

Editorial

Another full issue, proving that nothing - not even Storm Doris or the prospect of a pleasant lunch - stops our workers.

If you are reading this on the website, do spare a thought and thank our large band of volunteer workers. Of course, volunteers alone will never restore this canal, but without volunteers the project would get absolutely nowhere.

Bill

Mrs Bucket Group - Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

At the start of the month (actually 30th January) a small number of the group attended Gosden aqueduct and removed the pile of debris, generated by our previous visit, further up the bank away from Cranleigh Waters to prevent the possibility of it being swept away by the rising waters.

At the same time a fallen tree, which was obstructing the flow under the aqueduct, was removed. At our second outing we joined forces with the Hedgelaying Group to dig up hedge plants/small trees on the Springbok estate and replant them on the towpath below Southland lock. Very hard work digging holes in clay!

This job was completed at our third meeting. Altogether 100 hedge plants have been replanted on the towpath bank (non canal side) between Southland and Devils Hole Locks to fill gaps in the hedge. Hopefully these will consolidate the towpath. We also took the opportunity to replace another rotten fence post and rail by the bridge at Devil's Hole Lock.

Our thanks are due to Margaret Darvill for arranging brush cutter training for three of the group during February, which means that in March (6th & 20th) we are likely to be working in Sidney Wood on our annual clearance 'fixture'.

Nick Wood

Thursday and Sunday Group

Early this year the temperature had been too low for bricklaying at GBL. So the TSG were pleased when storm Doris brought a change to Gennets Bridge Lock, sunshine and 11 deg C, we don't mind the wind.

Holidays had played a part in delays to progress, but by the end of February, thanks to longer days, higher temperatures and the rain holding off things were looking up. J.J. Price, Geoff Thomas and Edward Stratton-Woodward have offered to do



Geoff Thomas starting to lay bricks in the bottom gate recess, haul side, which he finished that day (picture from Eric Walker)

extra days bricklaying, so the weather is the only thing that can hold us up now.

With the first four copings cast, the first of the eight bollards having been put in and the off-side top sill wall ready for concrete, there is a feeling that progress is being made on all fronts.

On the protected species front, a partial relining of one of the ponds has been done. Being close to the top of the hill, the speculation that the pond was fed from the sandy layer just below the surface were shown to be true. At the lock frogs, toads and newts are returning to where they were born despite the amount of concrete we have put in, but then they have only one thing on their mind.

The Thursday and Sunday Group normally meets at 09:30. Please email Eric Walker if you want to get on the email circulation list for details of when and where the TSG is working

Eric Walker

Hedgelaying Group

Moist Hellos to all (it's raining so I'm in my own office which has a very wide choice of beverages!)

Tuesday 28 February saw us make our fourth February visit to and south of Highbridge. The weather has been kind to us this month so, although progress seems to be slow, working on two sections at once has proved to be successful in doubling our output. 14 trees have been transferred from the towpath bank into the first section and 10 home grown Hawthorns have been planted into the gaps. Hopefully before March is out we will have finished these first two sections.

I have also transferred the TCV free trees from their intended planting area at Gennets, where they were heeled in, to Hunt Park to finish off their hedge. They had got their figures wrong and Gennets won't be ready for planting up until Autumn 2017.

On a different note: for charity. Saturday 8th April 2017 heralds a one and only visit from The Bob Kerr Whoopee Band to Loxwood. This is in aid of upgrading North Hall which has charitable status. There will be a bar, doors open at 19.00 with the band on at 20.00. Tickets are £10, available from me on 07817 798865, Loxwood PO and John Murray (the Loxwood butcher).

It's music played well but with a tongue firmly lodged in cheek, spanning mainly the 1900's. Think Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band, the New Vaudeville Band, and the Temperance Seven.

Keith Nichols

Summit (Northern) Working Party

The end of February should have seen the brickwork on two on the retaining walls at New Compasses Bridge completed (J.J. Price) and all but about 1.5m of the brick coping on the northern (airfield) side training wall completed (mainly Graham Hawkes). The rest will be finished once the ramp from the towpath to the bridge has been built and the heavy machinery is out of the way. This leaves one more, smaller, retaining wall to be built close to the top of the aforementioned ramp - the completion of which will see all the substantive construction works at the site finished.

