

### Editorial

So much going on at present - particularly with the recent canal camps - that you don't need to read much from me. However, it's worth mentioning that there's loads more going on that we can't always cover in this short newsletter.

Not quite working parties, but thanks to the generosity of a member the Trust has temporary use of a vacant shop in Crown Court, Godalming, which is serving well as a publicity centre. It is open on Wednesday afternoons.

Next year looks like yet another opportunity to raise the profile of the Wey & Arun canal project, as the IWA will be holding its National Trailboat Festival in May on our own summit level near Dunsfold airfield. There will be plenty of preparatory work - not least de-silting with the Trust's recently-acquired dredger - for this important national event.

*Bill*

### Mid-Week Working Party

This month the group has been split up most of the time. A group spent three weeks at Sheep Wash - I bet no one knows where that is. It is a farm that borders onto the River Arun.

Just before the small boat rally a small group went up the Arun and found it was badly blocked by a huge willow tree. Although the root and end of the trunk is still there the river is now clear and canoes can now go up the River Arun without having to get out of the boat and haul it round the tree.

At the beginning of the month we spent a day at Pallingham Quays pulling out trunks that had become rooted. There is still more to do.

The navigable section from Loxwood to Southland was our next task. The towpath side is covered in beautiful wild flowers but the punters could not see anything through them so we spent three weeks clearing the side using *May Upton* and making gaps in the wild flowers so people could see the views.

Our last outing this month was to Rooks Hill and Rushetts where we pulled out some roots, cut back the regrowth on the alder trees and cleared the long grass, so it is now possible to see the canal and the location of Fanesbridge Lock.

*Margaret Darvill*

### PEST Boat Group

The eight regular members of the PEST (Passengers' Environment Safety Team) team now operate every other Friday keeping the navigable section of the canal free from hazards to safe boat operations. During July the PEST team worked on the navigation

between Loxwood Lock and Southland Lock. In the first of our two outings we cleared the canal between Loxwood Lock and Devils Hole lock of overhanging branches which both restrict skippers' view and risk catching passengers standing at the bow or entry steps. We also removed a considerable amount of new growth from the off-side of the canal which, again, risked catching boat passengers.

On our second outing we cleared all the overhanging branches impeding skippers view ahead from the canal between Devils Hole Lock and Southland Lock. Skippers now enjoy an unimpeded view from the 'chicane' north to Southland and south to Devil's Hole. Our next piece of work will be to clear the outgrowth around the 'chicane' to provide more room for skippers to manoeuvre when negotiating this section of the canal.

Anyone wishing join the working party should contact Peter Hyem (phone 01403 752393, e-mail peter@barscorner1.plus.com ) or Chris Jones (phone 07745 793243, e-mail chrisryderjones@outlook.com ) or just join us at 09:00 at the Canal Centre on the first and third Fridays of each month.

*Chris Jones*

### Maintenance Group

Loxwood Link maintenance has benefited from the better weather and the availability of the Eric Walker Group to lend a hand with the bigger tasks.

My small team and I have completed two jobs that have been on my to-do list for a while. First, we finally made good and concreted the upstream side of Drungewick Spill weir. This should now stop the



**Stop plank channels and stop planks at Drungewick (Kev Baker)**

river washing out the towpath in the winter when the river floods.

Then it was five days of hard graft - two with EWG's help. We have replaced the stop plank channels at Drungewick Lock, cast a new raised cill and finally I modified the existing stop planks to fit the new channels

Also, following Sanofi's Corporate day, we have completed the upgrade work of new pedestrian gates into the lock area and started to build the new stairway down to the electric cabinet and pump house at the bottom of the lock.



**Left and centre - Drungewick spill weir; right workboat 'Wasp' (Kev Baker)**

*Kev Baker*

### Eric Walker Group

The work refurbishing the Tickner's Heath depot is now complete. However, we are still awaiting the electric meter installation by SSE. We will need to return when this happens to put a final test on all the wiring, lights and appliances.

At Drungewick Lock, as previously reported, we had fabricated the timber props, but had major problems trying to drain the water from the lock due to the bottom stop planks not forming a seal. With help from Kevin Baker we have now fitted new stop plank channels in the southern end of the lock, the stop planks have been replaced and we have been able to obtain a good seal.

