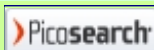


# East Anglian Waterways Association. P



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NEW! With General Forum for you to chat!

## East Anglian Waterways Association and North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust, Work Parties - 2010

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In Co-operation with the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust

### Work party at Honing Lock.

Sunday 21st November 2010.

Report from: **David Revill**, EAWA. Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To locate and investigate the weir; to clear the near side area back to the fence; to clear the chamber islands and to locate the site of the old rail/lock keepers cottage and to investigate the possibilities of diverting the canal into the backsake for when maintenance work is carried out on the lock.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** Weather was forecast to have the odd shower with the occasional spot of sunshine - there was no rain and only the odd appearance of the sun! Bit cool but this

changed when working.

During the briefing and H&S period, two new volunteers, **Andrew Fryer** and **Nigel Cross**, were welcomed to the Team. We split into four groups and didn't meet up again until the lunch break. One group tackled the clearance of the near side area, in addition to that which had been cleared on an earlier occasion; the two new chaps attacked the western chamber island, one group went for the eastern chamber island and I set off with **Alan** to locate the weir.

The results of these ventures were, first of all, the near side clearance, which at the end of play presented a view of the lock chamber from the approach path before reaching the little access bridge (which was found to be again in need of repair) and indeed is a rather large sized area in which to prepare canoes etc or even sit for picnic. Having achieved this, the group went on to investigate the location of the old cottage and the route of the backsoke.



The site of the old cottage was found and, interestingly, the former garden which had the remnants of garden flowers still growing there! Between this and the canal, runs the backsoke and it was realised that it would only require to cut a channel about 6 metres long to divert the canal. It would probably also require some bank re-enforcement to the backsoke to prevent erosion.

On the east chamber island, the growth had not been too great and this was reduced by use of the mower to a very acceptable and pleasing level. The work on the western chamber island was more onerous as it is, of course, still littered with brick-work and lumps of concrete - the former coping stones.

However **Andrew** and **Nigel** persisted with the task and at the end, the greenery had been removed and one can now see the extent of bricking that is required. The weir was located and after an extended time spent cutting away dead and living bushes, fallen trees and branches the full extent of the weir was established. There are, however, several trees still growing on the actual spillway, but the remainder of the concrete surface is in remarkable condition, as is the brickwork boundaries along each side from top to bottom.



This weir is perhaps a little unusual in that at the top cill it is about sixty feet wide whilst at the outlet end it is only about eight feet in width. The sad thing is that this weir will not be used again as the lake which used to be there, is now a field used for grazing animals!

My grateful thanks go to **The Team** for another wonderful day of progress, brought about by pure, hard labour. A day on which the results could not have been envisaged!

*The next work party is at Honing Staithe Cut on Sunday 5th December 10.*

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**In Co-operation with the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust**

## **Work party at Briggate.**

**Sunday 14th November 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To co-operate with and assist **Briggate folk** in clearing part of the mill site including the wheel race building site but excluding the main, big storage building: to burn existing brash on the pond site.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** Weather fine and dry at the start with only slight air movement: quite pleasant. **Diana Howes** arrived and we walked the site with her and discussed the situation and possibilities. Ideas were given in connection with the boundary of the 'green' site and not to be involved in any way with the big storage building!

It was agreed that the wheel-race building site will be included in the 'green' site plan. **Phil and Alan** went to ignite the brash piles and after a while, white smoke was seen to rise into the sky! Well done in a difficult circumstance, considering the rain which has fallen in the past week or so.

Whilst the **Brigate folk** were attacking the main area, starting at the road-side, **Chris and I** went for the walls of the work-shop. Several saplings and plenty of ivy, which had grown on top of two walls at the western end and, one tree inside, were removed and large numbers of loose bricks were lowered, by gravity, to ground level for safety reasons. Parts of the broken door were stored in a safe location and protruding screws taken out of some remaining doors' woodwork.

*Timed by Big Ben on the wireless, the 2 Minutes silence was observed.*

Late in the morning, a photographer from the **EDP** arrived and we all contrived to look busy! H & S would have had me hung, drawn and quartered - with a scythe taking a swing at the legs of the chain saw operator; the sickle man taking aim at the arm of the lady pruning roses.....! Artistic license?

**Norfolk County Councillor Paul Morse** arrived at the end of the photo call and went into discussions with **Diana** and later, our **Chris**.

Coffee, very kindly made by **Diana** was taken at her kitchen table at our late lunch break at 13.00hrs. Our thanks to **Diana and David** for this grateful and most welcome gesture.

Back at the workface, precipitation arrived at about 14.15 and it was decided to call it a day and we departed at 15.00hrs. Looking around the site, it could be seen that this first day of co-operation had been a great success! Co-operation it was, with 5 of **The Team** and 5 '**Brigatteers**' working together towards the common goal.

*As this was an extra, out-of-programme meeting, special thanks go to all who attended and for their efforts.*

*The next meeting is at **Honing Lock** on Sunday 21st November 2010.*

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## **In Co-operation with the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust**

### **Work party at Bacton Wood Lock.**

**Sunday 6th November 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To carry on removal of growth along the canal bed or banks upstream of the lock or to assist **Mr L Ashton** in whatever he requires. As I was to be out of the county, **Mr Chris Black** was standing in for me and his report follows below.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** Awoke to rain and a keen easterly wind - not a promising start! I arrived at **Bacton Wood Lock** at approx. 09.10, **Laurie Ashton** appearing five minutes later with a selection of scrapers and screwdrivers. We were eventually joined by Graham Brown

and guessed that we were the three volunteers for the day.

**Laurie** wanted us help prepare the lock walls for some more bricklaying, hence the scrapers and screwdrivers. We donned hardhats as we were working in the lock and made ourselves familiar with the scaffolding layout for health and safety reasons. **Laurie** had arranged a tilt over the west lock wall which had had the first two leaves of brickwork removed however there was no need for the tilt as the sky had cleared and warm sunshine bathed the inside of the lock.

The mortar needed raking back and loose bits of brick removed together with any small roots. We made good progress and stopped for coffee at approx. 11.30 during which time **Roger Hopkinson** arrived. Then we were four! Just before lunch **Peter** appeared making our total volunteer number five for the day.

Lunch was taken at 13.00 with a welcome cup of tea provided by **Julie Ashton**. I mentioned the possibility of an extra work party at **Briggate** as mentioned by **David Revill**.

Discussions centred around the breach and the role of the weir in the water control. We decided to walk to the weir to get an idea of what was required to restore it, **Laurie** wondering if it might be a good idea to make it a shallow 'v' shape to channel the water to the centre on low flow rates.

Back to the lock to continue the brickwork preparation! **Laurie and Graham** removed some of the ivy from the east wall in readiness for the outer leaves of brickwork to be chiselled off sometime in the future and with fading light we decided to call it a day at 16.30.

*Chris Black, Acting work party leader.*

Many thanks again **Chris** for that! As can be seen, our work is much and varied, which makes it the more interesting I suppose?

It seems that the lock now takes on a fairly high priority at **Bacton** so that will come into the future programme. The other point is that I have accepted an invitation from **Mrs Diana Howes, of Briggate**, to attend her work party at **Briggate Mill** next Sunday, 14th November.

I know that this is **Remembrance Sunday** and I, at least, will be observing the 2 minutes silence. I hope that as many of you who are available and free would like to come along for even a short period of time in order to co-operate with their venture.

