

Working Party News

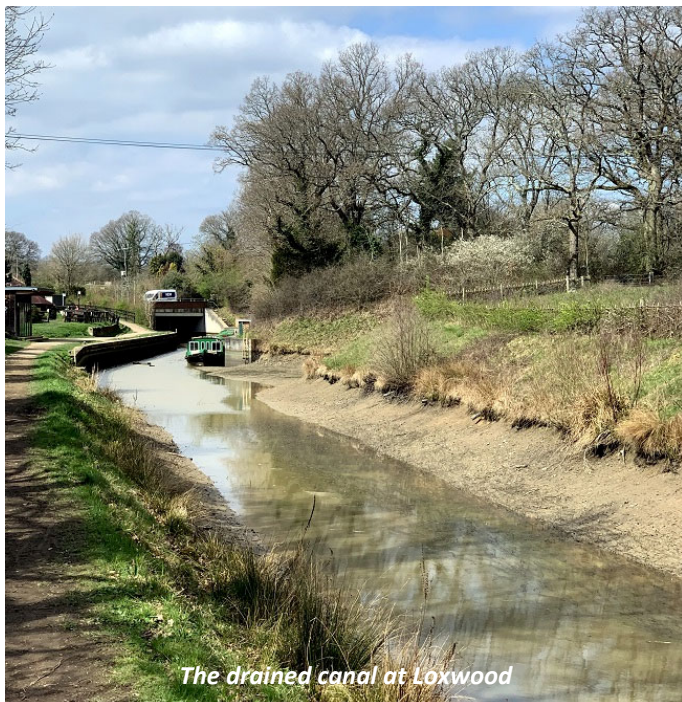
No. 351

For WACT Volunteers

May 2023

Editorial

April was a month of bad news and good news. The bad news was the act of criminal vandalism to the control boxes and lock gear around Loxwood resulting in the canal being drained. Fortunately our staff and volunteers came to the rescue and got the canal back in water.



The drained canal at Loxwood

The good news was that the Trust acquired the freehold of the Bonfire Hanger canal section which extends 800m to the north of Gennets Bridge Lock. MWWP has already got stuck in to getting it into good order.

Peter Winter

Northern Working Party

At the beginning of the month, some of the team assisted with the start of the reparation of the devastating criminal damage caused to the canal and equipment in the Loxwood area. Thanks to everyone's efforts, the canal was refilled in time for the bulk of the Easter boat trips to continue.

After Easter, we collected the large pumps from Devil's Hole Lock, where they had been temporarily installed to replenish the drained pounds.

Work then continued at Tickner's Crossing, where a chestnut paling fence was erected along the road verge and the Heras fencing removed. The site is looking much tidier but we look forward to continu-

ing with the construction of the crossing when the necessary approvals are granted.



Lowering the level at Rowner Lock

Early in the month, there was a breach of the canal bank just north of the electricity pylon near Rowner Lock. Urgent remedial work was required and we attended the lock to remove stop planks to lower the water level to prevent flooding of the adjacent land, pending a more permanent repair of the breach.

Assistance was provided to the operation to lift and transport the Trust's dredger and two tubs from the canal at Compasses to Loxwood. A long day's task in very wet weather, involving road closures, diversions, three large low loaders and one very large crane! Having safely relocated the dredger and tubs to Loxwood, *Wasp* was lifted out of the water, near the Canal Centre, and transported to Tickner's Depot for maintenance work to be carried out.



Beware of Wasp

The use of the crane meant that some remedial groundwork was required at Compasses, and the following week, we spread a load of top soil over the disturbed area and replaced the large wooden edging posts that had been removed in order for the crane to

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Wasp arrives at the Depot

be stabilised.

We went on to visit Devil’s Hole Lock and installed a new pedestrian wooden gate to the lock area on the offside of the canal. Whilst there, we also dismantled a section of the large bore metal piping, to investigate a significant leak from the back pumping system. The cause of the leak has potentially been identified and remedial work should shortly be completed.



