

Working Party News

For WACT Volunteers

September 2009

Editorial Comment (Wendy Andrews)

A rather belated edition this month, for which I apologise. Thank you to the regulars for their contributions and to those of you who responded to the 'Silly Season' competition (see below).

There's definitely a hint of autumn in the air. However, with the fine dry weather and water levels holding up the boat trips continue to be busier than ever and working parties are able to get on with the job.

MDV – Help Please (Richard Pope)

The Trust's Mobile Display Vehicle (MDV) attends a variety of events from shopping centres to shows all around the locality publicising boat trips, membership opportunities, restoration, achievements, etc. It's an opportunity to meet and speak to the public and it's fun.

We always need volunteers to help man it during the summer season so if you would like to help, please contact Richard Pope at rp@weyandarun.co.uk or telephone 01403-790407.

Tickners Heath Depot (John Smith)

The team assisted by David Junkison and Richard Watson has completely disassembled the shelving in Richard's shed leaving 4 shelves intact for use by the Trust.

During the month Dave Kersley has been his usual busy self giving support to the work camp and any of the working parties that need his expertise. It would be appreciated if team leaders could spare a helping hand when he has to transport heavy items to and from Tickners.

Ken Bacon continues to re-organise the security store but has found that we do not have any manuals for the brush cutters/trimmers held in the store. If anyone knows of the whereabouts of manuals for STIHL FS 300/200 & HS75/80 brush cutters plus Danarm 24E VIP or Mountfield Model 37?? would they please get in touch with me.

Ken also found that of the 3 Tifors we hold in the store only one has the correct operating handle so if anyone has a spare handle I would be delighted to take it off their hands.

In one of the Nissan huts there are various old kitchen units which are taking up valuable storage space; if no one lays claim to them by September 18th I plan to dispose of them.

Well that's all for now folks.

Thursday/Sunday Group (Eric Walker)

During August installation of the rubbing strake under the B2133 Bridge was completed. The design of a louvered box or shed to protect the Loxwood lock back pump equipment from the elements is awaited.

At DHL the contractors removed the top sill and the volunteers moved in to start the reconstruction. The dry weather during the month was a big help in moving things forward, so by the end of the month the lock invert had been cast, the curved wall to form the sill and the lock walls of the extended lock were in place and back filled. The top sill has its blinding concrete in place. So early in September the reinforced concrete top sill will be in place. Next connection to the existing sluice will have to be made so that the ground paddles, now to be behind the new gate recess, can be connected. There was a 'wobbly' during the month when it was thought this sluice connection was going to be too difficult to construct given the ground situation, but a dry season has been a help in this regard, so the option of gate paddles has been put on one side. Also during the month a simplification to the ground paddle and associated sluice design has been made, this will shorten the lock construction time.

Notwithstanding it being the holiday time, a tremendous amount was achieved because of the huge support from the group and extra days being worked.

The bringing electricity to DHL took a step forward when SSE put a transformer on a pole along the towpath towards Southland Lock. Eventually the supply will be shared between the two locks. SSE has given a date for the overhead lines to be switched off for them to connect to the pole fuses and the installation of a meter. So the pressure is on to get the box for the meter, promised for delivery in the middle of the month, installed. Similarly the cable from the box to DHL is on order, for this a half metre deep trench 500m long is to be dug and the ducting, pulling boxes and control cabinet at the lock have to be installed ready for when the cable arrives.

A follow up to where the WRG summer camp putting in the Southland Culvert had dug through the towpath, a new bridleway surface was put in place.

The DHL winding hole work is on hold until the lock structure is secured against whatever the winter weather may throw at us. Progress has been so good that it is possible that this work may start by the beginning of October. The containment of water coming down the canal above the lock will be by the spoil bank that is in place at the top of the lock, or the stop planks, any excess being allowed into the river.

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

During August, apart from our the normal maintenance work at our regular sites, we undertook four extra 'little' jobs, which, as it turned out, were not that little!

Two members of the group cleared the towpath of accumulated brambles and other vegetation north of Haybarn Swing Bridge to the stile at the sharp bend in the canal - almost half a mile of hard work; walkers will now have a much easier passage alongside that section of the unrestored canal. At the same time attention was given to the paintwork on the bridge, presumably damaged by the passage of a farm vehicle.

Four of us also spent some time cutting back the undergrowth at the side of the towpath from Devils Hole northwards towards Southland at Eric's request in preparation for laying an electric cable to both locks. We're mugs for a challenge!

Finally we completed the task we set ourselves and started in June, to clear the towpath from Three Compasses, past Farnhurst Bridge to the limit of our leased section of the summit. Our two intrepid mowers also managed cut the bank after we had brush cut the section. All is now set for the small boat rally in September.

We meet again on 7th and 21st September.

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

The first week in August the group worked at Malham Lock putting some finishing touches to some work we were asked to do at very short notice earlier in the spring so we have now returned to tidy up and complete the job.

The following week we were at Lordings to do some general tidying and there we found that some four legged vandals had managed to push the tool box over. When enough hands turned up we were able to get the box standing up again but then had some trouble opening the thing because the lock was jammed. When we did finally manage to open it we spent some time sorting out the jumble that was inside.

This prompted us to buy some padlocks and fit them in place of the original deadlocks and at the same time fitted some old scaffold pipes to the runners underneath the box which we think will prevent the cows pushing it over again.

