

Working Party News

No. 324

For WACT Volunteers

December 2020

Editorial

At this time of year it's usually the weather that hampers our activities, but while working conditions have been good it's the blasted virus that has stepped in to slow us down.

Hopefully, by the time that this missive hits your inbox, we'll be operating under a regime that allows the work parties to resume, albeit under strict social distancing. I know that everyone is keen to get restarted.

One bit of good news is that the Trust has now acquired a Nissan Navarro to replace the Land Rover that had to be returned to Harwoods.

With Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Peter Winter

Mrs Bucket Group

Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

Well, here we are again in lockdown! However, as anticipated in the last WPN, at the beginning of November we did manage to get one visit to start work in Sidney Wood. We cleared from Firtree Copse to just beyond the first bund including culvert 1 which, not unexpectedly, was choked up with leaves.

In place of 'outdoor' meetings we held three weekly discussions via Zoom which had the benefit of keeping us all together and allowed our leader to update us on the emerging Covid implications for the canal and indeed the whole of the inland waterways situation.

At the time of writing, end of November, we hope to resume work in Sidney Wood on 7th December.

Best wishes to all for Christmas and the New Year from the Mrs Bucket Group.

Nick Wood

Boat Maintenance

For most of last month we have been hampered by the general lockdown which prevented all but emergency work. As the trip boats are ready for passengers, we helped Kevin with May Upton; Ian putting in a new wooden deck aft and in the cabins, and me cutting the worn bits out of the long mooring ropes and re-splicing them. She is now tied up on short mooring ropes opposite the Canal Centre. Otherwise, it was a case of taking away step boxes and boathooks for refurbishment at home and Ian ordering twelve melamine-topped tables to be fitted in the New Year to *Zachariah Keppel*, which currently only has chairs on board.

The MCA has just granted *Wiggonholt* a full passenger certificate for 60 passengers valid until the end of November 2021. With the current social distancing, she can only carry a maximum of 16 which will be the situation for our projected Christmas Santa trips. *ZK* will be alongside the canal centre as a static 'Santa's Workshop'. All these arrangements depend on how we are permitted to operate under the relevant Covid tier.

On the 18th November Kevin reported an incident of vandalism involving breaking into an electric box, graffiti and damage to two boats. Ian and I went in the next day to assist. All our five larger boats (*WH*, *ZK*, *JJ*, *MU* and *Wasp*) are now securely moored opposite the Canal Centre, and most of the damage has been repaired

David Arnold

Lengthsman Vacancies

The Trust seeks to recruit two volunteer lengthsman to cover:

Length 3 from Wonersh Bridge, Station Road, down to Birtley Bridge

Length 8 from A281 bridge Alfold down to and including Compasses Bridge.

The job of the Lengthsman is to be the 'eyes and ears' of the Trust; to walk their Length at least monthly and more frequently in times of flood, maintenance or project activity; and to identify and report any issues which need attention. Despite the title, this role is open to both men and women. Access to e-mail is important.

If you are interested, please contact Julian Cheek (julian_cheek@weyandarun.co.uk).



The canal looking good between Loxwood and Devil's Hole

Photo: Roger Wilson

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.

Hedgelaying

Hedgelaying started again this winter with two sessions coppicing hazel to provide stakes and binders, before the lockdown struck and we had to stop. As required, the Group now consists of a maximum of six people on site, with no shared tools, and everyone responsible for processing any material they produce from cutting, through to the finished products, and also including removing brush and creating anti-deer stockades around the cut stools, to allow regrowth to take place. Coppicing requires us all to work at least two tree lengths apart, so there is no problem with maintaining social distancing, and the wood we are working in gives us more than enough individual space for lunch and coffee!

Sadly, I have had to tell six potential hedgelayers that we cannot take anyone new whilst Covid precautions are in place. Hedgelaying training requires close supervision (which is just not possible), and as most people do not have their own tools when they come to us, it is much better for them to try a range of billhooks, before buying one as they are very much a personal choice. I use a Leicestershire pattern, which is double sided with a round handle, while others prefer a single sided blade with an oval handle. Much is also down to how the user finds the weight distribution along the length of the blade and handle.

When we are allowed to restart, I am hopeful that we will complete our first round of coppicing (producing a grand total of 100+ stakes and the same number of binders) in the next session. We can then look forward to start laying the remaining section of the hedge on the opposite bank along the pound between the Canal Centre and Brewhurst Lock before Christmas. Unlike normal practice when we work together to take down hung-up parts of the hedge and to lower cut pleachers without straining (or breaking!) them, everyone will be working individually on their own section of hedge, spread 11 yards apart (to maintain social distancing). This will be similar to a competition, where each person's style will be up for individual scrutiny. This is a high profile site, as it is visible to all the trip boat passengers as well as towpath walkers,

so everyone will be striving for a high standard!

With a maximum of 16 Tuesday sessions remaining before bird nesting stops us, and fewer hedgelayers on site, I am still hopeful that we can complete this section during this season. However, as always, that is very much weather dependent. Hopefully, the 2021/22 season will be free of restrictions, and we can again welcome new members to the team next autumn.

In the meantime, do have a look at what we are doing when you visit Loxwood.

Nick Baxter

Canal Maintenance Unit

With the lockdown curtailing most of our activities I have been looking at upgrades of our lock pump control systems to make them all dual level. This will save money in the future by allowing a lower level in winter months and also in times of water shortage whilst still keeping enough to allow boat movements.