Part of this is also included in our future plans, too. I am also hoping to be able to burn some more brash on the Pond site at the same time! It all needs doing some-time.

Thanks go to those who attended the above for their dedication.

*Our next planned work party will be at Honing Lock on the 21st November 2011.*

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**In Co-operation with the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust**

**Work party at at Briggate Mill Pond**

## Sunday 24 October, 2010

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To progress further with the work started to clear the area; should plant be available, to cut down the remaining five trees standing in a hazardous position and to remove the one remaining sapling standing in the entrance area from the canal; to continue removing spoil from the base of the mill pond from a prescribed area and with the spoil, rebuilding the banks; to burn brash and weeds cut at last work party and that produced today.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** Weather for the day planned to be so miserable that work could probably not progress. However, after a very wet start in some places we arrived on site to find the sun shining which it continued to do for the rest of the day apart from a few drops of rain at lunchtime! But whatever the weather did, it would not have dampened my excitement with what transpired.

Following a tactics talk with **Tom and Digger**, they set to work and by the beginning of the afternoon had dug out a long trench about six metres from the public road and with the spoil had built an access track alongside the road for future use to the far side of the pond.





My heartfelt thanks go to **Laurie Ashton** for bringing the cherry picker and getting the hazardous trees at the western end of the pond site, out of the way for us. The view of the village from the canal bridge is now completely different and I consider much better, showing houses nestling comfortably in the treed setting. A nice place to live!



They are the last standing trees planned to go as all the remainder will remain (apart from the sapling mentioned above).

**Ivan, Darren and Philip** started to dig down into the water spill area and discovered far more in-fill than had been thought possible - they had still not reached the grill, whether horizontal or vertical we do not yet know. We were informed though, that a water main had been laid some years ago along the length of the road on the mill side. At what depth this has been laid is not known nor if it interferes with the water flow to the previously, casually inspected wheel chamber.



This culvert is oblong in form whereas the more usual shape is round, therefore there may have been some consideration given to future use of the culvert. Subsequent to the quite heavy rainfall during the last couple of days, it seemed that the idea of lighting any of the bonfires was out of the question. Not for young Alan though, who diligently persevered and, with a lot of smoke, cleared a lot of old and new brash. Tremendous effort.



Of the seventeen, yes 18, volunteers who signed in today, the transformation of the site must have seemed incredible. Everyone applied themselves in whatever they were doing and the result is fantastic. We shall now plan to return to carry on this latest development with gusto and get the pond into some sort of working state before the beginning of the reproduction season in 2011. With much more visible water available I am sure that we shall soon see water birds returning to complement the vast increase in frogs and toads following the previous incursion of water earlier in the year.

My thanks to all who took part today - and well done! *The next work party will be at **Bacton Wood Mill** site on Sunday 7th November.*

My thanks also, as always, go to **Chris Black** for his very able support.

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**In Co-operation with the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust**

## **Work party at at Briggate Mill Pond**

**Sunday 10 October, 2010**

Report from: **David Revill**, EAWA. Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** Without plant, to clear the brash and other growth from the mill pond area and burn where possible; to assess the remaining standing trees to be felled; to attempt to clear the one remaining tree from the far side of the inlet; to check that the running canal is clear near to the upper lock gates (missing).

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** The weather was forecast and proven to be sunny all day long! What a relief to be able to work in splendid conditions?

A total of 15 volunteers turned up during the day, which did not start too well as the Big Mowing machine had suffered a dead battery. Once this was changed, luckily **Chris** had one in his instant power appliance, things started to move in the right direction. Then one of the strimmers ran out of cord, which necessitated a run up to the local garden centre.

The growth on the chamber island had grown so much that **Chris**, taking the Big Mower out for the first time, disappeared from view in the jungle. Such was the extent of the challenge for the day. However, before lunch was taken at 12.45, much of the island had been cleared and most of the western tip of the mill pond, with fires started at both ends of the site.

It was found that the four western willow trees, to be felled on 24th?, are all growing from a fallen over tree, laying horizontal across the pond. Immediately before lunch, **Graham** and I had joined **Chris** in finalising the application form, which he was completing in connection with a lottery bid for **Honing Lock**. **Chris** has spent many hours at home on this already as it is a mammoth task!

After lunch it became apparent that we would probably not finish the task of total clearance but again before we finished and left site at about 16.25, a very different view was presented to the viewers from the roadway. **Kevin** had run his mower along a path as requested by **Mrs Diana Howes** and also along the side of the public road, making it a very presentable picture. Words cannot really describe the effect of the hard work carried out by our Team today, but in a nutshell, it was wonderful. So my thanks go to you all who were present and joined in with the labours.

*The next work party is again at Briggate Mill on 24th October 2010 and hopefully, well, it is planned, some plant will turn up and the big things will get done.*

No attempt was made at work in connection with any trees today. I did make an inspection of the Mill Race area and also spoke to a local house-owner in connection with the planned future work at the Mill Pond. He is happy with the plans!

## Work party at at Honing Staithe Cut.

**Sunday 19 Sept, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**Chris Black** had once more agreed to step in as Work Party Leader on the day.  
Here below is **Chris'** report:-

My alarm failed, not a good start!

After a rushed breakfast and a few chores I managed to get on site at the appropriate time. The weather was warm, fine and sunny with broken cloud. **Alan** was first to arrive with **Kevin** close behind.

Our tasks for the day were to close mow the area around the staithe, clear any fallen debris, ensure that the walk was clear of obstructions and any obvious hazards, visually inspect the footbridge, mow the walk and remove more of the reeds growing in the canal and staithe entrance.

We took the mower, brush cutter and other tools down to the the staithe to discover the water level to be at a reasonably good height. A **H&S briefing** was followed by mowing and the removal of small branches and pieces of wood which were stacked at the bottom of the road bank.

The brushcutter was used to clear the staithe and canal banks of reeds and weeds and remove small saplings and shoots from the trees. The area of canal bank at the entrance to the staithe, which had been covered by recent dredgings, was cleared of nettles and levelled making it look much tidier. We will have to close mow this patch to encourage natural grass growth which is happening over much of the mown area.

We eventually ended up with six volunteers with **Laurie Ashton** paying us a visit mid morning.

The walk was close mowed allowing walkers to avoid some of the muddier patches. The experimental 'reed' path is working very well, thanks **Ivan and Darren**. Whilst I was mowing the walk a young lad rode past on a mountain bike going round the loop, another useful way to use it for exercise. We also observed several other people using the walk and the staithe seems to be very popular with dogs taking a swim! The popularity of this open access area is very obvious and we received several plaudits during the day for our work which keeps it tidy and attractive.

Lunch was taken at 12.30 on the logs at the end of the staith and after I gave a brief resume of the ongoing bid to get **Heritage Lottery funding** for the restoration of **Honing Lock**. After lunch **Roger and Alan** embarked on some reed clearance to good effect. These were left on the bank to dry until our next visit.

We removed the growth from the Ash tree stump near the bridge to halt its re-growth and I removed the remaining bulk of the large tree stump on the road bank with the chain saw. The whole area now looks very tidy indeed.

We left site at approx. 16.30.

**Chris Black**, Acting Work-party Leader.



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**In Co-operation with the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust**

**Work party at Bacton Wood Lock area.**

**Sunday 5th sept., 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA. Work Party Leader.**

**THE PLAN.** To further investigate the newly discovered weir, to burn brash from previous work party and cut up fallen trees.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** Weather fine and warm all day with a gentle breeze which helped with burning the brash. Ten volunteers attended and it turned out to be a convivial occasion. A new attendee, **Seb**, was given his first H&S briefing together with his personal booklet on H&S matters and welcomed into **The Team**.

