

Working Party News

For WACT Volunteers February 2026 No. 384

Editorial

I think it's fair to say that January has been a mostly miserable month for the weather with extended periods of heavy rain, albeit interspersed with the odd fine day. Nevertheless our teams have been active whenever conditions permit and good progress continues to be made on several fronts.

Peter Winter

Northern Working Party

Despite the wet and very muddy conditions this month, work has continued apace at Rooks Hill. We have now fitted and filled all the Gabion baskets along the top of the Legato block wall at the weir site and the concreting has been completed around the weir itself. Cable ducting and a water pipe have been laid along the top of the Legato blocks, behind the Gabion baskets, to provide services along the new section of canal.

Brick and block laying on the wing wall approaches to the bridge are progressing and we are gradually filling the cavities with reinforced concrete.

Work is soon to continue at the culvert outlet, where there is more brickwork to be done and more Gabion baskets to be positioned and filled. The approach track to the outlet is extremely muddy and so we have begun to lay a temporary firmer surface in order to get plant, machinery and materials to the site.

Meanwhile, members of the Eric Walker Group have installed the support frames to enable the bridge deck formwork to be put in place. The surrounding formwork for the



main concrete pour has also been constructed while leaving access for the reinforcing steel to be positioned.



Additionally, our Monday Team has completed a miscellany of tasks with Andy Evans having now completed the build of a custom made diesel power pack for the hydraulic log splitter, they have commenced the preparation of a permanent hard standing for the unit, adjacent to the log bay at Tickner's Depot.

They have visited Bonfire Hanger and decreased the height of the temporary dams by removing two stop planks from each. They retrieved the Christmas decorations from the Loxwood Canal Centre and installed overhead cable warning markers between Loxwood and Devil's

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Hole Locks. Further up the canal, they have made a temporary repair to part of the fence by Southland Lock, which was damaged by a recent storm.

Towards the end of the month, several NWP volunteers assisted in Zoe's final college assessment at the conclusion of her apprenticeship. Having now left WACT, we would like to thank Zoe for the assistance she has provided to the Northern Working Party during her time with us and wish her well for the future.

Dave Miller

Tickner's Depot

What a soggy old month that was. At least we had some good news to brighten the days. Our long-awaited Stump Grinder finally turned up. We've yet to put it to use, but just running it up in the depot was quite impressive.

Another new and even more impressive bit of kit is the Hydraulic Power Unit that Andy Evans has built. Until now, we had to use the Telehandler to power the log splitter - a bit of over-kill really. Andy did a great job in sourcing the hydraulic pump and diesel motor and then excelled himself in building the bunded frame to house it, the twin tanks for fuel and hydraulic fluid, the hydraulic switching system, the 24volt electrical system, including a remote-control unit for safe operation and finishing it off with coat of WACT green. I think you'll all agree, a very professional looking piece of equipment. Thank you Andy.

The cold snap we had over Christmas broke the bowser washer.



Hydraulic log splitter power unit

Whoever used it last, didn't flush the hose through with anti-freeze when they finished with it. Consequently, the plastic strainer housing froze and split open. When it thawed, the 1000 litre bowser emptied itself. It's fixed now and ready for use again.

Big thanks to the Thursday team, who were stood down from their usual tasks due to the foul weather, but still came to the depot and carried out several small, but really worthwhile jobs. Also, a few of the MWWP who again were called off due to rain, cleared all of the remaining logs by splitting them and burning the scrappy left over bits.

Next month, I'll have some more good news for you. It's blue, has 4 wheels, begins with 'T' and ends in 'ractor'.

Mark Feeney



The stump grinder attachment

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 Stephen David

Saturday Group

Our January outing was well supported, with three of our six volunteers not being members of any other working party and only available to come out on Saturdays. After gathering at Tickner's Depot and loading the Iveco with required materials, we travelled to Rooks Hill where we spent the day. We started off by dismantling the old, rusty metal field fencing and gates that secured the southern edge of the boundary of the site and cutting them up into manageable sections. We were then able to load them onto the Iveco to take them all back to the Depot for disposal.



