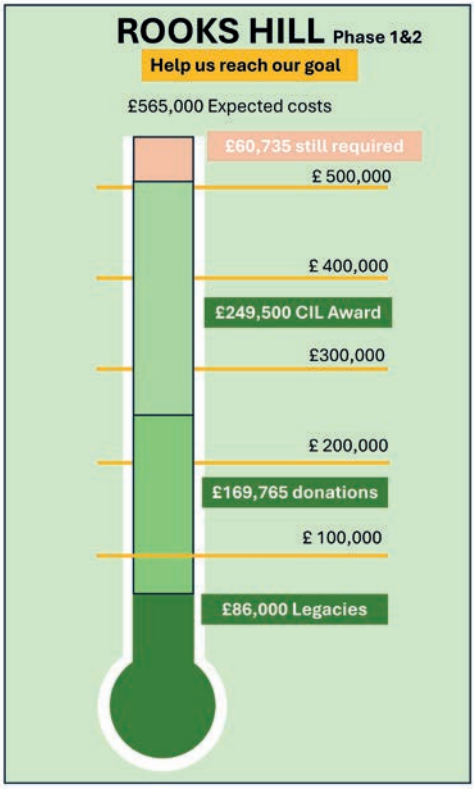
We would like to thank all those who have made donations thus far, ensuring this project can continue to make rapid progress.

To make your valuable contribution to our Rooks Hill appeal please go to:

weyarun.org.uk/rooks-hill-appeal

or send a cheque to our postal address (see page 35 for the full Canal Centre address).

Gift Aid can be claimed on eligible donations, meaning we receive £1.25 for every £1 donated.





FOR SALE - A twelfth share in the 58ft narrowboat SOJOURN

It's an ideal way to dip your toe into the cut! Sojourn is currently lying at Great Haywood on the Trent and Mersey Canal. The twelfth share gives 4 weeks' use per year, comprised of two summer weeks and two winter weeks, on a Friday change-over. The weeks do not have to be sequential. The choice of weeks' use is decided by a sliding annual rota. Sojourn sleeps 7. She is professionally maintained, with wood-panelled interior. She is equipped with a full-size cooker, fridge, shower, 2 WCs with pump out, TV and diesel central heating.

Offers in the region of £1,500
For more details apply deirdre.hucklebridge@gmail.com

Reptiles on the canal

I'm writing this on a warm August day, although by the time you read this it will be October. If you've been around the canal during the summer you probably saw plenty of flying wildlife and probably some swimming as well. On the whole flying insects enjoyed the hot weather. But let's look at some of the less visible wildlife – in particular the crawling kind that can be difficult to spot. In the UK we have six native types of reptile: three snakes and three lizards.



Grass snake swimming in the canal

The smooth snake is very rare, but occasionally you can spot adders and grass snakes. Both spend most of their time on land but can swim strongly if they need to. An adder's skin has a distinctive zig-zag pattern. If you see one, admire it from a safe distance. They will not bite unless they feel threatened, but if they do it can be serious, especially for a child or a dog. Even for an adult human, a visit to A&E is strongly advised. Adders like sunny spots on the edge of woods. Sadly their numbers are currently declining sharply. They use their venom to catch and eat small animals such as mice.



Not a snake : A slow worm

Grass snakes are normally longer than adders – they can grow up to 1.5m (5ft) long. They are harmless to humans and pets. Technically they can bite, but they are very easily scared and usually slither away. Grass snakes also eat small animals and can help to control pest populations.

Slow worms are often mistaken for snakes but are actually a type of lizard. Unlike other lizards, they do not have legs. They are quite small (typically 30 to 50cm / 12 to 20 inches long) and very shy. If you see one it is probably because you have disturbed some leaves or stones. If you see one in your garden, look after it as it will eat slugs and snails.



Adder at Brewhurst Lock

All our reptiles like to find a sheltered place in the winter and will spend most of the time sleeping. On the canal we make special efforts to welcome them by building hibernacula ("winter quarters") as refuges, especially if our projects are likely to disturb existing habitats. And we have created a new home for slow worms in Loxwood where they were put at risk by work on a neighbour's land. We can all do our bit to protect threatened species.

Julian Morgan

Surrey Hills Wood Fair

We attended the 2026 Surrey Hills Wood Fair at the Cranleigh Showground over the weekend of 12th to 13th September. We returned with the ever popular "Drive a Digger" experience providing members (from the very young to "big" kids) of the public the opportunity to operate a mini-excavator through a very basic set of manoeuvres. The attraction was supported by Phil Short and his team of volunteers manning the Mobile Display Vehicle (MDV).



Yes, we need PPE but maybe this is a step too far

The digger experience involves raising the bucket filled with logs and rotating the arm over a tractor tyre into which the logs are dropped. The arm is then extended and the digger is rotated to knock over a set of traffic cones before returning the bucket to the start position. With ever increasing focus on operator and volunteer safety, this year we made a few minor changes which also the improved the experience from a spectator perspective offering an improved opportunity for photographs of participants. Each digger is manned by a volunteer supervisor who provides basic instructions and who is, importantly, able to operate the kill handle in the event of over-enthusiastic operators. During the weekend we had over 220 participants. Overall we were favoured with good weather. The forecast was less encouraging on the Sunday but surprisingly we had a greater public throughput on the "Drive a Digger" experience.

Over the weekend the MDV team saw a steady stream of visitors enquiring about the activities of the canal. Donations were collected over the weekend, supplemented by the sale of bags of wood, all contributing to funds. A special thankyou goes to Roger Beazer for "extracting" donations from the public.