Constructing the new landing stage at Brewhurst

A weekend working party at the end of the month, re-profiled the canal bank at the winding hole at Brewhurst by installing pre-seeded coir fibre rolls

along the edge and assistance was given to finishing off the job.

The final task of the month was to transport materials down to Brewhurst Lock, using May Upton and begin construction of a new canoe landing stage.

Dave Miller

Boat Maintenance

Since bringing *Josias Jessop* back to the Canal Centre, we have pumped out the bilge at the stern and removed the resident frog from the bow.

As for *Wiggonholt*, the battery acid levels have been topped up, and the tannoy was inspected as it seemed to suffer in the damp weather. The new cable entry point for charging the batteries has been cut into the control box to accommodate the new flexible cable.

Zachariah Keppel now has solar chargers to keep the batteries topped up and is now equipped with an assortment of phone charging points. The next big task is to paint the interior of *ZK* which has become very weather worn during the winter.

Ian James

Monday Group

The vandalism on 1st April caused some changes to our expected tasks with the result that we confined ourselves to cutting the grass at Gennets and Drungewick locks, leaving the levelling at Gennets for another time. However on 17th we were able to start at Gennets, laying 4 tonnes of soil and grass seed, but another two tonnes are required to finish the job!

We completed our third meeting of the month by mowing, strimming and tidying up at Compasses Bridge, Tickner’s triangle, Southland, Devil’s Hole and Brewhurst Locks and at various points at Lox-

Working Party Diary

Every Monday	Monday Group	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 Thursday	Tickner’s Depot	Contact Mark Feeney
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

wood, particularly around the Centre and the steps leading to the offside moorings.



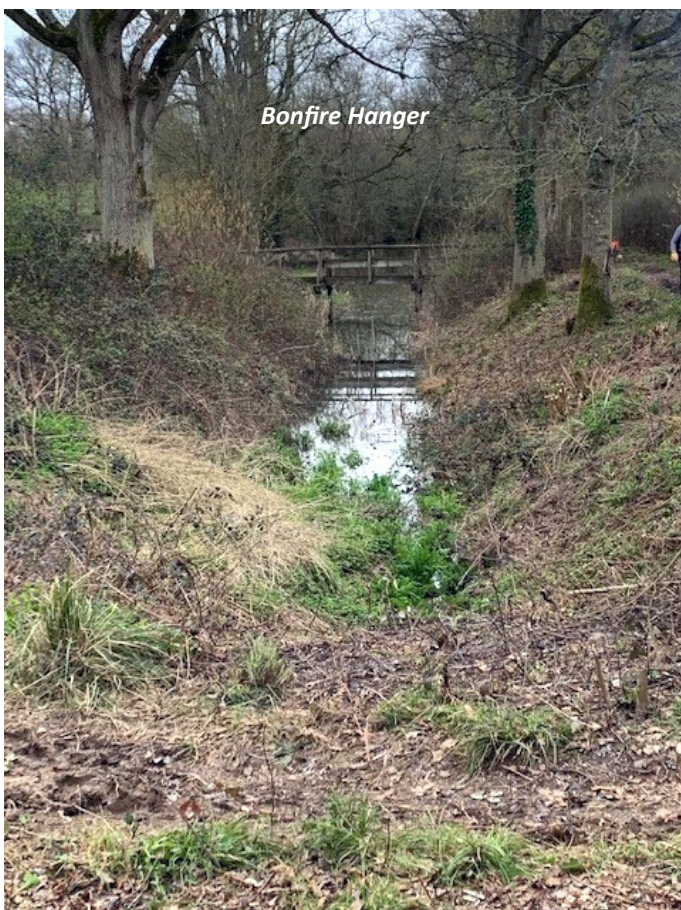
Finally we said cheerio to Ted Jackson with a retirement drink at the Onslow Arms. Ted has been a member of the group for over 20 years and he has earned the 'right' to hang up his strimmer. We wish him well.

As there are now two bank holidays approaching, our next meeting will be on 15th May.