**Ivan** and **Darren** had brought some suitable timber for the construction of some simple access bridges across two of the back dykes.





One group tackled the quite large downed tree some 200 yards north of the breach and also fired the rather large pile of brash there, whilst the third group went along to the weir.

The southern end of the spill wall was confirmed by **Seb** who then exposed the end wall alongside the apron. As the overhanging branches and trees were removed, the full extent of the spill wall was revealed and eventually the northern end point was established.

The overall size of the weir is approximately 16,520 x 4130mm. The condition of the spill wall is generally fairly good but that of the lower wall, which is about 3 feet high, is quite poor. It is considered that the lower wall retaining posts are probably the originals together with the bottom rail, albeit in very poor state. It also appears that the apron has collapsed in places and has become eroded underneath.



Lunch was taken in bright sunshine and smoke and provided a very pleasant break from the mornings' labours. During the afternoon the whole of the weir was exposed, the whole pile of brash burned and most of the large tree cut up. The main participants finished at about 4pm, leaving **Ivan & Darren** continuing with their bridge construction until about 5pm. Once again it was a very successful work party and a great deal achieved. The rapidly changing improvements are quite encouraging!

The next work party will be at **Honing Staithe Cut and Lock** on 19th September when **Chris Black** will be Leader as I shall be away on holiday. Please remember **Briggate** too on the 10th and 24th October 2010.

*Many thanks to you all who attended and made such a difference and improvement.*

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## Work party at Bacton Wood Lock area.

**Sunday 22nd August, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill**, EAWA. Work Party Leader.

As I would be out of the county, **Chris Black** had once more agreed to step in as Work Party Leader on the day and we discussed that the days' work would be concentrated at and above the lower breach towards **Royston Bridge**.

Here below is **Chris'** report:-

**THE PLAN.** Nature of work to be undertaken. - Removal of fallen tree on west side of canal above the breach. Cut useful timber into lengths for firewood and stack up brash for burning at a later date. Brushcut reeds around access pathway and stack up timber left on ground during our last visit. Leave area in a tidy state.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** I was awoken at 05.30 by a close flash of lightning and clap of thunder followed by heavy rain! I was hoping this was not a portent for today's work party. By 08.00 the sun was shining and we were blessed yet again with a dry, warm, partly sunny day.

Eight volunteers arrived eventually and we set about our task of removing the tree after a work briefing and H&S matters. The tree was much bigger than I had envisaged some of the branches 15 inches or more thick! We decided to cut off each branch and then remove the good timber for stacking and making a heap of the brash. This way we didn't have a monster pile of branches to deal with later. It was a tricky sort of tree as branches were laying in tension so we had to be very careful when cutting them away and some were diseased and rotten making them brittle.

Good progress was made up to lunch time by which about half had been removed. During the morning a new volunteer arrived who **Ivan** had found wandering in the village. He had intended to come to the work party but did not know how to find us! Thanks to **Ivan** for sorting him out. He is a member of the **Wherry Trust** and is involved with keeping **Albion** afloat.

Lunch was taken in the shade and we resumed work again in about an hour. We cleared lying timber from the 'path' to the point where we could cross the soke dyke on the west bank. We continued with the tree surgery and managed to remove all the timber on the top of the bank, the remaining stumps being too large for my chainsaw and also overhanging the soke dyke which at that point had a considerable depth of water in it.

During this phase I was called by **Ivan** to come to the bridge area near the breach. He was with the **son of the owner of the land** beside the west bank who was offering help as he has a plant hire business. He was keen to see the clearance and explained his plan to remove some of the trees around the bridge over the river. He asked me how he could help to which I replied the soke dyke on that side would need clearing - a fortuitous statement in the light of another happening at the end of the day!

We finished clearing what timber we could and were all pretty tired so I suggested that we take a walk up footpath 19, i.e. the west bank, to see what other trees would need to be removed. It was a jungle-like trek to the first tree. This was not large and not a problem to get removed.

We continued on when I suddenly realised that I was walking on a brick structure. Further investigation showed this to be the 'lost' weir above **Bacton Wood Lock!** What a great find as this means that there will be no need to build a new one with all the potential problems of planning constraints and a bonus in that the water passing over this weir will go down the west soke dyke and join the outflow of the proposed new culvert under the canal thus alleviating the flow through the new culvert. We must set about clearing this weir at our next visit as it seems to be much as it was when first built.

We packed up about 16.30 making sure we had taken all our tools with us as two bow saws were found in the old timber pile from our last visit!

Chris Black, Acting Work-party Leader.

I thank all of our eight volunteers for their efforts and Chris for standing in once more. So many

developments, contacts and discoveries were made this day that it is another great step forward. I look forward to being at this same site on Sunday 5th September.

*Please remember the two meetings in October which will be at Briggate Mill Pond. Thank you*

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## Work Party at Honing Lock.

**In co-operation with The North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust**

**Sunday 8 Aug, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To clear both sides of the **chamber islands** to make it look cared for on the west bank and to provide an access way for the portage of **canoes** from the eastern tail of the lock through to the launch site north of the little bridge; to convert part of the existing fence into a gate to facilitate transport of canoes; to clear an area adjacent to the bridge over the back soke to make it easier for the launching of canoes there; to clear obstructions (bricks and rubble) from the **canal north of the bridge** over the lock; to remove several trees from the canal south of the lock and also the two brought down by recent high winds north of the lock.

Cut 'grass' at **Honing Cut**, time permitting.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** Weather was fine with some cloud but dry and warm. At the H&S and work briefings, our new attendee **Phil Harrison** was welcomed and introduced to **The Team**. A '**gate**' was fashioned in the screening fence running parallel to the footpath between the back soke access bridge and the lock bridge. Access being obtained, a way was cut through to the tail of the lock to provide portage of **canoes** past the lock. In the meantime, others made the **public footpath** wider by cutting back the overgrowth and then continuing to clear a large area beside the backsake to allow the easier launching of canoes from this point.

**Chris and I** walked to the end of the woods on the western footpath to ascertain the location of, and chances of removing, the major blockage there. On this assessment trip, a further **three trees** were noted to be removed. **The high wind damaged trees** (upstream) were cleared and the canal there left fairly free of obstructions, but the **reed** continues to encroach into the passage both north and south of the lock.



By the time of taking a late **lunch break** (13.15hrs) the major obstructing tree (south) had been pulled to the side of the canal. During the morning, **some five canoes** were launched on the backsake and carried their happy occupants smoothly southwards down the canal.

Following a lunch taken in warm sunshine, all of the known obstructing (south) trees had been removed and/or secured.



**Mary** was taken for her very first trip in a canoe down nearly to **the East Ruston Arm!** It was thoroughly enjoyable, she later reported!

**Roger** jumped in above the lock (suitably attired, I have to say!) and cleared a large quantity of bricks, flints etc which had found their way into the water and which could have presented a hazard to launched canoes. **Alan** launched himself and walked upstream to very successfully pull out some of the intruding reeds in the navigation. He is very good at that!

The tall weeds on the western side of the lock chamber (inside the fence) were cut down to match the eastern bank, to present a most favourable aspect from the bridge.

We left site at 16.15 having closed the new gate to the eastern canoe portage route.



*The next meeting will be at Bacton Wood Lock on Sunday 22nd August.*

My thanks to all of the fourteen volunteers who turned up and worked so very hard to produce yet another wonderful result, to the praise of our many visitors!

