

### Editorial

The month of January saw another significant step forward in the volunteer work programme, with bricklaying commencing at the new Compasses Bridge. This is alongside the volunteer brickies' efforts at Gennets Bridge Lock, which also got under way recently. There are reports and some pictures in this issue of *WPN*, while more pictures can be found on the WACT website.

More visiting groups news - on the weekend of 16/17 January we hosted WRG BITM (that is to say Waterway Recovery Group Bit in the Middle) who carried out some tree surgery and management work at the Whitley Manor railway bridge site, as well as digging a trial pit to uncover what remains of the foundations of the bridge at Rushett Farm, both near Cranleigh in Surrey.

Finally, and sadly, most will be aware of the death in January of former WACT Treasurer and Vice Chairman Jim Phillips. Over 20-plus years of service to the Trust, Jim played a leading role in moving us from a purely voluntary, amateur-run organisation to becoming still voluntary-based, but professionally organised, and with fundraising capabilities to employ contractors on ambitious, professional projects. Jim will be very much missed - typical of the man was the way that he always took the trouble to say how much he enjoyed reading *WPN*, which gave him an insight into how the money was being spent at the sharp end of the project.

*Bill*

### Thursday and Sunday Group

Naturally the heavy rain in January made getting to the site at Gennets Bridge Lock (GBL) difficult - or impossible for some. In the lock itself there are three small pumps working away which, if not blocked by leaves, keep the water down in the lock to a few inches. The ice and snow was another matter. The rule for starting to lay bricks used to be three degrees centigrade and rising, it is now five degrees and rising.

The site routine is to mix the mortar and the back fill at the beginning of the day, then lay the bricks, so on the next working day the void behind the brickwork can be filled. The routine continues with the regular task of putting up and repairing the newt fence at the end of the working day. The bricklaying is concentrated on the bridge abutments and the bridge parapet foundations.

At Baldwin's Knob Lock we have put up a

fence at the end of the lock and replaced the electricity cabinet. Because of the state of access to the lock, the materials were moved there using our logistics team's sponsored 4x4 (in place of the Trust Land Rover) and trailer from GBL to Brewhurst, and from there by work boat *May Upton* to the lock. The logistics team also moved some concrete blocks and paving slabs from Tickner's Heath to GBL.

We are lucky that Edward can do our welding, including repairs to the scaffolding, stop plank steels and the tool vault. A team under Martyn Baker is preparing the top cill for the reinforced concrete invert.

With a regular group of 15 and more people joining the group, the programme is being pulled forward, just how much it is too early to say as the weather will constrain work over the next three months.

Despite the general downturn of the value of recycling materials we are still able to get cash through recycling batteries.

The Thursday and Sunday Group meets at 09:30. The TSG has a work briefing form emailed out before the working day. Please email Eric Walker if you want to get on that circulation list.

*Eric Walker*

## Mrs Bucket Group - Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

As anticipated in the last *WPN*, we continued working in Sidney Wood during January. We have cleared both culverts yet again and repaired the safety fence above the first culvert (near Firtree copse). Trees on the non-towpath side of the canal have been cut back, a channel for the water at the overspill weir near lock 16 has been dug out which will reduce the water level in the canal even more and we cleared the culvert out-flow stream, including the removal a large branch which had broken off an adjoining huge oak tree. The surplus water should now flow more freely.

We need to return to complete tidying up from the overspill weir to lock 16, likely in February when we are meeting on the 1st and 15th.

*Nick Wood*

## Summit (Northern) Working Party

On 16 January, our now regular third Saturday team spent the day dismantling the scaffold that we had constructed in December from which the contractors were able to erect the bridge parapets. We then transferred it into the canal bed

to create a complete deck under the bridge from which the bricklayers could work (see visiting groups report elsewhere).

Such is the pace of volunteer work on this site that two weeks on it is difficult to remember exactly what else we did! I should mention that both Dave and Andrew Evans put in many hours on site between the organised visits. Their preparation means that we never waste time when we arrive to work on site.

The next third Saturday work party is on 20 February when we hope to continue the bricklaying if the weather allows.

*Bill Nicholson*

## Hedgelaying Team

Wassail all. 'S'now the leader spoketh and low, it did, a little bit. One evening and morning - then gone. Was that winter or will it be later this year, like April? A horticulturalist's nightmare.

Just to ramble a bit further, does age impair judgement or is it sheer stupidity that on 26 January I drove into a field believing that I wouldn't get stuck. Wrong! So thanks Steve for towing me out, backwards, at about 20mph. I don't need to go to Alton Towers for my thrills. Just try driving backwards with no speed control



## Hedging at Haybarn

*The hedgelaying team's recent efforts at Haybarn, along the Arun Navigation section of canal, 26 January 2016, met with general approval. Keith Nichols took the pictures (after he had been extricated from the mud).*



in a field and then a 90 degree turn through a gateway. Pass me fresh underwear somebody please.

And now, the boring stuff.

The last three Tuesdays of January saw us move from Devil's Hole and coppicing, down to Haybarn and the start of laying. A day of flooding and strong wind, a day of cold but glorious sunshine, a day of gale force wind and driving rain. The weather isn't boringly sunny and hot then.

So respectively we laid 8m in half a day, 17m in a full day and 12m in half a day. Good going, good teamwork, rubbish leader I heard someone say.

