

Editorial

Yet another milestone in the march towards reopening the canal - Gennets Bridge Lock is nearly finished. A completion ceremony is planned for 21 April, ahead of the Trust's annual meeting. This also marks the retirement of Eric Walker, who has led this project and many others over the last few years. He will still be around, but has handed over his duties to Dennis Gillen and John Reynolds.

Just to underline the rapid progress being made, a planning application has now been submitted for the navigable channel at Gun's Mouth, while work should be able to start on the Tickner's Heath crossing thanks to a very generous legacy from the late Peter Flatter.

Bill

Thursday and Sunday Group

The concreting in Gennets Bridge Lock has been completed. The last element of brick laying to the training walls is continuing. Work has started making the stop plank shelter and the supporting foundations.

The stone seating sculpturing was completed, but the wood elements, due to be done in January by the landowner, was delayed by the weather. The site landscaping continued with the planting of hedges and profiling the spoil heaps. There remain a couple of short lengths of fencing still to be completed. However, the ground is too wet for us to continue spreading top soil on the spoil heaps on the west side of the towpath and the rest of the site.

The final major operation is to remove the sheet piling and causeway, then we can remove the two site cabins and remaining materials.

Eric Walker/Dennis Gillen

Mrs Bucket Group - Keeping Up Appearances on Mondays

As anticipated, our first 2018 meeting was a hedge cutting from Lee Farm causeway to the lock, our second visit this winter season to this site. We have been working in co-operation with MWWP as they have been on site too. It is now anticipated that they will finish the job off all the way to the lock, so our involvement is complete.

Unfortunately continuous heavy rain resulted in our planned visit to Haybarn on 15 January being cancelled. But the weather moderated and the following Monday we visited Lordings, although it was very wet. We installed the replacement plaque



Flood lock seat (Nansi Taylor), Flood lock plaque (John Emprigham) and Harsfold info post (Roger Wilson)

on the bridge, reset the seat by the flood lock in stone and constructed a special surround for it. Attention was also given to the towpath chain stile, rebuilt by Tony Clear, securing the post of the adjacent field gate and concreting in proper stepping stones around the stile. In addition we cut back quite a bit of hedge and overhanging foliage near the flood lock and installed a new info post at Harsfold causeway. We had intended to secure the water wheel from any possibility of access as a safety measure, but this was not possible as it was under water and the lock itself was full of water, a very unusual occurrence.

Finally in January, at the request of Kev Baker, we spent a day at Loxwood rebuilding the fence between the lock and the path to the 'tunnel'. Five new fence posts were replaced after a lot of digging with the result that the fence is now secure in an upright position. We cleared vegetation around the lock and the back pump outflow and brush cut part of the overflow car park.

In February we intend to return to Loxwood to finish off and perhaps start work on bank clearance north of Gennets Bridge lock.

Nick Wood

Mid Week Working Party

This month has been a busy one. We started at Loxwood and cleared the hedge by Brewhurst Bridge that we cleared a couple of years ago and tidied up the towpath side as far as Baldwin's lock. We are trying to make it easier for the Boat Crews.

Due to the shooting season we have only been able to get down to Haybarn once this month, to continue to cut the hedge which has not been cut for 20 years. We probably have 50 yards left. A small group managed to complete clearing the logs and trees out of the canal near the swing bridge at Haybarn. We then went back to Birtley and cleared a number of trees out of the water using ropes and a Tirfor. We still have work to do there.

The following week the group worked on the canal at Run Common. It was terrible weather, wind and rain, and I do congratulate the group for completing this job. The last place we have been to this month is Bonfire Hanger where we cleared many brambles to better define the canal.

Margaret Darvill

Tickner's Heath Depot

Well so this is what 2018 looks like, wet and windy and that is not describing the team after excesses over the festive season I should add.

Since the resumption we have been glad to welcome back the Trust's Land Rover to the depot. Its enforced stay at Harwood's meant many a head ache and rescheduling of work for a lot of the Trust; not just us at the depot. Early indications are that thanks to the efforts of the crew at Pulborough the old girl is running even better than before the mishap, so fingers crossed it continues that way.

The team has now taken over one of the containers brought back from GBL. The lock has been changed and Mick Jones and Richard Powell are at present making improvements to the racking so that we can move in some of the depot stock which in turn will free up some spare space elsewhere in the depot.

Richard has also been using his engineering skills to replace the plug on one of the depot's trailers, which had the effrontery to become entangled



wheel with disastrous effect. The plug was replaced, and the electrics were checked with the world renowned Weller STIFO box, (shown above; Francis you really should patent it). All's now well.

John Piper has taken on the task of producing an inventory of items in our fuel store. This has had the added advantage of highlighting what we can dispose of. John has now taken many trips to his local tip and the contents of the store are rapidly diminishing.

