

Working Party News

No. 339

For WACT Volunteers

May 2022

Editorial

The weather has been good during April and it has been great to see so many visitors to the canal. Of course, the vegetation is starting to grow so the teams tasked with keeping the canal in good order will have their work cut out over the coming months.

Peter Winter

Boat Maintenance

During the last month the team have carried out repairs to the water supply to the toilet on *Wiggonholt*, checked battery levels and topped up as required.

Derek Wright and myself did a thorough inspection for the safety of the wheelchair lift, topped up the fluid level then made adjustments to the shelf so the manual pump could work and lift the platform to its full height.

On one of the days we tested the new pumpout on both *Wiggonholt* and *Zachariah Keppel* with John Reynolds and this proved very satisfactory.

Ian James

Boat Group PEST

Activity was somewhat reduced in April. We managed only one work day and that with just three volunteers due, in part, to ill-health among team members.

Tickner's Depot

The depot team is in attendance on Mondays, but it can be accessed seven days a week. If you take any tools or materials, please email Ian Prior.

Taking our equipment down to the unserviceable Baldwin's Knob Lock in *Josias Jessop* we transferred to *Wasp* and spent the day clearing debris from below BKL.

We are still looking for volunteers to join the team. If you fancy working on the water, keeping the navigation clear for our boats, then please get in touch or just turn up. We meet on the first and third Fridays of each month at 09:00 at the Canal Centre, Loxwood.

Chris Jones

Midweek Working Party

The workload for the MWWP is beginning to reduce as the bird nesting season is now with us and we are unable to do a number of the jobs. However, the group has been split to tackle a number of smaller jobs down the navigable section and elsewhere.

The non-towpath side of the area north of Barnshill, Brewhurst winding hole and the Birch Copse area have been tidied up by strimming and removing lots of loose timber. Work has been completed at Gun's Mouth Island for this year by tidying and removing all the loose timber. We cleared a tree at Gennets that had come down in the storm but another smaller tree that also came down in the canal had to be left as moorhens are nesting in it.

A small group continued to plant trees and hedges at Birtley and Drungewick Long Meadow and then water them. We have completed taking the trees out of the canal from Lee Place to Haybarn swing bridge. Activity has started again at Northlands to clear the trees that have fallen into the canal due to the storm.

Meanwhile one of the group has been spraying Giant Hogweed in his lovely white space suit. It is a long job which will continue for much of the summer.

Working Party Diary

Every Monday	'Mrs Bucket' Keeping up Appearances	Contact Tom Close
Every Tuesday (late October to March)	Hedgelaying	Contact Nick Baxter
Every Tuesday and Thursday	Boat Maintenance	Contact David Arnold
Every Wednesday	Midweek Working Party	Details from Margaret Darvill
Every Monday	Tickner's Depot	Contact Ian Prior
Every Wednesday and Thursday	Eric Walker Group	Details from Dennis Gillen/John Reynolds
Every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Third Saturday	Northern Working Party	Contact Bill Nicholson
First & Third Friday of the month	PEST Boat Group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem
Third Saturday of the month	Summit Level	Contact Dave Evans

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More generally, another 11 people from various groups completed their Forestry First Aid training this month. This will make it easier to split working parties into groups or operate when the only First Aider is on holiday or sick. I shall be running another course in the Autumn

Margaret Darvill

Mrs Bucket Group

Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

As anticipated in the last WPN, at the end of March the Group not only tackled Tickner's, but also Compasses. Now fully into 'Keeping Up Appearances' mode, the first meeting in April saw visits to Southland, Devil's Hole, Loxwood and Brewhurst.

This was followed by two outings for extensive work at the Drungewick slipway site and from Drungewick Lane Bridge to the lock and winding hole. At the former, all the area has been strimmed, brush cut and raked. In addition, a lot of the reeds that had been dredged out of the canal were cleared and left on the bank to dry. These have now been removed and the duck weed residue from the canal has been spread on the adjacent field. The permissive path has been tidied and piles of reeds have been removed (one pile still to be removed). Training continued with participation in brush cutter and first aid courses.

On a more personal note, on the morning of the AGM (Saturday 23rd April) I took the opportunity to walk the permissive path at Drungewick and was very gratified to see that the canal was in water all the way to the lock. The back pump was working and the lock looks really smart. What a credit to all our volunteers. I did see that the stop-planks were still in place at the heavy vehicle crossing with about 6 inches difference in the water levels either side. I understand these remain in place to prevent the fish swimming into the rewatered section pending certainty that it does not leak.

After the May Day bank holiday, visits to Devil's Hole and Southland etc. are on the cards.

Nick Wood

Eric Walker Group

The group has started work on the Birtley Bridge 2 site. After setting up the a safe works compound, we laid a hardcore track to the bridleway just before it goes under the Downs Link. As part of the planning consent conditions, we installed extensive tree protection fencing on all sides of the canal, which will be followed by two areas of root protection.



One of the most significant operations on the project is to re-route a medium pressure gas main that runs along the existing causeway, which after removal, will be the location of the new bridge. After many months of discussions with Southern Gas Network (SGN), we (Richard Meinertzhagen) finally arranged a meeting on 28th April with a group of senior managers, who have agreed to the dates for the diversion work that we proposed.

Next month will see us excavating, very carefully(!), to locate the existing main and then create a dam across the canal just to the south of the new bridge's location. After pumping out the water between the new dam and the existing causeway we will proceed to excavate to reduce levels and dig the trench for SGN to lay the gas main diversion.

Dennis Gillen

The Contact List

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