## Work Party at Honing Staithe Cut.

**Sunday 18 July, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To check the **water levels** and **growth** on banks of cut and canal beside **walk**; check on plant growth in the cut itself and in the canal near to the **road bridge**.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** Weather was fine but not too hot - very pleasant! On arriving at the site, it became very evident that the few drops of rain which had fallen on this area had promoted a great leap in plant growth! However, after the H&S and general briefing, when **Roger Mason**, a new member was welcomed into our group, the strimmers and mower were put into motion and very soon the growth, in places up to four feet in height, was seen to tumble.

**Alan** had said to me that he had noticed **Himalayan Balsam** growing at the head of the cut. That was just the job for me and I attacked it and cleared (?) about 13 sq. metres of the invasive plant. Further along the bank of the canal, beside the walk, several trees and branches, which had succumbed to the recent high winds, were retrieved to the bank - a messy job. Strange really that the ladies will pay pounds for this mud for beauty treatment and it lies here for free!

Lunch break came upon us rather rapidly! Whilst sitting with food and drink, the reeds at the end of the cut started to move sideways and the bow of a canoe came into sight! The words 'Dr Livingstone, I presume' came to mind as **Graham** came into full view. He had canoed up from **Honing Lock**, accompanied by two other canoes but they did not venture into the cut.



Photo credit to Alan Bertram

The turn at the head of the cut was accomplished with a little difficulty, but by then **Chris** had jumped (gingerly slid) on board for the return trip.

Having seen the intrepid explorers battle the reeds again, **Alan** decided to attack them, the reeds that is, from below water level and promptly donned his waders! In a rather startlingly short period of time, he had cleared a large area of the reeds from the mouth of the cut and a way along the canal towards the bridge. On retrieving these onto the shore, we disturbed a bee's nest in the bank, so promptly left that area without any harm being done. Some water plants were pulled out from the cut, to make it look a little clearer.

When we left at about 16.00 the cut walk was again looking like it was cared for. We shall be there again with the mower in about three week's time to keep the grass and weeds to a manageable level.

During the day, **numerous visitors** passed by and chatted, all on the very positive side for what we are doing. On the nature side, **a heron** was disturbed when we arrived - he had been sitting in the reeds along the side of the cut. Of **the visitors**, some three people were signed up to **join the Canal Trust**. A good day on all scores!

*The next work party will be on Sunday August 8th at Honing Lock and grass cutting at the Staithe Cut. A lot of interesting work to be done on that day, so look forward to seeing you there. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped today.*

[TOP](#)

## Work Party at Ebridge Lock.

**Sunday 4 July, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** With the seriously reduced number of volunteers expected to be on site this day, the expectations were kept quite minimal. As I would be 'out of town' for the majority of the day and Chris was expected to be also away, I had asked **Darren Cooke** if he would be our Work Party Leader for the day. I am very pleased to report that he did agree. I explained to him to 'do as best as you can' on site in the general clearance of the lock sides, whatever else was feasible and also to clear the buttress on the north side of the canal, south of the road bridge. In the event, **Chris Black** did arrive on time and the duties were duly and gracefully shared!

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** As I was not there, but did my turn for part of the afternoon at the **Dilham Village Hall** for the **Canal Trust Exhibition** there, I include below the report of the day as sent to me by **Chris Black**.

Work-party report for 4th July 2010 at Ebridge Lock.

I was not expecting to be available for this work-party but circumstances changed and I was able to attend. The weather was warm and dry, continuing the run of rain free Sundays. Shortly after my arrival **Darren Cooke** drove up and we decided what to do as we knew this work-party was going to have a small attendance. We eventually ended up with six volunteers.

H&S issues were addressed then we set out to continue the clearance of the lock sides and a few yards beyond upstream. The east side of the lock had not been cleared for some time and looks much improved visually now thanks to **Kevin's** brush-cutter and mower.

**Darren** cleared the weeds from the fence on the west side, this having been mowed at our last visit. **Laurie Ashton** arrived soon after and attacked the weeds and brambles growing in the cap stones on the lock. He then carried on with the dredging

. I had had a conversation with him prior to this about the spillway construction. **Darren and I** did a bit of digging beside the top wall and found it to be bricked to a depth of approx 2' 6" with no obvious footings. It was probably built on wood which has since rotted away. Photographs were taken before we backfilled the hole for safety reasons. We took the decision not to advance the cutting upstream as the nettles were nearly 7' high and **Laurie** is dumping the spoil near the bank anyway.

Lunch was taken at 13.00 and was a first for **the Trust** as it was consumed aboard ' *Weasel*'. It felt really good to be aboard a real boat afloat on the canal. **Laurie** had the galley well stocked with tea and coffee and had the kettle on the gas hob ready for us to make a drink!

*After lunch **Darren** attacked the brambles on the abutment on the south side of the road bridge and it is now much clearer. During the day we had several members of the public speak to us about what we were doing. One was a local who had canoed much of the canal in the past and had been involved in canoeing activities with the scouts. All were very positive about the renovation and we ran out of Trust leaflets!*

We left about 16.00 with **Laurie** continuing his dredging.

Chris Black, Acting Work-party Leader.

A lot of good came from this work party and my thanks go to all the stalwarts who attended. The next visit will be to **Honing Staithe Cut** on this Sunday 18th July 2010. Please remember the 'Big One' at Briggate in October.  
*My apologies for the late delivery of this report.*

## Work Party at Ebridge Mill Pond site.

**Sunday 20 Jun, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To clear roadside grass on the verge of the mill pond; to tidy the chamber island; to clear the walk up to the weir; to clear away growth on the south eastern buttress of the road bridge down to canal level; remove best part of the two remaining trees, but leaving sufficient to mark the side of the road.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** I went to site and was surprised to find so much mechanical plant in place. The mill pond had been dredged to provide a reasonably sized area of clear water. As a further proof of the value of the work which we are carrying out on the canal, Chris and I watched a duck call her six ducklings to order and swim from the lock gates up the canal into unknown territory! With the return of frogs to Briggate Mill pond and other sightings along the worked on parts of the canal, we are all feeling rather gratified with the fact that nature is returning as we had hoped. As I cannot go 'off-road' yet I departed at about 10.30 and left Chris Black i/c. Here is his report-:

The cold weather early on gave way to a pleasant day - and no rain! **David Revill and I** had the pleasure of seeing a family of Mallard Ducks swimming on the cleared stretch of water - a sight not seen for many a year on the reed choked millpond. We strimmed and mowed alongside the retaining wall of the millpond, there being no possibility of removing the remaining trees however. As requested we measured the wall, the dimensions of which are set out below.

Most of the team were set the task of clearing the weir which had numerous nettles growing in the cracks in the concrete capping. All along the bank on that side the nettles have grown very tall and dense however with the ground paddles closed to maintain enough water for the dredger to float the clearance of these proved difficult as the water level was high.

**Laurie Ashton** arrived before lunch and set about more dredging with '**Weasel**'.

A natural break occurred at about 12.30 so lunch was taken on the mowed area beside the lock. We had by then accrued **11 volunteers** plus Wiggy the guard dog. **Laurie and I** had a discussion about the millpond wall and he was sure that the blocked up 'inlet' opposite the older part of the mill was an old culvert for a millwheel in the original mill. We also discussed the problem of diverting the water whilst repairing the top gates (and the lock eventually). We came to the conclusion that the millrace culvert was low enough to bypass the lock whilst keeping the water level reasonably low in the canal and millpond.

