

Working Party News

No. 336

For WACT Volunteers

January 2022

Editorial

A Happy New Year to everyone for 2022. Let's hope things will be allowed to run more smoothly than the past two years.

The weather held out well during early December and so most groups were able to get out and about, together with the odd Christmas celebration.

The rain over the holiday period would have caused a few problems and hopefully conditions will have dried out by the time we get back to work again.

In spite of restrictions, we made great progress last year so let's look forward to a successful 2022.

Peter Winter

Midweek Working Party

Once again, it has been a very busy month. Numbers have been very high including the week before and after Christmas.

Hunt Park is consuming a great deal of time for a small group. At the Shalford Information Centre, a new fence has been erected from the corner of the boardwalk to the river to prevent the public and dogs wandering on the area until such time as the conservation plan agreed with our ecologists has been completed.



MWWP take lunch at Run Common

Work has continued in clearing Gun's Mouth Island. This is a large job but we are only able to do it when the Cranleigh Waters are not in flood and therefore a small group has only been over there for one week this month.

The other area that has had our attention is Roger Dimmick Lane, Drungewick. A group has spent several weeks down there and it is very much clearer. It is now possible to park many more cars making it easier for our volunteers and the canoeists.

We have spent some time down at Haybarn and the Lee Farm area clearing ash trees, cutting hedges and generally making the area look much tidier. There is still more to do but we are constrained by the landowner's commitment to other users.

The week before Christmas we met as a whole group at Run Common Road and cleared the landowner's area north of Run Common Road. The group love this annual Christmas venue and we were very kindly given a whole cake by the landowner at lunch time.

Margaret Darvill

Boat Group PEST

This month the PEST team turned to the canal north of Loxwood, in particular the area around Devil's Hole Lock. Although the winding hole had received attention in past months, the approaches to the lock needed and received a fair amount of work.

The team also returned to the winding hole for further work to maintain its appearance and enable ease of use by boat crews. Our crews do not appreciate being thrust into a jungle while their skipper is winding the boat!

The first of our two planned work days had to be abandoned due to insufficient volunteers. When on the water we are required to operate with a team of a minimum of three people one of whom must be a qualified W&A skipper.

We ended the working year with a late lunch at The Onslow Arms after work on Friday 17th. Most of the team were able to attend and enjoy a well-earned celebration.

In January we will continue to work on the navigation around and beyond Devil's Hole Lock with particular focus on the 'chicane' in the canal above the lock.

Chris Jones

Northern Working Party

There has been limited activity at Tickner's Crossing during December where the temporary road is now about 80% complete. However, without a Section 278 agreement in place from Surrey County Council we are unable to connect it to the highway, so it will remain a 'road to and from nowhere' for the time being.

For our last three days of work before Christmas, attention turned to Loxwood and the need to fell many Ash Dieback trees (small and large) along the towpath side of the canal between Brewhurst and Barnsill Bridges. With a smaller team, including friends from visiting groups NWPG and KESCRG, the first two days were spent on the section from Brewhurst down to Birch Copse. The towpath is narrow here and some skilled reversing of vehicles and trailers was required to get the kit to site and the timber away. However, by the end of Friday our work was completed. The more substantial timber was split on site and loaded into ton bags and then taken back to Tickner's Crossing. The brash was dealt with by the WACT chipper.

For the last working day of the year, in lovely winter sunshine, we had a fantastic turnout of 20 who set to the task of taking down the marked larger ash trees below Baldwin's Knob Lock. For this, Peter Foulger kindly permitted us to fell the trees across the towpath and into his field and to burn the brash on site. Although almost the shortest day of the year, we managed to fell at least five very large ash trees, cut and split the logs and to burn everything else. Mandy kindly provided a tea bar and Dave the mince pies. Everyone enjoyed the day so much that we are planning more of the same on 22nd January.

By the end of the three days we had filled 30 large dumpy bags with split logs. They are now filling the yard at Tickner's Crossing and are available for local log burners in return for a donation to the Trust. They will require seasoning, but being ash should burn well next winter and beyond. Please contact Roger Beazer or Dave Evans if you are interested.

Finally, our working days are slightly altered in January with the main change being that the third Saturday working party will be on the 4th, namely the 22nd. For other volunteering days, it's best to check days and times with Dave Evans via e-mail or WhatsApp.

Happy New Year!

Bill Nicholson

Mrs Bucket Group Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

Two outings in December to round the year off. We brushcut and raked up all the resulting cut vegetation from the towpath all the way from Baldwin's Knob lock to Drungewick Aqueduct. This included clearing and cutting the grass at the slipways at Barnsill Bridge and Drungewick. The canal overflow at Drungewick also received our attention.

Two members of the Group continued to maintain the garden at the Loxwood Centre. Christmas lunch at the Onslow Arms followed on the 13th after a morning of hard work to celebrate another year of 'keeping up appearances'. We resume work on the 10th of January.

Meanwhile, last month I reported on how the outflow from culvert 3 was a bit of a mess as you can see from the photograph.



Happy New Year to everyone.

Nick Wood

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	Midweek Working Party	Details from Margaret Darvill
Every Monday & Wednesday	Tickner's Depot	Contact Ian Prior
Every Wednesday and Thursday	Eric Walker 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

Eric Walker Group

December saw the group continuing the reinstatement of the stretch of canal from Gennets Bridge Lock towards Southland. All the ash trees with dieback were efficiently felled by Dave Evans and Kev Baker with the help of Jeff Scotcher on the Yanmar digger. This left a considerable amount of trunks and branches to be logged and cleared.

The dry weather and the low amount of water in the

canal bed allowed Jeff to operate the Yanmar and clear the winding hole and canal bed of shrubs, small trees and tree stumps.

