



## **Operations Report January 2022**

### **The Tip has started to go!**

The highlight of the month has been the start of removing ash from our site. We placed a contract with a large waste disposal company FCC, and this is the first contract of any size that WCT has negotiated and delivered as a principal contractor to CRT. This material is 100-year-old Tring Urban District Council (UDC) rubbish, mainly ash. The work this month was largely paid for by Tring Town Council, thank you!

44 lorries took around 870 tonnes of material (which is about 15% of the total amount to go from the tip) to the large FCC waste disposal site at Calvert over a 4 day period. Here is a 13 tonne excavator loading ash into one of the lorries. The red on top of the front of the lorry, is a soft retractable top to prevent the ash flying away in transit.



Removing the ash was only the last step in a long hard process. Time has been spent over the past year by the Tip Group, led by Steve Chapman, to find the best quote for the removal of the ash. This was a long process, as several rounds of sampling showed that the ash was not 'hazardous' as the initial sampling and testing in previous years had indicated.

We then had to spend the first few days of this work party resurfacing the short access slope "cart-track entrance" from Little Tring Road. This also included the turning area where the lorry is standing, all in preparation for the vehicle movements. The car park also needed a new layer of stone, because it had become muddy for our volunteers and their cars. We bought suitable material, spread it with the excavator, and hired a vibrating ride-on-roller to flatten it. Terry Cavender of Bucks Canal Society helped train our volunteers on the roller.

Next there was a backlog of clean clay spoil from previous months. Once removed, we started excavating the ash from near the winding hole and storing it at a temporary stockpile ready to load into lorries. We carried out a COSHH assessment (Control Of Substances Hazardous to Health) which concluded that those working with the ash had to wear masks to



protect against dust from the ash. Some volunteers also completed online banksman training to maintain site safety.



The above picture shows ash being dug out. In the background is a narrow boat “winding” (turning) at the current head of navigation (which we opened in 2005). The ash is about to be loaded into a dumper and taken to the pile shown on the previous page for removal. At the end of the working party, all the ash previously piled up at this location near the winding hole had gone, and most of the ash on which that pile was standing, has also been dug out.

This was our first time using wheeled dumpers with cabs. The cabs were especially welcome on the first Saturday when it poured with rain all day, but since then the weather was unexpectedly dry. The drivers found these dumpers a mixed blessing. While a warm dry cab in January was very welcome, the controls in each of the 2 hired dumpers were different from each other, and different again from our usual Thwaites cab-less dumpers. The smaller wheels struggle on our ground, and the eco features of the nearly-new JCB dumper proved troublesome. Nonetheless over a 6 day period, our volunteers moved some 270 loads of ash in the 2 dumpers, that's about 1 every 10 minutes.

We did this work now, a pilot, because we were keen to prove the feasibility of our plans. A small number of loads will also be removed during the February working party. We then need to review any lessons learned, and the availability of sufficient funding, before we continue with more bulk ash removal.

### **Tony's Magnificent Decade**

Thank you, Tony Bardwell, for your magnificent contribution to the Wendover Canal Trust over the past decade. After more than ten years devotion to the Wendover Canal restoration, culminating in the role of Operations Director, Tony Bardwell has now stepped down for a well-earned rest.



With a welcoming approach, he has encouraged many new volunteers to join our ranks. He also encouraged them to learn new skills to aid our progress, as well as the important health and safety practices essential on site. This was a vital ingredient in ensuring safe working conditions during the current pandemic.

Tony has always been a great innovator. His most recent development has been the “Bentomatic”. This has enabled us to lay 40 metres of canal lining continuously, through an ingenious excavator attachment. In moving to a slightly quieter life, Tony will still be seen on site during our work parties. He’ll be making his knowledge and skills available to others as well as developing who knows what.

We are pleased to welcome team leader Chris Bent, who has stepped up to cover the role of Operations Director. This will initially be until the end of March, when he goes away for three months, and then on his return.

Tony was very successful in finding ways of delegating parts of his role, however we still need to delegate more. So this report has been collated and written by long-standing restoration volunteer (and Deputy Chairman!) Clive Johnson.

### **Re-watering from Bridge 4a to 4**

Stillage tests requested by CRT following re-watering have revealed a so far unexplained water loss between Bridges 4a and 4. We have followed the CRT hydrologist’s recommendation to use biodegradable fluorescent dye to try to trace the water loss, but so far this has revealed no obvious flows and we are not yet any nearer to tracing the cause. Chris Bent is leading a small team of specialists to quantify the loss and investigate further.

As a charity we are required to be prudent and take the greatest care in how our money is spent. Until we trace the cause, we have felt obliged to temporarily pause further relining beyond Bridge 4. This decision had to be taken at short notice, and we’re sorry for any disruption it caused to people’s plans.

Although no relining took place this month, some “profiling” was done (excavation of the canal to the required shape ready for relining) and we covered most of the remaining previously-laid lining with spoil.





## **Next Working Party**

Our volunteers deserve a break after all their extended efforts this month. The next working party will be delayed from our usual first Friday, to start Friday 11<sup>th</sup> February for one week. This also largely avoids another planned closure of Little Tring Road (between our site entrance and the pumping station entrance).

## **Tidy Friday**

The last 150 trees were planted along the towpath, to fill in any open hedging – note the newly planted trees in both pictures below, on the towpath bank. This winter, 560 hedging and trees have been planted by WCT volunteers and Aston Clinton Scouts, all supplied by the Woodland Trust.



By Clive Johnson, Restoration volunteer and Deputy Chairman,  
On behalf of all the Wendover Canal Trust team leaders and volunteers.