LODDON FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION CONSULTATIVE

PENNYWORT POST – Spring 2025

An update on the ongoing Yateley Pennywort situation,
with reports on the rest of the Loddon catchment

Our second assessment of 2025 was accompanied by a rare rainy day.

Mill Lane. No Floating Pennywort was found. Despite the observation earlier in the year that these visits are not a big commitment, the recovery of the indigenous plants is making these checks more challenging. However the continued absence of Floating pennywort is rewarding.

Derby Green Pond. It is pleasing to report yet another zero incidence at this site.

Wyndhams Pool. As noted earlier this year, the spring check is made easier by less growth of the other plants. 7 pennywort plants were found but they were well hidden below the growth of reeds, iris and mint. Care was taken to remove the rhizomes but regretfully two of the smaller plants did break off so there is potential for regrowth from these fragments. As previously the plants were all found in a relatively small area. Despite frustration that we are still finding these plants, it is encouraging that we are even managing to detect them in a challenging situation, and will hopefully be reducing the potential for re-growth

Wystaria Lane. A continued absence, although a local resident was slightly alarmed to see a dry suit clad individual wading around the muddy margins.

River Blackwater. No plants were seen in the river at Mill Lane. There was a noticable increase in native plants growing in the river channel.

Further afield:

Basingstoke Canal – Fleet.

A full check along the towpath between Gelvert Stream overspill and the Fox and Hounds Public House was conducted. 9 small but viable fragments were removed from the towpath bank, and it was felt likely that more fragments would have been present along the opposite bank. An inspection by boat would have increased efficiency. Most of the fragments had a reasonably thick rhizome, but their size was much smaller than expected, none were longer than 20cm. One significant plant was found at the Gelvert overspill in the concrete channel immediately below the overspill. This displayed the type of growth that a small fragment would have been expected to achieve since the last inspection.

The Basingstoke Canal Authority are continuing to lead efforts on the canal and their ranger patrols are looking out for pennywort.

Charvil.

There have now been 3 visits to the Borough Marsh Stream site at Charvil. This channel is a distributary of the Thames, but a tributary of the St Patricks Stream and hence the Loddon.The pennywort here is almost certainly the result of downstream drift from the incidence in Green Park in Reading. The first visit involving a volunteer group in early May conducted a manual removal at the site of the main rafts seen earlier in the year. This was supported by an inspection and removal by boat downstream to the bridge on Loddon Drive. A large number of viable plants were removed. This initial visit was followed up by a targetted application of herbicide by the EA at a point where a couple of very small slots had been cut into the bank, at the site where the origional rafts had been found. These narrow slots, approximatley 2x2 metres in size had been particulaly challenging for the volunteers due to access and riparian vegitation. This same vegitation did restrict the effectiveness of the herbicide application.

The third boat based visit in early August was very encouraging apart from the final few metres. Less than 10 plants / fragments were found, either caught up in debris accumulating on branches, or growing in shallow muddy bays. This was significant improvement to the visit earlier in the year. It probably reflects the fact there were no large rafts upstream releasing fragments.

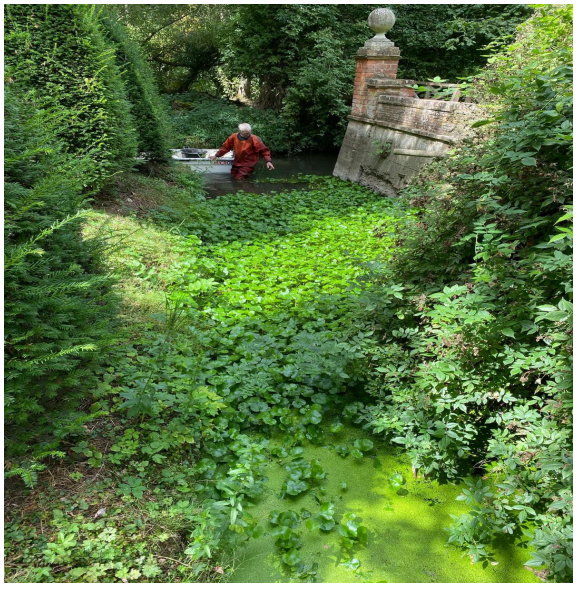
Fragments accumulating on branches

Growth in shallow bay

One of the small slots described above did produce more plants. The spraying had eliminated the cover concealing these plants although it was difficult to determine if the lack of cover was simply making detection easier or if it had reduced competition from other plants, thus facilitating the pennywort growth. The leaves of these plants were very small, yet the rhizome hidden in the mud was fairly thick and plainly storing enough potential for producing further growth. The extraction of these rhizomes was difficult owing to the clay underlying the mud.

Growth in 'slot'

Size of some leaves



The slots will require further attention, as will the final channel inspected. This was a short 50 metre long side arm off a small channel itself running off the main stream. As can be seen from the photo there has been a very significant growth of Floating pennywort in this part of the system. It is almost certainly the result of this having no flow, with just a single opening to the rest of the system, whilst there is little competition from other plants. Despite it being a significant area of growth of a large established nature, good access and the shallow depth should make removal relatively easy. This will be the target of a further visit.

Martin