

SMALL TASKS TEAM VOLUNTEERS

*Working in partnership with the Canal & River Trust
North Wales and Borders Waterways*

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RECENT ACTIVITIES

This month has seen the Small Tasks Team Volunteers achieve the small milestone of undertaking the 50th task for the Canal & River Trust since the group completed its first task in March 2012. This milestone was met on 2nd to 4th April when timber board and aggregate steps (with hand rails) were installed at Hoolgrave Bridge (Bridge 11) on the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal to improve access between a public footpath crossing the bridge and the canal towpath. Additionally, an access gate with adjacent fencing was installed at the head of the steps.

This task was requested by Church Minshull Parish Council who wish to establish a circular walk, The Minsh Trail, from the village and embracing the canal. The project has the backing and support of the Waterways Partnership as their local appeal project for this year. The intention is that now the steps have been installed the Parish Council will complete its arrangements with Canal & River Trust to adopt a stretch of the canal. Funding will then be sought to install an interpretation panel on the towpath and develop a leaflet to link the canal to the village and the local amenities. Part of the proposal is to work with the local school to design the interpretation board - and possibly a seat in the shape of a badger to link in with the local pub, which one of the Waterways Partnership members would take the lead on as part of their community engagement plan.

STTV planning for this project began in June 2013 with a preliminary site visit and over the following months the detailed project plan was developed until a window of opportunity presented itself in the group's diary to undertake the work. The actual works were spread over two work parties. There was a considerable amount of vegetation clearance to be done. The first work party was held on 20 February 2014 when ten members of the Small Tasks Team Volunteers had a profitable day removing undergrowth, over hanging trees and excess hedging to clear the site for the steps installation.



The site before work commenced



Site Preparation in February

The main works were done in the period 2nd to 4th April. On 2nd April some of the required materials were delivered to site by road to the head of the proposed steps. Other tools and materials were loaded on CRT's work boat "Gowry" below Minshull Lock and then taken by the canal to the work site ready for an early start on 3rd April.







Some of the happy volunteers, including "Millie" our security dog



The end product – before the application of the stone top-dressing on the treads of the steps

Some twelve volunteers attended over the three days contributing in excess of 200 hours of work. The weather remained good on the work days although night time rain left the partially excavated route somewhat slippery for a while until work progressed. All in all a fun, incident-free work party with an end-product where volunteers passing on their boats in the future can say with pride and satisfaction "I did some of that and can still feel the pain".

The volunteers who assisted with this task were:

Mike Carter
Richard Hall
Geoff Harris
Brian Holmes
Geoff Lane
Helen Lane (*who provided tea & coffee at scheduled breaks and orange squash during the two days*)
Paul Mills
Ray Moore (*who took the lead on the layout of the job*)
Chris Nichols
Graham Russell
Simon Waddington
Maurice Ward

And not forgetting "Millie" the dog!

We also had the company of and a valuable contribution from Roger Birch (CRT) on 3rd April.

Consideration is now being given to our next project from our list of twelve possible tasks – all of which will only be one day work parties.

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