

# For WACT Volunteers September 2025 No. 379

# Working Party News

## Editorial

On August 31st Margaret Darvill hosted a volunteers' barbeque at her home in Bramley and a wonderful time was had by all. Thank you, Margaret.

Well, I guess it's good news that we've started to get some rain. Maybe we'll be able to start running boat trips before Christmas. It also means that we'll be pulling on our wellies again as conditions under foot become a bit squelchy.

*Peter Winter*

## Midweek Working Party

This month has been very busy with several groups active. One group has been clearing trees at Rye Farm so that EWG can start the second phase of the bridleway project, while another has been doing our annual clearance at Pallingham Bridge and the Quays as well as completing the clearance from Toat to Cook's Bridge. Considering that it was not done last year due to flooding, there was not as much growth as we expected.

Gosden Aqueduct has had a purge and all the saplings have been cut back as well as much of the ivy and weeds being cleared off the brickwork. This will allow a spider crane to be brought in to see how much work is required to prevent it deteriorating further.

Another group cleared Bonfire Hanger of saplings and long grass. To enable NWG to work at Tickner's Crossing a small team brushcut the area to be set out for work to begin on the base of the temporary road.

Meanwhile, throughout the month a small team has been painting the boats while there is no water for trips.

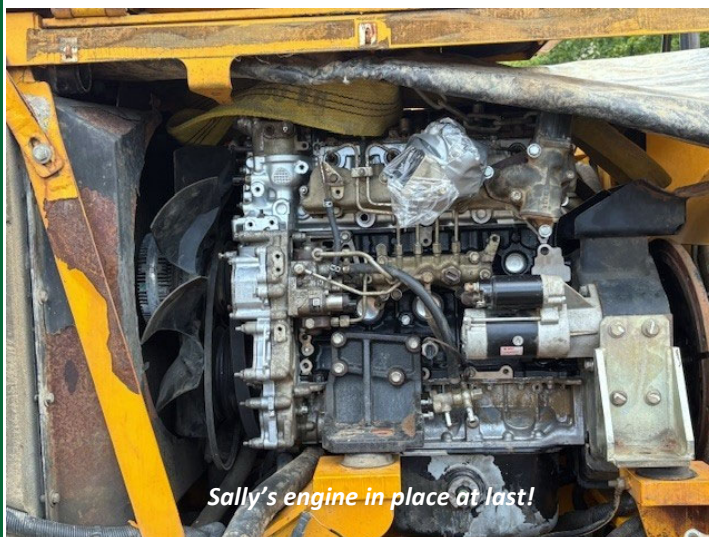
*Margaret Darvill*



*Gosden Aqueduct revealed*

## Tickner's Depot

The saga of our work on *Sally*, the 13 ton excavator, nears its end. In my last report, we still had a load of components to fit to the new engine block. Now, the reconditioned cylinder has been fitted with the valve timing and valve clearances set, and the fuel injector pump and pipework have been connected up. The turbo, together with its oil and water pipes, is bolted on.



*Sally's engine in place at last!*

A small, but costly hiccup was the front cover. Due to the redesign of the crankshaft, the original front cover and oil seal would no longer fit, so a new cover and seal were acquired and fitted. At this point, the engine looked very much like it should and was ready to be lowered into the engine bay – and what a kerfuffle that turned out to be! Using the Telehandler, we lifted the unit ten feet up to clear the guard rails and then lowered it very slowly towards the bay. First issue, the engine wouldn't go in with the mountings fitted, so

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they came off. Then the turbo had to be removed, with all of the connected pipework. After that, the inlet manifold elbow had to come off. Finally, we had to make space in the radiator cowling to get the fan in. Then the fun really started. Trying to line up a 400kg lump of iron with the hydraulic pump was a step too far. Time was getting on, so Ian and I left the engine sitting safely in the bay, cleared our tools away and went to The Sun for a new plan and inspiration. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the engine will be bolted to the pump and all the parts reattached.

OK, enough gloom and despondency. We have been working on other interesting stuff. A while back we took delivery, via John Reynolds, of a Tracmaster Power Scythe, donated by the RSPB at Pulborough. It was in two parts, the blades were in desperate need of attention, and the motor wouldn't start. Hardly surprising as it had stood for several years with stale petrol in the carburettor. Getting the engine running was simple enough – clean the carb out, remove hardened crud from the jet, a service, some fresh fuel and it was working well.

