

# Working Party News

## For WACT Volunteers

No. 330

July 2021

### Editorial

As you will read in this month's reports, the WACT Working Parties have all been really busy and there has been an amazing amount of progress. Two bridges have been installed, the repairs at Drungewick Lock are complete and the grass has been kept at bay.

Yet there is so much more to do with major projects under way and new ones in the pipeline. If you want to know more, come along to the Trust's AGM on 31st July at the Billingshurst Centre. See you there.

*Peter Winter*

### Northern Working Party

June has been about two bridges – big and small. At the very start of the month the steel footbridge for the Tickner's Crossing was delivered to the site from its fabricators in Fareham. To describe it as a footbridge is a bit of a misnomer as it is large and quite wide enough to drive a car over should such be permitted. It is also slightly skewed and very long, making its installation a tricky job which was carefully overseen by Project and Site Managers, Tony and Dave. As is often the case with such operations, a little modification was necessary to the abutments to allow the water pipe casing to sit in the correct position. Work has since continued during the month in advance of work to build up the approaches on either side.

Timber for the bridge deck arrived at the end of the month. We were also pleased to welcome back KESCRG; one of our regular visiting groups from the



*The footbridge at Tickner's Crossing*

wider canal restoration world. They came for one Saturday with Covid rules preventing the usual overnight stays in village halls. An excellent day's work saw all the longitudinal timbers laid out and installed across the bridge transoms ready for our regular team to commence work on the deck planks. I've forgotten how many screws are involved but it will be many thousands. Work for the weeks ahead.

### Depot Volunteers Wanted

Can you spare some time to help run the Trust's depot? We are looking for volunteers to help with the following tasks:

- Stock Control: Keeping an awareness of what stocks of materials and equipment are at the depot or out with project teams and working parties
- Servicing and repair of Trust equipment (unless professional services are needed)
- Servicing and repair of other items (e.g. gates, fences, etc.)
- Accepting deliveries of materials and equipment (e.g. returned from working parties or delivered by suppliers)
- Storage of materials and equipment in the correct locations
- Supervising despatch of materials and equipment (e.g. to working parties, scrap merchants etc.)
- Construction of small items (e.g. signs, small footbridges, etc.)
- Other miscellaneous tasks such as re-arrangement, tidying and maintenance of the depot and its facilities

If you are interested, please contact Ian Prior, the depot manager, at [Ian\\_Prior@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:Ian_Prior@weyandarun.co.uk)

I mentioned two bridges. It has been seven months since NWPG (one of our other visiting groups) completed the fabrication of the temporary wooden bridge for the Birtley section. All that time it has been sitting in the Tickner's Crossing yard getting in the way; weather and Covid preventing it moving. A three day NWPG working

opened to the public.

We continue to welcome our four Duke of Edinburgh volunteers to our Saturday work parties. They've certainly brought down the average age of the team! Thanks to them and the visiting groups who have helped us so much during June.

*Bill Nicholson*



party was arranged in early June with volunteers staying (at their own expense I should add!) at The White Hart in Cranleigh. The first day was spent preparing for the move with a decision taken to minimise the amount of dismantling given that almost every bolt and hole was bespoke!

On Friday morning the bridge was lifted onto the large trailer and towed to the site via the Trust's newly acquired section of canal at Rooks Hill. Using the telehandler, Youngmans boards and rollers, the bridge was winched across. Friday afternoon and Saturday were spent fitting the deck planks, handrails and approach sections before the whole was given a coat of preservative. Another couple of days work are needed to complete the bridge approaches as well as providing a gate onto the Downs Link and then the promised circular path can be

## Boat Group PEST

We have continued the work of keeping the navigation clear for our trip boat activity which is now ramping up with the relaxation of the Covid restrictions and the increasingly fine weather.

This month, our focus shifted to the canal around and above Devil's Hole where we concentrated on clearing debris from the water. Unfortunately our second work day during June had to be cancelled due to heavy rain.

We normally use two boats, the smallest passenger boat *Josias Jessop* and the workboat *May Upton*. With JJ now spruced up for a new season of charters PEST has been warned off using her and spoiling her new-found good looks. So the search is on for a replacement.

With John Reynolds help we have looked at three existing W&A boats and hope to have a replacement for JJ shortly. Watch this space!



*Chris Jones*

## Working Party Diary

|                                       |                                     |  |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Every Monday                          | 'Mrs Bucket' Keeping up Appearances | Contact John Empringham                  |
| Monday to Friday<br>(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                        |
| 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                       |

## Eric Walker Group

The group has continued operating at two sites.



leaks from the canal into the adjoining field between the lock and Drungewick Bridge.

Meanwhile the team at Harsfold, having finished the new concrete weir, continued to lay considerable quantities of aggregate to bring the towpath up to new levels towards the “big bend” and to remove three Ash trees with die back on the line of the new towpath. The finished level of the towpath requires more aggregate in specific areas to bring it up to level and then we will finish with a coating of Type 1 material which will be rolled to give a regular overall appearance to the towpath.

The heavy rain at the end of the month showed that the weir is operating satisfactorily, but also revealed that further work will be needed on raising the towpath.