We had several visitors during the lunch period, all very supportive of our project! A young lad spoke to us about how he and his brother had canoed down virtually all the canal fairly recently - some feat! He was looking forward to the restoration which would enable him to canoe easily on the canal. This is a perfect example of the recreational opportunities the restored canal would bring for our young people.

After lunch we continued with the nettle bashing and **Laurie** returned to the dredging. I

finished clearing around the west side of the lock and had to field more questions from interested passers by, all in favour with NO negativity. There was no attempt to clear the brambles on the south side of the road bridge.

**Laurie** eventually had to curtail his dredging as two of the hydraulic hoses on the dredger arm started to leak. While he was trying to remove these we were visited by the **local Police Community Officer** who was very interested in the work and warned of machinery theft. He took our leaflet and my card as he was interested in possibly getting some offenders involved in a bit of restorative justice! His suggestion!

We cleared up at about 15.30 and left about 16.00.

**Chris Black**, Acting Work Party leader"

*Thanks again, **Chris and all who attended**. From the photos received, (thanks **Alan**) it turned out to be a worthy days endeavours! Next party is back at **Ebridge** on 4th July*

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## Work Party at Work Party at Briggate Mill.

**Sunday 6 Jun, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA. Work Party Leader.**

**THE PLAN.** To cut and clear away any timber remaining near to the pond wall: to burn brash: cut grass on road verges; measure pond wall for costing of rebuilding; measure for costing of a wooden fence at western end of pond; measure wheel race chamber; consult with **Mrs D Howes** on her requested clearance of wheel chamber (exterior) and walls adjacent to public road, prior to enquiry for Village Green status of the mill site.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** Weather fine all (working) day despite the forecast with very little air movement. After the usual H&S and general briefing for the day, **Chris and Richard** started the work off by cutting the pond side verge with mower and strimmer whilst awaiting the arrival of **Mrs DH**.

**Alan and Richard** then fired three of the piles of brash which fortunately had not been affected by the torrential rains falling elsewhere on the night before. There was found to be no remaining timber to be cut and removed.

Following a lengthy chat with **Mrs DH**, I explained that the pond boundary is as it can be seen now, with the several trees growing into the pond wall having to be removed together with a couple beside them plus the lone sapling adjacent to the water inlet to the pond.

We then concentrated our efforts on the water-wheel chamber. The exterior walls were covered in ivy and brambles with the odd sapling growing from the top. This was all mostly removed to leave a 'cleared' appearance as seen from the roadway. A tall sapling was removed from the quite wet base of the wheel chamber together with several smaller specimens. In the meantime **Mrs DH** had returned to site in working attire and joined us in our efforts at the lower end of the wheel chamber. As I can not yet go 'off-road', I thoroughly enjoyed myself being part of **The Team** again, albeit only being able to work on the exterior road-side walls.

The wire netting covering the various apertures in the road-side mill building wall was reaffixed to good effect. The eastern wall of the wheel race chamber was not touched due to inaccessibility on this occasion.

Lunch was taken with Carole's' luscious scones with jam and double cream (doctors should not read this) and the work continued.

Measurements of the pond wall were taken (from the spill into the road culvert to the water wheel) for costing purposes at 113 feet long and the parapet wall over the culvert at 13foot 8inches by 4' 2" to the footing and being 1 ½ bricks deep.

The wooden fence at the western end of the pond is to be 8metres by 1 metre high with three rails. The wheel chamber is, internally, 24' 2" long by 7' 6" wide. A couple living adjacent to the mill asked if we would remove a tree belonging to them, which had collapsed across the mill race outlet and onto Honing Estates land. I said that we would be pleased to help but not at this time due to the birds nesting period. Chris inspected the tree for later referral.

Five other (groups of) people stopped for a chat and after explaining what the ultimate plan is to be, were delighted with the idea and what had already been achieved - in contrast to one gentleman, early on, who appeared to have been quite agitated until I explained the situation to him and what we would be doing today, in co-operation with other village folk. Unaware of my conversation with this gentleman, Alan & Graham took a stroll across the pond site to where the water inlet to the pond had been dredged and reported scores of frogs lying in several areas such that they could walk no further for fear of treading on them! Nature returning!

Carole took me away at 14.30 leaving CB in charge for the final push. A short, 10', bole of a tree which will have to be removed from the pond site eventually, was removed without trouble and cut up. My thanks to all who turned up for a rather splendid day in all sorts of ways!

*The meeting on 20th June will be at Ebridge Mill pond starting at 09.30 as usual.*

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## Work Party at Work Party at Bacton Lock.

**Sunday 23 May, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To further clear the breach area and parts of the dried canal; to vertically cut through the exposed canal bed to ascertain the construction method; to remove already felled timber and burn brash; investigate the surrounding area for any further signs of old construction; to visit Honing Lock area and erect fence and notice; to visit Honing Dee Bridge and erect notice only. As I could not be there for the main work party after Honing Lock, here is the report as sent to me by Chris.

"Work party report for the 23rd May 2010"

**"Bacton Wood Lock ( Breach)"**

A cloudless blue sky and wall to wall sunshine greeted the volunteers today. It was already warm by 10.00 and got hotter! 16 signatures on the EAWA worksheet was quite a surprise as when I arrived there were only four of us. As arranged, **Mary and I** went down to **Honing Lock** to meet **David Revill** and his chauffeuse **Gisela**. I had briefed **Graham Brown** with the plans for work around the breach, nominating him as temporary work party leader in my absence. I asked him to give the H&S talk and guide the team whilst I was at **Honing**.

The reason for the **Honing** visit was to erect a fence at the lock end of the pound to **Dee bridge** and to place a notice on it reminding the public that there is no public footpath beside the canal and to politely request that they do not walk beside the canal. A notice was also placed at the Dee bridge end with the same request.

**David and Gisela** took photos as evidence that the work had been executed.

**David and Gisela** returned to their boat as his leg is still recovering. **Mary and I** returned to **Bacton Wood Lock** and were greeted by a large number of volunteers, the Hymac and two large fires. The idea was to remove the good timber from the fallen trees and cut it up ready for bagging up and destined for wood burners eventually. The Hymac was used to retrieve the bags of wood from the far side of the breach as were some of the smaller branches. We stopped for an early lunch as I think all of us were wilting in the heat. Hot baked potatoes from the embers went down a treat!

After lunch I gave the team a taste of the outcomes of the two meetings earlier in the week.

**Graham Brown and I** spent a good half hour sketching out a method statement for the canal as this is required by **NNDC**, in particular to see if we need any planning permission for new structures etc. We also have a new volunteer called **Alex Compton** whose studies at Easton College may prove very useful to the Canal Trust.

**Alan Bertram** took several pictures of the activities which included the removal of the large tree stump in the side of the breach. It didn't give up easily but is now on the canal bank!







The alternator on the Hymac seized up so we could not move it any further. At approx. 15.30 I called time and we loaded all the kit into the dumper and went back to the lock.

More bricks have been laid on the east side of the lock chamber. The crumbling face had been removed, as on the west wall, to allow the setting of the gate hinge in the new brickwork. It is looking splendid! The cill has been repaired and has reached a point where timber can be replaced on the cill floor to facilitate the installation of the upper gates. Laurie Ashton is seeking some decent timber for this. We left site at approx. 16.30.