The blades were a bit more complicated. Five teeth were loose and worn, so new ones were sourced and riveted in. The drive unit had a burr due to lack of maintenance, so that was ground off and the drive reassembled. It is now ready for anyone who wants to use it. It'll need trailering to site and the operator given training on how it works and to do basic maintenance, but in the ten minute test we gave it, it cuts really cleanly and close to the ground. Undergrowth up to an inch in diameter didn't stand a chance.

And finally, Ian and I are away for the first two weeks of September (not together!). So contact Stuart or Zoe if you need anything from the depot



*Mark Feeney*

## Boat Group PEST

Due to the lack of water and the inability to use the locks it was decided, sadly, to abandon our first trip out in August.

Our planned meeting at the end of the month was to finish the preparation of the trip boat *Zachariah Keppel* for painting. It was another hot and sunny day which is not ideal for preparation and painting. However, five of us managed to finish the job before escaping the heat around lunchtime.

With a combined effort from PEST and MWWP members we have also been painting on Wednesdays in order to finish the job whilst the weather was dry; we needn't have worried! The timber hatch of ZK was in a very poor state of repair and we are most grateful to the Depot team who kindly agreed to restore it. We are very much looking forward to finishing boat painting so that we can return to our work of non-towpath tidying of the useable stretch of canal in September.

*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 and Tuesday	Northern Working Party (Monday) Northern Working Party (Tuesday)	Contact David Stevenson 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 Margaret Darvill



## Eric Walker Group

The group, as has been previously reported, completed work on the Rye Farm project Phase 1 and will return to site in mid-September to commence the construction of Phase 2 following the tree removal on the bridleway route by MWWP.

Meanwhile the team has been involved in the Rooks Hill project. The bridge concrete foundation and abutments which were completed by visiting volunteer groups in just a couple of weeks, gave the project a really good start. Since then the EWG team have continued with further concrete pours to the bridge structure, namely the wing wall foundations. These are also very substantial, with 32 cubic metres of concrete used in the four base layers that have been completed so far.

Also, we think, a 'first' was achieved by the team, when two Axtell Mixtrucks lined up side by side pouring concrete simultaneously into the two west wing wall foundations! This avoided the need for complex formwork as we just excavated the 'mould' into the clay.



*The double concrete pour!*



*Hardcore road access being laid at the site*

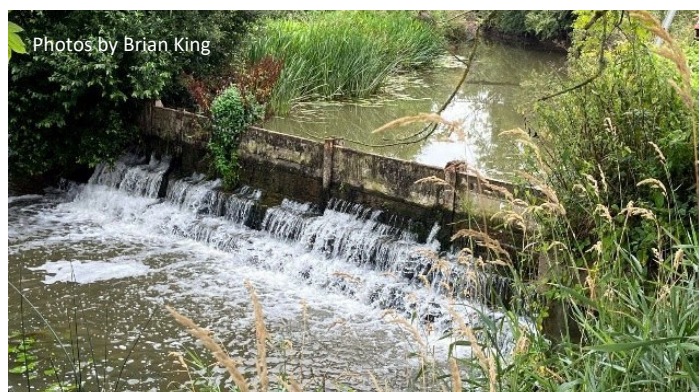
*Three of the wing wall foundations installed*

While the weather has been kind, we've been planning ahead for when the rain inevitably makes the site a bit soggy. So we've been laying a hardcore access road across the site and along the bed of the canal over the clay strata. Otherwise any movement of plant or vehicle deliveries would be precluded when the weather turns wet.

*Dennis Gillen*

## Thursday Group

The river weir downstream from Lordings Aqueduct is in a poor state of repair and in need of remedial work to control the water level effectively. As an interim fix, we had several visits to the site this month, when we attached plywood sheets to the stop planks, cut back overgrown vegetation and packed clay and sawdust into the accessible leaks. As can be seen from the before and after photographs, we were able to substantially reduce the flow through the weir, to the delight of the local angling society, who were very complimentary about our efforts.



*Photos by Brian King*



*A significant improvement to the weir at Lordings*

A little further down the canal toward Lordings Flood Lock is a small spill weir, where there was concern about water leaking from the canal around the structure. We excavated a small trench on either side of the weir and packed it with puddling clay, that again had been kindly donated by Ewhurst Brickworks. The water level is so low in that section, at the moment, that we are unable to assess the effectiveness of our



repair, but we are hoping for the best.

We then turned our attention to Drungewick Lock to prepare for the installation of a new river pump for extracting water from the river into the winding hole at Drungewick. This requires new power cabling to be installed from the control cabinet alongside the lock to the pump chamber adjacent to the river, a distance of approximately 120 metres. After hand digging a couple of small inspection pits along the route to locate and pinpoint underground facilities, we made use of a pedestrian trencher to excavate the complete length of the trench and laid new ducting in readiness for contractors to install the required electrical connection.

