



East Anglian Waterways Association.



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East Anglian Waterways Association and North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust, Work Parties - 2008

Honing Staithe Cut 28th December 2008	Bacton Wood Lock Area. 30 November 2008	Ebridge Lock 26th October 2008	Briggate 12th October 2008	Honing Staithe Cut 28th September 2008	Briggate Mill Pond 14th September 2008	Honing Dee Bridge and Path 31 August 2008	Briggate Mill Pond 17th August 2008
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Work Party at Honing Staithe Cut.

Sunday 28th December 08

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To check the state of vegetation growth either side of the Staithe Cut; the state of the walk through the woods, alongside the canal and the new wooden bridge.

WORK ACHIEVEMENTS. Weather fine but cloudy with some broken sunshine and the temperature climbing to an impressive +2C after a cold, frosty night.

After the H&S talk, the Team were briefed on expectations of NCC work on the boundary between Weavers Way and the Staithe Cut together with the trees intertwined with the elevated cables along the roadside between the two bridges. Mary and Chris took care of the mower and removed any excess growth of grass etc along both sides of the Cut.

Roger and I walked along Weavers Way and down the Walk through the woods - finding it quite wet in some places. We did search for an alternative way but none proved to be suitable. The wooden bridge appears to be well used and in a sound condition. Marc and Jackie meantime looked at removing some odd logs that had fallen (or been pushed?) into the Cut and some more dredging along the side.

Tom arrived and together we inspected the mouth of the Cut where he had brought a lot of spoil

ashore and found that it had all settled into a fairly hard surface. We discussed further operations with Tom and Digger, both at the Cut and at Briggate. Peter, Marc, Chris turned their hands to work on the Walk in the woods by laying brash and timber onto the wet areas and covering some with earth. A worthy start to the project of lining the walk with timber and eventually filling it in with earth to present a drier area upon which to stroll.

Lunch saw Carole on the scene and I departed due to family concerns. All in all a very good turnout at this time of year, and with the good weather, we enjoyed ourselves (as always!). The canal and the Cut look very presentable with a good flow of water, albeit with quite a low level. The Cut has not looked as it does now for many a year and as if proof was wanted of the worthiness of our work, there are several pieces of oxygenating plants starting to grow at the head of the Cut! Thank you to all who came and also sent good wishes to Gisela, for which she is very grateful.

Many thanks for a very successful 2008, and I wish you all a Very Happy New Year and a Healthy and Prosperous 2009.

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Work Party at Bacton Wood Lock Area.

Sunday 30th November 2008.

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To liaise with Mr L Ashton in connection with providing access to Public Footpath FP19 at the southern end. If agreement reached, to clear brambles and other natural growth beside the canal and stack for future disposal.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT. Weather at the start of the day did not bode well! However, by the time that eight (of the final total of ten) of us and Mr Ashton gathered in the shade of the latter's' giant Hymac, things started to brighten up - not to make us ecstatic though.

Chris had brought with him his CCTV camera-on-a-mouse type contraption and other related equipment, which would allow the inspection of the paddle chambers, and other concealed areas of course, at the head of the lock. Mr Ashton and Darren went along to assist and the result of the examination was very favourable. Hopefully not too much extra work to do there, then.

By the time that that party returned, other members of the Team had arrived and following the usual H&S briefing, I put the plan to Mr Ashton, to which he readily agreed! Marc wandered over the girder bridge to where he had pre-positioned the magic cutting machine and spent some time lowering the natural growth between the bridge and the lock to a reasonable level. The remainder of the party started to cut a way into the terribly overgrown area between the sheds and the canal. The work progressed at a slow pace with the brash being temporarily piled up against the sheds.



(Photo JSW)

Once the canal side had been reached, the several saplings lining the bank were felled and arranged so as to form a crude fence line, against which was placed the brash. In the meantime, Mr Ashton had retired to seek out a recharged battery in order to attempt to start the Hymac. This machine did not look as if it wanted to be moving again as it had been at rest for some two years and looked happy in its' slumberous state. However, start the engine did with enough smoke issuing from the exhaust to match a small volcano!

After one or two smaller problems being solved, such as a frozen throttle, the machine settled down to a gentle purr and gathering its' loins, set itself into motion! The arm was a little reluctant to do what it was told in the early stages, but it soon got the message with its' hydraulic fluid once more pumping through its pipes and all was sweetness and light!

Lunch was taken in the conservatory of the mill, courtesy Mr and Mrs Ashton, and a light drizzle greeted us when re-emerging onto the work-site. The Hymac was redistributing the up-hill/down-hill surface of the line of the pathway and turning it into a surface fit for a roadway. Some of the spoil, taken some goodly time ago from the canal, was banked up against our newly constructed fence line and at the same time, burying some of the brash.

At about 14.00hrs, Ivan Cane arrived as planned and picked up Roger (Chairman of the Trust), Chris (Vice Chairman), Carole (Secretary), Marc and me in order to take us on a short conducted tour of the canal area at the end of FP19 and north of Royston Bridge to where the breach occurred in the canal so many years ago. All very interesting and informative.



