



THE WENDOVER ARM TRUST WORKING PARTY NEWS

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After the February work party I was reminded of the immortal words of the poet, Robert Burns:

“The best laid schemes o’ mice an’ men
Gang aft a-gley”

On the Friday morning all went well and the materials and formwork for the base of the mooring bay wall and pipe capping were transported to the work site. Work carried on erecting the formwork for the first base of the mooring wall but it was not in our plan to complete this and pour the base until the March work party. On the Friday and Saturday as much as possible of the water in the ‘dry’ bed leading up to the temporary bund was pumped back over the bund. Let us hope that there is not another wet spell to fill it up again.

The excavator and tracked dumpers worked all day Friday on clearing the layer of mud from the 100 or so metres of bed from the end of the completed pipe capping to the next manhole just into stage 2. It was slow progress as the glutinous mud was not very keen to part company with the dumpers! This continued into Saturday when I was away for the day and Bob Fletcher took over. We were also joined on Saturday by London WRG for the weekend. Bob did an excellent job on Saturday but I unwittingly left him with a major problem. Excavation of two trial holes over the pipeline showed that the route of the pipeline near the manhole was not as expected. There was also over a metre depth of spoil then to be excavated at the end nearest the manhole before the pipe capping trench could be excavated – it was a forlorn hope that this could be completed for a pour of concrete on the Monday.

On Sunday morning the situation was reviewed and it was agreed to commence excavation, from the end of the completed pipe capping, down to 300mm above the top of pipe capping level working towards the manhole. As this did not close access to the mooring bay, the formwork for the first base of the mooring wall was completed, mainly due to the sterling efforts of a four man gang from London WRG who soon picked up the intricacies of our formwork. It was successfully poured on the Monday morning and, after the pour, the area adjacent to Bridge 4A, where it has been agreed with Herts CC to tip a metre depth of spoil at the toe of their tip, was de-stumped and cleared ready for bonfiring at Pete Bowers’ next work party. An access ramp was formed for plant to get up to the higher level of this area. Preparation of this tip site will give us a site on which to dispose of excavated spoil that is not required for reinstating banks.

The formwork to the base of the mooring bay wall was loosened on Tuesday by Ken Graves and Brian Harris who were hedge cutting at Little Tring; Brian was also seeing the hired plant off site.

March Work Party

Looking ahead to the March work party, it is planned to excavate and prepare at least 10 metres of pipe capping ready to pour on the Saturday morning. Excavation and preparation to continue for the rest of Saturday and Sunday ready for concrete pours on Monday/Tuesday. How about a target of 60 metres to bring us back on schedule? A second excavator will be completing the general lowering of the bed up to and past the manhole. This work will cut off access to the mooring bay but work can continue on moving the formwork on to the second base.

This raises another problem. It was the plan for London WRG to bend all the reinforcement for the Stage 1 mooring wall but we could not find Ron Pittaway's bending frame. After it was last used in May 2006 we are pretty certain that it was dismantled and stored away – but where? Can anyone remember dismantling the frame and where it is stored? There are 6 alloy scaffold tubes approx. 2 to 3 metres long and various scaffold clamps. I am sure that the clamps must be somewhere in the hut. In lieu of bending, London WRG cut a good supply of reinforcement mesh for the pipeline capping and carried out repairs with crushed concrete to the road through our storage site..

Scrub Bashing

The plant moving up and down the bed of the canal has kept plant growth well under control but the banks are having to be cut back regularly to prevent serious re-growth. RAF Halton started the good work scrub bashing last year, Pete Bowers' weekday work parties continued it as well as spare volunteers at the monthly work parties. London WRG gave the work a boost at the February work party and I feel that most of the banks are now under control.

London WRG

I have already referred several times to London WRG at the February work party; they put in a lot of effort over the weekend and completed valuable work. Well done and many thanks to them for spending their time with us. Hopefully they will visit us again and they can then try their hand at steel pan formwork for the reinforced concrete wall?

