

# Working Party News

For WACT Volunteers

July 2009

## Editorial Comment (Wendy Andrews)

Thank you to all the contributors for another bumper edition. Those of you who are active working party members must take special note of Michael's piece on Health & Safety. Please don't groan – it's important that we comply with the regulations and even more important that we safeguard our volunteers.

## Health and Safety (Michael Bates)

Those who read every inch of the papers will have noticed that a Company Director has been in court facing the first charge brought under the Corporate Manslaughter etc Act 2007, as well as facing charges under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. If he is found guilty (one of his employees died in a pit where he was undertaking a geological survey for the company) he faces a maximum of life imprisonment, the company a fine of between 5% and more of the company's annual turnover, and other sanctions. The word is that Risk Assessments were not in place.

The CoM is watching this case carefully, as are Trustees and am I, and it will not surprise you to be reminded that suitable and sufficient Risk Assessments should be in place for any work where there is a risk either to our own volunteers or anyone else who may be affected by their work.

I can provide suitable proformae to anyone who would like one, and given notice I may be able to attend a Working Party and assist the leader in creating a Risk Assessment for the day's work, which should take no more than ten minutes and a couple of minutes team briefing before work starts.

The principle that everyone is responsible for their own safety still holds good but nevertheless there are still duties of care on those in positions of responsibility. Neither you nor I nor the Trustees wish to be in court. If an accident does happen and someone is seriously injured or killed we have to be able to show that we had considered the risks beforehand and had taken all reasonable precautions to mitigate them. We are then all in the clear.

Watch this space for the next instalment.

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

We did our bit for the Poddle, two sponsored members walking with friends and relatives and another member and his wife manning refreshment point No 2. Consensus was that it was an excellent route, a delight to walk with great weather. Congratulations are due to the organisers.

Three outings in June to our regular sites, the extra one to clear the towpath bank at Three Compasses and cut a path through the vegetation to Farnhurst Bridge. By heck it were hot!!

We meet again in July on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> if you would like to join us.

Finally it is very gratifying to read in the summer edition of Waterways (the IWA magazine).....'the Wey and Arun Canal Trust is an accomplished and professional body which has already achieved much'....

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

'The Lost Boys!'

I don't know what these lads add to their coffee but I have had some problems getting them to remember where they were or what they were doing while I've been away.

It appears that they have been working at various sites from Lordings to Devils Hole and Rowner doing tidying up and moving stop planks and having a very exciting encounter with a very large pike at Rowner (or have I been given the old story about the one that got away?)

Some work has been done at Lordings where Bob fitted some new hasps and staples to the tool store to replace the original dead locks that became a bit unreliable.

Only Brian was the most positive about his jobs because he knew he had been keeping the grass cut.

Some scaffolding had been removed from Devils Hole and taken to another site (I hope they remember where!)

Finally we were at Tickners Heath to do some tidying up and to give John Smith some help but I wish I had been told we were going to be pulling up waist high stinging nettles before I arrived wearing a short sleeve shirt. It was a very hot day and while some of us suffered at Tickners, David with the help of Dave went to Lordings to shift some timber which had recently been delivered to the farm gate and transferred it to near Rose Arch Bridge in readiness for the bridge to be renovated. Then they went to Rowner and cleared some rubbish and surplus iron work and returned it to Tickners.

That's all for this month; see you next time!

### **Tickners Heath Depot** *(John Smith)*

Has another month gone already? At this rate we will soon be using the 'C' word. (Heaven forbid, says ed!) During the month we have had a visit from Dunsfold Park Estates; luckily Dave Kersley was there at the time. Various faults were pointed out, one being the bowing of the end wall of the large single shed. Under the lease agreement the Trust is responsible for maintenance of Tickners so Turlough was consulted and it was agreed to keep the area under observation.

Since the last newsletter we have been out and about delivering various items for the Baldwins Knob Lock emergency and 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> weekend camp. We've also managed to fit in a certain amount of servicing to the plant currently stored at Devils Hole.

