

# Working Party News

No. 355

For WACT Volunteers

September 2023

## Editorial

It's amazing to see the range of activities that our volunteers are engaged in each month. Each team contributes to keeping the canal in a good state of repair or restoring new sections, whether that be by working on the canal itself or keeping equipment in good order. It is all a team effort where everyone plays a valuable role.

*Peter Winter*

## Northern Working Party

A variety of tasks have been completed this month, commencing with more of the same work, with hand digging of trenches at Devil's Hole Lock for cable ducting to be installed. The team also had on-site training in the use of the CATscan cable detection equipment, which will come in very useful considering the number of post holes and trenches we have got into the habit of digging!



*Shelter in use!*

Users of the towpath in the Loxwood area will have noticed the proliferation of SPAWS that have sprung up at various sites. We have been constructing these Single Person Adverse Weather Shelters over the last few months and have recent evidence of

them being put into use! Unfortunately, Dave Evans has insisted on making steel doors that are going to be fitted to keep people out and then intends using the structures for housing control panels!

Work has continued throughout the month at Tick-



*The tug looks good*

ner's Depot preparing the new steel frames and doors for the brick cabinets. We've also finished painting the dredger tug, which is now looking rather resplendent.

A Saturday working party, including a Duke of Edinburgh volunteer, met at Devil's Hole Lock to pour a concrete roof on the brick cabinet and then finished off the day with more trenching for cable ducting at Birch Copse.

Repairs were required at the small weir and canal overflow near Barnsill, where the pipe draining down into the ditch in the lower field was blocked and the ditch itself was clogged up. We unblocked the pipe (by removing some of it), helped with dig-



*Ditch repairs at Barnsill*

ging out the ditch which takes the overflow to the River Lox, and then made some concrete bags to place around the ditch to make it a bit more stable. The field has not been able to be used for grazing due to flooding but should now be OK.

We have put new fencing in at Barnsill, and also in Rosemary Lane (near Alford) where the Midweek Party had cleared a lot of scrub to expose the canal there.

*Dave Miller*

## Monday Group

Following our work widening the towpath between Loxwood and Devil's Hole Lock in July, we continued with this task at our first meeting in August all the way to Southland lock.

The two subsequent outings involved keeping the vegetation under control at the Drungewick Aqueduct site, Brewhurst, Loxwood, Devil's Hole, Southland, and Gennets Bridge Locks, Tickner's and Compasses Bridge.

At Tickner's we cut the towpath side of the canal up to the boundary with the 'airfield', just short of the slipway. Then, in preparation for bank repairs between DHL and Southland we trimmed the growth

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around five former fishing locations.

Unfortunately one of our valued regular members, Guy, is leaving us and moving away, so we took the opportunity to wish him well at The Three Compasses pub.



A farewell drink with Guy (seated in green shirt)

Nick Wood

### Midweek Working Party

This month we have been very busy working from North to South. In the North we have been clearing land just off Tannery Lane which WACT owns. When we started we could not find a sensible way in and it was only after two and half weeks that we could really see what the job was. The land has not been cleared for at least 15 years and has been used as a place for fly tipping and garden waste. We have now cleared just over half the area.

At the beginning of the month, a small group took a couple of weeks removing the laurel hedge between Sydney Lodge and the canal. Dave Evans' group have now put up a lovely fence to stop people falling in from the road. One week, a small group

helped EWG clear a route down through the trees to the canal at Northlands so that EWG can put in a track which is part of the contract for buying Northlands.

One group spent time at Haybarn clearing the canal. There is still a great deal to do there. Another group has spent the last month clearing the canal of the huge amount of growth from Cook's Bridge down to South of Pallingham Bridge and clearing the Quays. It is really looking lovely now. A lot of clearance has been done by the group. Well Done!

Margaret Darvill

### Boat Maintenance

I have been away from the maintenance team for much of the month enjoying a big hernia operation and the aftermath. However, things went very well without me for a couple of weeks as you might imagine.

The saloon deck of *Wiggonholt* has been given two coats of some very special industrial floor paint. This is now hardening up and we hope it will resist the scuffing of tiny feet when we get to the Santa trips in December. Guy has also worked on WH's



A shiny new saloon deck for Wiggonholt

## 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 Peter Hyem
Third Saturday of the month	Summit Level	Contact Dave Evans

lockers and has primed some hidden areas. The next job is to apply two-pack epoxy paint on the engine room deck.