Design of lining

Because of the amount of spoil required to make up banks that have had to be cut into, consideration has been given to the continued use of hollow concrete blocks. They form a solid wall once they are filled with concrete, a necessity to make them withstand the impact of boats but, if the bank has not consolidated 100%, could lead to voids between them and the Bentomat layer. For the next length we are going to use solid concrete blocks only 100mm deep, therefore lighter to handle, on top of the first row of hollow concrete blocks that are bedded into the in-situ concrete base. They will have to be tamped into position on the Bentomat with rubber mallets but, once that is done, the job is finished.

Materials Deliveries

You will see from the work schedule that our purchasing manager, Ron Pittaway, has been rather busy ordering materials. This is necessary so that we can take maximum advantage of the BW 2007/2008 allocation of £40,000 for restoration in lieu of renewing the pipeline. It is also advantageous in that materials prices are going up and we are taking advantage of current favourable prices. Talking of prices going up, our first delivery of ready-mix in April 1999 was at £68/cubic metre ex. VAT. As from February 1st 2008, the price is now £100/cubic metre ex. VAT, + 47% in 9 years! This is mainly due to rising fuel costs and the government imposing taxes on aggregates - yet we are told that inflation is only 2% p.a. or thereabouts. For reinforcing mesh the increase is +50%.

Five day work party

I received little response from volunteers to the suggestion that we extend our monthly work party to include Tuesday as it will not cost us any more in plant hire as we pay for a week's hire (5 days) but only use the machines for four days. I therefore cancelled the idea for the January and February work parties. This caused a much better and supportive response to the suggestion and we are commencing the five-day weekend as from the March work party. As most of you are aware, we do not need such intensive labour at present; retired volunteers can support weekdays leaving those still at work to come at weekends, provided that we can operate all plant for the full five days. Hence the new form of work schedule with this newsletter for volunteers.

Looking Ahead

As I said in the last newsletter, the use of tracked dumpers, although expensive, has meant that we have been able to keep working despite atrocious conditions along the temporary road in the 'dry' canal bed. It has however highlighted a new drawback – these machines are even wider than the 5t excavators that we normally use and this has meant cutting further into existing banks, both towpath and offside, to enable the machines to move alongside the trench excavated for the pipeline capping. This raises the problem, not so much of restoring the banks, but leaving them for sufficient time to enable settlement to take place before laying the Bentomat lining and cover, desirably a year. This should not affect the overall completion date but means that we will probably spend most of 2008 extending the pipe capping through Stage 2 and working on mooring bays rather than completing the lining for Stage 1. Fortunately the work method we have adopted will allow us to line banks where consolidation is not necessary or has already taken place but the bed for Stage 1 must be completed in one operation, probably now in 2009.

August Working week

We are planning a working week in August as usual. First thoughts are for the week 2nd to 10th August 2008 but it has been suggested that this may not suit everyone. It will have to be timed to suit machine operators as a first priority but could all of you who are willing to assist please let me know any weeks in August that you cannot manage.

Towpath along Phase II

Dacorum Borough Council Footpath Officer has some money in his budget that he wants to spend on this towpath, that is a registered footpath, by the end of the financial year, 31/3/2008. He is arranging a contract for 400 metres of 1 metre wide hard surfacing starting 10 metres east of the Stage 2 mooring wall and working up to and past bridge 4A towards bridge 4 until the money runs out. The contractor is going to use tracked dumpers with access from the path coming up from Wilstone Reservoir subject to approval of his procedures by BW. At the February work party we put fence posts by our 100 metre interval temporary benchmarks to protect them from damage. I have expressed fears that the plant travelling on the towpath from bridge 4 to the end of the new surfacing will be badly damaged.

Whilst talking of the towpath, it has been observed that the underside of the steps at the new footbridges becomes a jungle in the summer. It has been agreed that these areas will be cleared and a layer of road stone laid over a layer of Geotex in order to keep weeds etc, from growing up through the steps. I have asked Pete Bowers to include this work in his weekday work parties. At the March work party a supply of road stone will be placed on the offside of both footbridges. It will be best to leave the towpath side of both footbridges until Dacorum BC have finished their works.