(Photo JSW)

It brought more thoughts into the minds of all concerned and immediately set those thoughts into motion as to what can be achieved in this area. Who owns the bed of the now dried up canal line in this area and can we get permission for a permissive footpath across some pieces of land to complete the FP19? Most of the required distance is already in the form of tracks being used by agricultural vehicles.

On our return to Bacton Wood we found that the balance of the plan had been expertly executed by those left behind and all of the broken pieces of wood, tyres, tree trunks, branches and other brash had been placed in respective piles or by the canal fence along the entire length from the road bridge to the girder bridge. Not only that, but the land was levelled to the same extent. My thanks go to all who turned up for this work party and of course to Mr and Mrs Ashton for their co-operation and assistance.

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Work Party at Ebridge Lock

Sunday 26th October 2008

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To cut grass and weeds from the chamber island and opposite bank; to clear trees from canal and bank to the north-eastern side of the canal.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT. Weather: seemed to have had communication problem with the weatherman as the rain did not stop by 11.00 but only got lighter! It did stop however by noon! Thereafter very bearable.

Our very own Muscle Man **Marc** did the remarkable with the new machine on the grass and weeds on both locations and then opened the path up along the top of the bank on the northeastern

side so far. **Carole** cleared the few brambles from the chamber coping stones whilst **Ivan** and I moved 'up-a-long-down-along' the top of the bank seeking out the trees to be removed.

Before Marc could join us, we had cleared some of the minor saplings and offshoots - the construction of an environmentally approved hedge started to take shape!



Ebridge Mill from weir. (Photo JSW)

In the meantime, **Mr Laurie Ashton** had arrived on site and enjoyed stopping Marc and Carole working for a period of time - by conversing with them. I took the opportunity to take some time out myself to speak with Mr Ashton, rather than telephoning him in the week - much better speaking face-to-face than remotely.

A very fruitful conversation ensued, to the betterment of all concerned.

When I rejoined the group of three others back at the tree area, **David Tomlinson** unexpectedly arrived - he's from about 200miles away and visiting the area so thought that he would join us for a while. Very good thought! Lunchtime was approaching and there lie the remains of three trees in the canal bed, unwatered of course. With the thought of changing into dry clothing and Caroles' cake in mind, we remained at the task until all was vigorously cleared - the little animal, bird and insect haven growing the while atop the bank!

For the want of somewhere better to sit for the taking of our meal, we used Marcs' trailer for a bench, which did evoke some rather strange looks from people passing by on the road. After the 'feast' we returned to the task and the final three trees on the list were duly removed. The vista now from the road bridge is vastly improved and, surprisingly, the weir does not look to be so far up-canal as it did when first discovered. The canal itself, though, is barely to be seen under all the reeds growing from it due to the consistently low water levels brought about by the paddle chamber at the lock always being open.

The bed of the canal, the which is no longer under water, was remarkably firm under foot, which could indicate that there might still be some clay to be found there? Despite the weather at the start, a great deal was achieved and my thanks go to the few who made it all possible.



Ebridge Lock. End of day (Photo JSW)

Work Party at Briggate Mill Pond

Sunday 12th October 2008

Report from: **David Reville, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To burn the brash previously cut, to continue to clear back shrubs, trees and reed etc from the pond area and eventually locate the boundary of the pond.

WORK ACHIEVEMENTS. Weather: misty start to the day but not cold. The sun burned off the mist and the rest of the day was clear and warm. The pond on our arrival actually had some water lying on the bed! Not exactly what I would have liked, but it did not deter from the actions of the day. It is thought that the water, apart from the direct rainfall, had entered the pond from the canal, indicating that blockages in the main route are causing flooding, or at minimum not alleviating it. After the usual H&S and plan-of-the-day briefing, the first thing to do was to set light to the three stacks of brash, left from the last visit a month ago. This proved a little more difficult than at first thought, but burn they did and by the end of the day and the two fires extinguished (we did not try to light the third stack!), all three piles had been devoured plus an enormous amount of new cuttings too!

Marc took the new wonder machine to cut back the growth on the chamber island and later moved into the centre area of high weed and reed, with resounding results. Carole and Brian alternatively fed one fire and creating more brash from the adjacent area whilst Alan and Peter, the machete men, made advances at the western end. When cutting our way back towards the boundary of the pond, the realisation dawned as to how really large the pond will be. And so before lunch break was called, the boundary had been located to the right of the pillbox and established for some twelve metres.

Brian Wexler, (good to see you on site again Brian), took his leave and as we were all eating some of Caroles' finest culinary delight, Roger made an appearance - his nose homing in on the cake! So, duly refreshed, but slowed down by the usual ultra high calorific intake, we returned to the work front.

