

For WACT Volunteers

August 2026

No. 390

Working Party News

Editorial

First of all, my thanks go to Dave Miller for stepping in last month to produce and excellent edition of Working Party News.

Well July was a scorcher and while the dry conditions were helpful for construction activities, they made life a bit uncomfortable for our volunteers. But they have stuck to their tasks and once again much has been achieved in maintaining and restoring the canal.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to the contributions made by two visiting work groups who gave valuable assistance to the Rooks Hill project.

Peter Winter

Monday Group



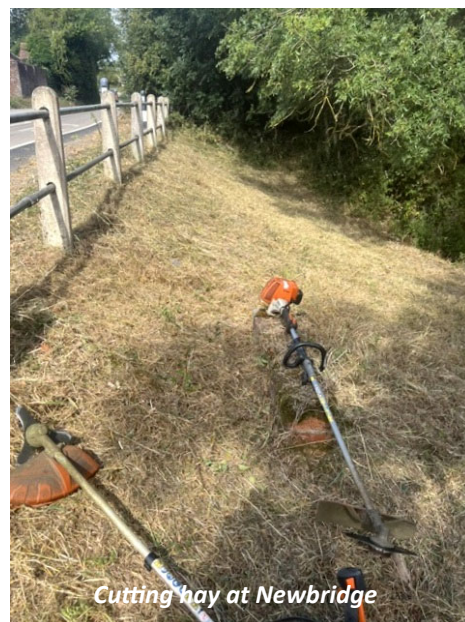
Drungewick Lock

Another 'warm' July; maybe August will be 'less hot' but perhaps that is just a pious hope. Nevertheless, the Group has been really busy and visited no less than Compasses, Tickner's, Gennets, Southland, Devil's Hole, Loxwood & the Canal Centre, Brewhurst, Baldwin's Knob, the Drungewick Aqueduct site, Drungewick Lock, Lordings Lock & flood lock, and Newbridge (the latter well overdue).

We also cut and widened the tow-path south of Southland Lock, between

Brewhurst Lock and the bridge and BKL/Birch Copse to Drungewick. It is amazing what our volunteers can achieve with the aid of brushcutters and mowers and with the support of those who clear up.

A visit to Malham Lock is on the cards for next month (the last time we were there was September) but we need the landowner's permission first.



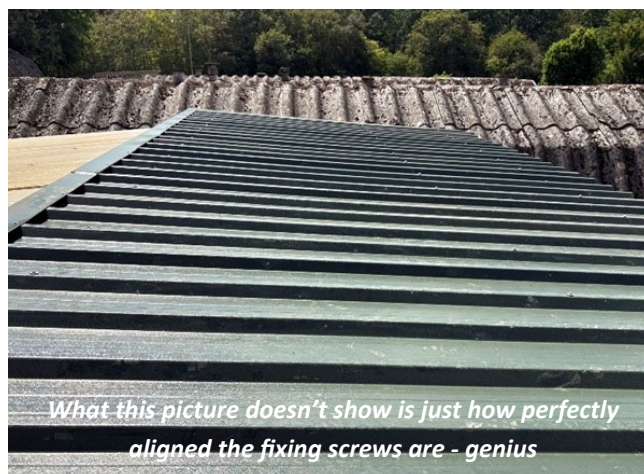
Cutting hay at Newbridge

Nick Wood

Tickner's Depot

I'm sure you'll all be over the moon to know that we have finally finished the roof on the canteen unit. Not only have Stephen and Neil got it properly watertight, but they also added the finishing touches of the eaves and barge boards. I say watertight, but it hasn't rained yet!

Whilst the guys were fixing roofs and trailers, I had been asked to build a cage to house the new pump for Baldwin's Knob Lock. The cage will sit in the canal, off the wall on the downstream side of the lock. Made of



What this picture doesn't show is just how perfectly aligned the fixing screws are - genius

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Pump cage, less the pump, on its side ready for galvanizing

steel channel, standing 2 metres high and 90cm wide, it's a bit of a monster. The top section, which I made first, weighs 100Kg, this was then turned on its side, and the rest of the cage was welded on. The total weight is 250kg, just under a quarter of an imperial ton. Next week, it's off to Eastleigh for galvanizing, before it is installed in the canal.

We've not got round to converting the big pine trunks into planks yet, but now that the BKL pump cage is finished, we can start looking into that.

