

# Working Party News

No. 334

For WACT Volunteers

November 2021

## Editorial

At this time last year, we were just about to go into another lockdown, so it's good to be able to report that work is advancing well on all fronts with hedgelaying also about to restart.

While the Trust's own work parties make steady progress, the impact from visiting groups is most welcome as reported by the Northern Working Party.

Meanwhile work on rebuilding the training walls at Lordings has been completed just in time before the site becomes inaccessible during the winter months.

*Peter Winter*

## Northern Working Party

October has been a busy month at the Northern End of the canal with work progressing at both Tickner's Crossing and Birtley Bridge. In our efforts we have been supported by two visiting groups.

At Tickner's work has continued to achieve completion of the bridge approach forebay and walls before winter sets in. In this aim we have been doing well! At the beginning of the month, the shuttering having been removed, the scaffolding was re-erected to allow the brickies to start work on the brick facing above the waterline. About eight courses were completed by the end of the month. Additional brickwork is also being progressed on the southern footbridge abutment to accommodate the water main that crosses the bridge in a slightly different position than had been envisaged!



*The completed Birtley Bridge 1*

Work also started on the temporary road that will take traffic along Dunsfold Road to the south of the existing road when the main bridge is built. A 22 tonne digger together with the Trust's 13 tonne machine are working in harmony to remove large quantities of clay which are being taken away in tipper trucks. Once complete, the excavation will be filled with an estimated 65 lorry loads of hardcore and compacted prior to the top surface being laid. Connections back onto the highway will

have to await completion of the formal Section 278 agreement with Surrey County Council.

London Waterway Recovery Group joined us for two days at the end of the month. Their team erected the tricky curved shuttering formwork that will enable the last section of wall on the north side of the forebay to be poured. They also cut back a couple of trees, continued with the brickwork and assisted with the temporary road excavation works.



*Installing a gate to the Downs Link*

On the same weekend the Newbury Working Party returned to Birtley to complete the final works before the Trust can open up its promised circular footpath route. A team of 10 under Adam Rayner's leadership installed three new gates, railings on the bridge approach ramps as well as providing a smooth level surface to enable safe use of the bridge. The hired in three tonne digger crossed

## Santas Wanted

Volunteers to act as Father Christmas are needed on the boat trips (3 weekends in December and the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays before Christmas). The role is to come aboard the boat at Brewhurst Lock and give out presents to the children on board while the boat goes up to Brewhurst bridge and returns to the lock when they get out again. Two trips at 12pm and 2pm. Presents will be wrapped and labelled. Costume provided.

Our Santa trips are all sold out and we're adding extra ones, but we can't offer any more until we get a few more kind people to come along to help. This is a major fundraising event for the Boat Group and support would be appreciated. Responses please to: [support@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:support@weyandarun.co.uk)

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.

the bridge a number of times which proved its strength! What the team did learn was that working on the Downs Link former railway line to install the pedestrian gate was not easy – a warning to us for when we start work in earnest in this area over the coming years.

The Trust is grateful for the continuing boost that visiting groups provide to our projects.

We work every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month plus Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays – for weekdays please give Dave Evans notice by email of your intention to attend site. New volunteers are always welcome. If new to our site or volunteering, please contact me in the first instance before attending site.

*Bill Nicholson*

## Boat Group PEST

This month the PEST team has been clearing the canal around and below Baldwin's Knob Lock (BKL).

Our first of two planned work days had to be abandoned due to heavy rain, but the second was more eventful and productive. We set off on *May Upton* to look at reported problems with the bottom gates at BKL and to remove logs, branches and general debris in the cut below the lock. Going down through BKL we could barely start to open the offside bottom gate. We estimated that there was about 600mm depth of twig clusters in the chamber. Eventually both gates were freed completely.

Past BKL, close to Barnshill Bridge, we found many logs in the water and one tree with a just few branches showing above the surface. These hazards to boat operations were removed from the canal and, with some difficulty, cut up and offloaded to the towpath for collection.

Later we discovered a loose boat, complete with a life ring, both taken from the Drungewick Lane Slipway. We returned both to their usual homes beside the slipway.

On returning to BKL we could not fully close the offside bottom gate. A large amount of debris was removed from across the cill and we managed to get it closed.

Work is continuing to prepare the workboat *Wasp* for use by the PEST team.

*Chris Jones*

## Boat Maintenance

On Saturday 23rd October our Chairman, Sally Schupke, carried out the official launching of the WheelyBoat naming her '*Walter Grove*' in the presence of Ian Hairs, a cousin of Peter Grove who has made a handsome donation towards the Trust. She is currently moored opposite the Canal Centre. John Reynolds has taken her big battery home to charge up. She being driven by an electric outboard.

We have touched up the inside paintwork of *Josias Jessop* where it was rusting, filled cracks in the seats and painted over the fillings, cleared and tested both bilge pumps and tightened up the leaking shaft seal so that it only drips once every 10 seconds. Work on her is now completed for the year.

