

Editorial

Another warm, even very hot, month on the canal and much progress has been made. This is especially so at Rooks Hill, where four different teams have been working on a wide variety of tasks with the aim of completing Phase 1 of the project over the summer.

Next month Dave Miller will once again step in as guest editor while Hilary and I take a two week cruise on our shared narrowboat.

Peter Winter

Northern Working Party

The fine weather in May enabled steady progress to be made at Rooks Hill and marked differences can be seen each week that we attend. We have continued with the brick and block laying on the bridge wing walls and concreting the wall cavities. All of the brickwork below ground level has now been completed and all visible brickwork is now being laid in double thickness Flemish Garden Wall Bond. We have also been filling the Gabion baskets on the interlocking concrete block wall on the south western approach to the bridge.



Photo by Keith Lyall

Clearing tree trunks at Rooks Hill

With a log grab attached to the excavator and the use of the log trailer, we have recovered a number of large conifer tree trunks that had been felled and left on the un-restored canal bed to the south of the bridge.

With the ‘sausage’ bank having been profiled on the western side of the canal opposite the new overspill weir, we have been able to remove the tree protection fencing from along the boundary with the adjacent property. We have begun to assemble and fill Gabion mattresses over the ‘sausages’ to protect and reinforce the bank. The mattresses, as the name suggests, are large, flat rectangular baskets that are secured in position and then filled with stone. On the opposite bank, we installed and secured coir rolls on top of the Gabion baskets, to form an edge



Photo by Keith Lyall

Installing Gabion mattresses



Photo by Keith Lyall

Clearing the bonfire site

to the towpath that is under construction. North of Rooks Hill towards Birtley Bridge 1, on the line of the new canal route, was a bonfire site used by the landowner. With the aid of a riddle attachment on the excavator, we sifted through the big heap of ash, removed the larger non-flammable objects and moved the remaining ash off the site for later

use.

Away from Rooks Hill, we tackled several other jobs. At Tickner’s Heath Crossing we laid several courses of bricks to form the base of a drainage chamber on the edge of the

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proposed temporary road that will be required during the construction of the new canal bridge at Dunsfold Road. At Rye Farm, following completion of the construction of the new towpath, we carried out the final clearance of the compound, returning all remaining equipment and materials to Tickner's Depot. We also attended Brewhurst and Loxwood Locks, where we replaced a rotten post in the 'Sussex type' post and rail fencing at each of the sites. Some time was also spent at Tickner's Depot assisting with log deliveries and then replenishing the stock using the hydraulic log splitter.

Dave Miller

Dredger Group

Although both Brian and I have been away on holiday some major tasks have been completed. The dredger's spud leg rams, removed at the end of March have been rebuilt and replaced. Fitting the ram's locating pin had similarities to threading a needle at the end of a long dark tube! After several attempts, we finally got the hang of it. Both the dredger's excavator and tug's engines have been serviced and are now ready for next season's dredging duties. However, a rusty fuel tank on the excavator, is giving us cause for concern. It has been drained and cleaned but could not be removed, so we will just have to keep an eye on it.

We finished painting one of our spoil tubs, only to find a split in its inner hull. Agricom will be called to do another welding patch - a constant problem with 20-year-old kit!

Our second spoil tub now awaits painting. As always, it's the preparation that takes the time. In this case a considerable amount of rust has first to be chipped off, before a rust preservative is applied prior to painting a topcoat.

The Tug required some electrical work to its bilge pump wiring and is now all completed. Next the fenders will need replacing as they have become split. Last summer we placed three separate fenders down each side. This was not a good idea as these have tended to be damaged by either the tub or the dredger sliding in between the fenders with subsequent damage! We are hoping that fitting a continuous fender along the full length will help.

Next month we are hoping to sandblast *Pauline's* hull. The deck and cabin sides were done a few years ago but now the hull sides need the same attention before she is blacked and made ready to launch.

Water levels have again dropped significantly and before we can launch the dredger, we will need the water to be at spillway level. Not much hope of that happening before September! In the meantime, the Thursday Group has been trying to identify and reduce leakage from the slipway pound. I'm keeping my fingers crossed that they are successful.

