

# Working Party News

No. 320

For WACT Volunteers

August 2020

## Editorial

The recent good weather has been a boost to renewed activity on the canal. Progress on the ground is gaining momentum with the opening of the Harsfold Bridge to public use, and with the maintenance teams restoring the towpaths and surrounds to good condition.

Meanwhile on the water, the boat teams are keeping the navigation clear and Wiggonholt is being prepared for trip boat activity to resume in August.

Let's hope that progress can be maintained and that the coronavirus is kept at bay.

*Peter Winter*

## Boat Group PEST

With operations restarting in July our first priority was to sweep the entire navigable section and remove debris in the water and the more egregious outgrowth from the bank to permit safe boat operations in the near future.

After removing a fallen tree from the navigation north of Loxwood Lock we have reached south as far as Drungwick Slipway. We cleared quite a few tree trunks and we also cut back the offside bank wherever it badly needed doing. Working together at different spots meant we cut up more encroaching material than normal. Working together, but physically distanced, seemed to achieve the best daily results yet. The Covid-19 precautions have not impeded the teams work.

We noticed that south of Barnhill Bridge, the offside bank is encroaching into the main water course by filling up with natural debris and in several places is permanently above the normal water level. We will need some form of dredger or a long-armed digger vehicle on the towpath stretching across the canal to clear this area. This will be discussed with WACT management.

Our thanks go to Kevin Baker for his assistance in preparing May Upton for our use.

*Chris Jones*

## Boat Maintenance

July has been a busy month for the Boat Group Maintenance team. Ian and I have been joined at various times by Ken Bromfield, Chris Jones, Peter Hyem, and Ian's next-door neighbour Keith who



*Chris Jones at work on JJ*

needed something to do to break the tedium of lockdown at home.

We have worked mainly on the refitting of Zachariah Keppel after she arrived back from Chertsey. Having re-ballasted her to my personal satisfaction - as I thought that previously she was trimmed too much by the stern, Ian and Ken have re-laid the saloon decking. We rubbed down and stained the plywood sides to the passenger area, re-secured them and added beading pieces at the joins. Colin produced a wiring diagram which meant that ZK now starts every time, and the rev counter works. Peter Hyem has put three coats of white on most of the heads area, which was very dank and dark before with bare plywood sides. Work progresses and the next things to do are to rebuild the box cupboard and scrape clean and repaint the deck with the usual special pebbledash paint.

Seating on Wiggonholt has been reduced to a maximum of 14 to allow for social distancing. She is our only operational boat and has a passenger certificate until 29th November. She did a trial run without passengers on Wednesday 22nd July.



Josias Jessop still has the for'd door glass surround to replace plus the after deck which is rotting away. Then we will have to slip, wash off and paint her hull.

The MCA Surveyors have ceased operations due to the lockdown, so we now have a new, self-certification system by the 'Master' of the vessel. I have identified myself as such although whether they will let me do the inclining stability test on ZK, she having been re-ballasted, remains to be seen. All grist to the mill (or it was 60 years ago) to a Merchant Navy officer.

*David Arnold*

## Eric Walker Group

At Harsfold, the bridge structure is now complete and was opened for public and the landowner's use on 9 July 2020. The northern compound (next to the bridge site) has now been dismantled with materials and equipment removed. The Group remains on stand-by to continue further work nearby on the revetment of the river bank and reinstatement of the towpath between Harsfold Bridge and the "big bend".



*Some spacious voids behind the stonework at Drungewick*

The next operations at Harsfold Bridge included the excavation of the earth and collapsed old bridge structure from under the new bridge to open the canal profile. The canalside brickwork from the original bridge has been

retained and is being re-pointed to good condition.

In addition there is further landscaping and fencing work and the removal of the causeway and bridleway diversion on the south side of the canal.

Meanwhile at Drungewick, work on repairing the unstable lock wall started during the first week of July, with the adaption of the temporary timber props to allow the scaffolding contractor to erect scaffolding through the full length of the lock.



*Cleared for navigation at Harsfold?*

## 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
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
Every Thursday and 3rd Saturday	Northern Working Party	Bill Nicholson
First Friday of the month	PEST boat group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem





*Reinforcement and formwork  
almost complete at Drungewick*

the two vertical cracks in the wall and following that the Platipus ground anchors will be installed.

