

Editorial

We can see Spring is fast approaching. There has been plenty of activity on the canal, particularly on the summit level. Three visiting weekend work parties, from London WRG, Kent and East Sussex CRG and Newbury WPG have been helping with getting everything ready for the small boat rally which took place on 23 March. Work involved building a landing stage, erecting fencing and various post-desilting landscape tasks. We hope the 28 rally entrants appreciated the hard work. Most concentrated on the Compasses Bridge to Fast Bridge length, but a few tried out the reprofiled Tickner's Heath section, where WACT's contractor, Rayner Plant, is still working.

Work by volunteers at Hunt Park has resulted in the creation of an osier bed, while contractors are continuing with reprofiling of the pound between Devil's Hole and Southland locks, working alongside our volunteers. This work is in preparation for the reopening of Southland Lock, scheduled for 21 June.

With the boat trip season getting underway on 5 April, following the 30 March Mothers' Day cruises, the main Loxwood navigable section has received its customary attention. Volunteer work parties have cleared bankside vegetation, given some of the lock gates a coat of paint, repaired a leaky bank near Drungewick, and removed a fair amount of silt deposited during the floods.

Don't forget (how could you?) the WACT annual general meeting, which will be held at the Weald School in Billingshurst on Saturday 26 April, starting at 2.30pm. A special guest speaker has been arranged, Canal and River Trust's Head of Heritage Dr Nigel Crowe, who will describe his organisation's work to manage and conserve waterway heritage. Dr Crowe will draw upon 25 years of experience gained from working in the conservation, archaeology and interpretation of historic buildings and places to explore the heritage assets cared for by CRT. For those wishing to make a day of it, there are various activities being organised before the meeting.

The Gennets Bridge Lock appeal managed to reach its target figure, and the Trust thanks all those who donated. More is still needed of course, for this and other projects, and with this in mind WACT is now registered as a good cause with cashback website www.easyfundraising.org.uk. The way this works is that if you buy online from one of a number of partner websites, you can go via easyfundraising and nominate WACT to receive a donation. All at no cost to you.

The Trust's Health and Safety policy has recently been updated, and can be found on the WACT website at www.weyandarun.co.uk/WACTHSEPolicy.pdf.

Bill

Mid Week Working Party

The MWWP spent the first Wednesday of the month working on the section of the canal near Drungewick slipway. Using a punt and the work boat *May Upton*, we have been cutting back the overhanging vegetation from the offside bank. This should enable easier passage of our trip boats. A few members of the group also returned to the field next to the hedge at Baldwins Knob Lock to tidy and dispose of the remainder of flood debris left over from a previous visit.

For the second Wednesday of the month the group worked on the section of canal between Compasses bridge and Farnhurst bridge. We removed weed from the canal and gave the area a good tidy up in preparation for the small boat rally.

For the last two Wednesdays of the month the group returned to the Drungewick slipway section of the canal to cut back more of the overhanging vegetation.

Dave Verrall, on behalf of Ray Pick

Winston Harwood Group

Since my last report, we have made a number of improvements on different sites but never at Lordings due to record rainfall making the heavy soil too wet for car access.

We have been involved at Drungewick installing a heavy post for a gate, and posts for the parking sign at Loxwood (the last one, with fence, was dismantled by the flood). The area backing the car park needed the debris, mainly woody with silt, stacking and burning. We brushcut brambles to allow giant hogweed to be sprayed. Nearer Bramley, in a rough paddock, the work involved clearing old cut brushwood and live brushwood, mainly brambles, into heaps - no burning allowed there, a pity!

Roll on Spring, the ground will dry and allow us to return to the waterwheel area at Lordings.

Tony Clear (for David Junkison)

Hedgelaying Team

Greetings All. The 'private' hedge kept our feet dry for seven days in total. Most of the time was spent transplanting 10ft trees into the line with the rest laying the old larger hedge remnants. It all went very well and best of all, none of us were drowned.

We have now moved back to the canal side at Drungewick Slipways (Roger Dimmock Lane). So far we have spent one and a half days there at the time of writing this (Tues 25 March). To date the group has laid 12 yards and trimmed 15 yards in preparation so that we have 40 yards left to lay. That's it for the moment apart from saying, only two months left to hedgelay and that dates may change due to my ongoing dodgy health situation. You wouldn't read about it?

Dates as follows:

Apr - Thurs 03/Wed 02, Thurs 10, Fri 18

May - Tues 06, Wed 14, Thurs 22, Fri 30

Tatty bye all

Keith Nichols

Walks to offer new perspective on canal heritage.