"Chris Black, Acting Work Party Leader"

*Many thanks for that work and report, Chris, and of course my thanks to the wonderful volunteers! Next work party on Sunday 6th June 10 will be at Briggate where there is a large variety of things to be done, hopefully in good weather? I also attach the work party programme for the second half of the year, which is, as always, liable to change due to unforeseen circumstances.*

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## **Work Party at Work Party at Bacton Lock.**

**Sunday 9 May, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To remove saplings and brush at the area of the breach and to investigate the breach itself, check the adjacent backsoke.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** As I was to be in hospital at this time, Chris Black would be the on-site leader and the report below is as he sent through to me.

## "WORKPARTY REPORT FOR SUNDAY 9th MAY 2010."

07.30 in **Yelverton**, grey miserable skies and drizzle! **Mrs Black** reluctant to go in this weather and I agreed. Car loaded and I'm about to set off on my own when my wife is up and has a change of mind - a womans prerogative. As we drive northwards blue skies appear and the sun came out, staying like that all day.

Attendance was rather light at eight volunteers - and a surprise extra, **Laurie!** Italian weather was just as miserable so he returned early.

We set off upstream to the breach where I gave the Health and Safety briefing and an outline of our tasks for the day which were to clear the brash and hazardous trees from the breach area. Looking upstream from below the breach the view was obscured, hiding the outline of the canal heading north.

**Laurie** drove his dumper up to the work area and we set about clearing it within the bounds of the far banks of the back sokes, which are quite wide apart at this point on the canal. Some large trees had blown over and were in a hazardous condition. Some were diseased and rotten inside.

On the lock side of the bank of the breach was an old barbed wire fence which was removed for safety reasons. This was stacked in a pile with the many iron stakes etc. used to support it. The brash was put in neat piles ready for burning at a later date and the usable timber for firewood was cut up and placed in the dumper. We reached a natural break at about 12.00, the chainsaws needing a sharpen and a bit of maintenance so I decided to call a halt for an early lunch, sitting in the warm sun on the east bank.

Lunch over we set about clearing the rest of the fallen timber and the northwards view of the canal came into view. It is well profiled here. I got into a conversation with **Laurie** about the repair of the breach and mentioned the existence of the old culvert entrance on the east bank. He was not really aware of this so we took a closer look.

It is a concrete pipe about 2' wide in a heavy concrete block and as it is so large we all wondered where the other end was as it was not visible the other side of the canal. Where was it? Well it turned out to be under our pile of barbed wire and some digging revealed a concrete wall about six foot long in very good order, with a 2' pipe in it! The pipe is blocked with soil and clay so we have a task now to try to clear it so we can put the CCTV camera down it to see if it is intact under the canal bed. There is a break at the east end where the concrete retaining wall has moved.

**Work came to an end at about 15.30.** Rebuilding the lock has moved on with the west side upper gate hinge in place and the east side ground paddle mechanism bricked in.

"Chris Black, Acting Work Party Leader"

*Many thanks for that report Chris and for taking on the task! Interesting about the culvert at the breach!*

*The diameter of that culvert should now be compared with that of the culvert just east of the **Wherry Inn**. When the water from the northern end breach is diverted back onto the canal once more, it will naturally mean less running through the culvert under the Bacton Road and therefore less running through the culvert at this breach site. Further investigation at this site I feel is warranted at the next work party there on Sunday 23rd May 10.*

My thanks go to all who attended and seemingly enjoyed the weather and results! !)

# Work Party at Honing Walk and Canal.

**Sunday 25th April, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To further the progress already commenced on the betterment of the **Walk** through the boggy part of the wood and to continue the clearance along the side of the canal immediately south of the '**D**' Bridge.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** Weather was forecast to be fine with possible showers later in the day. It turned out to be very pleasant but then, about noon, precipitation commenced. This shower developed into rain but ceased after a while and the sunshine returned to present us with a very sunny afternoon.

Ten members of **The Team** turned up and following the usual briefings we split into two parties. **Ivan and Darren** elected to re-visit the Walk (they are of the best in walkway [titivation] construction, after all!) and the rest of us turned to the south to where the view of the canal from 'D' Bridge is obstructed at the first bend in the canal by large projections of saplings and brush on the west bank.

Work progressed very steadily here and soon the dead trees, branches and cut down saplings were stacked alongside the backsoke to form a newly created hedge of some sizable proportions! Ideal for birds in which to build their nests and for small animal habitation.

Owing to the shower/rain at noon, it was decided to take an early lunch under the protection provided by a large, ivy covered tree. Alongside this tree, the bank was well covered in bracken, wild roses and blackberry growth. Following the participation of refreshments, I departed to rest up a little and left **Chris Black** in charge. The following report is as provided, with thanks, from **Chris and Ivan**.

Facing this massive entanglement of thorny growth, mixed with not a little brash, **Kevin** went off and returned with his brush cutter to better enable the removal of this very unfriendly entity. The pictures taken at the end of the day prove that this was a very wise move which facilitated the complete removal of the visual obstruction!



At the end, **Kevin** also strimmed the whole balance of this area and **Chris** cut back the remaining tree stumps to ground level. The view from the bridge really shows the canal profile now but which would benefit from a bit of dredging along the west bank.



'Up north' on the **Walk** in the woods, another twenty yards of the sides of the walk were lined with larger timbers and the space between filled with smaller timbers at right angles. This was then covered with mud and covered in turn with reed, which was then trampled well in. The reed/mud system progressed until no further mud oozed through the reed. The final picture of this walk approaching the little timber bridge is truly amazing and I am certain will be well appreciated by all who use it.



Later on, **Darren** mowed the stinging nettles on the **Staithe Cut** (nearer to the roadway) and **Ivan** cleared a walk through the spoil from the earlier dredging along the north side of the Cut. The work party left site at approximately 16.00.

My thanks, as always, go to all of **The Team** and for the work which they do so well. These last three work parties in this area have really made a big difference to the scenery. *The next work parties will be at Bacton Wood Lock area on Sundays 9th & 23rd May - just 'upstream' of the lock, at the breach.* So please park as usual at the lock parking space.

As I shall be severely incapacitated then, **Chris Black** will be in charge, so any questions to him please. I look forward to being back with you all as soon as possible/practicable.



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## Work Party at Honing Staithe Cut, Canal and Bacton Wood Lock.

**Sunday 11th April, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** Changed from that envisaged due to circumstances! Now: dredge more of the Staithe Cut and nearby canal, to continue with tree clearances along the canal nearer to the Lock and to assist with brick (?) removal at Bacton Wood Lock.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** The 13 (thirteen) total of volunteers were spilt into three groups to attend to each area and H&S and general briefings given.

**Alan** accompanied **Tom & Digger** down to the Staithe cut, whilst **Chris, Matt and I** left for the canal south of D Bridge and were later joined by **Graham and Dawn**.

**Richard** took **Mary and Tim** to Bacton Wood Lock and they were joined by **David T and Kevin**.

Weather was good but the breeze was almost like the lazy one again. Progress was very good along the canal as access had already been made. A large number of trees were still apparent growing over and into the canal and these were systematically removed along with several growing near to the bank. Very satisfying.

On retiring for lunch break at the *D Bridge*, we could not help but notice the enormous amount of work carried out by **Tom & Digger**, not forgetting **Alan** of course, on the canal bank and into the Staithe Cut.

As at lunch-time, nothing had been heard from Bacton Wood. I departed after lunch and left **Chris** as i/c. From the reports, which I have received today (12/4/10), **Tom** cleared the north side around as far as the Weavers' Way end of the Cut and left everything in fine order - just ready for

nature to take over once more.