Our thanks also go to the many volunteers involved in the set-up and successful running of the event. In addition to the general organisation associated with such an event, there is significant up-front preparation in packing and transporting the required assets to the event. Volunteers set up the experience on the Friday afternoon and then ran it over the weekend of the Wood Fair. Volunteer roles include digger supervisors, log/cone replacers, queue management, catering and manning the MDV stand. Thanks also to BPH Plant Hire for the hire and transport of the diggers to and from the showground at a reduced price.

Volunteer Barbecue



Over 80 of our volunteers and their partners gathered for an afternoon Barbeque on 23rd August in Bramley. The BBQ is organised by the Board of Directors as a thankyou for the hard work and contributions made over the year by our brilliant volunteers. Margaret and Stephen Darvill kindly hosted the event. We were rewarded with a warm and dry but not too hot afternoon.



It was a great chance to catch up and interact with volunteers from other working parties and back-office teams. We hope to see even more of our volunteers at next year's event.



Loxwood boating 2026

The last boat trip for the summer season was on Tuesday 14th July, when maintaining water levels for any further trips became impossible. Even if boats can physically move, extremely low levels mean that progress is slow and there is a risk of the boat going aground and being damaged. Ploughing through mud is difficult for crews and not a pleasant experience for customers. It doesn't do the canal any good either. We must also consider fish and other wildlife that will clearly suffer if sections of the canal run dry. The Loxwood section has no natural water supply so virtually all the water in the canal has to be pumped from the local rivers, and those rivers are so dry that no water is available for us. In these conditions the Environment Agency suspends our pumping licence. To restart boat operations at least several days of significant rain is needed to refill the rivers and then a week or two of pumping to replenish the canal



On the positive side, in 2025 the end of boat trips came before the end of June, so this year has been slightly better. We have to thank John Reynolds for his careful water management that allowed us to continue so long as we have. Water shortages at Loxwood are nothing new; in the first ever year of public boat trips the water ran out very soon after the start of the season. But now it seems that very dry summers are the normal pattern and we must plan accordingly, running as many trips as we can between March and late June/early July.

At the end of 2025, we decided not to ask the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) to renew our Passenger Safety Certificate for the narrowboat *Zachariah Keppel* (ZK). A certificate is required if we carry more than 12 passengers, which incurs a heavy cost in money and volunteer effort. The MCA charge high fees for their inspection services and every year there are normally extra safety requirements that need us to fit new equipment. From a commercial point of view, our decision looks to have been correct as we have easily been able to do without ZK and run all trips for larger parties on the wide-beamed *Wiggonholt.*

When trips are scheduled, it is a significant job to coordinate skippers and crew. For the past few years Ken Broomfield has kindly taken on this task, but around the end of May Ken took retirement and handed the role to Chris Jones. We are very grateful to Ken and Chris for their efforts. Our skippers clubbed together to present Ken with a voucher for a trip to a local vineyard.

The traditional Christmas boat trips are scheduled to run on eight days this season and by the time you read this, bookings should be open. The most popular dates tend to sell out fast. Shortage of water has never been a problem for these seasonal trips. In fact sometimes there has been too much water – or water at the wrong temperature, so that ice-breaking has been needed. These trips need a lot of volunteers, so if you have any time to spare there is a job for you – please get in touch with canalcentre@weyarun.org.uk.

Brinsbury and back - our 2026 Sponsored Walk

Sunday 7th June 2026 saw our 53rd annual sponsored walk – previously known as the 'Poddle' – which attracted 69 walkers. The weather was fine and pleasant.(Perhaps others were deterred by the heavy rain and strong winds of the previous day. In fact, the bad weather on the 6th was the last rain for more than two months, with heatwaves that turned the countryside brown and brought a premature end to our popular canal boat trips for the summer.)

Those who took part had a memorable walk through rolling Sussex countryside, quaint ancient hamlets and villages, and sites of historic interest, starting at Brinsbury College near Adversane, a venue we last used in 2013 and which offers excellent facilities and plentiful parking.

The route took walkers through glorious countryside which offered extensive views reaching out to the South Downs before descending to the river Arun at the ancient historic Stopham bridge, long since bypassed and dating from 1423, under which barges would have passed on their trip working to and from the Arun Navigation at Pallingham Lock, and then onto the Wey & Arun Junction Canal at Newbridge. (These two waterways comprise what is now our Wey & Arun Canal.)

Passing through the hamlet of Stopham, walkers arrived at Fittleworth Village Hall for a splendid buffet lunch and the chance to sample local Firebird brewery beer or a selection of hot and cold drinks. After the lunch stop the walk continued through Fittleworth wood, with some steep drops down, and climbs up which helped digestion of the meal, before eventually arriving at Lee Farm Causeway on the Arun Navigation, where stalwarts Richard and Nessa Smith again provided their impressive tea and cake refreshments. Here we had special permission to allow walkers to take a detour to see Lee Farm Lock which was restored by our volunteers but which is normally out of bounds to the public.

Heading north the towpath alongside the Navigation was followed to Haybarn Swing Bridge then on to Lee Place Bridge, built by our volunteers in 2020. We then returned across fields to the finish back at Brinsbury.

It was very pleasing to hear from many of the walkers how much they had enjoyed the walk and how interesting they had found the route. Such comments make all the work that goes into organising these walks very rewarding and worthwhile. It gives us renewed enthusiasm to plan next year's walk, which will be on Sunday 6th June 2027.

