

Working Party News

No. 341

For WACT Volunteers

July 2022

Editorial

Working conditions were pretty good during June, if a trifle hot at times.

The good news is that repairs to Baldwin's Knob Lock were completed at the end of the month and the lock can now be used again.

Meanwhile, progress on Birtley Bridge 2 has run into the sand. In fact very wet sand, which has delayed progress.

Peter Winter

Northern Working Party

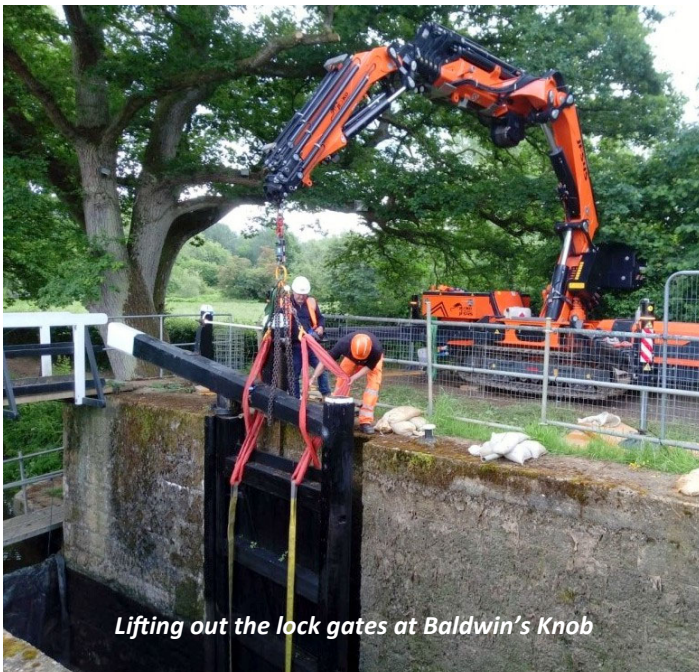
The Northern Working Party has been fully employed at Baldwin's Knob Lock this month. Having established the extent of the leakage problem, repair and restoration work began in earnest at the beginning of June with the emptying of the lock, the removal of the lock gates and the installation of heavy duty steel props to brace the side walls.

Each of the two tonne gates was lifted out by an all terrain, 18 tonne spider crane that made its way under its own steam along the towpath to the site, before extending its legs and jib to then lift the gates with ease.

The side walls were securely braced before a pneumatic drill (and picks and shovels!) were used to dig out the worn stonework and old wooden mitre from the lock



Reinforced concrete was then poured into the trench and new, very large (and heavy), oak timbers were cut and installed for the mitre on the lock floor. The spider crane returned to site to lift lock gates back into position, remove the steel props and bagged debris from the lock chamber. Further reinforced concrete was poured and shaped behind the timber mitre to complete the construction work. The year was then inscribed in the concrete for posterity.



floor. A trench approximately 5 metres long by 2 metres wide was excavated. A job that was considerably hampered by the necessary positioning of the steel bracing props directly above the work area!



Not bad for three weeks work. All that now remains is landscaping and tidying of the site.

Dave Miller

Boat Group PEST

A couple of productive days this month; the weather helped, of course. Also helping were two new volunteers who had answered our plea for more hands. Both David Luckett and David Miller are experienced volunteers who

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are also members of other WACT working parties. Age and infirmity are taking their toll, as ever, and it is good to have 'new blood' in the PEST team.

Our first outing saw the team take *May Upton* to the pound above Devil's Hole Lock and remove three trees that were obstructing the navigation. Removing and cutting them into manageable sections for transport before taking them to the disposal site became a full day's work.

On our second working day six members of the team headed out on *May Upton* for Baldwin's Knob hoping to pick up *Wasp* below the lock to start clearing there. As the lock had not yet been re-opened and *Wasp* was still grounded due to low water level, we worked north of Baldwin's clearing dead brambles and retrieving some large sections of tree trunk from the canal.

Boat Maintenance

Both Ian and I are on holiday at the moment, in different locations in Turkey. The boats are working hard - almost too hard for the availability of crews apparently.

There is a problem with the water tank on *Wiggonholt* which seems to be leaking into the bilge in the region of her heads. A well-intentioned skipper managed to open the port hatch of *WH* in the hot weather and then couldn't get one of the pins back in when he tried to secure it. It hasn't been fully opened in living memory so I'm not surprised.

Otherwise, we need to slip, paint, and partially replat the weed hatch area of *Josias Jessop*. This will be possible when BKL is fixed and in operation again so she can get down to the slip.

David Arnold

Midweek Working Party

This month numbers have been much lighter than of late as many people have taken well earned holidays. The main work has been at Alfold Road where we cleared along the line of the canal near Fast Bridge and took large branches and trunks out of the canal to the South.



The PEST Team on a fully laden May Upton

Whilst it is important not to remove vegetation that might disturb nesting birds, it is also important to clear growth such as brambles that risks injury to passengers and crew, particularly now that we are travelling with windows open and passengers are on the bow or entrance steps. Similarly we need to keep sight-lines clear for the skippers on the approaches to bridges and landing stages. With everything growing fast, this is quite a challenge.

Chris Jones



MWWP working near Fast Bridge

Work has continued at Hunt Park keeping it looking like a semi natural Nature Reserve. This is becoming a full time job. The Gosden Aqueduct has been tidied up and now looks cared for.

One of our group has scraped and put two coats of un-

Working Party Diary

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

dercoat and a top coat on the electrical cabinets at Brewhurst and Birch Copse. Barnsill landing stage area has been brush cut again this summer. It seems to have been growing like crazy this year. One week a select few cleared the Poddle route where it had become overgrown
Margaret Darvill

Eric Walker Group

With the installation of the AquaDam as reported last time, work commenced on constructing the brideway diversion and a start was made on preparations for diverting the gas main. However, while excavating to form the brideway diversion, we unearthed underground water running from the embankment of the old railway line, which created “running sand” in the bottom of the canal.



Liquid sand in the canal bed

This is a serious problem and resulted in a decision to delay the gas main diversion until July. The team managed to install a drain under the towpath to prevent an



The trench boxes assembled ready for moving to site

accumulation of water, but the bed of the canal remained very soft.

In order to proceed, we will have to employ specialist equipment, Pro-Mech trench boxes, so that it is possible to dig the trench for the gas main. This will impact significantly on our budget.



The brideway diversion shared up with bulk bags

The trench boxes were delivered at the end of the month and prefabricated prior to being moved to the work site, where most of the excavation for the brideway diversion was completed.

Dennis Gillen

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