Our attention then turned to the boundary of the canal route beyond the point where the old rusty gates had been. We extended the tree protection fencing a short way along the western bank towards the site of Fanesbridge Lock. Temporary Heras fencing was then installed across the canal route and back along the eastern bank towards the Legato block wall that is already in place by the new weir structure.

The Saturday Group meets on the second Saturday of every month and welcomes new volunteers. Our next outing is planned for 14th February and, if you would like to join us, please register your interest with Stephen David whose details are in the Contact List.

Stephen David

Hedgelaying Team

January provided a mixture of weather to entertain us, with snow on one occasion and then later quite a lot of rain. However, work continued on every occasion, though with delayed starts on two days to allow the weather to settle.

Our final Tuesday in January followed Storm Chandra, which semi-filled the old canal and showed us what it might look like when the work is complete (apart from the missing lock)!



The canal at the site of Fanesbridge Lock

Earlier in the month, four members of the Team were inveigled to join a multi-agency hedgelaying day just south of the Hog's Back in Surrey (co-ordinated by Surrey Wildlife Trust), where their expertise was called upon to teach beginners. A great day, with about 40 people present, and, most importantly, a hot lunch provided - something for WACT to think about offering (we can but hope!).

Finally, we said goodbye to a long standing Team member, Philip, who is taking his woodland skills to manage an ancient semi-natural woodland, which he and others have jointly purchased. We wish him well.

Nick Baxter



Hedgelaying in the snow

Monday Group

We had three meetings in January. Following our attention to the potholes in Loxwood car park in December, torrential rain fell around Christmas and the New Year which had a bit of a detrimental effect on our work. In any case we hadn't completed the job, so for our first meeting in January we returned to repair the effects of the rain and filled in the remaining potholes. Job done!

For our second session, at Margaret's request, we provided support for the assessment of our apprentice for brush cutting supervision at Barnsill Bridge and towpath towards Drungewick. For our third outing we concentrated on cutting the towpath hedges south from Brewhurst Bridge.

Nick Wood

Thursday Group

Following a report from a passing member of the public of the sound of running water on the opposite bank of the canal in Long Meadow at Drungewick, we attended the site to investigate. After a search of the area, we discovered a vertical plastic vent pipe in the hedgerow on the Drungewick Manor boundary, where the noise was coming from. Further examination revealed quite fast flowing water running in a large bore pipe going under both the canal and Long Meadow before discharging into the River Lox. The source of the water is unknown to the Estate Manager at Drungewick Manor. Is anyone aware of its origin?

On a very wet Thursday, we sensibly found some under cover jobs to keep us busy at Tickner's Depot! We cut two sheet metal panels for the sliding door at the rear of the MDV Shed and began pop riveting them in place. On the next rainy Thursday we can finish fitting them and give the door a coat of paint. We checked the wi-fi cabling at the Depot and located a faulty connection that we repaired. Under the sheltered cover of the log bay roof, we prepared the plastic wood components required for the 'dolphins' at Drungewick and some stop planks for the pump chamber at Brewhurst Lock.



During the month, several visits were made to Drungewick Slipway where we finished constructing and installing two sets of 'dolphins' alongside which the two dredger tubs can be moored without getting snagged on the banks. When water levels permit, another set of 'dolphins' will be installed, so that the dredger can also be securely moored alongside.

We also utilised *May Upton* to carry out some tasks downstream of Loxwood. We went to Brewhurst Lock, where we installed the newly cut stop planks and drained the back pump chamber to obtain precise details of the two fitted pumps. We then went to Birch Copse where we replaced and strengthened the haunching around the inspection hatch by the towpath alongside the river pump outlet. We also

fitted an angled deflector on the end of the outflow pipe and sealed around the pipe with cement grouting. On the return journey to Loxwood, we moored by Brewhurst Lane Bridge and repositioned a faulty gate latch on the five bar gate on the towpath, to ensure it closed and latched securely.