The fireproofing of the engine room of *Zachariah Koppel* has been carried out by Ian and Brian in accordance



*Ian & Brian installing fireproofing on ZK*

## Working Party Diary

Every Monday	'Mrs Bucket' Keeping up Appearances	Contact Tom Close
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
Every Wednesday and Thursday	Eric Walker Restoration Group	Details from Dennis Gillen/John Reynolds
Every Monday, Tuesday, 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



with the surveyor's instructions (see picture). Ian has fitted vertical poles by the starboard side entrance to assist passengers when they use the steps there and which can be a little difficult. ZK is now ready for her afloat survey on November 4th.



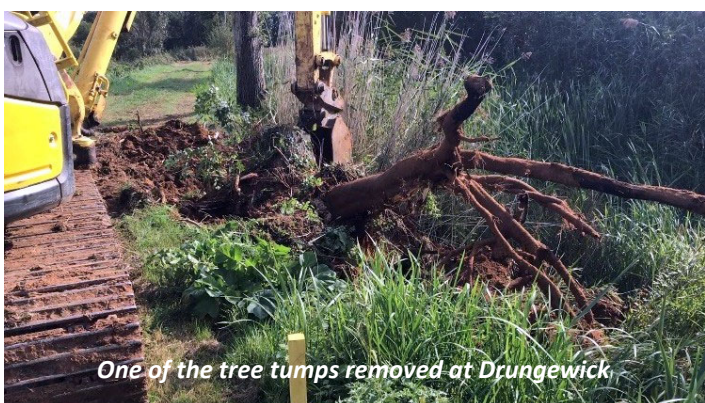
On *Wiggonholt* all battery terminals except one have been disconnected, cleaned, and re-connected during the summer. The exception was the main outlet terminal on the port battery which was so badly corroded as to impede the conduction of electricity and thus slow the boat (picture). Brian estimated this as a two-day job, and there was no period until recently when *WH* was not carrying passengers for two consecutive days.

The maintenance team had to resort to fervent prayer and crossed fingers that she wouldn't break down in some remote place with a full load of people on board. I am happy to say that this terminal has now been cleaned and re-connected and (from personal experience) *WH* is somewhat sprightlier in response to the throttle than heretofore. She will be slipped on November 1st and the hull washed off and painted. The ultra-sonic bottom survey by Vlad of HMS Surveys Ltd. is scheduled for November 4th in the presence of the MCA Surveyor (Rob Shaw).

David Arnold

## Eric Walker Group

Over the last month the Group has continued with its efforts to repair the leaks from the stretch of canal from Drungewick Lock to Drungewick Bridge. As work has progressed it became evident that further areas needed attention. In total there are seven areas where leaks have been identified through the east bank of the canal into the adjoining field, Long Meadow.



One of the tree tumps removed at Drungewick

Some of these have been along the shrunk roots of old stumps left in the bank after tree felling. The process to rectify these leaks, is firstly to remove the top 300/400mm of earth and vegetation from the centre of the canal to the top of the bank. Once this has been done and a small trench cut along the line where the bank meets the towpath, the Bentonite membrane is laid covering the area, the top of which is secured in the trench to prevent slippage of the material. The section of Bentonite is then covered with the excavated earth to a minimum thickness of 300mm and then compacted. Where more than one

piece of Bentonite membrane is required to cover the leakage area, it is overlapped at its edge to the previous piece to ensure a continuous seal. In all, almost 1,000 sq.m. of Bentonite will be laid.

Dennis Gillen

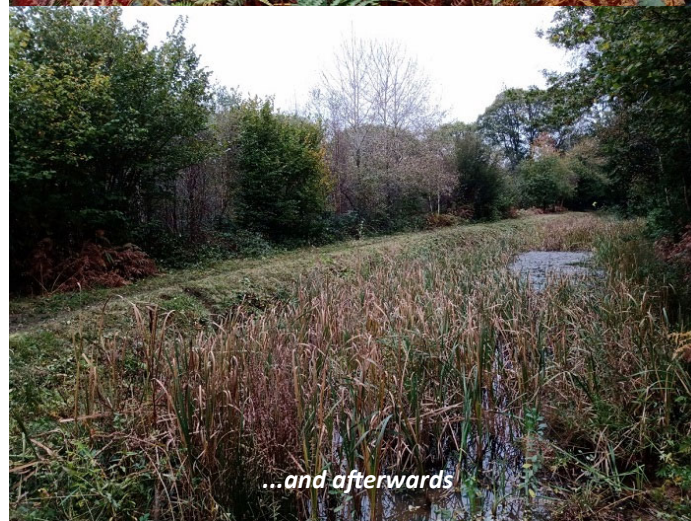
## Mrs Bucket Group

### Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

In October Gennets, Devil's Hole, Brewhurst and Baldwin's Knob locks were all visited (the latter two at the request of the 'regular' volunteer work group). The Tickner's triangle and roadside as far as the bridge worksite were cut and a start was made in Sidney Wood.



