

Working Party News

For WACT Volunteers
November 2008

Editorial Comment (*Wendy Andrews*)

If you're an active working volunteer please remember to sign up for WACT Personal Accident Insurance. I'm again attaching the form that needs to be completed to ensure that you're covered and repeating Michael Bates' details of the scheme, see below.

On a lighter note, there's more news of the Navvies Christmas lunch – get your reservation in while you can! Details and a booking form are attached.

Talking of Christmas, the ever popular Santa Cruises will be running on December 13th/14th and 19th to 23rd. Please see Rosie Sugar's plea for help below and think about calling the WACT office to book a trip as a Christmas treat.

Christmas Lunch (*Geoff Perks*)

The annual Christmas Lunch is to take place on Monday 15th December at the Three Compasses. Last year we had to turn a couple of people away due to space limitations and so, while a party of up to 36 can still be accommodated in one room, this year it has been arranged that if the attendance exceeds 36 we can split the group. In this event 30 people would sit in the principal room with the balance, up to a maximum of 20, in the pub's usual dining room. So, in total, up to 50 of us could attend. Details of the menu and a booking form are attached.

Santa Cruises (*Rosie Sugar*)

We run a number of trips over the Christmas period - there are 7 days of Santa Specials this year when Father Christmas comes on the boat and hands out surprise presents to the children; grown-ups enjoy mulled wine or fruit juice and mince pies.

An amazing display of Christmas decorations will be put up along the canal and on the boat. Helpers are encouraged to dress up in festive wear and be jolly and merry to help create the festive atmosphere! We are hoping to repeat last year's roaring success of our talking model Santa who actually holds conversations with our visitors. Apart from the boat crew we need lots of additional help with the refreshments, lock operations, car parking and general shore side duties, not to mention putting up the decorations etc.....please volunteer – could you, or your 'better half', spare a day or even half a day, to help out?

We also run Boxing Day Revels and New Years Day trips for which we need volunteers to help on the boat and shore.....do you fancy some fresh air and exercise to work off the excesses after Christmas?

Please, please email me, rosiesugar@hotmail.co.uk or operations@waelboat.co.uk, or telephone me on 01403 752321

Hedge Laying Group (*Keith Nichols*)

Here I am in one of my offices at 19.45 and it's cold, dark, wet and miserable and that's inside The Three Compasses! It's even worse outside.

The team has finished Layed Hedge trimming for this season and has moved on to preparation for laying in the Drungewick Bridge/Aqueduct area. After much sweat we had finished over 100m of preparation on October 28th. At the end of that day 2 people, who will remain nameless (won't we!), repaired to a local office to cogitate on our efforts.

Buzzards can now be seen aplenty trying to fatten up for the breeding season. It must be annoying for them though when they get buzzed by about 40 rooks. It was like watching the Battle of Britain when we arrived on site on Tuesday. We also got a low flying display by 2 swans, instead of the Vulcan. Earlier, at Baldwins, we were treated to a Sparrow hawk pretending to be a Hobby, being chased by a rook at medium height, rather than doing what a Sparrow hawk does best by diving at high speed and whizzing in and out of the trees at low level.

I digress! For the next 1 or 2 Wednesdays I hope some of the team will assist MWWP in cutting 400 stakes and 400 binders. I, unfortunately, have some jobs to do at home as work pressure is not giving me the time to do everything that I need to do but, who knows, I may be there as well.

Planned dates:

November – Wednesday 5th, (Sunday 9th), (Thursday 13th), (Sunday 16th), Friday 21st.

December – Monday 1st, Tuesday 9th, (Sunday 14th), Wednesday 17th.

Winston Harwood Group *(Ron Chamberlain for David Junkison)*

The first Thursday in October saw us at Lordings where we completed the brickwork in the bottom of the lock and more work was done on the water wheel. Also some more clay was moved to the lock.

The next week the group went to Tickners Heath to collect the notice board which had been renovated. It was loaded onto Tony Clear's trailer and returned to its original site. It required a fair bit of manhandling to get it along the path to where it needed to be. On arrival at the site we hunted for the two concrete spurs that David had hidden at the last visit. Unfortunately both had 'as they say gone with the wind' so after a quick modification we were able to erect the notice board and put it to use with some WACT pamphlets.

The next week the group went back to Lordings where some work was carried out fixing some strengthening spurs to the picnic tables. Later some further clearance work was done to remove surplus ballast and other materials from the site, including the concrete mixer, all of which was returned to Tickners.