Progress seemed to be a little quicker in the afternoon and an advance was made deep into the centre of the treed area leading to the water entrance from the canal. It will take a few more work visits to reach the goal, however! During the afternoon, several visitors stopped to say 'well done' and how grateful they were that something is being done to the canal and the pond site. At the end of the afternoon, more folk arrived after having been to the information event set up in the Honing Village Hall. One such chap said that his grandfather and father had each worked at the mill for decades and that he himself had worked there for but two years. He had also been fishing on the pond and canal whilst at other times using a canoe on the pond itself. Good, interesting tales about the later history at the mill.

Two other interesting visitors who took some photographs were Jonathan Neville, who has set up the web site about Norfolk Mills and Brian Hedges. My thanks go to those attending and for the hard labour used to achieve the wonderful progress in the existing quagmire conditions.

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Work Party at Honing Staithe Cut

Sunday 28th September 2008.

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To check the state of the new permissive Walk; to clear the 'island' from the canal at the mouth to the cut; clear as much as possible from the cut; to install protective guards to the paddle chambers at Honing Lock; to generally clear up the site and make ready for the opening of the Walk.

WORK ACHIEVEMENTS. Weather: fine start to the day with clear skies, which did not last for too long with a shower at lunchtime followed by general cloud. A pleasant temperature in which to work. An amazing number of sixteen people turned up for the session! As usual, the plan for the day was explained after the H&S briefing and H&S booklets handed out and further explained to the two new people attending. Everyone set about their allotted tasks and very soon the whole area was a hive of industry!

Tom and Digger were present and soon made short work of some clearance at the mouth of the cut and then moved on to tackle the 'island'. This proved to be more time-consuming than had been at first thought and lasted till close of play. However, during this operation, some smaller and easier tasks of clearing and levelling were carried out. There is, however, still a lot more work to do!

The stretch of land to the left of the Cut (near to the road) is starting to look in good shape once the mower had been run over it! There were still a number of saplings, which do tend to grow into big trees, interfering with the general view so these were removed and some were used as an edging to the land. The spoil from the cut, which had been used as infill some seven months before, had settled into a good hard surface and plant-life has begun to return - in fact the whole scene looks quite green already. During the morning, **Chris** and **Marc** set off to carry out the task at **Honing Lock** (a H&S issue pointed out to the Canal Co by the Environment Agency) - returning, it seemed in record time!

Photos have been taken of the now safe paddle chamber mouths. The permissive walk was declared 'clear' by those who had walked it and removed the odd offending pieces of timber and brash, although somewhat soft in places. My thanks go to **Chris** who had provided the two guide plaques, one placed at each end of the Walk to show folk where they were and what there is to experience. A very professional piece of workmanship, Chris. The new wooden Bridge is in excellent condition! And so to a very welcome lunch break.

Today was a little bit special for two reasons - firstly **Chris** is at the break in life called the 60th birthday and secondly we were expecting the **North Norfolk MP Mr Norman Lamb** to arrive and open the permissive Walk. All of our thanks go to **Chris** and **Mary** for providing the first class provisions for the lunch and **Carole** for doing her usual, body-enlarging temptations of cake and trifle!

After singing (?) '*Happy Birthday to You*', we staggered back to our workstations whilst Carole and I went to receive the MP.

After presenting his cheque in the sum of £150 to our Roger Hopkinson, Chairman of the Canal Trust, **Mr Norman Lamb** was very pleased to cut the ribbon and declare the Walk duly 'open'. Unfortunately, as he had a further appointment in Wells (Norfolk) he declined the offer to stroll around the Walk but asked to see the end of the Cut by walking along the 'good' side. Mr Lamb expressed a keen interest in the Canal and hoped that it would soon be improved, resulting in better drainage for the area in general and helping to prevent flooding, in the North Walsham area, in particular. He expressed his thanks for the work being done by all those present.

After his departure, we settled down again to work. It was a very inspiring sight to see so many figures bent over and clearing, cutting or tidying over a great area! At the end of a day, when so

much had been achieved and a result actually seen, we departed around 17.30 to hot baths or showers! I am very proud to have been involved with such a team of volunteers and today was the culmination of so many hours of hard labour by so many over the past two years at Honing Staithe Cut. But, heh! - don't sit back too comfy, as there's more to do here yet!!

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Work Party at Honing Staithe Cut

Sunday 12th October 2008

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To continue the clearance of bushes, trees and fallen timber from the pond area and to burn the brash.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT. The weather was very kind throughout the day although the breeze had a cool edge to it. Mostly sunshine with some cloudy periods.

After the H&S and work briefing the first task was to set the fire in order to maximise the quantity of brash burned in the allotted time. Mary, Darren and I carried out this task in the absence of our Fire Man, who was AWOL. At the start of the work period, there was no way through from the lock chamber bank to the rest of the pond as a tree had been felled on the previous visit and left to block the way. An enormous amount of previously cut brash was cleared away and put on the fire. Once this was cleared, which took until after the lunch break, the way forward was simplified, although a lot of pulling and pushing of logs and tree branches was involved. Lunch was taken at about 12.45, when the sun was shining well and we settled in reach of the warmth of the fire to keep off the edge on the breeze. I must here officially thank Carole for the continued supply of her scrumptious cakes! And at this lunch break, the lady even produced a trifle - not for the faint hearted, I can assuredly say!! Following consumption of these two items of culinary delight, the thought of further work was at the back of most peoples' minds, but with great determination and resolve, we staggered to our feet and carried on. Thank you Carole.