As the team plans to relocate the various types of hoses etc from the scaffolding shed to the large single shed we have contacted certain Trust members about removing items (shelving, a boat, helicopter parts etc). It is hoped that this will make it easier for working parties to see what is held at Tickners and so help save the Trust money buying items that we already store here.

Finally, many thanks to David Junkison and his Thursday team for their efforts in removing large amounts of foliage at Tickners on a very hot day; it was much appreciated - now we can ferret around the various piles of kit without being tripped up and stung by brambles etc.

That's all folks.

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

The sani point in support of Wiggonholt has progressed in June and should be available soon. Connection to the sewer was a major problem which entailed making a 6-inch diameter hole through 10 inches of concrete.

The installation of the rubbing strake under the B2133 Bridge has progressed well using May Upton as a base. Team effort was the key to this work. It was one of those jobs put on one side until there was water in the canal.

An electrical connection for an info centre is now in place ready for whenever it will be needed.

Another job done during the past month was the adjustment to Baldwins Knob lock gates. They had become impossible to close so the stop planks were fitted using Hornet, the lock was partly pumped down with a hired 6" pump, pots from Tickners were fitted under both gates and then the lock flooded up and the stop planks removed, all in the same day!

A clamshell bucket has been purchased and fitted to Hornet. Complementary to the 4½ Tonne Hanix, a 13 Tonne Case digger has been purchased which now means we are very well equipped.

Following a further paper study of the DHL winding hole and a review of the site it has been decided not to have an 'around the island' winding hole but a straight forward Vee notch. Bearing in mind that the canal was constructed over the original riverbed, indeed the river course was diverted before the canal was built, before work takes place an investigation will be undertaken to determine what actually is there where we are going to put the new bank.

The move of the TSG to DHL is almost there. Initially we will be getting contractors in to do the major masonry removal at the head of the lock; the volunteers will then move in and start the restoration. All we hope for is more dry weather. With the holiday season upon us there will be no TSG meetings from 19<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July.

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

Until we're directed to go elsewhere the MWWP is continuing to clear scrub from Devils Hole towards the site of Southland Lock. We've been taking out the willows from the old canal bed and from the original winding hole just north (or west?) of Devils Hole. We were joined on July 1<sup>st</sup> by the landowner and between us we removed a dead tree which had been leaning precariously towards some overhead power cables. We've also been doing our bit to try and keep the area around Devils Hole as tidy as possible.

Apart from being alert to the dangers of the excessive heat and sun, we're also warned to be aware of snakes in the grass! Newcomers are always welcome.....

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

Nothing from Keith this month - he was last seen sampling the beer at the Loxwood Society Summer Barbecue, hopefully he'll be back in time for the winter hedge laying season.

### **Restoration Manager** *(Turlough Bamber)*

*Note from 'ed' - I've held most of Turlough's contribution over for the next edition of Wey South. However it's important that active volunteers are aware of what's going on with regard to Drungewick Sealing Work.*

We have a specialist geotechnical contractor in to seal the canal embankment close to the aqueduct to preserve the water for WAEL operations. It will involve making a 400mm trench 2m deep, placing some bentonite powder into the arisings and mixing insitu. The mix is then tamped down and squeezed into the holes in the embankment which probably resulted from shrunken roots of felled trees. Bentonite is a clay that swells to 2 or 3 times its dry volume when wet. The programme of 350m is expected to take about 3 weeks and incurs a bridleway closure. If you wish to visit please speak to the foreman first - you must have a hard hat and hi viz waist coat on. No PPE on Entry!

## **Newbury Working Party Group (Bill Nicholson)**

As mentioned in my report on our March visit to the Wey & Arun Canal, we had been asked to return to Rowner Lock to carry out some further improvements there. Thus with the sun shining (mostly) and the essential dry conditions needed to access what is typically a remote W & A venue a team of 12 NWPG volunteers ventured forth.