The next week, at Peter Wilding's request the party returned to complete the work started some months ago at the pump site just below Brewhurst where a protective cover was fitted around the pipe and the trench filled in and the area tidied up and returned to its natural state. A new cover has been made for the pump chamber and left at Tickners to be fitted at a later date.

The final week in October the team returned to Lordings to do some general end of season clearance work and tidy up. Any further work this season depends on the weather and access to the site.

So that was October - see you next month!

Monday Working Party *(Nick Wood for John Empringham)*

The Adventures of Brian (with the Monday Group)

Now children, Brian is what we adults call an enthusiastic canaller, but he gets into scrapes. Having abandoned his motor car in a ditch at Devils Hole Lock on one occasion, which involved Mr Plod the policeman, and fallen into some smelly stuff on another, he has now had further adventures at Run Common. He stepped into a deep hole and got well and truly stuck, rather like Gordon the big engine! Like Gordon he had to send for the Fat Controller who eventually dug him out. We are pleased to say that he suffered no damage and the hole has now been filled in with the help of Mr Mole from Wind in the Willows.

(Note from Ed – for further explanation please ask Nick, not me!!)

Apart from that, we have been tidying up our regular sites in preparation for our winter programme, although we haven't quite finished yet. In addition we spent some time mowing and strimming at Tickners Heath yard at the request of Dave Kersley and at Loxwood on the West side of the road, preparing the ground and sowing grass seed as well as cutting back the roadside hedge to improve the site lines for motorists.

We meet next on 3rd and 17th November. Please ring John Empringham for details if you would like to join us..

Mid Week Working Party *(Peter Jackman)*

It's proved impossible to make positive progress as regards sites and details of work to be done and how long a particular site might need is often difficult to predict.

For the last eighteen weeks the number of volunteers has been in double figures ranging between ten and eighteen except for an odd week when we were divided between Toat and Bramley.

Alison, bless her, keeps regulars informed by email as to location, task, and detailed information on how to get there.

As I write (November 1st), post-and-wire fencing will be erected at Tannery Lane, Bramley along with the associated removal of timber already fallen or cut by us in previous weeks. This will start on November 5th and will require a good one or two day's work to complete.

Keith Nichols has made a belated request for 400 stakes and binders for hedge laying at Drungewick and I think this will mean a visit to Beevers Farm for material.

We spent the last day in October felling a rather large willow (our biggest tree at 40"/1 metre diameter) at Elmbridge next to the previously demolished causeway. The tree (its roots having disturbed the canal bank) had fallen over the canal to about 45 degrees at which point it got hung-up in the branches of trees at the bottom of the bank! Sixteen bodies were out along with two chainsaws one of which was my 23" Husqvana which justified its appearance, and the Tirfor pulled the tree down plus six or seven smaller ones. More work is required there to complete the job.

There will be more clearance work at Birtley (Westlands Farm), and when the access is clear, coppicing and possible bank clearance between New Lock and Devils Hole Lock. Further clearance will be done at Run Common before Christmas.

Educational Projects *(Don Gibson)*

My Infopost(®) activities have been interrupted by having to give emergency help to my son and his business partner, who, due to their lease running out, have had to move premises and I have some jobs to do in the 'new to them' place. When these are completed I will be able to continue with splitting the leaflets into 50's and modifying the dispensers with an acrylic bracket on the base to improve the security and ease of mounting them on their supporting posts.

Health and Safety (*Michael Bates*)

Insurance

I mentioned in my piece in the June/July issue of WPN that we were looking at obtaining some better insurance cover for all our volunteers, whatever they may do for the Trust. Much interest has been expressed, but brokers need more detail than we can provide from our existing records. **SO IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE INSURED FOR PERSONAL ACCIDENT AS WELL AS FOR THE NECESSARY PUBLIC LIABILITY WHICH THE TRUST ALREADY COVERS PLEASE RETURN THE ATTACHED FORM TO ME.**

Either send it by slow post to M G Bates at the office (address on Page 3 of WeySouth) or by email to michael.g.bates@btinternet.com. I regret that I will not be able to engage in discussion over particular details of your individual requirements, but we will put together a composite list of volunteers and what they do so that we can approach brokers with sufficient detail to gain what we hope will be advantageous quotes. Individual names WILL NOT be revealed. If you carry out more than one activity (such as ZK crew and MWWP) please list them all, together with all the relevant qualifications you may have that are still in date, or have no end date. These include those such as First Aid, Chainsaw/Brushcutter certificates, 250 ton crane driver, and professional diving qualifications (but not PADI or BSAC). Some volunteers may be reluctant to reveal their dates of birth, but this information will only be held by me, and not revealed unless I am required to do so by law.

