

# Working Party News

For WACT Volunteers

April 2009

## Editorial Comment (Wendy Andrews)

The clocks have 'gone on', days are getting longer and the 2009 season is underway. Don't forget to book your Bunny Cruise, or better still offer to help over the Easter weekend. Public trips start on April 4<sup>th</sup>, the new boat, Wiggonholt, is due to be delivered, with a big splash, soon after Easter, the AGM is on April 25<sup>th</sup>. If you can cope with any more excitement the Grand Opening of the Loxwood Crossing is planned for May 9<sup>th</sup>. Work is progressing at a pace to keep up with the demands to be ready for the 'Big Day'. Please come to look and admire!

## Visiting Groups (Bill Nicholson, Visiting Groups Co-ordinator)

### NWPG and WACT Summer Camp at Bonfire Hangar 7/8<sup>th</sup> March 2009

In 2002 following completion of Dig Deep work at Rowner Lock on NWPG and Dig Deep were asked to construct three brick dams and two wooden footbridges on a 1 mile leased section of the canal at Bonfire Hangar near Alfold. This we duly completed and at the same time we also celebrated the group's 21st Birthday in a three day working party with the highlight being a party and buffet at The Forrester's Arms at Kirdford. Walking the Poddle sponsored walk last summer, the route took us across the larger of the two footbridges and looking south down towards Loxwood it was almost impossible to see the bed of the canal or the dam at the site of Lock 10 such had been the re-growth of brambles and trees in the bed of the canal. So it was decided that rather than wait for the already over busy local teams to do the job, a joint team of NWPG and friends from the WACT Summer Camp team should spend a weekend to restore visibility along the canal.

The weekend was a great success. 17 workers (from as far afield as Teignmouth and Newcastle upon Tyne) attended for all or part of the weekend including 4 volunteers under 26! The bed and towpath bank of the canal was substantially trimmed and cleared from the large footbridge down to Lock 9; over 30 tree stumps (mostly reseeded willow) were extracted by Tirfor winch and a modest amount of ale was consumed at The Forrester's Arms, Kirdford, our first visit since the 2006 Brewhurst Summer Camp.

It is hoped that the local teams might find time to spend one or two days finishing the clearance at Lock 9 and pulling out the remaining stumps above it. NWPG returns to the Wey & Arun in June and September to do further work at Rowner Lock – matters that weren't quite finished when we left the site in 2001. This time construction will be the order of the day.

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

For most of March the group has been split into two parties, some working at the Loxwood crossing site and the remainder at Newbridge continuing to clear the non towpath side to gain access to the fallen trees which were lying across the canal. Having cleared a great deal of bracken and brambles the task of removing some of the offending trees was started. With the aid of the Tirfor and Richard Watson's canoe for transport from the main road (A272) along the canal to our worksite, most of the large trees were dragged out of the water and up onto the bank. These have been cut into logs for the landowner's use and carried up onto higher ground so that flood water could not return them to the canal. There are still a few large trees to be dealt with in the same way so we will carry on next month.

That's all for now. See you in April - doesn't time fly!

## Tickners Heath Depot (John Smith)

Unfortunately Tony Rozier has decided that his efforts are better directed elsewhere within the Trust. He will be sorely missed as he was a fund of good ideas and his mechanical skills will be difficult to replace.

We have managed to remove most of the scrap metal from the site which has raised approx £250 for the Trust. There are still some reinforcing rods in the near nissen which need to go.

This month we have had various visitors to the Depot, some to give advice on sealing the asbestos roof of the engine shed and we await their estimated bill for repairs.

With the warmer weather fast approaching the MDV has been dusted down and Richard Pope has passed on the proposed dates for its use. So that Richard can easily move it in and out would anyone using the double shed please make sure that the MDV and the entrance are not obstructed.

With more and more requests for storage space for items of Trust equipment we are having to review what is actually stored at Tickners. Unfortunately this may mean that in the future we may not be able to accommodate private items of equipment in the various hangers and items such as boats etc may have to be moved outside. If this becomes a reality the relevant members will be contacted and informed as to where their item is now stored.

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

Early in March we completed our work in Sidney Wood; both culverts are now clear and the winding hole above lock 16 looks a lot better, but we need to return later in the year when the canal bed has dried out to clear away the reeds. Whilst in the area we took the opportunity to move the fallen tree and culvert debris from the roadside into the yard at Tickners, finally finishing the day's work by clearing the silt from the ditch at the far end of the car park near Brewhurst Lock.

An additional meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup> saw the group busy at Loxwood planting 60 bare rooted hawthorn plants, supplied by Peter Foulger, to the north of the canal on the pub side of the road. In time these will complete the hedge line that runs up into the field. We also dug up the turf on the northern side of new lock where it had sunk badly. This was built up with earth and sand and then the turf returned. It will look as good as new in no time. Finally we rolled up some huge plastic piping and brought this over to the towpath side at the request of Eric Walker.

Our third meeting of the month saw the removal of the debris brought down by the winter rains from the culverts at Newbridge together with extensive work tidying up the towpath bank and car park at Loxwood to help Peter Wilding.

All in all another successful month's work. We meet again on April 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. Please contact John Empringham for times and locations if you would like to join us.

### **Thursday/Sunday Group** (*Eric Walker*)

The brickies finished the brickwork on the northwest wall in eight straight days. The weather for them was ideal but the bricks were wet from the wet winter so they will show a lot of whiteness as they dry out.

The completion of the northwest wall required it to be backfilled; in consultation with the designer it was backfilled with 10 tons of shingle and some aching limbs – thank you to Martin Law and Peter Savage. Then the scaffolding was removed.