The event couldn't take place without much help from the volunteers who devote such a lot of their time in the planning and organising beforehand, and those who helped on the day. Very hearty thanks to you all. We would welcome new helpers for this event, so please contact us if you think you might be able to help next year.



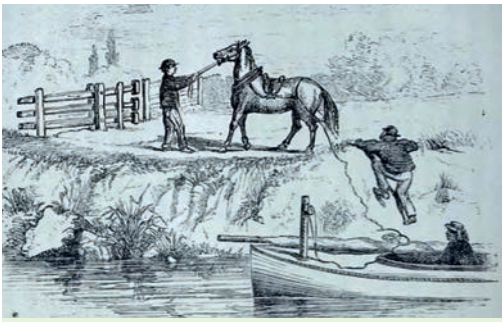
Stopham Bridge, an attractive waypoint on the walk

Dashwood discovered

by Jonathan Copeland

In our June 2026 edition we included an article about those who had tried to emulate J B Dashwood's journey along our canal. Dashwood wrote the story of his 1867 journey in the short book 'The Thames to the Solent by Canal and Sea' or 'The log of the Caprice'. We said that for many years we had assumed that J B Dashwood was Jarrett Bacon Dashwood (1832-1907). This was mainly because of a hint in later editions of Paul Vine's book 'London's Lost Route to the Sea', mentioning Bacon as his middle name, and also because – well, no one found anyone else with these initials and the Dashwood surname. But now we have – a different Dashwood.

Dashwood's book does have numerous clues as to the background and character of the author. One was the purpose of the journey. It was not simply to sail down the Surrey and Sussex canal but rather, he says, because they were 'to join a party to see the naval review at Spithead in honour of the Sultan'. This suggests some connection to or interest in the Royal Navy, and not one for someone without deep pockets.



Dashwood's boat 'Caprice' plus pony and groom

Dashwood employed a groom and pony to tow his boat *Caprice* the 40 miles down to Littlehampton, and this pair had been on prior journeys with the Dashwoods around Britain. During the voyage, money for services rendered changed hands on several occasions - half-a-crown was paid to a lock-keeper for letting water into the drained canal near Bramley (twice!), they put up at various inns along the way (despite taking with them camping equipment and a portable bath) and, having arrived at Littlehampton, paid a pilot to help them navigate the sea to Portsmouth.

Jarrett Bacon Dashwood appears in all the censuses during his lifetime, but the ten-yearly snapshots show he had difficulty settling to any one career. At 19 he was a silk warehouseman in the City of London. In 1856 he was a Manufacturing Stationer. Five years later he had become a 'Teacher and poet'. Importantly in July 1866 he was advertising in a Hertfordshire paper as the Principal of West House School in Essendon, near Hertford. This was exactly a year before JB Dashwood undertook his voyage. He remained a teacher in 1871, now married, and by 1881 was living in Pinner, still a teacher but now on half pay. By 1891 he had become an Estate Agent in Beckenham Kent, where he died in 1907.

So why might Jarrett Bacon Dashwood not be our man? Quite simply he just doesn't seem to fit. The *Caprice's* voyage was not a cheap holiday. At the time a teacher's salary, even in a private school, was as little as £100 a year. Is it likely that he would have recently commissioned the building of a fashionable and no doubt expensive sailing boat at the same time as launching a new school?

At the very start of his book Dashwood writes 'Several of our friends, in the kindness of their hearts, came down to the river's banks to see us off, and having supplied us with cake and fruit, wished us 'Good speed'. The adventure started in Weybridge, Surrey, and we have to assume that these friends did not travel very far with their edible gifts. And nor would they have needed to, because living at Wentworth House, Weybridge, about half a mile from the river Wey, was James E B Dashwood, an Assistant Senior Clerk at the Foreign Office. He was about 33 years old.

Our research has shown that James Dashwood's father William Bateman Dashwood was a Captain in the Royal Navy. He was promoted Vice-Admiral, after retirement as a Captain. He had lost an arm in action in 1811 (de rigueur for senior naval officers in those days?) and had a distinguished naval career. Son James was a scholar at Charterhouse School and seems to have entered the Foreign Office straight from school. His first cousin was James Howard Harris, 3rd Earl of Malmesbury, who had a distinguished political career. At the time of Dashwood's voyage he was Lord Privy Seal and had earlier served two terms as Foreign Secretary.

James Dashwood's school biography tells us that he was "Precis Writer to Lord Malmesbury, as Foreign Secretary, whom he accompanied to Potsdam when in attendance on the Queen in August 1858, and served as Private Secretary when [Lord Malmesbury was] Lord Privy Seal 1866 - 68 ; retired as a Senior Clerk 1 April 1881".

CHRISTCHURCH TIMES—SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1868.



Conclusive proof

This all strongly suggests that James Dashwood was our man, but conclusive proof comes from an article in the Christchurch Times newspaper on 12 September 1868. It describes in much detail a regatta in Mudeford (near Christchurch, then in Hampshire) that week in which a Mr Dashwood and his yacht *Caprice* are listed as racing.

In addition J B Dashwood is shown as one of the Committee and other subscribers include the Earl and Countess of Malmesbury.

It seems then that our Mr Dashwood was not a struggling teacher but a well-connected and rather entitled gentleman of means at a time when nepotism was the rule.

with the greatest good will and harmony, the Mudeford Regatta of 1868 terminated.

