

# Wey & Arun Canal News

## June 2010

A review of recent events on the Wey & Arun Canal

### CANAL EXTENDED FURTHER NORTHWARDS

On Saturday 17 April 2010 the Wey & Arun Canal Trust achieved another milestone in the canal's restoration when Devil's Hole Lock near the Sussex/Surrey border was officially reopened. This lock is the next north of Loxwood on the way to the canal summit and has a fascinating connection with the Canadian army during World War II.

Preparing for the Dieppe raid in August 1942, the Canadians practised their demolition skills on the remains of Devil's Hole Lock, which had lain disused since the canal closed some 70 years earlier. The result was that the upper part of the lock chamber was completely demolished. The Trust had to repair the damage before lengthening the lock and adding a back-pumping facility to conserve water, in line with other recently restored locks.



Col. Rutherford cuts the ribbon to declare Devil's Hole Lock reopened



Devil's Hole Lock during the official reopening ceremony

The weather in the weeks leading up to the celebration was severe, first with the snow at the beginning of the year, then with the extremely wet conditions that followed, leading to worries that the site would not be ready in time. The volunteers made a magnificent effort in spite of this and all was in place on the day of the opening, including a new winding hole (turning area) below the lock. The weather on the day was also good and the event was well attended.

The event began with the naming of the Trust's new trip boat, the 12-passenger *Josias Jessop*, by Lady Egremont.

Trust President Lord Egremont's ancestor, the third Earl of Egremont, was the driving force behind the building of the canal in the early years of the 19th century, and Josias Jessop was the engineer who surveyed the route. The boat was converted and refurbished by Trust volunteers.

Following the naming ceremony, the VIP party travelled in the narrowboat *Zachariah Keppel* along the half-mile or so of newly-filled canal to Devil's Hole Lock. It was fitting that the rebuilt lock should be reopened by a Canadian Army representative and Colonel Paul Rutherford, Senior Army Adviser to the Canadian High Commissioner, cut the ribbon on the bridge over the lock. Before doing so, he paid tribute to the volunteers responsible for restoring the lock and the rest of the canal.

Colonel Rutherford was accompanied by Lt Col Pal Mann and Lt Col Denis Janelle from the Canadian High Commission, and the event was also attended by a party of Canadian veterans who had settled in the area after the war, many of whom had been involved in building nearby Dunsfold airfield.

Trust Chairman Sally Schupke asked those present to remember the many Canadians who did not make it back – about 3,600, almost 60% of the total, were killed, wounded or captured.

She also thanked the land owners for their cooperation and the local residents for their understanding in enduring the mud and many puddles involved during the restoration.

After the formalities a number of small boats ranging from canoes up to 23ft trailable canal cruisers enjoyed the extension to the navigable section.

# PAVING THE WAY

Bernard Ashley, recently appointed as Development Officer for the Wey & Arun Canal Trust, explains what his new role involves:

“The opening of the Loxwood Canal Crossing in 2009 and the recent extension of the canal to Devil’s Hole Lock are significant milestones in the Trust’s long term aim of restoring the full 23 miles of canal between Shalford and Pallingham. Among the many challenges ahead, one important aspect is making sure that the Trust’s aims and objectives are supported in the planning framework that is currently looking forward to 2026.

“The South East faces growing development pressures, and it is important that the canal, and the benefits that it can offer to the wider community, is recognised in the emerging Local Development Frameworks and that the entire route is protected against developments that might otherwise compromise its restoration. This task is all the more complex given the canal’s cross-boundary status, requiring consultation with two county councils, four borough/district councils and associated parish councils, to which can now be added the recently created South Downs National Park whose boundary includes part of the southern stretch of the canal. Other key agencies with whom we need to work closely include bodies such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Wildlife Trusts.

“My principal role as Development Officer for the Trust is to strengthen and develop relationships with government, local community and environmental bodies in order to pave the way for the future restoration of the canal. We believe the way forward is to forge an effective working partnership to promote and deliver the canal as an integral component of “green infrastructure” in the South East. In particular we wish to explore the potential for closer alignment with existing forums such as Local Strategic Partnerships and Surrey and West Sussex Rural Partnerships.”

## LOXWOOD BRIDGE - APPEARANCE TO BE IMPROVED

The Wey & Arun Canal Trust recently announced an important agreement with the Loxwood community to improve the appearance of the canal bridge that opened in early 2009. Currently the metal parapets on the bridge have a rather industrial appearance that is not in keeping with the nearby canal lock and horse bridge, both built in Sussex brick by Canal Trust volunteers.

The history of the metal parapets is complex, but it is fair to say that safety considerations took priority over aesthetic ones. The parapets had to conform to exacting “containment” requirements for public highway bridges, as well as ensuring the safety of pedestrians and other road users.



Loxwood Lock and horse bridge - the new parapets will be built with similar materials

Working together, the Canal Trust, Loxwood Parish Council and the Loxwood Society carefully studied the options for a more attractive design that would still satisfy the safety standards. Their joint recommendation was to modify the parapets with brick facing. A planning application has now been submitted to Chichester District Council for the revised design.

The Canal Trust and the Loxwood community are co-operating to raise the required funds, with a target figure of about £35,000. A “Buy a Brick” scheme has recently been launched; for a mere £5 donors can have their names symbolically associated with one of the new parapet bricks.

Trust Chairman Sally Schupke comments: “We want the people of Loxwood to be proud of their canal. We are delighted that we are now working with the community to improve the appearance of the area.”

## STAY UP TO DATE - VISIT OUR WEBSITE

If you would like to know more about the Wey & Arun Canal or keep up with our progress, our website is updated at least once a week so you will frequently find something new there.

[www.weyandarun.co.uk](http://www.weyandarun.co.uk)

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