

# Working Party News

No. 352

For WACT Volunteers

June 2023

## Editorial

The sun has been shining and there has been little rain, so all our Work Parties have been able to get on with their work.

It's encouraging to note the coordination and cooperation between work groups and how some are joining forces to work on specific tasks.

*Peter Winter*

### Health & Safety Officer

The Trust is looking for someone to take on the role of Health & Safety Officer. This would be suitable for an existing volunteer so if you are interested please contact [chairman@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:chairman@weyandarun.co.uk).

## Boat Maintenance

I have been away most of the month, but work has been proceeding headed by Ian and Guy. Ian has been repairing the deck outside *Wiggonholt's* heads where a skipper's foot went right through the rot during the safety briefing for a passenger trip. Sadly, our boats are getting older and are much used. Eventually all of WH's wooden deck will need replacement with plasticised and resinated sheets

which should last much longer. That is a very big job and will probably be tackled in three sections.

Guy has been occupied in painting the exterior decks of *Zachariah Koppel* and WH for'd and aft. The picture shows the newly cleaned and painted for'd deck of WH. Much smarter, especially as Ian has managed to clear both scupper pipes, so the rainwater should run off into



Repaired flooring on Wiggonholt

the pump tank and be pumped back out as it is designed to do.

Although not strictly our responsibility, John Reynolds has been organising big improvements to the boats' mooring area opposite the Canal Centre. The steps and balustrade have been completely reconstructed, the pump-out arrangements have been reor-



Smart new bow deck on Wiggonholt

ganised with a new pump in its own separate shed and replacement pipework fitted, which allows both ZK and WH to be pumped out while remaining at their normal berths. WH also has a new electric point next to her stern and a new wire to bridge the short connection to it.

*David Arnold*

## Canal Maintenance Unit

Further work has been carried out to the Birch Copse river pump chamber to secure the manhole cover base and this is now complete. We have also been painting new fencing at various locations.

One of the team has been rebuilding a damaged memorial bench which should soon be returned to its position by the canal.

For the last two weeks in the month, with some of the team on holiday and some of us having work commitments, the remaining volunteers assisted the Odd Job Gang with jobs at Hunt Park and at the depot.

*Ian Lower*



## Midweek Working Party

MWWP have had a very busy month even though it is bird nesting season. We spent one week at Northlands pulling trees out of the canal. The ground was soggy and cars were stuck in the field. We will

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need to go back at the end of June.

Two weeks were spent chopping wood that had been felled in the spring. A small group cleared brambles at Rooks Hill and an even smaller group trimmed at Birtley clearing the towpath avoiding the flowers and clearing a patch between the river and canal so that the bank can be stabilised.

Hunt Park had the attention of a small group clearing the fast growing grass in line with the ecologist's requirements.

*Margaret Darvill*

### Northern Working Party

The first couple of outings for the month were to Brewhurst Lock to complete the construction of the canoe landing stage, pedestrian gate and wooden rail fencing. Very favourable reports were received from



*The new canoe landing stage at Brewhurst*

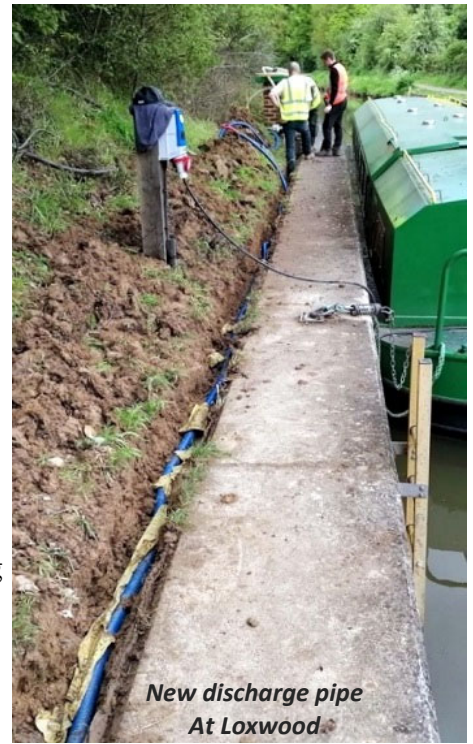
canoeists who had already started to make use of it.

Opposite the Canal Centre, we dug a trench and buried the flexible, waste discharge pipe along the edge of the moorings.

We used May Upton to transport several large loads. En route, a stowaway was discovered - believed to be a field vole! It was safely detained for the remainder of the voyage and then released into the hedgerow away from Brewhurst Lock.

Our final outing of the month was back to Birch Copse with a trailer load of bricks. We then continued with hand digging trenches along the towpath. It should be a much quicker process when machinery is available!

*Dave Miller*



*New discharge pipe At Loxwood*



*The stowaway*

### Monday Group

With three Monday bank holidays in May, the Group met only on 15th & 22nd. Despite this and with an excellent number of volunteers out, a lot of work was undertaken.