The following is the List of Subscribers :—Committee, M. Ricardo, Esq., £2 2s., J. B. Dashwood, Esq., £1 1s., G. B. Townsend, Esq., £2 2s., J. B. Dawson, Esq., £1 1s., Hastings Cameron, Esq., £1 1s. Earl of Malmesbury, £1 1s., Countess of Malmesbury, £1 1s., Marchioness of Waterford, 10s., Lady C. Morant, 10s., Lady Somerville,

He does not appear in the press very much and it seems he was a respected Civil Servant, but we know of his retirement from the Civil Service as a senior clerk aged only 47 when on an annual salary of £925 and being awarded a pension of £601 a year.

In his book JBD devotes the last chapter to a description of his boat and its kind. It was a Una type yacht, a single-masted, single-sailed catboat style which he had built by Caleb Corke of Cowes in the Isle of Wight. The first of these small yachts was exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and they became very popular, being particularly suited for inland waterways. In 1881 The Isle of Wight Observer reported 'Mr Caleb Corks (sic) who is well known for his skill in building these boats, which are great favourites with many yachtsmen, has just completed, to the order of the Prince of Wales, one of the handsomest Boats which we remember to have seen turned out'. I said they were fashionable! The sharp eyed will notice that *Una* took part in the same race as *Caprice* in the Mudeford Regatta.

James Dashwood retired in 1881, which coincided with the failure of his daughter's marriage. This developed into what must have been a nightmare for his family, culminating in 1885 in

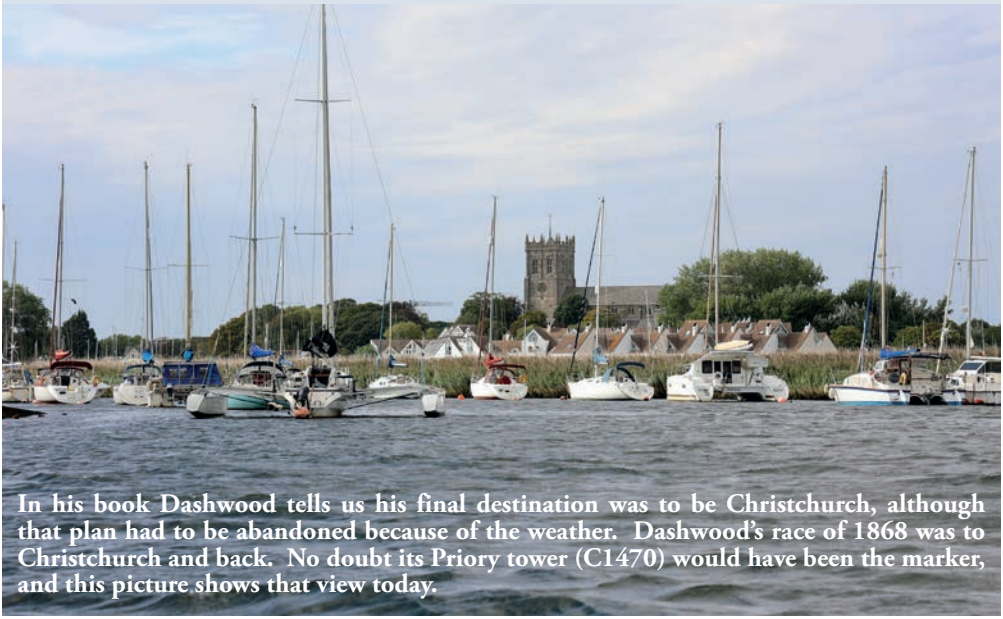


what newspapers called an 'Extraordinary Divorce Case' that must have led to the disgrace of his daughter, who was found to have committed adultery. Mixing in the circles he did this would have been a totally humiliating fall from grace. He died at the Grove, Freshford, Bath on 11 February 1905.

Tony Pratt, who repeated Dashwood's journey in 2002 was never quite convinced that Dashwood was who Paul Vine suggested. I am grateful to him and his partner Shar for helping in my own research.

Jonathan Copeland

As a footnote to this story some have wondered whether our Mr Dashwood might in any way have been connected to Sir Francis Dashwood, founder of the Hellfire Club, the exclusive and somewhat debauched 18th-century English secret society for elite rakes. He was; both families spring from the same 17th-century London merchant - Francis Dashwood (1603–1683)



In his book Dashwood tells us his final destination was to be Christchurch, although that plan had to be abandoned because of the weather. Dashwood's race of 1868 was to Christchurch and back. No doubt its Priory tower (C1470) would have been the marker, and this picture shows that view today.

2026 archaeological dig at Pallingham

Giles Eyre and Alan Johnson report



Inspecting the south side of Pallingham dry dock

The last half mile of the southern end of the Wey & Arun, originally the Arun Navigation, contains four interesting heritage features – Pallingham Lock (a double lock), Pallingham Lock Cottage, Pallingham Docks and Pallingham Canal Bridge. All are on private property but the Docks are partially visible from a public right of way which crosses the canal bridge.

In order to assemble more information about the docks – how they operated and how they were used – we commissioned a desktop archaeological report in 2022 from Martin Cook and Suzanne MacLeod. This has now been followed up, as funds became available, with a limited archaeological dig on the site carried out in the first two weeks of August 2026 under the supervision of Parris Stubbings of Prometheus Solutions. 4 trial pits were dug. While at the time of writing we await the full report from Prometheus, the findings have contributed interesting information about the docks.

What did we find?

A hearth (the base of a fireplace) that is reckoned to have been a feature of the carpenter's workshop was found, and is considered perhaps insufficient for a forge, though very likely adequate to heat tar assisting the building and repair of barges. The floor of the workshop and the adjoining area along the south side of the southern dock were found to be of crushed chalk (easily obtained by barge from pits – a likely candidate would be the 'Balcombe' Pit close to Houghton Bridge on the River Arun).

