

GREENWAYS AND CYCLEROUTES WORKCAMP 2024

Greenways Ninth Annual Workcamp took place from 7 to 14 September, in Shepton Mallet, Somerset.

77 Volunteers worked a total of 340 days – by far our largest workcamp to date. We are immensely grateful for the support of Somerset Council – and its predecessor Mendip - for our funding.



Thanks to the generosity of Gavin Mayall, we camped for a third time in the welcoming quarry at Rock Farm, where we recovered from our work fed and watered by Chris and Claire Grimshaw, with able assistance from Wendy.

The weather was not entirely kind, so it was perhaps lucky that our charming marquee blew away last year, and was replaced by a larger, more waterproof version.



We had two principal challenges: to make abutments for the new bridge over the B3136 that will complete our paths in West Shepton, and to form at the Cemetery the first part of a link from the town centre towards the Bath Road Viaduct.

Initially work focussed at Rock Farm, where under John Grimshaw's command, Gavin Mayall's yard became a workshop for four teams. John Richfield, joined by David Fish masterminded the fixing together of reinforcing rods for the new abutments.

Mark James helped Martin Silburn (who had been working for days already) to complete the shuttering.



Steve Shrewsbury and Charles Biscoe set up a joinery shop to make the five benches that would be installed in the cemetery



David Judd oversaw the making of the concrete planks that would form the final approach to the new bridge



Meanwhile in the Quarry Caroline, Simon Jarratt, Pete Sprules and John Barnes prepared 108 pieces of steel to form the pergola in the cemetery and bent the corten steel to form the planters. On Monday professional welders Charlotte Smith and her friend Izzy arrived to weld the tubes to the plates, ready for assembly.



Down at the cemetery a hole was cut through in the wall, Gavin's team cleared bracken on the slopes aside, the old fence was taken down and in its place a line of gabions was installed under Peter Huxford's guidance. The material for filling them was not as clean as might have been hoped.



On Tuesday the first of the steelwork was taken to the cemetery and the first bench and planter assembly in place.



Things got better. A powered wheelbarrow helped, and Malcolm Clivery on the digger was invaluable.



We mastered the fixing of the tubes and planted the planters.



And finally sat down and enjoyed the result.



In West Shepton Steve Turner's team of local volunteers under Mike Thompson's direction and with much support from the Frome Missing Link group assembled and filled gabions to support the ramps to the new bridge, and the path as it climbs out of the little playground.



The gabion team found time to reinforce the approach ramp above the large culvert too.



The seemingly indefatigable Gavin Mayall delivered shuttering and reinforcement – and much else besides.



Mark Golding supervised the concrete pour and wielded the vibrating poker



By Monday morning the first shuttering and reinforcement were in place and the concrete base of the West abutment was poured, without a hitch.



The East base was poured on Tuesday, the west walls on Thursday and the east walls on Saturday morning. An exacting timetable, but it all worked.



Tim and Jane Cranfield were diverted briefly to install mesh behind the trolls on Hamwood Viaduct, and to create a bench from which it is possible to appreciate the details of the structure.



There were a few moments to relax too, over well-earned tea and coffee, and cakes and biscuits.



On Thursday night we were joined by Ros Wyke, the Councillor who had brought about all our work in Mendip, Shane Snow from DfT and representatives from Active Travel England and PJA who are writing a report on Rural Routes for curry supper courtesy of Roger Levett, and a slide show by John Grimshaw.



Thank you to everyone who contributed to the week, but especially to John and Gavin.

Caroline Levett

for Greenways and Cyclerroutes, September 2024