

# Working Party News

No. 318

For WACT Volunteers

June 2020

## Editorial

The weather has been perfect for our working parties to be out and about in all their various roles. Sadly the Covid-19 pandemic has halted almost all activity, but with the easing of restrictions, plans are in hand for some work to resume at the earliest opportunity. As John Talbot outlines below any activity will have to be preceded by a carefully thought through risk assessment that complies with Government guidelines and minimises risk to our volunteers.

Meanwhile, some work is progressing as outlined by Kev Baker and David Arnold.

*Peter Winter*

## Health & Safety Update

I have seen an increasing number of email exchanges on the current pandemic situation in terms of the resumption of WACT's volunteering efforts. This was brought to a head by a very specific question from John Smith (Maintenance Depot) who asked about the possibility of a return to the depot to resume operations.

Sorting out a reasonable and measured reply to John set me thinking further on this matter, as it has already started to become an increasingly frequent question from working parties (WPs).

There are still some people – possibly a diminishing number – who think that the current general Health & Safety Legislation and associated Regulations have generated a 'Nanny State', in which people have to be protected from themselves and their own carelessness. There is, undoubtedly, an element of truth in that, predominantly encouraged by the attitude of jobsworths, who bask in the petty power of telling people what they must and must not do.

Yet there is another, more reasonable viewpoint. Everybody working for an organisation – and that specifically includes volunteers working for charities as well as company employees – has the right to return home to their family at the end of the day's work, safely and in good health. It is this latter philosophy that drives the Trust's policies and modus operandi. So why should all volunteers in working parties, not be entitled to return home safely and in good health to their families, without risk of carrying and passing on Covid-19 (CV-19) to their nearest and dearest within the same household?

Well, firstly some background facts.

I have done some online research on the susceptibility of people who are older and those with pre-existing medical conditions, with the results being summarised in the two tables below (data from [www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/coronavirus-age-sex-demographics/](http://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/coronavirus-age-sex-demographics/) and other sources). The results are almost identical across a number of countries where records are considered to be reasonably accurate:

### Age-Related Covid-19 Mortality

Age	Death Rate *
80+ years old	14.8%
70-79 years old	8.0%
60-69 years old	3.6%
50-59 years old	1.3%
40-49 years old	0.4%
30-39 years old	0.2%
20-29 years old	0.2%
10-19 years old	0.2%
0-9 years old	no fatalities

\* For people in a given age group, this represents the increased risk of dying if infected with CV-19.

### Covid-19 Mortality for those with Pre-Existing Medical Conditions

Condition	Death Rate *
Cardiovascular disease	13.2%
Diabetes	9.2%
Chronic respiratory disease	8.0%
Hypertension	8.4%
Cancer	7.6%
No pre-existing conditions	–

\* For people with a given pre-existing condition, this represents the risk of dying if infected by CV-19

It is very clear that the risk of dying, if infected by CV-19, rises dramatically for those above the age of around 60, and that is further compounded for those who have one or more of the pre-existing medical conditions identified in the second table. Those facts of increased vulnerability have been reported so often in the national news over the past 2-3 months as to become almost a mantra.

It should be self-evident that the greater majority of our volunteers are retired and fall into the at-risk age groups identified in the upper table. Equally obviously, I have no idea about the state of health of our volunteers, as noted in the lower table, but they will know who they are.

The question of reopening our WPs is a thorny one. It depends on how the evolution, then deterioration of CV-19 plays out in the UK as well as what international good

practice is reported. While I would generally tend to go in the same direction as advised nationally, I am of the firm conviction that it is better to err on the side of caution and temper our behaviour accordingly. In several instances the Government's advice has been shown to be either tardy in being issued, or just plain not best practice, albeit this is realised in hindsight.

Being acutely conscious that most of our volunteers (me included!) are of advancing/advanced years, which means that they (we) are much more susceptible to the effects of CV-19 than younger people, as detailed above. I appreciate that even if we were to reopen as soon as officially permitted, it is and should be, a matter of personal choice whether to attend a WP. However, I would rather proceed carefully. An over-optimistic view of the apparent decline in the pandemic, leading to an early return to 'normal' work in the imminent future, may contribute to a resurgence of the virus and a further, stricter lockdown, regionally, if not nationally and I, for one do not want to be party to that!

The guidelines for England issued at the end of May stated that from Monday 1st June the following measures were explicitly included ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do)):

- people will be able to '... spend time outdoors, including private gardens and other outdoor spaces, in groups of up to six people from different households, following social distancing guidelines.' There are some other relaxations which are not relevant to WACT volunteering, so not mentioned here.
- The guidelines go on to remind everyone that 'At all times, you should continue to adhere to strict social distancing guidelines when you are outside your home, particularly ensuring you are two metres away from anyone outside your household.'
- Expressly forbidden, among other matters is to '... gather outdoors in a group of more than six (excluding members of your own household)'. Public gatherings of more than six people from different households will be prohibited in law.

From the foregoing, it is clear that up to six members of any working party can meet at the same time, provided that all sensible precautions are taken, like maintaining strict social distancing, no sharing of food, tools or equipment, etc. For larger working parties, this might mean that the group is divided into several sub-parties of up to six volunteers who could meet, but not concurrently. To stay within the Law, it is apparent that the sub-parties of each group would have to stagger their work locations, times or dates. WP leaders may be able to arrange tasks that ensure the sub-parties do not come into contact with each other, ie, are at least 2m apart, and do not meet up with their friends at break times.

