

Working Party News

For WACT Volunteers

May 2009

Editorial Comment (Wendy Andrews)

Wow! So much excitement I can hardly cope.

Our new trip boat, 'Wiggonholt', was successfully craned into the canal early this morning (April 27th) followed swiftly on by the launch of our other recent acquisition, a work boat/dredger 'Penelope' which will be of huge benefit as we work our way northwards from Loxwood. 'Penelope' may or may not be renamed, suggestions are 'Hornet' (we already have a 'Wasp') or 'Poddle' since last year's Poddle raised the funds for her purchase.

There are pictures on the website at <http://www.weyandarun.co.uk/wiggonholt-1.php>

For those of you who weren't able to come to the AGM on Saturday, Peter formally confirmed that he is standing down as Chairman though he will continue as a member of CoM – how would we manage without him? I'm sure you would all join me in thanking him for the support he has given the Working Parties over the last 12 years. We await with anticipation the announcement of his successor.

Now down to the inevitable pleas for help - car park marshalling on May 9th, manning the MDV, holding the fort at the Black Shed, collecting waste paper; more details below before you get bored and discard WPN to the recycling bin!

Congratulations to Keith Nichols (Editor)

I quote an extract from the Royal Mail press release:

'Billinghurst postman, Keith Nichols, who devotes a great deal of time into restoring the Wey and Arun canal has been short listed for one of Royal Mail's 1st Class People Awards for community work. Keith is one of a small band of craftsmen keeping a traditional skill of hedge-laying alive. He is a volunteer hedge layer helping to restore part of the Wey and Arun Canal. Keith's voluntary work equates to over £35,000 of time donated to the Wey and Arun Canal Trust as commercial hedge laying costs £10-£12 per metre.'

Well done to Keith and his team, good publicity for WACT.

Help Please on May 9th (Wendy Andrews)

Sites for off street parking on the Big Day, May 9th, have been secured; all we need now are offers from volunteers to marshall the car parks just for a couple of hours leading up to the start of the event. Please contact me asap if you're willing to help.

Manning the MDV (Richard Pope)

Can you help man the Trust's Mobile Display Vehicle?

Most of you will know that we operate a Mobile Display Vehicle (MDV). This a display trailer about the size of a small horse box where one side opens out and becomes a professional publicity van with a variety of photographs, posters, etc. The MDV is generally taken to fairs, village shows, farmers markets, etc., across the local region from spring to autumn. We would really like to hear from you if you would be able to help man the MDV at some of these events. Typically events are either a Saturday or Sunday from around 10:00 to 4:30 with a couple during the week. The aim is to have a rota of people so that the whole programme is shared around. We are seeking two types of volunteer:

Those that will man the stand - it's fun manning it and, to be honest, not really hard work either (entrance is free!).

Those that are able to tow the MDV from its base near Dunsfold to the event - an ordinary caravan / trailer tow bar is required with a 'black socket' connection. Since you would be there you may like to man the stand too but that's flexible.

Please contact me, Richard Pope at rp@weyandarun.co.uk or phone on 01403-790407. If you have any questions then please just ask and I will be happy to answer them.

Monday Working Party (Nick Wood for John Empringham)

With our winter programme completed we have now turned our hands back to keeping up appearances at our nine regular sites. This has occupied our two April meetings. As usual we have some catching up to do so we have yet to visit Devils Hole Lock and Three Compasses Bridge. Once again we have had to clear a considerable amount of litter, especially at Run Common. We sometimes think the general public do not deserve the Trust. C'est la vie!

We meet again on May 5th (Tuesday) and May 18th if you would care to join us.

Winston Harwood Group (Ron Chamberlain for David Junkison)

April has been quite a divisive month with the group split into different parties to work at both Newbridge and Loxwood. One party carried on at Newbridge clearing the non towpath side and we managed, with the aid of the Tirfor, to drag some large fallen trees to a position where they can be dealt with at a later date. The second party were busy at Loxwood helping with various tasks to prepare the site for the grand opening on 9th May. For the last 2 weeks of the month the remainder of the group also went to Loxwood to do some clearing work. With the aid of Chris Guthrie's trailer some surplus materials were taken back to Tickners Heath while David J did some bricklaying and Ron and Richard built some steps for use by any stray canoeists who happen to pass this way. Meanwhile Tony and Brian spent some time at Lordings keeping up with the grass cutting and generally making it all look shipshape and tidy.

Maybe we will all get together again in May... tra lala

See you next month

Tickners Heath Depot (*John Smith*)

Is it that time of the month already? It must be because Wendy says so!

