

For WACT Volunteers

October 2025

No. 380

Working Party News

Editorial

There's starting to be a nip in the morning air, so I guess it's Autumn. Nevertheless, the generally warm weather has meant that the teams dealing with vegetation have their hands full. Remember that the Trust's AGM is on 18th October at 2.30pm at Shalford Village Hall, when you can get an update on activities.

Next month, you'll have the pleasure of Dave Miller as guest editor, while Hilary and I travel around Indonesia for a few weeks.

Peter Winter

Monday Group

To compensate for August (three outings) the calendar allowed five meetings in September! As a result, we were able to visit Lordings where we cut both sides of the lock, part of the canal and towpath as far as the sluice and both sides of the flood lock.

We then turned our attention to Loxwood and Brewhurst Locks and the towpath from Loxwood, past Brewhurst to Birch Copse. We have a commitment to clear the towpath to Baldwin's Knob Lock, but we haven't quite got there yet.

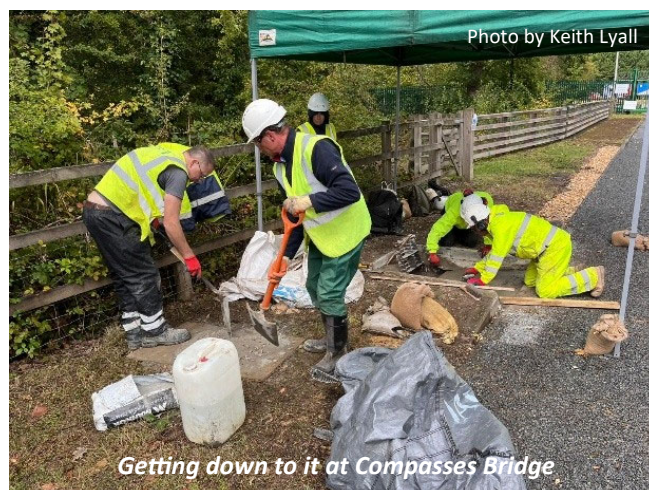


Finally, we made our first visit this year to Malham and Newbridge. The former really did need our attention. At the Chairman's request, we also walked the Right of Access path from near Newbridge to Lordings.

Nick Wood

Northern Working Party

When installing a drainage channel along the section of the road approaching Compasses Bridge last month, it became apparent that the concrete drain gully, already in place, was not ideally shaped. On a very wet day, with the benefit of a sheltering awning and some strategically placed sandbags, we broke away the concrete sides and re-profiled the surround. We had to wait for some drier days, later in the month, to return to the site and put a white thermoplastic line edging along both sides of the



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road, which should now be of a sufficient standard for it to be adopted by the local authority.

A visiting group had laid replacement stone dressing on the last 120 metre section of Bonfire Hanger towpath approaching Gennets Bridge Lock and we attended the site to clear away the old surface that had been removed together with some felled timber. The new top dressing has made the towpath much tidier and considerably less muddy!

Work continued at Tickner's Heath Crossing where the ground is being prepared for the construction of a temporary road onto which traffic can be diverted when construction starts of a new road bridge over what will be a diverted section of canal.

We assisted the Thursday Group with installing a new flow meter on the river pump at Birch Copse by digging trenches for new pipework and drainage. We cleaned and freed up the seized inlet grill in the river and cleared debris and silt from the inlet pipe.

Further work was done with profiling the eroded bank on the towpath just downstream from Baldwin's Knob Lock, where we tidied up the coir rolls, strengthened the post and rail supports and began to backfill the void.

We have also done some work at Rooks Hill, where we removed the shuttering from a couple of recently poured concrete bridge wing walls and stacked piles of bricks at various positions around the site in readiness for the facing brickwork to be laid.

The annual Surrey Hills Wood Fair was held this month in Cranleigh. The Thursday Group had assisted in the gathering of equipment and loading of trailers for the ever popular 'Drive a Digger' stand where we were kept busy over the two days with a continual queue of youngsters eager to have a go at moving logs and knocking over cones with a mini excavator.



Dismantling formwork at Rooks Hill Bridge

Dave Miller

Boat Group PEST

The 5th September was our first PEST day of the month and what a lovely day it was. We have finally finished the exterior painting of all the trip boats and the work boat *May Upton* with the help of MWWP. Our final task was the painting and fitting of the hatch on Zachariah Keppel. We also repaired and painted the front door panel of ZK. Our final job of the day was to strim the canal bank between the Canal Centre and Brewhurst lock on the towpath side.

Sadly with all boats painted, work completed in the Canal Centre pound and with no ability to move out of that pound, our second trip of the month was cancelled.