In conclusion, if working parties wish to re-convene as outlined above it will be necessary for their leader(s) to make a detailed written risk assessment for each meeting, specifically to address the measures to be adopted to safeguard against the spread of CV-19, bearing in mind that these might change according to the work locations. The RA should be shared with all members of the WP for their full agreement before work commences. Any volunteers not wishing to abide by the RA will not be allowed to participate in that day's activity.

*John Talbot*

*Director of Health, Safety and Welfare*

## Mrs Bucket Group Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

As many volunteers will know Brian Crossley, the founder of our working party in 1998, died on 21st April. A number of us attended his funeral on Friday 22nd May via a webcast link, an emotional occasion for those of us who knew him well and enjoyed working with him.

Not a lot to report as the Group is not out working at the moment. Our leader has initiated weekly 'Zoom meetings' with the help of one of our more IT literate members and we have discussed canal matters of interest to us all. He has also briefed us on the outcome of the recent Trust's Restoration Committee meeting. Members have also been walking the canal now that the 'lockdown' restrictions have been eased a bit and taking photographs so that we can at least see the state of the

## Working Party Diary

Every Monday	'Mrs Bucket' Keeping up Appearances	Contact John Empringham
Monday to Friday (as required)	Loxwood Link Maintenance	Check with Kev Baker
Every Tuesday (normally from mid-October to end of March)	Hedgelaying	Contact Nick Baxter
Every Wednesday	Mid-Week Working Party	Details from Margaret Darvill
Every Wednesday	Maintenance Depot	Contact John Smith/Ken Bacon
Every Wednesday and Thursday	Eric Walker Restoration Group	Details from Dennis Gillen/John Reynolds
First Friday of the month	PEST boat group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem
Third Saturday of the month	Summit level	Contact Dave Evans



vegetation growth! We are happy to endorse Kev plans for the southern end of the canal. Overall the Group feel very frustrated that we cannot get out and work, no doubt felt by other volunteers. Consequently we look forward hearing from the Trust that work can resume shortly, perhaps taking the lead from the Canal & River Trust.

*Nick Wood*

## Boat Maintenance

We haven't been able to do any maintenance work during the lockdown but I thought it might be opportune to report on the current state of our boats.

### Wiggonholt

Needs the heads deck re-laid (Ian has it all cut out) to replace the rotten areas which have been cleared away. Then the replaced deck would need to be primed and painted. A touch up in green gloss for'd and aft and the paperwork brought up to date and within 48 hours she could be ready to carry passengers. Wiggonholt has an up to date passenger certificate.

### Zachariah Keppel

Work has now been completed by the 4 All Marine shipyard and ZK has been launched in their adjacent berth on the River Thames. The pictures show:



### 3. ZK alongside the shipyard jetty.

At present the crane at Penton Hook Marina is not in operation so she cannot be placed on a lorry to be trucked back to Loxwood. When she does come back, a team of volunteers will have to reload nearly three tons of ballast, the saloon decks will have to be replaced and the new seating plan effected. To give more room, it is planned to make her entry door only on the star-board side (as is the case with WH) and remove the port midships ladder. When all this has been done we will need a surveyor to inspect her and carry out an inclining test to ensure she has an adequate righting moment with a full load of passengers (somewhat less of them in the new seating configuration). Then, with luck, the surveyor will grant her a passenger certificate. All this will, of course, take some time.

### Josias Jessop

Just before the lockdown David Nott (a very experienced diesel engineer and automotive lecturer) changed the four injectors for reconditioned units in an effort to reduce the engine smoking and overheating. Sadly the lockdown prevented trials of this arrangement and also the planned slipping of JJ to check out and paint her entire hull, inside and out. Nonetheless, when we are able to carry passengers again, we could have her cleaned out and ready for service in 48 hours. Carrying ten passengers or less, she has no need of official surveys nor passenger certificates.

*David Arnold*



1. her waterproof deck for'd which now drains through scuppers overside. A similar arrangement has been installed on her after deck so that the bilges should be almost completely dry.
2. the cabin top with the enlarged hatchway over the engine room.





## Maintenance (South)

Following our repairs to the overflow sluice at Lordings Flood lock, last week Alan and I (observing distancing measures at all times) spent a day finalising the safety rails, fencing across the top of the sluice and back filling the gap behind the back wall with concrete. This should now make this important part of the Lordings to Harsfold section capable of handling the water in the canal without leaking through and round it. After nearly 20 years when it had started to leak quite badly and is now almost water-



tight. Thanks are due to the volunteers from the canal maintenance team for their hard work over the last 9 months in getting this task completed.

Meanwhile at Baldwin's Knob, after two very long and hot days the work has come on in a big leap. On the first day brick rubble was put in behind the 'lego' wall and on the second day the hardcore went in. Now all that remains to do is to finalise the fencing either side of the new fence across the wall and to put down the finish surface to the towpath.

*Kev Baker*



*The new wall at Baldwin's Knob*

And finally  
a couple of  
pictures from  
Chris Jones  
reminding us of  
Tim and Pru's  
Great Canal  
Journey on the  
Wey & Arun



## The Contact List

Name	Group/Project	Tel	email
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