

Editorial

Not a lot this time - everybody has no doubt been too busy celebrating the festive season. Or maybe everybody was involved in the Santa cruises, which, by all accounts were very successful. But all in all it looks as if 2012 will bring plenty to keep the volunteer work parties well occupied.

A Happy New Year to one and all.

Bill

Thursday & Sunday Group

Is January going to bring the winter rain? This is a major consideration in terms of finding the leak in the Loxwood pound. Although we have plenty of winter abstraction water available presently, once we get to April the summer allocation comes into force and of course the boat operations restart. What we are fairly confident of is that there is very little leakage through the bank, because we cannot see any. If the gates and ground paddles are watertight at both locks then there will be only a little water going down the canal. In the Loxwood pound there are some land drain inputs and once the ox-bow is full, which is land drain filled, then excess water from there goes into the canal over the bank. Work was done at both ends of the ox-bow to reseal the old river course. Looking at the bottom riverbank where the river used to run into and out of what is now the ox-bow, there is only a little seepage. We have never established the flow of water through the bank from the canal into the ox-bow or from the ox-bow into the canal. There was a time when water went through the overflow pipes into the ox-bow but they were stopped off. So my personal view is now that it will take time to fill the voids under the canal with water and three months is a short time to achieve the establishment of where those voids are.

At Southland lock the bricklaying goes on with gusto. We are using mortar that come in dry premix plastic bags. This is more expensive than the usual sand and cement, but always gives the correct mixture of cement, sand and lime and if the mix is made too sloppy the addition of some more powder tightens it up well. A recent batch of sand of a radically different colour from that previously obtained underlined that the premix mortar will give a consistent colour. The bricklayers are delighted with the mortar being offered, so that is a recommendation in itself. One thinks that sand is sand, but for the bricklayers the sand varies from pit to pit and even within one pit. In 2000 sand from Pendean near Midhurst was being recommended; currently it is Rock Common.



Looking towards the head of Southland lock, the lower gate recess is on the right - 22 Dec 22 2011 (Photo: Julian Morgan)

Working Party Diary

Every Sunday and Thursday	Mainly construction work	Contact Eric Walker for details
Usually first & third Mondays of the month	'Mrs Bucket' - Keeping Up Appearances	Details from John Empringham
Every Wednesday	Mid-Week Working Party	Check with Ray Pick for confirmation of venue
Every Wednesday Thursday & Sunday as required	Loxwood Link Maintenance	Check with Kev Baker
Every Wednesday	Maintenance sessions at Tickner's Heath Depot	Contact John Smith/Ken Bacon
Every Thursday (currently Fridays)	Winston Harwood Group	Contact Tony Clear for details
9 January 2012	Annual Dinner - Arundel	Contact Vanessa Lamey (as last month)
16 January	Navvies' Christmas lunch at Sir Roger Tichborne, Loxwood	Contact Geoff Perks (see last WPN) at 61 Ashleigh Road, Horsham, RH12 2LE

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The scaffolding has been put at a double width along one side of the lock. This will enable the movement of materials along the scaffolding without disturbing the workers. The historic 1813 quoins for the bottom gates were grouted in December.

The formwork for the top sill (off side) walls was completed and over a three-week period 20m³ (44 tonnes) of ready-mix concrete was poured. We used a skip (donated by Mike Burras a long time ago) with the Case machine to place the concrete. The formwork was struck and we all looked on in amazement. Well done Martyn Baker. We will be filling behind that wall with clay this month, which will enable the digger to track onto the wall to lift the formwork up for the other top sill wall (towpath side). Eventually with the digger in that position we will be able to place the concrete on that wall.

Join us

The Thursday & Sunday Group generally meets at 09:30 at Southland. If you need directions, please ring 07717 855340 for the latest info.

By the way, 2011 Christmas Day and 2012 New Years Day both falling on a Sunday has meant we have lost a lot of working time. In 2012 the public holidays will be on a Tuesday and Wednesday so there is little excuse for not coming on the usual working party days!

