

## NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL TRUST

In co-operation with the East Anglian Waterways Association Ltd

Subject: Work-parties at Bacton Wood Lock No 4 and Purdy's Marsh

Date: Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>&Sunday 19<sup>th</sup>March2017.

From: Chris Black, NW&DCT.

### THE PLAN:

- (DAY 1) to complete the mortar backfill of the lower gate quoins at Bacton Wood Lock, to locate the gates in the new quoins, to investigate the poor gate clearance above the floor recess and to clear out some of the silt and detritus from the lock chamber. We also planned to re-lay several bricks on one buttress which had been lifted by frost damage.
- (DAY 2) to complete the clearance of the silt and detritus from the lock chamber, to clear the remaining bits of branches/logs/cut reeds from Purdy's Marsh, to remove obstructions in the canal bed above Royston Bridge.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT: (DAY 1) The warm and dry weather was perfect for the tasks today and again the lock had to be pumped out due to the incursion of groundwater. 11 volunteers turned out all of whom were wearing hard-hats and hi-vis clothing as is required when on site. Our first task was finishing backfilling the new quoins with hydraulic lime mortar. This was completed in a couple of hours, so with lime mortar available a group of us set about the removal of bricks and old lime mortar loosened by frost on one of the west side buttresses. The bricks were re-laid and then covered by temporary boards to protect them from any late frost. Meanwhile efforts were made by the remaining volunteers to get the gates into the quoins to see if there was sufficient distance between the top of the gate hinge-posts and the top of the quoins, with the gates resting on the lock floor. This is important as the restraining straps holding the hinge-posts back lift the whole weight of the gate clear of the floor and allow the gate to swing freely. The clearance on both sides was  $\frac{1}{2}$ in but not sufficient, so shims will have to be inserted under the hinge posts. After spending two hours trying to work out how to proceed, Laurie abandoned any more work on the gates in favour of clearing the lock floor. The gates were secured with a strop holding the gates together and the hinge posts tied back to ground posts.

Lunch was taken at approx. 12.00

After lunch we cleared more of the detritus from the lock. This was done manually by shovelling the ooze into the Hy-Mac's large bucket which was lowered into the lock from the cill end. Approx. one third of the silt/old mortar/bricks and timber was removed before we called it a day.

Work ceased at 16.30

WORK ACHIEVEMENT: (DAY 2) the weather was dry, bright and very pleasant, unlike the ooze in the lock bottom! 12 volunteers turned out but not all could be accommodated in the lock to carry on with the clearance of the detritus. It took all morning to remove the remaining detritus, but we did find an original ground paddle windlass (probably dropped in by a wherry-man), a pristine bottle and a children's wooden spinning top toy. A small quantity of black ooze was left to cover the wooden floor as it must not be exposed to the air. It is in a remarkable condition despite being 191 years old.

Lunch was called at approx. 12.00

The work-party was moved to Purdy's Marsh to clear the remaining bits of branches/logs/cut reeds from the marsh. This task was made very much easier by the use of Laurie's recently acquired tracked tipper, which sped across the boggy ground with ease. The heaps of reed were moved to the north end of the marsh and burned. Deep tracks where wheeled vehicles have sunk will have to be levelled, but the third of the reed marsh cut down this year will now be left to regenerate and the remaining two thirds left for the wildlife. The cut third of the marsh however is where the invasive Himalayan Balsam is growing. We will remove the weed before it seeds and hopefully get permission to remove the Balsam on the upper east side of the soke.

Some of the volunteers had been tasked with removal of pieces of timber/rubbish etc. from the top part of the canal. Wood, barbed wire and an old tyre were removed and put safely out of way of the canal banks.

Chris Black, Work Party Leader