

For WACT Volunteers

July 2026

No. 389

Working Party News

Editorial

Peter is away on holiday at the moment and I have temporarily stepped in to prepare this month's edition ... and what a mixed month it has been, weatherwise! Working parties have endured a range of conditions from monsoons to heatwaves, but have soldiered on regardless and continued to make progress with their respective activities, as can be seen from all of this month's reports.

It was disappointing to see the board announcement, that we will reluctantly place the Tickner's Crossing Project on hold after tender costs for the construction of a new road bridge came in much higher than expected. (Full information can be found in the "[Latest News](#)" section of the WACT Website.) On the positive side, work continues at Rooks Hill, with Phase 1 nearing completion and preparatory work having begun on Phase 2 of the project to excavate a new section of canal from Rooks Hill to link up with the Birtley Bridges section.

Dave Miller

Dredger Group

We made some good progress this month on *Pauline's* summer maintenance tasks. She was sandblasted early in the month and has received her first hull blacking coat. Two more to go before that's completed. The hull is covered in small corrosion pits but considering her age (50ish) she is in reasonable condition. Extra storage has been added inside her cabin in an attempt to tidy up the general 'stuff' needed when dredging. Solar panels have been fitted to keep both the domestic and starter batteries charged. These will also keep our hand-held radios charged.



Pauline, with her new Blacking

We still have many jobs on the 'to do' list, but *Pauline* is now ready to be launched as soon as there is sufficient water level. Not much hope of that before the end of October! On the bright side, once launched she should not need to be slipped again for another 3 years. I shall be away on holiday for the next two weeks, after which Brian will also be on holiday, so not much boat maintenance will be achieved over the next 4 weeks!

Charlie Coxwell

Eric Walker Group

Progress has continued on Rooks Hill and the team have been involved with a number of tasks. These have included extensive earth moving to profile the ground behind the east bank and towpath down towards the flood plain on Cranleigh Waters. The pond on the west bank near the bridge is also taking shape, although it still needs to be lined to hold water, but the Plastecowood piles that delineate the pond from the bank of the canal are all now in place. These will eventually have Plastecowood rails fitted to them to complete the "soft bank" formation.



Bricklaying at Rooks Hill

Brickwork has continued on the bridge parapet and wing walls and will soon be up to the level when the purpose made coping pieces can be fitted, virtually completing the bridge with only the access ramps to be constructed. Work has also commenced on Phase 2 of the project. The first operation carried out was to excavate to a level along the east bank in order for the Plastecowood piling and gabion basket soft bank configuration to go in.

Dennis Gillen

Material published in *Working Party News* represents the views of the contributors and should not, unless specifically indicated, be assumed to be the policy of the Trust.

Monday Group

As mentioned in last month's report, we did not complete cutting the permissive towpath between Drungewick Lock and the road bridge. That has now been done. We also cut round the lock again and, at the aqueduct site, we trimmed both sides of the canal.

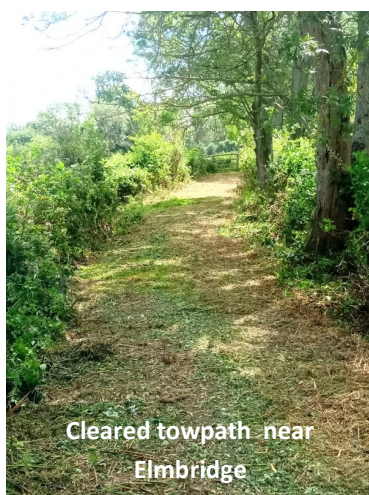
In addition, Baldwin's Knob Lock received our attention. Devil's Hole and Loxwood Locks together with Brewhurst winding hole were tidied up and considerable time was spent removing Himalayan Balsam from the latter.

Finally, everyone will be aware of how hot it was on the 20th. In those conditions (33 degrees) we could only attend to Three Compasses and Tickner's. That will leave Gennets to do next time.

Nick Wood

Midweek Working Party

We have only had 3 weeks out this month as on our 4th week we had our annual MWWP barbecue with partners and people who have retired from the group. It was the very hot Wednesday but we all ate under the trees and a good time was had by all.



Cleared towpath near
Elmbridge

During the month, our work at Alfold Road was completed and we followed on by clearing the very overgrown towpath from Elmbridge to Mill Farm which had been closed for several years. We then cleared the vegetation at Gosden Aqueduct to enable viewing of the structure to see what remedial work needs doing. Also, a group have been clearing trees and vegetation on the bank between Cranleigh Waters and the stretch of canal between the Birtley Bridges for work to begin on stabilising the bank.

