

Working Party News

For WACT Volunteers

June/July 2008

Editorial Comment (Wendy Andrews)

Congratulations to Eric Walker on becoming a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in this year's Queens Birthday Honours List. 'Well Deserved' to Eric and 'Great PR' for WACT!

It's good to have a report from Michael Bates this month. As our newly appointed Health & Safety Officer earlier in the year, we were somewhat concerned about his state of health back in April; great news that Michael is making a good recovery and is already making a difference on behalf of our volunteer force. Thank you, too, to Turlough and the Group Leaders for their contributions, without which WPN would be a non-starter.

Restoration Manager (Turlough Bamber)

In place of a report I thought of offering a joke:

There was a Home Party Entertainer who squeezed an orange until it was dripping no more. He challenged the audience in West Sussex: 'If you get another drop, I will give you £1000.' So, one tall fellow got up and took the squashed orange and sat on the floor. He applied some manual pressure and, lo and behold, he got several drops out. The Entertainer was astonished as it had never happened before. He said 'How come? What do you do?' 'I am the Treasurer of a Southern Canal Trust'

Hope you get better soon Jim!!

There are some developments on the Surrey sections that hopefully will bring joy to many in the Working Parties. It is a hard, soulless grind, believe you me, making progress there.

It was a great pity Jim Chipchase did not feel he could put the time needed for the role of Operations Manager. He had some splendid ideas having come from field work in the petrochemical industry. Maybe we set the brief too high. Is there anyone in the Working Parties who would like to take on some of the roles Jim and David Jessop have had these last 2 years? There is no doubt that it is not possible for one person to carry Working Parties, Training, H&S, Tickners Heath as well as some input into Conservation (pro tem). This is not to mention attendance at CoM (with a monthly report), Management Meetings, Restoration /Operations Meetings, Landowner Liaison Group meetings, also input to Bramley Link, the Summit and Lordings with its SSSI problems. So, if this Canal is to continue to progress, we need volunteers to come forward and take on some of these roles.

I am told by my Family that it is a human right to see something of one's grandchildren!

So, come on Guy and Gals there is a small but important role for you to get deeper involved in the life of the Trust.

Monday Working Party (Nick Wood for John Empringham)

In May all that sun and rain and a three week gap between meetings caused by the bank holidays, the vegetation at our sites grew like topsy! But we're catching up having visited Devils Hole Lock and, with the kind permission and supervision of the site manager, two of our members were 'passed through' the construction site to enable them to mow Loxwood New Lock too. Also we have to report that the sign on the left hand side of the road approaching Three Compasses Bridge has been 'flattened' by person or persons unknown (possibly by the contractors who cut the verges). It has been moved to Tickners Heath yard for further attention but that means that there is no wee box for the canal brochures at that site at present.

At the time of writing (June 27th) we have had 3 meetings in June, continuing work on our regular sites and keeping the diversion signs on the A281 at Alford clear of vegetation. In order that Loxwood New Lock was tidy for the Poddle, two highly committed members conveyed a mower in a wheelbarrow all the way from Loxwood Post office across the fields on the footpath to Devils Hole Lock and down the towpath to Loxwood New Lock as access through the construction site was not possible on that occasion. What heroes!

Repainting Haybarn Swing Bridge is well on the way to completion and the opportunity was taken to mow and strim a walking width along the towpath to the stile, some 400 yards north of the bridge.

We meet again on 30th June, 7th and 21st July.

Recycling (John Wood)

Back in January this year Joy, my wife, noticed a large number of strapped bundles of undelivered weekly 'freebie' newspapers awaiting collection by the Council's 'kerbside' re-cycling lorry, outside a house.

Joy put one of our 'Save a Tree and Restore a Canal' flyers through the letterbox of the house. The next day the householder phoned us to say that there are nearly always some of these newspapers left over each week and we could take them away if we wanted. The upshot of all this is that every Thursday we collect the undelivered papers. We are told that the Editor of the paper is pleased to know that the papers are sold to our merchant, Messrs Aylesford Newsprint, and are a very useful form of fundraising for two deserving charities, The Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital and The Wey & Arun Canal Trust.

Now, I believe this situation is probably repeated wherever 'freebie' weekly/monthly newspapers and magazines are being delivered to households.