*Dennis Gillen*

## **Mrs Bucket Group Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays**

After seven meetings in June and July we have just about 'caught up' with all the outstanding work! At the beginning of July we attended Malham lock. As our previous visit was last September, it was not surprising that the grass was, in parts, five foot high! It took the team of six all day to bring it back to looking tidy again (see photos). Bignor Bridge also received attention. The other team of six re-visited Loxwood and the three locks northwards to carry on following the initial visits in June.

Further attention was given to the Drungewick aqueduct site as well as spending a considerable effort clearing all the brambles from around the winding hole below Drungewick lock. We made a first visit to Newbridge too and re-visited

This was followed by the removal of the concrete kerb and top course of stonework to the west wall. A lot of wide joints were exposed behind the facing stones that had been filled with soft jointing material and not hard lime mortar as expected. If, as is likely, this is repeated throughout the stone beds and joints of the rest of the wall, then it would be one of the reasons why the west wall has moved and cracked.

As part of the wall stabilisation our specialist contractor has drilled seventeen 62mm diameter vertical holes through the full height of the wall and inserted stainless steel rods held in place by pressure injected grout.

The EWG team has fabricated the heavy reinforcement for the new concrete capping beam and the formwork erection is also well under way. Next month sixteen specialist anchors will be fitted within the stonework across

Compasses Bridge, where we dug up all the ragwort, cleaned the notice board and seat and tidied up the whole site.

This was followed by a visit to Tickner's to 'keep up appearances' at that location. The other team undertook more clearance work at Lordings, made a temporary repair to the footbridge where the cows had damaged it and cleared all the overhanging brambles between the flood-lock and the new Harsfold Bridge.

At our final outing in July we again cut the vegetation at Loxwood (including pulling up Himalayan Balsam in the car park), Devil's Hole, Southland and Gennets Bridge locks. At the latter we widened the towpath from the lock to the spill weir above the lock and paid a quick visit to Run Common.

Another busy month. It's good to be back!

*Nick Wood*



*Spot the difference...*



*...at Malham Lock*



## Mid-Week Working Party

This month we have had beautiful weather for MWWP outings. We have once again been split up into many groups. Hunt Park has been visited three times this month by one group. Gosden aqueduct is now looking clear of ivy. Much of the park has been cleared of Himalayan balsam. This is a thankless task as it never seems to be complete.

Most of the work has been in the south. We have cleared more scrub down at Haybarn and we will return here in the winter months. Harsfold has had two visits this month, one to clear the triangular field next to the new bridge and one to tidy the hedge down to the bridge.

Much work has been at Pallingham clearing around the quays of vegetation as well as clearing the base of the canal towards Pallingham Lock, while making sure we keep the privacy of the landowner. We have

strimmed from Pallingham Bridge northwards but there is still a lot more that needs doing here.

A small group spent a very happy day starting to clear the land near Toat Bridge. The bridge can now be seen from the landowner's house. Most of next month will be spent here as it has not been touched for over nine years and it is a jungle.

*Margaret Darvill*



*Plenty of clearance work to be done at Toat Bridge*



*Looking Northwards  
from Pallingham Bridge*

## The Contact List

Name	Group/Project	Tel	email
Julian Cheek	Maintenance Coordination	01483 505566	julian_cheek@weyandarun.co.uk
Maurice Cranefield	Visiting Working Parties	01483 505566	Maurice_Cranefield@weyandarun.co.uk
John Talbot	Health & Safety Director	01483 429918	jcst@weyandarun.co.uk
Dennis Gillen	Eric Walker Group	07866 583753	dennis_gillen@weyandarun.co.uk
Margaret Darvill	Mid Week Working Party	01483 894606	margaret_darvill@weyandarun.co.uk
John Empringham	Monday Group	01483 562657	mondaygroup@weyandarun.co.uk
Kev Baker	Canal Maintenance Unit	07920 755957	kevin_baker@weyandarun.co.uk
John Smith	Maintenance Depot	01903 235790	depot@weyandarun.co.uk
Nick Baxter	Hedgelaying		hedgelaying@weyandarun.co.uk
Bill Nicholson	Northern Working Parties	01844 343 369	bill@nwpg.org.uk
Dave Evans	Site Restoration Supervisor		dave_evans@weyandarun.co.uk
Chris Jones	Boat Group PEST	01403 752393	chrisryderjones@outlook.com
David Arnold	Boat Maintenance	01403 790168	dja103@hotmail.com
Peter Winter	Working Party News	07722 184117	peter_winter@weyandarun.co.uk