On Wednesday 7th August we will start to remove the substantial amount of silt and debris from the lock base. Following that operation we will install the temporary timber struts, which will then allow access

by our specialist contractor to start drilling a series of investigation cores in the west stone wall of the lock. We have arranged for the same contractor to install three 'Platipus' ground anchors (supplied free by Platipus Anchoring Systems Ltd) in the ground immediately behind the west wall. If this installation is satisfactory, then Platipus will design a full system to stabilise the wall. If the trial anchors are not successful, then we may have to revert to a concrete piled solution.

At Harsfold Bridge, meeting with the landowners subsequent to my last report has established that we will now have two construction compounds on site. As access down the narrow 300m bridleway track to the future bridge location is extremely difficult for plant and delivery trucks, we will build the main compound at the head of the track to store bulk materials.

The other compound for the welfare cabin, generator and day to day small tools storage will be located adjacent to the new bridge and diverted

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bridleway. Before we mobilise to site we have to complete the refurbishment of our welfare cabin, which is currently underway and we hope to make a start on site before the end of August.

*Dennis Gillen*

## Mrs Bucket Group - Keeping up appearances on Mondays

July meant mostly working on ten of our eleven regular sites to combat the normal summer growth, in total 16 individual visits (we didn't 'do' Hunt Park because MWWP have been there). I say mostly because we also undertook the following:-

- At Run Common widening the path to the Downs Link Path;
- Mowing at Brewhurst & Baldwin's Knob locks to cover for volunteer holidays;
- Clearing the towpath, which had become impenetrable in places, northwards between Haybarn swing bridge and the 90 degree turn in the canal;
- Pulling out Himalayan Balsam in the overflow car park at Loxwood;
- At Kev's request, clearing and widening the towpath from Barnshill Bridge to Drungewick and opening out views of the canal;
- From our visit to Run Common, advising Surrey County Council that the small brick retaining wall and the walking path sign at that location require their attention.

It was good to see a troupe of guides and their leaders having fun with their canoes and paddleboards at Drungewick. According to one of their leaders they liked the site more than others they had visited!

Visits to Haybarn, Newbridge and Run Common are in the programme for August as well as others as vegetation growth requires.

*Nick Wood*

## Tickner's Heath Depot

With the temperature achieving a new high throughout the country we at the depot have been making the most of the good weather and enjoying working outside for a change.

Strimmers and brushcutters have been given the once over to ensure they are fit for purpose. A good thing too, as Dennis and the EWG had use of them almost immediately. But I must admit that one of the

critters is giving us a bit of trouble. First it has no drive, then when we sort that out the thing refuses to start. But have no fear, we will sort it one way or the other. We still are persevering with the large Honda diesel generator. Although we had a degree of success in getting it to start, there were quite a few things which needed tinkering with. Neither the self-charging system nor the oil pressure light worked.

So Dave Nott investigated further and managed to get the charging circuit working but it appears that the oil pressure switch is defective. As it is of an age (like a lot of Trust equipment) we may have trouble getting a replacement. But we live in hope. The electrician chappie and his apprentice have now completely finished wiring the workshop. They have kindly installed a three phase supply, so should the trust ever become the beneficiary of the odd lathe or welding plant, it can be accommodated. The last thing they did was to install motion sensitive external lighting which should help on some of the dark winter nights. All that is now needed is for the supply company to 'extractus digitus' and we at the depot will be happy as larks.

The EWG boys are still with us, putting the finishing touches to the remodelling of the depot. After installing a huge septic tank they are at present fitting a toilet to the welfare unit so that we have somewhere to go (not that we were ever short of being told where to go that is).

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

*John Smith*

## Northern & Summit Working Party

A couple of months of really intense activity at Birtley have culminated in three weeks of non-stop Waterway Recovery Group canal camps - believed to be the longest-ever continuous run of volunteer work on the W & A Canal.