Would you be interested in seeing whether this inexhaustible supply is available in your locality? Well, if you are, this is a method of locating the distribution point to where those delivering the papers and magazines collect them. You could ask the person who delivers to your home where the collection point is or get in touch with the editor of the paper or magazine.

Obviously there have to be downsides. Leftover papers/magazines would have to be collected from the distribution point. You would need to be coming to, or passing, the site of our Aylesford Newsprint skips, either in our car park at the Onslow Arms, Loxwood or Hurst Farm, Crawley Down fairly regularly.

Do please get in touch with me for further information.

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Health and Safety *(Michael Bates)*

After a false start on appointment, due to a misdiagnosed burst duodenal ulcer, I am now taking up the reins as H&S Officer. I am still working for a living, so am not as available as many others, but always contactable on 07786323515 or michael.g.bates@btinternet.com.

Current work is directed at Tickner's Heath, where a quantity of broken asbestos cement sheeting requires safe removal. Most of the sheds at Tickner's Heath are clad in this material, some with an external coating, but most not. There is no danger to anyone as long as the materials are not disturbed, but we, the Trust, have a duty at law to carry out a suitable survey, which has been arranged, and then follow up on the findings. The broken (and therefore a potential hazard as asbestos containing dust could be released) sheeting by the side of the oils and fuel shed is mixed up with road barriers and supports which we will need to use in future, but we hope that the broken material in the large Dutch barn can be barriered off, unless someone has an urgent need to use this space, and left for the foreseeable future. This form of asbestos (chrysotile) is the least dangerous, but is still a hazard which we cannot ignore.

I hope to contact and meet the Working Party leaders over the next couple of months to ascertain their future training needs, check that their 999 systems are sound, and then develop a training plan, based on a database I intend to set up.

Good news from the Government! We are looking at insurance, particularly personal insurance for our members, and the statement from Harriet Harman that it will be illegal to discriminate against the over 70s, who no longer find personal accident insurance easy to find and we do not have it at present, should help us cover everyone for any non negligent accident sustained on WACT business. Watch this space.

Loxwood Link *(Peter Wilding)*

With the small boat rally, whisky tasting, soiree and special invitation cruises (VIP trips) coinciding with the strongest vegetation growing period much mowing of the access areas, tree and hedge trimming has been required. Mowing has now been made easier with the acquisition of a new self-propelled mower - much easier than pushing! Water levels have been maintained well but now at the end of June with virtually no rain for 2 weeks and warm weather we are having to increase pumping from the river Lox and fine tune the BKL back-pump timing to balance levels above and below that lock.

Time to brush up on the rain dance again!

Mid Week Working Party *(Peter Jackman)*

A brief note this time, with the MWWP hopping about from pillar to post, any job is a last minute decision. We've been digging out the canal between Farnhurst Bridge and Fastbridge to enable 'small' boats to get past the sand bar when we run the Small Boat Rally later in the year.

We've spent two weeks constructing a board walk (50 odd railway sleepers on bearers, bolts, metal strappings and ash posts, hard, heavy work) for Surrey County Council – all part of Working Together!

We've had a blitz at Tickners Heath sorting out tools etc – a plea here: please clean shovels before returning them, they are heavy enough without a coating of concrete or cement!

We have now started on refurbishing the newly acquired work boat – it is more than 40 years old!

Future work includes clearing stinging nettles etc at Beevers Farm and possible clearance at Drungewick. Late today, at time of writing, a second newly acquired boat, a small steel punt, arrived at Tickners with its new 'bottom'. This needs to be cleaned of surface rust, its topsides painted and underwater sections blacked.

Don't turn up in your best clothes!

For up to date info on work site venue watch out for Alison's email or phone me on 01483 772132.

Many thanks for your continued support.

Thursday/Sunday Group *(Eric Walker)*

The making of concrete copings and blocks for use at Devils Hole lock has been completed.

The gate to fit on the bridge at Devils Hole lock has arrived and is ready for fitting. It is being stored in one of the cabins there. The decision to hold the fitting of the gate was held for planning consent from CDC in respect of the lock. The anticipated date for that consent is now 11th August.

The Thursday group has been pointing up the voids between the pre-cast beams on the Loxwood Bridge, not an easy job. Before completion of the east side the contractors started to put in the invert so finishing this task has been put back until better access is available, possibly September. The pointing between the coping blocks behind the Onslow Arms has been completed.

