

2018 Work News Archive

January

Into the second week and with the first opportunity to make an overdue visit to the long section between Puckland and the northern end of Dunsdon Nature Reserve we found several smaller branches and two trees totally down or partially blocking the footpath which took us all day to clear a way through and



1 Puckland Section



2 Broomhill to Dunsdon Nature Reserve

stack up the larger pieces out of the way. The damp and cold weather continued but the top of the canal bank from the Vealand picnic table back to Vealand Bridge was cut back to clear both old and new bramble growth plus other vegetation down to the water edge. The weather stayed very much in the same theme as we collected together previously cut brash from the Holsworthy branch through to Brendon Bridge. Having several fires during the day helped to keep us a bit warmer.



3 Bank cutting



4 Majority done



5 Last of the all day burn

February

Having cleared the brash we were then able to strim round Vealand Bridge and along this section in the same way as the previous week although despite the sunshine, everything was still wet and getting the heaps of vegetation to burn was a challenge.



6 Strimming around Vealand Bridge



7 On the way to Holsworthy Branch



8 After the cut at the end of Brendon Wood



9 Some flames at last



10 Tending the fire

March

Returning to the previously cut down trees between Puckland and DNR further clearance work was carried out to prepare the large amount of brash for burning at a later date.



11 Cleared



12 Trees and branches down on both sides



13 Brash prepared for burning

Vegetation clearance back to Broomhill Bridge completed the days' work.



14 Through to Broomhill Bridge

The following week continued with similar vegetation clearance from Broomhill Bridge through Puckland and Moreton up to the Bound Stone nearer DNR. Some of the large mounds of Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*) needed a hair cut to expose their withered old faces. One huge clump of Frogspawn, the first and only seen on the canal this year.



15 Needs a new face!



16 First and only frogspawn of the year

A sudden second spell of cold weather on the 18th provided the opportunity for some slightly unusual pictures in March, particularly on the canal.



17 Vealand Bridge view south



18 Vealand Bridge



19 New Bridge

20 Holsworthy Branch

21 Snowy bushes and trees

To round off the month, we revisited the remains of Aldercott Bridge stone walls which, since the first clean up almost 10 years ago to the day, were again being distorted with invasive tree roots and ivy. The majority were dealt with although some sort of stump treatment will be required and stonework re-pointing to prevent further damage.



22 Pre vegetation removal

23 Ever faithful volunteers – DB, MN and RE



24 Heavy vegetation clearance

25 Tree down and bank cut

April

With the damp weather continuing Virworthy Wharf rose to its highest possible level with the water spilling over the top of the spillway planks and into the next section as well. The excess weeds were raked off onto the bank edges, allowing them to drain down and any wild life escape back into the water and the spillway splash stones were placed back in position.



1 Dragged out weed, tidy up



2 Both sides

Lengthy sections of the footpath between the Lower Tamar Lake and Virworthy Wharf had become waterlogged with excess mud in sunken places. A start was made on scraping all the excess accumulated mud from the underlying stone surface



3, 4, 5 Water-logged footpaths between Lower Tamar Lake and Virworthy Wharf

Marsh Marigolds were appearing thick and fast along the Puckland section by mid April, a welcome suggestion of summer being on the way and burning of brash was started and some tree stump removal was carried out. A week later and once again the water level in the Wharf basin dropped rapidly to reveal a repeat of the leak hole under the concrete which was plugged once again.



6 Marsh Marigolds at Puckland



7 Puckland burn



8 Leak hole at Virworthy spillway

The displays in the Virworthy Wharf building had been plastered in bird droppings the previous year and plastic mesh was placed on the inside top edge of the wall in order to reduce the access further into the building plus a tree adjacent to the building had some branches removed to eliminate concerns raised by the insurance company about possible damage, into the last week of the month A channel was dug out and the weed removed from the canal profile between Virworthy bridge and the stream draining water into the canal from Sutcombe.



9 Jackdaw secure tree and trimming



10 Weed removal

May

Into the new month with new vegetation growth taking off, the first cut of the year was carried out to maintain access for walkers, however a fallen tree at Dunsdon Nature Reserve interrupted the planned task.



11 Path at Moreton Bridge



12 Fallen tree

Serious damage was also discovered at Wooda Bridge where livestock had trashed the hedges by scrambling over the banks onto the footpath both north and south of the bridge. Arrangements were put in place to remove the fallen tree following day.



13 Bank damage at Wooda Bridge



14 Trunk removal

Also on the 9th. of May a Green Veined White butterfly, (one of several seen) conveniently settled on the dandelion clock for a picture shot.