Having discovered the damaged lower sensor at Devil's Hole, I made a replacement and fitted it, but this revealed that the relay had also failed! So a new one was needed, and this in the usual fashion produced another problem as the replacement is wider and would not fit, so a partial rewire ensued to enable the fitting. As part of this Don, one of my team, came in and between us we were able to draw a new cable through to the top sensors. All is now working correctly again.

At Gennets Bridge our friends Burras Ltd have removed the steel piling below the lock, leaving the Trust to remove the earth bund in the near future. This is part of our plans to continue south and restore the Gennets section. The resulting water level currently in the lock gives an indication of anticipated water level in this section once the two culverts are repaired.

The old Hanix excavator was returned to the depot after her breakdown whilst at Cook's Bridge. I have started to repaint her into WACT colours and give some much needed TLC, which should extend the life of this trusty workhorse for a few more years.

Kev Baker

Working Party Diary

Every Monday	'Mrs Bucket' Keeping up Appearances	Contact John Empringham
Monday to Friday (as required)	Canal Maintenance Unit	Check with Kev Baker
Every Tuesday (late October to March)	Hedge Laying	Contact Nick Baxter
Every Tuesday and Thursday	Boat Maintenance	Contact David Arnold
Every Wednesday	Mid-Week Working Party	Details from Margaret Darvill
Every Monday & Wednesday	Tickner's Depot	Contact Ian Prior/John Smith
Every Wednesday and Thursday	Eric Walker Restoration Group	Details from Dennis Gillen/John Reynolds
Every Thursday and 3rd Saturday	Northern Working Party	Contact Bill Nicholson
First Friday of the month	PEST boat group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem
Third Saturday of the month	Summit level	Contact Dave Evans

Eric Walker Group

Prior to the lockdown, work continued at Pallingham on the stonework under the bridge while the site was cleared and left in a safe condition.

As soon as we are able to get back to work, the group will concentrate on completing the project. The main work being to finish the stonework to the towpath under the bridge, but this involves pumping out a considerable amount of water before work can start as shown in the picture below. The other operations will be to complete the repairs to the brickwork and the installation of Cintec anchors to stabilise the stone bridge abutments. This latter activity will be carried out by our contractor Precision Engineering, who recently installed the Platipus anchors at Drungewick Lock.

Dennis Gillen

Tickner's Depot

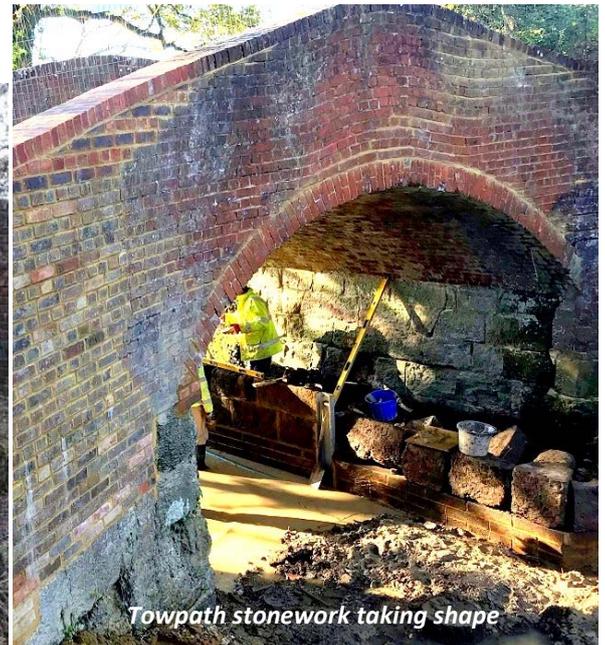
After leading activities at the Tickner's Depot for about 12 years, John Smith is going to change his role to looking after maintenance and repair of smaller items of equipment. Meanwhile, we extend a warm welcome to Ian Prior, who will take over management of the Depot. Ian has a strong interest in industrial heritage and his career was in the aviation industry working in logistics and store keeping.

John recollects how the work of the Trust has changed dramatically over the past decade, with increases in the number and scale of the projects and complexity of the tasks undertaken by the Depot.

Ian will be on-site at the Depot on Mondays while John will continue in his Wednesday slot.



Plenty of water to be pumped out at Pallingham



Towpath stonework taking shape

The Contact List

Name	Group/Project	Tel	email
Julian Cheek	Maintenance Coordination	01483 505566	julian_cheek@weyandarun.co.uk
Maurice Cranefield	Visiting Working Parties	01483 505566	Maurice_Cranefield@weyandarun.co.uk
John Talbot	Health & Safety Director	01483 429918	jcst@weyandarun.co.uk
Dennis Gillen	Eric Walker Group	07866 583753	dennis_gillen@weyandarun.co.uk
Margaret Darvill	Mid Week Working Party	01483 894606	margaret_darvill@weyandarun.co.uk
John Empringham	Monday Group	01483 562657	mondaygroup@weyandarun.co.uk
Kev Baker	Canal Maintenance Unit	07920 755957	kevin_baker@weyandarun.co.uk
Ian Prior	Tickner's Depot Manager	07790 350974	ian_prior@weyandarun.co.uk
John Smith	Tickner's Depot Workshop	01903 235790	depot@weyandarun.co.uk
Nick Baxter	Hedge Laying		hedgelaying@weyandarun.co.uk
Bill Nicholson	Northern Working Parties	0118 9714785	bill57nicholson@gmail.com
Dave Evans	Site Restoration Supervisor		dave_evans@weyandarun.co.uk
Chris Jones	Boat group PEST	01483 421136	chrisryderjones@outlook.com
David Arnold	Boat Maintenance	01403 790168	dja103@hotmail.com
Peter Winter	Working Party News Editor	07722 184117	peter_winter@weyandarun.co.uk