A transverse slit trench excavated through the south bank of the southern dock showed its structure most probably to have been of timber planks held in place by vertical wooden posts, the remains of one slightly raking timber post or stake having been uncovered. The base of the dock, like the area around the carpentry shop, was found to be of crushed chalk on clay, which would have made

a suitably firm surface on which to work when the dock was dry as well as being permeable in a light rain shower, a property not offered by the underlying clay.



Haiarn Dwr Codd-neck bottle

Extensive excavations alongside the south-west pier at the entrance to the southern dock confirmed that the stop plank grooves and the position of the cill (base for the planks) were almost certainly original, showing that the dock was constructed to be able to be used as a dry dock. The very substantial nature of the foundations of this element, on the canal side of stone and on the dock side of stone and brick, show that it was built to hold back the pressure of the canal water against the stop planks when the dock was emptied.

Many iron artefacts were found, particularly in the area of the entrance to the dock, largely consisting of a wide variety of nails and bolts as well as a well-preserved iron ring, perhaps used to fasten a boat or to raise the stop planks. The number of nails and bolts was so great that perhaps the area of the docks was used as a dumping place for discarded metalwork. A very fine and completely intact glass mineral water Codd-neck bottle of the Haiarn Dwr Mineral Waters Company, Horsham (late 19th/early 20th century) was also found (pictured left).

In the area of the carpentry shop there were also metal farm implements, perhaps suggesting that the carpentry shop continued to be used after the canal ceased operation. As previously reported, the census records show that the last entry referring to James Stone as a bargebuilder was 1861, but subsequent entries record his descendant Benjamin Stone as a carpenter at least as late as 1921. In his album The Arun Navigation (2007) P.A.L.Vine quotes the unflattering opinion of Thurston Hopkins, author of Sussex Rendezvous (1938), on the quality of shepherd stools produced at Pallingham by Ben Stone (died 1935) likely for many years after the last use of the canal by barges in 1888.

What next?

Further archaeological excavation will be necessary to clarify the precise width and length of the two docks (which were not apparently identical based on the evidence of historic maps), whether they were both capable of being emptied and converted into a dry dock, and the system by which the water was removed (possibly into the adjacent ditch which feeds a culvert that passes westwards under the canal).

Further archival research is needed to establish the barges built (and repaired) in the docks, and the sources relied upon by P.A.L.Vine and R. D. Hull, and to add to the one transcribed bill for barge repairs at the Pallingham Docks (published in *Wey-South* No 5, June 1973). Anyone able to assist in the search should please contact the authors.



Reviewing a wooden support stake

Teamwork

Many thanks go to the volunteers who sought out and nominated an appropriate consultant field archaeologist, specified and scheduled the work, coordinated our workforce, undertook the preparatory site devegetation, assisted in the dig – including operating the small mechanical excavator, and working with shovels, trowels and hands - and to Parris and Sarah Stubbings of Prometheus Solutions for their guidance, diligence and wisdom during the dig.



Pallingham north end dry dock stonework

What do we already know about Pallingham Docks?

Some remains of the two docks remain visible although the carpentry shop alongside, shown in one known photograph of 1886, is long gone. The documentary history which has so far been tracked down provides very limited information. We know that in 1804 the owners of the canal ordered that a dock for the building and repair of barges be prepared at Pallingham, but no written record confirming that any barge was constructed there has been found. P.A.L. Vine, in his various books, referred to it as a busy boat-building business and both he and R. D. Hull identify the last boat built there, said to be in 1864, but documentary evidence for that has not been traced.

When the Arun Navigation opened and until the Wey & Arun Junction Canal opened in 1816, any barges built or repaired in the docks would have been working the River Arun and the four and a half miles of the Navigation. From 1816 the range of barges was greatly extended, from Littlehampton to Guildford and the Port of London and even, as recorded in some toll records, up the Regent's Canal into north London.

Articles about Pallingham Docks appeared in Wey-South 202 (May 2022) and 207 (June 2024).

Meet the volunteer
Tom Crawshaw



Tom Crawshaw

As our webmaster, what do you do, Tom?

Our website is at the core of what we do. It impacts members, boat trip passengers, walkers, working groups, local politicians and landowners, as well as anyone in the world who may have an interest in what we are doing. It is our main public face and it's important that it is easy to use and to navigate, and is kept up to date.

Over the years I've enhanced and developed the core website to handle membership administration, donations, newsletter mailings, walk registrations and most recently boat trip bookings and crew rostering, all using a system called 'CiviCRM'. It allows any authorised user to add and update the information for which they are responsible, e.g. restoration and wildlife pictures, the monthly newsletter, skipper training records and much more.

I also run the systems providing our eShop, and get involved where required with other IT systems.

What were and are the challenges?

This website started 15 years ago. We had to migrate old website pages to the new site and import old membership spreadsheets. Then we had to transfer the Boat Group system and develop a program around it. This system is used by a wider group of our volunteers than other parts of the website, and I had to try to ensure the process was simple and well supported with documentation.

As with any complex IT system, ours requires regular maintenance and updates. CiviCRM is entirely open-source (i.e. written and supported by thousands of volunteer programmers around the world), so this task is generally routine. Now and again, a major change will be required, which might sometimes require external assistance, but fortunately the wider IT community is always willing to help. Apart from the monthly cost of the servers, all this software and support is free – which is one of the reasons why I recommended we chose it.

Was this new to you?

No. At various times in my working life I have been responsible for setting up new IT systems in university libraries and converting ancient card catalogues into electronic formats. This experience probably helped to make our IT migrations successful.