15 Green-veined White on Dandelion

Work also commenced on securing the entrance to the Wheel Pit outlet adit to safeguard the suspected small bat roosting colony and prevent adventurous persons exploring the adit in its state of small but significant sections of roof collapse. Ten members of a walking group from Lewdown Past enjoyed a sunny day at the end of the month resting at Vealand Bridge



16 Gate retaining posts



17 Lewdon Past walking group

June

Work continued over from the end of May to remove Willow stumps from the canal profile at Vealand and the line of the original towpath was cleared of vegetation from near the picnic table



18 Access to the stump



19 Stump removal

and benches to the top of the Incline Plane. Over to the left of the Incline Plane is an access to the surge overflow gully which was also cleared out. The large reinforced culvert lining pipes were moved from the storage area at Virworthy Mill



20 Old towpath cleared



21 Moving pipes form Virworthy Mill



22 Access to overspill gully

July

The lining pipes were relocated nearer to the three culverts carrying streams under the canal.



1 On far side of stream



2 Strimming at Virworthy Mill



3 Section Cleared

An overdue clearance of the footpath from Virworthy Mill to Cape Horn was completed during the first week along with clearing the path, south of Brendon Bridge removing a fallen tree at



4 Brendon Bridge south side



5 Fallen tree at Puckland



6 Cleared

Puckland and strimming back the side growth on the foot path, north of Brendon bridge



7 Brendon Bridge north side



8 Almost up to the DNR

August

The top of the bank between Puckland and Dexbeer was strimmed of potential overhanging grass and ferns.

A temporary fixing was put in place whilst the last part of the final construction was started for the security gate at the mouth of the Wheel pit Adit.



9 Securing the adit gate



10 Inter-parish Walk

The Incline Plane, right through to Virworthy Mill was mown in the opening days of the month, followed couple of days later by the eleven strong Inter Parish Walkers group led by Evelyn Sharman

There was a shortage of volunteers for the remainder of the month.

September

A deep hole in the canal profile near Brendon Wood was successfully filled Another tree was starting to lean across the footpath at Cape Horn which after cutting down, created the first pile of brash of the season A few more remaining road scalplings were spread on one of the dips in the footpath north of Virworthy Wharf.



11 Repaired deep hole near
Brendon Wood



12 One small trunk removed at
Cape Horn



13 Starting the first of the brash
heaps

October

Trying to catch up with several areas at the start of the month, beginning with cutting back a collapsing tree in the Aldercott Bridge area. This was followed by clearing away general undergrowth before tidying saplings and brash back towards Aldercott Bridge.



1 Trees on the far bank
threatening collapse



2 Solid wall of branches and
bushes



3 Saplings and brash

and initial bank strimming at Cape Horn



4 Before and ...



5 ... after trimming at Cape Horn

before tackling the canal profile back to Virworthy Mill



6 ... and after clearing



7 Progressing nicely



8 Clearing individual branches

Carrying on the next week towards Aldercott Bridge from Virworthy Mill checking work done and left to do. Removing some of the bigger invasive willow tree root stumps



9 End of a satisfying day



10 Checking what is still to do



11 Further south, dragging out root stumps

Construction completed, the adit protection gate was given a final coat of paint and with the discovery of the fence marking the start of the Permissive path measurements were taken to carry out the repair work



12 Entrance protection whilst painting gate



13 Rotted support posts

After the cutting down of the larger trees and bushes along the Vealand far bank, damage was occurring to the smaller unprotected saplings and branches



14 Broken branches remaining from damage ...



15 ... and bigger bits

November

Some damage was also occurring along the Brendon Bridge to Dundson Nature Reserve and on to Dexbeer / Puckland sections



16 Dundson Nature Reserve,
small tree clearance



17 Approaching Broomhill



18 Last of the day

whilst on the brighter side we were met with a blaze of late Autumn colours. More tree damage in the middle of the month at each end of the Incline Plane



19 Dundson Nature Reserve
autumn colours



20 Windswept Cherry
trees



21 Burmsdon boardwalk
trees

Another week followed with insufficient volunteers to organise into a work party so the cutting of the bank top between Virworthy Mill and the Wharf had to be postponed and completed at the end of the month.



22 Virworthy Mill to Wharf strimmed



23 Gaps in the bank

At several places along the canal channels have been cut through the far bank to allow just surface water or even streams having evolved over a longer period of time discharging into the canal with, under severe or adverse weather conditions, high levels of silt. The flow rate and level of vegetation in the canal, coupled with the distance to an outflow point is determining whether the silt discharges to larger streams or settles in the canal bed, eventually filling it up. The consequences of these ongoing factors are currently under investigation



24 Stream from Sutcombe



25 ... and another one



26 Feeder stream into the Canal

December

First week of the month and once again, torrential rain prevented setting up work for the day. The following week, the last before the Christmas shut down for the volunteers and the face of the footpath hedge between Virworthy Mill and the Wharf was cut back.



27 Hedge cutting and clearing up