Along the canal, all the problem trees had been removed, apart from some which are far too big. Should they eventually fall over, then they can be cut up and removed! At the **Bacton Wood Lock**, work had progressed at a pace and reached a point when no more could be done! It is thought that approximately 8.5 tonne of bricks had been removed from the chamber wall and relocated via a dumper truck. From a logistical point of view, a day which at first seemed to be problematic, turned out to be very splendid indeed and an enormous amount of work progress was accomplished.

*We are back at Honing at the next work party and this will be split again, probably into three groups, with one at the Staithe Cut Walk in the woods, one to clear up on the canal side and the final one at the lock area looking at portage points.* My thanks again go to all who attended for their dedication and hard work. Progress can be seen to be made and the era of tedious work should be coming to a close in the near future, albeit it is most of the time an enjoyable tedium!

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## Work Party at Honing Staithe Cut and Canal

**Sunday 28th March, 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To continue clearing and tidying the area around the Cut and along the canal walk; to improve the walk through the woodland; to continue the clearance of the canal and bank south of the 'D' Bridge.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** The weather forecast was not too encouraging but was again not quite accurate and we met in sunshine, which prevailed for the rest of the day - very pleasant. Following the H&S and the plan briefings, the majority of the **13 folk** departed from the **Triangles** to the **Staithe Cut area** whilst I went with **Chris, Roger, Graham and Matt** to the canal south of the Bridge.

I had had a site meeting with **Mr A Paterson** on the Friday and had agreed a work programme for this area. Since the major clearance of the canal here, and its bank on the west side, progress was quite rapid. The work was relatively easy because a good access was possible. Trees were readily removed and stacked in the approved manner at the top of the canal bank alongside the previously placed brash.

On returning to the **Staithe Cut** at our lunch-break, we found that good progress had been made in clearing all of the fallen timber from the Cut and also a large quantity of growing weeds and other tall vegetation strimmed from around the edge of the Cut. Others had continued with the supply of fallen branches and other smaller pieces of trees into the rather soggy walk through the wood area. It is anticipated to make this walkway a lot more stable before the end of the summer in preparation for the next winter months.

After the lunch break, I unfortunately had to leave but left **Chris Black** as i/c and work continued as before. Two visitors arrived during the afternoon session, **Mr L Ashton** and **Dr Tom Moore**. **Tom & Digger** would like to return to the Cut to continue dredging and with diggers' extended arm this should make a great improvement both at the mouth and at the **Weavers Way** end of the

Cut.

**Laurie** would like some assistance in removing a further area of bricks from the chamber wall at **Bacton Wood Lock** as he has the bricklayer back in harness, (he's pretty fast!). With our **Team** doing the basic work, it will allow the bricks to be laid at a greatly improved rate.

The work ceased at about 16.00hrs when a contented group left for home.

***Re work at Bacton Wood Lock.** I have been asked by a couple of members of **The Team** if it is possible for individuals to go along and help at **Bacton Wood Lock** on non work party days.*

*Yes it is, but this would be on an individual agreement between yourselves and **Mr L Ashton** and would not come under the cover of the EAWA Work Party insurance nor health & safety conditions.*

Once again many thanks to all who turned out on this occasion and made such a difference. The next event will be on Sunday **11th April** at **Honing Lock and Staithe Cut**, meeting again at the Triangles initially.

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## **Work Party at Ebridge.**

**Sunday 14th March 2010.**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To remove as much as possible of the tree growth entwined with the BT overhead cables on the roadside; to clear the weir again; to continue with the removal of the cut down trees in the canal bed and bank upstream of the lock and to start clearance of the reed growth in the mill-pond area (time permitting)

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** Due to my limitations, I took an early departure from the site and left **Chris Black** in charge. Following is his report as sent to me:-

"**David Revill**, being somewhat incapacitated with a gammy leg, had warned me that he would be attending for only a short time today and I would have to take over as work party leader after he left. The weather was fine and bright but accompanied by a cold wind.

**David** gave us the usual health and safety talk and had made a specific point to me to ensure that nobody in the work party was to cross the canal via the 'sandbagged' gates as the stability of these was unknown, considering the number of years they had been there.

Four specific tasks had been identified for today. Remove as many as possible the tree branches growing into the BT aerial cable alongside the road. Clear the weir (spillway) of weed growth and small bushes. Continue the removal of the remaining trees upstream and cut down some of the reeds.

Fourteen volunteers turned up at various times of the day, some leaving early or after lunch. It was good to see **Marc Lines** back with us. **Marc and I** set about the roadside tree. It took considerable thought and ingenuity to find the best way to remove the branches without damaging the cable but by lunch we had cleared the branches from the cable leaving only two to be removed, probably using a cherry picker as they lean into the road.

The timber was cut up and the small branches stacked in a tidy heap. Whilst we were on tree duty others were busy clearing the weir which now looks much improved.

Some work was carried out on the trees upstream but not as much as we had hoped. I had spent most of the day working on the tree by the road so could not use the chainsaw on the fallen timber there.

We did not have time to cut any reeds.

We had two visitors of note today. **Laurie Ashton** arrived just before lunch and told us about his new purchase - a 42ft dredger! He told us how he intended to put it in the water where he has dredged a channel on the south side of the millpond and work his way upstream. He had some video of the 13 hour trip to get the dredger to Wayford Bridge - it's only got a small engine.

**Tom Carr** arrived about 2.30pm armed with paperwork and a few thoughts about this area of the canal. I walked with him to the end of our tree clearance activity upstream to keep him up to date with our progress.

We ceased working about 3.30 pm and left the Trust Chairman trying to recruit a new member.

**Chris Black"**

There we have it! My thanks go to Chris for this report and of course taking over for the day with a successful result. My thanks of course go as usual to The Team for turning up once more and carrying on the good fight!

*The next meeting will be on Sunday 28th March 2010 at Honing Staithe Cut.*

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## **Work Party at Briggate Mill Pond.**

**Sunday 21th February, 2010..**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA. Work Party Leader.**

**The Plan.** To continue dredging the pond; to remove as much waste from the grassed area of the chamber island; to take measurements of the lock proper for inclusion in the Management Plan.

**Work Achievement.** Weather - frosted, hard ground; overcast with rising temperature; at commencement of work, sleet turning to snow prevailing, turning to rain later. **Tom** and digger had arrived and moved onto site before the main briefing.

At the H&S and general briefing, we welcomed three new members to The Team - **Richard** and **Sue** together with **Bill**. Also appearing on the scene at this time were **Mr L Ashton** and **Mr Jeremy Cushion** with a cherry picker and a set of chain saws!

The plan then changed with the addition of taking down as much as possible of the offending trees growing on the pond retaining wall and rooted under the highway. The four trees growing on the bed of the mill pond could also possibly be felled, given the time and conditions.



Following the briefing, The **Team** split up to carry out the various tasks.

A group attacked the chamber island with strimmers and other cutting tools and then raking the spoil into several piles for later disposal. A bit of a dismal task, but competently completed. The underlying grass should now be able to re-assert itself, especially when being well attended during the growing season.

Traffic marshals were placed strategically, and marker cones placed, on the public roadway about the cherry picker. Using agreed calls and signs, traffic was permitted to pass safely through the area without undue hindrance and no adverse comments were heard!

**Jeremy**, going aloft in the cherry picker, made short work of reducing the three main trees at the eastern end to ground level. He made the task look so easy, working in his usual very professional and competent manner.



