

Working Party News

No. 340

For WACT Volunteers

June 2022

Editorial

While it's been a bit cool during the past month, working conditions have generally been good. The first phase of work at Tickner's crossing is now just about complete, while at Birtley operations are starting in earnest on Bridge 2.

The boat trips are getting busy, but there is increasing maintenance to be done on the navigable stretches of the canal so that these can go the distance.

Peter Winter

Boat Group PEST

Our first work day in May was on the 6th and what a lovely one it was. Six volunteers took two boats out. All went in *May Upton* to Baldwin's Knob Lock, where three transferred to *Wasp*. The team on *Wasp* travelled down to the Drungewick slipway clearing the canal as they went. A considerable amount of fallen wood and general flotsam was removed from the water and some blocking branches were cut back.

The team had lunch at the slipway using the new table and bench. Thousands of tadpoles were observed near the banks on both sides of the canal from Baldwin's Knob Lock down to the slipway. Meanwhile, the team on *May Upton* cleared the canal north of Baldwin's Knob Lock.

The canal both north and south of Baldwin's Knob now looks much better; over four boat loads of material having been removed from the water. *Wasp* is now working well thanks to Ian James's ministrations.

Our second planned work day on Friday 20th May had to be abandoned due to a combination of forecast bad weather, the need to conserve water in the canal and limited availability of volunteers.

Chris Jones

Northern Working Party

April saw the completion of the northern bridge approach and forebay at Tickner's Crossing. This included the shuttering and casting of the concrete capping beam along the length of the retaining wall; a task ably carried out by Andy Smith and his team.

Having completed this, work focussed on the footpath/bridleway approach ramps to the steel footbridge. These ramps comprise of clay taken from the large stockpiles created by the temporary road excavation. The clay was compacted and overlaid with



rolled type one aggregate between timber edge boards. The northern ramp was completed by the end of April.

The southern section, as well as the ramp, incorporates a 100m length of 2 metre wide footway along-



Material published in *Working Party News* represents the views of the contributors and should not, unless specifically indicated, be assumed to be the policy of the Trust.



Landscaping the southern access

side the road as far as the access from Dunsfold Road into the Sidney Wood car park. We were joined for three days at the end of May by NWPG. Together with our Saturday regulars, both the path and ramp were completed and are now available for use by the public, who can see all the work completed to date. Sections of tree protection fencing no longer required have been taken down.

Apart from completing the temporary road, there is little more to do at Tickner’s until contractors do their part on the bridge itself. This is unlikely to be until 2023 and so we will be engaged elsewhere.

For June our work will be at Baldwin's Knob Lock where the leakage identified in my last report transpired to be a substantial failure to the lower cill. Consequently June will be spent working with the full time team in reconstructing the lower cill using reinforced concrete. The lower lock gates will have to be lifted out of the way as part of the operation.

We are currently working on Mondays, Tuesdays (weekly) and for June on Saturdays 11th and 18th (avoiding the Jubilee weekend). As noted above, we will be at Baldwin’s Knob Lock. Please park at Loxwood and walk down. To join our WhatsApp group for regular updates please text Dave Evans.

Bill Nicholson

Mrs Bucket Group Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

May was another busy month for Mrs Bucket to ‘keep up appearances’ by extensive brush cutting, strimming, raking and cleaning. The Group visited Gennets, Southland, Devil’s Hole, Loxwood, and Brewhurst Locks (all twice), and gave the Drungewick slipway and aqueduct site their attention too.

The permissive path from Drungewick Lane Bridge to the lock and all around the winding hole was cut, the last pile of reeds (mentioned in the last WPN) was disposed of and the mileposts and benches in that section were cleaned. I sometimes wonder if we do more maintenance on our canal than the Canal & River Trust does on theirs!

Nick Wood

Midweek Working Party

This month we have spent much time at Northlands clearing trees from the canal. We put in a gate and fence posts with a rope to help people down the hill and placed large logs in a circle for people to sit on. We also prepared for the spreading of the ashes of the late supporter whose generous legacy paid for

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, 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

this section of the canal.