The removal of scrap metal from Tickners has been put on hold for the moment as Dave Kersley, with the assistance (or should that be hindrance) of myself, has been out and about visiting the various working parties to deliver urgently required supplies and to remove unwanted items; this included moving the final instalment of the tow path edging blocks to Eric at Loxwood, a task that we could not have done without the assistance of Dave's chum Peter. These visits have also helped me to appreciate just what is being done on the canal and where these mysterious places such as Devils Hole, Lordings etc are.

In fact we have had to put on hold most of the planned tidying up of the site so that we can assist where possible all those who are beavering away to ensure the Grand Opening on May 9th goes off as smoothly as possible.

But it would not be me if I didn't have a gripe - now would it? Although most of those who visit Tickners complete the sign out/in chit when items are removed/returned there are still the odd few, and I stress few, that do not let us know that items have been removed from the depot. This can cause embarrassment when working parties request an item which should be at Tickners but isn't; I know the red face is mine as it is my responsibility but I ask for your assistance to ensure that equipment not being used is returned to Tickners as soon as possible. Thank you - end of moan!

Thursday/Sunday Group (*Eric Walker*)

April 2009 was quite a busy month thanks to all the volunteers from other groups who came to help leading to record attendance numbers. Colin Durbridge connected the Wiggonholt charging point the weekend before the new boat arrived. The top sill was finished in Worcester blue bricks. Dave Junkison tells me they were ex Basingstoke used first on the wharf behind the Onslow and salvaged when that was removed. The rubbing strake along the walkway under the bridge has been put in place and a fluorescent edge put in. Removal of the bund made an exciting day. The copings were brought from Tickners to complete the towpath behind the Onslow Arms to the bridge. The installation of the wooden fencing along the footpath and down the bridgeway alongside the Onslow Arms and the laying of the turf took place on schedule. The bank between the lock and ramp alongside the towpath had a sprinkling of topsoil and then seeded with grass. The opposite bank, between the lock and the bridge, had the clay sods put in by the digger broken down and also grass seeded. The metalwork in the lock was re-painted and looks very smart. Steps for the crew to get off the boat on the training wall and wooden steps for canoeists have been built. Mooring rings for the new boat have been put in. A big effort has been made to move the kit off the site but some still remains. The lock back pump eventually arrived but the coupling pins between the pump and motor were damaged in transit delaying the final assembly and electrical connection. The weed cutting boat came and spent three days clearing the pound above the lock.

Next month may not be quite as busy but still exciting times.

Hedge Laying Group (*Keith Nichols*)

On Monday 6th April we completed the 223m of hedge in the six sections around Drungewick Lane and Aqueduct. Then I was going to start on my own hedge but the continuing warmth had started the new growth - between Sundays 5th and 12th the trees had put on up to 6". Rather annoying as I had all the stakes and binders to hand!

We then moved down to Baldwins, via some coppicing, to re-stake and bind the 35m of hedge that had been damaged in the last GREAT flood of Tuesday 10th February 2009. To date we have 15m left to do. Hopefully on Thursday 30th this and some tree trimming will be done which will then leave just one day of light hedge-trimming to do.

For me, the good things about what we do are seeing all the wildlife and meeting people who are interested in what we do and encouraging wildlife; there were some 200 to 300 people this season. I gather that not everyone shares my view.

If anyone wishes to talk to me then please feel free to join me at one of my offices where we can support a local small business by sampling their wares!

Possible future date: Monday 18th May.

Cheers, (mine's a pint) Keith

Mid Week Working Party (Peter Jackman)

Work carried out in April has been concentrated in the area between Devils Hole and the Onslow Arms. Volunteer numbers for the first 4 weeks of the month were 21, 21, 22, and 24.

We cleared all the piles of logs, previous and current, and loaded them into the landowner's 'Monster' trailer. Then we dropped and logged some willow trees that were in the old oxbow; cut, cleared and burnt along the towpath; cleared fallen and projecting branches on the offside. With the help of Dave Kersley and John Smith we brought the MWWP steel punt from Tickners and dunked it in the canal above the New Lock, then we were able to bring more branches away from the offside and sort out the fox hole/drain outlet.

With some male assistance the ladies laid the turf on the Onslow Arms side of the bridge while others spread the earth between the bridge and the lock ready for seeding.

Whilst clearing to open up an entry gap into the field opposite the pub, ready for May 9th, we exposed two manhole covers hitherto inaccessible – you might not have seen them but boy you could certainly smell them – a job for Eric's team!

The Truxor machine, a brilliant bit of kit with an excellent operator, deposited reeds on the towpath bank. Phil Broadley used the dumper to cart the reeds up to Devils Hole for burning along with the big tree roots that have been there for quite some time.

