

Editorial

Celebrating our 300th issue - why not have some fireworks, as it's November and a special *WPN*.

A lot has changed over the 40-or-so years that *WPN* has been in existence. It actually began as a rather subversive newsletter, started by one Peter Dragonetti (later to gain respectability as WACT Treasurer) because the workers on the ground felt rather out of touch with, and ignored by, the Trust's directors - perish the thought. Then it was called *RunaWey*, soon to become *WPN* and gain official recognition. *WPN* nowadays even features on the Trust's website.

The nature of the work may not have changed substantially - back then we were still building bridges and rebuilding lock chambers, but the scale and scope has increased beyond all measure. H&S requirements have probably been the major change in the way the work is conducted, and that has to have been a positive change.

Now, as then, the diversity of the people involved is something to be celebrated. All too many of the workers around when issue 1 was published have now moved on to higher working parties, and those who remain are probably no longer recognisable. We all have tales to tell from those days. Would you believe that one enthusiastic - some might say over-active - university student, who did not drive (so I had to rush him in the Trust's ex-army Land Rover, at speeds that were certainly inappropriate and probably illegal) to the station to just catch his train home, would become, many years later, the Chief Constable of a force well known for its love of speed cameras?

Were those the days?

Bill

Hedgelaying Group

Alloah all. I must stop booking holidays with ASAGANHS?? (What do I mean?) In the October *WPN* I thought we would be moving to Haybarn on the third Tuesday of the month, i.e. the 24th. I was wrong. We moved down there on the 30th of October. What's a week between friends? Well I wouldn't know as I haven't got any friends, sob, sob.

The last four Tuesdays at Slinfold and the Onslow overflow car park has produced 300-plus stakes and about 260 binders. So we will be short of binders, but then the final amount of material can be cut when we know exactly how much we need rather than a rough estimate.

We will have about six weeks of work (six days) before Christmas which should be enough time to finish Haybarn. Or will it? What will the weather do? Who will be on holiday or off sick? I know of one! Yes, ME, as once again this missive is being written from C Bay (no, not Ebay) in St Richard's Hospital,



We asked for particular memories from the previous 299 issues of WPN - here's one sent in by Boat Group Chairman James Field. It's of Brewhurst Lock, 1996, showing the very young Laura and Megan Stockwell with their cousin Hannah standing in the canal in front of the gates. Hard hats etc excused on that day... James sends his thanks for all the good work done by our WACT and visiting Navvies.

Chichester. So does the first line above now make sense?

I do not know how much I will be able to physically do before Christmas. That is in the lap of my specialists and their treatment so we shall see.

Well that's enough from me so:

Cheers from me, (really dying for a beer - but not completely dead yet).

Keith Nichols

Tickner's Heath Depot

Well that's the summer gone, now for the cruel hard slog through the winter months, mind you with the progress being made by Dennis and the Eric Walker Group we may well be tucked up in a nice warm draught free new working area come the New Year. Yippee.

Anyone visiting the depot of late would be astonished at the new look. Sheds have been re-organised and redundant items deposited in the skip or have been advertised on sites such as eBay. In most cases they have been snapped up and have put welcome cash into the Trust's coffers. As they say, one person's rubbish is another's... Mind you the Tickner's team deserves no credit for this at all, it's all been done by members of the EWG, so well done them.

Nearly all of our effort during the month has been directed towards stripping the old reed cutter boat of the engine, gearbox and other components, which, to be fair, made it a modern H&S nightmare. The idea is to convert it to a work boat for use on the canal.



Monday Group at lunch at Barnshill (left) and completion of the clearance at Barnshill slipway (Roger Wilson)

Mind you until the last working day of the month it seemed that we were doomed to failure as we could not fathom how to remove the rather ancient Brunel type propeller. Everything we tried came to naught, until a close inspection showed a screw thread and - lo and behold - with the help of one our giant Stilsons plus a bit of muscle from Kev Baker, part A unscrewed from part B and out the prop came. Now all we need is a friendly face with access to gas cutting kit to remove most of the shroud that went over the prop.

