

# Working Party News

No. 364

For WACT Volunteers

June 2024

## Editorial

Whilst Peter is away travelling in Europe, it has fallen upon me to guest edit this month's edition and I would like to thank all contributors for their timely submissions. It was good to see a successful month of Cream Tea Cruises in the fine weather and I can personally vouch for their high quality, having finally treated Mrs M and myself to one of the trips! I can thoroughly recommend indulging yourself, if you get the opportunity.

*Dave Miller*

## Mobile Display Vehicle

The MDV made its first appearance of the year on Saturday 11th May at Dunsfold Village Fete on what was the hottest day of the year so far. The event was well attended, with even the Chancellor and local M.P., Jeremy Hunt, making an appearance and visiting our stand. We signed up seven new members, in one case taking Swiss Francs as part payment! As well as signing new members we sold a reasonable amount of merchandise and received a number of donations.

The following week we were present at the Bramley Village Fete and in June we are attending the Cranleigh Artisan Market on the 1<sup>st</sup>, Loxwood Fete on the 8<sup>th</sup> and Cranleigh Lions Carnival on the 29<sup>th</sup>. There are a number of further events we are planning to attend this year and any offers of help to either staff the MDV or tow it to events would be greatly appreciated.

*Roger Beazer*

## Dredger Group

This month we have been tasked with clearing the excessive amount of silt build-up south of Baldwin's Knob Lock, especially round the winding hole. We split into two teams, with each team working one day per week. With the help of extra volunteers, we managed to make a start on tackling the silt build-up

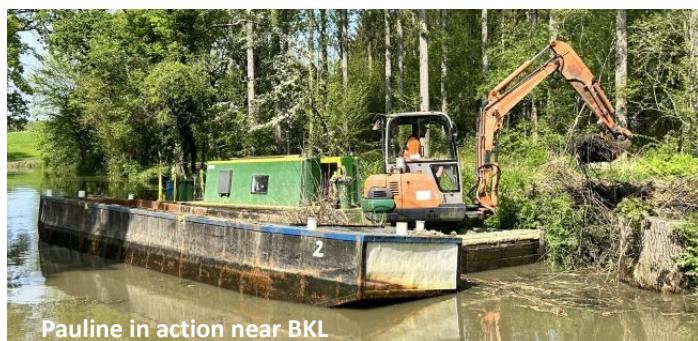
issues, which were preventing the trip boats venturing down that area. In places, water depth was as little as 0.3m; normal depths are expected to be 1.3m. We are aiming to initially achieve the minimum depth required to enable trip boats to safely navigate the winding hole and we plan to return over the winter months to do a thorough job. By then the spoil deposited on canal banks will have solidified and should be able to accept further dredgings. As expected, these are very sloppy, so there is a limit to the amount the bank can accept without it all slipping back into canal!

We managed to off-load some spoil directly on the offside bank, especially around the winding hole area, but a significant amount had to be first cleared into one of our Tubs and then emptied at a close suitable offside bank location. A somewhat time-consuming process as Pauline does not have a working propulsion system, so



Kermie the Tug had dual roles in moving both Dredger and then the Tub, prior to unloading. If you walk along the towpath and see spoil humps on the offside bank, don't worry as it is all good, composted material. Once the spoil has drained it will significantly shrink in size, normally by 50% and will soon support a healthy plant population! One of the main benefits of depositing canal cleared silt so close to the water's edge is it gives any water-based life forms the opportunity to return to their home environment. However, in the short term it does look a bit of a mess!

If you have any boating or excavator experience and fancy joining our team, you will very quickly adapt to the dredging challenges. However, we do train all interested volunteers with the aim, once competent, of achieving ticked status. Tasks include small boat use, tug operation, dredger excavator use and general boat maintenance. Teams are generally comprised of two volunteers, allowing us some flexibil-



Pauline in action near BKL

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ity on what weekdays we run work parties. It is anticipated that dredging operations will be generally limited to winter months and boat maintenance issues tackled in the summer. Currently we operate on Wednesdays & Thursdays. If you're interested, please contact me via email or phone.

*Charlie Coxwell*

## Monday Group

Although two bank holidays in May meant that the Group were only out twice, the visits replicated those in April. As we mentioned in the last WPN, every site requires a visit at least every other week now that we are into the 'full growing period' of the year. Accordingly, we visited Three Compasses, Tickner's (roadside and bridge), Gennets, Southland, Devil's Hole, Loxwood (lock & centre), Brewhurst, Baldwin's Knob and the Drungewick Aqueduct site.



A tidy looking Gennets Bridge Lock

This was facilitated by splitting the Group into two teams as the number of volunteers allowed and circumstances dictated. Perhaps visits to Harsfold Bridge and Haybarn Swing Bridge might be on the cards in the future.

*Nick Wood*

## Eric Walker Group

We returned to Birtley this month to seal a leak in the canal between the two Birtley Bridges. An extremely large tree stump had to be pulled out of the bank-side before a Terraseal waterproof sealing membrane was laid and then covered in clay.



With on-site construction work now complete, the mobile welfare unit and storage container have been relocated to Tickner's Depot for us to overhaul and paint.

