

Working Party News

For WACT Volunteers

March 2009

Editorial Comment (Wendy Andrews)

This time last month there was snow on the ground, though not very much here in Loxwood. Now there's a hint of spring in the air and we're busy making plans for Easter. Please remember the Easter Cruises – even if you are not able to help, try and come along to join in the fun.

Thank you to John Smith for his contribution this month, the first of many I hope. John, along with Tony Rozier, has taken on the daunting task of managing the Trust's depot at Tickner's Heath.

Easter Cruises (Rosie Sugar)

Easter fast approaches and I am now putting out a plea for volunteers to help with the Easter Bunny trips over 10th -13th April inclusive – please see the poster either locally or at www.weyandarun.co.uk/easter

We run 6 trips each day and if demand dictates, we run both the ZK and the JS – a potential 1000 passengers.....phew! What an amazing opportunity for substantial revenue and PR exercise for us but I am sure that you will appreciate that we need you to help us make it a success.

So..... I am looking for volunteers– not just boat crew and skippers but also general shore side help which includes serving up refreshments, lock keepers, car parkers and this year we are also hoping to repeat the success of the games and entertainments. Apart from running the games we are also looking for ideas and 'props' to fill this niche – does anyone have any suggestions? For instance - face painting always goes down well - does anyone have these skills? Or do you have alternative suggestions for side shows that don't occupy too much space?

We need lots of volunteers and if you are only able to spare half a day then that would be fine. On the job training will be provided (!) and if you can come dressed up that would be even more fantastic but a set of bunny ears would suffice! We are looking for as many characters in costume as possible as 'entertainers' which helps to create the fun atmosphere – we have had some great characters in the past with Old Mother Hubbard, chickens, clowns, Tweedle Dum, Tweedle Dee and the Mad Hatters Tea Party running riot along the canal.

Thursday/Sunday Group (Eric Walker)

Eventually Burras cleared off the site in mid February and, as they left, half their team was laid off. Once they had gone the scaffolding for work on the northwest wall was erected.

With the official opening on 9th May there was too little time for the brickwork on the northwest wall to be done by the volunteers so a couple of brickies and a labourer were employed for seven days, the weather was ideal and they broke the back of the job.

The completion of the northwest wall requires it to be backfilled, another major activity involving a large amount of concrete and soil/clay. The concrete will be put in while the scaffolding is in place, Verrall will do the rest when they clear that part of the canal. The volunteers will do final tidying of the soil.

The cables have been received for the electricity connection from Loxwood Lock to the Wiggonholt charging point. Now we have to get the pulling chambers built and then pull the cables in.

There have been a lot of very supportive visitors to the site recently and a number have joined the Trust. None of these folk have objected to the bridge parapets and are amazed when they hear of the hassle with the local authorities.

The lock gates are in manufacture and should be with us by 25th March. With the gates in place the bund can be removed and the copings behind the Onslow put in. The back pump is on order and should be with us by early April. The railings on the ramp are in manufacture and again should be in place by 25th March. The railings down the track are on hold awaiting a clear indication from WSCC if they will accept the Parish Council's recommendation for the bridge parapets. There are lots of other jobs to be done, not least to clear the accumulated kit off the site ready for the grand opening.

Hence a busy time is forecast!

Winston Harwood Group (Ron Chamberlain for David Junkison)

The group returned to Rowner Lock to carry on clearing the non towpath side to gain access to some large trees that are lying across the canal. These will need some chainsaw work at some time in the future. The adverse weather prevented us from working one week and then, when we were able to continue, we returned to the Newbridge site and did some more clearing on the non towpath side to gain access to some more large trees blocking that part of the canal. The last week of the month the group split into 2 parties; one party went

back to Newbridge while the other party went to Loxwood to give some assistance with the tidying up on the site.

That's all for this month; see you in April

Tickners Heath Depot (*John Smith*)

Having been in the seat, so to speak, for a little over a month I can now appreciate why certain members of the Trust thought both Tony Rozier and I were either certifiable or had a death wish when we volunteered to take on TH Depot (you would think after 24 years in the forces I would have known better about volunteering).

First I would like to thank Colin Gibbs for supplying the most recent inventory of Tickners. It makes interesting reading; now all Tony and I have got to do is to find where the kit is and update the list.

There has been a site meeting with Turlough and Jeremy to determine what we can and cannot do on the site. We've also looked at the possibility of installing some form of sanitation and supplying power to certain buildings.

With the help of Dave Kersley we have made a start at removing the large amount of scrap metal from the site. The plan is then to re-locate the caravan to that area so that it can provide some form of office for the site.

Whilst on the subject of waste can I please ask that members do not use the area as a dumping ground for any redundant household items because removal of waste from the site is very time consuming. Wherever possible working groups should be responsible for removing waste from their own sites and only bring items such as scrap metal back to Tickners.