A group of four took a boat from Pulborough Bridge down the River Arun to clear it in preparation for the River Arun Rally. Others worked hard in Hunt Park keeping it looking like a Nature Park.

Margaret Darvill

Boat Maintenance

The boats have been working hard carrying passengers this month and most of work has been concerned with routine maintenance and the fixing of minor defects. Ian has done a full, formal survey and maintenance of the wheelchair lift on *Wiggonholt* including hand pumping the lift up to full height.

The Wey & Arun Canal Trust signs on WH were split so we replaced them with new aluminium



A new sign for Wiggonholt

backed ones.

Just to illustrate one of our larger charters I show a picture of 44 guests and 4 catering staff who em-



barked with food and champagne for a two hour charter of WH recently. It was a surprise 80th birthday party. This involved removing half the tables and adding chairs around the sides of the saloon.

David Arnold

Eric Walker Group

This month the group has continued its work on the Birtley Bridge 2 site. That's the northerly of the two Birtley bridges. In compliance with our planning consent conditions, we have completed the extensive tree protection measures with the installation of two areas of tree root protection.

As mentioned in my previous report on this site, one of the most significant operations of the project is to re-route a medium pressure gas main that runs under the existing causeway. Before Southern Gas Networks can undertake this task we needed to find the exact location of the existing main. Although this was plotted on one of our engineering drawings from information given by SGN, we had to carry out



Finding the gas main at Birtley

exploratory excavations along the length of the causeway to determine exact position, direction and depth of the gas main. This could only be done employing a digger with no teeth on its excavation bucket and only to a depth near to the estimated level with the final dig being done by hand.

An added complication was the need to have our arboriculturalist consultant in attendance when excavating within the tree protection zones to advise if any tree roots were encountered. This excavation was successful and we located and plotted the two points on the main where SGN will make their joints for the pipe diversion.

Another major issue concerned arrangements to dig the trench for the diverted gas main and to construct the bridleway diversion. We needed to dam



Installing the AquaDam



AquaDam in place with bulk bags to keep it in place

and pump dry the section of canal to the south of the new bridge location. To do this a considerable amount of material would have to be imported. However, the logistics to do this would have taken too long for our tight schedule and we would need to remove all the material on completion.

As a solution we decided to employ the use of an AquaDam. This is a device looks like a large

‘sausage’, as can be seen from the pictures. To install it we positioned it on the towpath in its rolled up state and filled it by pumping in water. This causes the dam to roll out and push across the canal. As it fills, it moulds against the canal bed by the weight of the contained water to provide a seal. This only took three hours! It will take a similar time to remove the dam and of course it can be used on future projects.



The foundations of the original Birtley bridge

As part of our exploratory excavations we have unearthed the brick foundations of the old bridge, most of which unfortunately will have to be removed completely in order to install the new bridge foundations.

Next month should see the gas main diverted, the bridleway diversion installed and a start made on the foundations of the new bridge.

Dennis Gillen

The Contact List

Name	Group/Project	Tel	email
Maurice Cranefield	Visiting Working Parties	01483 505566	maurice_cranefield@weyandarun.co.uk
Dennis Gillen	Eric Walker Group	07866 583753	dennis_gillen@weyandarun.co.uk
Margaret Darvill	Midweek Working Party	01483 894606	margaret_darvill@weyandarun.co.uk
Tom Close	Monday Group	07811 534292	thomasdclose@googlemail.com
Ian Prior	Tickner’s Depot Manager	07864 708932	ian_prior@weyandarun.co.uk
Nick Baxter	Hedgelaying		hedgelaying@weyandarun.co.uk
Bill Nicholson	Northern Working Parties	0118 9714785	bill_nicholson@weyandarun.co.uk
Dave Evans	Site Restoration Supervisor		dave_evans@weyandarun.co.uk
Chris Jones	Boat Group PEST	01483 421136	chrisryderjones@outlook.com
David Arnold	Boat Maintenance	01403 790168	dja103@hotmail.com
Julian Cheek	Maintenance Administration	01483 505566	julian_cheek@weyandarun.co.uk
Peter Winter	Working Party News Editor	07722 184117	peter_winter@weyandarun.co.uk