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River Wey Navigations

NEWS FROM THE ST CATHERINE'S LENGTHSMAN - DECEMBER 2017

The beginning of November started well with a day working in Shalford Nature Reserve with the Wey Navigation Conservation Volunteers, which proved to be a very productive day. My main task was to trim the embankments surrounding the seasonal ponds whilst the volunteers helped me by cutting back the encroaching willow carr at the back edge of the embankments. With ten of us the day went so well that we achieved everything I had hoped too. My fellow lengthsmen from Stoke lock, Richard was trialling one of the new battery-powered chainsaws. The silence was something of a novelty - being used to the noise that a petrol-powered chainsaw usually makes. I was impressed with the saw but at this time they are still slightly expensive to buy.



The rest of the month was spent mainly concentrating on the annual winter cut back of towpath vegetation. There was however time for other tasks, such as repairing a section of the towpath near Ferry Lane where over time dogs had worn away about a third of the towpath on this narrow section. It is remarkable just how many barrow loads of soil it takes to fill these damaged areas of towpath.

Whilst in the Ferry Lane area I also cut back some overhanging branches and removed a couple of exposed tree roots on the sandy hillside. Heading upstream by the roller, I have again reduced the vegetation on the bend in the river. For those who have not heard the reason why before it is to aid navigation, giving a clear view of any boats approaching the sharp bend at this point.

On the morning of 30 November I completed the cut back of my length on reaching Broadford Bridge. Then in the afternoon I assisted a colleague removing a large Alder tree complete with root ball from just above Unstead Lock. The tree was too big for us to winch out initially so we cut it into several sections in the lock chamber and winched those out. Even then the sections were extremely heavy being completely waterlogged. It was a race against time with the light beginning to fade but we managed leaving me enough time to head home in the boat before the light went altogether.

See you by the river.

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