I met the landowner on the 26th, who was very pleased with what we were doing. So a big pat on the back to all of the team and a cow pat on the head for me.

So far I've not seen much wildlife at the Haybarn apart from the usual swans and one bedraggled Redwing who was as p....d off with the rain as we were.

I hope this leaves you as it has left me!

*Keith Nichols*

## Visting Groups - NWPG

As many will have seen from the WACT website, 22 January saw the start of volunteers laying bricks, blocks and pavers at Compasses Bridge. It is now full steam ahead until the contractors return at Easter (not far away) to divert the access road into the airfield across the new bridge.

NWPG members Mike Fellows and Graham Hawkes kindly joined us on the Friday of this weekend to set out the brickwork and to generally work out how it was all going to fit together. Dave Evans and a small team finished off the scaffold steps down onto the working platform that neatly covers the area under the bridge. This means that there is plenty of covered space to both lay and store bricks at the same time.

It is also kitted out with a set of 110v light units so that neither the weather nor the dark can now



**First brick at Compasses, laid by Mike Fellows of NWPG (pic supplied by Bill Nicholson)**

stop work from proceeding. And proceed it did. On Saturday we were joined by fellow NWPG bricklayers some of whom have not laid a brick on the W & A since the construction of Loxwood New Lock!

We were pleased to train up one of our Saturday team (who showed great promise) so that we managed to employ five brickies in total on the two main walls. By the end of the weekend, 11 courses had been laid on the north side and eight courses on the south.

Once the canal had been rapidly pumped out by the new 6in pump, work continued on the training

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Dave Evans	Health & Safety Officer		<a href="mailto:compasses@weyandarun.co.uk">compasses@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
Eric Walker	Loxwood Projects	07717 855340	<a href="mailto:tsg@weyandarun.co.uk">tsg@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
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John Smith	Tickner's Depot	01903 235790	<a href="mailto:depot@weyandarun.co.uk">depot@weyandarun.co.uk</a>
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walls on the west side of the bridge where a final facing course of blocks has to be laid on both sides. About half of this work was completed during the weekend. On top of the bridge, Dave (on Saturday) and Malcolm (Sunday) completed about two thirds of the pavers for the footway that runs across.

All these tasks were supported by a team of brick movers, cutters and mortar mixers throughout the weekend. Moving the bricks and blocks down to the canal was greatly aided by a bespoke chute such that they didn't have to be manhandled down the steep steps onto the platform.

This was a very productive and rewarding weekend which has set us up well for the next couple of months. We were fortunate that after all the frosts of the previous week the weather was positively balmy and ideal for all the construction work we had planned. In February we look forward to a return visit from LWRG.

*Bill Nicholson*

## Tickner's Heath Depot

Well, a twelfth of 2016 has gone and whoever is managing the weather needs to get their act together as here at the outpost of empire we have gone from balmy days to days when brass monkeys were seen without their proverbials. But are we down-hearted, those of us sojourning in the land God gave to Cain? - No!

January saw the team attempting to repair an outboard for the *May Upton* workboat. Somehow the spark plug had got itself cross threaded and refused to start. We purchased a new plug and managed to tap out the plug hole but to no avail as we could not get a good enough seal around the plug. Luckily we had repaired another outboard earlier last year and so the crew of the *MU* no longer have to do their impression of 'Sanders of the River' when moving the old girl along the canal.

Taking advantage of the slack period, the team set its collective skills towards the task of putting in place an electrical circuit for the workshop and garage. This will give us much needed lighting and power, which means that we can further extend our already diverse and collective skill for the benefit of the trust.

Our last working day of the month saw us decamp to the canal centre for the annual ceremony of changing the lock combination. Unlike last year things went like a dream and all was done and dusted by the time yours truly turned up to supervise. However, I did have time to ensure our resident painter and decorator managed to complete his task with the minimum of fuss. I shouldn't really have bothered as the team were all under the watchful eye of Lyn Nash which was enough to ensure that we were all on our best behaviour.

Well, I guess that's about it for this month. All the best.

*John Smith*

## Navvies' Festive Lunch

Just enough space for a reminder that the Navvies' Festive Lunch will be held on 10 February. Not sure if there are still any places available, but full details appeared in the last two issues of *WPN*.

## Volunteer Time Sheets

At the request of our insurers, the Trust is now using a new form on which to record the work done by our volunteers. This shows the various types of work we do, including planning, obtaining approvals, construction, maintenance, publicity, office support, boat operations and others. We will need to get used to the new form but it should provide a more complete picture of all the work being done by the Trust.

*Julian Cheek*

## 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	Details from Margaret Darvill
Every Wednesday (plus Thursday and Sunday as required)	Loxwood Link Maintenance	Check with Kev Baker
Every Wednesday	Maintenance sessions at Tickner's Heath Depot	Contact John Smith/Ken Bacon
Tuesdays or Fridays	Work in Lording's area	Contact Tony Clear for details
Various Tuesdays	Hedge Laying	Contact Keith Nichols
Third Saturday of the month	Summit level	Contact Dave Evans
10 February	MWWP Navvies' Lunch	See WPN 265/266 (available on WACT website)
23 April	WACT Annual Meeting	See next issue of <i>Wey-South</i> for full information