During the afternoon, three new sites, on the pond bed, were set up for the burning of the newly acquired brash at the next visit. Useable logs were piled in stacks for collection at a later date. Now that it is visible over a fairly large area, the pond bed is found to be in a fairly level and sound condition, albeit many trees have rooted in it. During this work session, Mr Wm Cubitt paid a visit and a private discussion was held covering various items such as publicity, the opening of the walk at Honing Staithe and woods, work to be carried out at Honing Lock, the extent of the work to be carried out at Briggate Pond and the state of the public highway in connection with the pond. I was asked to provide some kind of barrier at the entrance to the pond site, which by now is getting to be quite open.

Later, our professional wood-working fellow, Alan with the Machete, set about cutting some forked supports to carry a suitably sized piece of timber to act as such a barrier. Chris cut an 18-foot straight-ish pole from the woods, dug holes to take the supporting posts and the barrier was duly erected! It is suitable to indicate that the site is NOT open for public entrance and IS a barrier for the unwary. Together with Peter, who constantly busied himself with cutting, carrying and tending to the fire, the seven of us present spent a very pleasant day, especially as the work carried out showed that progress was being made.

Numerous visitors stopped on the road and had a chat about the works and many questions were answered. It is good to see that people are showing an interest in our work, and hopefully joining in at a later date. Some are even now beginning to realize that a canal is there! As we were about to leave site, a modern tractor with an agricultural implement in tow, crossed the bridge and whilst swinging the implement, clouted the parapet and forced a section of bricks outwards, at the same time removing a small section of brick surface. Following the realization of what had happened, we could not take an identity of the vehicle as by this time it had sped away.

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Work Party at Honing Dee Bridge and Path

Sunday 31 August 2008

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To check the state of the path so far and open it onto the **Weavers Way**; to make a clear track through from the cut end, for the digger, as far as the newly constructed bridge over the backsoke; to burn brash on the north-western side of the Cut; to inspect the bank of the newly cleared canal between Dee Bridge and Honing Lock; to visit Honing lock and take measurements and details of fixing for the securing of the paddle chambers, *(ref letter and photographs as received from the Environment Agency)*

WORK ACHIEVEMENT. The weather was partly clouded all day but with a reasonable amount of sunshine, to make it a very pleasant day to be beside the canal! A total of eleven folk turned up and readily dispersed to various areas along the path, after the H&S and work briefing.

The fire was started early on, by Roger, our Fire Man and Jackie in an attempt to burn away as much as possible in the allotted time available. Alan, (good to see you back again), and John took off into the scrub to sort out the way through to the Weavers Way.

Once over the new bridge, the track of the path is a bit soft in places but passable with shoes, proper for the purpose. Carole, Marc and Mary worked on the various sites where very large trees had cast their roots, covered in a great depth of earth, across the path and thereby blocking the way for the digger. Gillian worked nearby taking out various pieces of obstructing trees and also helping to feed the fire.

Chris and I walked the length alongside the newly cleared canal between Dee Bridge and Honing Lock. This was accomplished with some difficulty as the area, previously cleared along with the canal, had re-grown to a height of some six feet in places. The reason for taking this route was to establish if the canal was indeed still clear and also to note the amount of brash and other debris that will need to be relocated/burnt/stacked. In the event it was discovered that one tree with two trunks, had suffered a splitting of both trunks and the upper parts had fallen backwards into the water leaving only a clearance of about five feet by the opposite bank. On arriving at the lock, it was good to see several groups of canoes coming up to the winding hole at the tail of the lock. Despite attempting to encourage the canoeists to venture further up the canal, only one crew decided to make the effort - but by taking the side channel! As they did not return, during the time we spent talking to other canoeists, we naturally wondered as to their predicament? However, on walking up the side of the lock to the Water Metering Station, we found the crew sitting there partaking of a picnic.

Measurements to protect the paddle chambers were then taken and the methods of fixing were

determined. This work is planned to take place on **September 28th**. On making our way back towards the Weavers Way, to return to the work-party, we found the picnickers' canoe tied up under the small access bridge on the Public Footpath!

Lunch was taken with the usual heavyweight cake (thanks Carole) and the path was eventually declared 'clear' for the digger to visit on Sept 28th; the path through the woods is basically also cleared and the bonfire was duly extinguished before we left the site at about 17.00. A successful day again with a lot accomplished and my thanks go to all who attended and again, achieved so much.

