

Working Party News

No. 363

For WACT Volunteers

May 2024

Editorial

At long last the rains have relented and conditions for our work parties have become more tolerable. It's also started to get above 10C on some days so the vegetation has started to grow meaning more work for some of our groups.

My wife and I are going travelling for a few weeks later this month, so once again I am indebted to Dave Miller who will step in as guest editor for the June issue.

Peter Winter

Tickner's Depot

There was 'dancing in the streets of Dunsfold' the other week when we finally finished the Archive Store roof. Now that it's properly watertight, we can get the electrics back on and repair the sagging ceiling, irrespective of what the weather gods may throw at us.

We now have new hard standing in front of the office unit. Dave and Andy shifted, levelled, and compacted several tons of type 1 aggregate. They even had time to erect a safety fence, and very nice it is too.

The secure store at the back of the MDV shed is nearing completion with a heavy sliding door now in place and the electrical fittings connected and tested. Once completed, it will be used to house our chain-

saws, generators, brush-cutters and the like.

One thing we have noticed though, is the lack of 110v Transformers in the storeroom. These are small yellow boxes with sockets on the front and a cable feeding in at the rear. For their size, they're very heavy, so can't have been blown

away in the wind. If you've seen one on your working parties along the canal, could you pick it up and return it to the depot please? (Do lift it carefully, with bent knees and a straight back.)

Mark Feeney

Northern Working Party

On returning from our Easter break, we went again to Loxwood to put the finishing touches to the new

wall at the Canal Centre, complete with wooden fencing, wooden bollards, hard standings for the water tap and defibrillator cabinets plus several tonnes of top soil for the borders and edging.



Our attention then turned to completing the installation of wooden bollards across the bridleway in Rosemary Lane, Alfold. The work had commenced some weeks earlier but had been delayed due to the inclement weather. A fine, dry day enabled us to finally complete the job, with a total of 12 bollards inserted.

Following a weekend visit from the KESCRG work group who installed posts and coir rolls to re-profile the bank near Devil's Hole Lock, we spent a day transporting trailer loads of soil from Tickner's Depot to the site and backfilling on the towpath side. There are still a few more loads needed to finish off.

We have also had several visits to Brewhurst to work on the new cabinet. The brickwork has been completed, formwork for the roof temporarily put in place and the concrete poured. When set, we will top off with a GRP roof covering before moving on to the next one!

Dave Miller



Boat Group PEST

The 5th was our first outing in April. Our usual routine is to meet at the Canal Centre to collect what we need and then to take *May Upton* north or south, depending on what is required. On this trip we went

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north again as far as the chicane just below Southland Lock to continue the work we had been doing on our previous outing. Last time out we produced a lot of material which we had left on the bank of the chicane, so this time, having added to the pile, we disposed of it so the area is now looking much tidier. Our return trip was interesting as there was so much water flowing over the upper gates at Loxwood New Lock, that the lower paddles couldn't keep up requiring three people to open the lower gate on the towpath side.

Our second PEST day of the month was on the 19th April and four of us took MU south, which is an area we have not visited for some time. We knew this stretch was in pretty good order but as a lot of the boat trips go that way it is important for us to keep the non-towpath side clear and tidy. This outing turned out to be a very social trip as the two trip boats were both out on three trips. The Canal Centre was open and busy plus we encountered three paddle boarders. Given the better weather (mostly) there were a number of people walking the towpath including a couple from Birmingham whose house overlooks a canal. They were much impressed with the work the Trust is doing.

John Lee

Thursday Group

This month, we continued fixing replacement waling boards at Drungewick Aqueduct. Both sides of the actual aqueduct have now been completed and just the wing walls remain to be done.

