

NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL TRUST

In co-operation with the East Anglian Waterways Association Ltd

Subject: Work party at Swafield Lock No.6  
Date: Sunday 28th September 2014  
From: C. J. B. Black, NW&DCT and EAWA

THE PLAN:

-To clear the brash and small trees from within the lock, to clear the ivy from the lock walls leaving the ivy on the top of the walls for frost protection, to reveal the position of the cill and investigate what appeared to be a part of the top lock gate.

-To clear the small spillway found on the north side of the canal.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT: The weather was dry, warm and sunny – ideal for the tasks ahead. The work-party volunteers assembled at the lower end of the field adjacent to the canal and lock no.5. Mickey Starling, the owner of this section of canal, arrived with tools etc. and a discussion took place as to what he wanted the volunteers to achieve in the upper lock. Mickey would be removing the smaller trees on the lock walls and within the bank area.

The Trust was pleased to welcome two new volunteers, Hadyn Claridge and Mike Harvey to join the large work-party of 16.

As we walked up towards the top lock, Ivan and others stopped at the spillway, the rest continued on to lock no.6. This lock has been compromised by partial infill by silt and soil which we are certain was removed from the southern side of the lock wall to form a deep bypass channel, the purpose of which may have been to speed up dramatically the flow of the canal feed-water by diverting it around the top lock. This may have been part of the 1940's scheme to reduce the effects of the North Walsham Laundry effluent flowing into the canal which caused prolific weed growth along its length.

Unfortunately the scheme has caused massive quantities of silt and suspended particles to flow into the canal system over the years as this bypass channel scours out its banks during frequent heavy flows and will have to be addressed to arrest this siltation problem.

The work-party set about removing the weeds, brash and small trees which were then burnt. Some of us set about revealing the 'lock gate' and attempting to find the cill.

Just before midday Ann Starling arrived with soup and cakes so we decided to break for lunch as all were rather weary. Thanks to Ann for her hospitality.

Lunch taken, we resumed the search for the cill and 'gate'. Eventually it was discovered that the cill had been removed, a major task probably done to increase the water flow through the lock before the bypass channel was dug. The 'lock gate' seemed to be part of a stop board and found hidden under the silt is the remains of the lock gates. The cleared spillway proved interesting as it had been modified over time.

We ceased work at approx 15.45 and will return at the next work-party.

Chris Black, Work Party leader.