How much of your time does it take up?

It varies, as I don't set aside regular hours for it. Some days I might spend several hours trying to solve some issue (Gift Aid processing was complicated), and other days just a short time answering emails.

How do you work with our senior management?

My most frequent interactions are with John Tovell regarding membership admin, and more recently the Boat Group administrators now that the system is handling boat trips & crew rostering. I am in regular and frequent contact with Board members Gordon Powell for IT and PR matters, also with Margaret Darvill, Giles Eyre and now Mark Akers when their responsibilities impact on IT.

Can others help?

Whilst we have a couple of volunteers with interests in IT, I am the only one who undertakes software development and bug-fixing, so it would be great to find more people who might get involved in programming and coding. Possibly members might not have these skills or interests themselves, but they may know of family or friends who would like to volunteer their time in exchange for a great experience.

What is your background?

Most of my childhood was spent in Norfolk (my father was a clergyman, so we moved a lot!), then Sheffield University for a Degree in Mechanical Engineering, followed by a Diploma in Library & Information Studies at Loughborough University.

I worked as a librarian with a particular interest in IT systems. Employers included the Central Electricity Generation Board, GEC and then the universities of Limerick, Oxford & Cork. On becoming Director of Information Services at the University of Surrey with responsibility for the library, IT services, e-learning and the teaching development programme, I moved to Bramley in 1994 with my wife, Viv. I am now retired.

How did you get involved with our canal?

I could claim that canals are in my DNA. A distant ancestor Joseph Wilkes was an entrepreneur who was a major promoter of the Ashby (-de-la-Zouch) Canal, as well as having interests in early railways, coal mining, brick making and banking.

While at university in Loughborough, I also spent many weekends clearing overgrown waterways, and so it was natural that I'd get involved with the Wey & Arun when I retired. Since at the time I had plenty of activities to keep me physically fit (gardening, volunteering at Winkworth Arboretum) I thought I'd use my experience with IT to help the canal in an administrative way. This has proved very rewarding and the need to constantly update my knowledge and solve technical challenges has hopefully kept the brain fit too.

What else occupies your time?

I have other volunteering roles. I do a regular stint in the Guildford Institute Library and am a driver for Bramley Wheels, a volunteer-run community car scheme. Most recently, I am a trustee of a new Repair Café at Shalford Village Hall. It's open on the 2nd Saturday each month from 10:00 to 12:00. We can try to fix lots of things, such as household electricals, toys, electronics, clothing, tools, sewing machines and buggies. Bring us your problems!

Maintenance Roundup

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.

A sweltering summer

The summer's dry, hot weather was a double-edged sword for our volunteer teams - little mud underfoot to contend with, but cloudless skies above and barely tolerable heat over several months. Despite the conditions, the Monday Group cleared growth at fifteen sites in July, with brush cutters and mowers.



A very tidy Lordings Waterwheel

In the south

Two groups focused on the southern end of the canal in July. As with the Monday Group, the Midweek Working Party's productivity was much enhanced by machinery, in this case the use of the Tracmaster to clear the canal bed and banks at Toat Bridge and Cook's Bridge, and to prepare the quays at Pallingham in readiness for the archaeological dig (see p 25).

The Thursday Group returned to Lordings Waterwheel to clean out the sludge, silt and weeds from the chamber. The mechanical parts were given a service and the hub bearings were greased. The nearby picnic bench received attention, so the location is now ready for walkers who visit this fascinating and historic site.



Home-grown planks

Site clearance at Rooks Hill resulted in a pile of 40 or more cut-down Scots Pine tree trunks, weighing about 70 tonnes and requiring transporting five miles to the Depot for further processing. The move was facilitated by the kind assistance of a neighbouring land agent. The Depot has acquired a 'Timberjig' attachment that can change a chainsaw into a portable sawmill, to create usable timber. This could be of any length in theory, but the dimensions of our trailer limits us to 3.8m. In any case, a greater length would be too heavy to handle. An internet search will show the jig in action.

The trunks will be cut into 6" (150mm) thick planks, and stacked to dry out under cover. These can then be further milled as particular applications require – 6" x 6" or 4" x 4" fence posts: 3" x 2" fence rails; or 4" x 2" or 2" x 2" construction studding or general-purpose planks for our projects.

Josias Jessop cuts the weed

The dry, hot conditions and fewer boat movements meant that waterweed was taking over the Brewhurst Pound. Boat Group PEST attacked this with two of our boats. Tripboat *Josias Jessop* ploughed through the weed to cut a path with its powerful propeller, with workboat *May Upton* following to scoop up the floating debris. Several passes restored the length to Brewhurst Lock to a temporarily navigable condition, awaiting attention to the roots for a more permanent solution.

Heavy-duty pump protection

Backpumping at Baldwin's Knob Lock has been upgraded. At the Depot, Mark Feeney designed and constructed a new cage for submersion on the 'downstream' side of the lock, to hold the pump. The cage will prevent damage from passing boats. Described by Mark as 'a bit of a monster' it stands 2m high and 90cm wide, weighs 264kg and the pump it holds is another 120kg. Durability is enhanced by it having been waterproofed by galvanization offsite by Wessex Galvanizers Ltd. It has now been installed by the Thursday Group with the total cost of materials at just over £1,200.



The monster cage on its side after galvanization

Pauline gets the attention she deserves

Pauline, our dredger barge, has been ashore at Drungewick, for several months of her off-season, in need of some significant attention. When at work, she is kept in position by vertical 'spud leg rams' which are raised in transit and lowered on site. These have been rebuilt and replaced.

