

2017 Work News – July, Aug & Sept

The new workboat was put to test in July making a start on pulling both rushes and the invasive Water Horsetail, both of which have made heavy growth in the Virworthy Wharf loading / unloading bay. True to its sale pitch it proved to be very stable and manoeuvrable and certainly easier than squelching round in two to three feet of silt whilst trying to maintain your balance. (photo 1) Digging for the wall continued but despite finding many smaller stones, none of the expected larger wall edging stones were found. (photo 2)



1 use of new boat



2 wall location attempt



3 trimming back the hedge line

With the heavy growing period this month it became necessary to cut back the face of the footpath hedge between Brendon Bridge and Dunsdon Nature Reserve (photo 3) and again between Dunsdon Nature Reserve and Puckland (photo 4) to initially enable the footpath to be cut to a reasonable width for walkers to walk side by side. Patches of wild flowers and signs of berries were skirted round.



4 getting there



5 larger stones



6 pipe to next section cleared

More digging at the site of the Virworthy Wharf wall did find a small number of individual larger stones but insufficient to establish if they were part of the missing wall (were the majority 'borrowed' for building material after the closure as a working canal?). (photo 5)

The water level in the basin seemed to indicate all the efforts to seal the leaks had been successful with the overspill pipe also transferring excess water into the next section. (photo 6) A family, looking for a flat route were cycling down the footpath from the Lower Tamar Lake and claimed they hadn't noticed any 'No Cycling' signs. Upon investigation there was a sign at the start of the footpath but it could possibly be missed due to its location. (photo 7)



7 existing no cycling at lake end



8 finishing off



9 north side started

Into August and the displayed artefacts were given a spruce up (photo 8) and work continued to clear the weeds from both sides of Virworthy Bridge. (photo 9) The weed growth was too heavy to employ the boat on the north side of the bridge but it was within reach from the banks on either side. (photo 10)

Between our working days, the cavers returned and made a further exploratory visit into the Wheel Pit Race Culvert. (photos 11, 12 and 13). Intriguing question, is this the entrance to the Wheel Pit, blocked with infill rubble? More visits are planned.



10 clearing north of bridge



11 cavers, Dave, Stuart, Lionel and Rick



12 entrance lined tunnel looking into fallen soft ceiling

Back to our normal routine, final coat of paint for the new picnic bench, (photo 14) clearing brambles at the beginning of the walk, (photo 15) replacing the 'inadequate' signage (photo 16) and placing a marker post to minimise a possible trip hazard. (photo 17)



13 loose stones and solid wall



14 picnic table final coat



15 vegetation clearance

Nineteen members of the Chilsworthy walking group made the most of a dry day to walk the full length of the canal from the Lower Tamar Lake car park through to Burmsdon Bridge, pausing briefly here at the halfway point at Moreton Bridge. (photo 18)



16 clearer advice



17 post to reduce trip hazard



18 inter-parish walk

The existing storage shed was moved to make room for a new, more secure store for the work boat and tools. A new gate has been installed at Virworthy Mill to replace the broken one. (photo 19)

September, and the last of the hand dredging and weed pulling north of Virworthy Bridge was surveyed by the team at the end of the day. (photo 20). The planned Permissive Path mowing and general vegetation clearance had to be postponed after receiving a report from a walker that several small trees had been blown across the footpath (photo 21) which were cleared.



19 new gate at Virworthy Mill



20 surveying the day's work



21 some of the reported trees down