Meanwhile the saloon of *Zachariah Keppel* has been painted white as opposed to the previous peeling yellow emulsion finish. This work was done by a team consisting of our Chairman, Sally Schupke, Alison and Ian James and me. The work is now finished with

the tables and chairs back in place, tidied up and ready for passengers, assuming that there is sufficient depth of water in the canal in the foreseeable future.

In the week commencing Monday 30th October we will slip WH for survey. Survey day is Friday 3rd November when Captain Hassan of the MCA will survey WH ashore and afloat, and ZK afloat. On these two dates, plus Tuesday 31st October, I will need some volunteers to assist us. Please contact me if you can pitch in and help.

*David Arnold*

## Canal Maintenance Unit

There have been a variety of tasks for us this month. First we assisted moving materials to Devil's Hole Lock in preparation for the construction of the next Back Pump Control Shelter, then laid material to improve the surface of the path leading to Sydney Wood.

We spent a couple of weeks improving the bench area at Brewhurst Lock by separating the benches from their concrete fixings, lifting and relaying the slabs, and then refixing the benches. A small 'coffee table' using old canal timber was added between the benches. More work is needed to clean and remove the algae and moss from the benches.

At the end of the month we worked with the Odd Job Group, constructing another concrete back pump outlet, painting the door frames for the new Back Pump Shelters and, with the cabin roof removed, breaking up and removing the final section of concrete ballast from *Wasp*.

Finally the team visited Hunt Park Visitor Centre to start treating and re-staining the various timber surfaces.

*Ian Lower*

## Odd Job Group

During the month we have to assist the Dredging Team with paint stripping and rubbing down of the hull of the dredger tug that is currently "dry docked"

at Tickner's Depot. Slow but steady progress is being made and any offers of help with the refurbishment, inside and out, would be gratefully received by the small Dredging Team.

We returned to Tickner's Crossing Yard to rebuild the formwork and, with the appreciated assistance of the CMU, to cast yet another concrete pump outlet. The mould may look a little Heath Robinson like ... but it has worked so far! We now have a small collection of pump outlets and look forward to the time when we can actually install them at their intended locations.



*Steel door frames for the new control cabinets*

We then continued with the work at the Depot, priming and painting the steel frames and doors that have been fabricated by Dave Evans for fitting to the recently built brick cabinets in the Loxwood area.

The Visitor Centre at Hunt Park, Shalford was erected two years ago and is now due its biennial maintenance. At the end of the month we again joined up with the CMU to make a start on the cleaning, preparation and application of preservative on the decking and exterior cladding.

*pp Brian King*

## Eric Walker Group

Once again the group has continued with its work on the Birtley Bridges 1 & 2.

As reported in the last issue, we fitted a bench seat next to Bridge 2 made by our team volunteer David Beadman from the baulk timbers the navvies used in the foundations of the original swing bridge. We have now fitted a brass plaque explaining the heritage of the timbers used in its construction.



*New balustrades at Birtley Bridge 1*

Work continued on Bridge 1 finishing off the fixing of the holding down bolts for the bridge steel superstructure. The other task completed was the removal, adaption and re-fitting of the metal balustrading. This was primed and painted the same green colour as the bridge steelwork.

*Dennis Gillen*

## Tickner's Depot

Our most recent 'challenge' has been a small 1Kw Honda generator. Up to a few weeks ago it was behaving itself perfectly, when it suddenly decided it needed a rest. In the workshop we checked all the usual suspects – plug, air filter, oil level and fuel supply. All looked good, so it had to come apart. The little Honda is a compact unit, and compact means fiddly. Having taken it apart and checked and cleaned the fuel tap, ignition pack, carb, fuel demand valve and governor, the little blighter still wouldn't run properly. I think I'll have to read the manual before I go back to it next week.

There was much too-ing and fro-ing at the end of August as Dave took the massive low-loader to Drungewick to get the excavator back. It needs to be in pristine condition for the WACT stand at the Surrey Hills Wood fair on the 9th & 10th September just outside Cranleigh.

Other than the above and a couple of chainsaws and strimmers in for repair that's about it.

However... On my way home the other day, I went over Compasses Bridge and saw how well the dredging operation is going. Land & Water have a

huge floating excavator and it's really getting on with it. Here's the proof.



*Mark Feeney*

## The Contact List

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