Bench Seats

It has been agreed to place a bench seat in memory of Roger Lewis in the vicinity of Little Tring Bridge. A further request to install another bench seat on the Arm, probably at Bridge 4, has been received. I hope to call on the services of Bob Fletcher and the 'Last of the Summer Wine' gang to lay the concrete bases and fix the seats.

2008 Tring/Wendover Canal Festival

Will those volunteers coming by boat please let me know as soon as possible so that we can allocate moorings on the towpath west of Little Tring Bridge

Ray Orth and I have agreed that our spare time at the Festival will be devoted to activities at Little Tring, i.e. a general clear up of the storage area, bending reinforcement, cutting Bentomat etc. This will enable members of the public to come and see us at work.

Web Site

The address of the Trust Restoration web site managed by Oliver Revel (that is linked to the main Trust site) is:

<http://wendovercanal.org.uk/>

The number of e-mail recipients of this newsletter is growing. If you give me a request for e-mail transmission I will do so but please let me know if the attachment does not arrive. Please note that new volunteers are automatically sent the Working Party news by post unless they request that it is to be sent by e-mail.

First Aid

Congratulations to Jon Kelly who passed his First Aid course in January so we now have two members who are qualified in First Aid, Jon and Dave Barratt. We still need volunteers who regularly come to work parties to take a First Aid Course – any more volunteers? The Trust will pay any fees and expenses. Please let Ray Orth know if you are willing to help.

Insurance

It is incumbent on anyone, regardless of age, to inform the Trust in writing if they suffer from any medical condition that could in any way affect their ability to carry out their work as a Trust Work Party Volunteer.

General Notes.

All volunteers receive and sign for the Trust's Restoration Manual that includes full Health and Safety requirements for the restoration works. The Manual is the property of the Trust; if you leave the working parties for any reason, please return the Manual to either Ray Orth or myself.

The Restoration Manual is currently being updated to take into account procedures for the lining in Phase II and new BW requirements under their procedures for treating us as a self-supervising contractor. Sorry for the delay but, as volunteers know, we have only just finalised our Phase II design and method of working. New volunteers will receive their copies as soon as the revisions are completed.

Hard hats for use at all times and high visibility jackets to be worn on sites with mobile plant in use are kept in the store at Tringford and must be drawn/returned there. One first aid kit is kept in the store; another is kept in the VW transporter for use on site. Also available in the transporter are ear defenders and goggles that must be worn when using strimmers, angle grinders, concrete breakers etc. Individual volunteers must provide their own gloves and footwear with reinforced toecaps.

We normally work from 9am to 5pm (or dark if earlier!) when we are hiring plant or taking delivery of ready-mix concrete early in the morning. There are breaks for morning coffee/tea, packed lunch and afternoon tea/coffee. We take our own food and drinks.

DATES FOR WORKING PARTIES

DATE (2008)	WORKING AT	WORK TO BE DONE
Friday 29 th February to Tuesday 4 th March	Little Tring/ Drayton Beauchamp	Continue with pipe capping, bulk excavation and set up formwork for second base of towpath mooring bay wall. Repairs to temporary roadway at Little Tring. Deliver road stone to offside of both footbridges. Materials deliveries at Little Tring.
Thursday 13 th March	Drayton Beauchamp	Strip pipe capping formwork, complete scrub bashing at Bridge 4A and lay Geotex/road stone under offside of footbridge steps. Materials deliveries at Little Tring.
Tuesday 18 th March	Little Tring	Materials deliveries at Little Tring.
Friday 4 th April to Tuesday 8 th April	Drayton Beauchamp	Continue with pipe capping, bulk excavation
Thursday 10 th April	Drayton Beauchamp	Strip pipe capping formwork & scrub bashing.
Friday 2 nd May to Tuesday 6 th May KESCRG on 3rd/4th May	Little Tring and Drayton Beauchamp	Continue with pipe capping, bulk excavation Bending reinforcement and work on mooring bay wall
Thursday 8 th May	Drayton Beauchamp	Strip pipe capping formwork & scrub bashing.
Thursday 22 nd May to Tuesday 27 th May	Tring/Wendover Canal Festival	Assisting with Festival and work on storage site at Little Tring.

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