

Working Party News

No. 344

For WACT Volunteers

October 2022

Editorial

Although we've had some rain over recent weeks, it's not been enough to float boats through the locks, so trips continue to be suspended.

Meanwhile the volunteers with the Summer Camp did some excellent work on several landing stages and with the piling now installed at the Birtley 2 site progress can be made on the bridge construction.

Peter Winter

Northern Working Party

Following the all consuming work at Baldwin's Knob Lock over the previous few months, a variety of smaller tasks were carried out in August. Surface dressing was applied on sections of the towpath to level and flatten the surface in the area of Baldwin's Knob, and a new timber post and five bar gate was installed on the towpath at Brewhurst.

In preparation for the visiting Summer Camp later in the month, temporary compounds were erected at the Canal Centre at Loxwood and the work site at



Collecting the Aquadock from Dunsfold

Devil's Hole Lock. The Aquadock from the slipway at Dunsfold was collected and prepared in readiness for the Summer Camp to use whilst replacing a number of landing stages.

Some general tidying up at Tickner's Heath took place, pending the temporary suspension of works at the site. One day was spent with the Summer Camp at Devil's Hole Lock to assist with the construction of landing stages and the resurfacing of the towpath. Following the departure of the very productive Summer Camp, their compounds were cleared and some

final resurfacing was completed at both Birch Copse and Devil's Hole Lock.

Despite a weather forecast of rain and thunderstorms in the immediate area, a strong contingent of hardy souls ventured out on the first Tuesday of September to carry out tree felling on the towpath by Loxwood Lock. Fortunately, the weather gods looked down on us favourably and a fine day was experienced, with barely a drop of rain in sight. As well as chipping and chopping the felled trees into logs, a trailer load of clippings was taken to Dunsfold Aerodrome in preparation for the construction of hibernacula for the amphibians that are to be relocated from the canal alongside the airfield - pending its cleaning and dredging.



Training young 'volunteers' at Surrey Hills Wood Fair

Volunteers from the Northern Working Party assisted with the running of the Trust's very popular stand at the Surrey Hills Wood Fair at Cranleigh, being kept busy by a constant stream of children keen to operate the two mini excavators that were in continual action over the two days. It was very gratifying to see so many smiling faces from the children and to receive numerous compliments from the parents on the Trust's participation in the event.

Due to their time out of the water during the lock repairs at Baldwin's Knob, the wooden gate planks had shrunk considerably and needed caulking to help prevent leakage. This was a slow job, requiring about 70 tubes of sealant to treat just one side of the gates! But the job has now been completed and we await testing the effectiveness of the sealant when the lock chamber can be refilled.

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Caulking the lock gates at Baldwin's Knob

Another task that was completed was the construction of timber rail fencing on the approaches to the footbridge at Tickner's Heath crossing. Also, following comments from local users, the coarse top surface of the approaches was scraped off and replaced by a smoother rolled surface.

Dave Miller

Boat Maintenance

Both Ian and I have been on vacation for the last fortnight so not very much maintenance work has been done.

The external cabin of *Zachariah Keppel* has been painted in the standard Buckingham Green to match the other two boats and very neat they look too, all moored opposite the Canal Centre.

Ian scraped off *Wiggonholt's* wheelchair platform from years of paint layered on rust and primed it with grey rust preventer paint. The usual pebble-dash buff paint we used on all the boats' decks is no longer obtainable, so, after a straw poll to choose between black, white, tile red, and grey, we are gradually going to paint the decks with grey floor paint, starting with *WH*.

Otherwise, we have been sorting out the programme and volunteers to arrange the slipping and survey of *ZK* starting October 31st with the surveyor coming on November 4th.

David Arnold

Mrs Bucket Group

Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

All three outings in September were held between Drungewick Lock and the aqueduct site, brush cutting, mowing the bank/towpath and cutting back overhanging branches on the dry bed of the canal. We also disposed of previously cut reeds and other debris resulting from our labours.

Nick Wood

Boat Group PEST

No report from the PEST Group. Still not enough water.

Chris Jones

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
Every Thursday	Canal Maintenance Unit	Contact Ian Lower
First & Third Friday of the month	PEST Boat Group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem
Third Saturday of the month	Summit Level	Contact Dave Evans

Eric Walker Group

This month the group has continued to work on the Birtley Bridge 2 site.

Having uncovered quite a few elements of the old bridge, the group continued to excavate and construct a platform for our piling contractor to install seven reinforced piles to a depth of 12 metres.

We had to remove all of the old bridge brick abutment on the east side as it occluded the line of the concrete piles. In the process of doing this we uncovered more of the oak timbers supporting the wall. These, as they were on the west side, were made up of two 12" x 4" timbers laid side by side and were



The 21 foot long oak timber that supported the old wall



The piles installed and a start being made on the concrete blinding

supported by pieces of 12" x 6" timbers at right angles to the main timbers at 4' 0" centres. The main timbers were 21' 6" long and at each end they were jointed and "splayed" back away from the canal channel.

This configuration was as shown on Josiah Jessop's standard drawing for swing bridges along the canal. Unfortunately these timbers also had to be removed to accommodate the line of new piles, although plenty of photographs were taken and location dimensions recorded.

Following installation of the piles, the area between the piles was excavated and following pump-



The blinding completed, but a bit wet

ing out water from the work site on each visit, a concrete blinding base has been laid in order to give a good firm working platform. With this in place the team will be able to cut the piles down to the required level and also a start can be made on the erection of the formwork for the concrete abutments.

Dennis Gillen

took *May Upton* from Loxwood to Baldwin's Knob Lock to start clearing vegetation in the canal.

The rest of the month we have carrying out a variety of tasks such as painting the mooring bollards at Loxwood, assisting with getting ready for a clean out of Devil's Hole Lock, and preparing the deck of a new bridge for Brewhurst Lock.

Ian Lower

Canal Maintenance Unit

This month we completed flooring the deck of *May Upton* and have been tidying up and repainting the cabins.

With higher canal water levels, on the 22nd we

Come to the Autumn Meeting

For all the latest information come to Alfold Village Hall, Dunsfold Road, Alfold GU6 8JB at 2.30pm on 22nd October.



The new decking on May Upton

The Contact List

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