She carries a powered excavator and when in use is manoeuvred around in the water by a pusher tug. Her dredgings go into two 'tubs' – short unpowered barges – which the tug takes to a suitable discharging location where it can be emptied, either by *Pauline's* excavator or other machinery. The excavator's engine has been serviced. One tub has been repainted, following some structural welding, with the other tub to follow, after the necessary chipping-off of rust and the application of anti-rust preservative.



Dredger Pauline gets a little TLC

Damming at Birtley

The completion of the three phases at Rooks Hill will result in the ability to have a continuous filled canal from north of Birtley No 2 Bridge – the newer, northern one – southwards via Birtley No 2 Bridge right to the foot of the location of Fanesbridge Lock. To lose as little existing water as possible while this is done, the Thursday Group isolated the canal at the north side of Birtley No 1 bridge with our inflatable Aquadam.

A large pump was then used to lower the level to the south, sufficient to install steel channels in each side of the bridge abutments, into which the wooden stop planks were then lowered. The Aquadam could then be deflated and returned to the Depot. With the stop planks now in position, the water level south of Birtley No 1 bridge can be regulated, for the bank reinforcement work (see p9) and, later, for connection up to the new Rooks Hill Bridge.



The Aquadam in place before installing stop planks

Register

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

Peter Grove



Peter Grove died on May 6. Peter was born in Send, near Woking, but lived in Pennsylvania with his wife Nancy. The links between Peter's family and our local canals go back a long way. Peter's grandfather Walter Grove was master carpenter for the River Wey Navigation from 1885 to 1930, so responsible for construction and maintenance of all wooden structures (especially lock gates, we imagine) all the way from Weybridge to Godalming.

We remember Peter as a generous donor to our canal and especially as the sponsor of our Wheelyboat *Walter Grove*, officially named at Loxwood in late 2020. Peter grew up on the River Wey and in 2024 he wrote: "Triggs Lock, as you can imagine, is "holy ground" for me… as is the river/navigation as a whole! My great-grandfather was lock-keeper /blacksmith at Triggs for almost 60 years. I took my wife, son and daughter and their families to Triggs not so long ago, walking up from Worsfold Gates and what used to be the Send Boathouse, owned by my uncle Ewart Grove."

Peter worked as a science teacher and in retirement he took up writing as a hobby. He wrote a memoir of his childhood ("Ghosts Along the Wey") and published an anthology of stories ("Lucifer Gets a Call"). Many of the stories are set around the river that he loved.



Ian Edwards

Ian Edwards died on 25 May. He had been unwell for some time. Ian joined in 1978 and was one of our most loyal and enthusiastic frontline workers. Ian lived at Elmbridge Retirement Village, close to the route of the canal near Cranleigh. He moved there when he was still fully active, probably influenced by the location and sensibly thinking about his later years. When we set up our team of lengthsmen, Ian was the obvious choice for the Elmbridge section.

We remember Ian most of all as a core member of our Midweek Working Party. Quiet and modest, he would reliably take on any of the team's jobs. In the years when Peter Jackman was team leader, Ian was often his faithful lieutenant – they made a great team of two. In 2019 we awarded Ian the Jack King ("Eager Beaver") Cup. For many years Ian was a "poster child" for WACT as his picture wielding a shovel was on the side of our Mobile Display Vehicle.

Ian was a dedicated canal enthusiast who would turn out to help for any event he could. I have a fond memory of him from 2009 when we held a Small Boat Rally at Compasses Bridge. This was long before we rebuilt it. On one side of the causeway navigation was possible up to Fast Bridge on the A281. The other side was an adventure – it looked like a canal but the water was only inches deep, before it dried out altogether. Some young kayakers decided to accept the challenge. Ian stood on a dry bit of land holding out a £5 note and with a huge effort one of the boaters got there to claim his prize. Farewell Ian, you were a top-class volunteer.

Register contd.

Richard Watson

Like Ian Edwards, Richard Watson was a skilful and committed volunteer who threw his energy into all sorts of canal work. He joined in 2003. Richard lived in Alfold, around the middle of the canal route, and was well known for cycling to working parties, along the towpath when possible.



We remember Richard most as a core member of the Midweek Working Party (MWWP). Times have changed but a big bonfire used to be essential on MWWP work sites and some members were suspected of arsonist tendencies. Richard seemed to have extraordinary firelighting skills and could conjure up leaping flames even when everything was soaking wet.

There were few areas of frontline canal work where Richard did not get involved. In 2007, Colin Gibbs (founder of the MWWP) reported "we have recently welcomed Richard Watson to our Technical team. Many of you will know Richard because over the years he has worked with a number of our working parties. Maybe all!!" Those groups certainly included the Winston Harwood Group that did pioneering work in the Lordings and Arun Valley area. Richard had great mechanical ability and won a reputation for fixing troublesome kit.

Our priceless photo archive used to sit in filing drawers in The Granary at Loxwood where the prints would inevitably deteriorate over time. When we started a project to digitise the archive, Richard was one of the first to volunteer and dutifully scanned thousands of prints. He was also a keen photographer, so today's archive is full of his pictures.

An appreciation of Richard would not be complete without a mention of his exploits, some from a time when Health & Safety was not so strict as today. Margaret Darvill, today's leader of the MWWP, tells us that Richard was "infamous for jumping in water after a working party". We don't have further details on that, but in 2010 Richard was photographed about to cut a Christmas cake with a chainsaw. "A delightful man who many people in MWWP will not forget", comments Margaret.

