

# Working Party News

No. 349

For WACT Volunteers

March 2023

## Editorial

This is my second and final edition before Peter returns from his travels and takes back the reins. I have been pleased to keep the Working Party News ticking over in his absence and thank all contributors for your forbearance. I must say that it was a revelation to experience the work involved in the compilation and it is a credit to Peter that he puts in the time and effort every month to prepare this informative publication that is enjoyed by many.

*Dave Miller*

## Eric Walker Group

The group has continued with its work on the Birtley Bridge 2 site. Having successfully completed the first concrete pour to the abutment walls, the team continued to erect the reinforcement for the next “lift” to the walls on both the east and west sides of the structure. With the reinforcement complete, work started to erect the formwork to the west abutment. This is the most complex part of the structure with the bridge support beams to the rear of the main abutment wall and the construction of the “box-out” on the canal side to accommodate the bridge deck.



Erecting formwork at Birtley Bridge 2

The whole section will be poured in one operation to avoid a potentially weakening construction joint but it creates the problem of stopping the “box-out” formwork from “floating” upwards under the pressure of the mass of concrete below it. Luckily, having experienced civil engineers on the team, we hope a solution has been found but that will only become evident when we carry out the pour, planned for the 2nd March!

Three companies have been invited to tender for the bridge superstructure and hydraulic lifting mechanism and all have visited site to determine site conditions, access etc.



Dredging at Birtley Bridge 2

Work has also continued dredging and bank profiling on the section of canal to the north of the bridge location.

*Dennis Gillen*

## Boat Group PEST

Activity in February has largely been in support of Dave Evans and the working parties removing the Ash trees and brush between Barnsill Bridge and the Slipway. With a good turn out and, fortuitously, good weather the team was able to assist in shifting a large quantity of material related to the tree clearance.

We also continued with our usual tasks of keeping the waterway clear of debris and the offside bank in a respectable state.

*Chris Jones*

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## Northern Working Party

Work has continued throughout February with the fence erecting at Elmbridge Village, where their property borders the canal, and a total of 84 panels with concrete posts, stretching approx 170 metres, have been installed so far. Progress is steadily being made and we are about two thirds of the way through. Having now got the hang of it, we look forward to finishing the task in March and moving on to something different!



Fencing at Elmbridge Village

We have also been supporting the sad but necessary effort to remove dead and dying Ash trees due to the ‘Ash Dieback’. We have been helping out with cutting timber and clearing away debris on land and also in the canal using the work boat *May Upton*. One positive aspect which has come out of the tree removal is that we have produced several tons of logs for firewood.

Initially we did the job by hand with splitting mauls but more recently we were presented with a log

splitter made ‘in house’ for the purpose and hydraulically powered from the Trust’s telehandler.

A brilliant piece of kit which can handle just about any timber, knotty or otherwise (some of which would be impossible to split with a maul or axe).

A short race between splitting mauls and the log splitter was neck and neck to start with but, after a while, the splitter powered ahead ..... because it doesn’t get tired!

*Dave Miller*



New log splitter

## Hedgelaying

The Team has done remarkably well, spurred on by good weather (well, at least not torrential rain and flooding, and even sometimes sunshine), but also by two members who competed in the February Surrey Wildlife Trust Novice Hedgelaying Championship, who have returned with added zeal and knowledge. They are now correcting all my old bad habits! Further information about the competition can be seen in the next edition of Wey-South.

The Slipway area is now much smarter and the hedge should be easier to manage over the next 10 to 15 years before it needs laying again. With the new picnic bench for slipway users, this is a really de-

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
Alternate 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
Every Thursday	Odd Job Group	Contact Brian King
First & Third Friday of the month	PEST Boat Group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem
Third Saturday of the month	Summit Level	Contact Dave Evans

lightful part of the Canal and it has been a pleasure working here.



Photo by Nick Baxter

Double hedge laid at Drungewick Slipway

The next few weeks should see the Team complete as much as was originally programmed, before we stop when bird nesting starts - altogether a great year.

*Nick Baxter*

### Odd Job Group

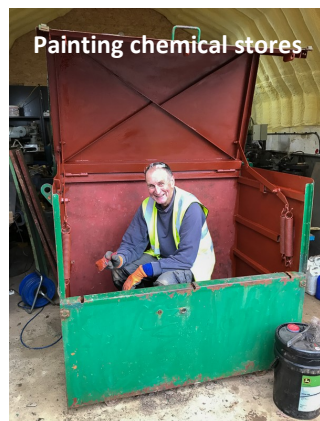
Throughout February, we have continued to tidy and improve conditions at the Dunsfold Depot. Mainly we have concentrated on storing equipment where it can be more easily found, in a safe and secure environment.



Pump pipe racking at Depot

All water pump piping is now stored on newly constructed scaffold racking.

Wiring for lighting in two of the large sheds has been installed and is awaiting final connection by an approved engineer. Supports for a new veranda in front of the welfare cabin have been erected and the work will be completed shortly. Next to the welfare cabin, concrete bases were



Painting chemical stores

formed and poured and the portacabin from the slipway lifted onto them - for Adam's new office!

The two chemical store cabinets have been moved and are being renovated. A good amount of work has been completed and the Depot is now starting to look much more organised.



Adam's future office

Assistance was also provided to the Canal Maintenance Unit by transporting their newly constructed (very heavy!!) wooden footbridge from Dunsfold Depot to Brewhust Lock and manhandling it into position.

