

Website update for SPRING 2020

January

8th. First day back after Christmas and the New Year with late celebrations (1) brash burning to start the year off (2)



1 Celebrations



2 Second burn of the day

Unfortunately the following week continued with more wet weather although we did manage to light more fires. Over the next six weeks, time was spent sorting through all the old Aqueduct section records to extract as much historical information as possible for archiving at the North Devon Record Office at Barnstaple.

During the refurbishment of the supporting walls of Gadlock, Wooda and Broomhill Bridges it was discovered that much of the damage being done to the original stonework was caused by the growth of the adjacent trees and their expanding root structure. A survey was carried out in order to obtain a quote for taking out the offending trees and stump treating.(3, 4, 5 & 6)



3 Gadlock South side



4 Gadlock water feed pipe through tree



5 Broomhill South side



6 Broomhill North side

More burning of brash was carried out the following week before checking the last section beyond the Incline Plane where a rotten plank was discovered in the old boardwalk section (7) and several fallen, hanging or leaning trees on the permissive path will need attending to. (8 & 9)



7 Rotten plank



8 Light clearing done



9 More to do

After investigating the possibility of creating a Bumblebee habitat within part of the Filter Bed area, a wild flower seed specialist employed by SW seeds and representing a member of the Bumblebee Conservation trust visited the site to offer advice and support for the potential project.

A report came in of tree damage between Brendon Bridge and Dunsdon Nature Reserve (DNR) and a walk along the section not only found two trees to deal with (10 & 11) but a general removal of invasive willow trees being required (12) and accommodation bridge rails replacing. (13) The big tree was removed.



10 Windswept tree



11 Unfortunate loss of a bigish one



12 New saplings



13 Rails missing

February

Three consecutive weeks were spent north of Lana Bridge removing the invasive willow trees from the canal profile (14 & 15) and strimming round the bridge (16.)



14 Water almost too deep for wellies



15 and back towards Lana



16 Strimming north side of Lana

In the middle of the month Storm Denis swept through the area and as expected, brought down or damaged trees along the path from the Lower Lake to Lana Bridge. (17) North of Virworthy Bridge (18)



17 Big tree down but under control



18 Path-blocking branch

and south of Dexbeer Bridge, several smaller branches and damaged trees were left to deal with later, including one (19) North of DNR. A nice example of a rotting wood fungi was seen at DNR (20)



19 DNR a big one but safely down



20 Hairy Curtain Crust (*Stereum hirsutum*) DNR

After several weeks of sorting through the stored paperwork, the first batch of the Aqueduct section historical records were taken to the North Devon Records Office for archiving. During the refurbishment of the Accommodation Bridge support and 'lead in' walls at Broomhill, Gadlock and Wooda Bridges the expanding root systems from adjacent trees were found to be the main reason for the stones being pushed out of position and steps were taken to remove the trees and stump treat the remains. (s1 Photo 21) & (qi Photo 21) & (g7 Photo 22) The Trust expressed their thanks to the farmers involved in carrying out the operation successfully.



21 Broomhill safety notice



22 Stripped branch dropped



23 Permissive path notice refitted

March

Starting the month on yet another continually wet day three broken branches hanging down over the footpath were cut down before carrying on to refit the Permissive Path notice (23) and remove the overhanging small trunks across the last section of the Permissive path (24 & 25)

The two broken rails and post supports at Lana bridge were replaced. (26)



24 Tangled up bigger ones



26 Replaced rail and post support at Lana

25 A clear walk through achieved



27 Old boardwalk plank repairs

Into the second week of the month with repairs to the planking of the old section of boardwalk beyond the Incline Plane (27) before dealing with a large tree that had collapsed across the canal near the site of the long gone water diversion weir at the far end of Vealand section. (28 & 29) little knowing what was coming before we could return the following week to finish the job.



28 Roots ripped out of the ground



29 Large tree collapsed across the canal

16th March, Corona virus stops all work on the canal.

However two exceptions were granted for our two regular ride-on mower operators to continue mowing which means the full length of the footpath will be maintained in a walkable condition.(30 & 31) Some small branches were removed on route. (32) Rotting timbers on the DNR footbridge were booked in for replacement and, to bring Broomhill Accommodation Bridge into line, replacement self closing gates are due to be installed.



30 Keeping the path clear north of Brendon Bridge



31 Branches down at Vealand with another at Virworthy



32 Bridge ramp damage at DNR