Brian King

Midweek Working Party

January has been a curate's egg as far as MWWP is concerned. The first and last Wednesday of the month were glorious, sunny and cold. The other two were extremely wet and we had to cancel the working party. We have had to deal with a large number of trees that are either over the towpath or in the canal due to strong winds and much rain. We have cleared those that are over the towpath, however, those that are in the canal will remain until the water levels reduce. Tree work has been our main job this month.

A group has been clearing behind Rye Farm Cottages and it is now looking less like a jungle and enhances the Rye Farm bridleway if people look behind them. In Hunt Park we had two teams out, one taking down dangerous trees following the recent tree survey and one clearing alongside the Cranleigh Waters at Tannery Lane to clear the banks. If you look over Tannery Bridge, you will see the results of our work.

A group has continued to clear the brash and has grouped up the 4m trunks for splitting at the depot or storage south of Rooks Hill Bridge. The area is looking much clearer now but there is still much to do. As soon as we finish removing one tree over the towpath at Bonfire Hanger, another one is down. We are being kept on our toes! The last area we have worked on is at Birtley along the Downs Link where we are having to remove dangerous trees after one came down and completely blocked the Downs Link.

Margaret Darvill

Eric Walker Group

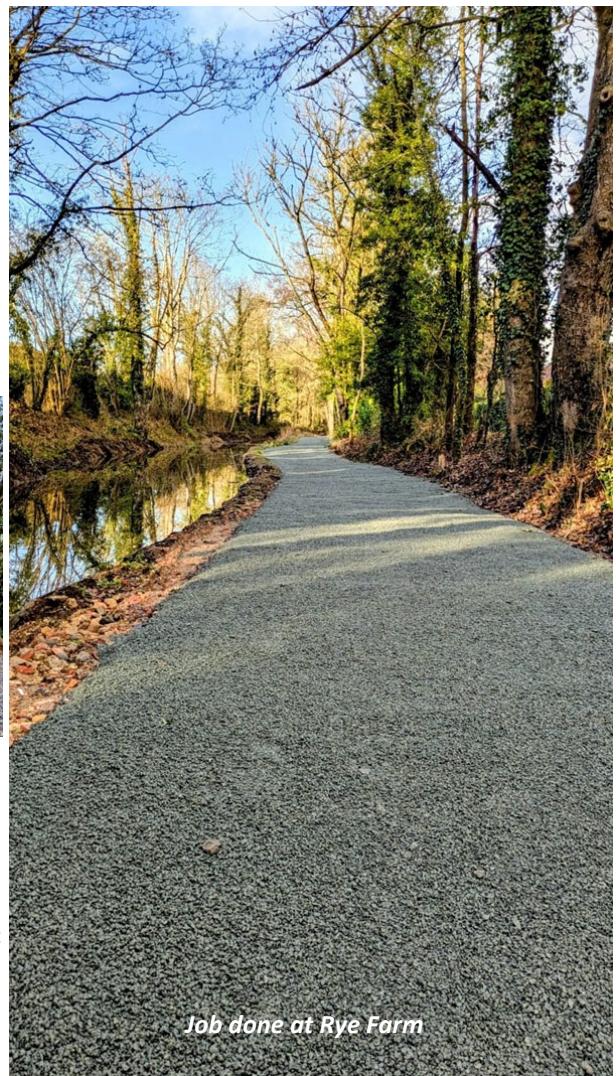
Part of the EWG team worked at Rye Farm during the month while the rest were working under Richard Meinertzhangen's direction on the Rooks Hill Project.

The work on the diversion of the bridleway at Rye Farm was completed by the end of the period with the installation of a short fence and the final topping of fine granite chippings being laid as requested by the Surrey CC officer responsible for public footpaths and rights of way. With the completion of this project and when Surrey CC have formally signed off on the diversion, ownership of this stretch of canal will transfer to the Trust.



It now only remains for the compound to be cleared and the plant transported to Elmbridge Retirement Village where the group have a small project to lay a drain to alleviate the accumulation of groundwater at the southern end of the Village.

Dennis Gillen



Job done at Rye Farm

The Contact List

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