Canal cruises will no longer be the only way to gain an insight into the history of the Wey & Arun Canal with the launch of this year's guided walk programme. From April this year, WACT will be offering guided tours each month from the Canal Centre in Loxwood, to give visitors a chance to find out more about the history of the canal, the restoration work on the waterway and more about the history of Loxwood village itself. For more details and the dates of each walk please see

www.weyandarun.co.uk/walks.php

Dave Verrall

Thursday and Sunday Group - Southland and GBL

I could write a book about the trials, tribulations and successes of our work over the last three months. Each Thursday TSG volunteers have been working on at least six tasks in three different locations on the canal. This report covers a part of that.

Working in winter along the line of the canal is very weather dependent. This winter there has not been much frost, but in common with the rest of the south of England the rainfall has been the highest on record. For us it meant the ground was fully saturated and any more rain quickly ran off into the canal. In the pound above DHL (DH pound), where we were removing hundreds of tons of silt accumulated over the past 200 years, any digger action would turn it into slop. Despite this, by the end of March all the material had been moved, some of it only temporarily, but the bulk has gone into what we formerly knew as the DH winding hole, now the 'old' winding hole. Forming a bank from the slop was particularly difficult there, as the slop slipped back in the channel, or the digger got stuck in it, with the baulks of wood (civil engineering mats) we had breaking like matchwood. To add to the pressure, the date of the official opening of Southland lock is fast approaching, and we will need a new winding hole close to Southland, the haul road in Southland field to be removed, then removal of the access causeway across the canal. To name a few problems to add to these difficulties, we have volunteers taking holidays (how could they?), the winter allocation of abstraction water ends at the beginning of April, and the usual equipment breakdowns. We had two bits of good fortune: first, the warmer and windier weather, which dried the top surface of the slop. The other was the contractor, Tim Rayner, whose top digger man did what he could with the slop and his engineers repaired our digger on several occasions.

Name	Group/Project	Tel	e-mail
WACT Office	General enquiries	01403 752403	office@weyandarun.co.uk
David Daniels	Visiting working parties	01483 505566 Mon- Thurs 8.30-12.30pm	support@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	01903 744767	bill_thomson@weyandarun.co.uk

Repairs and modification to Gennets Pound Sluice are well in hand. The GBL access road has had positive feedback from the horse community. At Barberry Bridge preparations have been done but the work will have to wait until the river is very low.

Even though Rob Taylor is working in Sheffield he has been helping with guidance on the Case digger problem and hydraulic oil supply in the repairs to *Penelope*, the dredger. We wish him well with the forthcoming operation and hope for a good outcome.

Returning the dredger to a working condition after the flooding was a major task on which another book could be written. Enough to say our volunteers pumped water out of the hull, took out a large quantity of emulsified hydraulic oil and replaced it with 235 litres of fresh oil, replaced the engine oil, and replaced the starter motor and a bilge pump.

Everything at GBL is on hold. Natural England, after six weeks, have said they are unable to respond to our Discretionary Advice Service application (11.7Mb of data) and we need to apply for an European Protected Species (EPS) Mitigation Licence for development, probably another 20Mb of data. That could probably incur another two to three months delay. We recently shared this problem with visitors from the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. They are experiencing the same sort of problems that we have at GBL, in particular where they have done work, and now must wait to proceed further, because of a European directive and consequent bureaucratic delays. But we are all working to the same goal - not as if we are proposing an oil refinery or acres of concrete. I wonder how many other waterway projects are experiencing similar difficulties to WBCT and us?

Join us. The Thursday & Sunday Group generally meets at 09:30. For some time now there has been a job list circulated to the TSG Group, this is to enable the volunteers to know where they will be working as the group has been split into up to six sub groups to do what is the latest task. For information about where we are and what we are doing or to get the latest job list, please ring 07717 855340. *(Editor's note: I have seen an example of Eric's job list, and the scope of work and attention to detail are amazing.)*

Eric Walker

Tickner's Heath Depot

Well the year rumbles on and at last we are seeing the ground here at Tickner's drying out. The work still keeps us busy as many kind souls have donated pieces of equipment which might be of use to the Trust. The latest addition is a rather ancient rotavator complete with all the attachments you could ever want, be it turning the soil or rolling a cricket pitch. Mind you, it took our mechanical wizards a bit of time to get the old girl started, but she is now here awaiting the call of the canal.

