

Editorial

Don't forget - April 29th sees the Trust's 44th Annual General Meeting, this year held at Cranleigh Village Hall. Although such meetings are basically a formality, they do provide an opportunity to keep up to date with everything that is going on with the project. It's easy to forget that restoring a canal involves far more than digging ditches and rebuilding locks and bridges; there is so much more happening behind the scenes.

Looking back over the project's long history, some past annual meetings have been lively occasions when 'workers' and 'committee-sitters' have clashed. I'm not saying there is any such friction at present - quite the contrary of course. But it is a reminder that any organisation like WACT cannot be complacent and carry on in the same way, with the same old crowd, for years on end. Although continuity is essential, so is a regular influx of new ideas. Fresh officers are always being sought, and if any of the workers on the ground feel their voices aren't being heard, now is the time to put that right - you have 14 days before the meeting to get your nomination in.

Organisers should by now have received their first quarterly timesheet for 2017 - please fill these in and return them to Maurice Cranfield: the information is important, as it allows the Trust to put a monetary value on volunteers' work, helping to attract grants from elsewhere.

Bill

Tickner's Heath Depot

Well the sad day has arrived when as we bid adieu to our chief Mechanic Francis Wellerd who is swanning off into the sunset, quite literally, as he is moving into the wild and woolly wastes of the West Country. He will be missed by all of the team. Mind you we cannot say the same about his jokes, but his expertise has been of great benefit to the Trust - perhaps more than most realise. We wish him and his wife Karen a fond goodbye and hope their new domicile is all they wish it to be.

By the way, don't mention outboards this month. Although we did have some success, that is with a small s, the one that we were most confident about really let us down. The large Mercury was transported to the slipway for installation on *Wasp*, only for it to let the side down and misbehave to such an extent that it has got to be taken to the professionals to be sorted out. This was after we had given it a full work out



Francis at his best (John Smith)

in on our test rig - this just shows the limit of what we can do at the depot. Still we managed a trip to the canal and at least got one of the outboards for the MU running. The picture shows the other MU outboard running in our test tank after being fully disassembled. Although we had got it to run, it cut out after a few minutes which seems to indicate that there is a problem with the water pump. Hey ho, more head scratching in the month to come.

Earlier in the month we loaned out our resident painter and decorator Ken Bacon to the Canal Centre. His fame had obviously reached the administrators of that worthy edifice as the management of the depot received a personal request for Ken's services. With his usual eye for detail Ken managed to match the decor exactly, to the satisfaction of Canal Centre supervisor (the fact we had the paint from the last visit was purely incidental). So, another tick in the box. Well done Ken.

As the Swedish mixer was returned to the depot after failing to perform at the Three Compasses Bridge site, the team decided to see if there was anything that could be done to get the old girl running again. Unfortunately, after stripping the carburettor down and making a new gasket for it, on re-assembling it still leaked and our Chief Mechanic pronounced the fault as terminal. The reed cutter boat engine was considered as a replacement but although of the same manufacturer the carb and engine were a totally different model so I'm afraid it looks as though the mixer is destined to end its days in the depot amongst the Trust's ageing relics of a bygone era.

So, other than the a bit of shed clearance and David Robson producing his now world renowned rustic canal side notice boards, that about it for the month. All the best

John Smith



The concrete casting for the upper offside sill at Gennets Bridge Lock is now complete. (picture by Geoff Thomas)

cracking on and recently poured three copings in one day, though fair to say, two were small.

But the coping work starts with the shuttering and here Len Hasler, Brian Whibley and George Mundy get the job done. When time allows they are doing the bottom training wall shuttering, which is difficult because it includes the back pump chamber.

Martyn Baker and Richard Meinertzhagen have been working on the top sill for ever, have poured the off-side wall and are now working on the shuttering of the haul side wall.

Robin Gardner, in the excavators, has been working on the spoil heap on the haul side of the canal getting clay to the off-side of the lock, to raise the ground behind the new lock coping. He has also arranged the

re-certification of the digger drivers in April. Besides a written exam, there will be a practical section which includes digging a trench and back-filling it. This is not something we do on a regular basis. Indeed with only a limited scope within the site the new drivers get very little experience. With the agreement of the landowner the establishment of a winding hole along from the lock gives an opportunity to get some experience and re-certification done.

So this last month the site has been prepared and the trench for the electric cable around the winding hole was dug. The existing steel wired armoured cable (installed in August 2013) was dug out and put in the new trench under the supervision of Danilo Ostacchini who had done similar work "millions of times" with the London Underground. Whenever there is a problem, with something electrical or mechanical not working,

Thursday and Sunday Group

Spring is here, the days are longer, the temperature is up and the birds are nesting. All those skiers have returned and even the visitor to the far east has returned, though like a lot of us has had a bad cold. Sounds as if we will get a lot of work done. Well, will those four who have had operations lately, get better soon, TSG is in need of your help?

In fact the Thursday & Sunday group has a number of teams, each making great progress at Gennets Bridge Lock (GBL). The extra days JJ Price, Geoff Thomas and Chris Elphick have done means that one of the parapets will soon be finished and the copings will go on that wall. The bricklaying within the lock is just about keeping ahead of the coping team too.