The next week no one was available due to holidays or other commitments

The week after we were still a bit short of people so only two were at Lordings and one went to do a bit of tidying at Tickners Heath.

Not much but hope we can do more next month so see you then.

(Not) the Hedge Laying Team (*Keith Nichols*)

It only seems like yesterday when the 2008/09 season finished and now I've picked up my pen for the 2009/10 season. Well! What to do?

It appears, at present, that we have no hedge laying to do for this season but there is rather a lot of trimming to do. So here is the trimming list:

- 1.Harsfold - Field Gate to Flood Lock
- 2.Brewhurst - Towpath side only
- 3.Baldwins - Lock to Field Gate and small amount at Birch Copse end.
- 4.Drungewick - Bridge to Slipway Landing Stage
5. Drungewick Lane

If there are any changes to the above I will let you know, meanwhile, here are the probable dates:

Sept - Tues 20th

Oct - Wed 7th, Wed 14th, Fri 23rd

Nov - Mon 2nd, Tues 10th, Wed 18th, Thurs 26th

Cheers all

Mid Week Working Party (*Peter Jackman*)

Nothing from Peter this month; we look forward to a bumper report for the October edition.

Recycling (*John Wood*)

Very recently we learnt that the WSCC Recycling Credits have increased from £82 a tonne to a little under £96. This means with the £10 we receive from Aylesford Newsprint, we now receive just a little under £106 a tonne.

DVD (*Colin Gibbs*)

I have a video full of Restoration work done by the MWWP during the 1990's. I'm looking for someone to edit it and put it on DVD. There must be over 4 hours on a couple of tapes. I've not seen them for a few years but thought it could be viewed in part at an AGM or even sold at a small cost – depending upon the finished standard. I see that I wrote on one tape years ago "If only I'd remembered to bring the Camcorder - not a guide to restoration or photography". Of course you never have it with you when someone falls in!

(Note from Ed – please get in touch with Colin or me if you're interested in taking up the challenge)

Silly Season Competition (Wendy Andrews)

Dave Kersley was quick to respond, by telephone, claiming the honour of being the longest serving working party volunteer. He has newspaper cuttings going back to the early 1970's and a collection of undated photos. Hopefully one cold wet winter afternoon he'll sit down and write some reminiscences!

Otherwise, I've had contributions from the following:

Ken Bacon: Re your silly season competition, I think I might be in the running for that honour!! I first started attending working parties at Rowner and Loves Bridge in 1974. There was a nucleus of volunteers, all of whom have since disappeared from active service except me and John Wood. Whilst still active in the Trust, I don't think he attends any working parties these days.

I read somewhere recently that, in connection with the recent removal of the gates at Rowner Lock, someone was asking for information about them. Well they were purchased in about 1974 from BWB for £1 each ex Grand Union Canal. They were too big for Rowner so they had to be modified. The bottom gates were done by Trust volunteers; one at our workshop at Coolham on Thursday evenings, which I also attended, the other somewhere in Ashstead Surrey where I think Richard Lamey was involved. The top gates were made at the Weald School, Billingshurst. My memory is not good these days but I think that is more or less correct.

Brian Crossley: I joined Colin Gibbs in the Mid-Week Working Party around September 1994, and as I remember Peter Wilding was around and also, I think, Jim & Janet Phillips and Geoff Perks, so I haven't a hope! But my guess is that Ken Bacon, if he qualifies as a current working party member, should probably be the outright winner.

John Ward: Dave Kersley and Ken Bacon are by far the longest current active Working Party Volunteers, both joined in the early 70's at Restoration sites like Run Common. I can't include myself as I am no longer active with the Trust. There are so many names that could be included, when the Trust was one man and a wheelbarrow, I remember those days well. Don't forget all those visiting WRG groups and Bill Nicholson.

John Wood: Records show that Peter Wilding (membership no. 0166) joined the Wey & Arun Canal Society on 11/11/1971. Dave Kersley (membership no. 0250) joined in March 1972, BUT Dave was attending working parties before he became a member! At one stage he was described as the society's 'official photographer'. He processed and printed his photos at home, but none have ever come into the WACT photo library. (*Note from Ed – Dave tells me that some photos were given to the Trust and mounted on display boards which were subsequently lost*). Of course in those early days, working parties mostly took place twice a month at both the Southern (West Sussex) Section and Northern (Surrey) Section, although we hardly ever joined forces (it was them and us!). The only joint session I can remember was working behind the 'Onslow Arms' after all the broken glass had been removed. No written records of attendance at a working party were kept in those far off days.

Working Party Diary for September/October/November

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 th September	The Pedal – sponsored cycle ride	Contact Simon Clark on 07784 676 938 or email pedal@weyandarun.co.uk
September 12 th /13 th	Heritage Weekend	Brewhurst Mill, Loxwood open 2pm – 4pm Saturday and Sunday
September 20 th	Small Boats Rally at Dunsfold	More details from Sally Schupke on 01483 503029, email to rallies@weyandarun.co.uk or look at http://www.weyandarun.co.uk/events_2.php
September 26 th /27 th	Public Consultation for the Bramley link	Shalford Village Hall
October 24 th	Autumn meeting in Pulborough	More details next month or in Wey South

Working Party Directory

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