

Wey & Arun Canal News

June 2009

A review of recent events on the Wey & Arun Canal

Prepared by Brian Andrews

CELEBRATIONS MARK OPENING OF CANAL CROSSING



Wiggonholt is the first boat to use Loxwood Lock
(photo by sky360photography.co.uk)

Saturday 9th May saw a dream come true for the Wey & Arun Canal Trust when the Loxwood Canal Crossing was officially opened. Many had said that a volunteer organisation could not tackle such a huge task.

After nearly 4 years of construction work, the pieces of the complex engineering puzzle all came together in early 2009. The new lock gates (from Hargreaves of Halifax) arrived and contractors excavated the short section of canal between the new bridge and the new lock. This section proved more costly and difficult than originally predicted, partly due to the need to avoid overhead high-voltage cables.



Wiggonholt emerges from the new Loxwood Canal Bridge
(Lord Sterling is 3rd from left at the front of the boat)

The whole project has cost the Wey & Arun Canal Trust in the region of £1.9m, which was funded almost entirely from private sources, including a generous donation from the Manifold Trust.

The Trust's new electric boat, *Wiggonholt*, played a star role in the celebrations on 9th May. After Mrs Doreen Mann, on behalf of the Wiggonholt Association, had named the boat in the traditional manner, *Wiggonholt* proceeded at the head of a column of boats to the bridge, where Lord Sterling of Plaistow (former executive chairman of P&O) performed the official opening and unveiled two commemorative plaques. *Wiggonholt* then entered the new lock.

The section of canal beyond the new lock is not yet ready for larger boats; the Trust hopes to complete the necessary dredging work before the end of 2009. However, after the ceremonies many small boats navigated to within sight of Devils Hole Lock, already largely restored by the Trust. With the opening of the Loxwood Canal Crossing, there are no major engineering obstacles between Loxwood and the Surrey border.

TRUST APPOINTS NEW CHAIRMAN



Sally Schupke, the Trust's new Chairman, pictured by the side of the Wey & Arun Canal

On 14th May, Peter Foulger retired as Chairman of the Wey & Arun Canal Trust after 12 extraordinarily successful years. Several of the Trust's major achievements have been recorded with Peter at the helm, including the rebuilding of Drungewick aqueduct and bridge, the replica waterwheel at Lordings, Haybarn swingbridge and the Drungewick slipways, culminating with the arrival of *Wiggonholt* and the opening of the Loxwood Canal Crossing. Membership of the Trust, now over 2,600, has more than doubled during Peter's chairmanship.

Peter's successor is Sally Schupke, formerly the Trust's Public Relations Officer. Sally is a trade mark attorney and lives in Shalford, at the northern end of the canal route. Speaking after her appointment, Sally said "I am honoured to take on the leadership of the Wey & Arun Canal Trust at this exciting time. It is daunting to follow in the footsteps of Peter Foulger. Peter's greatest achievement has been to demonstrate that full restoration of the canal is not just a wild dream, but an achievable objective. With the support of my management colleagues and the Trust's growing band of enthusiastic volunteers, I will work hard to promote even faster progress towards our final aim."

Peter Foulger will continue to serve as a Director of the Wey & Arun Canal Trust.

NICK HERBERT MP BECOMES VICE-PRESIDENT

The Wey & Arun Canal Trust is delighted to announce that Nick Herbert, MP for Arundel & South Downs, has agreed to become a Vice-President of the Trust. Nick's constituency includes the southernmost part of the canal route. He is an enthusiastic supporter of the Trust's aims and was a VIP guest at the opening of the Loxwood Crossing on 9th May.

TRUST CONTRIBUTES TO LOCAL STRATEGIES

District and Borough councils are currently busy preparing their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), which will guide planning policies at least until 2018. The Wey & Arun Canal Trust has recently contributed to the LDF consultation process in Guildford and Waverley Boroughs, which between them contain about half of the canal route.

The Trust has presented the many benefits of a restored canal, including creation of amenity open spaces, promoting recreation and improving people's sense of well-being in the place where they live, as well as creating new commercial opportunities. Restoration of the canal channel and the adjoining towpath offers an excellent opportunity for environmental enhancement. It is recognised that a restored canal will benefit wildlife and promote biodiversity.



Gosden aqueduct in Bramley, on the boundary between Guildford and Waverley Boroughs

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www.weyandarun.co.uk

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