Eric Walker

Hedgelaying group

Greetings to all and sundry for 2012 from the Hedglaying Group. Our last meeting of 2011 saw a little flooding and as neither of us wanted to gently slide backwards into 4ft of water, we decided against any actual laying but to titillate by doing some housework. Trying to light a fire (which has never defeated me before - use plenty of dry boy scouts if girl guides aren't available) was a little taxing. What had been dry material on the towpath had had a liberal soaking from the RAIN and by sitting in a now very, very full cut i.e. starting to trickle across the towpath. We won and eventually burnt it all. Also, my reasons for not leaving binders and stakes lying around became clear as Arundel and Littlehampton have no use for them apart from firewood.

The stalwart mover and groover Dave had kindly delivered our MWWP-cut stakes and binders and I didn't want to see them go any further.

The end of November plus December saw us lay a total of 30m which, for two days, I think is pretty good. This leaves about 227m to lay this season which may not be completed until the end of 2012. We shall see, as it would be a shame to waste any cut material but the length left does equate to about 22 days of work. This is against the probable number of work days of 11+6=17.

I have been asked for my "wish list" for 2012 so, here it is:

To be younger (no aches & pains)

To have more younger volunteers

Less visible concrete used on the canal

A better view on aesthetics on restoration

No new buildings that do not fit in with the vernacular (many expletives vis-a-vis the Visitor Centre)

I would like to point out that a canal is just a water filled ditch and without its history, wildlife, plants and canal architecture it is nothing but a ditch!

Yours hopefully for a better future,

Keith Nichols

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Winston Harwood Group

Not much to report with the Christmas break included. The final 'square-up' at Rose Walk did not happen thanks to the weather that Friday. This short cut for youngish cattle can now be used.

Tony Clear (for David Junkison)

The Mrs Bucket Group - keeping up appearances on Mondays

After another session in Sidney Wood in early December we reckon we have done about half the job. This year we are clearing both sides of the canal, not just the towpath. Brambles, saplings and other thick vegetation on the off side have encroached in to the canal quite significantly in places, so clearance is likely to take longer this year. We shall need at least another two outings to get to lock 16.

The approaching festive season and the weather meant that numbers were depleted for our second meeting, so three intrepid fellows did a lot of tidying up at Loxwood before the bitterly cold rain set in. Temporary repairs to the fence adjacent to the cycle racks, clearing the ditch at the far end of the supplementary car park, disposing of builders' rubble and fly tipped garden rubbish from beneath the hazel hedge and an extensive litter pick were undertaken. The car park environment looks a lot better now.

We meet again on the 9th and 23rd January, most likely in Sidney Wood.

Nick Wood

Loxwood Pound leak rectification

The Council of Management has agreed a scheme for sealing leaks in the section of canal between Loxwood Lock and Devil's Hole Lock. This is based on meticulous preparatory work by John Talbot, our Chief Engineer, who has negotiated specialist plant hire from a local company on very favourable terms. We would very much like to save costs by using a volunteer to take charge of the scheme; if you are interested please contact John Talbot (jcst@weyandarun.co.uk).

The way things were

Following a suggestion from one of our readers, here is the first of an occasional look back at familiar canal scenes 'then and now'. The first is Malham Lock, the second lock on the actual Wey & Arun Junction Canal, a couple of miles north of Newbridge. The lock can be seen today from the footpath which passes Malham Farm, east of the B2133 road between Newpound (Wisborough Green) and Loxwood. When first 'discovered' in 1972, the chamber was full of all manner of junk which was gradually removed over a period, which allowed the chamber to be dug out, the walls repaired, and the bridge rebuilt for the first time (it was subsequently re-built slightly wider to allow passage of farm machinery). In the second



image, from 1976, the comparative absence of health and safety is noted, but it was over 25 years ago, a frightening prospect for your editor who remembers working at Malham - including driving a tractor and trailer full of junk from the lock to the Itchingfield tip one bank holiday, causing all manner of traffic chaos.

The final picture (all are from the WACT archives) shows the restored chamber; though why it was felt necessary to fit top gates remains a mystery to me.