Accordingly we brush cut, trimmed, mowed and tidied up the vegetation at Compasses Bridge where

## 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

we installed a bench given to us by a nearby resident, Tickner's (the 'triangle' and around the new pedestrian bridge), Gennetts (including 200yards down the towpath to the footbridge), Southland Lock, Devil's Hole Lock, Loxwood Lock & the Canal Centre, Brewhurst Lock, Baldwin's Knob Lock, Drungewick Aqueduct site and Dungewick Lock. A really busy two days, necessary now that the growing season is here!.

*Nick Wood*

## Eric Walker Group

The group has continued with its work on the Birtley Bridge 2 site where the foundation abutments concrete and brickwork are now complete. This month the team placed all the Gabion cages to the ends of each abutment, hand filled them with limestone and fitted plastic wood boat rubbing rails to the fronts. We also constructed a Gabion "mattress" filled with limestone and placed over the line of the diverted gas main as protection.



*The completed foundations and abutments at Birtley 2*

An order has been placed with Beaver Bridges for the lift bridge structures for both Birtley 1 and 2. Design and fabrication are underway at their Wigan factory.

As part of the bridge design we have to provide five concrete balance weights for each bridge. These are currently being constructed by some of the team



*The first two of ten balance counter weights*

at Tickner's depot and when completed they will be sent to the Beaver factory in order that they can carry out operational tests prior to the bridges being delivered to site for final erection.

Work will now get underway preparing the south (Birtley Bridge 1) bridge abutments. This will involve removing the temporary steel and timber decking and installing new mounting pads for the lift bridge support gantry and deck. To maintain the popular circular walk along the towpath and the Downs Link, we have arranged for a scaffold bridge to be installed adjacent to the existing bridge abutments. This will be fitted during early June.

*Dennis Gillen*

## Tickner's Depot

Last month's WACT Restoration group visit didn't happen, so I ate all the biscuits myself. Hopefully a visit of interested parties will take place soon. The Odd Job Group came along and made a huge amount of noise and mess when they hammered out the concrete ballast from *Wasp's* bottom. We can now see the extent of rust and repairs needed. There is a plan to replace the outboard with a proper engine and drive system, but that's a long way off at the moment.

We've had visits from two teams recently. The MWWP have been slicing their way through the huge pile of logs and turning them into an even larger pile of firewood for sale later in the year. There's still a lot of logs left, so I expect to see them back as regular visitors.

The EWG have reached a point in the Birtley 2 bridge construction where they need to build the counter-balance weights. A nice shady area of the depot has been made available for them to create the ten reinforced concrete beams they need, and they've just finished pouring the first two.

If the weather holds, I'm hoping to get all the wooden doors sanded down and painted in the next few weeks.

*Mark Feeney*

## Boat Group PEST

After an inactive April due to weather and manning issues, May saw the team continue with our usual tasks of keeping the waterway clear of debris and the offside bank in a respectable state. Work focussed on keeping the sightlines around bridges, locks and landing stages clear for skippers and crew.

With Spring arriving, the rapid growth of vegetation on the banks poses quite a challenge; it makes us feel that perhaps Nature is gaining on us. With *Wasp* out of service for a major overhaul and just *May Upton* at our disposal work is somewhat curtailed as no more than five can really work comfortably aboard her.

This month the PEST team cut back growth from the offside bank up to Devil's Hole Lock with three

boat loads of cutbacks being gathered. This managed to keep the channel wide enough for our needs.

Another three large loads of cutbacks were gathered on our second workday, this time above Devil's Hole Lock up to north of the 'chicane', a task we had been wanting to carry out for some months.

*Chris Jones*

## Odd Job Group

Our first job for the month was at Tickner's Depot to drill out the concrete ballast from *Wasp* in readiness for her repairs and refit. Despite her very rotten sides, the bottom was in remarkably good shape, surviving our heavy pounding with a large pneumatic drill!



Removing the concrete ballast from *Wasp*

Due to low numbers in both groups for the following weeks, we joined forces with the Canal Maintenance

Unit to complete several tasks. We first went to Hunt Park to construct a concrete base for a memorial bench that is soon to be installed there.

We next went to Tickner's Crossing Yard to complete building the wooden formwork for new concrete back pump outlets at Drungewick Lock, that we had been working on for the month. The design of the actual outlet was drawn up by one of our team and had caused us a lot of head scratching as to how the formwork should be constructed - bearing in mind that it has to be "easily" dismantled and reassembled for re-use!



With the formwork completed, and with a certain amount of trepidation, the concrete was poured into the mould and we eagerly, if not nervously, wait to see the fruits of our labours when the formwork is removed in a couple of week's time!

*Brian King*

## The Contact List

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