Future work takes us on a diversion to just below Southland to clear scrub ready for the June Dig Deep work camp though any work necessary on the section above the New Lock will take priority.

April 29th sees me on my boat, off to the big city (Little Venice) but I will be back for May 9th – I think something is on!

Thanks to all the team

Newspaper and Magazine Recycling (John Wood)

We now have an Aylesford Paper Bank dedicated to WACT at the 'Shoots' Garden Centre on the northbound carriageway on the A24 London Road at Washington. Please patronise if you can. We have also been given permission to place another, by the owner of a Farm Shop on the A259 Worthing to Littlehampton Road on the Ferring/Angmering borders, BUT will have to wait until SITA inspect the site to make sure their skip emptying lorry has sufficient space to manoeuvre.

In the current financial crisis fundraising is going to be difficult but I am sure with the introduction of a few more dedicated Paper Banks near to where most members live we can increase the input. It would put the icing on the cake if only we could find suitable sites in the Lancing/Worthing district, also the Godalming, Guildford, Shalford or Bramley areas. The first 3 months of this year have resulted in just over 20 tonnes being collected, and at £87 per tonne will give us approx. £1,700 including the recycling credits that we receive from the local authorities. Heavy items like Argos, Littlewoods, Freemans home shopping catalogues etc etc are very acceptable due to their weight. However, we must not put cardboard, food packaging or 'Yellow Pages' into the skips.

I am sure that almost certainly our active working party members already bring paper when attending a work party in the Loxwood area. Very many thanks for that.

Manning the Black Shed (Wendy Andrews)

What with the opening of the bridge/tunnel and the arrival of Wiggonholt we are seeing more and more visitors to Loxwood at the weekends, especially on Sundays. (The brown tourist signs on the A272 may also have something to do with it, thank you to Sally!) Any offers of help to 'man' the Sales and Publicity stall would be appreciated; please contact me on 01043 752170 or wendy_andrews@weyandarun.co.uk

Wasp and Hornet (Turlough Bamber)

Well! the two new arrivals to the WACT fleet have arrived safely and were dropped into the Loxwood Pound without any difficulties thanks to the wonders of modern mechanical engineering technology. The new trip boat is, of course, 'Wiggonholt'. The other is a work boat/dredger, 'Penelope', recently acquired from British Waterways with funds raised by last year's Puddle. There is some discussion as to whether we rename her. Since we already have 'Wasp' I must say I like the names of 'Wasp' and 'Hornet' working in unison for the maintenance of the Canal infrastructure.

Subject to CoM's approval 'Hornet' will become the Restoration Group's responsibility. As she will be used initially for maintenance on the Loxwood to Drungewick section she will come under Peter Wilding's operational control as an extension of his current maintenance role. Where she will be moored is to be decided.

Chain Saw Operators (Turlough Bamber)

We have had a serious blow to our restoration and canal bed clearing programme - our insurers, through IWA, have refused to cover any NPTC trained chain saw operatives whose courses and certifications are older than 5

years. Since IWA informed us on 26th April and the ruling is effective from 1st May we have had no time to make alternative arrangements.

This means that we have only one volunteer available to log fallen/felled trees. Effectively all our chain saw stalwarts are 'grounded' until they are retrained to produce a new certificate of competence. I can hear reactions to this at some distance! I have written individually to all our chainsaw trained volunteers with this sad news to thank them for their service to the Trust to date.

The Last Word (*Charles Walker*)

In the April WPN 'hangers' or 'hangars' were mentioned twice and in both cases are, I submit, wrongly spelt. First, if the hangars at Tickners are sheds or shelters (eg for aircraft), then that is the way they should be spelt. Second, I don't know the origin of the name 'Bonfire Hangar' but suspect it is more likely to refer to a wood on a hillside (hanger) than to a shed or aircraft hangar. Or am I wrong? It is a bit of a mystery because, as far as I know, there are no remains of a shed there and there is certainly no hill nearby steep enough to accommodate a true hanger. I wonder if anybody knows the answer?

Working Party Diary for May/June/July

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
Saturday 9 th May	Loxwood Bridge Opening	Contact WACT office for details
Wednesday 25 th May	Pirates and Princesses	Book through the WACT office
Sunday 14 th June	Annual 'Poddle'	Contact Jo Holcombe on 01483 418195 (evenings), or email joanne.holcombe@cartwrightgroup.co.uk.
Thursday 2 nd July	Mikron Theatre at Fishers Farm	Contact the office to book

Working Party Directory

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