We went to Birch Copse where we had been tasked with recovering the waterlogged tub that had been used by the Midweek Working Party when clearing the offside bank. Armed with the Tirfor winch, generator and a submersible pump we took *May Upton* to the site to formulate our salvage plan! All went surprisingly well and we soon manhandled the tub to just above the water level and quickly emptied it with submersible pump. It was then strapped to the side of *May Upton* and taken down to Drungewick Slipway where, with the grateful assistance of the Dredger Team, we pushed/pulled it onto the slip-



Photo by Brian King

The submerged tub at Birch Copse

way to await transportation back to Tickner's Depot.

With the KESCRG working party due to visit for the weekend, we were called upon to transport bulk building materials from the Depot to Brewhurst Lock, where another brick cabinet is to be built. Fortunately, *May Upton* took it in her stride and all the sand, cement, bricks and Heras fencing were soon delivered. We then cruised northwards through Loxwood and Devil's Hole to carry out routine maintenance on the lock gates.

We were also asked to investigate a circular brick structure that had been seen in the overgrown vegetation on the bankside north of Southlands Lock. We cleared back the undergrowth to fully reveal the structure which is an access chamber for a culvert that goes under the canal and is known as a monk!



Photo by Ian Lower

The Philip Weston Williams memorial bench

Working Party Diary

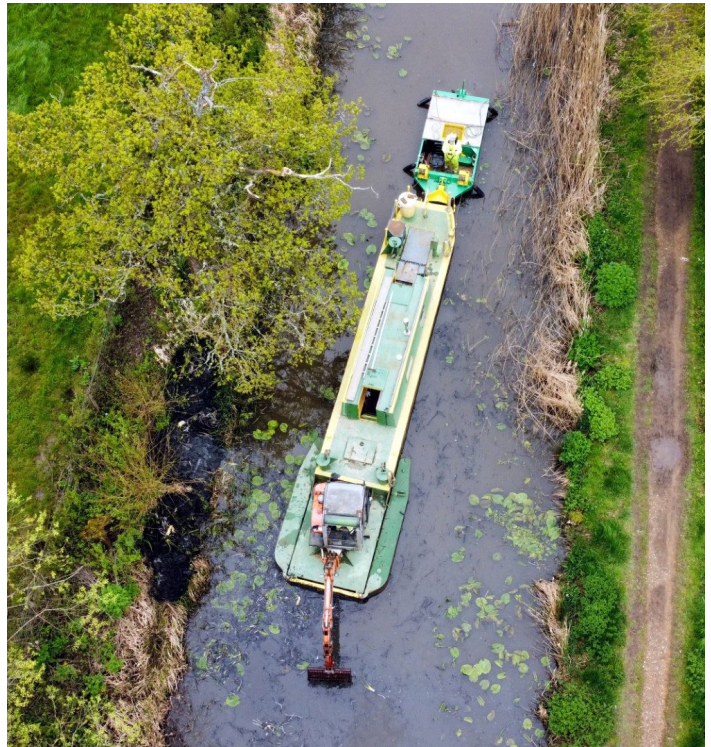
Every Monday	Monday Group	Contact Tom Close
Every Tuesday (late October to March)	Hedgelaying	Contact Nick Baxter
Every Tuesday and Thursday	Boat Maintenance	Contact John Reynolds
Every Wednesday	Midweek Working Party	Details from Margaret Darvill
Every Thursday	Tickner's Depot	Contact Mark Feeney
Every Wednesday and Thursday	Eric Walker Group	Contact Dennis Gillen
Every Monday, Tuesday, and Third Saturday	Northern Working Party	Contact Gordon Powell
Every Thursday	Thursday Group	Contact Ian Lower or Brian King
Every Thursday	Dredger Group	Contact Charlie Coxwell
First & Third Friday of the month	PEST Boat Group	Contact Peter Hyem
Third Saturday of the month	Summit Level	Contact Dave Evans

Following the KESCRG visit we returned to Brewhurst Lock to finish the bricklaying for the new cabinet, that is now just waiting for the steel doors to be fitted and a concrete roof cast. Some time was also spent at the Canal Centre cleaning the outside commemorative benches; one of which was presented for Philip Weston Williams (1938-2011) and is inscribed "In appreciation of the hard work by the volunteers". It is now looking much tidier.

