



Operations Report January 2020

Volunteer safety

This month there were plenty of opportunity for slips and trips due to the mud. We had no reported injuries or near misses. A lot of time was spent on strenuous tasks like shovelling ballast into the concrete mixer, moving the mix with a wheelbarrow and lifting and carrying hollow and solid concrete blocks. I think a few people were muscle sore at the end of each day.

This month we started getting everyone to sign in and acknowledge the Volunteer handbook v 4. They also gave brief details of who to contact in case of an emergency. Both of those documents were carried on site by the Team leaders for the day.

The week's events

As per the norm for this time of year we had mud and water to deal with before we could make a start. Unfortunately, both of our petrol-powered pumps didn't like being wet and cold. One broke its pull-start cord and the other just stopped and went on strike. We repaired the cord and got one going, the other had to be taken off site for repairs. Once at home the pump started first pull! It obviously liked to be in dry and warm surroundings. Further examination showed a very low oil level in the sump and this probably tripped the oil level sensor and cut the spark. Fresh oil was added, and all is well.

Whilst the water was being removed from the bridge area there was some activity nearer to the car park at Little Tring.

The first task was to get the electrically stricken pickup out of the Pumping station Oil store garage and remove the equipment on the pickup bed. To do this we had to jump start the pickup using one of our volunteer's pickup. We duly got the WAT pickup out, shifted the kit from the back and got it back into the Oil store. Success?

Later in the day when it was getting cold and dark and time to go home, we discovered that our hero volunteer's truck had a totally flat battery. It seems the alternator had burnt out and shorted the battery to earth. We got it going again with jump leads from my car and charged the battery for 10 minutes.

That amount of charge lasted until just passing Aston Hill entrance on the Wendover road. I eventually arrived and towed the truck into a layby and connected a fresh battery. We made it back down to Aston Clinton and parked the truck on my drive. Our hero got a lift home and came back a couple of days later to get the pickup back to his place.

We also spent some time during the day making several small excavations to map out where the towpath side of the domestic refuse filled in part of the canal is. The towpath bank is quite well defined and still has the coal tar lining in place.

Weekend report (from Mike Wright)

Saturday 4th: We had 6 volunteers. Cut 4 x Bentomat strips 2.5 x 8.5m for sloped sides through bridge 4 & transported to site. Pumped out & bailed out (by hand) west end of bridge narrows. Levelled east end of bridge using laser level (& 5 tonne excavator). Rolled out existing bed mat.

Sunday 5th: We had 8 volunteers. Loaded hollow blocks & ballast & transported to site. Laid offside 2.5m strip & installed hollow blocks.

Monday 6th: 5 volunteers. Loaded more hollow blocks, ballast & water & transported to site. Crushed concrete delivery am. Laid towpath side 2.5m strip & installed hollow blocks



The hollow blocks nearest the existing blocks were filled in an “upright” position and subsequent ones were laid at 45 degrees as is normally done on the bank block work.

We had decided on Tuesday 7th to ask the Ready Mixed concrete supplier to deliver a day earlier and they agreed to deliver at 11:00 on Wednesday. No pressure then?

We set out some more formwork for the bed concreting and commenced on preparing the reinforcing mesh by attaching some “standoff” feet.



There were definitely no comments like “should have been put behind bars years ago!”

During Tuesday morning, to reduce some complaints, we moved the 20 tonnes of crushed concrete, delivered the previous day, into the ruts running alongside the car park area. We had been getting mud and debris splashed onto the parked cars when the machines went past. The 20 tonnes didn't fill the ruts completely and we will repeat the exercise next month.

Last thing on Tuesday 7th it all looked like this: -



You can see in this picture that there is a row of hollow concrete blocks topped with solid blocks. This was done to allow the dumpers to bring the concrete to the required place and thus reduce the amount of manual shovelling needed. The arrangement was tried, adjusted and tested again to make sure it was stable, and the blocks could withstand the loads generated by a dumper with a wet concrete load. All set for the concrete to arrive on Wednesday.

Wednesday 8th Jan. (From Pete Bowers/Tony Borrill)

The Volunteer work force split into three teams thus: -

The concreting team laid the reinforcing grids, built and removed the raised platforms for the dumper, moved the blocks, shifted, raked and vibrated the concrete. The team were Pete Bowers, William Mathew, Phil Strangeway & Tony Borrill.

1. Two dumper drivers took delivery of the concrete from the car park at Little Tring to bridge 4 and were Clive and Peter Bird.
2. A canal side fire was also run to clear the large pile of hedge trimmings next to the tow path opposite the shed. (from the Family camp). Boyd Williams ran this, assisted by everyone else when they weren't concreting or dumper driving.



This is the
concreting
team!

I was at home on concreting day and got a phone call at 12:30 to say all the concreting was done!

Next day (Thursday 9th) this is what it looked like: -



It was now time to use concrete to infill the gap between the blocks and the bridge walls and carefully fill the gaps in the block work. At the same time fresh Bentomat was laid on the next part of the bridge banks and the form work laid out ready for a quick start next month.



The view looking directly down from bridge 4



View from Bridge 4 going the other way showing the materials etc. ready for February, plus a large lake to quell!



Best caption wins a packet of biscuits!

Tidy Friday 10th

We had a three-person Tidy Friday Team who made sure the plant machines were safely removed from site. They continued to do clearing and planting on the offside bank between Whitehouses and Bridge 4. They have literally thousands of bulbs and new plants and trees to look after

Tony Bardwell