The hoardings around Tickner's Crossing compound have been painted in WACT green, so they now look cared for and a couple of the team have chainsawed the trunks in the depot so that logs can be chopped up.

Our wonderful sprayer has been tackling the Giant Hogweed along the Navigation but it will take two weeks for the chemicals to have effect. If you have seen a spaceman on your travels along the canal, that will be him.

Margaret Darvill

Working Party Diary

Every Monday	Monday Group	Contact Tom Close
Every Monday and Tuesday	Northern Working Party (Monday) Northern Working Party (Tuesday)	Contact David Stevenson Contact Stephen David
Every Tuesday (late October to March)	Hedgelaying	Contact Nick Baxter
Every Tuesday and Thursday	Boat Maintenance	Contact John Reynolds
Every Wednesday	Midweek Working Party	Contact Margaret Darvill
Every Wednesday and Thursday	Eric Walker Group	Contact Dennis Gillen
Every Thursday	Tickner's Depot	Contact Mark Feeney
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

Tickner's Depot

At the Spring meeting, a question was asked as to what was going to happen to the 40 or so tree trunks lying in the canal bed at Rooks Hill. Well, the EWG team had since moved them to just beyond the parking area ready for removal. A chance meeting with one of our neighbouring land agents, has resulted in getting them moved to the depot for milling. No mean feat, as the first load of 8 trunks weighed over 14 tons! We've recently acquired an attachment that turns a chainsaw into a portable sawmill. We'll be using that to convert the trunks into useable timber up to 3.8m long.



Some of the tree trunks recovered from Rooks Hill

The 14' trailer suffered a minor incident a while back, when the tie-down ring was pulled out of the floor with some overzealous ratchet-strapping! The floor was a bit rotten, which didn't help. The old floor deck has been removed and new phenolic plywood cut to shape. By the time you read this, it should be ready for use again.

Thanks to the Saturday and NWP groups, the toilet block, once looking forlorn and unkempt, is now resplendent in its fresh coat of WACT green. The canteen roof isn't quite finished yet. I reported it being too hot to get up there in May. Well, as you know, June was even worse. Thirty-five degrees in the shade equals melted pensioners in the full sun. With a bit of luck, and some cloud cover, we can get on the roof soon and complete the job.

Mark Feeney

Mobile Display Vehicle

The MDV season is well under way. During May we exhibited at Dunsfold Fete and Bramley Fete, both of which enjoyed glorious weather, hence the attendance was extremely good and many people were keen for an update on our current local projects.

On June 6th, we attended Loxwood Fete. Sadly, the weather gods did not look down kindly upon us but many brave souls turned out regardless of the persistent rain. It was a great disappointment for all those who worked so hard organising everything.

On the 13th and 14th of June, for the first time, we exhibited at the Surrey Hills Enterprises Country Fair at Merrist Wood. On the first day the attendance was 2000 visitors and there was great interest in our venture and a number showed their support with donations.

On June 27th, Roger officiated at Cranleigh Carnival, with the help of Chris Jones and Brian Morgan, who had a very positive, busy day (big event on our calendar). On the same Saturday we supported the Kennet & Avon 75th Anniversary at the Reading Water Fest, with the aid of a gazebo and the help of Bill Nicholson and Graham Hawkes. Visitor numbers were high and we enjoyed a lot of interactive discussion and interest in WACT, which made for a very memorable day.

We will be out again on the 4th July at Elstead Fete, followed by Parham Steam Rally, near Storrington on the 13th and 14th July. Anybody who wishes to come along and join us on one of our dates, will be very welcome.



WACT on tour at Reading Water Fest

Phil Short

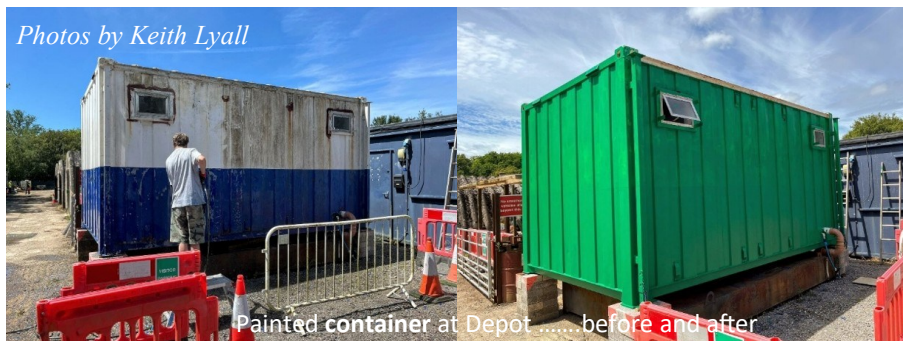
Saturday Group

In June, six of us, including a Duke of Edinburgh's Award participant, spent the day at Tickner's Depot where we tackled several tasks. We started off by firing up the hydraulic log splitter and processing some of the logs in the heap in front of the log bays.