Whilst the contractors were fitting the electrical controls at Loxwood Lock, it became apparent that the headroom of the pump sensor chamber needed to be increased. We had to build a vertical extension to the chamber, in order for the installation to be completed without any further delay.

We left three of the team at Loxwood while the rest of us took *May Upton* to Birch Copse where we erected two short sections of wooden post and rail fencing in gaps in the hedgerow on the towpath boundary of the compound. We then moved up to the winding hole at Brewhurst Bridge where the boat crews had reported underwater obstacles on the towpath edge of the canal. We soon found them when *May Upton* ran aground on two submerged tree stumps! The hazards have now been marked with three white painted posts. We also put new white cill markings on all the locks, as the old ones were becoming faded.

Several very low depth sections were identified with depths down to 0.7 Metres. The canal nominal depth should be between 1.4 and 1.5M. The worst identified sections being in the slipway area, south of BKL and the reed section leading up to slipway winding hole.



Much of the area around the slipway has now been cleared, including the slipway itself, we should now be able to slip the dredger, *Pauline*, and get some much needed hull maintenance done. The tug, *Kermit*, now has new push fenders and fixed side fenders, so hopefully this will protect her new paintwork from further scuffing.



Photo by Ian Lower

Lordings Waterwheel

A small group visited Lordings waterwheel to check on its condition and get it working. It is capable of lifting 2,650 gallons of water per hour from the river to the canal. We greased the main bearings and cleaned up the site after it was all flooded during the winter months.

Brian King & Ian Lower

Midweek Working Party

Over the last two months, MWWP have had less to do as the ground has been very wet and it is now bird nesting season.

We have done a few jobs which have used a small number of people. A group spent a couple of weeks diagnosing the fault and mending the generator, while others have been doing some fencing.

The Rooks Hill and Rushetts sections have had a haircut and the area behind the depot has also been tidied. We have cleared around the new trees in Birtley and taken one out in preparation for mending the leak.

Margaret Darvill

Dredger Group

Although April's weather started wet & cold, it has at long last slowly started to improve! This month we have managed to complete a detailed depth survey between Baldwin's Knob Lock and the Rodger Dimmick slipway.



Whilst attempting to move *Pauline* up towards Barnsill bridge, she ran aground whilst transiting through a reed area. Hence this section has been partly cleared, but still a great deal left to do.

A shortage of hydraulic fluid caused an overheating issue, so stopped further dredging. The dredger hydraulics uses Panolin, which is the only canal friendly oil we can safely use. However, it is very expensive and difficult to obtain. Oil finally arrived during the third week allowing dredging work to recommence. This time trying to clear silt build up south of BKL, which has been identi-



fied as a priority area.

One of the main problems is emptying the now full tubs. Using *Pauline* to empty our tubs takes a considerable amount of time and limits where the spoil can be placed. However, at present we are unable to justify the expense of a shore-based excavator to do this for us, so *Pauline* must do the job.

Last job of month was to start clearing south of BKL. We were very lucky with water levels, just sufficient to get *Pauline* up through the reed section, albeit scraping the bottom and running aground, but not too much water under Barnsill Bridge. The area around the winding hole by BKL is very silted, and I suspect it will take several weeks to clear the site.

Charlie Coxwell

Monday Group

I suppose you could call it our main round! Mowing the grass, trimming hedges and tidying up are our main pre-occupations now that the growing season is upon us.

Accordingly during April we worked at the following:
Locks: Gennets (twice), Southland, Devil's Hole (twice), Loxwood (twice), Brewhurst, Baldwin's Knob and Drungewick.

In addition, we visited Run Common, Tickner's (including the new bridge, twice), round the Canal Centre (twice, a new responsibility) and the Drungewick Aqueduct and slipway site (twice).

A busy month and weekly outings are essential to keep the areas looking cared for and creating a good 'image' for the Trust.

Nick Wood



The Trust's heavily used workboat 'May Upton'

The Contact List

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