

Working Party News

No. 343

For WACT Volunteers

September 2022

Editorial

Well, it's not been as hot as last month, and while we've had the odd downpour, it has not been enough for the trip boats to resume.

This month sees a welcome return to reports from the Canal Maintenance Unit which is now led by Ian Lower.

The major activity continues at Birtley where problems continue to arise and be dealt with.

Peter Winter

Eric Walker Group

This month the group has continued to work on Birtley Bridge 2. At the start of the month SGN finally completed work on the gas main and the bridleway diversion was finished. This enabled a start to work on preparing the site for the contractor to install the piles below the new bridge foundations.

With the bridleway diversion in place we were able to remove the Aquadam, which had successfully



The original abutment on the west side

of the brickwork was supported by timbers 4" thick and 12" wide for the full width of the wall and run-



The base of the swing bridge mechanism



Starting on the excavations with the concrete platform yet to be removed

held the canal water back from the worksite.

First we had to remove a 5m long and 1m thick concrete platform that had been laid over the old gas main. With this out of the way, we were able to start on reducing the levels for the piling platform.

We soon uncovered both the old bridge brick abutments down to a level just below the canal bed level and found that the base

Can you help with the Mobile Display Vehicle?

Roger Beazer is looking for assistance in running the Mobile Display Vehicle, which we take to events locally and nationally to publicize the Trust's activities and recruit new members. If you are interested please get in touch with Roger at: roger_beazer@weyandarun.co.uk

ning the full length of the abutments (obviously imperial sizes used by the original navvies). These in turn were supported by timbers 12" wide and 6" thick placed at right angles to the wall and support timbers at 4ft centres and protruded 2ft or so each side of the wall base. These, unfortunately had to be removed to make way for the piles.

Along with the brick bridge abutments, we also unearthed near the

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.

west abutment a brick base about 4ft square with metal threaded rods protruding vertically at each corner of the base. This proved, as we suspected, that the original crossing was a swing bridge and this was the base for the rotating mechanism. Also just adjacent to this we found stone “kerbs” at the top of the brick abutment, proving that the abutment finished at bridge deck level and not continuing vertically as it would in an arched structure. All of these were photographed and recorded by an archaeological survey team prior to us having to remove them for the new bridge foundations.

Also while the archaeologists were on site we found a small heavily rusted section of metal chain with a fixing bracket. This was found loosely attached to the brickwork at the end of one of the curved wing walls. The lead archaeologist said that it was probably the remains of a ‘Sunday Chain’. These were used to prevent use of the canal on Sundays by stretching a length of chain across the canal.

Next month the group will start on the construction of the foundations following the piling installation.

Dennis Gillen

Mrs Bucket Group Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

August was another busy period for the Group. In the early part of the month the banks between the Drungewick slipway and the lock were strimmed, mowed, lopped and raked. Two visits were made to the Loxwood overflow car park and Devil’s Hole Lock, the former to brushcut the area and to cut back brambles and at the latter to prepare for a forthcoming working party who will be constructing a new landing stage. Finally, the volunteers attended Rowner lock for a much needed tidy up, a location which Mrs Bucket hasn’t visited for a very long time.

Nick Wood

Midweek Working Party

MWWP has completed clearing Mill Farm. They have found and cleared two culverts and it is now very obvious where Utworth Bridge was. The canal bridge over the river has been cleared of ivy and shows a very large crack at Mill Farm.

Some of the group tidied up the towpath at Birtley and the footpath is now open again. Another group have been clearing the base and sides of the canal at Drungewick .

Margaret Darvill

Canal Maintenance Unit

The Canal Maintenance Unit has been operating again every Thursday since June, under the direction of Dave Evans. After assisting with the repairs at Baldwin’s Knob Lock, we have been undertaking various repainting tasks at Brewhurst and Loxwood Locks, and replacing the felt roof shingles of the stop plank shelters at Loxwood and Devil’s Hole.

On two particularly hot days in August ground-work was carried out at Brewhurst in preparation for the replacement of the back pump.



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
Every Thursday	Canal Maintenance Unit	Contact Ian Lower
First & Third Friday of the month	PEST Boat Group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem
Third Saturday of the month	Summit Level	Contact Dave Evans

At the end of the month we replaced *May Upton's* deck flooring, which was in urgent need of repair, with the final work to be completed early in September. This will be beneficial to PEST and ourselves, as we will be regularly using the workboats as transport to the navigable parts of the canal; once water levels improve that is.

Ian Lower

Boat Maintenance

One thing I realised when we had to stop passenger operations due to lack of water, was that it was a wonderful opportunity to paint and bring our three passenger boats into perfect order. What I failed to anticipate was that everyone would take the opportunity to go on holiday, paint the garden shed or immerse themselves in other local charitable activities, fetes and vegetable shows.

With some difficulty we managed to assemble a painting team and finish painting the saloon of *Zachariah Keppel* bar some minor work on the port side, for'd and aft areas, and the yellow rails along the top. Mention should be made of the great help rendered by Sally Schupke, Stephen Keating, Su Hannan, Patrick Jiskoot, Paul French and of course the old maintenance team of Ian, Brian and me. This means that the upper works of all three boats are now painted with the Hammerite Burlington Green garage door paint that has been much admired (I hope) for the last two years on *Wiggonholt*.

We intend to get together before the end of the month to finish off, and then it can pour with rain as far as I am concerned, as we now have several inside jobs to deal with under cover.

David Arnold



Ian hard at work painting Zachariah Keppel

Boat Group PEST

No report from the PEST Group this month. There's no water!

Chris Jones

The Contact List

Name	Group/Project	Tel	email
Maurice Cranefield	Visiting Working Parties	01483 505566	maurice_cranefield@weyandarun.co.uk
Dennis Gillen	Eric Walker Group	07866 583753	dennis_gillen@weyandarun.co.uk
Margaret Darvill	Midweek Working Party	01483 894606	margaret_darvill@weyandarun.co.uk
Tom Close	Monday Group	07811 534292	thomasdclose@googlemail.com
Ian Prior	Tickner's Depot Manager	07864 708932	ian_prior@weyandarun.co.uk
Nick Baxter	Hedgelaying		hedgelaying@weyandarun.co.uk
Bill Nicholson	Northern Working Parties	0118 9714785	bill_nicholson@weyandarun.co.uk
Dave Evans	Operations Manager		dave_evans@weyandarun.co.uk
Chris Jones	Boat Group PEST	01483 421136	chrisryderjones@outlook.com
David Arnold	Boat Maintenance	01403 790168	dja103@hotmail.com
Ian Lower	Canal Maintenance Unit	07827 977916	ian_lower@hotmail.com
Julian Cheek	Maintenance Administration	01483 505566	julian_cheek@weyandarun.co.uk
Peter Winter	Working Party News Editor	07722 184117	peter_winter@weyandarun.co.uk