Charlie Coxwell

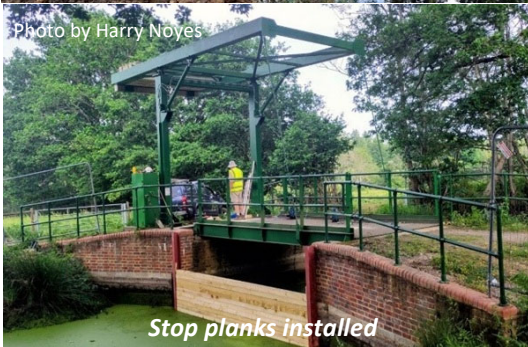


Working Party Diary

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)	Contact David Stevenson
	Northern Working Party (Tuesday)	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

Thursday Group

We started off the month by continuing with the repair of the eroded towpath bank opposite Drungewick Slipway. More clay spoil was collected from Rooks Hill and rammed into position along the bank, which involved volunteers donning waders and buoyancy aids to work in the canal. Fortunately, this meant they were properly attired when an unexpected call came through to collect *May Upton* and assist *Wiggonholt*, which had badly fouled her propeller and was stuck by Brewhurst Bridge. After a lot of strenuous work, the material was eventually removed from around the prop and *Wiggonholt* was able to return to her mooring at Loxwood.



Another job was to install new steel stop plank channels at Birtley Bridge 1 to assist with water management during the construction and future maintenance of the new stretch of canal at Rooks Hill. In preparation for this work, the large 4 inch diesel pump and Aquadam were transported from Tickner's Depot to the site. With the Aquadam deployed across the 'in water' section of canal on the north side of Birtley Bridge 1, and the diesel pump emptying a fair bit of water from the south side of the bridge, we were able to fix the steel channels in position and install the new stop planks.

During the month, we also assisted with fitting tie rods and waling boards to the posts securing the Gabion baskets on the east side of the canal bank below the Rooks Hill Bridge. When completed, this will form the edge of a new towpath.

Some time was also spent at Tickner's Crossing clearing and tidying the compound. Several trailer loads of materials and rubbish were conveyed to the Depot for either storage or disposal. Outside the compound, we covered the large earth spoil heap with Terram sheeting to suppress weed growth during the construction of the new road bridge.



Brian King

Tickner's Depot

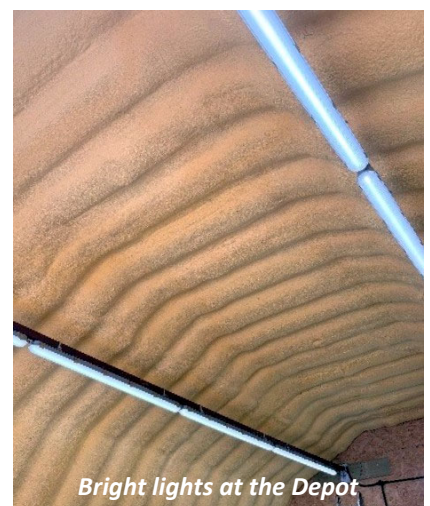


Ian was training Stephen in the dark art of PAT Testing the other week. When checking a 110v extension lead, they found it was badly damaged. We think it was either caused by having the lead too close to a generator exhaust, or draped across a fire. Either way, the fact that it was returned to the depot with no note and put back in the 'ready to use' pile, simply beggars belief.

Cables get caught, snagged and damaged, it happens, and we repair them. Health and Safety is EVERYONE'S responsibility.

Back in January, I announced that we were getting proper lighting in the engineering workshop. After a couple of false starts, a gable-end rebuild and hospital commitments, we can now, thanks to some great teamwork, finally see what we're doing in there. Two banks of four 1.5m LED battens, fixed to rectangular steel boxes mean that we can get some of the bigger jobs done inside and out of the weather.

Last year a leak was detected in the canteen roof. The Thursday guys put a tarp over the top to keep the worst of the rain out. Well, we've now got the steel sheeting and timber purlins to put a new roof over the container to make it watertight again. Trouble is, it's been just too hot to get up there and finish the job off. Hopefully I'll have a photo of the completed roof next month.



