

For WACT Volunteers

June 2025

No. 376

Working Party News

Editorial

Well the dry weather has yielded to some spells of dampness, but not enough to satisfy the canal's need for water or to deter our work parties. On the restoration front, good progress has been made at Rye Farm and preparations are well underway for major works to commence at Rooks Hill. Of course, we are well into the growing season and controlling the vegetation keeps several of our teams busy.

Next month, Dave Miller will once again be stepping in as Editor, while Hilary and I take a trip on our shared narrowboat up the Caldon Canal.

Peter Winter

Thursday Group

We had more visits to Baldwin's Knob Lock this month, where we finished off the raking out and re-grouting of the stone blocks of the entire lock chamber. This was a long job that we are pleased to say is now completed.

With the installation of the back pump having been finished, we fitted a post and rail fence and pedestrian gate on the non-towpath side of the lock at the top of the steps leading down to the pump chamber. Whilst there, we took the opportunity to rub down and repaint the white woodwork on the lock balance beams. We were also able to install more coir rolls on the formwork for the re-profiled bank where the towpath had eroded just downstream from the lock.



Photo by Ian Lower

Bank repair near Barnsill Bridge

Having previously investigated a leak around the spillway into the field between Barnsill Bridge and Drungewick Slipway, we



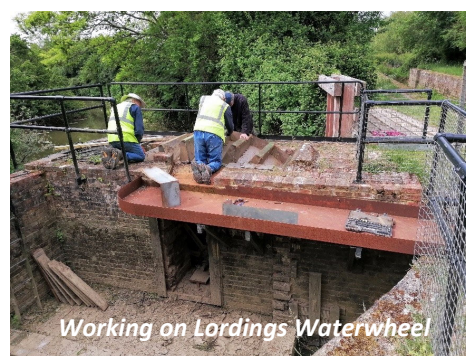
Photo by Harry Moses

Basking Slow Worm

joined up with John Reynolds, Zoe Mallam and the Dredger Team to effect a repair. John 'waded in and got his hands dirty' by puddling in four bulk bags of clay (kindly donated by Ewhurst Brickworks) on the canal bank alongside the spillway. This worked well and has markedly reduced the leakage at that spot. While clearing away some rubble from the hedge-line we spotted a slow worm basking in the sunshine, not at all perturbed by our presence!

The dry weather has enabled vehicle access across the fields to Lordings where we spent a day at the waterwheel, fitting eight prototype replacement buckets to assess their effectiveness in increasing the volume of water being lifted from the River Arun up into the aqueduct. A test of the wheel produced very pleasing results and work is continuing on producing a final design for full replacement of all the buckets.

One end of the stop plank shelter at Southland Lock was subsiding and so we took tools and materials to the site, using *May Upton*. After removing the stop planks, we raised and supported the shelter clear of the ground, dug out the soil, installed formwork and poured a new concrete footing. We shall return when the concrete has set and reposition the shelter.



Working on Lordings Waterwheel

Brian King

WACT email addresses

Please note that email addresses @weyandarun.co.uk are no longer in use and have been removed. The new email format is now firstname.lastname@weyarun.org.uk

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Midweek Working Party

This month has been very busy and once again we have been clearing the whole length of the canal.

A group spent much time clearing the offside of the canal at Rye Farm. This is to enable people to see the true width of the canal whilst EWG take out some of the width to make the new bridleway. We have to work with EWG so we do not get in the way of all the machinery moving backwards and forwards. There is still further work to do here on vegetation clearance.

Another group cleared tree trunks from across the canal so that the Poddle could get through. It is quite amazing how many large oaks have fallen across the cut with large green crowns intact. We have been chopping logs up from all the trees that have been taken down ready for them to go out to members for their log fires.

Another group spent three weeks clearing tree stumps and rubbish from the canal near Run Common Road. This length of canal is normally in water so it was good to get the stumps out. A small group also started the annual clearance of the lock at Lee Farm, so it has been a very productive month.

Margaret Darvill

Boat Group PEST

Last month we spent our first outing taking the workboat *May Upton* from Drungewick slipway up as far as Baldwin's Knob Lock. We managed three boat loads of cuttings from the non-towpath side, and the towpath side where land based volunteers were unable to reach. During the day we saw two herons, an unusual amount of frog spawn in the water, and a family of Mandarin ducks. On reflection it maybe one heron that we saw twice, who can tell.

Later in the month the MU workboat was back at the Canal Centre and for the first time in quite a long while we went north to Southland Lock. Going through Loxwood Lock and Devil's Hole Lock we let two lockfulls of water down from each lock so that the trip boat would have enough water for their outing later in the day. We removed a considerable amount of growth from Southland Lock winding hole, more than filling the boat. The winding hole is now looking much more like a winding hole.

John Lee



Plenty of growth removed from Southland Winding Hole

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 Stephen David
Every Thursday	Thursday Group	Contact 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

Tickner's Depot

In last month's edition, I mentioned the big pile of wood still to be converted to logs. I can report that that's all done now, and the place is looking much neater. Well, it was, until a new pile arrived from an oak tree near to Compasses Bridge. It's akin to painting the Forth Bridge!

You'll be glad to know that the Thwaites Dumper is now out and earning a living. It was taken to Rooks Hill a week or so ago, to be used in the new bridge project there.