Our efforts have been assisted once again by the contribution of London WRG who visited during the coldest weekend of the month. Their main task, successfully achieved, was the installation of a French drain and connections alongside the caravan park to prevent one of the gardens there flooding in times of heavy rain. I understand that it was an all-girl team job and I take my hat off to them having seen the size of one of the holes that they dug out, all by hand! Other work completed

was the installation of the wooden steps frame that will allow visitors down onto the canal side from the road verge. These will be concreted in due course after which the final landscaping can be carried out.

Looking ahead, the 'Open Working Week' starts on 11 March and runs through up to and including 18 March. The first two days will be at Hunt Park where the landing stages at Bridge End and on Guns Mouth Island will be re-decked and the remainder of the week at Compasses building the ramp and the many other smaller tasks on Dave's list. If you would like to join us at any time during the week please let me know .

Bill Nicholson

Tickner's Heath Depot

Here at the depot we haven't let the grass grow under our feet. Oh no, just because the weather hasn't been that kind to us, have we stayed indoors drinking various beverages (of a non - alcoholic nature I should add)? No, we haven't: we have been running from shed to shed ensuring that all is in order and those that need equipment get it.

Miracle upon miracle, at long last more items are disappearing from the depot than have been arriving Dan O from Eric's lot has helped reduce the aging pile of equipment which has been slumbering at the depot for years, plastic pipes have disappeared into his trailer along with other items of well needed equipment.

We have, however, managed to do some work of a technical nature. Brushcutters have been looked at and investigated for faults, parts stripped down and reassembled and proved to be working. Generators run to ensure they are generating and chainsaws operated to ensure they can cut the mustard, or should that be the wood?

In between we even managed at long last to get the Land Rover to Harwoods for her long overdue service, the delay didn't seem to have harmed the old girl as she came back in sparkling condition. Mind you, I did remark to the gent who delivered

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Navvies' Lunch, 2017, at Foxbridge Golf Club (picture by Janet Phillips)

her that we preferred the muddy look to shiny.

I must admit to being a trifle slack over the month, in that - feeling confident that the team could cope without the influence of a couple of key players - Richard Powell and I availed ourselves of the kind invite from Di to attend the annual Navvies' lunch at Foxbridge Golf Club. A right good do it was too, good food, good company and good conversation which made for an excellent afternoon. So, a big thank you to all who had a hand in organising it and making it such a success.

In my absence the team attempted to improve the image of the depot by tidying various sheds. Also, the pile of ferrous scrap was made a trifle more presentable and less of a heap. All we need now is to get rid of our non-ferrous scrap which has been hanging about for some time.

So that's about it for this month. All the best
John Smith

Mid-Week Working Party

February started well with a very good Navvies' lunch. We wish to thank Di Miles who organised it. 47 people sat down for a delicious meal at Foxbridge Golf Club. We were mostly MWWP with some partners and members from other groups. We enjoyed drinks before the meal where people were able to mingle. MWWP were very pleased to see that it was horrid weather outside and were not thinking they could be doing with some exercise

Since then we have spent two weeks clearing willow and alders. The area is now much clearer and needs one or two weeks to clear the rest. We have been able to have bonfires, with four on one week. The weather and wind has been very kind to us and so the smoke has gone up vertically rather than veering to the A281. The area is beginning to look ready for the proposed wetland.

The week of half term we planted over 1500 saplings to form a mixed species hedge to form a boundary between WACT land and Gosden-House School. We were very pleased to have Janet Phillips' grandsons join us for the project.

Margaret Darvill

Volunteer Timesheets

Thankfully the tortuous form for recording volunteer hours last year has been simplified. The previous version you were asked to complete was devised by our insurers but we will all be relieved that this is not now a requirement.

However, it is still important for our Trustees to have a record of how many hours we're all putting in and the monetary value thereof, not least because it is a useful statistic for matched funding when grants are being applied for.

A much simpler form has been devised. We would be grateful if you could complete it at the end of each quarter, starting with the first quarter of 2017. Copies for completion will be circulated towards the end of March. Many thanks.

Maurice Cranefield

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	Details from Margaret Darvill
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
Various Tuesdays	Hedge Laying	Contact Keith Nichols
Third Saturday of the month	Summit level	Contact Dave Evans