

Editorial

Some real progress has been made in the last few weeks, thanks to our WACT and - especially - NWPG Scamps. The latter has made a real difference with some splendid work on the summit at Dunsfold. WACT's official thanks are winging their way camper-wards, and also to the BITM group for their recent fencing work at Shalford.

On the subject of visiting groups, WACT is looking for a volunteer to take on the coordination of visiting workers. Allan Chambers is standing down after a number of years. He is another who is thoroughly deserving of WACT's thanks, and will be a hard act to follow. Allan says that he will be happy to give full help and support to his successor while they settle in to the job.

Bill

Thursday & Sunday Group - Southland and Northwards



Recent work at Southland sees the lock chamber nearing completion, with all brickwork now finished and work concentrating on the copings and training walls, ready for the gates which are now on order (Eric Walker)

All the brickwork was finished shortly after the first anniversary of the start of the work at Southland Lock. The lock gates have been ordered and the suppliers are awaiting the timber and have scheduled delivery for 27 September. Casting the copings at the bottom of the lock, ready for the gates, has been completed, so the emphasis is now on the copings at the top of the lock. The other tasks this coming month include getting the blocks from Tickner's for use in the training walls, and getting the kit required at the next construction site to a storage site ready for delivery.

The training walls at both ends of the lock have been started. With the harvest on the farm due this month, it is hoped to start clearing the silt from Devil's Hole pound.

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.

Eric Walker



Another Southland Lock image (Eric Walker)

Summer Camps June 23 - July 7

Two camps took place this year, one behind the other, and both staying in Dunsfold Village Hall supported by our new mobile shower unit, which proved invaluable. The first of these was the Wey and Arun camp, led again by George Whitehead, which was originally programmed to carry out some sophisticated repair work on Ifold Lane Bridge. This, though, had to be cancelled due to the previous heavy rain and subsequent high level of the river.

Fortunately Eric Walker was able to accommodate the team of nine at Southland Lock, working on the construction of the South East wing wall. This involved filling the area between the block wall with lean mix concrete bulked by large lumps of hardcore (plumbs) and then backfilling with clay behind the wall.

We made extensive use of the digger, loading concrete and the plumbs in a restricted working area, using a hurriedly filled platform which partially collapsed on one occasion due to the extensive weight of the digger. The machine was driven most of the time by a new camper, Dave Evans, an experienced driver.

The damaged wall was competently replaced and extended by George and his team of nine who worked alongside Eric's Thursday and Sunday team, and they helped with the completion of a number of the concrete copings.

The weather after the constant rain of the previous weeks was absolutely marvellous. It was a pleasure to work at Southland Lock and Eric's hands-on assistance was most appreciated. George Whitehead and Rob Nicholson stayed on to join the NWPG camp for the following week, and John Barnes stayed over for a day.

20 enthusiastic volunteers joined the NWPG camp starting on 30 June, staying at Dunsfold Hall and working at Compasses Bridge. Some of the volunteers were entirely new to canal restoration work and two had travelled from New South Wales and Eastern Scotland respectively. It was however a fine mix of youthful energy and mature experience, highly suitable for this difficult assignment.

The project was to work on the Dunsfold Summit, helping to prepare about 2km of navigable water, for trips on 25-27 August 2012, the date of the Wings and Wheels event, water levels permitting, or later in the year.

On the Saturday, dredging of the canal using a long reach excavator loaned by Tim Raynor -



George Whitehead and others building the new landing stage at Compasses Bridge end, and the long reach excavator removing sandbanks from the canal. This machine was lent at no cost by a wellwisher. Poor lads, it was like the Somme. (Janet Phillips)

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	Winston Harwood Group	Contact Tony Clear for details
Thursday and Sunday	Eric Walker's Group (construction)	Contact Eric Walker for details
15 August	Pirates & Princesses cruises	Details from WACT office
26/27 August	Wings & Wheels	At Dunsfold Park (see p4)

and coordinated by Nick Whitehorn - took place and was completed on the Sunday. This was near to Farnhurst Bridge, and clear of the area around Compasses Bridge where Bill Nicholson's team worked.

The two main elements of the work were to construct a ramp down to the towpath at a reasonable slope from the Compasses Bridge causeway to a new landing stage and back to a field access, and to level and surface 400m of narrow and undulating further towpath as far as Farnhurst Bridge. Ancillary work included a silt trap on the stream that connects to the canal and replacement of the fence on the wing walls to the Compasses causeway.

The team had the use of two diggers and two dumpers, a roller and a more adaptable 'wacker' plate. The ramp required a support system consisting of gabion baskets filled with crushed concrete, designed by Keith Lawrence. Installing these involved initially digging out the old crude retaining structure made up of concrete panels, scaffold poles and railway sleepers, some of which we were able to re-use.

