

Wey & Arun Canal News

December 2017

A review of recent events on the Wey & Arun Canal

Prestigious award for Surrey volunteer project



Left: The new bridge with the public viewing area on the left.
Right: Compasses Bridge Project Manager Tony Ford (L) and Site Manager Dave Evans (R) in front of the old causeway.
Below: Dave Evans and other key volunteers show off the Living Waterways Award.



The Wey & Arun Canal Trust won national recognition at the Canal & River Trust Living Waterways Awards 2017, presented at a ceremony in Birmingham on 27th September. The Canal Trust received a Commended award in the Community and Volunteering category for the rebuilding of Compasses Bridge at Alfold, Surrey. Volunteers achieved a huge financial saving by doing the majority of the work on the new bridge; the Trust's professional contractors handed over to the volunteers after building the basic concrete shell.

In the 1930s an ugly and poorly constructed concrete causeway replaced the original canal bridge at Compasses, which at that time carried the main Horsham-Guildford road. The canal became neglected and forgotten. The Canal Trust aims to restore the canal for the benefit of the whole community. The Trust is proud of the new bridge which is faced with locally made bricks and includes a public viewing area on the site of the old causeway. Over time the Trust plans to restore the whole canal section to navigable condition, with public boat trips and access for canoeists and walkers.



Rebuilt Sussex lock is complete

Volunteer work to rebuild Gennets Bridge Lock, near Ifold (Sussex) and Alfold (Surrey) is nearing completion. The team is now working hard to landscape the site as an attractive area for the benefit of residents and visitors, including walkers on the long-distance Wey-South and Sussex Border Paths. The two paths meet immediately next to the lock. The Sussex Border Path crosses the canal on a new arched brick bridge. The volunteers have been working on the lock and bridge for more than two years. The landscaping work includes planting 180 metres of new hedging and a number of trees, all using native species.

As part of the construction project, the team had to relocate Great Crested Newts, a legally protected species, which had made their home in the bed of the derelict canal. This needed the Canal Trust to obtain a licence from Natural England (NE) and construct ponds as an alternative habitat for the newts. NE recently visited the site and were extremely impressed with the standard of the work done by the volunteers on the newt ponds.

More work is needed to restore the canal on either side of the lock for boats; once this work is finished the Canal Trust will install lock gates and other equipment needed for navigation.



Gennets Bridge Lock as future boaters will see it - with some of the volunteer construction team at the far end.

Visitors help with new slipway

Not far south of the newly completed Compasses Bridge at Alfold, Surrey, volunteers have been hard at work on a new slipway that will make it much easier to launch small boats on the restored canal. The project received a boost in October when the national Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) organised a week-long volunteer work camp to build one of the two concrete side walls. Some 20 canal restoration enthusiasts from all over the country, covering a wide age range, willingly gave their time and skills to working in the autumn mud. To meet the deadline for pouring concrete at the end of the week, the team worked on into the evenings under floodlights. The Canal Trust hopes to open the slipway formally in the first half of 2018.



Waterway Recovery Group volunteers constructing the new slipway wall.

Volunteers protect river bank

The Canal Trust is working to improve the Hunt Nature Park along the banks of the Cranleigh Waters river in Shalford, Surrey, close to the original route of the Wey & Arun Canal. In 2013, volunteers built a new path following the winding route of the river and allowing walkers to avoid the busy cycle path that runs along the former Horsham-Guildford railway line. At the end of 2013 the most severe floods for many years hit the area and badly eroded the river banks, very close to the new path in several places. More flooding could clearly damage the path itself, which has now become very popular with local residents. The Canal Trust has acted to protect the path by reinforcing the banks in the more vulnerable areas. The approach chosen was very environmentally sensitive, using timber boarding which was then covered with topsoil and planted to create natural reinforcement.

Volunteers installed the bank protection at three sites over two weekends in June and October.



Volunteers install the new protection on the river bank.

Plans for new Sussex bridge

After two years of preparation work, the Canal Trust has applied to Horsham District Council for permission to rebuild Harsfold Bridge, on the canal near Wisborough Green, Sussex. After the canal fell into disuse the former canal bridge at this site disappeared and was replaced by a causeway which carries a farm track and a public right of way. The causeway is the only significant blockage in a 2km section of canal running south



from the Trust's showpiece site at Orfold (sometimes known as Lordings), where there is an aqueduct, an unusual waterwheel and a partially restored lock.

Canal Trust engineer Nigel Yarwood has developed plans for a relatively simple replacement bridge that could be largely constructed by volunteers. The Trust is enthusiastic about the prospect of opening up the green canal corridor through the peaceful and isolated Arun valley.

Staying up to date

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