

Editorial

The weekend of 1-2 September sees an important milestone, with public boat trips on the summit level, using the 12-seater *John Smallpeice*. A second operational section is a great achievement for our volunteer workers, in particular the visiting groups who have contributed so much to getting this length of canal in navigable condition.

The ever-increasing professionalism of WACT is underlined by our welcoming more members of administrative staff. David Daniels has joined as administrator, based in Shalford, while Kate Taylor and Susan Goble have joined the Granary office team based in Loxwood. Susan is an experienced Tourist Information Centre manager and will help with running the Canal Centre.

David Daniels is also taking over from Allan Chambers on the coordination of the visiting groups who help with restoration work. David is working from Bridge End, Somerswey, Shalford, Guildford GU4 8EQ Monday-Thursday 8.30am-12.30pm. He can be contacted at support@weyandarun.co.uk, 01483 505566.

Rather less favourable news is that we have received a warning from Chichester District Council that Notices to Quit are being served upon unauthorised caravan encampments. As a result, we are advised to ensure that gates to any accessible space are securely locked.

That's all I have room for; a lot is happening and some last-minute reports mean that I have had to omit some photographs. Maybe we can use them next time.

Bill

Thursday & Sunday Group - Southland and Northwards

As the brickwork at Southland was nearing completion there were 14 copings to be cast in situ. These were being done at one per week, if we were lucky, which meant we would not be finished until November. Now the brickwork is complete, the rate has gone up to as high as three per week, meaning that all those copings critical to the fitting of the gates are done and all but those at the end of the lock should be completed by mid-September.

All the blocks for use in the training walls have been brought from Tickner's. So work on the training walls at both ends of the lock can continue. With the harvest on the farms due to be completed in August, it is hoped this will enable us to start clearing the silt from Devil's Hole pound.

The lock gates are scheduled for delivery from Hargreaves in Halifax on 25 September. Prior to that the scaffolding is to be removed and taken back to Tickner's for maintenance and storage. That is also true for the timber, equipment and other materials used during lock construction. And here we are looking forward to Gennets Lock!

Back to the Southland lock gates; basic preparations will be done on the Monday afternoon. To lift the gates into position will involve a combination of the Hyab on the delivery lorry, a 25t tracked excavator and our own 13t tracked excavator. Early (08:30) on the Tuesday the gates will arrive at the lock. During the day the four gates will be lifted into position and then secured. The balance beams will then be fitted onto the gates. On the Wednesday and the Thursday morning the gates and mitre planks will be fitted into position. Allowing time for clearing any snags, WACT hopes to be able to formally accept the gates on the Thursday afternoon.

Visitors to the site will be restricted to the towpath. With luck we will have a viewing platform too.

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

The Mrs Bucket Group - keeping up appearances on Mondays

In response to a plea for help, at the back end of July two members of the group assisted Dave Kersley and Peter Reid to move surplus plastic pipes from DHL to Tickners, and four very heavy lock ladders from Tickners to Southland. In August our two meetings were devoted, once again, to keeping up appearances at our regular sites. In particular we have had to spend considerable time and effort trimming the hedges around Haybarn swing bridge and at Drungewick Lane; brushcutters with suitable attachments allow much to be achieved.

We meet again on the 3rd and 17th of September and then the 1st October when we hope we shall be able to find the time to catch up on some of the outstanding jobs we have been requested to do, not least a long-deferred visit to tidy up Malham lock.

Arising from the chats we have during our 'elevenses' and at lunchtimes we seem to be in the dark about what MWWP is up to. Now we know they are doing very valuable work and they put many more hours in than we do, but we would appreciate a report in *WPN*. Can someone in the group press a few buttons on their computer please? *Read on... (Ed)*

Nick Wood

Mid Week Working Party

Sorry, there hasn't been much news and comment coming through from the Mid Week Working Party over the last couple of months. A lot has been happening, we've been very busy, it's the time of year when people slope off for excursions and expeditions, and these months just seem to come around really quickly.

With the campaign at Ifold Bridge Lane, just to the north of Southland Lock, concluded, attention has been turned to the 'far north'. At Gun's Mouth island lots of sterling work has been accomplished by the visiting weekend work groups, but they don't half leave a mess behind them! Any potentially unsafe trees have now been cut down - we don't want a repeat of last winter's incident - but this has generated a large quantity of felled timber. Potentially saleable, but in the wrong inaccessible place, and not in marketable and man-handlable portions. So MWWP's mission became to slice through the undergrowth, cut the boughs up into bite-sized log-shaped pieces, and transport them across and off the island to a point where they could be stored and sold on (yes, the Chairperson's house is close by). A very labour-intensive operation involving 'human chains' and five separate moves - you can get a flavour from the photo that hastily accompanied the June WPN report.

