

Wendover Arm Trust

14 May 2019

Operations Report for May 2019

Health and Safety

The Team Leaders had nothing to report on major incidents. However, after it rained there were several cases of people slipping over on mud coated plywood board covers (including me) but without injury. We need to be constantly aware of the risks from simple trips and slides.

May Restoration Timetable, Why Two Weeks?

We had several lots of materials that needed to be delivered to Little Tring and some unloaded by excavator. This included Bentomat, solid concrete blocks and coir rolls. We were able to organise the deliveries over three days during the week before the main restoration week, so we ordered the plant a week early. This also gave the teams the chance to continue with the Landscaping work particularly next to Whitehouses.



An additional bonus would be the ability to have spare machine time for training more volunteers to operate the excavators and wheeled dumpers.

After this was all organised, we just had to hope that volunteers would come forward.

We shouldn't have worried: we had a marvellous turn out!

Restoration progress

As usual, there are some pictures of the progress to date. The teams were able to complete five bank mat drops on the towpath side and four on the offside. The Bentomat was fully blocked and back filled together with the bed mat roll out and back filling. This gives 22.5m more of finished canal.

The limiting factor for the offside was the ramp to the upper trackway to Whitehouses. As can be seen in the pictures the ramp slopes down gently to allow the machines to climb up in muddy conditions, the last bank mat just reaches the top of the ramp bank.



Landscaping

We had a meeting with Herts County council and the adjacent farm tenant. The spoil tip at Whitehouses was discussed and we were able to agree what needed to be done to make the HCC/farmland usable. In broad terms we had to take out the areas of elder scrub (including the roots) and fill the various holes and dips to create a smooth area of land that matched to edge of the adjacent fields and thus make it useable for grazing sheep and cattle. The area leading to the canal edge would be levelled as much as possible. After this exercise is completed the whole area needs to have a layer of topsoil added for special seeding for sheep grazing. With this information we could set to work during the first week and make progress according to the plan. During the second week and after the work party this work was continued.

The picture below shows the completed area awaiting topsoil.



Further work continued with the other areas being converted to flat grass /trees etc. on top of the Bridge 4 mooring wall, Whitehouses compound and the land in between.

The view from Bridge 4



As can be seen the lining is up to the ramp to Whitehouses. If you look the other way from Bridge 4 you would see that the bed track has been widened. (as below)



Team Leader Training

As per the last two work party weeks, we asked willing potential team leaders to be “in charge” for the day whilst another team leader mentored them. This training has already been of use for this work party where we have had to cover the extra week of working. It will also be of use during June when a lot of the regular team leaders are away on holiday.

Volunteer training on Wheeled Dumpers and Excavators

Over the two-week work party an extra 7 people were trained, tested and authorised to drive wheeled articulated dumpers and 2 to drive excavators. This authorisation does not imply a level of competence beyond basic ability to drive the machines safely. Further experience will be gained under the supervision of the team leaders during future work parties.



Here is someone pleased to have a new certificate!!

Why Wheeled dumpers?

The hire company that supplied the tracked dumper last month charged us a lot of money for some damage and too much mud left on the vehicle

The canal bed between bridge 4 and Little Tring car park had been further cleared of deep mud (as mentioned last month) and the weather forecast was looking good. Wheeled dumper hire is much lower than for a tracked item so hiring two for two weeks was an economical choice.

We had to allow for training on wheeled dumpers and the timetable would allow for this.

We have found out that a 10-tonne wheeled dumper can shift a lot of spoil but is impractical as far as turning around and general manoeuvrability is concerned. However, a six-tonne swivel bucket dumper works well.

We will keep using wheeled dumpers until the weather/mud makes using them impractical.

Tidy Friday Report

The Tidy Friday team carried on with clearing the area next to Bridge 4, pulling tree roots and generally tidying up the wooded areas. A new volunteer from Forestry England has joined the Tidy Friday group and brings useful information and guidance for us.

Work Party two weeks again in July??

I am asking for volunteers to run another two-week work party in July. The most likely extra week would be after the main work party week. The recent "two weeker" has been useful, and we should be taking advantage of the generally good weather in summer and maybe cutting some of the work party days/hours if the weather gets bad in the winter. I will be putting a general request out with the June work schedule to gauge the possible support available.

Thank you for your help

Tony Bardwell

Operations Director