

For WACT Volunteers September 2026 No. 391

Working Party News

Editorial

We began the month with a continuation of the blistering heat before it cooled down and even rained. It was amazing how quickly conditions at the work sites became muddy again.

Our thanks go to Margaret Darvill for organising the Annual Volunteers' Barbecue. A great time was had by all and it was a good opportunity for interaction between the various work groups.

Peter Winter

Tickner's Depot

I can confirm that following last month's question over the functionality of the canteen roof, it has now been thoroughly tested and proved to be a roof, not a sieve!

Following the re-decking of the 14' trailer, the rest of the trailer fleet has begun to be maintained, serviced and documented.

We've had a couple of visits from the PEST team. They were unable to get on the canal to clear the offside bank, so they have been doing sterling work in painting two of the units at the depot, and a magnificent job they've done too.

The Baldwin's Knob Lock pump cage is now back from the galvanizers and looking very smart. Many thanks to Dave & Brian for acting as delivery men. Shortly, it should be firmly bolted to the concrete wall just South of BKL, ready to have the pump installed.

Unfortunately, we've not been able to produce any firewood this month, due to the noise from the hydraulic power unit. To overcome this, I will be fitting an additional silencer to the exhaust, and we'll be looking to make a soundproof housing to shield the pump and engine. Hopefully, we'll be splitting logs again soon.



Pump cage galvanised and ready to go

Mark Feeney

Saturday Group



Photo by Gordon Powell

Sub-base of the temporary road

For our August outing, we spent the day at Tickner's Heath Crossing where we continued the work being done by the Northern Working Party to prepare a sub-base for the temporary road that will be required as a short diversionary route when construction work commences on the new road bridge on Dunsfold Road. We laid a geotextile membrane and then some geogrid at the base of the recently excavated section of the road and began covering this with hardcore to form the sub-base.

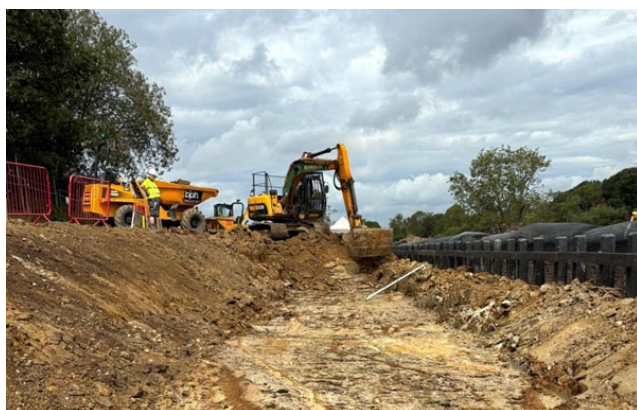
We also extricated and removed some Heras fencing panels from the boundary of the old car parking area, that had been overgrown by the hedging.

Due to our participation in the Surrey Hills Wood Fair at Cranleigh in September, our next group session is planned for 10th October. We welcome and encourage more volunteers to join us, so please email stephen.david@weyarun.org.uk, to be added to our mailing list and kept up to date with the arrangements for our outing(s).

Stephen David

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Eric Walker Group



Excavating the canal for Phase 2

The dry weather may not suit the boat group, but it has been ideal for progressing the groundworks at Rooks Hill. It's a far cry from the winter and spring when it was almost impossible to get around the site for thick mud. This has now been replaced by a thick coating of dust!

This month the excavators and dumpers have been hard at work taking spoil from the excavation of the canal for Phase 2 to build up the levels of the towpath and the approach ramp to the east side of the bridge.

More work was completed just south of the bridge with the remaining interlocking concrete block bank wall now in

place up to the southern boundary with Phase 3. Once again this operation that was made much easier with dry conditions allowing the concrete truck and the block delivery truck to get down the canal bed to the work location.

Brickwork continued to the bridge and the west side wing walls and parapet were completed, which then allowed the placing of the coping stones. This was not an easy operation as they are very heavy, taking three members of the team to lift and place each piece into position. It now only remains for these to be pointed in white mortar to match the colour of the stones.

