

NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL TRUST

In co-operation with the East Anglian Waterways Association Ltd

Subject: Work party on pound north of Ebridge Lock No.3

Date: Sunday 27th April 2014

From: C. J. B. Black, NW&DCT and EAWA

THE PLAN: At the request of the OCC Ltd. to complete the cut back of the willows growing in the west side bed of the canal for some 300m of the top third of the pound. The brash would be placed on the west bank of the canal to provide cover for nesting birds.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT: The weather was overcast but warm. 10 volunteers arrived and Laurie lashed the weed cutter to the pontoon while we loaded our kit on board. At 10am we set off upstream. A safety throwing line was taken with us as a precaution against someone falling overboard. Being heavy the pontoon is extremely stable. The work attendance sheet was signed by all ten volunteers.

Ever mindful of the bird breeding season all the volunteers took great care to examine the trees, brash and reeds for any nesting activity before any work on the small trees and brash was performed. Only trees and brash growing in the canal bed were cut back leaving the trees on the west canal bank untouched. Branches growing below the water and extending across the canal causing a hazard to navigation were removed.

During the morning Mrs Bowles confronted us regarding the removal of the willow branches overhanging the canal which were a hazard to navigation. She made several misinformed comments which led to an exchange of views. I offered to meet with her at the earliest opportunity to discuss the restoration, as had David Revill in an earlier email to Mr Bowles.

We resumed work, with lunch being called at 12.30. A brief chat about the latest meeting with the EA was given to update the volunteers with the good news that Laurie could resume de-silting.

Having run out petrol we set off upstream towards Bacton Wood Lock. With slight difficulty, because of the heavily silted canal near the mill race confluence, we managed to reach the cottage just below Spa Common Road Bridge. The pontoon is the largest vessel to navigate the canal since the cessation of the wherry trade some 70 years ago!

We made our way back to the obstruction and removed the remaining overhanging branches. Interestingly we discovered that what were thought, by the EA, to be berms are in fact floating mats of reeds, which are unstable and easily dispersed as was demonstrated by a very large section which floated into the canal channel. This one section took four strong men 10 minutes of heavy work to pull it onto the bank.

Back at Ebridge 'island' two canoeists arrived and asked Laurie how far upstream it was possible to canoe. It was great to hear the words 'as far a Bacton Wood Lock' and to consider that the underwater hazards had been removed.

We ceased work at approx 15.30.

Chris Black, Work Party supervisor