

# 2017 Work Archive

## January, February and March

Burning of brash, cut and collected during the autumn of 2016 between Puckland and Dexbeer kept us busy in the first two weeks of **January**.



*1 - Cutting, stacking and burning brash*



*2 - Half gone*

This was followed with a heavy commitment of the work schedule during this and the following two months being concentrated in the area of the Holsworthy branch. Contracted work started right at the beginning of the year to cut down the fir tree plantation known as Brendon Wood on the adjoining land, and by the third week half of the trees had been removed. Unfortunately this coincided with a weekend of strong south westerly winds and with much of the protection previously provided by the plantation trees having been removed, it proved too much for many of the remaining trees on both the edge of the plantation and alongside the footpath.



*3 - Other small trees*



*4 – Also across the path and canal*

Various trees were identified as being at high risk and following discussions with the contractors and DCC P3 footpath officers, actions were put in place with the contractors and our volunteer hedge layer to resolve the created problems between us whilst enjoying the opened up views.



5 – Warning notices each end



6 – And again, logged up



7 – More from marked trees



8 – New Countryside view

Many years of excess growth, mainly of willow trees were removed to prevent damage to the fence alongside the far end of the Permissive path followed by a burn up.



9 – Burmsdon cutting and burning

Into **February**, and work continued in the area of the Aqueduct Bridge, clearing vegetation through and beyond Burmsdon Bridge although a mower cut is required as soon as the weather permits.



*10 – Aqueduct bridge cleared of vegetation*



*11 – Waiting mower cut*

The old South West Water pump building was found to have been damaged, creating access into the building which had a fragile floor over old pipes and several feet of water. Steps were taken to re-secure the building



*12 – View inside door*



*13 – Resealed door*

**March** came in like a lion and more tree damage at Brendon wood had to take priority



*14 – More trees cross footpath*

The decision was made to lay as much of the whole length of threatened trees and saplings whilst leaving as many individual larger ones as possible after reducing the number of branches on the footpath side of their main trunks.



*15 – Laying main stem*



*16 – End of season hedge laying*



17

– *View looking south*

A burn up of the majority of brash was completed on the last week and although the hedge is looking sparse at the moment new leaves are all ready starting to show.



18

– *Clearing the brash*

The accumulated silt in the drainage ditch between the footpath and the plantation due to a lack of fall along its length has been kindly dug out by a contractor on behalf of the forestry management creating access to the outlet end of the damaged section of culvert (believed to have been made from a hollowed out tree trunk.) Further investigations will be made whilst cleaning out silt from the pipe and possible repairs to the exposed rotted section, two feet below the surrounding canal bed level.

The exposed rotten drainage pipe near the Holsworthy branch had been draining water from the canal for a long period of time, dragging silt into the now cleared ditch which had started to impede the higher field drainage. It was found to be in need of some serious repair work after clearing all the surrounding vegetation and accumulated silt down to the clay bed and materials had to be ordered.

### April, May and June



1 exposed rotten wood culvert



2 cleared back to profile



3 view from footpath

Still in April, the canal profile in the Aqueduct section over the river Tamar was cleared of all the new vegetation and the large amount of new vegetation was cleared from the turning area at the Holsworthy branch along with another re-cut of the Filter Bed being carried out with the powered hand mower and trimmers, as the ride-on mower was found not to cope.



4 well on



5 job done



6 Burmson Bluebells

A walking survey along part of the Burmson section at the beginning of May revealed the beautiful display of Bluebell which appear here every year. With the purchase of water sealing adhesive, rubber sheeting and the purpose made steel cover the repair of the rotten wooden culvert was finally carried out in the middle of the month. before refilling the large cavity in the canal bed with clay.



7 slots cut in clay to take support



8 ready to overfill with clay



9 Burmsdon Aqueduct information

A guided walk arranged by the Bude Canal & Harbour Society for members of the Rolle Canal, BCHS and BCT arrived at Vealand after lunch having explored the Bude end of the canal and Hobbacott Incline Plane. The first part of the walk was between Vealand through to Burmsdon Bridge with the various points of interest being explained in conjunction with the display boards on route. Resulting from the walk, one of the visitors, being a member of the Cornwall Cavers showed a keen interest in exploring the wheel pit drainage culvert in order to try to clarify the position of the actual remains of the pit structure



10 after cut back



11 tree damage



12 culvert liner pipe

Moving forward into June with the usual canal maintenance taking priority, the heavy vegetation growth was cut back for two short sections either side of Vealand Bridge tree damage and a new lining pipe was inserted through the repaired wooden culvert to enable a better drainage flow and easier silt removal in the future should it become necessary



13 end of bay



14 exit after first check



15 third at risk

An offer for trying to locate the drainage culvert, wheel pit plus any remains of a retaining wall at Virworthy Wharf from the surface levels was taken up with some follow up excavation (pick and shovel) work following on at the latter site.