Hopefully, next month will see us close to the end of Phase 1 work with the pond area, the west bank to the Phase 3 boundary and the brickwork to the bridge east wing walls all approaching completion.



Rooks Hill Bridge with some coping stones

Dennis Gillen

Midweek Working Party

This month we have just worked in two locations. A group cleared the vegetation around Pallingham Quays ready for the archaeological dig. When this was completed small groups worked on two consecutive Tuesdays and Wednesdays helping with the digging for the survey.

The rest of the group have been clearing the canal base and banks at Mill Farm. It is certainly looking better now.

Margaret Darvill

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

Northern Working Party

Another month of hot weather was spent at Tickner's Heath Crossing where groundworks continued on preparing the sub-base and drainage for the temporary road. Many lorry loads of hardcore have been spread and levelled. Flexible drainage piping has been laid in the excavated trenches on either side of the road which we are steadily backfilling.

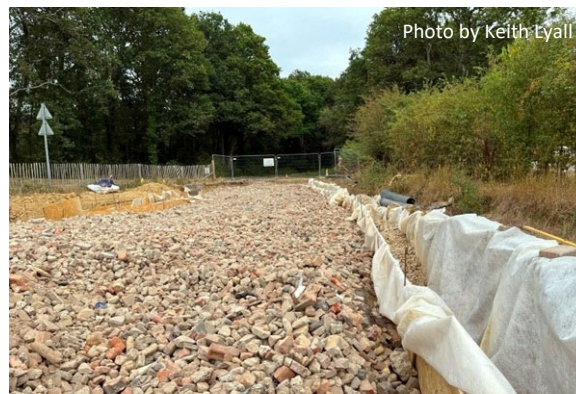


Photo by Keith Lyall

Base of temporary road at Tickner's Crossing



Photo by Keith Lyall

Cutting up the formwork

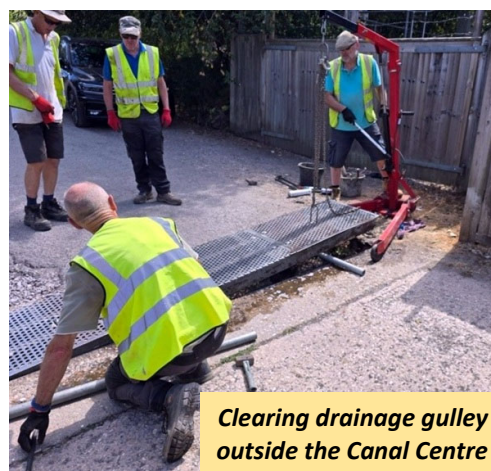
On the other side of the road, we recovered the metal steps in the cut between the canal and the footbridge. These had been in place since the construction.

We also cut up into manageable sections and removed the heavy steel formwork that had been used to create the curved, concreted section of the bridge approach.

Elsewhere we completed various other tasks during the month. We attended Pallingham Bridge where we replaced and secured the stop planks to prevent them lifting and floating away again during any winter flooding. We also continued

with the site surveys of the various culverts that are situated under the canal, including the underside of the aqueduct by the Lordings Water Wheel.

Outside of the Canal Centre at Loxwood there is a wide drainage gully that runs across the access road to the car park behind the Onslow Arms. This gully had become silted up and needed clearing. We lifted the heavy metal gratings with the assistance of a hoist and dug out all of the accumulated debris. With the gully completely cleared, we replaced the grating and cleaned out the adjoining inspection chamber. We are hopeful that this will help to alleviate some of the surface flooding that occurs at that spot during the wet winter weather.



Clearing drainage gully outside the Canal Centre

Dave Miller

Dredger Group

Despite the recent hot weather, the team have successfully got the dredger, *Pauline*, ready to be launched. All we need now is some water for the canal!