A couple of months ago, I mentioned that we were missing a few DeWalt batteries. Some turned up the other day, but I'm not sure they'll be much use anymore. They had just been left in the open on the ground outside Hut 3. These batteries are quite expensive, and I'm sure people wouldn't treat their own kit in this manner. If equipment and tools can't be put back where they belong, then at least put them under cover.

Mark Feeney

Monday Group

With two Monday Bank Holidays in May and our leader temporarily unavailable (getting better we hope after his knee op) we concentrated our two meetings on our 'regular' sites. Accordingly, we tidied up at Devil's Hole, Loxwood, Brewhurst, Compasses, Tickner's and Gennets. This keeps it looking good and demonstrates to our visitors that the Trust believes in regular maintenance.

Nick Wood

Eric Walker Group

Phase 1 of the Rye Farm project is now 85% completed. There is approximately 15m of base construction of the bridleway left to create before the team starts the final Type 1 aggregate surfacing work.

The final stretch involves a ramp where the new bridleway rises over the tree line to join the existing bridleway. Here it is necessary to install cellular tree root protection. The cellular structure is required where the roots have to be protected from traffic including horses and vehicles. It consists of a plastic expanding membrane placed upon a geotextile fabric base in which clean self draining aggregate is placed. The cellular structure secures the aggregate and prevents it from spreading. A further layer of geotextile fabric is then laid over this and then similar self draining aggregate is laid as a topping. The final layer can also be tarmac or a similar traffic bearing surface.



Dennis Gillen

Dredger Group

The start of the month saw us attempting to stem a significant canal leak, next to the overspill on the Drungewick pound. Both John Reynolds and Zoe Mallam took turns at working over a ton of donated puddling clay into the bank. This currently has stopped the water from leaking out through the bank on to the adjacent field. We now wait to see what happens when the clay starts to dry out!

Next *Pauline* was moved to the south side of Baldwin's Knob Lock to assist with moving some clay. Even with the water levels a good 300 to 400 mm down, it was still a tight fit to get under the bridge.

Charlie Coxwell



Northern Working Party

Work continued at Rooks Hill this month with the installation of stock proof fencing and a double farm gate on the field boundary directly opposite our new site compound. We also erected protective Heras fencing along the edge of the footpath and bridleway that runs alongside the site of the proposed new bridge. We then scraped and cleared the surface of the deck over the Downs Link in readiness for a bulk delivery of Type 1 material that is to be spread over the deck to preserve its load bearing capacity for the heavy vehicles that will require access to our compound.



Photo by Stephen David

Recommissioning the Tickner's Crossing site

After having to mothball the Tickner's Crossing site pending Council approval for the new bridge crossing and mains water pipe work required by Thames Water, we have now made a start on recommissioning the site for work to continue. We began by scraping back the thin covering of soil over the earlier laid base of the planned temporary road diversion and have taken delivery of bulk material to extend the foundations of the temporary road from where we had previously finished.

Following on from the work of the Hedgelaying Group in laying a new hedge along the towpath upstream from Drungewick Slipway, we have installed temporary stock proof fencing along the farmer's field boundary to keep the cattle secure until the hedge has had time to grow and establish.

Having reported before that Ewhurst Brickworks have been kind enough to donate bulk quantities of clay for us to carry out several canal bank repairs, they also extended an invitation to us to visit their site for a guided tour. At the end of the month, eleven of us from various WACT work parties attended a very informative two and a half hour tour of their quarry and processing plant at Walliswood, just south of Ewhurst. We were warmly received and guided around both the large, automated manufacturing plant and the smaller factory for hand-made specialist tiles and bricks. We were all encouraged to chat with the operators making the individual handmade roofing tiles and then we actually made some ourselves!

Dave Miller



Photo by Keith Lyall

Touring Ewhurst Brickworks

The Contact List

Name	Group/Project	Tel	email
Bill Nicholson	Visiting Working Parties	07791 097773	bill57nicholson@gmail.com
Dennis Gillen	Eric Walker Group	07866 583753	dennis.gillen@weyarun.org.uk
Margaret Darvill	Midweek Working Party	01483 894606	margaret.darvill@weyarun.org.uk
Tom Close	Monday Group	07811 534292	thomasdclose@googlemail.com
Mark Feeney	Tickner's Depot Manager	07747 445680	mark.feeney@weyarun.org.uk
Nick Baxter	Hedgelaying		hedgelaying@weyarun.org.uk
Stephen David	Northern Working Parties	07757 702970	stephen.david@weyarun.org.uk
Peter Hyem	Boat Group PEST	01403 752393	peter@barscorner1.plus.com
John Reynolds	Boat Maintenance	07540 840549	john.reynolds@weyarun.org.uk
Brian King	Thursday Group	07771 666751	briankingems@gmail.com
Charlie Coxwell	Dredger Group	07786 614708	charlie.coxwell@weyarun.org.uk
Jack Walker	Saturday Group	07359 590988	jack.walker@weyarun.org.uk
Phil Short	Mobile Display Vehicle	07761 372551	pjshort@hotmail.com
Peter Winter	Working Party News Editor	07722 184117	peter.winter@weyarun.org.uk