Whilst the insurers need not hold individual names they will expect the party (i.e. WACT) to hold accurate records, so in the event of a claim we can show that the individual had given the necessary truthful information. Thank you for your help.

Loxwood Link Maintenance Unit (*Ed for Peter Wilding*)

Nothing from Peter this month though a little bird tells me he is very pleased to have had 2 offers of help to join his team. I'm sure he wouldn't turn more away. The work is mainly 'fine weather gardening' - motor mowing and low level tree trimming using the workboat to maintain a clear navigation - plus occasional other DIY jobs such as painting locks. The advertised weekly Wednesday is not a rigid commitment and even once or twice a month would be a great help. There is no point in restoring a canal if we are not going to maintain it so if you can help to keep the jungle at bay please phone Peter on 01483 422519.

Thursday/Sunday Group (*Eric Walker*)

October saw Baldwins Knob gates lifted (shims under both heel posts) by Peter Foulger and Phil Broadley and the walkways were fitted to the top gates. Then the stop planks were removed, all but the bottom one which David Kersley found a few days later, floating under Barnsil Bridge. It had been noted when the lock was pumped down that that plank was not in the slot but held by the lock wall.

The water supply for the boat group has been put in at last. First the tap and connecting pipe for the meter were installed. Three weeks later Southern Water installed the water meter and connected the tap to it. Meanwhile, using a small digger from Burras, the water pipe from the bridge to the boat watering point, where ZK is usually moored, was installed. Finally in very wet weather the trench for the water pipe was excavated by hand up the bridge wing wall to the tap. Well done to Len Hasler and Dan Rolt. With the water pipe in place the bank can now be built up to its finished height.

Tasks around the bridge are gradually getting done. The gate to Knebbs Field (in the NE corner of the bridge) has been put back, so that now, with the water meter in place, the track can be resurfaced and the hedge replaced. At the same point of the bridge there is to be a short fence and gate for crew access to the boat. Then steps from this gate to the canal wall have to be installed, again for crew access. A start was made putting fences on the NW corner of the bridge. One will go down the wing wall; the other will go behind the kerb along the road. This latter fence is to have a hedge planted behind it.

Also in the NW corner of the bridge a (cable) pulling chamber is to be installed, as in September in the NE corner, for the electricity supply for the new boat. In the NW corner of the bridge there will be three service ducts, two street drain ducts and a back of wall drain.

One of the first jobs Burras did when they arrived on site was to put in the 'L' shape units to complete the wall from the bridge to the bridleway behind the Onslow. When Burras has finished to the west of the road the machines will 'escape' under the bridge and out to the road, to clear the site. This limits to some extent how much of the wall can be completed by the volunteers, but most of it can.

To the west of the road Burras is making good progress and by the middle of November it might be possible to start laying the bricks on the NW wall, between the bridge and lock.

Access to DHL is not available yet, so work there is further delayed. Not to worry; there is lots to do. Busy times ahead!

Working Party Diary for November/December/January

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	tba
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	See Keith Nichols' piece for this season's dates
December 4 th	Christmas Dinner Arundel	More details from Tim Jolly 01403267408 tim_jolly@weyandarun.co.uk
December 12 th	Christmas Dinner Bramley	More details from Emma Williams 01483 890515
December 15 th	Christmas Lunch for Working Party Volunteers	Contact Geoff Perks 01403 262855
December 13 th /14 th & 19 th – 23 rd	Santa Cruises	Bookings through WACT Office Offers of Help to Rosie Sugar
December 26 th	Boxing Day Cruises	Bookings through WACT Office Offers of Help to Rosie Sugar
January 1 st	New Year's Day Cruises	Bookings through WACT Office Offers of Help to Rosie Sugar

Working Party Directory

WACT Office	General enquiries	01403 752 403	office@weyandarun.co.uk
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Eric Walker	B2133 Crossing	023 9246 3025	eric_walker@weyandarun.co.uk
Peter Jackman	MidWeek Working Party	01483 772132	a.m.saville@btinternet.com
John Empringham	'Mrs Bucket'	01483 562657	john@empringham.com
Peter Wilding	Loxwood Link	01483 422519	peter_wilding@weyandarun.co.uk
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