The engine shed is slowly being emptied of items so that work can start on weather proofing it with a view to making a reasonable environment in which to repair and service the Trust's equipment, tools etc.

Also eventually we will be attempting to place like items together so that working parties do not have to trawl the site to find what they require and on that note can I please ask that working parties return items to where they found them; I appreciate it is hard when you have put in a full day's hard graft and wish to get off to home or some local hostelry but it will make life a lot easier in the long run. Also can I please ask that when items are removed from the depot that a usage chit is completed before leaving, these can be posted into the letter box by the main gate. This will be of use to Tony and myself in 2 ways: (i) we will know where the kit is being used and (ii) knowing how frequently items are used makes planned maintenance easier.

Unfortunately due to hospital visits etc we have had to change the day we meet to Wednesday. We appreciate that this clashes with the MWWP but I am afraid it was unavoidable. If any there any other members who fancy a challenge we would welcome them with open arms.

Both Tony and I realise that this is a long term project and may mean some disruption to old established practices but I was always taught that 'If you do what you always did you will get what you always got'! Both Tony and I want to ensure that we improve the service that working parties get by making sure equipment, tools etc are available when needed.

Now, if you will please excuse me, I am off to sample the wife's pancakes!

Hedge Laying Group (*Keith Nichols*)

Well, here we all are, entering the last month of the 1st quarter of 2009 or, to put it more simply, it will soon be Christmas.

The team has worked 7 days this month and has completed the canal side hedge right up to the Drungewick Lane Bridge.

On Friday 13th a small team started on the three roadside sections between the river bridge and the canal bridge at Drungewick Lane. Being the 13th I decided to lose ourselves in some of the densest large area of bramble I have ever had the 'pleasure' to attack. Two days later the team of 2 had cut a 6 foot swathe either side of the line of saplings on the west side of the road and also cut down the bramble on the east side.

After a mammoth effort on Monday 23rd we had layed over a third of the east side and over a half of the west side which leaves about 39m left to lay.

A couple of walks along all the layed hedge this month identified only 17m of flood damage in all, which, after the 'Great Flood' and the 'Nearly Great Flood' this year, I thought was pretty good.

The Buzzards have been much in evidence in all our visits with the male starting its courtship display. The Barn Owl flew by late on Monday 23rd (at 17.00) and must have seen me? It let out a cry that certainly lived up to its common name of 'Screech Owl'. I thought I didn't look that bad? Comments on a postcard to the landlord of the Three Compasses!

So March should see the end of the Hedgelaying team's work this year unless someone finds something up their sleeve.

Cheers for now all, as I've got to get another pint.

Dates: March 2nd, 11th, 19th, 27th

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

No-one will be surprised to hear that we didn't meet on 2nd February! It was the first time since the Group was formed in November 1999 that the weather beat us. However, we enjoyed a complete contrast in the weather on 16th February when it was a mild sunny day in Sidney Wood with the canal filled with water and looking very attractive. We have nearly finished, although we need one more visit to complete the clearance of the winding hole above lock 16 and to conclude clearing the adjacent culvert. We shall return later in the year to cut the reeds in the bottom of the canal after the water has soaked away.

We meet again on the 2nd and 16th March, weather permitting!

Mid Week Working Party (Peter Jackman)

A short brief this month from the 'Bramley Gang', alias the MWWP.

We started work in the Tannery Lane/Eastwood Road area on September 13th 2008 with a couple of days at Beevers Farm. Since then we have worked on 28 days (note a month's work) tree felling (I repeat 'tree', some were around 18/20" diameter), scrub clearance, boundary fencing and ditch diggingand heaven knows how many fires at which the MWWP excel. On a recent work party an unscheduled competition between the Environment Agency's flood debris clearance team and the 'Bramley Gang' proved this – we won 3 fires to their 1!

Should you wish to see the results of our work I suggest you take a walk from the bridge in Tannery Lane along the old railway line (the Downs Link) towards Bramley. Just past the old aqueduct bear left towards Eastwood Road. Better still, come and join us: February 18th saw 19 volunteers and February 25th saw 25. Well done and thank you all!

Starting in March we may be a day or 2 at Devils Hole, then possibly back to Bramley.

Working Party Diary for March/April/May

Usually first & third Mondays of the month	'Mrs Bucket' – Keeping Up Appearances	Details from John Empringham
Every Wednesday	Maintenance sessions at Tickner's Heath Depot	Contact John Smith
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
Varying dates in the winter months	Hedge Laying	See Keith Nichols' piece for this season's dates
Friday 6 th March	Fundraising Race Night at the Onslow Arms	More details from the WACT office
April 10 th – 13 th	Easter Cruises	Book through the WACT Office
Saturday 25 th April	WACT AGM, Borough Hall, Godalming 14.30 Boat trips and guided walks in the morning	More details in Wey South
May 9 th	Loxwood Bridge Opening	More details to follow next month and in Wey South

Working Party Directory

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