

For WACT Volunteers

October 2026

No. 392

Working Party News

Editorial

While the fine weather has been welcomed by those working on canal restoration and maintenance, the lack of rainfall continues to frustrate those groups that need to get on the water, such as the boat crews and the dredging team.

The Trust is always keen to recruit volunteers. There are many opportunities to help, whether working on the canal or providing invaluable assistance for the key back office activities. One of our new recruits is Paul Rennie who joined Brian King's Thursday Group. He has written an enlightening review of his experiences as a new volunteer. Look out for it in the next issue of Wey-South.

Peter Winter

Monday Group



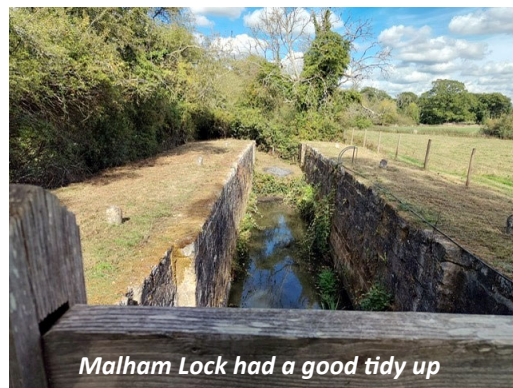
Filling gabions at Rooks Hill

The different tasks, mentioned in last month's report, manifested themselves this month with the Group assisting at Rooks Hill by building the gabion wire cages and filling them with 'rocks' ready for building the canal banks.

The 'bit' of rainfall we had during the month also required us to tidy up at Compasses, Tickner's, Gennets, Devil's Hole, Loxwood, Brewhurst, Baldwin's Knob and Drungewick.

Finally, we obtained permission to visit Malham lock which needed a good cut.

During September a number of the Group were trained on using the Trust's 4x4 and associated trailer to help with our regular site visits.



Malham Lock had a good tidy up

Nick Wood

Northern Working Party

Throughout September we carried on with the groundworks for the temporary road at Tickner's Heath Crossing. All of the roadside drainage pipes have now been laid and the trenches backfilled with stone. More lorry loads of hardcore were delivered and spread to level the sub-base of the road, followed by deliveries of Type 1 stone that we have spread and rolled to provide a smooth base for the future tarmac surface to be laid.

There was a large section of old steel formwork left in the former car parking area that we cut up into manageable sized pieces and transported back to Dunsfold Depot.



Photo by Keith Lyall

Groundworks at Tickner's Heath



Photo by Keith Lyall

The WACT Display at Surrey Hills Wood Fair

In the middle of the month, we assisted in the preparation and running of the WACT display at the Surrey Hills Wood Fair at Cranleigh. As well as the Mobile Display Vehicle being in attendance, we had two mini excavators set up so that children of all ages, under

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Top dressing the footpath at Tickner's Heath

Photo by Keith Gull

close supervision, could operate them to move and drop logs into tractor tyres and knock over traffic cones. This activity was very popular throughout the two day event.

Back at Tickner's Heath we dismantled and removed the large, water filled red and white plastic barriers that were positioned along the road by the side of the footbridge and backfilled the previously excavated edge to level the verge. On the actual footpath to the footbridge, we weeded the approaches, levelled the surface, top dressed with a new layer of granite chippings and compacted it with a wacker plate and road roller.

Elsewhere, we went to Drungewick where we adjusted the float sensor level for the river pump and cleared vegetation around the top gate of the lock.

We also dug out and inspected Park View Culvert (near Birtley) which was covered and blocked with a lot of mud and silt. We exposed the head wall, which is leaning and so halted proceedings until the site can be properly assessed. However, we did manage to clear one of the possible two pipes that form the culvert, which should now drain water under the Wey-South Path and canal.

A day was spent at Rooks Hill, where we tidied up the new bridge brickwork by cleaning off some of the surface efflorescence from the facing bricks.



Photo by Nigel Hartley



Photo by David Stevenson

Excavations reveal the Park View Culvert

Dave Miller

Boat Group PEST

The PEST group has had no prospect of using *May Upton* for some time, so we spent the first Friday of the month cutting the vegetation from the bank on the towpath side between the Canal Centre and Brewhurst Bridge; it does look a lot neater.

We repeated the work on our second outing of the month from Loxwood Lock going north.

We look forward to returning to the water as soon as possible, but at the time of writing there is no sign of any consistent rain!

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)	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

Eric Walker Group

This month the Group has mostly been dealing with earthworks at Rooks Hill, so the guys in the excavators and dumpers have been really busy. We had been concerned about what to do with all the spoil from excavating the new cut of the canal for Phase 2, but in the event there has been no problem in using it.

Most of the spoil has been used on the east side of the new bridge, where large amounts of earth have been needed to build up the access levels for the repositioning of the bridgeway and to grade the slopes to the south of the bridge.