The first of several exploratory trips into the Wheel pit drainage culvert proved to be interesting enough to warrant further investigations as part of the autumn program. General maintenance of damaged trees and

hedges continued through the month except for during the third week when high temperatures for the country hit the headlines and any prospect of work was called off.

## July, August and September

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. Digging for the wall continued but despite finding many smaller stones, none of the expected larger wall edging stones were found.



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 and again between Dunsdon Nature Reserve and Puckland 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?).

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. 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.





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 and work continued to clear the weeds from both sides of Virworthy Bridge. 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.

Between our working days, the cavers returned and made a further exploratory visit into the Wheel Pit Race Culvert. 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, clearing brambles at the beginning of the walk, replacing the 'inadequate' signage and placing a marker post to minimise a possible trip hazard.



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.



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.

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. 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 which were cleared.



19 new gate at Virworthy Mill



20 surveying the day's work



21 some of the reported trees down

## October, November and December

**October** Although not part of the Aqueduct Trail the volunteers offered to clear the area round the entrance to the Merrifield wheel pit on a privately owned section of the Launceston branch of the Bude Canal system. This also provided the opportunity for those volunteers to have supervised entry to the wheel pit construction which was greatly appreciated.



1 Site entrance area cleared



2 Outflow entrance in bottom left hand corner



3 Water entry opening in roof



4 Roof and exit in chainwheel chamber

All the new growth in the Aqueduct Bridge over the Tamar was once again cut right down and the Permissive Path was mown through to the end.



5 Aqueduct Bridge clearance

Overhanging trees/branches from the far bank between the Holsworthy Branch and Brendon Bridge were removed during the remainder of the month.



6 General cutback required



7 plus new Willow growth

A persistent problem of dog fouling and occasional cycling prompted the addition of new signs at various access points between the Lower Tamar Lake and Vealand.



8 Vealand

Photographs provided by the cavers and accompanying archaeologist indicated that in two areas where the culvert was tunnelled through a mixture of shale and clay there had been partial roof falls creating a potential hazardous situation for inquisitive inexperienced individuals.



9 Entrance



10 Roof fall material

The keystone on a stoned section and what appears to be the remains of the stoned entrance through the wall of the wheelpit has been partially exposed although, the last digging for approximately five feet beyond that has indicated that the structure itself has been destroyed and filled with waste material. Due to the possibility of unauthorised access, it has been decided to have a secure preventative structure placed across the entrance to the adit. The calculations they have provided have given a better guideline of the original location of the Wheel pit' s position relative to the top of the Inclined Plane for future investigation.



The small amount of water still flowing out of the stoned exit of the adit is presumably seepage of surface water but this has gradually almost silted up the channel to the point that it has at sometime, changed its course away from its purpose of providing a water supply to the next section at base of the Inclined Plane. However, the course of the original channel remains although surprisingly, seems to have just been cut through the surface clay and not been stone lined. Despite being silted up, surface drainage water is still finding its way down and some clearance work of undergrowth and silt removal has begun to open it up again.



13 First section away from adit entrance



14 More water but still branches



15 following down the water flow

## November.

During the first weeks of November an effort was made to clear as much of the silt from the 'ditch' profile as possible. The remainder of the month was taken up with removing more fallen trees, particularly in the Dexbeer/Wooda area, some of which had completely blocked the footpath



16 Dexbeer Bridge



17 blocking footpath



18 cut up and stacked

and also commencing work to improving the situation of a potential footpath collapse over the washed out cavity by the long term leak at Virworthy.



19 Footpath boarded over

## December

As the repaired leak by the overspill at Virworthy Wharf has been retaining the high water level from the continuous recent rainfall for several weeks, work to finish the construction of bridging over the undermined footpath was completed.

Unfortunately adverse weather conditions coincided with several work days for the remainder of the month and into the New Year.

The canal bank top along the Wharf basin was cut and the canal bank top the north of Virworthy Bridge was also cleared.



20 Completed boarding



21 Cut bank



22 Cleared bank

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