

Working Party News

No. 353

For WACT Volunteers

July 2023

Editorial

Several of our work groups have been involved in activities to repair the damage caused by the criminal vandalism at the beginning of April. The opportunity is also being taken to make improvements so that the canal is easier to manage in the future.

Meanwhile work on the Birtley bridges is entering its final stages.

Peter Winter

Midweek Working Party

This month we have only had three sessions as we had a Navvies barbecue, one week. It was for volunteers and their partners and everyone enjoyed the food and company. We thank Harvey Silverman and his wife for the offer of his garden for the event.

The rest of the month we tidied up Hunt Park, brushcut the Birtley towpath and helped EWG brushcut the steep bank down to the river at Birtley.

The rest of the group have been on the navigation section, keeping the towpath clear and strimming the base of the canal at Gennets Farm and north of Southlands. We are now getting short of work as we are still in bird nesting season, so if you need any help let me know.

Margaret Darvill

Odd Job Group

The first job of the month was to tentatively remove the formwork from the new twin pump concrete outlet for Drungewick Lock that we had constructed from scratch and poured at the end of May at Tickner's Depot. Bearing in mind the complexity of the shape, we were very pleased to find that it came out, as designed, in just the one pour! More outlets are going to be required for other sections of the canal, so the formwork was cleaned up and work commenced on reassembling it in readiness. We then teamed up with the Canal Maintenance Unit again to



Pump outlet for Drungewick Lock

assist with the trenching for the cable ducting along the towpath at Loxwood.

We were back at Tickner's Depot for the final session of the

month, to finish of the formwork for the second pump outlet and to pour the concrete into the mould. It will be another week or two until we see the fruit of our labours - fingers crossed!



Brian King

Canal Maintenance Unit

At the start of the month we worked with the Odd Job Group to install the new bench at Hunt's Park and painted the doors of three of the Nissen huts at Tickner's Heath Depot.

Through the month, together with other teams we assisted with the installation of new cable trunking as well as brickwork for a new Pump Control Shelter, and finally working again with the Odd Job Group to install the formwork for the concrete roof of the shelter.

For the last couple of months our carpentry expert, Harry Noyes, has been repairing the John Ringrose memorial bench which had been accidentally damaged. Starting with just the back of the bench and a few other parts, Harry rebuilt the seat, frame, front legs and arms. The bench has been returned to a new location at Baldwin's Knob Lock for which the team prepared a new base.

Ian Lower



The restored John Ringrose Memorial Bench

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Monday Group

The growing season in good swing, so with four outings in June and a goodly number of volunteers, we brush cut, strimmed, mowed and tidied up at Compasses bridge, Tickner's and the locks at Genets, Southland, Devil's Hole, Loxwood, Brewhurst and Baldwin's Knob.



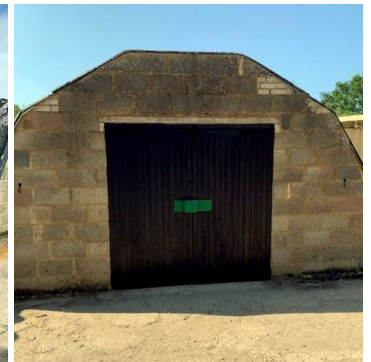
Attention was given to the Drungewick Aqueduct site, Newbridge and Lordings. At the latter both locks required a lot of work as the pictures show.

At Margaret's request we also cut the banks of Roger Dimmick Lane at Drungewick. With all this activity it shows that the Trust is committed to the ongoing maintenance and appearance of the canal, often expressed to the group by passing walkers.

Nick Wood

Tickner's Depot

It's a bit quieter at the Depot now. Dennis and the EWG team have successfully cast 10 huge concrete counter-balance beams, and the MWWP have pretty much completed their task of slicing and splitting several tons of ash logs.



We have, however, got some jobs done around the Depot. Ian and others, prepared and painted the doors to the three Nissen Huts as alluded to last month, and a jolly good job they made of it too.

The workshop continues to get tidier each week. Only today did we find and discard a crate of very used sandpaper and wet & dry!

The dusty concrete floor is being painted bit by bit. I would do it all in one go but, I'd probably paint myself into a corner, and the fumes can get a bit addictive.

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

Courtesy of our neighbours in the big green hangar, who are moving premises, we have a new COSHH cabinet.

We are also in the process of building a new secure equipment store at the rear of the MDV hut.

Mark Feeney

Northern Working Party

Following the issue of a 21 day temporary closure order for the towpath bridleway at Loxwood, the month's work concentrated on trench digging for new cable ducting. Although work began with Bumble Bee making light work of actually excavating the trench, plenty of physical labour was still required to lay the ducting and backfill, during what turned out to be a very warm period.



Trench digging at Loxwood with Bumble Bee

A pedestrian trencher was then hired, with much less soil being removed during the digging process which in turn meant there was considerably less backfilling to be done!



Digging with a pedestrian trencher



Formation wacking!

For the remainder of the month, work continued on reinstating the towpath with much surface dressing and wacking! The towpath was subsequently reopened for public access.

Dave Miller

Boat Maintenance

This month the team checked the solar panels on *Zachariah Keppel* to rectify the flashing charge light and found no fault as this is normal when batteries are fully charged. The new charging panel in the engine room now has phone charging sockets for all phones. Also the stern bilge pump has been rewired to work all the time on auto.

The starboard bow fender has been re-attached with new shackles completing the work on *ZK*.

On *Josias Jessop*, the new fire extinguisher mounts have been fitted in the cabin and one on the rear bulk-head.

Wiggonholt had its six month chair lift service and safety check. The lift has proved invaluable for the many disabled passengers we have welcomed aboard in the past month. The painting on *WH* continues as does the Forth Rail Bridge.



Ian James

Eric Walker Group

The group has continued with its work on the Birtley Bridges 1 & 2. With the foundation abutments and brickwork completed on BB2, the group turned its attention to BB1 and to the fabrication of the concrete bridge balance beams for both bridges.



As the balance beams are being cast at the depot, the team spent part of each week there, erecting the formwork and mixing and pouring the concrete to the beams. In order to record the lift bridge construction some of the beams have a cast-in WACT sign and the

year. These will be visible when they are erected on the bridge gantries.

Down at BB1 work is underway to ensure the bridge abutments are exposed for the fixings to be installed for the steel lift bridge superstructure. First, however, we had to remove the temporary steel and timber deck. It was not an easy task to remove the decking planks as it involved removing hundreds of



Lifting out the temporary bridge

well embedded screw/bolt fixings. Then, we managed, with a method suggested by Dave Evans, to remove the heavy timber and steel deck framework in one go using our Yanmar digger.

Also this month, in order to maintain the popular circular walk along the towpath and the Downs Link way, we contracted Mid-Sussex Scaffolding to install a temporary scaffold bridge adjacent to the existing bridge abutments.



A scaffold bridge keeps the circular walk open

At BB2 we removed the bund just to the north of the bridge and in order to release the stored water down to the stretch of canal south, we installed an overflow pipe under the bridleway diversion path. This was tricky as we had to maintain access for the public at all times, so it was a stop-start operation. Next month we will continue working on BB1 abutments and we will be despatching five of the concrete balance beams to the Beaver Bridge fabrication facility for the company to use in the test erection and operation process, prior to the delivery to site.

Dennis Gillen

The Contact List

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