

Working Party News

For WACT Volunteers

October 2009

Editorial Comment (*Wendy Andrews*)

Autumn seemed come in with a bang on October 1st with the arrival of cooler days and long awaited rain. Hopefully it won't become too wet to slow work down; at least we should have enough water to keep the boats operating until the end of the season.

WACT's membership continues to increase at a pace and a majority of new members are expressing an interest in getting involved in Working Parties. Next time you spot a stranger in your group please make a special effort to make him or her feel welcome.

Geoff Perks is reminding us that Christmas is on its way. Remember to book early for your Santa Cruise and don't forget that a membership subscription makes a very nice present for that friend or relative lucky enough to 'have everything already'.

Navvies Christmas Lunch (*Geoff Perks*)

You might think that we were still enjoying summer but after being quizzed by the MWWP in mid September about the date for the 2009 Christmas Lunch I have to tell you that the Festive Season is looming large.

The annual Midweek Working Party Christmas Lunch will again be held at The Three Compasses, this time on Monday 14th December at 12.30 for 13.00. Details of the menu available and of the cost are awaited and the intention is to circulate these with the November issue of the WPN together with the booking form. The experimental use of two dining rooms for the event last year produced largely adverse comment and therefore is not being repeated, but, of course, the use of one dining room means restricting the numbers to a maximum of 36 and bookings will be taken strictly on a 'first come first served' basis.

Tickners Heath Depot (*John Smith*)

It doesn't seem a month since I dusted off my old key board to create another stunning missive on life at Tickners (yes it does exist).

Ron Chamberlain has done a sterling job cutting back the wilderness at the top end of the site so we can now make out the neighbour's fence – Well done Ron!

Our planned schedule of work for the month went out of the window again when it was noted that there were to be 2 weekend work camps so the scrap run and weather proofing of the engine shed had to be put on hold to enable the team to ensure that the camps got the equipment required. That's the great thing about working at Tickners - you never know what is coming your way one week to the next - it certainly keeps the team on its toes.

The supply of pumps etc to the work camps seemed to go off without a hitch but yours truly can now appreciate the level of skill and dexterity required when operating 3" & 2" submersible pumps, the art as I understand it, is that when testing these items one should not get too much of the wet stuff on oneself; still I will know for next time!

During the month certain members of the trust employed their skills with either paint brush or wire brush and assisted in starting the painting of 'Wasp'. Thanks to the help of Dave Kersley, Michael Bates and Jeremy Watts she now has a shiny black bottom half, the green bit will follow shortly then there is nothing from stopping the old girl taking to the water. By the way, has anyone any idea where the name Wasp came from? Finally thanks to all who supplied information as to where to get the manuals for the brush cutters etc; it was most helpful.

Well that's all for another month - keep smiling.

Mid Week Working Party (*Peter Jackman*)

Not being in a position to personally attend the last 2 working parties has caused a few problems. If someone wants to lead the MWWP I would be more than happy to step aside.

So, what has the group been up to? Simple answer – Dunsfold Park, initially clearing the bankside and creating a channel through the mud, removing old iron and submerged tree trunks starting at Compasses Bridge and working towards Tickners Heath. This job didn't meet with everyone's approval; it was hard graft! Then we started the other side of Compasses Bridge removing the scaffolding, steel ladder-like sections, pallets and other miscellaneous junk left behind by the Fishing Club. After that we started to clear the whole bank from the fence to the water's edge, cleaning out land drainage channels etc.

For October we will go back to clear the offside of the canal above Loxwood Lock where we had made a start before being diverted to Dunsfold Park. The aim is to cut and clear all the way up to Southland, weather and water levels permitting.

And finally, thank you to the ladies for cleaning the bridge steel work.

Thursday/Sunday Group *(Eric Walker)*

Another month of dry weather at Devil's Hole Lock and the work continues at a great pace.

Early in September the reinforced concrete top cill was placed. A major hold up has been the construction of the ground paddle sluices. Sheer determination and hard work by the volunteers with angle grinders and breakers for days and days and days, eventually creating the holes for the ground paddle water in some very hard concrete we poured some years ago. Now, as part of the wall construction, the sluices will be connected up. The ground paddles themselves are on order and should be available this month.

Plinths for the meter box and the back pump control system were made with access for the cables. The boxes arrived and were installed. SEE installed their electricity meter and isolator in the meter box. The next job was to connect the 11kV to the transformer, to do that they had to cross the farm. Just hours before they needed access the harvest started and the connections were made.

The volunteers started early in the month to lay the ducting for the cable but that task was deferred to get on with the winding hole while the weather was being kind to us.