A new flow meter is to be installed at Birch Copse to measure the water being extracted from the River Lox into the canal. This is going to require alterations to the current length of water pipe. To prepare for this, we have surveyed the ground and dug inspection pits to locate previously laid ducting for other services. We intend to make use of the pedestrian trencher to excavate a short trench for the replacement section of water pipe. While there we took the opportunity to clear mud, silt and debris from around the river pump inlet.

Photo by Keith Lyall



*Pedestrian trencher at Drungewick Lock*

*Brian King*

## Northern Working Party

August was largely spent on completing two main projects. Following the installation of the mains water pipe over the footbridge at Tickner's Heath Crossing, we made several visits to the site to backfill the trench, scrape and level the footpath, top dress the surface and re-erect the post and rail fencing. All has now been completed and the path is open again.

We also spent time at Tickner's Depot where we removed the shuttering from the recently poured concrete pads of the trailer parking area, installed expansion joints, created a stone filled drainage channel along the rear edge of the pads and filled around the outer edges with Type 1 stone. This completed the parking area and it has now been taken into use.

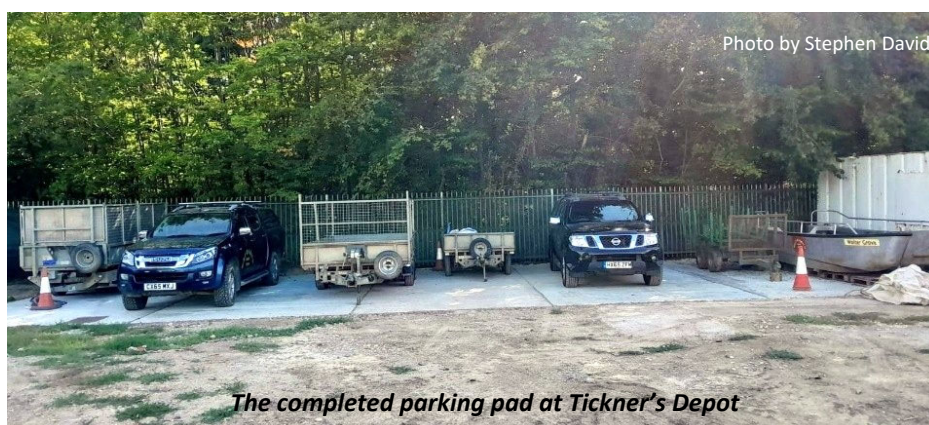


Photo by Stephen David

*The completed parking pad at Tickner's Depot*

tion for this, we excavated a section alongside the verge and put in a stone filled drainage channel to assist in dispersing surface water from the road. We will be returning to place white lines down the road edges and carry out remedial work on a drainage gully.

The fabric lining of the canal near Brewhurst Bridge had become loose along the towpath edge. To remedy this, we fabricated some staples from lengths of rebar and resecured most of the lining to the bank. We will need to return to the site to finish the job completely. While in the area, we in-

Photo by Keith Lyall



*Footpath at Tickner's Crossing*

Since the building of Compasses Bridge several years ago, the short length of new road on the approaches has not yet been adopted by the local authority. In prepara-

Photo by Nigel Hartley



*New fencing by Devil's Hole Lock Bridge*



stalled some white topped, wooden posts in the winding hole at Brewhurst, to warn the boat crews of submerged tree stumps.

With the bridge at Devil's Hole Lock having been rebuilt and a new wooden five bar gate fitted, we removed the old, dilapidated fence on the bridge approach from the towpath side and erected a new post and rail fence. We also paid a visit to Lee Place (Harsfold) Bridge where we replaced a rotten gate post and refitted the metal farm gate.

*Dave Miller*

## Monday Group



*Gennets Bridge Lock looking very tidy!*

With a Bank Holiday at the end of the month, we were restricted to three meetings in August. Nevertheless we did a lot of work. We completed cutting the second part of the towpath to Drungewick Lock with the aid of Monster Mower 2 (a new acquisition) and cut the vegetation round the winding hole in preparation for the excavation of the trench for the electric cable for the new pump.

We gave attention to Run Common, Compasses, Tickner's and the locks at Gennets, Southland, Devil's Hole, Loxwood and Brewhurst. In addition, we tidied up the towpath between Southland and Gennets, around Brewhurst Bridge and both sides of the canal at Drungewick. All made possible by a good turnout of volunteers.

*Nick Wood*

## The Contact List

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