*Dennis Gillen*

## Boat Group PEST

This month, PEST had only one outing with our first being cancelled mainly due to the lack of water and other considerations. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, four of us including our new colleague, Andrew, took out *May Upton* and went north, nearly as far as Southland Lock. It was a very nice sunny and warm day and we enjoyed ourselves trimming back the non towpath side to keep it under control at a time of year when the vegetation is growing very quickly and can soon get out of control. Recently this is the direction that most of the trip boats have been going, so it's important to periodically check that all is well for them. On our return we met ZK at Loxwood Lock going out on a trip. When we had put MU away, and due to the warm weather, it was necessary to have a short debrief at the Onslow Arms! We look forward to having two outings in June.

*John Lee*

## 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 of the month	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

## Northern Working Party

We started the month at Loxwood, with half of the team going to Brewhurst Lock to remove the shuttering from the newly poured concrete roof of the brick cabinet and begin installation of the steel door that was fabricated at Tickner's Depot. The other half of the team went to Devil's Hole Lock, to tidy up the area around the recently removed electrical cabinet. The ground was excavated for the cable conduit to be buried at a deeper depth, covered with a layer of sand and topped with concrete.



Following the Hedgelaying Group's achievement alongside the towpath opposite Drungewick Slipway, we installed stock fencing on the field side of the newly laid hedge, to help keep the cattle secure until the hedge grows to be more substantial. During the month, we constructed a hibernaculum in the canal-side field near Gennets Bridge Lock as a refuge for amphibians and reptiles. It consists of a pit filled with logs and branches, covered with a mound of soil and turfs.



Work was finalised on the brick cabinets at Brewhurst and Loxwood Locks, with the fitting of the key-locks and the painting of the steel doors. We have now moved on to Drungewick Lock to commence construction of what should be the final brick cabinet and to replace the commemorative bench that was removed for safekeeping during the recent clearance work.

*Dave Miller*

## Midweek Working Party

This month has had its ups and downs with all the weather. The grass has grown at a rate of knots and MWWP have been asked to cut back vegetation for other groups. This included cutting back the vegetation from the slipway at Drungewick. A small group spent time tidying up the area at Lordings Lock so that it can be used for parking for maintenance using the permitted route from the A272. Two of the group have been taking the paint back to the metal on Haybarn. Due to the rain they have been rained off on at least one day. The painting will be completed by the end of the summer. A small group cleared a large tree that had fallen down on the Downs Link and was blocking the access route from Birtley Courtyard to Birtley Bridge 2. Much of this month has been spent clearing the long logs from Bonfire Hanger and taking them back to the depot for firewood

*Margaret Darvill*

## Tickner's Depot

The Depot has been alive with activity over the last few weeks. The Groundhog Welfare Unit has returned and has been treated to a proper spruce-up by the guys of the EWG. The chassis has been rust-proofed and undercoated, the outside is now resplendent (albeit a bit bright!) in WACT Green and all the pivot points and linkages have been greased. Further down the yard, one of the diggers has also received a tidy up with a jet wash and fresh paint.

I have to say how impressed I was by the response to my request for information regarding the missing 110v transformers. No sooner had last month's WPN hit the streets than reports came flooding in as to various sightings of the yellow monsters. We now have them all back, or know where they are being used, so thank you all.

The challenge this month is to locate some DeWalt battery chargers. We did have three or four single charger units in the tool store, but they are no longer there. If you know of the whereabouts of any of them, please get in touch.



**Stop Press.** The Depot will be closed to visitors on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June. Dunsfold Park are holding an exhibition in the neighbouring Hangar 132 and parking will therefore be severely restricted. WP team leaders should contact myself, Dave or Adam if you're working that day and need access.

*Mark Feeney*

## Thursday Group

With work progressing well on the installation of the new pump controls, our first outing of the month was to take *May Upton* to Birch Copse and finish fitting a post in the canal for a water level sensor to be attached. We then moved up to Loxwood Lock where we fixed cable conduit in readiness for another water level sensor to be fitted there. The construction of the brick cabinet at Brewhurst Lock is almost complete and we returned to the site to clear all the remaining materials and debris.

Work also began on the construction of new wooden shelving units for the Canal Centre. The units are being built and painted at Tickner's Depot and will be transported to Loxwood and reassembled on site in due course.



On the following Thursday, a hot sunny day, we again took *May Upton* out, sharing the canal with *Wiggonholt* on a charter trip, from Loxwood up to Southland Lock, where we considered the design and construction of a new or adapted lock gate walkway. Whilst there, we took the opportunity to walk up to Gennets Bridge Lock and grease the lock pad-

dle gear, to keep them prepared for use! On our return trip we stopped at the recently uncovered "monk" to measure up for a new wooden insert to replace the old one that had rotted away. We replaced and painted the insert the following week. Work continued through the month on fitting the waling boards at Drungewick Aqueduct, with both sides of the aqueduct now complete. Just a few more boards now remain to be fitted on the adjacent Plant Crossing, that we hope to finish on our next visit.



Some final jobs of the month were to start trimming the vegetation on the bank alongside the moorings opposite the Canal Centre and to burn a white line edging along the canal-side walkway under Loxwood Bridge.

*Brian King & Ian Lower*

## The Contact List

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