

Pond Project Carlton

As a family we have for many years been actively involved in conservation and nature. We are very lucky to live where we do and try to make the most of the land that we have: quite a lot of what we have done in the past is largely unseen as it has revolved around the Bottle Neck wood but over the years we have planted over 3000 oak and ash trees to regenerate the wood, clearing small areas at a time and replanting. When bottle neck wood was first planted by Charles & Agnes Tollemache Scott in 1888 and extended in 1889, there was a small pond in the centre of the wood just off the main ride. We reinstated that very small pond a few years ago, along with planting three new hedgerows around the wood, clearing the ditches and putting new drainage around the wood.

It has long been our wish to put a more substantial pond on the land, but something that hopefully other people could enjoy as well as ourselves, so we applied for planning permission which was granted. We had a badger survey carried out, and also dug some test holes to check the viability, as the nearer you get to the village itself there is a sand belt that could have created a problem retaining water - thankfully this was not a problem.

We actually started putting a spade in the ground in late April. That part of the field has always been wet, and when we started digging you could see why - as soon as we had stripped off 40-50cm of top soil we were straight into clay which was good. We stripped the top soil off and piled it up and marked out the basic shape and used a laser level to mark out the water levels. In order to get the pond to sit at a good visual level we excavated in some areas and filled in other areas (a practice known as cut and fill) - by doing this we omitted the need to import fill material to make up the southern levels.

At present the southern end of the pond appears to be much higher than the northern end, this is in fact an optical illusion and the effect will gradually disappear as the pond fills up. We gained clay to build the bank at the bottom of the pond to level it with the top end of the pond all from within the ponds own footprint. We also dug completely around the edge of the field to block any old land drains as these can create leaks which are then difficult to correct at a later date - this is known as a key trench. Having dug the basic shape and depth the clay was compacted and levelled in layers to the sides and bottom of the pond to create the seal, although nature creates the final seal as it fills. The top soil was then reused and distributed and levelled around the pond.

Several existing land drains from the property and across the two fields have been connected to create a feed into the pond, with an overflow pipe at the bottom which sends surplus water back into the existing land drains around the wood, the overflow is also used to set / adjust the final water level. Finally we prepared and have sown grass seed all around the pond which is showing signs of shooting as I write this now, also with the recent weather we have water in the pond and nature is working brilliantly to seal the cracks in the clay and allow the pond to fill naturally.



Whilst the pond was under construction we had some very strong winds which blew over one of the trees in the wood. In the fallen trunk was an owls nest with two chicks - we put the chicks in a box while we cut a 3 meter section out of the fallen tree trunk containing the owls nest. Then using the machine we held the section of tree trunk against another tree and attached it with heavy duty ratchet straps We then put the chicks back in the original nest and set up a wildlife camera, and have captured images of the parent bird visiting the nest and have pictures of the chicks still doing well.

So after moving 3,000 cubic meters (about 6,000 tonnes) which is the equivalent of 300 lorry loads of soil around we have the end product which we are very pleased with. Hopefully the pond will fill to full level over the winter and create a haven for wildlife of all sorts over the coming years, and also pleasure for anyone walking the footpath for generations to come.

The Dolman Family

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