John Lee

Working Party Diary

Every Monday	Monday Group	Contact Tom Close
Every Tuesday (late October to March)	Hedgelaying	Contact Nick Baxter
Every Tuesday and Thursday	Boat Maintenance	Contact John Reynolds
Every Wednesday	Midweek Working Party	Details from Margaret Darvill
Every Thursday	Tickner's Depot	Contact Mark Feeney
Every Wednesday and Thursday	Eric Walker Group	Contact Dennis Gillen
Every Monday and Tuesday	Northern Working Party (Monday) Northern Working Party (Tuesday)	Contact David Stevenson Contact Stephen David
Every Thursday	Thursday Group	Contact Brian King
Every Thursday	Dredger Group	Contact Charlie Coxwell
First & Third Friday of the month	PEST Boat Group	Contact Peter Hyem
Second Saturday of the month	Saturday Group	Contact Margaret Darvill

Thursday Group

With other activities being somewhat curtailed by low water levels, a number of groups have been involved in the cleaning up and repainting of *Zachariah Keppel* and we were asked to build and install a new cabin hatch to replace the one that was in a poor state of repair. This with the help of the PEST team has now been fitted



Fitting new meter and vacuum valve at Birch Copse

and ZK is looking good after her make-over.

Following the trench digging last month, work has progressed at Drungewick and all the wiring for the river pump has now been installed and connected. Very pleasing to see the pump back in action.

More trench digging was required at Birch Copse to fit a replacement flow meter on that river pump and provide a drain from the meter chamber. We have installed the new meter and pipework and the system has successfully been tested, though there still remains some finishing off to be done at the site.

Brian King



New hatch for Zachariah Keppel

Tickner's Depot

'Sally' lives! In my last missive, the engine was in but still had many components to connect up. Ian and I each went on holiday for a fortnight, and upon my return I popped into the depot to connect up the hoses. Imagine my surprise, when I got there to find the JCB fairies had paid us a visit and put all of the remaining parts on, filled it with oil & water and had it running, albeit briefly. Our huge thanks to Andy Evans for spending a weekend putting on the rest of the parts and running his experienced eyes over our work, checking the all-important oil pressure and generally being a good bloke. We did have a slight dribble from the front crank oil seal, which took a while to fix, but is now bone dry. We've since run several tests on the new engine and are now happy to put the 2.5 ton balance weight back on and give the hydraulics a gentle check over. Soon we'll have it LOLA tested and can



Sally's engine pretty much complete

get it out working for a living again.

Last month I was able to whet your collective appetites with the refurbished Tracmaster Power Scythe. Well, since then, we have, thanks to a DEFRA grant, purchased its bigger brother, the Tracmaster BCS780HY. Not only is it bigger and more powerful, it's far more adaptable too. Thanks to quick-hitch fittings, we can easily switch between it being a 3" chipper to a flail mower, capable of reducing the nastiest of undergrowth to mulch in 0.9m wide strips, or a stump grinder for removing those evil little trip hazards hiding in the grass along the towpath. I think it will mainly be used in flail mower mode, and due to its size and weight, it will need to be taken to site on a trailer. If you're interested in using it, you'll need training. So, ask your Team Leader to request training and we'll arrange a session at the depot. Thanks to Stewart at Tuckwells for supplying our new Tracmaster plus attachments, and providing our training.

Mark Feeney



BCS780HY, self-propelled, electric start, all-singing, all-dancing

Midweek Working Party

We've had a very wet month and work had to stop early on two weeks. We have now completed the tree removal at Rye Farm so EWG can begin work on the new towpath when they are ready. A small group ti-

died up Tickner's Crossing car park and the rest of that area so that NWG can more easily get on with work for the foundations of the temporary road.

The next week was spent starting on the Autumn tidy up at Hunt Park, although more needs to be done. Two of us cleared the culvert under the railway at Birtley from the Courtyard and then part of the group cleared the stream of a fallen tree from below the Rooks Hill culvert to the Cranleigh Waters. It was extremely difficult as it was full of quicksand. Work will continue in October.

The big job of the month is clearing the canal bank, hedge and towpath between Haybarn and Harsfold Bridge. I am surprised more complaints were not had as it was virtually impossible to walk down there. There is much more to do.



Margaret Darvill

Eric Walker Group



The EWG team has now completed the concrete pours to all the Rooks Hill Bridge wing wall foundations, enabling a start to be made on blockwork and brickwork. Because of the clay substrata throughout site, the recent rain has not drained away making the site very muddy. To combat this and to make the site safer we have had to construct hard-core access routes to the work areas. These are made up of a base layer of Terram covered in hardcore. Next a layer of Geogrid is laid on top, before the final layer of hardcore.

The next planned operation is to construct concrete foundations for the Legato concrete blocks which will form a substantial part of the canal banks. Meanwhile, you can see all the progress from drone photographs on the Trust's Facebook site, taken by our team member Robin Gardner.

We hope to return to Rye Farm on 15th October to start on Phase 2 of the project, subject to the successful completion of mechanical repairs to the 8T Yanmar tracked excavator.

Dennis Gillen

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