

## Editorial

Not a great deal seems to have been happening; no doubt most of the volunteer work parties have been fully occupied with the leak sealing in the Loxwood pound. The work has taken longer than anticipated, but it was very cold at the beginning.

Then, just as we went to press, the Trust was told by Southern Water that the main sewer pipe running down the side of the bridleway, alongside the canal, has broken somewhere along that stretch and SW will need total access to the path for urgent repairs. We understand that Southern Water is likely to request a bridleway closure. Their break will have to be investigated by the SW CCTV team, which is expected to happen on or around 5 March, and until the outcome is known, canal restoration work has been suspended.

But coming up we have the official opening of the new Canal Centre, for which the auspicious date of 1 April has been chosen; also the Annual Meeting in Pulborough on 28 April.

*Bill*

## The Mrs Bucket Group - keeping up appearances on Mondays

February was an unusual month in that our normal deployments did not apply because members of the group, along with others, assisted Land & Water services in the task of sealing the Loxwood pound up by Devils Hole Lock. Some days it wasn't very warm!! The task also took longer than anticipated. Nevertheless it was very interesting to watch the diggers at work and to appreciate how much time can be saved and the amount of work that can be achieved by the use of heavy equipment.

Two members of the group spent half a day fixing the leased boundary posts in Sidney Wood and discovered the third culvert which will require another visit (in March?) to clear it.

We meet again on 5 and 19 March. Please contact me on 01371 831416 if you would like to join us (John Empringham will be away).

*Nick Wood*

## Hedgelaying group

Greetings one and all from the 'dark side'. I would like it to be known that my February missive was somewhat 'hung, drawn and quartered' by the upper echelons of this august body of volunteers (WACT). Free speech is what was fought for in numerous past wars and also the courts of this fair land - was it not?

Down to the nitty gritty then. As of today, Tuesday 28 February, the team, minus their erstwhile leader for most of the time, has managed to lay a further 65metres, since the last report, in a total of four days. If we carry on at this rate we will do ourselves out of a job and have to have a Group name change.

Whether you like it or not the wildlife keeps on showing its presence vis-à-vis large flocks of fieldfares and redwings, year old swans coming to have a vada at what we are up to, and on time i.e. 1500 hours, the frogs start up their cacophony of croaking (no, not the French but the amphibians).

## Working Party Diary

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
18 March	Mother's Day cruises	See website or contact WACT office
1 April, 12.30pm	Canal centre official opening	
6,7,8,9 April	Easter cruises	See website or contact WACT office
28 April	WACT Annual Meeting, Pulborough	See <i>Wey-South</i> for details

If you had noticed, it's been warm and dry over the last few weeks so the sticks we are attempting to lay have decided to open their buds and show small green leaves. So it's going to get really cold soon then! Probably around Easter?

The dates published in February WPN are likely to change, so keep in touch if you wish, on: 01403 753882 or 07817 798865

Possible dates (I may do a few Sundays, if required)

**Mar** Wed 07, Thurs 15, Fri 23

**Apr** Mon 02, (Tues 10?), Wed 18, Thurs 26

**May** Fri 04, Mon 14, Tues 22, Wed 30 - weather, birds and health permitting.

*Saluté* from Keith *Obersturmführerdasgrossenhedgenlayengruppenleider*

*Keith Nichols*

## Thursday & Sunday Group

Aspects of the 16-month drought are now a national concern and no doubt the boat group will have their prayer mats out soon. At Southland the TSG is very happy with the situation, though we could have done with a few more days of frozen ground to continue with back-filling of the wall on the towpath side; perhaps a quarter of it has been done. This back-filling needed to be done to enable the back-pump pipe to be put in, for which, with the first pour of concrete for the top sill wall done in the following two weeks, we are now ready. What we are concerned about is the dumper will be at risk of churning up the towpath when putting the back-fill in. To avoid this the ground needs to be hard, that is, frozen or baked dry, as it should be in summer. So there will have to be some creative thinking to solve that problem if the next (and last) pour of concrete is to take place soon.

The bricklaying continues on the lock off-side wall, reaching the top from the bottom gate recess to the first ladder recess. The block laying at the bottom of the lock is going well too. It is constrained by the need to get the foundations in where the muck from the lock is stacked up, and that in turn is too close to the area subject to the Natural England licence. So to stay within the licence conditions, we may have to wait until July to get the machine in here.

The Thursday & Sunday Group generally meets at 09:30 at Southland, if you need directions please ring 07717 855340 for the latest info. Thursday is presently very popular but there is scope for more volunteers on a Sunday with lots of jobs to do.

*Eric Walker*

## NWPG at Loxwood Canal Centre

At first glance being asked to landscape the new purpose built Canal Centre at Loxwood didn't seem much of a job. However by lunch time on Saturday 4 February we had 16 volunteers on site and all were fully employed in a variety of constructive tasks! Work started on the previous day when we had to transport up to 40 railway sleepers that had been generously donated by the father of one of our Newbury Working Party Group volunteers. The sleepers were needed to build a protecting wall between the rear of the Centre and the car park. We had the services of two 4x4 vehicles and trailers and by the time that the second trailer had been loaded (at 7pm in the dark and cold next to a silage clamp in Buckinghamshire) we had 37 sleepers available to start building the wall.

Saturday was cold - very cold - but we had the benefit of the Canal Centre in which to keep warm and have our tea breaks in. The workers were split into four teams: the paving team who spent the weekend preparing the base and then laying the slabs for the paving leading up to the two doors; the step team, lead by George Whitehead, who dug out and constructed the wooden steps leading from the car park access to the towpath; the sleeper wall builders



*The Loxwood Canal Centre receives some finishing touches, despite the cold weather (Allan Chambers)*



**Two more views of the NWPG's wintry working weekend at the new Canal Centre, preparing for the opening scheduled for 1 April (Bill Nicholson)**

who by the end of weekend had cut, drilled and concreted in about three fifths of the total length required; and finally, a hardy team who dug back the bank to enable the Trust Landrover to gain future regular access to the towpath to re-fuel the trip boats. One job we've never had to do before on a working party was to break up the sand with a sledge hammer - such was the previous week's frosts.

Saturday night and heavy snow fell on Sussex. Undaunted, we returned to the site, brushed and shovelled the snow from our working area and carried on where we had left off. By 4pm the paving at the Centre entrance was completed, as were the steps. This has left us the paving between the towpath and the Centre, the remainder of the sleeper wall and loads of other work to come back to.

We've planned an extra day on 3 March and have another full weekend on 24/25 March. It'll be touch and go to complete everything by the opening date on 1 April but we'll give it our best shot. Thanks to Ian Burton for managing the work and Dave Kersley for supplying and delivering the equipment and materials. We'll need you both again in March!

*Bill Nicholson*

## Summer camp 2012

WACT will be running a summer canal camp this year, from 23 to 30 June. We welcome volunteers aged between 18 and 70 from all backgrounds, so this is a great chance for those who live beyond a normal commuting distance to get involved with restoring our canal. This year's project will be the construction of a boat house, slipway and landing stages on the dredged section of the summit at Dunsfold between Tickner's Heath and Compasses Bridge crossings. This will enable the Trust to start a trip boat operation on a second length of canal. For further information, see *Wey-South*, contact the WACT office, or visit [www.weyandarun.co.uk/SummerCamp2012.php](http://www.weyandarun.co.uk/SummerCamp2012.php).

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Michael Bates	Health & Safety Officer	07786 323515	<a href="mailto:michael_bates@weyandarun.co.uk">michael_bates@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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