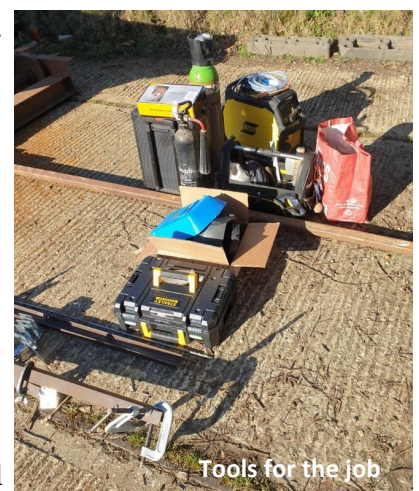
*Brian King*

### Boat Maintenance

I have been away for most of the month on holiday but work has proceeded on *Josias Jessup* in my absence, to the exclusion of all other boat maintenance, apart from emergencies.

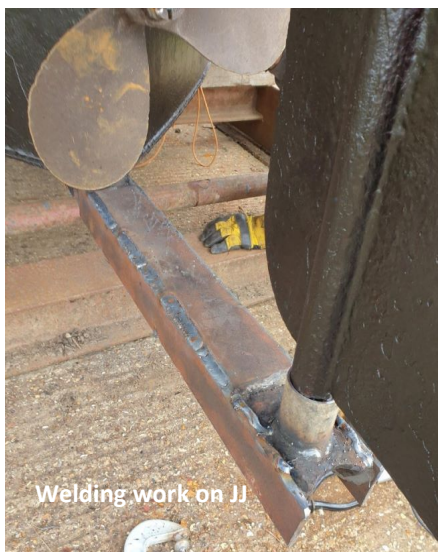
The refit of JJ is proving to be the biggest job that we have yet tackled, especially in the cold weather, in the open, on the slip.

Ian has hired a great array of kit, a 3kw welder, wire, gas, a gas bottle and more. This will cost the Trust over a thousand pounds but is still infinitely cheaper than hauling JJ out and trucking her to a shipyard for partial replating, as we did a couple of years back for *Zachariah Keppel*. That cost the Trust £25,000 or thereabouts. Ian and Brian have started the reconstruction work by welding up the very corroded rudder bearing and



Tools for the job

channel bar supporting it. Guy and I are working on overside and aft fenders to protect the new black hull paintwork, plus painting up the new steelwork as it



is welded in place, including the corroded hatch drain areas. The prop shaft bearing will need new packing and greasing and new, sacrificial anodes will be fitted. Hopefully she will be back at her canal centre berth and ready for service by the third week of March.

Then we have to sort out the deck of *Wiggonholt* where the new grey floor paint has been worn away by the flock of Santa trip passengers.

*David Arnold*

## Mrs Bucket Group Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

As it had dried out a bit underfoot a good start was made in February by giving attention to Malham Lock, although getting temporarily stuck with one of the volunteer's cars did happen. Despite not having visited since last June, growth of the vegetation was not as great as we had expected. Both sides of the lock and the bank into the field were cut and raked, leaving the site a lot tidier.

**However, we would welcome any suggestions for obtaining a boat which we can take down to the site so that we can remove the foliage that is growing out of the lock walls.** A job for another time.

We have cut and cleared the towpath between Devil's Hole and Southland Locks by adopting the Trust's new clearance policy of 50 yards of the towpath bank canal side followed by 50 yards of the non-canal side of the towpath.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> we cut the top and side of the towpath hedge and, where appropriate, the bank between Loxwood Lock and Brewhurst Bridge. The mass of cuttings were carried to the area offside Brewhurst Lock where they will be disposed of in due course.

The following Monday we worked on the hedge above and below Barnsill Bridge, so we are well on



the way towards tidying up all the way from Drungewick Aqueduct to the Loxwood Canal Centre. With a bit of luck we shall complete this in March before the birds start doing their thing.

*Nick Wood*



## First Aid Training

Every group should have at least two, and preferably more, First Aid trained volunteers.

If you would like some initial First Aid training, or if you already have a certificate that is near to 3 years old or over, please contact me:

*Margaret\_Darvill@weyandarun.co.uk* with Title First Aid.

The one day course will be in late April or May.

*Margaret Darvill*

## Canal Maintenance Unit

Our main achievement this month was the replacement of Brewhurst Lock footbridge, with the new bridge installed with the valuable assistance of Brian King's Odd Job Group. Some final painting remains to be completed.



New footbridge at Brewhurst Lock

The rest of the month we have been completing various outstanding tasks, ready to start something new.

*Ian Lower*

## Midweek Working Party

Most of MWWP have spent the three weeks we have worked, at the field adjacent to Roger Dimmock Lane. The plan was to cut the willows down so they did not go over the navigation. However, this did not work out as we had to clear the hedge

and all the other brambles and small trees in order to reach the willows.



Hedge clearing near Roger Dimmock Lane

We cleared the willows and the hedge and brought it down to fence height and now everyone from the towpath can see the beautiful view up the hill. A great improvement !



Navvies Lunch at Bramley Golf Club

The other week, 38 people sat down to Navvies Lunch at Bramley Golf Club where a good time was had by all. A very big thank you for a lovely gift I was given

*Margaret Darvill*

## The Contact List

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