Photo by Keith Lyall

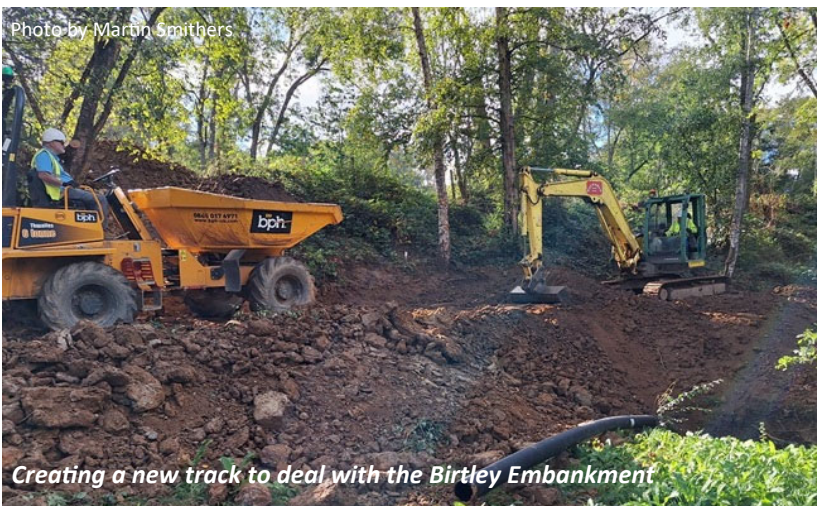
Excavating the new cut for Rooks Hill Phase 2

Photo by Martin Smithers

Creating a new track to deal with the Birtley Embankment

Then even more earth is required to provide a stable platform for the contractors who will be coming to drive sheet piling into the bank to the north of Birtley Bridge South. This is required to mitigate the risk of an embankment failure where there is a steep slope from the canal down to the Cranleigh Waters. So the Group is working to widen the towpath and grade the slope. This is quite tricky as access is limited but a good start has been made on the task.

Meanwhile, brickwork has continued to the wing walls to the east of the bridge and the coping stones have been pointed with white mortar.

Dennis Gillen

Thursday Group

Continuing on from where we finished last month, we spent most of September working at Baldwin's Knob Lock installing the new pump cage and the refurbished back pump in the canal.

We started by scraping the silt away from the bottom of the canal to provide a level base for the pump cage to rest on. The local farmer was then good enough to return with his telehandler to assist us lifting and placing the heavy steel cage in position. Having bolted the cage and fender in position, we then helped the contractor to install the pump and connect the required pipework. A new water level sensor was fitted to a Plastecowood bracket on the wall of the approach to the lock and all of the trenching for the pipework and cabling was back-



Photo by David Stevenson

Concrete rip-rap outfall at Brewhurst

Photo by Ian Tower

Pump cage and steps at BKL

filled.

To provide a safer pedestrian access route to the pump cage, we cut out steps from the higher ground of the farmer's field down the steep soil bank, bracing each step with a Plastecowood retaining plank and top dressing with stone.

We did complete another task during the month when we attended Brewhurst Lock to carry out repairs to the outfall of the back-pumped water where the concrete blockwork rip-rap had subsided and collapsed at one edge. We excavated the damaged section, edged the area with new kerb stones and infilled with fresh concrete.

Brian King

Dredger Group

Whilst most groups have been grateful for the recent dry spell, the dredging team has been longing for heavy rain! *Pauline's* maintenance is complete and she now needs to be launched. For this to happen we need a month of heavy rain; no sign of that happening in the near future!

This month we have had to entertain ourselves with several minor jobs, painting, cleaning etc. The tug's fenders need replacing but that can't be done until there is sufficient water to turn her round.

Nevertheless, we have completed two important jobs. First, we managed to turn the dredger's floats back round to the 'in use' position. Not an easy task as they needed to be unhinged, turned and refastened.

Secondly, last year we fitted 'iDig' to the excavator, a system that visually displays the bucket position, relative to a known datum. However, we were only able to calibrate the system when afloat and this produced some errors. Now ashore, we have taken the opportunity to re-calibrate the system from scratch. Time will tell if this is an improvement. If successful, the system should help us dredge without damage to the clay 'puddle', which is always difficult when you cannot see the bucket position underwater!

Charlie Coxwell

Tickner's Depot

We've been busy with lots of small jobs this month. Servicing our trailer fleet continues thanks to Neil.

The flywheel on our Husqvarna 550 chainsaw came loose and broke the integral woodruff key that holds it in position. A quick search on the internet showed that it can easily be made to work with a bit of careful alignment, so that's what we did, and it's now working fine. The Tracmaster Allen Scythe was in use for the first time this year when it started smoking. It is old enough, but it's a nasty habit. A change of air filter helped, but a replacement carburettor will be fitted this week, so no Nicorette patches are required.

As you enter the depot, there is a small stand of pine trees. These are all showing signs of death and disease, so will have to be removed. We will chip all of the brash from them, so we thought it pertinent to give 'Colin' the big chipper a quick check over. Despite having not been used for two years, it started first time, but when we moved it backwards, it decided to wet itself. The spill-mats, which we always have to hand, came in useful and soaked up the hydraulic fluid. We think it was due to a low level of fluid causing air to be sucked into the pump and making a huge amount of hydraulic froth, which bubbled out of the filler cap. We'll have to give it a service before we fire it up again.

Following on from last month's report about a secondary exhaust on the hydraulic power unit, I can report that it made almost no difference. The decibel readings were only 2Db down. The next step is to build a solid enclosure around and above the unit, lined with acoustic Rockwool to keep the noise in. It will, of course have to have a couple of fans to ensure the engine can breathe and the warm air can get out.

Mark Feeney

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