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Work Party at Briggate Mill Pond

Sunday 17th August 2008

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To make a start on the total clearance of trees and other growth from the millpond area as depicted on drawings as supplied by Savills.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT. Weather. There seems to have been a glitch in communications as the heavens opened when started to clear the lock chamber bank! Even reverting to working under the canopy of the trees, did not prevent everyone becoming quite wet. At 11.30 the decision was made to take an early lunch and if the weather did not improve, a cessation of work would be called.

At that time, the rain ceased, we all changed into dry clothing, wet clothes hung out to dry and lunch was taken in warm sunshine! Thereafter, normal weather comms were re-established and the sunshine prevailed for the majority of the afternoon.

After the H&S and plan briefings, Marc and the new machine cut easily through the well overgrown lock chamber bank and made an access path into the millpond site proper. The first seven of us present started, variously, on clearing a work area near to the millrace culvert spill; clearing brambles etc from the roadside and taking down saplings. Peter and Fred arrived about lunchtime.

After lunch, partaken with the usual piece of cake from Carol, Roger (Water Babe) and our new Pyro Man(iac), did attempt to start a bonfire using copious quantities of waste paper, but to no avail. We had all considered it a forlorn hope in the first place! The "DANGER - KEEP OUT" sign was duly hung at the tail entrance to the lock chamber, as requested, and a photograph taken of same. It can not easily be seen from the road, so do hope that it will be relatively safe from vandals.

During the mornings' rain, Mr and Mrs David and Diane Howes, tenant farmers at Briggate Hall Farm who were accompanied by one Trish, paid us a welcome visit. All three are very interested in our project and co-operation was discussed. By the end of the day, the original barrier rail had been exposed on all but about 12 metres at its' western end and showed that the concrete support posts are mostly all suffering from palling. The roadside grass verge was cleared back to the rail and has been run over with the lawn mower - looking very pleasant in the late afternoon sun. A sizeable amount of small branches and brash have been piled in the pond area awaiting our next visit on Sunday 14th September.

It was found that the base of the pond seen so far is littered with the remains of trees, which have

either been dumped or fallen over - some in a quite rotten state, and of no further use. Amongst the old mild bottles, Mary located a mug celebrating the accession to the throne of King Edward VII - sadly with a small piece missing from the rim! I am very pleased with the result of our first days' labours at this site and the dedication of The Team was exemplified today - Thank you all!

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Work Party at Ebridge Lock

Sunday 27th July 08

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To inspect the pond wall and guard rails, to clear the mouth of the lock and chamber island, to clear trees and obstructions from the canal bank on the north-eastern side upstream of the weir.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT. Weather was first class with 9/8 sunshine and high temperature. Six stalwarts arrived for the start of 09.30 and after the H&S and task briefing for the day, Marc set off with the new machine into the well overgrown area to the west of the lock. It did not take very long before the area was once again visible! What a machine! Carole, Darren and Graham were busy clearing up various locations of the usual nettles, weeds and other natural growth. Chris then came to assist me in taking details of the pond wall, guardrails and measurements as requested by Edward of Savills. This took some time as all the guardrail posts were covered with grass and other weeds.

The lunch break came all too soon - what a difference good weather makes? This time, lunch was completed not only with Carole's cake but also her trifle! Only the very brave attempted to eat both! After all of this, we staggered back to the work on hand- Carole and Darren upstream of the lock mouth, Marc and Graham to the trees well upstream and Chris and I left to visit Briggate. Here we exposed most of the guardrail posts and rails. The wall was found to be in a similar state to that at Ebridge - please see my separate report.

The afternoon was completed with everybody carrying on with their tasks and a tremendous difference was made to the visual aspect of the canal, chamber island and the upstream area of trees. A passage has been completed, nearly through to the end of the trees - perhaps a further 100yards to go. Altogether, a very pleasant day with a lot accomplished, more than can be envisaged by this short report!

My thanks as usual go to those in attendance.

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to Build Soke Bridge at Honing Staithe Cut on the North Walsham & Dilham Canal.

Saturday 19th July 2008

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To construct a wooden bridge, according to instructions, over a soke to link the new footpath beside the canal and Weavers Way.



WORK ACHIEVEMENT. Weather, cloudy with intermittent sunshine and very heavy showers. (It was a Saturday, after all!). The lorry with the flat-pack bridge on board arrived slightly after the planned time at 08.40. This was an unusually early start for us!

The materials had to be hand carried to the site as the Honing Tri-angles are the nearest vehicular access point. At this point I welcomed and introduced two new members to The Team: - David Kett from Aylsham and Graham Brown, a graduate in canal related knowledge, who has had practical experience on canals up to and including Scotland. So in good heart, the eight members present set off carrying whatever they safely could.