Anyway, we will not be resting on our laurels as there are a couple of wheel barrows requiring our attention plus some donated items which need the once over. All the best

John Smith

Mrs Bucket Group - Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

As the calendar falls, so we had five meetings in October and achieved a lot. As anticipated in the last WPN, we cut back the growth on the Drungewick Lane to the Lock permissive path and around the winding hole below the lock, as well as working in the car park at Loxwood, at Devils Hole and Southland locks. A day spent at Malham lock saw that tidied up too.

We have started on the list of jobs requested by Chairman Sally and Kevin in that the Barnshill slipway has been cleared, 100m of hedge between Baldwins Knob lock and Brewhurst Bridge has been trimmed and the 'rail track' in the Drungewick

slipway has been cleaned out in preparation for slipping *Zachariah Keppel*. Continuing this theme, we have laid paving slabs in front of four bench seats at Brewhurst lock, Devils Hole lock and at the two located between Devils Hole and Southland locks. On the same day we replaced the fence at Barnshill slipway and found time to tidy up the Loxwood car park again, a continuous task!

Finally we tidied up the riverside walk in Hunt Park and cleared around the viewing platform. Working with Kev we cleared the towpath of branches etc between Brewhurst Lock and Birch Copse and conveyed them in *May Upton* to the winding hole at Brewhurst. We also brush cut the towpath bank. All in all a busy month!

On a more personal note, I found the meeting at Bramley on the 20th October very well organised and informative. So our thanks are due to Chairman Sally, all the project managers and our colleagues who provided all the delicious cakes and drinks.

Monday Group was formed at the initiative and under the leadership of Brian Crossley in November 1998 with the objective of 'keeping up appearances' at points where the canal was adjacent to the public highway. Understandably it soon acquired the nickname of 'The Mrs Bucket Group' in tribute to the TV series 'Keeping Up Appearances' with Patricia Routledge as Mrs Hyacinth Bucket (pronounced bouquet)! The leadership was handed over to John Empringham in July 2005.

For a long period the group met twice a month, although occasionally a third meeting was added if a

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 Keith Nichols
Third Saturday of the month	Summit level	Contact Dave Evans
First Friday of the month	PEST boat group	Contact Chris Jones/Peter Hyem

request was received for the Group to undertake a special task.

With the opening up of the canal south to Drungewick lock and northwards to Southland lock and the construction of Gennets Bridge lock, the work expanded to such an extent that from October 2017 the Group now meets weekly and visits many more sites than originally envisaged. From a small start, membership has expanded to about 15 volunteers but not all attend on every occasion.

Nick Wood

Mid-Week Working Party

We have had a busy month with the group having bumper numbers, well over 20 and lots of new people. We have spent the month going from site to site awaiting for a number of landowners to give us permission to really get our teeth into something.

At the beginning of the month we finished clearing the middle section of the canal from Gennets to the field crossing. If one walks the towpath, it is now possible to see a very clearly defined towpath and canal. It changes the feel of the towpath completely.

The next week we did our annual maintenance at Run Common. The landowner is always pleased and gives the troops a cake to share which is very happily accepted. The following week we went to Birtley to do some preparation for the Newbury Working Party. We cleared all along the fence line so that the fencing could easily be taken out and it made the towpath seem so much wider. Although the weather forecast was good, we spent the day in the rain. Since we did this the working party has made it even wider.

Then we went to Haybarn and cleared south of the Swing Bridge. Comment heard in the car park "What are we doing here, we only cleared this six months ago." By the end of a beautiful day we had cleared half the length and are looking forward to returning.

Our last outing was clearing up after a contractor had taken down a large number of trees on the off side of the canal south of Drungewick Bridge. When we began the day, it looked as if we had been sent on an empty mission, but six fires later and with 23 people working we believe the field is now ready for horses again.

Margaret Darvill

Boat Group PEST

The weed infestation in the navigation south of Barnshill Bridge was the principal target for PEST (passengers' environment safety team) during this past month.

