

Working Party News

No. 365

For WACT Volunteers

July 2024

Editorial

First of all, let me record my thanks to Dave Miller for once again for doing an excellent job standing in as 'guest editor' while my wife and I travelled around Europe on trains and buses for five weeks.

As you'll see from this issue, it's quite amazing to see the range of activities that our working parties get up to. We're always pleased to welcome new volunteers. Why not give it a try?

Peter Winter

Philatelist Wanted

Some stamps have been donated to the Trust so that they can be sold. We're looking for a philatelist who might be able to value them and advise on how they might be sold. If you can help, please get in touch with Peter Winter. Contact details on the last page.

Thursday Group



Photo by Chris Everitt

Shelving at the Canal Centre

At the beginning of June, we took the shelving units that we had constructed the previous month at Tickner's Depot down to Loxwood and installed them in the Canal Centre, providing much more organised storage space in the kitchen area.

We continued at Drungewick during the month to fix new waling boards at the Plant Crossing. All of the Aqueduct and the Plant Crossing is now complete, but our work is not finished there, as the landing stage on the towpath side of the canal, opposite



Photo by Keith Lyall

New waling boards at Drungewick Plant Crossing

the slipways, is in need of repair and we have stripped off the old planks prior to fitting new ones.

We visited Birch Copse to apply a second coat of paint to the replacement gates that had been installed by the Northern Working Party at the entrance to the compound and fitted a drop bolt to one of the gates.

The end post of the Sussex Post and Rail fencing on the towpath at Loxwood Lock had rotted at the base and was loose in the ground. We dug out the old post and replaced with a new one, making the fence secure.

For our final outing of the month, we met at Lox-



May Upton en-route to Southland Lock

Photo by Brian King

wood Canal Centre where we fully loaded May Upton with pedestrian barriers and a temporary bridge. We took her up to Southland Lock, where it was all unloaded and installed in readiness for a visiting school group who are attending to do some painting and tidying of the lock. During the trip we took the opportunity to clear the cabin of May Upton and make a start on painting the interior.

Brian King & Ian Lower

Boat Group PEST

PEST had just one outing again this month on the 21st June. Three of us met at the Canal Centre in preparation to take May Upton out. However, we met Sally at the Centre and she "persuaded" us to do some gardening work cutting back vegetation around the black shed, the Centre and also some cutting back in the car park so that coaches have easier access.

Following this and on a lovely sunny June day we took MU south as far as Baldwin's Knob Lock cutting back the vegetation that John Reynolds had requested. Mainly because many of the boat trips have

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The PEST Group with a harvest of vegetation

been going North, it was surprising to see how much reed growth there is in this pound.

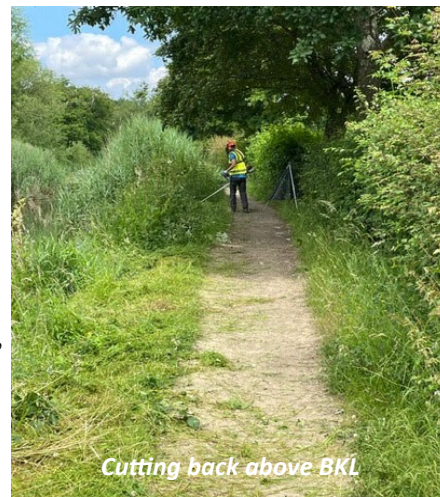
John Lee

Monday Group

On the 10th June we took a leaf out of the MWWP book and had a trip using *Zachariah Keppel* from Loxwood to Drungewick for working and retired members together with their guests. It was most enjoyable to see the canal from water level rather than the bank. Despite it being June and whilst it did not rain, it could have been warmer!

Back to the job, we did the 'business' at all our regular sites; Compasses, Tickner's, Gennets, Southland, Devil's Hole, Loxwood Lock & the Canal Centre, Brewhurst, Baldwin's Knob, and Drungewick.

We also widened the towpath,



Cutting back above BKL



which had become very narrow, from just above BKL to the spillway.

We also spotted an unusual duck, (see photo). Can anyone name it?

Next month will include a return to Malham.

Nick Wood

Tickner's Depot

After a very busy few weeks at the Depot, things are getting much quieter. The EWG team have just finished casting a new pump chamber and they have been clearing out their tool container. This has resulted in three petrol driven water pumps needing a little TLC.

The groundhog welfare unit now has a stablemate. The Trust recently bought another unit and Dave has been busy painting it ready for the work camp at Bonfire Hanger in the first week of July.

We were pleased when Andrew Christmas popped in for a day, particularly as he almost single-

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

handedly removed the outboard motor from *John Smallpiece*, before it (JS) goes to the scrap metal man.