Pauline is ready for the new dredging season

Some of the jobs completed include three coats of hull blacking, and the topsides and deck were repainted. Together with the previous work on the spud legs, solar power and internal storage we are hopeful that this should last several years before we need to haul her out again. There is certainly a considerable amount of dredging work scheduled for her and we cannot wait to get started.

In the meantime, both spoil tubs are in need of some painting and patch welding.

Stuart Thompson has recently joined our team and started his 'Basic Introduction' to-

wards his Dredger ticket. He is now up to 3 hours instruction, although I doubt we shall reach the magical 100 hours. His help towards the maintenance tasks has been very much appreciated.

Brian used the excavator 'Teaspoon' to clear some of the spoil build-up on slipway which will hopefully allow an easier launch. When launching, we only have about an 1 inch clear between the slipway cradle and *Pauline's* hull. So, every bit of slipway clearing is a big help.

Charlie Coxwell

Monday Group

Well, in August the grass had not grown much with the result that, apart from a visit to Run Common, the Group has been concentrating on cutting and widening the towpaths and trimming hedges with hedge cutters, trimmers and the Tracmaster. We went north from the Canal Centre to Southland Lock, and then south from Loxwood to Drungewick taking three visits. We also dealt with the permissive path and round Drungewick Lock together with cutting the reeds around the boats at the Drungewick slipway.

Effectively the Group is up to date, apart from Malham lock where we await landowner permission. In September we will be looking at different tasks to undertake, so watch this space.



The permissive path at Drungewick

Nick Wood

Boat Group PEST

What we feared might happen, happened. All movement on the canal has been suspended for the time being due to a lack of water. We had considered suspending operations, which may still happen. However, for our first Friday outing in August we were 'invited' to do a little painting at the Depot, which we were glad to accept. The canteen building, a former container, had just had a new roof and was in need of a little care and attention with external painting. We spent the day doing this and were pleased with our efforts.



Before and after at the Canteen Container



Conditions continued to deteriorate so at the end of August it was back to the Depot for more painting. The container that is used as a fuel store was looking very tired, surrounded by brambles and weeds with a lot of peeling paint on the sides. We were able to clear the undergrowth from around the container, rub down the peeling paint and give it a coat of WACT green!

John Lee

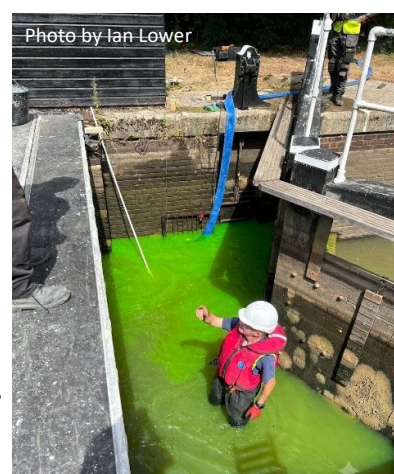
Thursday Group

Following reports of constant running water at Loxwood Lock, we made several visits to the site to investigate the source of any leak. After fitting stop planks above the upstream lock gates, we drained the water to examine the area around the offside gate paddle. Despite the use of coloured dye, no obvious cause was found but the fixings for the paddle and covering grille were discovered to be in need of replacement, which we have now done.

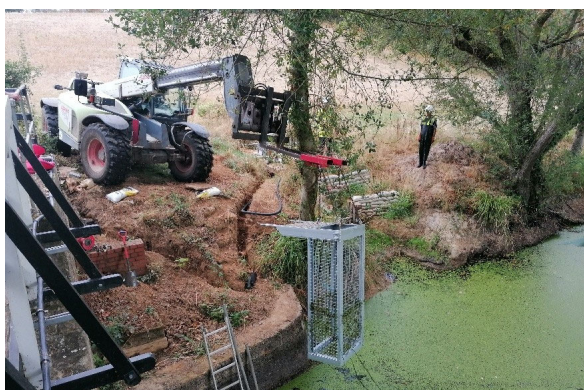
While at Loxwood we also cleaned the water level depth marker at the lock, so that it is clearly visible to the boat crews and, opposite the Canal Centre, we made a temporary repair to the mains water supply for *Wiggonholt's* pump out. We will return soon to replace the old copper piping and drain valve.