Finally, our man of many talents David Robson has started to repair the leaflet holder from the MDV which has been looking rather the worse for wear. He has reinforced the back so that the securing screws actually secure, and has added another couple to make the stand more stable. Hopefully it will give a better image of the Trust at the various displays the MDV attends.

Well I think that it's for this month so onwards and upwards for 2018

John Smith

Northern (Summit) Working Party

Since my last report of water inundation we have been further flooded out but our efforts have continued, undeterred. During the early part of the month we repaired the breach in the dam enabling us to pump out the slipway hole, dismantle two sections of shuttering and clean out clay that had washed in from the breach. The shuttering was then re-instated and supported with acrow props and the scaffolding necessary for the concrete pour re-erected (I have lost count of the number of times we have had to either dismantle or re-erect the scaffold).

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All was then ready for the NWPG weekend at the end of the month when the volumetric concrete delivery was due. A further flood during the previous week was in part solved by re-positioning the 6in pump down the canal towards Compasses to pump surplus water over the blocked section to the north. Helped by no rain on the previous Thursday and Friday the canal levels were well down below the wharf in time for the arrival of the concrete.

The concrete arrived at 9.00am on Saturday and the pour was completed by mid morning. This hardened off overnight and the team spent the whole of Sunday dismantling the scaffold (again) and then the shuttering. This was completed apart from the end panel and two back panels. The slipway now has its two side walls.

The weekend also saw work start on capping the south wall with two brick course and bull nosed coping bricks. By the end of the weekend this was about 60% complete. The site is now really to emerge from the wet and mud. Other work was on the wharf where the task is to install the large oak wallings to the face of the piling. Saturday was spent finishing the preparation of the timbers and joining plates. Our attempts on Sunday to install the first walling timber were thwarted by blunt drill bits that refuse to go through the metal piles. In the end we had one section temporarily installed together with an understanding as to how to proceed with the rest. We just need plenty of sharp 10mm drill bits and a lot of patience and, of course, less mud and water!

Progress during the month means that an early summer completion of the slipway is entirely feasible provided that the rains holds off.

In anticipation of further major work in the area, the Trust has purchased a 9 ton dumper that has already shown its worth in moving muck and materials about the site.

We work every third Saturday and often on others (next meet 10th February). If you would like to join us or need more details of the work planned please contact either Dave Evans or myself. You will be most welcome.

Bill Nicholson

Hedgelaying Group

Hi folks, 'it's nice to vada your jolly old eeks Hagain'. So let's get straight into it. On January 02 we finished at Slinfold despite some inclement weather, so ending the last 80 yards of the hedge to be laid. Due to the wetness I erected a tarpaulin shelter which gave a dry place for tools and the five of us to have a break. Stephen and Chris did sterling work in taking two loads of stakes and binders to Haybarn.

The following four Tuesdays alternated with laying at Haybarn and more coppicing at Devil's Hole and finishing the month at Devil's Hole on the 30th. The weather has been two days of moist and grey at Haybarn. I saw two flocks of birds there but couldn't determine what they were as they were just black shapes in the dismal light. Probably Redwings and Fieldfares. At Devil's it's been totally different, i.e. sunny and warm, being a bit of a sun trap with the first Primroses flowering in one particular spot.

In the laying two days, we have managed to lay 27 yards, good going, and prepared 50 yards. The bonfire was going all day on the second visit which shows how much brash was cut out of that 50 yards. Only another 311 yards to go but we are now round the horne and beyond our ken!

On the coppicing days we have cut and cleaned up 12 Hazel stools, producing enough brash for another all-day bonfire. This has also given us another 110 stakes but only 70 binders. Simon Carter seems very pleased with our regeneration of the coppice at Devil's.

Smith tells me I've just got room for a brief advert so:

Dobbyroyds, Dobbyroyds, enough Smith, enough!

This was written without the use of beer but no publican has been harmed in this production. They are just a little poorer.

This finds you as it leaves me.

Keith Nichols

Navvies' Luncheon, 14th March

Please see the last issue of WPN (available on the Trust website) for details and booking form.

Working Party Diary

Every Sunday and Thursday	Mainly construction work	Contact Eric Walker for details
Every Monday	'Mrs Bucket' - Keeping Up Appearances	Details from John Empringham
Every Wednesday	Mid-Week Working Party	Details from Margaret Darvill
Every Wednesday (plus Thursday and Sunday as required)	Loxwood Link Maintenance	Check with Kev Baker
Every Wednesday	Maintenance sessions at Tickner's Heath Depot	Contact John Smith/Ken Bacon
Various Tuesdays (not in summer)	Hedge Laying	Contact Keith Nichols
Third Saturday of the month	Summit level	Contact Dave Evans