

Working Party News

No. 367

For WACT Volunteers

September 2024

Editorial

It's been a busy month for our volunteer teams on the canal. Fortunately the weather has been kind so good progress has been made.



The resurfaced towpath at Bonfire Hanger

Our efforts have also been supplemented by visiting groups from NWPG and KESCRG, who with assistance from WACT volunteers did a magnificent job resurfacing the towpath at Bonfire Hanger between Rosemary Lane and Gennets Sluice.

Information is included on the activities of our Mobile Display Vehicle run by Roger Beazer. The MDV does a great job in bringing in new members to the Trust.

Peter Winter

WACT Volunteers Barbecue

The Board of the Wey & Arun Canal Trust invites all volunteers and their partners to join them for a barbecue on the 15th September from 12 noon at Eight Dormers, Snowdenham Lane, Bramley GU50DB. If you would like to attend please contact Margaret Darvill.

Northern Working Party

The month started with a return visit to Drungewick Lock where half the group completed the brick cabinet by fitting the door panels and locks, painting the doors and finishing the concrete roof with a coat of acrylic sealant. The electrical work has been completed and we were able to backfill the trenches



Drungewick Control Cabinet

in the vicinity of the cabinet and finally remove the safety barriers. The towpath was given a quick once over with the lawnmower and the area is now looking much less like a building site.

The other half of the group went to Birch Copse to continue with the job of digging an exploratory trench in the towpath to locate the site of a missing section of conduit and install the final 6 metre length to enable the cable to be pulled through and connected at Baldwin's Knob Lock. It would be an understatement to say that this final small section has not been as straightforward a task as expected and though progress was made, we were not able to complete the job. So we were back the following week and eventually finished the job in readiness for the contractor to install the electric cable.

With there being a volunteer summer camp at Bonfire Hanger, we joined them on one of their days



Installing the cable at Birch Copse

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and assisted with laying more stone sub-base for the new towpath and erecting a replacement post and wire boundary fence along the field side.

We finished the month on a high, by returning to Birch Copse and assisting the contractor to finally complete the job of installing 450 metres of heavy-duty electric cable from Birch Copse to Baldwin’s Knob Lock.

Dave Miller

Tickner’s Depot

You’ll remember, I’m sure, that I mentioned a new roof for the two log storage bays. Well, that has now grown to all three bays. The leftmost bay will become an aggregate and building material storage area. The order has been raised and we should be getting the roofing sheets and purlins in the next few weeks.

We’ve had another visitor from the MWWP come and help out for a couple of days. Paul Sylvester has resolved the big Ferris mower starting issue. The starter solenoid was to blame, so a new one was ordered and fitted. The mower is now available to teams who wish to use it. Paul also fitted the new driver’s seat to the 9-ton dumper. No mean feat, as one has to defy gravity to get the seat into position and bolt it in.

We also had a small but select team of Harry, Dave, Keith, and Dan from the Thursday group fit the gutter to the MDV shed. The roof has a very short overhang and was dripping water down the wall and making the inside of the shed wet. Access to the wall proved to be a bit of a challenge through the neighbours four metre high laurel hedge. However, the new gutter was installed in a day, and they even had the forethought to arrange for some rain to give it a thorough test.

Both Ian and I are away on holiday for the first two

weeks in September, so make sure you contact Adam or Zoe in plenty of time if you need access to the workshop or any plant or tools for the various jobs you’re doing.

When we reopen after our holidays, I will be on medically enforced light duties and plan to do a lot of electrical PAT testing. So, if you have any portable appliances (i.e. tools and extension leads) that are getting close to the test expiry dates or haven’t been assessed for a while, please drop them off at the depot and I’ll get them done.

Mark Feeney

Eric Walker Group

The team has been operating at two sites during August. At the beginning and end of the month, we worked at Long Meadow making good progress on laying the Terraseal membrane on the bank to prevent further leaks into the adjacent field.



Making good progress at Long Meadow

In between, we helped out with resurfacing the towpath at Bonfire Hanger.

Dennis Gillen

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 and Tuesday	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
Second Saturday of the month	Saturday Group	Contact Jack Walker

Boat Group PEST

Our first outing in August was on a hot and sunny day and we took the work boat *May Upton* south to Brewhurst Lock, where we cut back vegetation on the approaches to the lock. Immediately south of Brewhurst Lock a large tree on the towpath side bank had partly shed a big branch, the canopy of which was hanging precariously low over the towpath. We were able to cut the branch down and remove the debris.

Next we went north through Loxwood Lock removing weed and reed cuttings from the water. We also took down part of a dead tree which was on the bank of the non towpath side

leaning towards the canal. As you can see on the photo, it looks rather like an alligator. We used a rather imaginative form of tree felling which was very safe and effective involving a rope and *May Upton*.



On the 16th we went north again and worked between Loxwood and Devil's Hole Locks. We had a very good turnout and were able to achieve quite a lot. This included removal of most of the floating weed, which improved the appearance of the pound. The reeds that have been cut are still a problem to some extent.

We encountered a good amount of wildlife on this outing including a water vole that was looking for a way out in Loxwood Lock. We were able to assist. In addition on our return we encountered a large flock of what we think were swallows or swifts swooping down on to the water.

John Lee

Monday Group

I regret to say no report was submitted for last WPN because I was 'well under the weather'. In case members thought that Monday Group had ceased operations, this submission covers the work done in both July and August.

At the beginning of July we visited Malham and Lordings lock and flood lock - strimming, mowing and tidying up. Both look better for our visit.

Following that we resumed work at our usual 'haunts' of Run Common, Compasses, the Tickner's 'triangle', Gennets, Southland, Devil's Hole, Loxwood, Brewhurst, Baldwin's Knob lock and the Drungewick aqueduct site. We also cut and widened the towpath from the Drungewick Road bridge to the lock.