Following the H&S 'bit' and a quick briefing, we set to. The plans and equipment list had been prepared by a man, well experienced in this type of work and whose bridges span many a dyke in this region. However plans are plans and they do not allow for local situations and therefore before work could start on the bridge itself, a lot of discussion took place as to fixing the height above water level (actual now and planned, when canal is in better state of water when lock gates fitted at Honing lock), type of footings, method of fixings to prevent movement of bridge, etc. As the canal end was the higher, this was constructed first. Following this success, the woodland end was constructed and noggins fitted at each end complete with its' first tread board. During the morning, as not all eight of us could work in the limited space about the bridge site, Darren, who had with me previously explored the best location for the woodland footpath, returned to clear the area once more, accompanied by Roger. The access to the Weavers Way has been left blocked pending a decision in connection with the date and manner of the opening of the completed footpath.

The remainder of The Team had also been very busy cutting and preparing stakes, logs, clearing brash, overhanging trees and removing the massive lump of earth covering the roots of a long-since fallen tree, which obstructed the main footpath. A well-earned lunch was taken at the Weavers Way end of the Staithe Cut with bright sun shining off the waters of the cut making the scene very pleasant and relaxing. I don't think that Carole's cake should really have been eaten, as

I swear that it slowed everyone down in the afternoon! But it was worth it!!

After lunch, Alan (our trade carpenter) arrived and with David K and me completed the construction of the bridge and laid and stapled the wire netting onto its surface. This done, it was now the time to earth up the approaches at each end of the bridge and the massive lump mentioned above was used for this purpose. Just to prove that the bridge is manly enough, most of us stood on it with a loaded wheelbarrow to have our photo taken. Needless to say, it did not budge of course!

This achievement is quite notable as it is the very first project, which has been funded by the new Canal Trust! Again, my thanks go to all members of The Team for their wonderful support and skills exhibited on site. Please remember that this was the first successful construction project - there will be many more to come!

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Work Party between Honing Dee Bridge and Honing Lock

Sunday 15th June 2008.

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To continue the work commenced on Sunday 15th June 08 to clear the canal of obstructions and growth.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT. Beautiful sunshine with a light breeze even at 8am and enough heat to make working in the deep shade a delight. Short shower of rain at end of day. The Work Party began their efforts earlier than usual as there was a huge task ahead and subsequently a later finish of 18.00 was recorded. The Work Party stayed as one group on this occasion and commenced from the Dee Bridge end. I had appointed Marc Lines as Work Party Leader, in my absence, for the day. Marc read out the H&S bit first and then outlined the plan for the day.

The first task was to create a much safer access path to the canal bank, rather than use what had now become a dry ski slope by the side of the bridge and consequently hazardous - especially when carrying tools to the scene. This completed, work began from the water and from the bank to clear trees, old carpet, other rubbish, reeds and the growth of some 50 years, plus the odd pair of sunglasses, from a very attractive canal. The Water Babes on this occasion were Alan, Roger and Ivan all suitable attired for the project and who worked tirelessly in cutting and removing branches, fallen and cut trees and other noted rubbish from the canal. Almost as every barrier was removed, the flow of water was seen to change. Meanwhile, the other five members of the party were working equally as hard on the bank retrieving and dragging the offered timber from the river party and cutting and hacking their way eastwards through the dense undergrowth. Wielding a brush-hook, machete, saws and rakes, they made their way forward in between stacking the retrieved objects from the canal, well back from the waters' edge. Lunch was taken closer to Dee Bridge and even by this time, the long trudge back towards the bridge was noticeably much further than most had realised. A well-earned rest was enjoyed by all, for a brief period, without the incessant buzz of those local 6-legged flying inhabitants. The break was again finished off with a piece of Carole's' luscious, fruit filled, creamy, totally unwarranted, fattening cake!!

By the end of the day, and with lots of aching arms, legs and backs, the whole quarter of a mile stretch of bank and canal between the Dee Bridge and the Lock had been cleared. Marc even

controlled his 'work-boat', suitable named "Marc 1", using a single oar and luck, through the cleared section. As expected, the level of the water has dropped following the removal of the blockages, but the flow rate has (seemingly) increased.

I am indebted to the eight members of the Team; Marc as Leader, Alan, a very valuable and new-ish member (Man with the Machete), Carole, Chris, Ivan, Jackie, Mary and Roger for their dedicated approach to this work and their combined achievement - a remarkable feat! I also thank Marc and Carole for sending me the basis of the above report



The canal at Honing



The view the other way after clearing at Honing!

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Work Party at Briggate Lock and Millpond

Sunday 18th May 2008

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To locate boundary of the Mill Pond; locate wall adjacent to public roadway; cut down grass, nettles etc, prune trees as required.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT. Weather sunny all day with the occasional cloud passing over; light breeze; quite warm. After the usual briefing, Carole, Darren and Marc set to by cutting down the grass on both banks, avoiding the danger area on the east chamber side. Chris, Mary and David set off up the canal bank to make an assessment of the millpond boundary there.

On our return, quite a good area on the west side had been cut down but the 'cut-everything-in-sight' machine run by Marc decided that it did not want to run on water! It was discovered that the fuel was contaminated with water and on separating the two liquids, the engine responded by springing into life again on petrol alone!