June continued our preparations for bridge construction. The access road was finally completed (started last October) and two excavators working in sync removed accumulated sludge from between the two dams. In the middle of the month the bridge base hole was excavated and surveyed to ensure it was the correct depth. The day before the WRG Camps began, the NWP poured a binding layer of concrete into the hole to provide for a clean working surface on which to lay out and fix the base steel-work. Dumpers were used to bring the dry ready-mix

### Working Party Diary

Every Wednesday and Thursday	Mainly construction work	Details from Dennis Gillen/John Reynolds
Every Monday	'Mrs Bucket' - Keeping Up Appearances	Details from John Empringham
Every Wednesday	Mid-Week Working Party	Details from Margaret Darvill
Monday to Friday (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 (not in summer)	Hedge Laying	Contact Nick Baxter
Third Saturday of the month	Summit level	Contact Dave Evans
First Friday of the month	PEST boat group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem



**July canal camp - Bill Nicholson**

down from Birtley Courtyard to the site - a dry run in both senses for the main pour planned for the end of first week's camp. The team also set up the welfare area tent, safety fences, notice boards and first aid area - vital work that ensured that the volunteers could get straight on with the main job.

The first week of camps was run by the Newbury Working Party (NWPG) with new volunteers from Norfolk, Scotland, New Zealand and France. The objective for the week was to cast the base slab of the bridge. Not only did this involve fixing the steels for the base but also all the upright steels that had to be tied into the base. The steel fixing team were kept busy throughout the week. Running in conjunction with the work down below, a carpentry team spent the week in the field making timber formwork - not just for the base but also the concrete pillars that will support the main bridge piers and the two main abutment walls facing the canal. 6.00am on the Friday morning and Dave

Evans was on site making the final adjustments. The ready-mix arrived as promised at 10.00am and, using a convoy of dumpers, was ferried from the courtyard down the towpath and into the hole. The job was completed by early afternoon.

Rob Nicholson (Bridge Designer) and Sam Doe led the second week. It was fortunate that this team was much younger in profile as there was a lot of hand mixing of concrete to do. More volunteers from WRG's association with REMPART (a French version of WRG but they restore castles as well!) and really hard working and committed they all were too - as were the rest of the team I hasten to add. Shuttering for the two concrete pier supports and towpath side abutment wall was erected and all the concrete hand mixed poured and vibrated in. Blockwork for the wing walls on both sides was started with phantom block layer Phil Cardy leading the charge. The design has blocks to just below water level with brick facing above. Incidentally during week one Phil and his assistant Paul Dunmore re-built the brick culvert entrance for the stream that runs under the canal close to the north of the bridge.

The final week of three, run by KESCRG (Kent & East Sussex Canal Restoration Group), maintained the rate of progress. Work completed included scaffolding out the site, painting the internal concrete faces; back-filling and compacting the large void with clean crushed hardcore; shuttering and casting the off-side abutment wall; block laying on both sides to water level and starting the brick laying. They also had to cope with that record breaking hot Thursday when wisely they decided to stop work at lunch.

The camp made fantastic progress. This was not by chance. Nine months' preparation from obtaining planning permission; creating an access; producing project plans and getting them agreed; advance works during June and the assembly of materials and equipment were critical. Whilst there are many to thank for achieving all of this, Dave Evans has to be singled out as the key to the success of the camps. His commitment, expert knowledge, drive and enthusiasm not only ensured a successful (and safe) outcome but also motivated all the volunteers who responded in kind. Thanks also to Birtley Courtyard and the adjoining land owners to the site without whose support the project would grind to a halt.

We are now in the position that with commitments from NWPG, KECRG and London WRG to weekends during the autumn as well the NWP, we should be able to complete the base structure of the bridge by the end of October. Over the winter, NWP will be focussing on the enabling works for the Tickner's Crossing before hopefully returning to Birtley next summer to tackle Bridge 2. Whether we can do that depends on the successful outcome to the Birtley Bridges Appeal. Have you contributed yet? If not, please consider doing so - I hope that my report and photos show what can be achieved in a very short period with the right investment in materials and equipment. These however, cost money and is where we need your help - please.

Go to: <https://weyarun.org.uk/restoration-appeals> or send a cheque to the Bridge End office. To those who have already given - thank you.

*Bill Nicholson*