

# Working Party News

No. 346

For WACT Volunteers

December 2022

## Editorial

Apparently, November was the wettest month on record and the weather did hamper the activities of our work parties. Nevertheless, they've all been out and about keeping the canal in good order and making significant progress on restoration.

With Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

*Peter Winter*

## Eric Walker Group

With all the formwork for the ground beams in place at the Birtley Bridge 2 site, the team was ready to complete the first of three concrete pours to the foundations.



*The pipeline from the cement works to the site*

As the site is literally behind the location of Singh's Concrete plant on the A281 just south of Bramley, it made perfect sense to use the company to supply the concrete. After some negotiations on price we devised a scheme whereby the company



*The pour completed*

could mix and then pump the concrete, a strong C40/50 design mix, via a 70m long hose line from their plant directly into the bridge foundations.

On the day of the pour we were lucky to have one of the rare dry days in November. With the use of "walk-talkie" communication between the pump operator in the plant and the staff at the site, the pour was completed. It was very successful, thanks to the combined effort of the EWG team and the extensive help of the competent Singh operatives. The 8 cubic metres of very fluid mix concrete was poured in rapid succession into the beam formwork.



*The scaffolding platform erected over the water*

The following week we stripped the formwork and our scaffolding contractor erected a complete platform between the newly concreted foundation beams giving us a firm, safe and dry base to work from to fit the next "lift" of reinforcement and formwork.

*Dennis Gillen*

Material published in *Working Party News* represents the views of the contributors and should not, unless specifically indicated, be assumed to be the policy of the Trust.

## Boat Maintenance

We have just completed the maintenance programme before the Santa season trips begin. Our MCA surveyor, Rob Shaw, insisted that the freeing ports in the forward and after decks of *Zachariah Keppel* did not meet the prescribed height above the load water line of 38cms, although the after ones were only 2.5cms too low. None of us could think of any conceivable problem in the flat waters of our canal that would be averted by raising the freeing ports by 2.5cms as their function was solely to clear away rainwater through the deck channels. Moreover, the steel decks had been added by 4 All Marine Ltd. in Chertsey when ZK was taken there for replating under the watchful eye of the appointed MCA Surveyor. She had later been inclined for stability and her drafts for'd and aft checked under Rob Shaw's supervision when she was re-ballasted and refitted by us. No mention of low freeing ports was mentioned at either of these times. Nonetheless, we were required to weld up the freeing ports, two for'd and four aft, pierce the steel decks and fit pipes into a plastic tank below the waterline with an automatic pump in it to pump any runoff from the deck up above the waterline and put a syphon loop in and a hull outlet with a valve in it for'd.

we muttered, moaned and got on with it. A new pump was added to the after bilge, as the old one was defunct, a fact not mentioned in the survey. As a maintenance department we seem to be turning into a small shipyard!

It's all done now, after a lot of effort by Ian, Guy and me. Paperwork deficiencies were also a feature of the survey, and Ken Broomfield has been busy sorting those out to the MCA's satisfaction. We now have passenger certificates for ZK and WH and can operate with all our boats.

Peter Hyem and I have been busy repainting the saloon decks of *Wiggonholt* slate grey, the agreed colour for all boat decks when they need a repaint.

*David Arnold*

## Canal Maintenance Unit

Most of November has been spent at Brewhurst building a concrete pad, brickwork, timber stud work and cladding for a new shelter to house the new back pump control gear.

We were a bit late starting on 17th November, with the Canal Centre car park flooded following a few days of heavy rain and some of the team were delayed driving to Loxwood.

*Ian Lower*



*Plastic tank and automated pump*

The issue of a new passenger certificate for the year to 23rd November 2023 was dependent on this work being carried out. Since ZK's first charter trip is on December 7th,



*Canal Centre car park in flood*

## Working Party Diary

Every Monday	'Mrs Bucket' Keeping up Appearances	Contact Tom Close
Every Tuesday (late October to March)	Hedgelaying	Contact Nick Baxter
Every Tuesday and Thursday	Boat Maintenance	Contact David Arnold
Every Wednesday	Midweek Working Party	Details from Margaret Darvill
Alternate Monday	Tickner's Depot	Contact Ian Prior
Every Wednesday and Thursday	Eric Walker Group	Details from Dennis Gillen/John Reynolds
Every Monday, Tuesday, and Third Saturday	Northern Working Party	Contact Bill Nicholson
Every Thursday	Canal Maintenance Unit	Contact Ian Lower
First & Third Friday of the month	PEST Boat Group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem
Third Saturday of the month	Summit Level	Contact Dave Evans

## Northern Working Party

The month commenced with more tree felling near Loxwood Lock on the bank opposite the towpath. With no vehicle access, this necessitated the setting up of a 'pull across' ferry, using the Aquadock platform, to transport volunteers and equipment across the canal. More diseased ash trees were felled and all the debris disposed of. The Turfa winch was put to good use throughout the day but with heavy rain and a thunderstorm rumbling in, it was thought prudent to pause for an early lunch in the shelter of the Canal Centre, rather than remain in the vicinity of a long steel cable in an exposed field with lightning expected! The weather did clear though and work resumed for a full day's work to be completed.

The old back pump at Brewhurst Lock has been inoperative for some time and in need of replacement. This was to be an awkward job due to its weight and being at the bottom of a chamber with only a small inspection hatch in the concrete slab that sealed the chamber. The task was made more difficult by the site's inaccessibility to machinery to aid the lifting!

