



WEY & ARUN CANAL NEWS

(formerly THE COUNTRYSIDE AFLOAT)

A Twice-yearly Review of Recent Events on the Wey & Arun Canal

November 2005

Prepared by Brian Andrews

LOCK'S AWAY

Work began on the new lock to the West of the B2133 at Loxwood in June when contractors moved in to install the sheet piling and to dig out the hole. Following their departure, volunteers at three successive canal camps in July made good progress with constructing the lock itself, thus allowing the very expensive sheet piling to be removed as soon as was practical. These week-long camps were organised in conjunction with the Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) and the Dig Deep Initiative. Further teams of volunteers have continued this work under the control of Dig Deep and the Trust's own teams, ably led by Trust member Eric Walker.

The planned order of work for the B2133 crossing had to be reversed when it became apparent that the bridleway diversion required to enable the lowering of the Onslow pound would not be available in time. To make good use of the people already booked for the Project this year, it was decided to begin by constructing the new lock instead. This lock is the first to be constructed in the South of England for over 100 years and is the first completely new lock to be built by the Trust.

WHEN SMALL IS BIG

This year's Small Boat Rally took place on Sunday 22nd May when a record number of boats gathered on the canal – 54 in all – ranging from a small yacht to a coracle! Good use was made of the slipways at Drungewick to launch them for the event. £450 was raised towards Trust funds and the day was enjoyed by all who took part.

WALKING TO BRIDGE THE GAP

The annual sponsored walk, or 'Poddle', on Sunday 12th June attracted a total of 191 participants. The walk was set in the Amberley area, returning along the River Arun, on a glorious Summer's day and raised a magnificent £12,620 towards the cost of the B2133 Crossing Project.

FALKIRK WHEEL COMES TO WEY & ARUN

Mikron Theatre paid a special visit to the Wey & Arun on Friday 15th July to perform 'Wheel of Fortune' the story of the Falkirk Wheel, Scotland's fantastic new attraction which provides the link between the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals at Falkirk. Mikron travel the waterways in their narrowboat *Tyseley*, bringing theatre to many who would not have any other access. The Trust hopes eventually to be able to welcome them to the canal on their boat.

SWINGING INTO ACTION

Saturday 16th July saw the official opening of Haybarn Swingbridge by Francis Maude, MP, who is also a Vice President of the Trust. The day was a hot one and many Trust members and guests were present for the event. After the ribbon was cut, the bridge was duly swung and the first boat passed through the gap to the accompaniment of several cameras recording the occasion. Amongst the guests was Helen Gordon of British Waterways who donated the bridge to the Trust when it became redundant at Keighley on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. The bridge has a marked slope owing to its previous location and this all had to be taken into account when mounting it to enable it to swing.

Afterwards several Trust members walked to Lordings Aqueduct to enjoy tea with Trust member Winston Harwood. Sadly he died six weeks later but the many works at Lordings, including the replica Waterwheel, which he had masterminded, remain as a fitting tribute to an amazing and inspirational man.

PLAQUE WITHOUT THE TARTAR

Lord Egremont, the Trust President, officially unveiled a plaque at the Three Compasses Inn at Alsfold on Wednesday 12th August to commemorate the opening of the canal in 1816. Lord Egremont is the great-great-great grandson of the 3rd Earl of Egremont, who promoted the canal and was the first Chairman of the Wey & Arun Junction Canal Company. The canal's opening ceremony took place at the Inn on 29th September 1816 amidst great rejoicing when a roasted ox and 200 gallons of ale were consumed. The current landlord couldn't quite match this but did provide various delicious snacks and drinks for the invited guests. Lord Egremont also presented an original drawing of the Summit Level, by local artist John Russell-Hayes, to Mr Jim McAllister of Dunsfold Park in recognition of his help and support. The Trust hopes to reopen the summit level past the Three Compasses Inn soon and has appointed a Summit Level manager for this purpose.

MILLS AND BOON

Romantic yes, fiction definitely not! Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September was Heritage Weekend and Brewhurst Mill opened to the public. This was a boon to the Wey & Arun and the tripboat ferried passengers to and from the nearby Brewhurst Lock landing platform. The mill and canal had several extra visitors over the weekend. Cream teas at the mill were a particularly popular choice among them.

NOW WE ARE 2000+

Trust membership passed the 2000 milestone in early September. The Trust's dream of 2005 in 2005 is now a reality and membership continues to rise. To mark the occasion, on Tuesday 20th September the 2000th member was presented with theatre tickets by Timothy West, who was appearing at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre in Guildford.

ANY QUESTIONS?

If you would like to know more about the Wey & Arun Canal, whether in respect of its history or of its ongoing restoration, do please contact the Trust's Office at –

Wey & Arun Canal Trust,
The Granary, Flitchfold Farm,
Loxwood, Billingshurst
Telephone: 01403 752403
Fax: 01403 753991
Email: office@weyandarun.co.uk
Website: www.weyandarun.co.uk