Recent visitors would have noticed the toilet block from Tickner's Crossing is now in the Depot. I recently connected it up to the waste and potable water pipework, only to find the wash basin in the ladies was gushing water from under the tap, and the water control valve in the gents had suffered a big freeze at some point, as the plastic housing had burst. New bits will be fitted next week and it'll be more convenience than inconvenient.

We also have a massive stack of logs. Recent work at Bonfire Hanger has resulted in all the trunks felled in the last eight months having been moved to the Depot and are ready to be split and stored. Any volunteers? We have splitting mauls and a hydraulic behemoth of a log splitter if you're interested.

Mark Feeney

Midweek Working Party

The team has been busy in both the South and Mid sections of the canal this month. The majority of the group have been cutting the tree trunks felled in the winter and spring into firewood sized logs, before transporting them along the towpath back to the compound, where the larger logs were split before the entire pile was trailered back to the Depot. This was a massive job involving some 36 large trees.

The entire towpath from Gennets Bridge up to Rosemary Lane is now clear ready for the Work Camp to begin laying a wide stone towpath.

To the south, a small team has been working on the Swing Bridge at Haybarn. This had been allowed to get into a bit of a sorry state. So, inspired by the



Applying primer to the South Parapet of Haybarn Swing Bridge

painting of the Forth Bridge, the structure was sanded, scraped, wire-brushed and generally de-rusted before the first coats of primer were applied. Unfortunately, work had to stop early last Wednesday as it was so hot. The paint was drying before it could be smoothed out. Still, that's better than having it washed off in the rain!

Margaret Darvill

Eric Walker Group

While the team is waiting for the go ahead on its next project, they have been engaged in a number of small jobs at the depot. These have included tidying up and repainting the new mobile welfare unit and casting a concrete outfall unit.



Dennis Gillen

Dredger Group

We started the month by changing the excavator's bucket to one that has very few water drainage holes. This allowed us to empty the very sloppy spoil that currently occupied the tubs.

Next on the list of jobs for this month was to measure up, prepare and plan for slipping *Pauline*. Her draft is a nominal 720mm. However, her spud legs are fitted with feet that protrude the hull by a further 200mm. The total draft of 920mm made it impossible for the legs to slide over the cradle, even when canal water level was up to the overspill. Maximum available water height above cradle is approximately 750mm. It was decided that our best option was to slide *Pauline* sideways on to the slipping cradle, so negating the need for her spud legs and feet to clear the cradle. We just needed to ensure her spud legs did not foul any part of the cradle, which was a bit difficult when you can't see under water, and you don't exactly know the size of her feet! The days team included, Adam Rayner, Zoe Mallam, Brian



Pauline on the slipway

Morgan and me. We successfully hauled her out on 13th June.

It is currently planned to relaunch her prior to the end of September, provided that we can raise the canal water level! We hope we will be allowed to pump water from the River Lox by then.

The next couple of weeks were spent pressure washing *Pauline's* hull and generally preparing her for blacking. Hopefully we will finish blacking by early next month.

The dredger's front fenders (wooden railway sleepers) have been removed allowing the hull to be blacked. New fixing bolts have yet to be sourced in addition to fixing some new sacrificial anodes. The hull is in fair condition, despite never having anodes but the new anodes will reduce the rate of corrosion.

Agricom have been on site to sort both an oil leak (rocker box) and fuel leak (fuel pump hose). They have also been asked to quote for some essential maintenance on arm pins and hydraulic oil replacement (very expensive!).

Charlie Coxwell

Northern Working Party

Most of our outings have been to Drungewick Lock where there has been a number of tasks for us. We have built another brick cabinet for the pump control equipment and poured the concrete roof. The steel frame and doors have been 'first fixed' and will soon be completed.

We re-laid the base for a commemorative bench that was then reinstalled after being temporarily removed for safekeeping during the ground clearance

around the lock. The bench is situated in a picturesque spot overlooking the winding hole and is inscribed "In fond memory of Peter Wilding who loved this place 1931-2010".

We have added to our fence building repertoire, by installing almost 100 metres of electrified stock fencing in Long Meadow along the field boundary with the towpath and we've made a start on erecting a new wooden post and rail fence along the towpath side of the lock.

The gates to the compound at Birch Copse were rather the worse for wear and in need of replacement. We were able to repurpose a set from Tickner's Depot and install them to provide slightly wider access for larger vehicles.

Following the refurbishment of the mobile welfare unit by the EWG group, a second unit has now been obtained for use by other work parties and we assisted in preparing it for a repaint at Tickner's Depot.

Work is soon due to begin on surfacing the towpath at Bonfire Hanger and we were involved in taking materials to Gennets Bridge Lock where a temporary compound has been created for the storage of equipment that will be used by the visiting Summer Camps.

Dave Miller



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