On a very wet and muddy day, assistance was provided to our contractors who attended to remove the pump. Taking much longer than expected and overcoming many obstacles, the old pump was eventually disconnected and winched out of the chamber, in readiness for two new pumps to be installed - hopefully on a drier day!

Having gone so long without rain in the summer, the November deluges hampered the efforts of the working parties and slowed progress somewhat. The opportunity was taken though to tidy up the contain-

ers at Tickner's Heath Depot and to continue to clear the site compound at Devil's Hole Lock following the tree clearance work there.

Work then progressed to removing the old fencing alongside the towpath adjacent to the lock and replacing it with a much smarter looking wooden rail fence, complemented by the installation of a brand new notice board.



...and a new notice board

*Dave Miller*

## Hedgelaying

The onset of winter is usually welcome as far as the Hedgelaying Team is concerned, as that means we can sharpen our billhooks and get out into the countryside to start sorting out wayward hedges. Unfortunately, this autumn/early winter has seen significant amounts of rain along with warm weather, meaning that trees have held their leaves and ground conditions have been very slippery - neither good for coppicing or hedgelaying! Looking back at Keith Nichols comments, the Hedgelaying Team (unlike other working parties on different days) was apparently always lucky with dry weather in the past. Either, we are now paying back for those previous good weather days, or, more likely, climate change is here with a vengeance. Sadly, we cancelled two work days during November, but, amazingly, the Team has made up for lost time and cut over 250 stakes and the same number of binders in readiness for laying the hedge at Drungewick slipway - a fantastic effort! On the last day of the month, we even laid some hedge at the roadside edge of the coppice site - always good to see that none of us had lost our skills across the summer.

*Nick Baxter*

## Mrs Bucket Group

### Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

The month started off with a blitz on the Lee Place area, a well overdue visit. We concentrated around the swing bridge and along the towpath to the 90 degree turn in the canal. The hedge was trimmed on both sides, the landowner doing the field side as far as he was able and us cutting the sides and top as well as the towpath. All the cuttings were disposed of so the site looks a lot better. There is more to do south of the bridge, but that is for another time.

Work continued at Brewhurst, Loxwood, Devil's Hole and Southland. And then the rain really set in! Jolly good for filling the canal but not so good for



Removing the old back pump from Brewhurst



New wooden rails at Devil's Hole Lock

'keeping up appearances'. In effect two of our outings were severely curtailed by heavy precipitation.

Nevertheless we made a brief visit to Drungewick and, although the road was flooded, too deep for wellies, we managed to cut both sides of the canal. After a brief outing to Gennets we were able to return for a second time at the end of the month on a good day to complete the job and replacing all the protectors around the hedge plants (who removed them no-one knows) as well as tidying up at Compasses and Tickner's with an extra strong team of 14 volunteers.

*The Mrs Bucket team take lunch at Gennets*



Best wishes to all our volunteers for Christmas.

*Nick Wood*

## Midweek Working Party

MWWP have had a busy month. Most days have looked very wet early on but by the time work started at 9.30 the outlook had improved. We began the month just south of Devil's Hole Lock on the offside. With the help of Dave and Adam we took down a number of ash trees.

The next three outings were spent at Lee Farm Causeway, clearing more ash trees and a copse, as well as cutting the hedge from Lee Farm Lock to Lee Place. It is looking lovely down there now. Whilst we were there, a small group helped Adam install a milestone. The last week we tidied up the Permissive Path at Birtley before it is reopened



*The MWWP team help Adam install a milestone*

again. A small group continue to tidy up Hunt Park.

*Margaret Darvill*

## Boat Group PEST

Both the weather and water levels were favourable for us on our two work days this month, which made a pleasant change. Our first outing was spent assisting the large team of WRG and W&A volunteers removing and disposing of the dead ash trees along the banks of the navigable section of the canal. This was a major undertaking in which we were pleased to be able to help.

For our second work day it was back to our normal task of keeping the navigation clear for our boats, passengers and crew. The principal work was clearing the over-grown offside bank of the canal at the entrance to Southland Lock and from around the nearby winding hole. The final task of the day was to stop off at the Devil's Hole Lock winding hole and clear a passage through the undergrowth to allow waterfowl to move to and from the canal and the lagoon behind the winding hole.

*Chris Jones*

## The Contact List

Name	Group/Project	Tel	email
Maurice Cranefield	Visiting Working Parties	01483 505566	maurice_cranefield@weyandarun.co.uk
Dennis Gillen	Eric Walker Group	07866 583753	dennis_gillen@weyandarun.co.uk
Margaret Darvill	Midweek Working Party	01483 894606	margaret_darvill@weyandarun.co.uk
Tom Close	Monday Group	07811 534292	thomasdclose@googlemail.com
Ian Prior	Tickner's Depot Manager	07864 708932	ian_prior@weyandarun.co.uk
Nick Baxter	Hedgelaying		hedgelaying@weyandarun.co.uk
Bill Nicholson	Northern Working Parties	0118 9714785	bill_nicholson@weyandarun.co.uk
Dave Evans	Operations Manager		dave_evans@weyandarun.co.uk
Chris Jones	Boat Group PEST	01483 421136	chrisryderjones@outlook.com
David Arnold	Boat Maintenance	01403 790168	dja103@hotmail.com
Ian Lower	Canal Maintenance Unit	07827 977916	ian_lower@hotmail.com
Julian Cheek	Maintenance Administration	01483 505566	julian_cheek@weyandarun.co.uk
Peter Winter	Working Party News Editor	07722 184117	peter_winter@weyandarun.co.uk