The improvements requested included removal of the lower bottom lock gates that had been put in during the early 1980's and which made Rowner the first lock on the canal to be used by a boat since the mid 19th Century. However by 1990, lack of use, water and permission meant that the lock was rapidly returning to nature. NWPG subsequently spent two years on a Dig Deep project there during which the top cill was piled and concreted, the top gates (already rotten) removed, chamber wall stones removed and replaced, stop plank channels installed and a combined back pump chamber and landing stage built below the lock together with pipe and upper outfall. All these works look in as good shape today as when we left in 2002. The bottom gates however were left and repairs to the bow wall of the top cill were never finished.

Thanks to the efforts of WACT's Winston Harwood Group, the lower stop planks were in place on our arrival and it took little time to pump out the lock. The previous day had seen a 4 foot long pike removed and a large number of other fish. We had a hired 3 ton excavator to help get the gates out and it took a day to do each gate. Much of the steel work on the gates (the most stubborn parts) had to be cut up by angle grinder and was so hot that it set the remnants on fire! We were fortunate to be able to use the lock safety ladder (also installed in our 2000 project) to get access into the bottom of the lock to install chains and shackles. We were also pleased to have volunteers under the age of 20 who had the energy to help with the heavy work.

Elsewhere we erected a scaffold to enable the mortar joints of the chamber wall to be thoroughly cleaned out (duly done) and to start cutting out the damaged stones on the bow wall at the top of the lock. During the latter work we also decided to remove the concrete mitre which we concluded would neither fit in well with our re-build plans nor form a good seal with the new gates when they are installed in years to come. Incidentally George Whitehead, who did this work, tells me that it was his first ever job on the Wey & Arun to cast the concrete mitre! No canal is ever restored properly until it has been done at least twice.

New stones were cut and brought down to site from the collection at Devil's Hole Lock (thanks to MWWP for clearing the jungle so that we could get at them and thanks to Dave Kersley for transporting everything around during the weekend). These were lowered onto the cill ready for our next visit in September. This was a team effort and will mean that by the end of September our work at this lock should be truly finished until the time has come for boats to return from the north.

## **The Last Word – Derivation of Bonfire Hanger (Charles Walker)**

Further to John Wood's definition of a Hanger as reported in last month's WPN –

*'Hanger: A wood on a steep hillside, characteristically beech growing on chalk in southern England. Thus, on or near the canal we have the following Hangers - Bottomfield, Baldwin's, Malham, Riefeld, Harsfold, Braziers plus at least two just known as 'The Hanger'.*

Since I have studied a book about place names by Margaret Gelling, kindly lent by Jim Phillips, and have had a conversation with the landowner (which I should have thought of long ago) we have a likely, although not definitive, solution:

Margaret Gelling warns against assuming the wood is on a steep slope; frequently 'the reference is to very gentle slopes' and she goes on to say: "There may be a special feature of the gentle slope, perhaps a slight concavity, which gave woods in this position a hanging appearance". She cites an Oakhanger Farm on slightly raised ground above the Severn, with a few ancient oaks (presumably the remains of the wood/hanger) nearby. The landowner told me that originally a stream ran north to south in a gully about 20ft deep to the East of the canal until it was dammed to form the two lakes that are there today, and that a stand of trees located approximately on the site of 'Bonfire Hanger' had to be felled.

We thus have the makings of a 'mini-hanger' at least!!

Perhaps one of the older hands among the WACT working party members can supply some corroboration or embellishment of this little topographical tale? It certainly seems the term Hanger is sometimes applied quite loosely.

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	Contact Keith for next season's plans
Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> September	The Pedal – sponsored cycle ride	Contact Simon Clark on 07784 676 938 or email pedal@weyandarun.co.uk
September 12 <sup>th</sup> /13 <sup>th</sup>	Heritage Weekend	More details next month

### **Working Party Directory**

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