

PENNYWORT POST - July 2021

A further update on the Yateley Pennywort.

Mill Lane. The lagoon has been inundated during recent high water levels, but marginal plant growth has been relatively unaffected. This growth is not causing much difficulty in making the inspection, as close range observations are possible. One plant was found very close to the site of that removed in April. It is difficult to work out where these odd plants are coming from, particularly after the series of zero visits last year. These plants are not appearing at the inlets of the lagoon, so are hopefully not being washed into the area from other undetected incidents. Further comment is included in the 'shading' section below.

Derby Green Pond. This site was checked in early June. No Floating pennywort was seen, but there is certainly an issue with *Crassula helmsii* – but that is another problem.

Wyndhams Pool. Some slow regrowth has occurred, but it is not extensive. There have been 2 clearance efforts, one by HCC volunteers, and one by contractors hired using Environment Agency Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP) funding. At least one further visit by the contractors is scheduled, whilst it is also hoped that the angling club can contribute with a work party. These visits have resulted in a thorough sweep over at least two thirds of the affected area. Observations at the other sites tend to suggest that if the larger more vigorous plants can be removed, then recolonisation is very slow with many of the smallest offshoots dying off. It will be interesting to see if this also happens on this site.

Wystaria Lane. A thorough sweep around the pond was carried out. One significant growth, of around half a metre in diameter was removed. It was felt that this was almost certainly the result of one fragment managing to re-establish. The regrowth was in an area of very shallow water (< 1cm) over deep silt, and fragments from this regrowth are highly unlikely to have drifted away. The remainder of the pond was clear and conditions favoured the inspection.

River Blackwater. No incidents have been reported. The short section at Mill Lane was checked and nothing seen

Further afield:

Basingstoke Canal – Fleet. There have been further sightings, and removals, from the canal in Fleet, in the vicinity of the Reading Road Bridge. The overflow has been cleared of vegetation, but two fragments were recently removed. In addition drifting rafts and fragments have been seen on the canal, and only some of these could be reached during the visits. There are no current indications as to from where these plants are originating. Further observations are underway, but there are concerns that there could be escape of fragments into the streams feeding Fleet Pond, and conceivably downstream into the wider catchment.

And also:

Shading In the continuation of the 'bucket experiment'. I have now removed the second bucket that had been kept in the dark for nearly 12 months. As can be seen from the pictures below the FP appeared to have died back, BUT on closer examination there were still some runners or stolons that could remain viable. Observations after only one week back into the day/night cycle have confirmed this, with fresh leaves appearing and a subtle green tinge to the stolons. From this trial it would appear that shading may not be a feasible method to controlling the plant. It may work if continued for a longer period, further trials are required.

However this trial might explain how re-emergent growth has occurred at both Mill Lane and Wystaria. This re-growth appears to have occurred in silty locations at both sites. There may be a possibility that there are some stolons or runners, hidden and remaining dormant but viable, in the the silt. If disturbance occurs from floods, animals - or even by those monitoring the ponds – these stolons could be exposed to light, thus stimulating re-growth. How long these fragments may remain viable in the silt is perhaps a good subject for further trials.



Floating Pennywort stolon arrowed on day of removal from dark



The same stolon after one week re-exposure to daylight.
Leaves beginning to re-appear

THANKS as ever to everyone who has been contributing to this effort, even if it is in the slightest way.

Martin