We had a day at Rooks Hill where we delivered 'Teaspoon' from Tickner's Depot, along with a stock of timber, and then continued on to Birtley Bridge 1 where we plugged leaks in the stop planks that we had fitted previously.

We then gave some attention to the 4" diesel pump that was extracting water to drain the canal from the bridge to the old bonfire site, so that the new canal cut from Rooks Hill Bridge can be connected to this in-water section. There was so much floating weed and debris that the pump inlet filter kept blocking. This meant that a couple of the team had to don waders and keep scraping the accumulating weed off the filter until the water was down to a low level.



Working at Loxwood Lock



Trying to install the pump cage at BKL

At Baldwin's Knob, a new back pump is to be positioned in the canal on the downstream side of the lock and, to protect it from passing boats when it is in position, a sturdy steel cage has been fabricated. We transported the cage to the site and with grateful assistance provided by the local farmer and his telehandler, we attempted to place it in position. Unfortunately, we couldn't quite get it to sit properly and, as the day was getting on, we had to postpone proceedings. We will return to scrape away some silt from the canal bed to provide a level base for the cage to rest on so that it can be securely bolted to the masonry.

Brian King

Health, Safety & Insurance

Volunteers working on the Wey & Arun Canal are often engaged in activities that are potentially hazardous. The Trust wishes to ensure that all volunteers get home safely and to comply with the law, the Trust has a detailed Health & Safety Policy and requires that all activities comply with the Health & Safety at Work Act. This includes the preparation of risk assessments, that all volunteers are suitably trained and briefed and ensuring that sites are kept tidy and accessible. If there is an accident or near miss, this must be reported to the Working Party Leader, who will then complete a form which is sent to the Operations Manager and a director. The incident will be investigated and if appropriate it will be reported to the Health & Safety Executive. If considered useful for other volunteers the learning points from the incident will be circulated to all volunteers. To learn from previous events it is as important to report a near miss as an accident.

In common with most waterway restoration organisations, the Trust is insured through the Inland Waterways Association and the insurers require the Trust to maintain formal records regarding the competency and experience of users of plant and powered machinery. This includes details of training and the maintenance of log books to prove experience. The methods for doing this are being shared now with all volunteers and all records will be held electronically on SharePoint.

The Contact List

Name	Group/Project	Tel	email
Bill Nicholson	Visiting Working Parties	07791 097773	bill57nicholson@gmail.com
Dennis Gillen	Eric Walker Group	07866 583753	dennis.gillen@weyarun.org.uk
Margaret Darvill	Midweek Working Party	01483 894606	margaret.darvill@weyarun.org.uk
Tom Close	Monday Group	07811 534292	thomasdclose@googlemail.com
Mark Feeney	Tickner's Depot Manager	07747 445680	mark.feeney@weyarun.org.uk
Nick Baxter	Hedgelaying		hedgelaying@weyarun.org.uk
David Stevenson	Northern Working Party (Mon)	07506 717717	david.stevenson@weyarun.org.uk
Stephen David	Northern Working Party (Tues)	07757 702970	stephen.david@weyarun.org.uk
Peter Hyem	Boat Group PEST	01403 752393	peter@barscorner1.plus.com
John Reynolds	Boat Maintenance	07540 840549	john.reynolds@weyarun.org.uk
Brian King	Thursday Group	07771 666751	briankingems@gmail.com
Charlie Coxwell	Dredger Group	07786 614708	charlie.coxwell@weyarun.org.uk
Stephen David	Saturday Group	07757 702970	stephen.david@weyarun.org.uk
Phil Short	Mobile Display Vehicle	07761 372551	pjshort@hotmail.com
Peter Winter	Working Party News Editor	07722 184117	peter.winter@weyarun.org.uk