Mark Feeney

Thursday Group

The fine (!) weather in July enabled us to complete a miscellany of maintenance tasks during the month. We started off by returning to Drungewick where we packed more loads of clay into the eroded towpath bank opposite the slipway. The dry weather and low water levels have meant that we can't yet gauge the

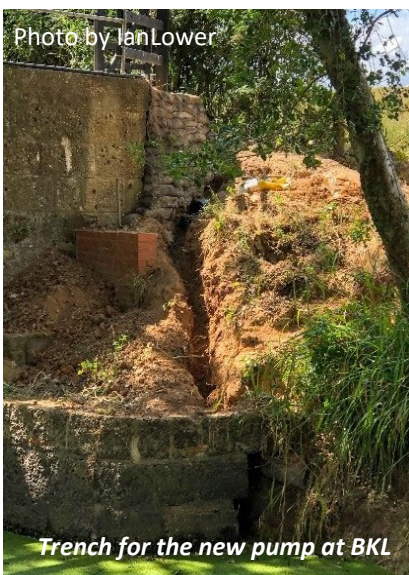


Photo by Ian Lower

success of the operation, but we remain optimistic.

The following week we assisted at the Rooks Hill Bridge site by preparing and installing Plastecowood rails alongside the filled gabion baskets bordering the line of the new canal route.

The Dredger Team are still working on the maintenance of dredger *Pauline* and we have provided some assistance with the messy job of blacking her bottom.

After a winter when you may recall, we did actually have a lot of rain and flooding, we went down to Lordings Waterwheel to clean out the sludge and silt that had been deposited in the chamber and remove all the growing



Photo by Brian King

A tidy looking Lordings Waterwheel

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

weeds. Routine maintenance was carried out on the mechanical parts and the hub bearings were greased.

The picnic bench by Lordings Flood Lock was in need of repair, so we gave that some attention to make it serviceable and at Loxwood, we adjusted the gate closure at the lock and sanded and undercoated the three wooden cabinets by the boat moorings opposite the Canal Centre.

A new back pumping arrangement is to be installed at Baldwin's Knob Lock and we spent some time on site making the necessary preparations. The pump will be situated in the actual canal and so we took measurements to design a protective cage to prevent any possible damage from passing boats. The cage has been fabricated by the Depot Team and will be galvanised before we place it in position. On a very warm day, we excavated a trench for the pipework to be connected from the site of the new pump to the currently installed piping.

Brian King

Eric Walker Group



WRG working on the Plastecowood bank for Rooks Hill Phase 2



Concrete base laid for more blocks

The Group has continued its work at Rooks Hill. In particular, attention was paid to preparatory works in readiness for the two visiting Work Groups which started on 13th July for two weeks. This was mainly focussed on the construction of the 'soft bank' structure on the east bank of Phase 2. This involved the installation of the two rows of Plastecowood piles, the stone filled gabion baskets, Plastecowood rails each side and the coir rolls.

The visiting groups continued this operation and achieved the construction of a substantial length, with almost a third of the distance being completed from the bridge north to the area where the 'chicane' will be situated. The visiting teams also completed the brickwork and copings to the culvert head wall at the southern end of Phase 1 of the project.

Bricklaying has continued to the bridge parapets and wing walls and is now almost at the stage when the coping stones can be put in place; a job that will start and hopefully be finished next month.

It was also decided that because of the prolonged dry weather, it would be opportune to extend the interlocking concrete block wall on the east bank to the south of the bridge. The bed of the canal is hard and dry so it was possible to get a ready mix concrete truck to pour the base and for the truck delivering the blocks to access right next to the work area. This saved considerable time and expense as the materials did not need double handling.

Next month should see the completion of the bridge superstructure and hopefully more progress on the installation of the east bank structure.