The fitting of walkways for the top gates at Baldwins Knob lock and Drungewick lock was held up by the late arrival of the metalwork. When it did arrive it was not as required so has been modified. The fitting of these walkways started at Drungewick in late June. Well done to those stalwarts who spent an hour and a half punting May Upton from Barnsill Bridge to progress this job and nobody has fallen in the canal, yet!

The Sunday group have been piping the land drains from where they emerge from the field opposite the Onslow car park down to the canal. Originally, when the canal was widened and the land drains exposed, plastic sheeting was used to protect the bank from erosion. In the event it was unsightly and did not work as expected. Three wild pear trees, grown on by Keith Nichols from the wild pear tree that was removed to lower the towpath, have now been planted in the field at the top of the bank. Peter Cooper has put up a lot of bird boxes and the Sunday Group helped him with an owl box up a tree by the winding hole at the Onslow.

The Baldwins Knob landing stage decking was deemed unsafe and the more wood that was taken off the more that decision was justified. Using May Upton all the decking was removed and replaced with new wood. Peter Wilding will be giving the walking surface an anti-slip treatment.

At the Canal Bridge, Loxwood, the traffic was moved to the east of the road in mid May. Excavations to the west started with lots of 'muck-away'. By 2nd June with the bridge works half finished, the trench sheeting, which formed the temporary works, was removed; we then had light at the end of the tunnel! By the end of June all the pre-cast beams were in place and the steel reinforcement was put in for the invert.

Special arrangements were made for the sponsored walkers on the Poddle to go through the work site on 8th June and on past Loxwood Lock.

The surveyors have been out again at Drungewick; eventually we get a record of what has been done over the past many years. Robin Charles has been putting the lock gate drawings onto CAD, again a record of what we have but also a means of saying what we want.

The summer break this year means that the TSG will meet on Sunday 20th July and then next on 30th August by which time we will be into our autumn programme, and we all know what that means - bring your toe-tector wellies and waterproofs.

Educational Projects (Don Gibson)

On 29th May I set out on my Walk, for which, due to totally inadequate publicity, nobody turned up to take part. I had got round about 7/8ths of the route and reached a stile, where, in trying to climb over it, I found myself subsiding sideways into the surrounding greenery; my left leg had given way. By the time I reached ground level, I found that my legs were in the wrong order, my left leg was where my right leg should have been and having spent the next 50 minutes vainly trying to raise myself from the ground and ending up completely and utterly exhausted and on the point of using my mobile to call for help, a couple turned up. He, it turned out, had had experience in getting people who had fallen over to an upright position. I will draw a veil over the next mile of return to the car park of the Limeburners Inn, having disgraced myself in falling over once more and plodding through flooded ground, ending up with soggy footwear and trouser ends. To my chagrin, I do not know their names, but I did learn that they were on a caravan holiday and had come up from North Devon, where they lived.

I thought that it would be better to cut short an ever lengthening story and mention the Educational Project, Infoposts®. I am in the process of adding an acrylic bracket to the bottom of the leaflet dispensers to improve their security and simplify their fitting. Fitting the bracket takes very little time, but getting the brackets on to the dispensers already in the field will take quite a while; I will have to call on the skills of my handier Monitors to do a swap over of already converted ones, but they (the dispensers) are in short supply.

Working Party Diary for July/August/September

Usually first & third Mondays of the month	'Mrs Bucket' – Keeping Up Appearances	Details from John Empringham
Most Tuesday mornings	Maintenance sessions at Tickner's Heath Depot	Check with Colin Gibbs
Every Wednesday	Mid-Week Working Party	Check with Peter Jackman or Alison Saville for confirmation of venue
Every Wednesday	Loxwood Link Maintenance	Contact Peter Wilding
Every Thursday & Sunday	Mainly construction work. Meet at the Onslow Arms, 09.30.	Contact Eric Walker for details
Every Thursday	Winston Harwood Group	Contact Ron Chamberlain or Tony Clear for details
Some Saturdays	Conservation and Maintenance	Contact David Jessop for latest plans
Varying dates in the winter months	Hedge Laying	Check with Keith Nichols for next season's venue

Working Party Directory

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