



Wendover Arm Trust

Operations Report 28 April 2021

Website: - <https://wendoverarmtrust.co.uk/>

Overview

A remarkably busy and fruitful work party.

Health and safety

Covid 19 team working and social distancing worked well, with two distinct work teams of around six people at each of the work sites. There were no known cases of covid arising and no warnings from the NHS app etc. Most volunteers have had one vaccination, and some have had two.

Hut 3 Burglary

One morning we arrived on site to find that hut 3 in the car park had its door forced open and some items stolen. A generator had been left just outside of the locked site gate as if the thieves had been disturbed. It was apparent that they had used a battery powered angle grinder to cut through the hut top hinge and then used brute force to get in. A hired generator and a WAT Strimmer were stolen along with a WAT petrol powered jet wash.

We are now lining the outside of the hut with weatherproof ply and beefing up the hinges and installing new combination locks plus a much better locking system. It was unfortunate that many of these planned security upgrades were delayed by the Covid problems.

Badger watch

A daily rota of volunteers was drawn up to make sure we had a look for signs of badger activity at the excavated tip end. If the burrows get to be longer than an arm's length, we cannot disturb the badgers. This was successfully carried out with a few scrabblings seen, but no major burrowing. The Badger watch will be run again between the work parties until May 6th.

Driver training

Several more excavator and Dumper drivers were trained, assessed, and signed off as "beginners under tuition". One day of machine use was set aside for the training. Those on the excavator were trained on the 13-tonne machine!

Bentomat handling fixture

This fixture (known as the Bentomatic!) arrived on site for inspection and trials. It will need some further fettling to allow easy mounting onto the 13-tonne excavator but looks very promising. The idea is to be able to apply Bentomat directly from a large roll onto a 45-degree bank thus deleting the need for prior cutting into lengths and re rolling etc. It also will delete a large amount of manual handling when being used on site.

Historic refuse tip surface clearance

The whole of the surface of the tip has been cleared to allow subsequent excavation and disposal of the tip contents. The first item to be broken up and removed was the reinforced concrete cutting pad that had been used for rolling out and cutting up the Bentomat (hence the Bentomatic!). This had obviously been made to a remarkably high standard and required all the might of the 13 tonner and a large hydraulic pecker to break it up.



The first step of clearing the Tip surface with a Hydraulic pecker!

The steel reinforced rubble is taken away to a stockpile awaiting removal by a grab truck



The Tip surface has been a materials store and general dumping ground for as long as I can remember, and it took all of two weeks hard graft to shift the stacks of concrete blocks and other useable materials to other areas such as the side of the “dry” canal banks, and either recycle or dump the other materials in an environmentally friendly way (i.e., give them to somebody else for their future use!)

Coir rolls and concrete blocks in their new storage position.



Yet more concrete blocks stored at the Excavated Tip end near to the Winding hole

Stop planks are go!

After some adjustments to the stop planks, they were taken down to the Bridge 4 site and installed in the channels built into the new walls. The first plank was laid onto a piece of Bentomat to aid sealing to the concrete up stand cill.



Here is the first plank being put into position



And here are all five planks ready to have Oak wedges put in at each end to hold them in place when under water.

The back of the planks was sealed with a single layer of Bentomat to provide as much water proofing as possible. A tarpaulin will be further added to make sure the seal is as good as we can get it.

Hut 1 moves

With the stop planks fitted, the hut could now be moved on to the concrete slab. This will allow the excavation of the soil covering the remains of the swing bridge wall on the offside so that the brick work can be restored and rebuilt.



The old wall remains on the offside can be seen here



New brick work grafted onto the old. Lime mortar is being used

Pipe capping resumes

Now that the length from bridge 4 to bridge 4a is completed the attention has now turned to starting the excavation and lining of the section from bridge 4 through to the Tip. The first stage is to prepare and cast the pipeline capping to provide protection to the Bentomat liner should the pipeline collapse. The capping will also be used as a "road" for completing the remainder of the lining activity. This will eliminate the usual water and mud problems over the next wet period. As can be seen in the pictures, the capping is now being made wide enough for a 6-tonne dumper to run between the form boards, it will also be wide enough for an 8-tonne excavator to run on.



Here we have the form boards held in place with steel pins and a wedge system to make the height adjustment easier.

Reinforcing sheets have the "chairs" added and are then put into the poured concrete and tamped into position.

With this process the volunteers were able to transport the 4 cubic m of ready-mix concrete for 800m along the canal bed and finish the tamping in around 40 minutes! Based on this success the amount of form work will be tripled. We have a lot of pipe capping to do!

Bridge 4a to bridge 4 finished

The canal length from bridge 4a to bridge 4 has now been completed including the finishing touches to the Whitehouses weir structure and, of course, the stop planks at Bridge 4. We are now discussing, with Canal and River Trust, the steps required to be able to re-water this section.

Tidy Friday and Environmental Group

The Tidy Friday group has started work on the raised decking at whitehouses. This involved hand moving lots of wood beams and planks as well as sand/cement/ballast along the offside bank. Movement of the materials by hand/wheelbarrow is now required because of the stop planks being in place and the bed of the canal being very wet and muddy. This structure will form the basis of a public information centre explaining the interesting history of the Whitehouses site.

The Environmental group met during Tidy Friday and concentrated on identifying and cataloguing specimen trees on the Whitehouses site. Jo Mason from Forestry England was there to advise.

Excavating and removing the Historic refuse tip

Our dedicated Tip removal project Group are evaluating the bids from several waste removal contractors.

Ongoing discussions are being held with CRT about how and who will place the final contracts.

Our target to start work on this project remains June July this year.

The estimated cost to do this work will be on the limit of the Trust resources and we have several projects looking to secure funds and grants.

Wanted: -Information Manager and Treasurer

Can you help us? – we are looking for one or two volunteers to help with online digital storage of our documents and pictures and to keep them secure but accessible when required.

The role will involve setting up and managing procedures for naming of documents/pictures and controlling permissions for access to them by members of Council, our sub committees and working groups as required.

The documents are mainly work reports, minutes of meetings and pictures that record the progress of the restoration and events etc

In both tasks, naming and dating in a consistent manner will be essential to enable us to search and find material in future.

Our Treasurer has indicated that he wants to stand down after many years of sterling service. We now need someone to join the Finance team to keep track of the Trusts' day to day finances.

If you think you can help us, or would like more information, please do get in touch with us.

Finally, here is the view from bridge 4 at the end of the work party. And it did not rain once during the whole work period!



Tony Bardwell

Operations Director