During the summer, and particularly during the period where we were not running boat trips, there has been a quite unusual growth underwater of a very thick and dense weed. When boat trips resumed in mid-September this weed caused our boats considerable difficulties making the trip down to the Drungewick Slipway. Skippers had to make frequent efforts to clear the weed from their boat's propeller which delayed journeys and detracted from the usual calm progress of the trip.

The PEST volunteers managed to clear a significant amount of weed from the navigation around the Slipway. However, it was apparent that, in the future, mechanical means of weed clearance would be required in order to effect a complete solution to this problem. In addition the team performed its usual task of clearing growth impinging on the navigation.

The end of the growing season will give the team an opportunity to make further inroads into the growth of canal-side vegetation. Winter winds bring fallen trees and branches into the waterway which will keep the team busy over the 'closed season'.

Anyone wishing join the working party should contact:

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or Chris Jones at 07745793243,
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Chris Jones

Summit Working Party (and visiting groups)

October was a busy month for visiting groups with not just one but two week canal camps running at the same time over the October half term.

With only one weekend's break from the very successful slipway opening on 30th September, NWPG were working at the back of the Birtley Courtyard to complete the setting up of the temporary site compound. They were also installing a

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Margaret Darvill	Mid Week Working Party	01483 894606	margaret_darvill@weyandarun.co.uk
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Bill Nicholson's pictures from the Summit Group's recent work parties show that there is much more today in laying and fencing a towpath than we could ever have imagined 300 issues of WPN ago

new temporary vehicle access to the canal that at this point lies hidden behind the Downslink railway path. It was a nerve racking two weeks with a week's NWPG/WRG camp imminent. Decisions were awaited and subsequently received from the various land owners who essentially held the key as to whether we could access the canal. The Trust is very grateful to all parties concerned, but especially to the directors of Birtley Courtyard who took a leap of faith in allowing us to site our construction compound on their property.

Driving plant across the car park field and then along the bottom of the railway embankment would have resulted in serious rutting and damage. So the decision was taken to acquire temporary plastic road sheets (of the type used at festivals etc). These were not cheap but they can and will be used again at both construction sites and Trust events. It was clear by the end of the week camp that the purchase had been well worthwhile and had protected the land over which we were moving our plant.

The NWPG weekend of 13/14 October attracted some 12 volunteers on each day assisted by regular Northern Team members. All the plastic road sheets were moved into position and bolted together. The entire boundary with the school to the east was fenced with stock fencing (c 180m) and gate posts installed.

Dave Evans installed the gates during the following week prior to the arrival of the Canal Camp volunteers whose first task was to dig out the bank from the access down to the bridleway that provides the only route to the canal under the Downslink..

There then followed some six days of work with about 15 people on site each day. During this time we completed around 400m of stock fencing along the new canal boundary and about 300m of 3m wide towpath access road. The latter is to form part of a circular walk with the Downslink as well as providing a construction access to the site of a proposed canal crossing which we hope to tackle in 2019. A post and rail fence was erected on either side of the of the bridleway canal crossing smartening the appearance of the crossing to the public. It is the case that the whole area is being transformed and now shows its potential as another restored section of the W & A.

I mentioned two weeks of camps - the second comprised a WRG Forestry team of up to 20 volunteers who spent the week attending to dead and dying ash trees along the Brewhurst to Birch Copse section of the Loxwood Link.

The work was aided by the hiring of a cherry picker platform and the Trust's recently acquired tracked chipper, thus avoiding the risks associated with tree climbing and bonfires. WRGF achieved all and more of the tasks requested.

The Trust is grateful for the ongoing support of these two outside visiting groups as well to all those behind the scenes that enabled the camps to run smoothly

Future winter Summit /Northern working parties will continue work on the Birtley fence (there is the other side of the canal to do as well). For details of this and any other tasks that we may be tackling, please contact either myself or Dave Evans.

Bill Nicholson