

Wey & Arun Navigation – Loxwood Crossing Wednesday 29 April

In the 19th century it was possible to travel by boat from London to Littlehampton. The route then was on the River Wey from the Thames to Shalford in Surrey and then via The Wey and Arun Canal to Pallingham in West Sussex which in turn linked with the River Arun. Like many other methods of water transportation, the competition from the 'new' rail systems that provided a much faster method of transit overwhelmed this canal and in 1871 an Act of Abandonment was passed that effectively closed the canal.

A century later, the Wey and Arun Canal Trust was formed to rejuvenate this historic link and in the intervening 38 years much has been achieved; not least the latest venture that of the B2133 Loxwood crossing. Following closure of the canal the B2133 effectively 'cut through' the canal which terminated either side of the road. The Trust had two options, either raise the road bridge or lower the canal that would enable the link to be restored. Technical problems surrounded the former and the latter scheme was adopted.



A group of volunteers prepared plans allowing for the diversion of underground services, realignment of a new bridge and not least the lowering of the canal and lock levels in order to achieve the necessary 2.4 metre headroom required.

Eighteen members and guests were provided with an insight into the £1.8 million construction scheme, entirely funded by private donations, by Eric Walker, a member of the Trust who was recently awarded the MBE for his services to the trust. Eric described the various challenges that the Trust was confronted with, not least 'regaining' use of land handed back to landowners following closure, and the more technical aspects of services and detailed bridge construction..

In 2008, when extensive concrete piling had been undertaken, the B2133 was closed for construction of the bridge deck and parapets that took some 8 weeks for completion with only pedestrian access being allowed by a specially constructed temporary footbridge.

Pictured right is the completed structure and whilst some discussion continues that the modern style of the parapets may not necessarily blend with the local environment, the finished scheme adds to the beauty of the area and provides a restful location, adjacent to the popular Onslow Arms, where visitors can walk on the towpath to the Brewhurst Lock (refurbished in 1995) and can even take a short cruise on Canal Cruisers.

Following the presentation, Eric took members on a guided tour of the site to further illustrate that which was contained in his excellent presentation.



Fortunately fine weather prevailed and the area was seen at its best, including a family of ducklings who were unperturbed by the attention and took advantage of the wildlife that formed their afternoon tea.

We are grateful to Eric and The Wey and Arun Canal Trust for their time in hosting this visit. For more information about the history and photographs of the construction, please visit www.weyandarun.co.uk/trust