The investigation of the ground conditions by contractors confirmed that where the winding hole is to go there was the original riverbed complete with wood. The original canal builders, having diverted the river, took the canal over the riverbed with a thick layer of clay. So forming the winding hole was started towards the end of the month, taking out the remains of the river and then engineering the clay back in to form the bed of our canal.

The landowner has asked us not to work in the ox bow for the week leading up to October 25th so if you are planning to join us after the 17th please check first to see where we will be.

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

We regret to report that our leader is on 'light duties' at the moment having injured his knee during one of his extracurricular activities (don't ask!) Nevertheless it has not impaired his enthusiasm for the canal so he has been out supervising us to make sure we do the job properly.

Visits to our normal sites continued during September, even to Devils Hole where we cut our 'lawns' around Eric's building site! Three members also lent a hand down at Lordings at the request of David Junkison, digging trenches and filling them with a mixture of bentonite and clay to waterproof the aqueduct.

October 5th and 19th are our next outings; if you feel like joining us you will be made very welcome.

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

The first two weeks in September we were a bit thin on the ground with people being away or on holiday so we did some tidying at Lordings and I went to Tickners to do a little weeding and general tidying for John. Then due to some transport problems I have been unable to do anything anywhere. However that did not affect the rest of the group and I have had the following from David J:

'Between Tuesday 15th and Thursday 17th we managed to lay Bentonite mat and Bentonite powder/clay mix beyond the waterwheel end of the aqueduct in order to reduce leakage. The mat was cut off from a large roll at Drungewick Hill Farm last year. Extra clay came from the work to alter Drungewick Winding Hole. We also bought Bentonite powder, thanks to Dave Kersley who collected it from Purfleet. The clay was mixed with powder and water and laid in trenches dug last year. Then the mat, in two pieces, was laid on this with an overlap and covered with a 450mm thick clay/Bentonite powder mix.

This was a large and difficult project. The mat was heavy and awkward to unroll and position. Very wet weather on the first day did not help. After completion the waterwheel output was directed into the canal. Next Thursday we will know how full the canal is.

This project would not have been possible without help from Barry Woodroffe, Tim Lewis, Bob Knight, Richard Watson and Turlough Bamber to whom we are very grateful.'

This ends David's report and he has told me that on Thursday 24th they were still not sure if all the hard work had had the desired effect but have now increased the flow of water from the waterwheel to help fill the lock. That's all for this month so on to October.

Hedge Laying Team *(Keith Nichols)*

On Tuesday 29th September 3 intrepid souls trimmed half of the Harsfold to Flood Lock layed hedge. Being a bit of a suntrap it seemed more like midsummer than autumn. With the machines switched off for our breaks we could relish the peace of this section and watch the butterflies, dragonflies, swans and buzzards from some very much needed shade. I hope to finish this section over the next 2 Wednesdays in October.

I am afraid that the November dates are no longer possible for me as I will be recuperating at home after an operation. Hopefully I will be back in action in December/January.

Here are the revised dates:

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

Dec - Fri 4th (possibly), Mon 14th

That's all folks, cheers for now

Visiting Groups (*Bill Nicholson*)

In reply to your 'oldest volunteer thing', NWPG held their first work parties on the canal at Lock 17 during the re-build there which I think was about 1983/1984 (others will have a record); after that we had a gap until 1989 when we returned to help with reconstructing Drungewick Lock. We have since been regular visitors.

On which subject I can report that two consecutive weekend visits from NWPG and LWRG saw the completion of the latest refurbishment of Rowner Lock. This comprised the re-pointing of the off side chamber wall and rebuild of the stone bow wall at the head of the lock. Stones from the Devil's Hole stockpile were cut and mortared into place by NWPG with LWRG making short work of backfilling the hole behind with concrete and removing the stop planks. LWRG also removed some fallen trees towards Loves Bridge and on the Sunday fitted a valve to the brick dam at the site of Lock 11 at Bonfire Hanger (after finding the normal access to the canal blocked!). So with the winter rains this section can now re-fill and without the trees that were growing in it. Next year, during the dry season, visiting groups hope to be working alongside the WACT summer camp to complete the Southland culvert. It may be a long time before you hear from me again!

Working Party Diary for October/November/December

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's contribution above
Saturday 24 th October at 2.30pm	Autumn meeting in Pulborough	More details in Wey South
Thursday 3 rd December	Christmas Dinner in Arundel	Booking form and details in Wey South
Friday 11 th December	Christmas Dinner in Bramley	Booking form and details in Wey South
Monday 14 th December	The Three Compasses, Alfold	See Geoff Perk's contribution above
December 12 th /13 th & 19 th to 23 rd	Santa Cruises at Loxwood	Booking essential through WACT office

Working Party Directory

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