Dennis Gillen



Completed culvert

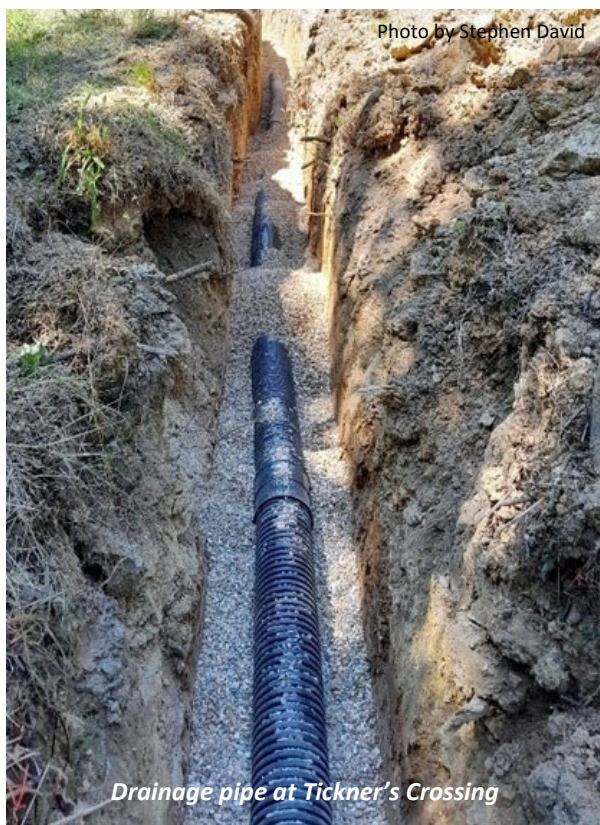
Midweek Working Party

This month we have had some very hot Wednesdays. We have tried to keep in the shade augmented by many drink stops. The southern stretch of the canal has seen much of our attention. We have cleared the canal base and banks from Toat Bridge and Cooks Bridge. The new Trackmaster made the job so much easier than in previous years. We have also cleared the quays at Pallingham in readiness for the archeological dig at the beginning of August. The rest of the canal nearby was also cleared.

Another area receiving attention has been at Mill Farm. The base needed a lot of work and all the brash has been left for wetter weather. There is still much to do. Half the logs left at Elmbridge have also been cut up so that they can be taken back to the Depot.

Margaret Darvill

Saturday Group



Drainage pipe at Tickner's Crossing

On a very hot Saturday, a depleted Group of four volunteers met to carry out more groundworks at Tickner's Crossing. Prior to mothballing the site before construction work can begin on the new road bridge, the intention is to finish preparing the foundations and base for the temporary road and then cover this with soil pending the re-commencement of works.

With a new drainage inspection chamber having been recently constructed on the verge of the route of the temporary road, we laid a long length of surface water drainage piping from the chamber to the outlet on the other side of the track to the car parking area. The pipe was laid on a bed of pea shingle, with a suitable downfall, and we then made a start on back filling the trench. However, the high temperatures caused us to cease work before the job could be completed and the rest of the backfilling was left for another day.

Our next session is planned for the 8th of August. Please email stephen.david@weyarun.org.uk if you would like to join us so that you can be added to the Group mailing list and kept up to date with the arrangements for our outing(s).

Stephen David

Boat Group PEST

On a hot and sunny day in early July PEST took out two boats, the work boat *May Upton* and also the small trip boat *Josias Jessop*. The reason for this was that the trip boats have not been going south for some time and also, probably because of the weather, the pound from Loxwood to Brewhurst lock was in danger of being choked with weeds. The idea was that JJ with its more powerful inboard engine would travel up and down this length of canal cutting through the weeds. Then MU followed behind scooping up the cut weeds. This of course doesn't deal with the roots of the weeds but it did look much better. A full boat load of weeds was collected and deposited at the winding hole site at Brewhurst Lock.

On yet another hot day at the end of the month PEST took the work boat MU north as far as Devil's Hole. We finished a job that we had started some weeks before which was to complete the cutting back of the non-towpath side between the winding hole and the lock. We also removed further weeds from the canal.

We very much look forward to travelling to other parts of the canal when conditions permit.

John Lee

Northern Working Party

All of our Tuesday outings this month have been at Tickner's Heath Crossing where we have continued with the groundworks on the site of the temporary road. We have dug out trenches on either side of the planned route and are in the process of laying the surface drainage piping and backfilling. We are levelling the ground on the approach to the current car park access drive and intend laying a stone sub base for the temporary road before covering with soil while the site is mothballed pending recommencement of the



Photo by Gordon Powell

Groundworks at Tickner's Heath Crossing

Photo by Gordon Powell

Scaffold Fencing at Tickner's Heath Crossing

works in due course.

The car parking area is being cleared and we have recovered the fencing, barriers and track mats and taken them to the Depot. On the other side of the road, we have removed all the Heras fencing and installed scaffold fencing around the water filled cut in front of the footbridge.

The Monday team has been tasked with carrying out surveys of the various culverts under the canal to assess their condition. So far, using a CCTV camera, we have inspected culverts at Baldwin's Knob Lock, Brewhurst Bridge, Elmbridge and Utworth, as well as the underside of Drungewick Aqueduct. It has not been an easy task. The inlets and outlets being in locations that are difficult to access, and are either overgrown with vegetation or awkward to climb down into the ditches. In addition we have needed to gain landowner permissions.



Photo by Andrew Bickerton

Utworth culvert is under there somewhere!

Dave Miller

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