



Operations Report November 2021

Introduction

It has been a very busy month! However, we have been able to maintain our social distancing and keep work groups apart to avoid the Covid 19.

The work party started on 5th November and lasted for two weeks. During that time our “Bentomatic” Bentomat dispenser was fully used for the first time. Back filling the banks and the bed with spoil was started. The new Brick work at Bridge 4 was completed with some welcome support from KESCRG.

Following that we prepared for, and started on, rewatering the restored section that goes past Whitehouses. At the same time, we had more younger visitors on site to help with hedging.

This report contains links to some video information (a first in these reports). These need to be copied/pasted/hand copied and typed into your internet browser to be able to see them.

Bridge 4 Old Swing Bridge Brick work



Here we can see the brickwork of Heritage Bricks and Lime mortar virtually complete except for some re-pointing work on the old brickworks lower down. We still don't know what most of the features were for!

We are grateful to KESCRG (Kent and East Sussex Canal Restoration Group) who camped out at Wigginton Village Hall over the weekend and arrived on site with a smile to help out with both the brickwork and the many other tasks that go on “behind the scenes”.

Bentomatic is go!

After a lot of trials and adjustments we decided that the Bentomatic was ready and should be used on the 40 m of bank that had just been excavated at 45 degrees. We are using a 13t Excavator because the Bentomat roll and Bentomatic weighs 1.3 tonnes and will be used in an extended position away from the machine.



Here we can see the Bentomatic being put into position at the end of the last piece of matting



The end of the mat was pinned in position over the existing one and then the mat was rolled out, stopping every metre to put a pin at the top to stop the mat from falling down. We have made a time lapse video of the whole process which can be seen here: - <https://youtu.be/7UjCXQfmxuY>

When you access this video, you will be able to see how the unrolling progressed and how many times we went up and down the ladders! The whole process took around 50 minutes and the end result looked like this:



All we have to do now is concrete in the Hollow blocks and put hundreds of solid concrete blocks on top of those!



Bank and Bed back filling

The picture below shows the bed mat rolled out, the bank mat and hollow blocks/solid blocks in position ready for the construction of the “concrete sleeping policemen”. We have one of these reinforced concrete structures on every bed mat join to stop the mat end being disturbed in the future. We also have them every 10 metres to aid the bank stability.



After the “policemen” have cured, spoil is tipped on to the mat at the end nearest the camera and then the spoil is run over by the excavators and dumper to protect the Bentomat and policemen.

More spoil is brought along and then piled onto the banks as shown in the third picture. After a bit of cleaning up, this section is finished.



All of the spoil used for back filling contains bits of coal tar from the waterproof lining applied many years ago. This has been separated from “clean spoil which we have found to be possible during the excavation process. The clean spoil is kept separately for disposal. The spoil with coal tar is very expensive to remove but can remain on site.



Just in case the dumper drivers forget! Clean spoil containing even small amounts of coal tar will not be accepted as “clean” by the waste disposal companies. The difference in disposal cost between clean spoil and Coal tar spoil is a factor of 4!



Tidy Friday

The area on the offside bank behind Whitehouses was strimmed down to ground level to allow sowing of the whole area with wildflower seeds. The soil surface has to be exposed to make sure the area is “impoverished” such that the wildflowers will grow, and the grass and other “weeds” don’t grow faster than the wildflowers. We are looking forward to an insect (and human!) friendly flower display next spring.

Rewatering between Bridge 4 and Bridge 4a another Historic step forward

Preparations for rewatering this section started some weeks ago during the work party. The actual start of rewatering occurred on Saturday 27 November.

On a freezing day with snow forecast to arrive with Storm Arwen, the Volunteers arrive to watch the “pulling of the plug” ceremony.



The volunteers standing on the bund with floatation aids are getting ready to lift out the board which is stopping the flow of water from the re watered section beyond bridge 4a. The water in that section is connected to the supply from Wendover so as the level drops it will be replenished.

The ceremony was recorded, and the link is here: - [https://youtu.be/ TxiqEwtoPs](https://youtu.be/TxiqEwtoPs)



Next day this was the water level at Whitehouses. The water surface looks hazy because it was frozen over!

The apron jutting out under the three arches is where the first water level is to be set for the first tests.



The rewatering process will be carried out in two stages. The first is to fill up the section to the top of the apron at Whitehouses. At this point the board will be put back into the bund to stop incoming water flow and we will then monitor the water level for approximately two weeks to make sure we have no leaks. This will include any leaks at the stop planks. When the Engineer from Canal and River Trust is satisfied, we will pull the board out of the bund again to let the water level rise to be the same as the water flow from Wendover. We can carry out another “still” test at that point to check for leaks and problems.

Volunteers will be regularly monitoring the rewatered section and the stop planks at Bridge 4 until we are assured that any leakage is minimal.

The Scouts defy Storm Arwen

At the same time as the rewatering event, we had 7 scouts aged 11- 17, 3 scout leaders and 2 mums all braving the blizzard conditions at the winding hole. They planted 60 striplings of hedging along the back fence, weeded around last year’s trees and manned the gate at Drayton Beauchamp Church to allow the volunteers to park there for the rewatering event. This was for their Community Service badge. The scout leader pointed out that, one of the main benefits of the activity, was a realisation that they had a commitment arranged, which also needed suitable clothing for the weather.

“They will be our next generation of volunteers”.



Tony Bardwell
Operations Director