

Working Party News

No. 326

For WACT Volunteers

February 2021

Editorial

This latest lockdown is definitely getting tedious! Nevertheless, it's good to see that some teams are able to undertake background activities while others are keeping in touch using Zoom.

Some of you will have had your jabs by now and the steady decline in infections gives grounds for optimism that we can look forward to work parties resuming some form of activity in the next month or so. Here's hoping!

Peter Winter

Boat Group PEST

In common with our other working parties, Government lockdown rules precluded any real activity by PEST on the navigable section of the canal during January. However the team has kept an eye on the navigation. We are fortunate in having Peter Hyem, the lengthsman for the entirety of the operational section, as a member of the PEST team. Peter reports that work for the team is mounting up as the volume of debris in the water is considerable and increasing steadily. Fortunately growth from the banks is minimal at this time of year.

More generally, the navigation is in reasonable shape



*Best wishes for 2021
from the PEST team*

although the amount of litter and dog poo left by thoughtless towpath users is disappointing. The team is, at least figuratively, cleaning its equipment and sharpening its tools ready to get stuck in again ahead of the restarting of boat trips in April. We look forward to a busy Spring with at least some of the team having received their promised Covid vaccinations.

Chris Jones

Mrs Bucket Group

Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

The team is keeping in touch with regular Zoom meetings to keep us all up to date about progress on the canal, the prospects for resumption of work and who has/has not had their Covid jabs!

Nick Wood

Hedgelaying

As reported previously, no Hedgelaying Work Parties have been possible since just before Christmas, when the latest Covid restrictions hit hard. It now looks highly unlikely that the Hedgelaying Team can meet together for some time, and probably not until after actual hedgelaying can take place this season. However, when we can meet, there will need to be some clearing up of previously cut material followed by a celebratory bonfire. I may even be persuaded to follow Keith's example by attempting to cook bacon and baked potatoes (hedgelayers will understand the use of the verb 'attempt'). Hopefully, something to look forward to!

Nick Baxter

Canal Maintenance Unit

Work on the old Hanix Excavator is now almost complete with just a few wires left to tidy up. The cab which was looking very tired has had a repaint and my small team have done a good job in the worst weather!

Don and I have sorted out the electrics, replacing the horn and headlight circuits with new wiring as it was impossible to repair the originals which are buried deep in the depths of the machine. A thorough service was also carried out with fresh hydraulic oil and coolant being added, and a liberal dosing of all the grease points. The tracks were also re-tensioned to complete the work.

This isn't bad for a machine that was donated to the Trust many years ago as a burnt-out relic. It was subsequently rebuilt by the then Depot team and has proved to be a great asset. All that remains to be done now is to apply some WACT logos and move her back for action at the next site!

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The Hanix looking good and ready to go

Boat Maintenance

Due to the current lockdown the Maintenance Department has been somewhat idle as regards our passenger boats during the last month. Ian has been busy drawing up the plans for the twelve tables to finish the fit-out of *Zachariah Keppel* after her refit ashore in Chertsey in the spring. He has placed a contract, with John Reynold's approval, with a company which will cut them out in heat proof, sealed Melamine and expects delivery shortly. He is working on the folding legs for them at home.

Having completed *Wiggonholt's* engine room deckhead prior to the lockdown, I was at a loss to occupy my time. Then I remembered a slight feeling of annoyance each time we passed through a lock. Every lifebuoy was green with age, un-named, and with bits of sun-rotted rope hanging from it. Not professional at all! So, with the help of Kev Baker and Peter Hyem, I collected in all the lifebuoys, two by two, scrubbed them off, re-ropeed them and sign wrote them. Examples of before and after are shown in the photographs. There are ten all told, from

Elsewhere I have been busy working on various jobs including upgrading the sensor cables at Devil's Hole Lock and Loxwood Lock's back pump sensors to better control the Summer/Winter water levels. This will save us money long term as the pumps will not cut in so soon in Winter time (if at all). So that just leaves a few switches to be installed ready for whenever we can resume boat trips

So far the Winter floods have been light this year and there has only been one incident of the River Lox flooding into the canal at Barnsill; plans are already being drawn up for a lasting repair.

Kev Baker



One of the lifebuoys in need of a little TLC

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 (late October to March)	Hedgelaying	Contact Nick Baxter
Every Tuesday and Thursday	Boat Maintenance	Contact David Arnold
Every Wednesday	Mid-Week Working Party	Details from Margaret Darvill
Every Monday & Wednesday	Tickner's Depot	Contact Ian Prior/John Smith
Every Wednesday and Thursday	Eric Walker Restoration Group	Details from Dennis Gillen/John Reynolds
Every Thursday and Third Saturday	Northern Working Party	Contact Bill Nicholson
First & Third Friday of the month	PEST Boat Group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem
Third Saturday of the month	Summit level	Contact Dave Evans



David Arnold with refurbished article!

Gennets Bridge Lock to Drungewick Lock. At the time of writing I have completed eight, with two to do next week. Then I'll have to find something else to break the boredom of lockdown.

David Arnold

Eric Walker Group

During the latest lockdown members of EWG have cleaned and polished their tools, while some of them have progressed to the harder levels of Sudoku.

Meanwhile David Beadman has been dazzling the world with the quality of his piles. In fact, David's exploits in this field earned him the John Mitchell Award from the Institution of Civil Engineers and he gave a lecture recently about his work on several major projects including the Canada Water, Canary Wharf and North Greenwich stations on the Jubilee Line, and a station for the Copenhagen Metro.



North Greenwich Station construction

We should be able to make use of David's expertise to take the canal underground if there are overground obstructions.

Dennis Gillen

The Contact List

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