Talking with Chris on the roadway, we were approached by a lady and a gentleman asking who was in charge? I owned up and asked who was enquiring - it turned out to be Mr and Mrs D Howes, tenant farmers at Briggate Old Hall Farm. We were enthralled by the amount of local information we were given.

Further work was then carried out at the Worstead end of the Mill Pond. This would indicate that the area is neither unattended nor wasteland. Chris, Mary and I then proceeded to the area and some spadework was carried out to reveal part of the end of the pond/roadway wall and an access was made to clear nettles and other plant growth in the pond area. The top of the wall stone was marked 'NWDC WALL'.

We carried out a search for the rest of the wall and it was located at various points along the whole length and found to be, where seen, not in a very good condition and leaning in places away from the road. This wall is topped with concrete posts and scaffold type poles but the extent and condition of which could not be ascertained as the whole length is covered in a bramble hedge and this was NOT removed due to possible disturbance of nesting birds. NONE was heard nor seen however!

After a sunny lunchtime break taken on the west chamber bank and terminated by a large slice of Carols' very, very tasty cake (no whipped cream though!), we all applied ourselves to pulling the west tailgate back into its' metal, shaped 'hinge' post. Using a tirfer, ropes and levers this was safely achieved, when a second restraining chain was fitted to the gate, to supplement the original. Due to various obstructions, both on the gate and in the chamber, the gate could not be pulled completely into the reveal.

From information received from Mrs Howes, we discovered the rough location of the, now extinct, coal shed with plenty of samples still lying about. From the same source we located the pillbox, near to, and probably on, part of the site of the coal shed, which apart from being in a very good condition is also hidden from sight from the roadway. I think that all pillboxes are listed buildings of one degree or other?

The spill frame taking water from the Mill Pond to the mill wheel race was cleared into a tidy state and some local trees were pruned to improve access. Building work and a safety check of the culvert would need to be carried out before this facility could be put to use again. During the day, several local people stopped and discussed what we were doing and, with diplomacy in mind, we were happy to talk of some plans we had. Some just said 'thank you for what you are doing' but did not stop. All together a very favourable and appreciative feeling was received from the local folk.

My thanks to the Team again for a very good day, when an awful lot was learned and preparations made.

Work Party at Honing Staithe Cut

Date: Sunday 27th April 2008.

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. If time allowed and weather permitted, to burn brash etc on the upstream side of the cut; to further clear the path alongside the canal; to clear more trees and branches from the canal itself alongside the pathway.

WORK ACHIEVEMENTS. Weather generally sunny with a light wind and a slight amount of rain later, which did not interfere with the proceedings; no burning carried out due to time restrictions. Eight people attended the work-party with an extra two adults and two younger boys present.

Marc Lines stood in as Leader, as I was away from the county, and welcomed the newcomers, one Alan High and his lady. He did keep the younger boys away from the main work area in deference to H&S.

No particular attention was paid to the actual pathway as the main effort of the day was directed at clearing as much as possible out of the canal. To this end, members of the party were working 'flat out' in moving equipment, stripping branches from trees and pulling some very heavy and large pieces of wood onto the side of the canal for making an edge thereto. With the obstructions gone, the water will have a much clearer path and assist in keeping the flow up to a good standard.

Darren took up much of his time in dredging that which he could of the tree-free waterway. This is not easy work! Darren and Peter also moved several large and awkward trees over to the other bank and up the steep slope as under-mud obstructions prevented them from being brought to the near shore. A much needed lunch break was taken in the 'tree-trunk' area. In conclusion, it was an amazing day with lots of concentrated effort by all concerned being thoroughly motivated - and exhausted by the end of the day!

Marc proved an excellent leader with attention to H&S and conducting the requirements of the day in an efficient manner. I am indebted to Carole for providing me with the report. My thanks go also to all who persevere with this work and these few words can hardly do justice to the efforts that all have made. We are, however, beginning to see some progress, with hopefully a further stretch of water to be opened soon.

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Subject: Work Party at Ebridge Lock

Date : Sunday 23 march 2008.

Report From : **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To locate a wall shown on an old photograph, which appears to run parallel to the lock chamber wall and forming an edge to the Mill Pond: to expose the wall adjacent to the public roadway: to remove debris from the tail of the lock: to check an access way along north east bank upstream of the weir.

WORK ACHIEVEMENTS. Weather fine and sunny all day with some fairly sparse high altitude clouds - quite warm with the hint of a breeze at times. The grass was cut on the southwest bank of the lock whilst three others started to locate and subsequently expose part of the Mill Pond wall alongside the public road (B...).

The two trees, brambles etc were trimmed back, on the pond side only, to allow easy access along the whole length of this wall. The condition of the wall is very good at low level but naturally the coping and upper course or three will need rebuilding. The guardrail mounted on concrete posts between the pond and public road is mostly all there but the concrete posts will need re-setting. Does the guardrail work lie within the responsibility of the NCC Highways Department?

