

Editorial

Slightly earlier than usual due to holidays -back to normal next issue we hope. Meanwhile exciting times ahead, with approval granted for two new bridges - one at Birtley and the new Harsfold Bridge. Plenty of money will need to be raised.

Bill

Eric Walker Group

The work refurbishing Tickner's Depot is almost complete, with only one or two tasks to finish. We still have not been able to get SSE to install a meter, despite all of our installation and wiring having been completed for some weeks. I estimate that, subject to the delivery of the toilet unit and effluent storage tank, our work will be completed in early June.

We have fabricated the timber props ready for installation in Drungewick Lock and have had two attempts to drain the lock by pumping over the stop planks into the section/pound south of the lock. Unfortunately as the stop plank channel is missing from the south west wall of the lock, we have been unable to make a good seal. Despite using our 6in pump, which is capable of moving a substantial amount of water, we have not been able to completely drain the lock and it re-fills very quickly following the pump being switched off. It may be necessary to totally drain the section of canal/pound south of the lock, in order to clear all the water and a substantial amount of debris in the lock prior to the next phase of investigations, the core drilling of the west wall. In the meantime we will attempt to install the timber props.

Following the completion of the tree felling and a recent meeting with the land owner at Harsfold Bridge, we have agreed a location for our site compound on his land. We hope to mobilise and complete this in June and this will enable us to start constructing the bridleway diversion, whilst leaving in the existing causeway to allow access for farm equipment to carry out harvesting operations. As soon as the harvest is complete and the bridleway is diverted we will be able to commence the bridge construction, which could be in late August.

Dennis Gillen

Northern & Summit Working Party

Apologies for no report from the NWP last time. We made one visit to Birtley in April, to complete the boundary fencing along the western bank of the canal as well as alongside the proposed footpath from the bridge site (Bridge 1) back to the Downs Link. We will now pause on this activity before returning to the section north from Birtley Bridge (Bridge 2) towards Bramley in the autumn.

If April was quiet then May has been the opposite. Work is now really gearing up to the start of lift

bridge construction during the WRG camps in July. NWPG visited Birtley for three days at the beginning of May. The objective was to finish surfacing the access road from where we left off in October so that vehicles can reach the Bridge 1 site. We completed the whole length less about 50m under the power lines which, for safety reasons, can only be done with the Trust's tea spoon digger or by hand!

Another job was to build a temporary scaffold footbridge across the canal at Bridge 1 so that workers can access both banks of the canal without a long west bank deviation uphill and down dale. Thanks to Rob Nicholson and James Upton for building us such a fine bridge. It was also the first use of the Trust's telehandler. We built the structure on the bank before launching it across the canal thus saving having to wade around in the sludge.

Back at Bridge 2, another team spent three days working on the overflow weir which was in very poor condition with water running off the canal and eroding the bank. The work involved digging out the sludge and using concrete filled sandbags to build a support/cascade, back filled with hardcore and which has surfaced with paving slabs over which the water will flow. Although temporary, it is a solid



In the absence of a full report, two recent pictures of the Monday group at Malham in May (Roger Wilson)



Northern & Summit Group at Birtley

structure which should protect the bank until such time as we build a controlled sluice as part of the second lift bridge.

During the three days we had the assistance of no fewer than 22 different volunteers, not to mention the large array of plant and equipment for moving everything around - all of which help us to complete our objectives.

Two further visits by NWP during May have seen further work at the weir (now almost complete) and the access road (now 15m short of complete). An earth dam has been put across the canal at Bridge 1 and the canal has been pumped down to reveal a vegetative sludge. The next job will be to remove this and complete the bridge design (ground investigation work was also carried out in May). We are hopeful that the excavation for the bridge base can be completed in time for when the first of the WRG/ NWPG camp volunteers arrive on 7 July, so that we can get straight on with forming the steelwork in time for a concrete pour at the end of the week.

Readers may be aware of the appeal launched at the Trust AGM to raise funds for the two lift bridges

at Birtley. Contributions would be most welcome and details of how to give can be found on the Trust's website. Please support the appeal if you can.

Bill Nicholson

Mid-Week Working Party

May has been a month where the group has mainly been split up. A small group has finished pulling out all the willows at the north of Birtley Bridge. Hopefully this will not be a job that will need to be repeated as it is very soggy underfoot, probably due to natural springs coming out of the Downs Link bank.

Some of the group have pulled out all the branches and brash which had accumulated at Gosden Aqueduct in preparation for the brickie to replace all the bricks which have fallen out. This was a goodwill gesture as EA owns this water and should regularly do the job. A visit to the stretch between Haybarn and Harsfold was made in one week to clear the way so the public can see a longer stretch of canal.

Last but not least, a group spent time clearing areas in Hunt Park so that people can see where the

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

proposed lock and visitor's centre is going to be positioned as well as pulling Himalayan Balsam and clearing some of the brambles. Meanwhile Mike Tucker has spent many hours spraying Giant Hogweed on the Loxwood section

Margaret Darvill

PEST Boat Group

During May the PEST team worked on the navigation north of Devils Hole Lock for the first time. Whilst the navigation is fairly wide and free from dangerous outgrowth the effects of some years of inattention are apparent.

Our first objective is clearing outgrowth near bends to provide better lines of sight for boat crew and progress was made to this end. It was apparent that by clearing outgrowth from the offside bank 1m or more of width can be recovered for navigation. Work continues but the team is constrained by the need to avoid disturbing nesting birds at this time of year.

We also made a foray south from the Canal Centre down to the Drungewick Slipway specifically to remove various 'floating islands' of vegetation and a number of floating logs and branches that had become hazards for boat operations.

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 Friday of each month.

Chris Jones

Tickner's Heath Depot

Well, the long warm summer days have just about arrived and here at the depot we haven't been idle.

Our critical inspection of all the tools etc that moved with us to the new place continues and we have discarded a multitude of duplicate spanners, screwdrivers hammers etc which have been acquired

over the years. Now the workshop is slowly beginning to take shape into a working environment.

In between sorting out our new work space we have been able to get our teeth into some real work. We have fitted a solid tyre to a donated wheel barrow so punctures as far as this one is concerned are a thing of the past and we have started to refurbish one of the Trust's trailers. The electrics have been sorted and now all that remains is to re-floor it once the correct ply is available.

The shower unit has been given the once-over prior to being used by the weekend camps. After an inspection by their resident gas certified expert, it would appear that the gas regulator is of the wrong rating. So a more powerful variant has been obtained which hopefully he will fit when convenient and so prevent any further malfunction.

Pleased to say the Land Rover is back with us and thanks to the people at Pulborough, the beast has a new battery which will hopefully prevent any further dramas and sleepless nights for yours truly.

In closing, may I please ask that anyone removing items from the depot - be they large or small - ensure that either myself or a member of the depot crew are informed. It saves us the embarrassment after informing Airfield security or the local constabulary, only to find it is our own people who have removed the item.

Finally, after the hard work put in by the EWG to tidy up the depot would people please refrain from depositing unwanted domestic items that no longer fill the bill at home at the depot. If I can be blunt, we are not a dumping ground for any old household rubbish - that is what the local Municipal Waste Tips are for. Of late we have seen an old lawn roller and empty aluminium drink cans arrive at the depot, leaving us with the problem of disposal. Your co-operation in this matter would be appreciated.

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

John Smith

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