The lock coping team, John Reynolds, Martin Smithers and Chris Elphick supplemented by Jason Falkner when shift work allows, are really

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Julian Cheek	Maintenance coordination	01483 505566	julian_cheek@weyandarun.co.uk
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John Talbot	Health & Safety Director	01483 429918	jcst@weyandarun.co.uk
Eric Walker	Gennets Bridge Lock	07717 855340	tsg@weyandarun.co.uk
Margaret Darvill	Mid Week Working Party	01483 894606	margaret_darvill@weyandarun.co.uk
John Empringham	Monday Group	01483 562657	mondaygroup@weyandarun.co.uk
Kev Baker	Loxwood Link	01489 690241	loxwoodlink@weyandarun.co.uk
John Smith	Tickner's Depot	01903 235790	depot@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
Dave Evans	Summit working party		compasses@weyandarun.co.uk
Bill Thomson	Working Party News	01903 744767	bill_thomson@weyandarun.co.uk

Danilo is the man for the job and it is fixed so work can continue.

Have you seen the wooden bowls and other items for sale in the canal centre? Maker Richard Bracey comes to GBL when shift work allows to relax by getting involved in solving our problems.

Just in time for the bird nesting season we got five boxes up near to GBL.

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

Mrs Bucket Group - Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

As anticipated in last month's WPN our two March meetings have been spent in Sidney Wood undertaking our annual clearance of both sides of the canal.

This year it has not been quite so overgrown as it was last year with the result that we have made good progress and are just 100 yards short of the third causeway from Firtree Copse. This has also been possible as we had a good number of volunteers. With a bit of luck and favourable weather we should be able to complete the job next time. We have again cleared culverts 1 and 3 (culvert 2, although filled in a long time ago, leaks) and closed the spill weir on the bend approaching Lock 16. However, there is little water in the canal at present. It was most gratifying and motivating to be complimented on the work we do by passers-by on the towpath.

We meet again on 3rd and 24th April.

Nick Wood

Summit (Northern) Working Party

March has been a busy and productive month on the northern section of the canal. At Compasses Bridge there is a real will driving the team to complete the project with 1st May being the latest target at the end of the planned visit from NWPG.

The Open Working Week in the middle of March saw much progress assisted by the contribution of



Summit group at Compasses Bridge (pictures from Bill Nicholson)

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



New access steps down to the landing stage by the canal at Compasses Bridge (picture by Julian Morgan)

between six and nine volunteers over each day of the six-day period. We have installed a ramp on the airfield side leading from the road down to the existing towpath level with 240 tons of crushed hardcore being delivered and then rolled in using a remote controlled roller -the latter being used for safety reasons. At the top end of the ramp there is a need for another smaller retaining wall and work has started on this with a concrete pour on this and the now-completed cycle stand on the west side taking place on the following Saturday.

On the west (pub) side of the bridge, the transformation has been dramatic with the viewing area and the steps down to it completed and the notice board re-installed. The whole area has been top soiled and seeded with grass and a path constructed to the mobile home park. The retaining wall is finished bar two corner coping bricks. Yet more drainage work is underway beside the road and the whole area has been tidied. More bollards and some changes to the footway are still to do but quite achievable by the end of April.

At the Northern End, the team has re-decked the landing stages at the bottom of the Chairman's garden and on Guns Mouth Island with hard wood Grip Deck planks. They have been fixed secure from floods and should last a long time as well as providing a safe access to the island/river. We also installed Heras fencing at Gosden Aqueduct where MWWP had cleared the collapsed side ready for survey and ultimately repair.

We will be on site on 23rd April and for the three days of 29th April -1st May. New (and returning) volunteers are most welcome to join us.

Bill Nicholson

Hedgelaying Group

Yahoo All (My travelling office has pitched up in Godalming 'Spoons) after a 'Trip Around My Mouth' by my Dentist. The book is not a very good read, yes, I couldn't get my teeth into it!

Tomorrow, Tuesday 28 March, will be the fourth session for that month. I only made the last two myself which was a relief for the rest of the team. We are still the good weather boys so no excuse to finish early and go to the pub. I expected to finish this section either on 28 March - some hope - or the following week.

We will then look at the next section to see about materials needed, more coppicing required and if the season will allow us to continue for much longer.

Number of daylight hours, temperature and rainfall are our three main factors, the last two being guesses with assistance from meteorologists. Realistically there are a possible eight more days of work, but...!

Even if we stop in early April we will have still laid 260-plus yards this season.

Tuesday 28 March, went well with benign weather, sunny periods sometimes with a chill to the wind. It will take at least another day to join the dots, i.e. hedge. All that has been laid so far is showing signs of life, which is nice.

All nine passers-by have said how good it looks, which is nice too. Last off site, I watched a Grey Wagtail beaking about.

I shall now, without further ado, sign off from my mobile beverage office which happens to be the Anchor Tap in Horsham. Well, all the coffee shops are closed, that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Bye Bye All.

Keith Nichols

Mid-Week Working Party

MWWP has had a very successful month with very good numbers. Well over 20 except one week when it poured with rain all morning and we were down to 12.

Every week this month we have been split. The first week, a small group finished planting hedging between Gosden House School and Hunt Park, whilst others were clearing brash in Hunt Park. The main job was clearing around the downstream face of the Gosden Aqueduct so that our project managers can ascertain what needs to be done in the way of repairs.

The following three weeks, the main group was working down at Pallingham clearing south of the bridge. It is now possible to see the entrance of the Quay and to appreciate the size of the big winding hole that was necessary to get into the wharf.

The rest of the group cleared the timber that was produced by the tree surgeons who have been attending to trees on the Loxwood section of the canal.

Meanwhile, the grass and flower beds around the Canal Centre have all been tidied up.

Margaret Darvill