Moving on, the team has been deployed at the 'Hunt Park' site between Shalford and Bramley, clearing on both banks of the Cranleigh Waters. On the east side this has entailed revisiting the general vegetation clearance undertaken in previous years, but also extensive clearing of the line of the proposed new and reinstated fencing between the park and the 'Downs Link' cycleway. Now working from the west bank, overhanging and obstructing trees have been removed from the watercourse and bankside, and an

initial campaign to tackle the large areas of invasive, and seed-ripe, Himalayan Balsam all over this side.

This was also the site of the bid by one of our party for Olympian swimming glory, having inadvertently entered the waters from above. What may have been lacking in style, when compared to previous MWWP contenders, was more than made up for in entertainment value, especially as it was a hot sunny day and he had not brought any change of clothing. UK press conventions constrain the publication of any photos.

For the past month the group has been working between Compasses and Farnhurst bridges in Alford clearing in readiness for the special 'Surrey' boat trips to be run here in conjunction with, or shortly after, the Dunsfold Park 'Wings and Wheels' (and tiller?) event. This stretch of canal, first dredged and cleared in the 1990s, had



The MWWP in recent action; this picture, by Janet Phillips, shows clearance of path and banks above Farnhurst on the Wednesday before the launch of the 'John Smallpeice'

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
8 September	Heritage Open Day - Shalford Gunpowder store open and guided walk	Contact Loxwood Canal Centre or Guildford Tourist Information Centre for tickets and information

become choked up with particularly fast-growing and virulent water plants. To enable boat operation, especially for the relatively deep draught of 'John Smallpeice's' outboard, this weed has had to be removed by use of rakes and other long-reach tools. The far (Compasses) bank has been cleared of overhanging trees and undergrowth to reveal a vast assortment of scrap material, carpets and general rubbish that has been dumped here over the years. Extricating this debris and loading it for transit to Tickner's Yard required superhuman efforts from the whole team well beyond our leader's expectations.

Peter Lander (for Ray Pick)

Hedgelaying Group

Doesn't time fly. The 2012/13 season will be starting in about a month's time. So here are some dates for your diaries:

Sept: Mon 17, Tues 25

Oct: Wed 03, Thurs 11, Mon 29

September will be trimming of the last season's hedge at Harsfold followed by trimming at Drungewick Bridge. Then we will either be coppicing or starting on the Drungewick slipway to heavy Plant Crossing hedge.

See you all soon, I hope.

Keith Nichols Tel: 01403 753882; Mob: 07817 798865

Tickner's Heath Depot

Quite a quiet month at the depot due to holidays etc. Most of the past month has been spent clearing the depot of excess vegetation; this has given us more space to store items externally. As reported in last month's issue the brakes on the caravan had given trouble, and on investigation the problem was found to be general deterioration due to the length of time since it had been used. But with a little ingenuity and a certain amount of skill the problem was solved.

The team has once again been asked to exercise its not inconsiderable skills in the fencing department, and added a middle rail to the new fencing at the Compasses bridge. This will hopefully increase the safety aspect of the path by the canal.

We are at present making space in the scaffolding shed in preparation for the amount of Quickstage units coming back from the Southland project. Hopefully we will be ready to receive items at the end of September.

Well I think that's about it for this month, as I said earlier, a quiet month. All the best,

John Smith

LWRG Weekend Camp

The purpose of the weekend camp on 18/19 August was to complete the work initiated by NWPG in July, which was heavily affected by the poor weather during that month. The team of some 12 souls from London WRG was very ably led by young civil engineer Peter Fleming. Early notice from Dunsfold Airfield management had restricted the operation on Saturday due to a 'Help for Heroes' presentation and efforts had to be made to ensure that main deliveries of plant and materials happened on Friday 17th. Dave Kersley achieved an early delivery of small plant and materials on Saturday.

Most of the team had arrived Friday night and an early start was made on Saturday, with the temperature predicted to reach 30 deg C.

The initial work was to fill some seven or eight tonnes of crushed concrete adjacent to the gabion wall constructed by NWPG, to give required passive resistance. Due to difficult access this was added mostly by wheel barrow loading and difficult controlled tipping.