Mark Feeney

Eric Walker Group

The team has continued with its work at Rooks Hill. Installation of more interlocking concrete block walls has been completed on the west bank while the 'sausage' soft bank formation on the east bank has also been finished.

Following the construction of the east bank Plastecowood and gabion cage design, it was then possible to build up the level of the ground behind it and to create a permanent geogrid and hardcore towpath. The final surface layer of stone, however, will be left until the final completion of Phase 1 of the project.

Following the laying of the top 'sausage' layer, a start was made on laying gabion cages shaped like mattresses on the slope and filling them with even sized stones, to complete the bank.

On the west bank between this formation and the interlocking concrete block wall next to the bridge a pond is to be formed. This pond will be contiguous on the canal side with the canal itself, only delineated by a structure of Plastecowood piles and rails.

Work also continued on the brickwork to the parapets along with the wing walls on both sides of the bridge.



Setting out the edge of the pond

Dennis Gillen

Midweek Working Party

Wednesdays have been very hot this month and therefore progress has been a bit slower. However, much has been done. We have been clearing dead trees at Birtley and have been tidying the site so our engineering team can see the profile of the bank between the canal and river to improve the stability of the bank.

A group cleared logs and branches by the culvert at Rooks Hill while another small group brushcut the pathway north of Birtley Bridge 2 in preparation for the spoils from the bund to be laid to increase the height of the new towpath. Meanwhile a few people have been painting the hoardings around the Tickner's Crossing Compound. A couple of people cleared the path for the sponsored walk. This job was much quicker than was expected as it had already been cleared last Autumn.

The main group continued clearing the canal bank at Alfold Road which has not been done for over four years and has meant the brambles are over six foot tall entwined in the trees. This will take a long time.

Margaret Darvill

Saturday Group



Photo by Keith Lyall

Filling Gabion baskets at Rooks Hill

For our May outing, seven of us returned to Rooks Hill where we continued with the assembly and filling of Gabion baskets on top of the interlocking concrete blocks on the south west bank. The baskets were faced and topped with limestone, to provide an aesthetic appearance. On completing the length of baskets, we backed them with a sandwiched layer of butyl liner, in preparation for the backfilling of the void behind the wall and the final profiling of the soil bank.

With the use of the excavator, we recovered a number of the felled tree trunks laying on the bed of the canal to the south of the bridge construction site. They are being cleared from the canal route and stacked nearby for later removal.

The Group normally meets on the second Saturday and our next session is planned for the 13th June. Please email

stephen.david@weyarun.org.uk, to be added to the Group mailing list and kept up to date with the arrangements for our next outing(s).

Stephen David

Boat Group PEST

On a lovely sunny day at the beginning of May, PEST took *May Upton* north as far as the chicane. We had planned to go south but Baldwin's Knob Lock was closed. As ever there is always debris to take out of the water and in addition a tree on the non towpath side had fallen into the canal. Much of it had been re-

moved but the remaining trunk with attached root ball were protruding rather far into the canal. With limited tools for the job we were able to cut the trunk back further.

One of the bends at the chicane was a little blind due to vegetation so we cut it back to give skippers a better view. Trips have been going north recently so it is important to keep this stretch clear. At the end of the day our cuttings and collected branches were deposited at Devil's Hole Lock.

We returned later in the month and cleared out both the sides and back of the winding hole at Southland where we understand some crew have disappeared into the foliage when the boat is being turned. We removed further growth at the north end of the chicane and cleared north of Devil's Hole winding hole and about 50m towards the lock.

John Lee

Monday Group

May had two bank holidays so only two outings for the team! Nevertheless the Group did their bit at Devil's Hole, Loxwood, Brewhurst, both sides of the canal at the Drungewick Aqueduct site and at Drungewick Lock. That leaves widening the towpath on the permissive path for another day.

On the second May session, having cut at Compasses Bridge and the Tickner's 'triangle', we were asked to cut the vegetation from the enormous mound of earth at Tickner's which had been deposited during the construction of the new footbridge and extension of the canal. Apparently, it is intended to cover this mound over before the contractors arrive later in the year to build the road diversion. This was quite a task, not least because there were a large number of substantial thistles.

Nick Wood



Tackling the mound of vegetation

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