In the meantime, **Tom** with digger had moved to the north side of the pond after having cleared a further stretch of channel in the direction of the pill box away from the canal. They continued to provide a more substantial bank by placing some of the spoil over the previously positioned tree trunks and brash on the northern pond boundary.



To help to prevent damage to vehicles and/or persons whilst passing the cherry picker, some brambles and other hard growth were removed from the water wheel mill structure and the grass verge subsequently cleaned up. The roadway was constantly kept clear of tree pieces and these items were placed into the pond area. The roadway was also swept to prevent any likely/possible damage to vehicles' tyres.



As the snow turned to rain during the latter part of the morning, the conditions steadily worsened and it was then decided to call off the work party. And so at the end of a most unexpected mornings' activities, the plant and skilled operators departed and the rest of us mere mortals cleared some more of the brush away to a pile for later disposal, when dried out, and the roadway finally brushed clear and the verge alongside the pond wall was raked clear to enable the disturbed grass to once more grow into a green sward in the warmer weather to come.



I was disappointed that the weather turned out the wrong way - but on the other hand most impressed by the efforts of The **Team** in such dreadful conditions. A total of **eighteen (18) volunteers** were present in The **Team**.

Well done to all and we do hope that the three new members will not be too put off by what could be said was a bit of a disjointed day.

*The next outing is at Ebridge on Sunday 14th March when I hope that the weather will be a little more co-operative? Once again, a BIG thank you to all*

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## Work Party at Briggate Mill Pond.

**Sunday 7th February, 2010..**

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA. Work Party Leader.**

**The Plan.** To discuss with **Tom** the best way forward in the prevailing conditions (the latter obviously not known prior to the day!); to clear fallen timber and reeds from the west end of pond: to expose wall in west end to establish its end point.

**Work achievement.** The day started off with light rain, which ceased after about one hour on site followed by overcast conditions. Bit cool! Thankfully no further precipitation or wind.

After H&S and general briefing we all set to! The pond area was mostly covered by a few inches of water so **Tom and Digger** could not safely venture forth in that direction. Therefore the pre-conceived plan of dredging the inside of the pond near to the road in the first instance, followed by dredging the connecting link to the canal, was reversed.



With a newly extended reach on **Digger**, a great entrance channel was dredged and the chamber island further raised with the spoil. As the canal is lower than the mill pond bed, the result of this

was the start of draining down the inside area of the pond. Hopefully and without too much rainfall in the next two weeks, this should result in a more stable pond bed enabling Digger safe access to the other required areas.



Some of **The Team** were assisting the dredging operation by removing sections of trees brought to the surface and placing them aside ready for re-use elsewhere. At the west end of the pond it was noted that two trees had been seriously shortened since our last visit here. Very helpful! It is understood that an inspection of the remaining trees to be removed, will be made on 19th February 10.

The brambles covering the top of the mill pond wall and guard rail, in the west, were removed and stacked in preparation for later disposal when dried out. I took the opportunity to speak with the owner of the property opposite, who parks his vehicles just beyond the west end point of the pond. As a fence would be required across the end edge of the pond, about 6metres long, we discussed the issue and agreed on a wooden structure of 4-5 posts and 2-3 rails, TBD. A cut-off part from a tree trunk has been erected as a temporary post to mark the end of the pond wall. There is a collapsed concrete barrier post and a separated piece of metal tube lying there but not at the end of the wall.

After a picnic lunch, taken on the chamber island, work recommenced with renewed vigour in an attempt to restore circulation (despite the luscious cake from **Carole! Bless you.**). So with each body's hydraulic system back in full working order, the dredging continued and the remaining area of brambles (that needed to be removed), removed and the east bank cleared down.

No pond wall has been discovered to the east of the mill waterwheel culvert entrance, so the bank is more of a steep incline. Plans for the next visit were discussed with **Tom** and agreed (many thanks again Tom) - subject to the weather playing ball. We welcomed another new face to **The Team** today, **Alan Bertram** who made our number on site up to ten. Good to meet you, Alan.

My very grateful thanks go to all of you for a great day of progress albeit slightly hindered by the lack of some tools which meant that we could not attack the reeded areas. The benefit is of course that the work you did today does not have to be done on another day - and the pond is really now beginning to take shape.

***Next work party is again at Briggate Mill Pond on Sunday 21st February 2010. Look forward to meeting you all there.***

## Work Party at Ebridge.

Sunday 24th January 2010..

Report from: **David Revill, EAWA.** Work Party Leader.

**THE PLAN.** To continue clearance of felled trees and other obstacles from the canal bed and bank; to cut back undergrowth and generally tidy the chamber island and roadside grass verge.

**WORK ACHIEVEMENT.** The weather forecast was for a dry but overcast day and so it was. Not too cold with the temperature at lunch-time at +5C.

After the H&S and general briefing, at which we welcomed **Richard Harmer** to our fold, some folk set off up the canal walk to the work site at the far end whilst others stayed behind to do the honours at the chamber island and grass verge. We had been selected by the **Radio Norfolk team** to be the site for Clue 2 of their Sunday morning radio show 'Treasure Quest'. I had received this clue envelope from the BBC during the week and duly placed it on one of the existing, original paddle gear winding posts beside the upper gates.

Some excitement took place as cars whizzed up and down before the **Radio Car** arrived with the very lively **Becky** and driver **Ian** jumping out and searching for the clue. A very good piece of publicity for the canal, which I hope will have been heard by several thousand folk in the county. Thanks go to **Diane Howes of Briggate** for taking loads of photos of the event. In the meantime, **Mark Webster** of the **BTCV** turned up to investigate what we were all aiming towards. I did take some time out to explain the general plan and how we were working our way towards the final goal.

The chamber island looking once more cared for, the attention was then focussed further up the canal. Back to the work face then! Whatever happened to the 'only 100yards to go'?

The far end of the mill pond is now well behind us and the banks of the canal can now be clearly seen on both sides - about 30 feet apart. Trees are now at some distance apart and are generally not a major obstacle to progress. Unusually, there was a fair amount of water present instead of the usual 3 feet wide trickle. It did make the removal of felled trees a little more difficult of course, but most of this task was achieved - only three main ones remaining and there is also a couple of large piles of brash to be burned at a later date when the wind is in the right direction.

Lunch was taken on the chamber island and during the break **a lady**, who was being taken for a walk by her canine friend, came by and stopped for a chat. I mention this here because of the interest her visit occasioned. She said that, whilst she was in general agreement with what we were doing as a whole, she was most concerned about the plight of the wild-life. In this connection she was frightened that we would be removing or destroying large areas of undergrowth and marsh away from the canal, which is probably the habitat of a number of small animals. We each of us replied on the topic that we are also very concerned with wild-life and far from removing their habitats we are indeed improving them. Nature does need a little helping hand at times and in any event we are merely restoring the canal to what it was for over some hundred and fifty years with all the benefits deriving therefrom! I gather that the lady was suitably reassured by our combined answers and happily departed with one of the Trusts' brochures. After this break we all returned to the point of labour and left it in the state mentioned above. I think that the term 'cool and weary, but happy and contented' would sum up the mood at the end

of the day.

My thanks to all who attended and welcome to Richard and Mark - hope to see you both again at future events!

*The next meeting is at Briggate Mill pond on Sunday 7th February 10.*

(BTCV (*formerly British Trust for Conservation Volunteers*) is the largest practical conservation charity in the United Kingdom.)

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