With all but one of the pulling chambers installed for the electricity supply, the cable from Loxwood Lock to the Wiggonholt charging point has been pulled in.

The team from Hargreaves arrived on 23<sup>rd</sup> March and the New Lock gates were put in on 24<sup>th</sup>. They were away by the 26<sup>th</sup> having also done some corrective action on Brewhurst top gates. The railings on the ramp were in place by 30<sup>th</sup> March.

Now that the gates are installed the top sill of the lock can be finished and the rubbing strake along the walkway under the bridge can be put in place. Then the bund can be removed.

With everything ready, the work to remove the surplus material from the site will start on 6<sup>th</sup> April and hopefully the bund will go on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Towards the end of that work the copings will be brought from Tickners to complete the towpath behind the Onslow Arms to the bridge. Two major volunteer activities will follow: the installation of the wooden fencing along the footpath and down the bridleway alongside the Onslow Arms (scheduled to start on 12<sup>th</sup> April) and the laying of the turf (scheduled to start on 22<sup>nd</sup> April)

There are lots of other jobs, not least to clear the accumulated kit off the site ready for the Grand Opening. The volunteers have asked for extra days so they will be on site on 31<sup>st</sup> March as well as Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Extra effort will be needed for the turf laying and fencing. Exciting times!

The lock back pump is on order and should be with us by early April. The railings down the track are on hold awaiting a clear indication from WSCC that they will accept the Parish Council's recommendation for the bridge parapets.

### **Hedge Laying Group** (*Keith Nichols*)

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> saw temperatures ranging from 7°C–14°C, squally wintry showers and almost summery sunny periods so not boring. The buzzards continued to delight us with their presence – three to the east and three to the west of the bridge and a fleeting visit from a weasel gave us a good reason for the lack of bunnies.

As of the end of March we only have 10m to lay and 22m to bind plus restaking and binding a short section between Barnsill and Baldwins Knob. This means we will be working into April with the courtesy of the birds not starting their nesting where we want to work. There is also a small amount of coppicing to be finished. I am therefore looking at a probable 4 days of work left for the team.

Jeremy and I have spent two Sundays working on a 15m section of hedge away from the canal. Why? Well, although it was at the bottom of someone's garden it also borders on a public footpath, so I thought 'PR' and a cheque for the Trust would get me interested. The intrepid duo, plus my chainsaw, have done the job. This is the third short hedge away from the canal that we have tackled with a fourth being imminent (12m).

Well, dinner and my assistance in maintaining the health of our microbreweries call, so until next month, TTFN.

Future Work Dates: April – Sunday 5<sup>th</sup>, Monday 6<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup>, (poss Sunday 19<sup>th</sup>), Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup>

### **Mid Week Working Party** (*Peter Jackman*)

The 'Bramley Gang' have been paddling about in the swampy ground adjacent to Beevers farm and have drawn stumps on the Bramley area for the time being.

We are now back at Devils Hole. Done with cutting and clearing the third section of the area adjoining the oxbow, we then started REAL restoration work – felling trees for the proposed access into the oxbow. When the water level permits we will cut and clear some of the willow trees in preparation for the off line island, so that instead of boats motoring in and reversing out of a normal winding hole they will go round the island and out into the canal again.

For the few critics who have commented on our work please go and see the marvellous show of flowers we have liberated in the area we have coppiced – violets, primroses, wood anemones, daffodils and bluebells all in bloom. Nature has a wonderful way of showing its gratitude.

Mention must be made of Richard Emsley's solo job of reed cutting by the slipway at Drungewick. Given a week's notice the MWWP were requested to send a small group to rake up the reeds. No work boat available and water in the weed cutter's engine oil – job scrubbed. On No! Dave Kersley and Richard rectified the fault, word got back to me so job back on. A small MWWP team was diverted to Drungewick where they re-instated the fencing washed away by the floods, burnt piles of branches and miscellaneous flotsam gathered up by Peter Cooper and the reeds that they could get out. A job well done and instead of nipping off early they rejoined the rest of us at Devils Hole.

Attendance for the four Wednesdays in March reads 17, 20, 22, and 22 despite some of our regulars being on holiday.

## Working Party Diary for April/May/June

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
April 10 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup>	Easter Cruises	Book through the WACT Office
Saturday 25 <sup>th</sup> April	WACT AGM	More details from the Office
Saturday 9 <sup>th</sup> May	Loxwood Bridge Opening	More details at the AGM or from the Office
Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> May	Pirates and Princesses	Contact the office
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> June	Annual 'Poddle'	Contact the office

## Working Party Directory

WACT Office	General enquiries	01403 752 403	office@weyandarun.co.uk
Wendy Andrews	W P News Editor	01403 752 170	wendy_andrews@weyandarun.co.uk
Turlough Bamber	Restoration Manager	01483 421 305	restoration@weyandarun.co.uk
Michael Bates	Health & Safety Officer	07786323515	michael.g.bates@btinternet.com
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' (Monday Group)	01483 562657	john@empringham.com
Peter Wilding	Loxwood Link	01483 422519	peter_wilding@weyandarun.co.uk
John Smith	Tickner's Depot	01903 235790	john8216@btopenworld.com
Ron Chamberlain	Winston's Group	01293 532 715	ronchamb@tiscali.co.uk
Tony Clear	Winston's Group	01903 774 301	penny.clear@talktalk.net
Keith Nichols	Hedge laying	01403 753882	
Bill Nicholson	Visiting Groups	01844 343 369	bandsnicholson@tiscali.co.uk