Nick Wood

Midweek Working Party

April has seen Midweek Working Party tidying up the newly acquired stretch of canal at Bonfire Hang-



er. Leaving the beautiful primroses, bluebells and wood anemones, Bonfire Hanger has been trimmed and cleared of some brambles and is looking much tidier. The rest will now be left for the autumn.



A small group spent one week in Hunt Park clearing a fallen tree and the first signs of Himalayan Balsam.

Margaret Darvill

Tickner's Depot

The big Ferris mower refurbishment is nearing completion. It turns out that it was more neglected than we first thought, but Ian Joyce has it well on the way to being a useful bit of kit again – just as well given the speed at which the towpath grass is growing.

The brushcutter and generator mentioned last month have been repaired and are out earning a living again.

We also had a Mountfield mower with a rear roller donated to us recently, so if any of the groups want to show off with stripes on their mown sections, let me know.

As part of the dredger move to Loxwood, *Wasp* was lifted and bought back to the depot for repairs including a new bottom. Sadly, she was a victim of the vandalism and now needs new battery leads as they were sliced off by a cretin with a grinder.

Next month we play host to the WACT Restoration Group, so I'll be spending the next few weeks sprucing the place up even more... or I might just carry on repairing and servicing stuff.

Don't forget that if you have any pieces of WACT kit in need of repair or service, please drop them off at the depot, but remember to leave a note and send me an email as to what's wrong and who to contact when it's fixed.

Mark Feeney

Canal Maintenance Unit

The steps at Loxwood leading to the moorings have now been replaced. As reported last month, NWP removed the old steps and started ground preparation, and the CMU completed two concrete pours, first for the bottom 7 steps and second for the



The new steps at Loxwood

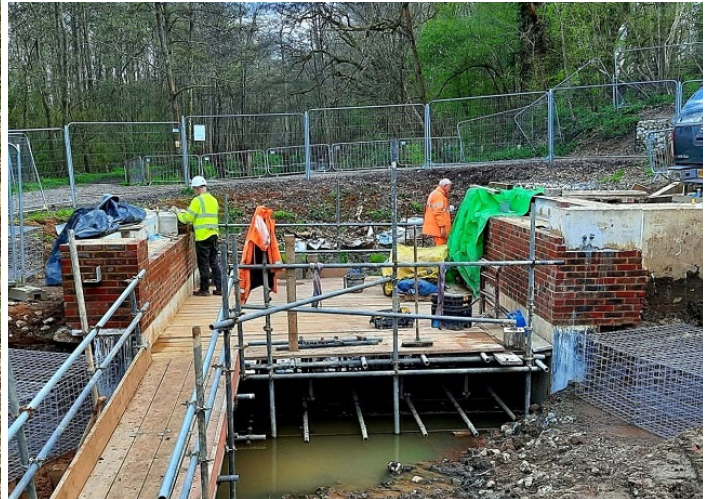
top 5 including a concrete slab leading to the gate. The handrail is too high now and will be replaced. There was some inconvenience to the boat crews accessing the moorings but we tried to limit this as far as we possibly could.

We also assisted in preparation for the dredger move on 14th April, including pumping out the barges to reduce the load as far as possible!

Ian Lower

Eric Walker Group

Work has continued at the Birtley Bridge 2 site with completion of the brick facing to both abutments.



A start has also been made to installing gabions on each side of the abutments.

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
Mark Feeney	Tickner's Depot Manager		mark_feeney@weyandarun.co.uk
Nick Baxter	Hedgelaying		hedgelaying@weyandarun.co.uk
Bill Nicholson	Northern Working Parties	0118 9714785	bill_nicholson@weyandarun.co.uk
Dave Evans	Operations Manager		dave_evans@weyandarun.co.uk
Chris Jones	Boat Group PEST	01483 421136	chrisryderjones@outlook.com
David Arnold	Boat Maintenance	01403 790168	dja103@hotmail.com
Ian Lower	Canal Maintenance Unit	07827 977916	ian_lower@hotmail.com
Brian King	Odd Job Group	07771 666751	briankingems@gmail.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