Having to create a reasonable base for the gabion wall necessitated considerable excavation and some double handling. This was exacerbated by the heavy rainfall, especially on the Tuesday night which created unsuitable material, which had to be removed and reduced the efficiency of the plant.

The landing stage was difficult to construct adjacent to the water and required a construction template. Made of plastic 'wood', the jetty has the advantage of not rotting in the wet/dry conditions. A particular problem was, however, driving the front piers into the water of the canal whilst trying to keep them vertical. The posts were driven by hand by operatives standing on our Aquadocks - the recently acquired floating platform assembly. A further problem was bolting the structure together with half the bolt holes under water.

The first job was towpath clearance and subsequent levelling, which was stopped after the heavy rain on the Tuesday night, thanks to the need to create a wide enough track for a 3 tonne dumper and to deliver the Type 1 surfacing, plus the need to create a working front at the beginning of the towpath furthest from the material supply. This meant that the operation could not be finished, and must now be completed by others. Several land drain crossings still remain to be completed before commencement of the paving works.

The sun came out on Thursday and work accelerated on the gabions. By Friday evening the campers had finished the tow path down to the landing stage. With more rain they worked until 1930 and by 2100 they had dispersed 25% of the 80m³ of spoil. They had however managed to complete the fence, some of the land drains and the silt trap. They returned on Saturday morning to disperse the remainder of the 80m³ of spoil. Well done. A great job in appalling weather conditions.

Bill Nicholson and Allan Chambers



Derek of Horsham digging ditches to drain the towpath (Janet Phillips)

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The Mrs Bucket Group - keeping up appearances on Mondays

As in June the continued mixture of rain and sun meant in July that we were required to work at our regular nine sites as the grass, hedges and weed growth had really taken off. Having said that it was good to see the canal so full of water. Nevertheless we have a number of outstanding jobs to do which will have to wait until we can spare the time to tackle them.

We meet again on 6 August and 20 August.

Nick Wood

Tickner's Heath Depot

Well, where did that month go? As usual it seems like only yesterday that I composed last month's epistle. As we are still waiting for the canal side to dry out before taking the Green Goddess for her proving trials the team turned their attention to giving the mini tractor an overhaul and service. It seemed to be running better afterwards but starting it up is still problematical so it would seem that a bit more work is still needed to bring it up to scratch. However, we did manage at long last to have a go at the old 3in sludge pump which had been languishing forgotten in one of the sheds and, after the ministrations of Francis Wellerd and Peter Andrews, burst into life on first pull. When the hoses were connected it proved to be a highly efficient pump.

A request was received for the old caravan to be used as a shelter for the July work camps and as it had been parked at the depot for many a year without moving, the whole team was mobilised to clean and empty it. After years of neglect it was given the mechanical once over. Unfortunately, whilst being transported to its temporary home, one wheel locked solid, so it is back at Tickner's awaiting repair as the braking system needs a thorough going over.

Mick Jones has been busy using his carpentry skills making notice boards for all and sundry. Eventually they will be out on the towpath giving information to the 'great unwashed'.

Ken Bacon has once again proved a tower of strength taking over command when yours truly has decided to skive off for the day. It's a good thing he is here, as he keeps us on the straight and narrow, and tea breaks are always on time when he is around.

Our hard-working scribe Richard Powell has all but completed the inventory. Unfortunately someone (guess who), has decided to move some of the kit around which will require a rewrite. Blooming management. Here can I once again ask that items taken away from the depot are noted on the white forms and placed in the red box by the gates (the form that is). This not only helps us to know where the Trust's kit is, but also the frequency of use.

Finally, our hard worked delivery boy Dave Kersley has been out and about, not only supporting the working parties, but also the last month has seen him directing most of his efforts to the two week work camps. So apologies to those who had to wait a bit longer for his support.

Well I think that's about it for this month, all the best

John Smith

Visiting Groups

WRG BITM brought around 10 volunteers down to Shalford, initially to work on stump pulling on Guns Mouth Island. However, following agreement from Surrey CC this was changed to the erection of a 160m length of post and rail fence along the boundary of the proposed Hunt Park and the A 281. Good weather and an excellent team led by Racheal Banyard resulted in about 145m of the fence being completed, with the remaining section to be completed by the Northern Working Party on 1 September. Work is now being ramped up at this end of the canal with WRG Forestry expected to return in the autumn for more tree work at Guns Mouth Island, and BITM planning an early 2013 visit to pull tree stumps there. Other work parties are planned for works at Hunt Park over the next 12 months.

Bill Nicholson

A further image from the recent camps (Bill Nicholson)



Wings and Wheels

The Wings & Wheels weekend takes place this year at Dunsfold Park on Sunday 26 and Monday 27 August. We have been given a free pitch this year which is very kind of Dunsfold Park. Could I please hear from anyone who would be free to man our stand on either of those two days? Sally Schupke sas@weyandarun.co.uk – and yes, it will come with a free ticket.