A couple of gas operated BBQ's have also been donated and at the moment the team is busy trying to make one serviceable item out of the two. A lot of the work done so far relates to the removal of years of cooking residue, thank heavens for the depot blow lamp.

One of the MU mowers was returned as the operating handlebar had turned out to be a trifle fragile. Luckily the parts from the one we scrapped last month fitted, but not until the judicious application of a round bastard file had been used, so another success (I know, self-praise is no praise).

During the month the team spent some of the time ensuring such items as the powered wheelbarrow and mini tractor were serviceable and ready for use and from reports these items performed adequately.

Also this month has seen an increase in demands by working parties and work camps for equipment held at the depot. Hopefully, we have managed to supply what was needed so that they managed to achieve their objective.

One black mark though. The first time that the services of the Hydovane compressor were called upon the beastie decided to misbehave and leak oil and so proved unusable. It was stripped down and inspected and once put back together worked a treat. Perhaps it has an aversion to work?

So all in all a quiet month. All the best

John Smith

Working Party Diary		
Every Sunday and Thursday	Mainly construction work	Contact Eric Walker for details
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 (plus Thursday and Sunday as required)	Loxwood Link Maintenance	Check with Kev Baker
Every Wednesday	Maintenance sessions at Tickner's Heath Depot	Contact John Smith/Ken Bacon
Tuesdays or Fridays	Winston Harwood Group	Contact Tony Clear for details
26 April	Annual Meeting, Billingshurst	www.weyandarun.co.uk/annualmeeting2014.php



Pictures taken by Hannes Gysin at Southland, showing the trees the Monday group planted and the growing grass, sowed last November, see text below

The Mrs Bucket Group - keeping up appearances on Mondays

A small number of members spent the first outing in March working under the direction of Ian Burton planting small trees with mulch and fertiliser at the 'triangle' bank by the Onslow Arms and at Southland Lock. It was pleasing to see the grass we sowed at Southland last November is starting to grow well.

Since last autumn we have been very pleased to welcome six new members to the group with the result that some of the bigger jobs have been completed more quickly than usual, 'many hands make light work' and all that. This has meant that at our second March meeting there were 15 of us out, the largest gathering of Monday Group ever since it was formed in 1999. We concentrated our efforts around Haybarn and the towpath was mowed from the 90 degree turn north of the bridge and cleared, widened, hedge trimmed and mowed all the way from the bridge, south past Lea Farm bridge/causeway and all the way to Lee Farm lock; a long term ambition of ours.

In April we shall be returning to the maintenance of our nine regular sites. But with a higher number of volunteers we also hope to rebuild the fence at Baldwins Knob lock and replace two rotten fence posts at Loxwood lock and Drungewick aqueduct.

Nick Wood

Boat (Appearance) Group

The boats are looking clean and smart after a recent mammoth cleaning event; a big thank you to everybody who helped out. The boating season is now well upon us, with the Mother's day trips at the end of March and the Easter bunny trips coming up. I am planning the next cleaning session for Tuesday 6 May. Any help you can give is most appreciated, and even an hour or two is worthwhile.

Anybody able to help with this important task please contact me by email at sh@weyandarun.co.uk or phone 07905 670095 or 01273 461729 (please leave a message if no answer). Thanking you in advance for your help.

Steve Harmes

Help buy an excavator

On 5 April four members of the Inland Waterways Association head office staff, Toby Gomm, Stephanie Pay, Gemma Bolton and Jenny Black, will be undertaking a 50 mile challenge along the Grand Union Canal. The 'Acheman Challenge' involves 40 miles of cycling, six miles of running, three miles of canoeing and locking a boat through seven locks at Marsworth. The aim is to raise £5,000 in sponsorship towards a new excavator for WRG. Most of the £50,000 cost of the excavator has already been met but further funding is needed.

WRG intends that the new excavator will play a key role in assisting its volunteers with waterway restoration work, as well as benefiting other waterways societies who would be able to use the WRG excavator at a significantly lower cost than standard hire prices.

Donations can be made: online, by making a pledge via a form on the Acheman Challenge section of the IWA website, or via Virgin Moneygiving; by texting ROLT46 followed by the amount in pounds e.g. "£10" to 70070; over the phone, to Toby Gomm on 01494 783 453 ext 611; or, finally, by cheque, payable to The Inland Waterways Association and sent to Acheman Challenge, IWA Head Office, Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA.

The 'Acheman Challenge' is an intentional play on words with IWA's founder Robert Aickman's surname and the physical nature of the challenge.