Name	Group/Project	Tel	e-mail
WACT Office	General enquiries	01403 752403	office@weyandarun.co.uk
John Benfold	Working party coordinator		restoration@weyandarun.co.uk
Michael Bates	Health & Safety Officer	07786 323515	michael_bates@weyandarun.co.uk
Eric Walker	Loxwood Projects	07717 855340	tsg@weyandarun.co.uk
Ray Pick	MidWeek Working Party	01483 272443	anne.pick@btinternet.com
John Empringham	Monday Group	01483 562657	mondaygroup@weyandarun.co.uk
Kev Baker	Loxwood Link	02380 861074	loxwoodlink@weyandarun.co.uk
John Smith	Tickner's Depot	01903 235790	depot@weyandarun.co.uk
Tony Clear	Winston's Group	01903 774 301	winstonsgroup@weyandarun.co.uk
Keith Nichols	Hedge laying	01403 753882	hedging@weyandarun.co.uk
Bill Nicholson	Northern working parties	01844 343 369	bill@nwpg.org.uk
Bill Thomson	Working Party News	07777 668 928	bill_thomson@weyandarun.co.uk

While this continued, the tow path on top of the gabions, which had experienced some settlement, was scabbled and re-compacted with the addition of some further type 1. Work also progressed on cutting back of the slope from the completed tow path and redistributing the spoil.

By early afternoon work had commenced on the timber hand rail and the towpath access to the jetty.

On Sunday morning the unexpected number of 12 was agreed to be too large to continue on the towpath works and four were seconded to help Eric Walker at Southland, where they ably acquitted themselves working on the extensive concrete production for the coping stones.

Work continued to complete the hand rail and the towpath including some 40m of the path approaching the Farnhurst Bridge crossing.

During the afternoon we were entertained by the Vulcan bomber making several low level passes over Dunsfold Airfield.

It was very hot and several among the team must have lost a few kilos.

A great contribution to the work at Compasses Bridge.



**London WRG weekend camp, installing hand rails on the summit in advance of trip boat operations
(Allan Chambers)**

Allan Chambers

Winston Harwood Group

The wettest summer in 100 years has had its effect. Despite the improved car access to Lordings waterwheel and area, it sometimes got too tricky. So we have been to Rose Walk a couple of times - good improvement on unwanted plant growth.

At Lordings, grass cutting was irregular due to the wet and was better exercise thanks to the mower clogging up frequently. Of more interest perhaps, the waterwheel was running smoothly but we had a problem with that mini-canal section developing more leaks.

The leaks were near the waterwheel where brickwork meets clay with Bentonite and a Bentonite sheet. They were so severe that the water level dropped right down endangering the waterwheel restocking of fingerling rudd and this year's tiny fish fry, plus of course the annual in-between sized elvers (juvenile eels from very far away).

I had some 30-year-old greenhouse blackout material, and using a blunt broom handle, bare hands, small spades and existing clay plugged the holes. Great game playing with water - and it worked! (98% at first, 95% a week later, so only temporary but respectable).

The Turf Lock repair work continues (near Winston's bridge). Same area - the overflow planks were sealed to about 10% using spare butyl pond liner. Thanks to Mr Henry Ayres who, when we were not there, fitted a mainly concrete plank to stop planks floating in floods. A few weeks later leak reduced to 1% (Thought leaks only got worse).

Mr Ayres is the farmer. The plank was cut from a farm building, very heavy and difficult access. If only other landowners were like him as far as the canal is concerned!

Tony Clear (for David Junkison)

Loxwood Link maintenance

Not much to report as I've been off after an eye operation. Thinking ahead, we will be in need of plenty of volunteers to help with winter maintenance on the first two weekends in November. On the 3rd I will need hands to put stop planks in and seal them and to drain the lock, then on 4th November we will start the repair work to the top cill walls. The following weekend I will need hands to clear muck from the chamber floor.

The operational section is holding up well and we are OK for water at present, but skippers/crew must let myself or Peter Foulger know if there are problems that we may not be aware of.

Kev Baker

Help wanted

Help is required to man the MDV on 6-7 October, at the Surrey Hills Wood Fair to be held at Birtley House near Bramley. Helpers will receive free tickets to the event. Please get in touch with David Daniels on 01483 505566 or e-mail david_daniels@weyandarun.co.uk.