Sidney Wood looking north before clearance



...and afterwards

Owing to the Covid restrictions last year, the only work undertaken in Sidney Wood was clearance of the two culverts and cutting down the substantial saplings that had grown up in the winding hole above lock 16. Hence there is an awful lot to do this year. The Group made two visits in October starting at the Firtree Copse end and have got as far as the first bend. It is quite likely that three more visits will be required to complete the job.

In addition, two members of the Group have continued with the maintenance of the Canal Centre garden.

Nick Wood

## Canal Maintenance Unit

Well despite the weather throwing an absolute deluge of water into the Arun Valley causing flooding that exceeds anything I've seen in recent years, we finally completed the repairs to the training walls at the tail of Lord-





*One of the restored training walls at Lordings*

ings Lock and have made a good start on clearing the site ready for the winter. The lock itself remains to be excavated but that can wait until the spring.

Elsewhere the weather caused several trees to fall. At Drungewick, three were cleared from Roger Dimmock Lane and a 40ft branch was removed from an overhead hanging position and brought down safely by Michael (Drungewick Hill Farm Manager), myself and a volunteer.

At Lee Place the recent work by EWG/CMU was put to the test by the volume of water. Thankfully, despite the high levels, the repairs have held up really well and there is just a small amount of extra fill to be added.

As winter returns the team will turn its attention to winter maintenance around Loxwood and the navigable sections.

*Kev Baker*

## Mid-Week Working Party

MWWP have had good numbers out this month despite many people being on holiday and many days not looking good or pouring with rain at 9am but by 10am we have had lovely weather.

Volunteers have worked the whole length of the canal. A small group cleared the footpath at Gosden meadow and near the notice board at Gosden Aqueduct. Work has been done at Rooks Hill and Fanesbridge clearing the new growth and timber that has fallen down over the year.

We had a group just inside Dunsfold Airfield clearing the towpath and taking trees out of the canal. For a couple of weeks a group worked at Northlands clearing the canal of trees. Although the work is not completed, the area has been so flooded that no more work can occur until next year.

Two more groups have been clearing the towpath and cutting the hedge at Haybarn and Lee Farm Bridge. This is a long job due to excessive growth this year. Another Group has been working from Cooks Bridge to Pallingham Quays, clearing the new growth and any logs that have come down the canal because of the strength of the water.

*Margaret Darvill*

### Restoration Q&A Session

All Working Party volunteers are invited to join in a Zoom "Question and Answer" session on Thursday 2 December at 6.30 pm. If you would like to attend, please let Julian Cheek ([julian\\_cheek@weyandarun.co.uk](mailto:julian_cheek@weyandarun.co.uk)) know and he will send you the link for joining the meeting. We aim to keep the session to about 45 minutes.

## The Contact List

Name	Group/Project	Tel	email
Maurice Cranefield	Visiting Working Parties	01483 505566	<a href="mailto:Maurice_Cranefield@weyandarun.co.uk">Maurice_Cranefield@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
John Talbot	Health & Safety Director	01483 429918	<a href="mailto:jcst@weyandarun.co.uk">jcst@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
Dennis Gillen	Eric Walker Group	07866 583753	<a href="mailto:dennis_gillen@weyandarun.co.uk">dennis_gillen@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
Margaret Darvill	Mid Week Working Party	01483 894606	<a href="mailto:margaret_darvill@weyandarun.co.uk">margaret_darvill@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
Tom Close	Monday Group	07811 534292	<a href="mailto:thomasdclose@googlemail.com">thomasdclose@googlemail.com</a>
Kev Baker	Canal Maintenance Unit	07920 755957	<a href="mailto:kevin_baker@weyandarun.co.uk">kevin_baker@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
Ian Prior	Tickner's Depot Manager	07864 708932	<a href="mailto:ian_prior@weyandarun.co.uk">ian_prior@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
Nick Baxter	Hedgelaying		<a href="mailto:hedgelaying@weyandarun.co.uk">hedgelaying@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
Bill Nicholson	Northern Working Parties	0118 9714785	<a href="mailto:bill57nicholson@gmail.com">bill57nicholson@gmail.com</a>
Dave Evans	Site Restoration Supervisor		<a href="mailto:dave_evans@weyandarun.co.uk">dave_evans@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
Chris Jones	Boat group PEST	01483 421136	<a href="mailto:chrisryderjones@outlook.com">chrisryderjones@outlook.com</a>
David Arnold	Boat Maintenance	01403 790168	<a href="mailto:dja103@hotmail.com">dja103@hotmail.com</a>
Julian Cheek	Maintenance Administration	01483 505566	<a href="mailto:julian_cheek@weyandarun.co.uk">julian_cheek@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
Peter Winter	Working Party News Editor	07722 184117	<a href="mailto:peter_winter@weyandarun.co.uk">peter_winter@weyandarun.co.uk</a>