This wall was exposed up to where it was expected that a corner would lie and therefore hoping that it would lead to the missing wall. Two other members had been digging, in the approved manner when seeking a wall or staithe! but without success. They did however reveal a corner wall with a return, which headed for the BT telegraph post! But it didn't make it that far! The corner wall unit was eventually linked to the roadside wall but it went no further. Another consideration came to mind -did this return wall form one edge of a slipway into the Mill Pond?

Both before and after lunch break, trial digs were carried out all over the place, and in various locations, but without the ultimate longed-for success of locating the edging wall. It will be a lot easier and much quicker with a digger! In the meantime, Roger the Waterbabe had been recovering numerous items of debris, including angle irons, which had been forcibly pushed into the lock tail bed and parts of plastic warning/fencing boards. He also noticed a mooring ring let into the wall of the mill building opposite the old water pump site.



Towards the end of the morning we had a visit by a Mr Graham Eckersley, an IWA member, who brought a rare collection of photographs - mainly of Ebridge. He says that he has bundles more of such prizes! The Norwich branch of the IWA, which was set up in the sixties, had carried out some work parties in this region some years ago.

Shortly after this visit, farmer Mr Paul Gibbons arrived and had a very worthwhile chat with me on subjects covering the NW&D Canal Trust, clearing the Mill Pond and a proposed meeting of relevant landowners, which he strongly supported.

Our well-earned lunch break was taken amongst the reeds on the base of the Mill Pond (we had been there before) in glorious warm sunshine! Nobody really wanted to move after Caroles' wonderful cake (we would not have been able to move if the portions had remained the size as cut by Jackie!) but needs must and we returned to the work face.

Roger continued in his labours, I moved off onto the east bank and the rest of the Team continued in their quest - eventually filling in all dug holes for safety reasons. With long handled secateurs alone I cleared a path, maybe 150 metres long so that on our next visit, access will be available for some of the team to clear back trees and branches from the canal side.

To sum it all up, it was a disappointment that the missing wall was not located but on the more positive side the pond side wall is shown to be in generally good condition; there may be a slip into the Mill Pond; the tail of the lock is cleared of major obstructions leaving a good uninterrupted flow of water; a path is clear on the east bank - and, perhaps more importantly, the Team of Eight had a thoroughly enjoyable day out in the sunshine and fresh air.

My thanks to you all.



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Work Party at Honing Dee Bridge Arm

Sunday 24th February 2008.

Report From : **David Revill, EAWA**

THE PLAN. To prepare and leave the east bank clear of brash and a strip footpath way basically levelled; to clear the hedge at head of arm alongside the Weavers Way; to dredge back as much as possible along west bank; to open block at mouth to re-admit water to arm.

WORK ACHIEVEMENTS. Weather. Sunny during a.m. becoming overcast in p.m. with occasional drizzle from 16.15. Tom and Digger moved along west bank clearing several logs and plenty of spoil leaving the bank in a fairly straight and acceptable state.

This completed, Tom removed part of the block and was surprised by the flood of water into the arm! It certainly bettered the depth of water there. At the start and following the usual H&S and plan briefing, The Team split into three groups - first to tackle the hedge along the WW; the second to tackle the brash at the inner and head end and the third to clear the mouth end. With two previously approved bonfires going the plan moved ahead very well and continued after the lunch break, including a generous slice of Carole's chocolate cake, taken on the east bank

Several further leaning trees were also removed due to H&S and/or effect. A few old tree trunks have been laid along the line of the fence-posts (on Canal Co land) to be used later as bank edging. The above does not really describe the tremendous effort put in by everyone on site. Unfortunately the path outline did not get levelled due to shortage of time. There are still some patches of reed in the canal proper and in the arm as they are out of reach of the digger. These should be removed later in the year using the manual dredger bucket - or, of course, by the EA doing their work and dredging the canal for effective drainage purposes?

The Team comprised of 14 people and Digger.

SUMMARY. All of the brash which we had previously unwittingly placed on land behind the

fence posts near to the foot of the road embankment (NCC Highways Department) has been removed and disposed of as has that placed along the rest of the arm east bank, leaving a relatively clear and tidy stretch of land. The odd sapling or tree may need to be removed in the final count and the bank needs to be completed and levelled. No further work was attempted on the canal-side pathway today.

More than a score of visitors had stopped and chatted and the only comments were good ones! As the literature at the entrance to the arm now includes the NW & D Canal Trust, as well as for the EAWA, more questions were asked. Carole (Secretary to the Trust) took membership forms and fees for the Trust from several people, which is quite encouraging.

Whilst the work is by no means completed, that which has taken place in the last 14 months is quite remarkable. From our first visit there carrying machetes etc and no sign of water in the arm at all, to the very pleasing vista of a watered arm stretching to the canal, which can now be seen from the Weavers Way as well as from the road bridge. My thanks go to all of the party, which is a record number of attendees, and to all who have worked at the arm during the period. Added thanks go to Marc and Carole who stayed behind after 17.00 as firewatchers until both fires were extinct.



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