At the request of the Chairman and following observations from the owner of the adjoining land, we spent two days clearing the compound and car park at Tickner's Depot. This is a major task which may require another visit.

In our contribution to the July WPN we had spotted an unusual duck. Many readers identified it as an Egyptian Goose.

Nick Wood

Thursday Group

We started off the month by splitting the group into two and taking both *May Upton* and *Josias Jessop* up to Southland Lock, where one team finished installing the replacement gate post that we started last month and the second team utilised JJ and a long handled hedge cutter to cut down weeds and reeds in the canal channel between Southland and Devil's



Hole Locks.

Being unable to load any debris onto JJ, it was left for those on *May Upton* to follow behind and haul a massive load of cut vegetation out of the water. Although a boatload of cuttings was collected and disposed of in the time we had available, we had to rely on our colleagues in the PEST team to visit the section the next day and continue with the clearing up.

The following week we spent the day at Tickner's Depot where, under the watchful eye of Depot Manager, Mark, we battled with the laurel hedging of our neighbours to install plastic roof guttering along the whole length of the boundary side of the MDV Shed, with not a lot of room to manoeuvre! To our pleasant surprise, after our dubious first impressions of the job, we successfully installed all the guttering and downpipes at each end.

With a design having been finalised for a new stop

Photo by Ian Lower



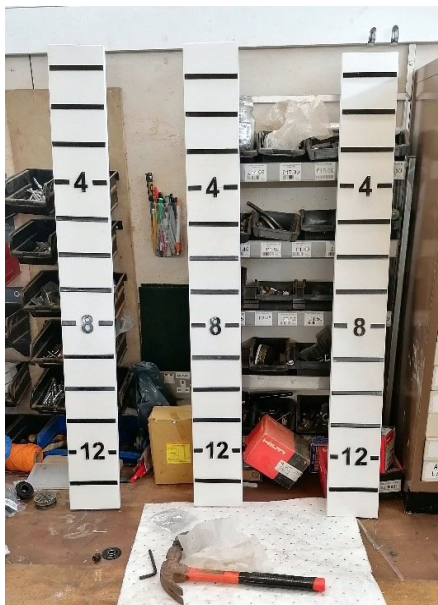
Concreting at Drungewick Lock

plank shelter at Drungewick Lock, we started preparing the site by levelling the ground and laying three concrete slabs to support the structure.

The following week, whilst our leaders were attending a Health and Safety Awareness Day, we spent the day at Tickner's Depot cutting and pre-assembling the parts for the stop plank shelter.

In addition, we also constructed a number of depth gauge boards to assist the boat crews assessing water levels in the canal.

We tackled a variety of tasks on our last outing of the month. One team went to Gennets Bridge Lock to paint fencing and paddle gear. Another team took *May Upton* and fitted the new depth gaug-



es to the lock gates at Devil's Hole and Loxwood. Such is the price of success, that we have now been requested to make three more boards for the remaining locks.

The rest of the group remained at Tickner's Depot to finish preparing the parts for the stop plank shelter. All is now ready for assembly on site, that we plan to complete next month.

Brian King & Ian Lower

Midweek Working Party

MWWP have enjoyed some good weather this month. Bonfire Hanger has seen most of our attention. It now sets off the restored towpath.

Another area that has seen our attention is Haybarn where the bridge sides have now finished being painted and the trees that came down in the winter storms have been removed.

The winding hole at Gennets Farm has been cleared and now the rest of the area down to Hillcroft will be cleared. Some of the group have been down at Toat Bridge and have made our annual clearance down to Cooks Bridge. It is looking beautiful now.

Margaret Darvill

Mobile Display Vehicle

The MDV has had a busy time located at Amberley Working Museum covering two successive weekend events, including the August Bank Holiday. Into September there are events on the first three weekends at:

- The Macmillan Vintage Rally at Balls Cross
- The Surrey Hills Wood Fair at Cranleigh Showground
- The Wey River Festival at Dapdune Wharf Guildford on Saturday 14th.

Additional help is always welcomed so feel free to join us.

Roger Beazer

Dredger Group

This month we needed to prepare *Pauline* for the numerous maintenance jobs that Agricom have been tasked with. However, to do this they need the services of our telehandler to lift the excavator arm off its mountings. Unfortunately, the available gap alongside *Pauline* did not allow space for the telehandler. It was therefore decided to bring it round via our Heavy Plant Crossing.

To assemble this the dredger had to be moved to the lower slipway securing point, enabling the telehandler to access the plant crossing site. Once the crossing was assembled, *Pauline* was hauled back up the slipway to allow Agricom space to work.

We now wait for them to book a suitable date for repairs to commence. As I write this the parts needed by Agricom have yet to arrive, so it's now just a waiting game.



Pauline moved to the bottom of the slipway

In the meantime, Brian & I continued chipping away and treating deck rust that had taken hold in numerous areas. Ian James continues to weld patches on our decks and weed hatch areas, a difficult and messy job.

One of the problems we have with *Pauline* is for the operator to determine when the aft spud leg is in its fully raised position. So, Brian and I have designed a simple system to help the excavator driver to quickly identify when it's fully raised. We are now nearing completion and fitment. We just hope it works!

Adam has been investigating the possibility to fit iDig to *Pauline's* excavator. If this can be made to work underwater it will greatly assist dredging. iDig is a system that helps operators know exactly where their operating buckets are, which will greatly reduce the risk of damaging canal's clay lining.

We are still aiming to launch *Pauline* by October, canal water level and Agricom permitting.

Charlie Coxwell



Installing the Heavy Plant Crossing



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