*Dennis Gillen*



At Drungewick Lock, work continued on repointing the Platipus anchor holes in the west wall and the defective mortar joints to both walls. A special lime mortar was used, designed and developed by a Cornish company for use on waterway and harbour wall projects throughout the country. The repair project was somewhat laborious as each day we had to pump the accumulated water out of the lock before commencing work.

The repointing was eventually completed in the third week of June and in the final week the group, along with the able assistance of Kev Baker’s group, finished concreting the top sill Platipus anchor “pockets” and four new lock beam quadrants. Kev’s team also filled in the old pump chamber with concrete which hopefully will resolve the leak around the stop plank channel. Finally Kev’s team returned to remove the scaffolding and formwork and tidied up the site. Job done!

The EWG group will now move on north of the lock to Long Meadow to commence repairs to seal several



## Mrs Bucket Group

### Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

June has been a busy month. We started off at Lordings, strimming the banks so that Kevin could get in with his digger to recover the lock gates from the canal which had been vandalised. We also strimmed both sides of the lock and then moved on to Haybarn to cut the footpath to a 'digger's width' as far as the 90 degree turn. A second 'sub group' visited Gennets Bridge Lock, Compasses bridge and Loxwood.

The following three outings involved strimming, brush cutting and tidying up at Devil's Hole and Southland Locks, Loxwood as well as Tickner's, the Drungewick aqueduct site and clearing the permissive path from Drungewick Lane to the winding hole below the lock,

With the retirement of Doug Nurse we are maintaining the Canal Centre garden until someone else comes forward to take it over (see Wey-South 195, page 28).

*Nick Wood*

### Canal Maintenance Unit

One again the Canal Maintenance Team has had a busy month repairing a lot of damage along the Arun Navigation section between Lee Farm and Lordings. First we had to find and refit the gates that had been taken off and chucked in the canal and the river. All were found and duly returned to their respective posts! Then we moved on to replacing the broken gate posts and fitting two new gates at Haybarn and Lordings before finally putting a new post in halfway along for the gate that separates the land of the two landowners.

At the flood lock we recovered and rehung the lock-gates, gave the whole site a good clean up before moving onto the main Lordings Lock site where we also did a lot of tidying up. We cleared out most of the chamber beside the waterwheel recovering a large amount of bricks which we stacked in the corner ready for the water wheel team to re-use. We also pumped out the lock chamber so that we could start retrieving bricks and stone that have been thrown in over the winter.



Finally as reported elsewhere, we teamed up with EWG at Drungewick Lock to complete the repairs and make the lock ready for use, complete with new beam quadrants.

*Kev Baker*

### Mid-Week Working Party

MWWP has been working very hard this month despite much inclement weather. As everyone knows the grass has grown at an incredible rate which has resulted in a great demand for the wheeled strimmer. Jim N has been putting in extra days to clear the pathway down to Drungewick with the help of the Graham's strimming and raking the bank in preparation for the repair of Long Meadow. Jim has also cleared the verges between Gennets and Loxwood and the public footpath at Rooks Hill as well as the verges at Birtley.

Ian, Paul and Rob have been at Hunt Park, helping clear the area and building piers for the new Information Point together with putting in a new Notice

Board. The MWWP team has also been looking after the volunteering group from St. Catherine's school who were pulling Himalayan balsam in Hunt Park.

A small team has continued to clear the canal at Rye Farm. The base is now clear of trees and debris and the banks are nearly clear now. Walking down the bridleway, it is possible to see the canal and how beautiful it is. This will eventually become part of the Elmbridge project.

The rest of the group has been working at Alfold Road. This is not a part of the canal that is open to the public. However, it is good to work here whilst we have a land-owner who is happy for us to tidy up. All the trees have been cleared from the base of the canal near to the gate and we are still working our way down to the boundary with Mill Farm clearing the bed and as much of the tow-path as we can without taking out any oak trees. It is much improved but there is still much to do.

*Margaret Darvill*

## Boat Maintenance

Ian has been on holiday for most of this period and I have been working with Peter Hyem on *Wiggonholt*, gradually painting her exterior with Hammerite in Buckingham Green.

On *Zachariah Keppel* we have measured up the engine space for the new A30 30-minute fire delay lining as specified by the MCA surveyor. The oil drip from the return fuel pipe to the port tank has been fixed and the oil removed ecologically from the adjoining bilge which now only contains a little clear water.

After a charter the other day when I was skippering ZK, my enthusiastic crew tried to pull the forward door shut with the bottom bolts extended and as a consequence pulled off the closing handle and its surrounding wood-work. This exposed a great deal of rot and delamination that had affected the sheet behind it. I took the whole thing home and, remembering my carpentry lessons at Collyer's School in the late 40s, set to work. I am glad to say the job is now completed. Another career beckons at



eighty-two!

Nature Notes: Having disturbed a little, black shrew on JJ as mentioned in my last note, as well as an aggrieved toad under the floorboards some time back, I must report the sighting of a large snake swimming happily towards the River Wey the other day. I do have a picture of him/her but will save it for the next edition.

*David Arnold*

## The Contact List

| Name               | Group/Project               | Tel          | email                               |
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