

# Working Party News

No. 321

For WACT Volunteers

September 2020

## Editorial

It's good to see some semblance of normality returning to the canal with the resumption of boat trips and most work parties operating, albeit with restrictions to ensure social distancing is maintained.

The pause in activities earlier in the year has led to some catching-up for many of the teams as the vegetation seemed to ignore the restrictions on movement.

However, the weather has been generally kind and the work parties have made great strides in getting the canal and its surrounds back into good shape.

*Peter Winter*



## Eric Walker Group

Since Harsfold Bridge was opened on 9 July 2020 for use by the landowner and the public, there has been regular traffic. This included the landowner driving his heavy hay making plant across the bridge as shown below.



*Harsfold Bridge takes the hay load*

The brickwork of the old bridge which we exposed during the new bridge foundation excavation has been preserved and renovated on the south side. The approach ramps on both sides of the bridge and part of the south brideway have been surfaced and rolled with road planings provided by the landowner. Finally we removed the last remaining remnants of the causeway to the east of the bridge and this released quite a lot of water, giving the impression of a functioning canal at least under and for a short distance both sides of the bridge.

Meanwhile at Drungewick Lock, the group completed the removal of the stone top kerb to the west wall. This was replaced by the construction of a new reinforced concrete kerb. Incorporated within this were recesses and holes, through which the top course of "Platipus" anchors were installed by our specialist contractor. The anchor contractor is now continuing to install the two rows of anchors through the lock wall at a lower level and the operation will be completed within the first week of September. Following that, they will return and start the tensioning of each anchor, before mortar grouting is inserted around the end of the stainless steel cables to secure them where they extend through the lock wall. The EWG team will then move in again and start the extensive removal and replacement of some of the defective stone joint pointing with a special lime mortar to both internal faces of the lock walls.

*Dennis Gillen*



*The renovated brickwork of the old bridge*

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*The new concrete kerb at Drungewick*



*A Platypus Anchor*

placed on the bank as well as a load of grass cuttings dumped in the canal bed by the great British public. We also erected a replacement post on the Downs Link.

## Mrs Bucket Group Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

As is now the 'new usual', we operated in two separate teams and at the request of Kev Baker, we undertook the following during August:

- more clearance at Lordings, including cutting back the hedge and recovering the picnic table from the canal (again!),
- clearing the towpath from the Drungewick Lane Bridge to the lock,
- two outings cutting the grass around Brewhurst Bridge, clearing/widening the towpath all the way to Fir Tree Copse and depositing the results with the aid of May Upton in the Fir Tree Copse bonfire area.

Run Common received attention too. This included sawing up a large branch which appeared to have been

We visited Compasses Bridge again and gave the site a thorough tidy up and continued to Tickner's where the fence, alongside the canal north of the road towards the slipway, was cleared of all brambles for 100 yards.

With the onset of rain after the hot interlude, the vegetation started to grow rapidly again, so for the final outing in August we visited Drungewick aqueduct, Loxwood, Devil's Hole, Southland, Gennets, Tickner's and Three Compasses to ensure the sites looked tidy before the Bank Holiday.

*Nick Wood*

## Boat Group PEST

During August first we went north and worked up to and included Devil's Hole winding hole, which we tried to tidy up, although we still needed to cut down some more of the partly fallen tree. We then took the Josias Jessop up as far as Southlands winding hole; there remains a lot of tidying up to be done in this section.

## Working Party Diary

Every Monday	'Mrs Bucket' Keeping up Appearances	Contact John Empringham
Monday to Friday (as required)	Canal Maintenance Unit	Check with Kev Baker
Various Tuesdays (not in summer)	Hedge Laying	Contact Nick Baxter
Every Tuesday and Thursday	Boat Maintenance	Contact David Arnold
Every Wednesday	Mid-Week Working Party	Details from Margaret Darvill
Every Wednesday	Tickners Heath Maintenance Depot	Contact John Smith/Ken Bacon
Every Wednesday and Thursday	Eric Walker Restoration Group	Details from Dennis Gillen/John Reynolds
Every Thursday and 3rd Saturday	Northern Working Party	Contact Bill Nicholson
First Friday of the month	PEST boat group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem
Third Saturday of the month	Summit level	Contact Dave Evans

We also had a problem with dead fish at Devil's Hole. John Reynolds came and joined us and we cleared the area up. We considered that the problem had been caused by the heat and the fish getting caught in the weed and debris building up around the lock. No passenger boat trips are scheduled to go up to Southlands at present.

On our next foray we went down to Drungewick slipway and worked back in preparation for a first passenger carrying trip to the slipway. There is work to be done in clearing the banks of the heavily reeded section north of the Slipway and also clearing some floating weeds as well as the usual off side cutting.

Generally the canal is looking in good shape all things considered. Clearly there remains much bush cutting back on the offside. We have asked if the Monday or Midweek working parties could cut back the reeds near the Slipway on the towpath side. We are also considering alternative ways of clearing the worst of the weeds as without more sophisticated equipment we cannot do much with them right now.

*Chris Jones*

## Mid-Week Working Party

August has been a busy month for the MWWP. We have continued to work as several separate groups. The northern group has continued to pull Himalayan Balsam in Hunt Park. There seems so much of it this year. They then cut back the ash regrowth at Tickner's alongside the canal. We have to do this for every third tree. Then the group started helping Dave Evans on the new road crossing, strimming the grass.

Some of the southern group completed clearing the canal below Pallingham Quays as far as the landowner will allow. There really is a beautiful view from the bridge now. The rest of the group continued clearing from Toat Bridge to Cooks Bridge. We have cleared about a third of the area and it is now looking much bet-

ter. I am expecting some of the group to be down there for the rest of September. Whilst working there we have seen deer and we have the delight of walking through the landowner's beautiful garden.

*Margaret Darvill*

## Boat Maintenance

Wiggonholt has had her tiller shortened by 4 inches to make it easier to put the helm over without the skipper falling down the hatch.

Josias Jessop has her new deck painted, her cabin roof repainted and her forward door window repaired. She is



ready for charter as is Zachariah Keppel.

ZK's refitting is finished. She has her new chairs on board and a valid passenger certificate until 20th November. She lacks tables as yet, but who needs tables for socially distanced trips of 35 or 50 minutes?

*David Arnold*

## The Contact List

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