

## PENNYWORT POST - October 2022

Yet a further update on the Yateley Pennywort.

These recent visits were conducted as part of Loddon Rivers Week 2022 activities. There was a very brief couple of seconds of concern on the Monday morning during the Fleet Pond visit when the plant pictured below was spotted. However, a quick more thorough examination revealed it to be our native Marsh Pennywort, thankfully not Floating Pennywort!!



Marsh Pennywort  
*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*

The stem is attached to the centre of the leaf and there is no split in the leaf

**Mill Lane.** No Floating Pennywort was found. It was useful that the visit was possible before any autumnal leaf fall had started, which facilitated observations on the open water. The marginal vegetation is recovering strongly from the glyphosate applications carried out by the Environment Agency a few years ago. There are now some very dense beds of sedge that do require a careful examination. A further check during the winter when some of this vegetation has died back will be useful.

**Derby Green Pond.** This site was checked and no floating pennywort was seen. The effects of the lack of any appreciable rain was very evident with the significantly reduced water level.

**Wyndhams Pool.** This recent visit was supported by one of the contractors. It was possible to conduct a thorough check, in around half a day with much of the area being covered twice. It was estimated that less than 200 plants were removed, and a good proportion of these had fairly large leaves which made detection easier. These plants will be a combination of growth from any small plants missed during the last visit and rhizomes that were hidden under the surface of the mud. Each plant removed tended to consist of a rhizome with a number of leaf nodes growing from it, and with a growing 'bud' at one or both ends. If only one end has a bud the other can often be traced back to a dead end of rhizome. In a few instances there is a branch growing from the main rhizome. Extraction from amongst the roots of other plants requires a little care but normally results in the very satisfying removal of the whole plant. The area where plants are being found has certainly been reduced, and although it will be challenging to complete full eradication on the site, it should be achievable. Long term monitoring will be required as on the other sites.



A floating pennywort plant growing amongst reedmace, broad-leaved pondweed and duckweed

**Wystaria Lane.** Yet again nothing was found. Despite this making the visit a little boring, the satisfaction of finding nothing is great and provides encouragement to continue efforts both here, and elsewhere.

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

Further afield:

**Basingstoke Canal – Fleet.** The Environment Agency conducted a single day boat-based visit in mid-October, partially supported by 'an extra pair of eyes' on the towpath bank during the afternoon. A significant number of plants were removed, that amounted to the best part of a dustbin full by the end of the day. This was a similar amount to that removed last year. The work was slightly hampered by the early stages of the autumn leaf fall. It is frustrating that so many plants are being found, BUT it could also be observed that things are not getting worse. Much of the removed fragments were actually individual leaves which would not be a viable source for new growth, but for approximately every 10 leaves removed there was at least one fragment capable of growing into a new plant. Why these fragments are present is unclear. Although there were a small number of properly established plants found, over 90% of the material removed was freely drifting. It was all found in the stretch between the Fox and Hounds Pub and the Gelvert Stream overflow. The fragments are probably coming from the few more established plants, unless something is being missed. Why the fragments may be breaking off is open to speculation. It could simply be part of the plants natural growth process, but it is perhaps more likely to be the result of physical disturbance. This could be wind, animal interference (the plant is edible and may be a food source for waterfowl etc) or possibly due to boat traffic (propellor wash, oar or paddle disturbance). There is also the possibility that a stand of the plant may be growing in the protected patch of water between the bank and a moored boat, but no instances of this have been seen.

I can only repeat my thanks to everyone who is supporting these efforts

Martin