We also remember ...

Among a number of sad losses this time, we note **Brian Dunman**, a long-serving member of our EWG team who died on 4th September. Brian had valuable skills in laying bricks and blocks, which he put to good use at Southland and Gennets Bridge Locks.

Bob Potts was a member of our Hedgelaying team as well as one of our most dedicated boat crew volunteers. In the days when amateur dramatics and Boat Group activities used to overlap, Bob was a highly convincing pirate at our Pirates and Princesses events.

Undoubtedly Bob would have shared the spotlight with **Kathy McConnell**, who often starred as the princess. Kathy was a cheerful and enthusiastic Boat Group volunteer who added a much needed spark to our special events.

Michael Bates became our first Health & Safety officer in 2008 and brought us exactly the professional experience we needed to support our expanding activities. He helped us in this role until 2014.

All obituaries by Julian Morgan

Membership report

32 new members have joined us in the last 4 months, taking our total membership to 2,640. We would like to extend a very warm welcome to the following new members.

Paul Allum	*Ali Blanch*	*Brian Burt*	*Teresa Butler*
Nick Chittenden	*Clive Crossman*	*Pamela & Philip Evans*	*Peter Darke*
Alice Dale	*Shamus Johnson*	*Andrew Curtis-Payne*	*Andrea & Geoff Kelley*
Ian Kingswood	*Jackie Malton*	*Dennis Macharaga*	*Stephen & Vivian Lovelace*
Nicola Milton	*Catriona Reeby*	*Lynne Rickwood*	*Helen MacPherson*
Barbara Saunders	*Jonathan Staines*	*Richard Stewart*	*Mary Strugar*
Chava Summers	*Deborah Tiddeman White*	*Kevin White*	*Daniel Svvennsen*

We have learned with regret of the death of:

Ian Edwards	*Rodney Saunders*	*Peter Ballard*	*Michael Bates*
Simon Brimelow	*Bob Potts*	*John Fowler*	*Rosemary Hind*
Doreen Hornsey	*Geraldine Williams*	*Colin Wood*	*Kathy McConnell*
Anne Groves	*Ron Sadler*	*Ray Bickers*	*John Burgess (of Thamesmead)*
June Nye	*Christopher Watson*	*Robin Lodge*	*Richard Watson (of Alfold)*

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.

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.

The Office address (also for Boat Trips, Administration, Accounts and Publicity) is
The Wey & Arun Canal Trust, Canal Centre, Onslow Wharf, High Street, Loxwood, Billingshurst, RH14 0RD
Email: support@weyarun.org.uk Tel: 01483 505566

Membership crunch !

Our numbers are falling....

Perhaps it's a sign of the times we live in. Maybe it reflects the age group of our members where, sadly, each year we say good-bye to more people than join. Whatever the reasons, ***we do need to attract more members.***

How can you help?

- Spread the word and encourage your family, friends or neighbours to join us.
- When you have read Wey-South, please share it with your friends and let them see what we do, and the benefits of becoming a member.
- Did you know you can buy gift memberships? This could be a unique present for someone with a love of the outdoors, waterways, nature, walking, boating .....
- Buy and send our Christmas cards and Calendar to promote our canal and the work we do.

What do you think?

Do you have ideas we might implement? If you'd like to suggest ways to attract new members, please email them to :

weysouth@weyarun.org.uk

Please make us a bequest in your will

Making a will can ensure your hard earned assets go to people and organisations you choose to support, with peace of mind for those survive you.

If you've already made a will and would like to include the Trust as a beneficiary, you can add a simple codicil or amendment. Simply download a form from the Donations page of our website, follow the instructions, and it's done, helping to ensure that the jewel that is our canal can carry on in perpetuity for the benefit of all.

As charitable bequests are tax-exempt, a gift to the Wey & Arun Canal Trust could reduce any Inheritance Tax to be paid after your death.

Questions? Please write in confidence to:
Legacies, Wey & Arun Canal Trust, Canal Centre, Onslow Wharf, High Street, Loxwood, Billingshurst RH14 0RD

Read all about our tremendous work throughout this magazine

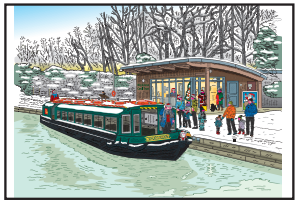
The Wey & Arun 2026 Christmas cards and 2027 calendar are now on sale



You can choose between

- A pack of six cards featuring our new 2026 design
- A mixed pack of two different cards (three of each design, including our new 2026 card)

- The inside of the cards reads "Season's Greetings"
- Price: £6 per pack of six
- Postage for up to two packs: £2.50







Back of cards (colour is green or red)



- 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: £9, Postage for up to three calendars: £3



- On sale at the Loxwood Canal Centre, (01403 753999, *canalcentre@weyarun.org.uk*). Open Wednesday to Sunday 11am-2pm, until the end of December
- Or visit our website and buy online:- *www.weyarun.org.uk/shop*
- Or to order by phone please contact the Loxwood Canal Centre, details as above
- Or to order by post please use the form below
- The cards and calendar will be on sale at the Annual Meeting at Pulborough on Oct 17th.

To: Wey & Arun Canal Trust, Canal Centre, Onslow Wharf, High Street, Loxwood, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 0RD

Please supply

_____ Packs of 2026 Christmas cards at £6 per pack
_____ Mixed packs of Christmas cards at £6 per pack
_____ 2027 calendars at £9 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: Wey & Arun Canal Trust.
- For card payment contact the Loxwood Canal Centre.