Notably, the old causeway below Gennets Bridge Lock



Jeff Scotcher removes the causeway below the lock



John Reynolds carefully rolls the Fittleworth Stone

has been removed and a new bund has been created just north of the next landowner's boundary.

Work commenced on building up the towpath levels with Fittleworth stone laid on a geotextile membrane. When complete (in January) the whole stretch of towpath will then be "topped" with smaller aggregate Fittleworth stone to provide a uniform finish.

Dennis Gillen

Hedgelaying

Progress continues to be made with the hedge opposite the Canal Centre. Although torrential rain one Tuesday meant a cancelled work party. We have managed to lay a further section of the hedge and prepared more ready for laying.

We finished the year with a huge bonfire, which required a seemingly endless succession of loads of previously cut material hauled from the far end of the field on a tarpaulin - not easy, as the tarp invariably snagged on blackthorn suckers and it is now a very long way back along the hedgeline, as we all found out.

Our spirits were lifted seeing the Santa Cruises passing us. It's always good to see boats on the canal, and also to see paying customers. Well done to all involved!

As recompense for working as a chain gang, we finished by toasting the hedge, ourselves and Christmas at the Onslow Arms (but outside, of course, to be Covid-secure).

As always, my thanks to the team for their enthusiasm, and welcome to David, our latest recruit.

Nick Baxter



An uninterrupted view into Gennets Bridge Lock

Boat Maintenance

Maintenance has rather taken a back seat to operations since both big boats, with much effort from all concerned, passed their annual survey and SMS Certificates at the end of November.

Walter Grove, the Wheelyboat, has been trucked from the canal to her winter quarters.

Zachariah Keppel has done her rather static duty as Father Christmas's grotto alongside the wharf, and *Wiggonholt* has been running Santa, Boxing Day and New Year's Day trips since December 4th.

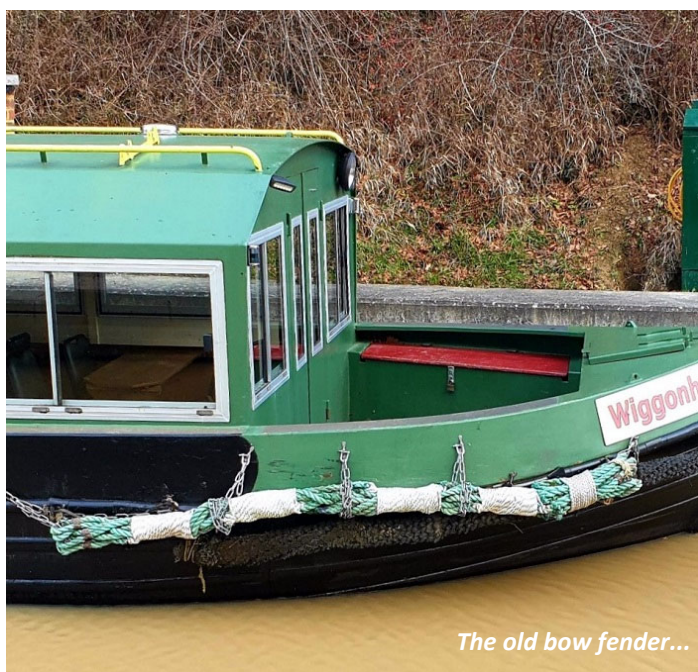
Josias Jessop had one small charter on December 28th.

This all adds up to an estimated income of more than £10,000 in the month after expenses, which reflects great credit on all the skippers and crew members who worked so hard over the holiday period, together with Sally, Jul-

ian, and Lyn, and not forgetting Stephen Keating and John Thompson in the role of Father Christmas.

Meanwhile, the bow fenders on *Wiggonholt* have been renewed. I made the old fenders couple of years back, designed to take the shocks of the odd skipper ramming the concrete. It worked well but did look a little unsightly. At great expense, a pair of new and proper fenders have been made and delivered by AJ Fenders Ltd., which look so much better. Woe betide any skipper who hits the brickwork and damages these. WH must now be handled gently and with great care!

David Arnold



The old bow fender...



... and the new one

The Contact List

Name	Group/Project	Tel	email
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Tom Close	Monday Group	07811 534292	thomasdclose@googlemail.com
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NAVVIES LUNCHEON

9th February 2022

The Luncheon will be held at the **Cranleigh Golf & Leisure Club** at 12 midday on the 9th February 2022.

All Past and Present Members of the MWWP and other Working Group Members and their Partners are cordially invited to attend.

As numbers are limited, bookings will only be accepted with a **Menu Choice** and **Cheque** together, and must be received by **Wednesday 12th January 2022** at the latest.

Please make cheques payable to Mrs D.J.Miles and send with menu choice to:

Mrs D. Miles 8 Newlands, Buckingham Close, Guildford **GU1 1TR**

Home phone: 01483 575804 (answer phone for messages)

Cost for any 2 Courses **£25.45** For 3 Courses **£30.45**

Attendee Name:..... (one form for each attendee)

email address for acknowledgement of booking.....

Menu

Starter

Wild Mushroom Soup, Crusty Bread
Chicken Liver Pate, Rocket & Crostini
Whipped Feta & Sun Blushed Tomato Tart

Main

Salmon & Smoked Salmon Fishcake on Wilted Spinach with Lemon & Dill sauce,
served with Minted Peas
Chicken on Crushed New Potatoes with Moroccan Tagine Sauce & Chickpeas
Braised Beef Bourignon with Creamy Mash & Braised Red Cabbage
All served with vegetables in season

Desserts

Warm Chocolate Brownie, Chocolate Sauce & Vanilla Ice Cream
Mixed Berry Crumble, with Whipped Double Cream
New York Cheesecake with Mixed Berries

Coffee & Mints

The last date for requesting other vegetarian menu option choices is now closed.