

Wendover Canal Trust – February 2023 Work Party Report

The one-week February work party started on 3rd February. There was the opportunity of extending the work party if the planned work was not completed in the week. Three extra days were worked.

The plan was to carry out vegetation works along the towpath between Wendover and Halton on behalf of Canal and River Trust (CRT) to enable the towpath upgrade to be carried out this year. WCT had secured some funding to carry out towpath improvement works and a second part of the February work party was to surface a trial length of towpath at Little Tring.

No work was planned for the relining of the canal.

The canal water level had risen and WCT were able to rewater the section of canal between Bridge 4 and 4a and further investigate the water leak.

Health, Safety and Environment

Two near misses were reported. During the vegetation work on the Wendover towpath, volunteers were asked not to tree climb, but to work from the ground and it was noted that petrol hedge trimmers were being used without ear protection.

A member of the public tripped and fell over one of the setting out pins used for the towpath at Little Tring. A separate accident report has been completed.

Towpath vegetation work.

WCT had agreed a scope of the vegetation work with CRT.

This was used to identify the vegetation work and to act as a check list when carrying out the work.

WCT volunteers managed to complete the full 2.7km of vegetation work during the work party.

During the work the towpath was kept open and there were many complimentary comments from towpath users.



Volunteers in action.

Clearance at the Wharf Road entrance to the Wendover Canal.



In addition, the vegetation was cleared at the Wharf Road entrance to the canal as shown above, allowing the canal to be seen from the road.

Towpath upgrade at Little Tring

Approximately 180m of the towpath was excavated to receive 150mm of surfacing material. The specification was for MOT Type 1, compacted in two layers over a layer of geotextile. The Type 1 was found to be of an open nature with little fine material to bind it. A surface dressing of fine material (Type 1 graded 6mm to dust) has been applied in places. Only one bulk bag of dust was ordered and the full length of the towpath has not been dressed.

Volunteers did manage to lay and compact the first layer of Type 1 over the full length of towpath that had been prepared and to complete the two compacted layers over approximately 100m.

Again the towpath was able to be kept open and volunteers received many complimentary comments and were asked when the next towpath section was going to be surfaced.

To reduce the manual labour WCT purchased an electric powered wheel barrow which proved to be very useful. A later section of the towpath employed a 1 ton 'skip loader'. This is a small dumper with scissor lift that can raise the hopper. It was used to tip the Type 1 from outside the fence.

In order to continue extending the towpath, should funds be available, hedge trimming was carried out over a further 40m of the towpath.



Skip loader in action.

Canal water level.

Higher water levels in the canal at Drayton meant that water flowed into the section of canal between Bridges 4 and 4a. This allowed the stop planks at Bridge 4 to be checked for watertightness and sealed using wood ash. The sealing was partially successful, but needs more work.

WCT were able to check the repair to the sluice at Whitehouses. The sluice was found to be watertight so the repair that WCT had carried out proved to be successful.

When the area at the site of the former swing bridge was pumped down, it was found that there was some water leaking through the walls, most noticeably at the expansion joint.

A representative from Oxford Hydrotechnics visited the site to provide advice and suggested that the weak point in the walls, bridge hole and mooring wall is likely to be the expansion joints.

He suggested using a polymer grout to seal the joints. The polymer grout expands on contact with water to provide the seal.



A good water level at Whitehouses

Tidy Friday

Tidy Friday was spent cutting down 3 stands of Hazel, which will allow light in to promote new growth.



Site Visits

On Thursday 9th February the site was visited by Neil Jackson and Annette Weiss of the Chilterns Conservation Board.



Neil Jackson and Annette Weiss with Clive Johnson and Peter Elwin.

Corporate Volunteering Days

On 16th January a group of 5 volunteers from Waterman Aspen were on site.

They cleared an area at Bridge 4a and planted 90 saplings which will form the woodland created in honour of Queen Elizabeth II.



Volunteers from Waterman Aspen working at Bridge 4a.

On 26th January 7 volunteers from Network Rail visited the site. They were engaged in carrying out repairs to the ends of the two mooring walls at Drayton. Where animals have entered the canal then scrambled up the banks, they have exposed the Bentomat. The repairs were carried out by cutting back the vegetation, then placing concrete filled sandbags on the exposed Bentomat.

Outline plan for the March work party

A one-week work party will start on 3rd March 2023, this will be weather dependent. The work will be the continuation of rolling out and backfilling the canal bed and the final profiling of the canal banks, together with completion of the Little Tring towpath.

M Bradley, 15th February 2023. V2