We then moved on to the scaffold store where we tidied up the interior and stacked most of what was on the ground onto the shelving. You can now actually see the floor and walk to the back of the store keeping your feet on the ground!

The rest of the day was spent on the toilet block container where we gave the exterior a good scrape down, sanding and jetwash. A start was then made on painting it WACT green. Quite a few coats were needed and thanks to the assistance provided by Northern

Photos by Keith Lyall



Painted container at Depot before and after

Working Party members the following Tuesday, the outside has been completely transformed. There are a few patches that need welding repairs and a bit more painting to finish the job, that we plan to get completed next month.

If you would like to join us, the Group normally meets on the second Saturday of every month and our next session is planned for the 11th July. 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

Northern Working Party

Most of our work in June has been at Rooks Hill where we have continued with bricklaying on the bridge and around the culvert outlet, and filling gabion mattresses on the east bank of the new canal cut. Thanks to KSCRG who attended the site for a weekend working party, that section of canal bank is now almost



Photo by Bill Nicholson

Mattress bank at Rooks Hill

finished. On the southern edge of the site we have done more excavation work and extended the line of the canal bed a further 11 metres towards the location for the new Fanesbridge Lock in Phase 3 of the project. Phase 1 is now nearing completion and we have spent time clearing up the site and transporting unrequired materials and equipment back to Tickner's Depot.

With dredger "Pauline" having had her hull recently sand-blasted, we assisted the Dredger Group with putting the first

coat of blacking on her bottom at Drungewick Slipway. A messy job, with a few more coats still to be applied!

The Saturday Group had done a lot of preparatory work in readiness for repainting the toilet container at Tickner's Depot. We subsequently spent a day on site applying a number of WACT green coats to the container, which is now looking a lot smarter.

On an extremely hot day, we went to Tickner's Crossing to construct a drainage inspection chamber on the verge of the proposed temporary road. We also positioned pegs along the bed of the excavated route to mark the level of the sub-base for the road. (Sad to hear that future works have been paused). All equipment has now been removed from the large blue container in the yard at Tickner's Crossing and taken to the Depot.

Work has continued at Tickner's Depot on the shelter for the diesel engine for the log splitter. We have extended the roof of the log bays so that there is an overhang over the concrete base, where the engine and, in future, the large diesel powered 4 inch pump can be stored and protected from the worst of the weather. A metal sheet wall has been installed at the rear of the shelter to provide even more protection. We have also started positioning the hydraulic hoses so that it will be straightforward to move the log splitter between each log bay and reconnect the hoses. We are hoping to finally arrange a layout that will not require the hydraulic hoses to be disconnected at all when the splitter is moved from one bay to another.

Dave Miller



Photo by Keith Lyall

Excavated canal at Rooks Hill

Thursday Group

Having successfully used the Aquadam at Birtley Bridge 1 to facilitate the installation of stop plank channels on the bridge, we recovered the dam and transported it back to the Depot for cleaning and packing away. After jet-washing, we inflated the dam with air to check for any leaks. Unfortunately, a leak was discovered in one of the tubes, which is going to require repair.



Photo by Ian Lower

Fixing canal liner at Brewhurst

Following a report of concerns that the fabric lining of the canal near Brewhurst Lock had come loose, we attended the area to investigate and discovered that a long length of the material had become detached from the bank. By pegging down with rebar hoops, we were able to temporarily re-secure the lining.

The forward bench seating in each of the Trust's trip boats was beginning to look tired, as was the sliding hatch cover for *Josias Jessop*. Fortunately, we found some phenolic plywood at the Depot to make replacements. The aft benches on *JJ* were still sound but in need of painting. With the exception of

the starboard bench on *Wiggonholt* which still needs a coat of paint to match the port bench, all of the refurbishments have now been made.

It was apparent that wildlife was managing to access the control cabinet at Birch Copse, so to dissuade them we laid a row of bricks behind the gap at the bottom of the doorframe. Additionally, we re-laid the weed membrane over the large spoil heap at Tickner's Crossing to make it more secure, tidied up the area around the dams at Bonfire Hanger, eased the pedestrian gate at Brewhurst Lock that was becoming difficult to open and shut, and carried out routine service maintenance on the control cabinets and locks at Devil's Hole and Loxwood.

Brian King



Photo by Chris Everett

Aquadam inflated at Depot

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