

Quagmire

The Newsletter of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust

Winter 2015/16

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News...

Each year the profits from **Sandringham Flower Show** are donated to worthwhile causes and we are pleased to report that in 2015 the canal restoration was included.

The donation of **£1,000.00** '*...is in recognition of the valuable work you do for the local community and the environment*'. A future newsletter will detail how the Trustees intend to spend this very welcome donation.



Have you walked alongside the canal from Royston Bridge towards Swafield Bridge lately? For the last few months the work-party volunteers have been assisting Laurie Ashton, the owner of this part of the canal, to clear the east bank. Trees that were growing in the bank and the canal bed have been removed, the larger trunks cut into logs and the smaller branches burnt. The conditions were sometimes wet, cold and muddy but the volunteers persevered, reaching almost to Swafield Bridge before Christmas.



If you look carefully this picture shows Swafield bridge in the centre and the Kingdom Hall on the right. On the left in the foreground the remaining bamboo can be seen, the majority of the bamboo having been cut down during an exhausting work party. Neither pandas nor Japanese soldiers were found to be lurking in the bamboo thicket, but much better was the discovery of grooves in a hitherto hidden wall, suggesting that the wherries may have been manhandled back around

the corner into a dock of some kind. A few blue bricks suggest that there could have been a staithe edge here - although there is no evidence, so far, on the archival map collection, of such a basin. These are the only such marks found so far on the canal. Over the next few months it is the intention to look for evidence of a possible staithe near the old building and research what caused the grooves in the brickwork. The remaining trees on the left in the picture will also be cleared within the next couple of months. A cherry-picker will be hired as some of the trees are extremely tall, with power lines and a house nearby.



Recent Events

Cantley Village Hall 21st October.

The Women's Institute at Cantley proved to be a very attentive and interested group. Chris's first question was 'who knew there was a canal in Norfolk?' and only one person raised a hand. Now the 16 women, all of whom signed the petition, will be spreading the word. We are grateful to the group for their generous donation of £45.

The talk must have been well received as one person has booked another talk for a different group in 2016!

United Reform Church, Norwich 16th November.

Another interested group, five of whom had previously known about the canal, paid great attention to Chris's talk. After Chris, Tom Carr also spoke and again was well received. Their policy is to give speakers' fees to charity and therefore they decided to give a donation to Christian Aid.

Christmas Tree Festival, Bacton Church



The NWDCT Christmas tree was the best of them all – in our opinion! Note the artistic use of a membership form in place of an angel and Perry's wildlife photos shaped as baubles. Our thanks must go to Sue, Membership Secretary on the left in the photo and Helen, Trust Secretary on the right for making the effort to raise awareness of our canal to people who may not otherwise know about it.

From the Trustees and Officers:

David Revill – Work Party Organiser & Press Officer

01603 738648

The EAWA (East Anglian Waterways Association) will be holding their AGM on 17th April. Full information will be published in the next Quagmire. The meeting will be held at the Sutton Staithe Hotel with a meal at a reduced rate (pre-booked) and that the steam launch at the Broads Museum should be available to us (pre-booked) in the morning.

Sue Boulton – Membership Secretary

I have received another subscription from **Anthony Martin** this year - unfortunately I do not have Anthony's email address, or address and telephone number so I cannot say thank you. If anyone knows Anthony - his initials are A.J. - please let me know so that I can thank him and start sending newsletters to him.

There are many members who still receive these newsletters either by post or hand delivery and of course I am very happy to continue keeping you all informed in this way. However, maybe you were given a laptop for Christmas and would be willing to receive the Quagmire by email? Just let me know via secretary@nwdct.org so that we can save on postage money. Many thanks.

Anyone for Cricket?

When I wander along the canal, my eyes are naturally drawn to movement, be it small or not so small. It has come from a lifetime of interest in nature; so much so that I tend to notice things that many other people might miss.

This is basically what happened on Wednesday 23rd September 2015.

I was walking along the northern bank of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal, heading from Royston Bridge towards Swafield.

It was a quiet, very ordinary autumn day. The sun was out and it was mild and calm.

As I walked along, I was checking the vegetation at the edges of the canal and the back-soke for spiders and hoverflies.

Just as I approached the section of path adjacent to Pigney's Wood, I noticed a small movement, deep amongst the plants. I bent down for a closer look and found a grasshopper or cricket - I wasn't sure which at that stage - trying to sun itself without becoming too exposed to predators. I was carrying my camera as I usually do when on my little 'expeditions', and managed to manoeuvre myself into a position where I could take a photo or two. I didn't get many shots before the insect realised it didn't want to be famous anymore and crawled back out of sight. Grasshoppers and Crickets can be tricky to identify, both in the field and from photographs. It is often very useful to hear them 'singing', because the various species have distinctive sounds. This one was silent.

I walked on a few more yards and noticed another cricket - at least I was sure it was a cricket this time - also partially in view. Again I took a few shots and carried on my way.

At home, I have a nice little library of various field guides and other reference books on a range of wildlife subjects, so as soon as I had downloaded my photos onto my computer, I set about trying to identify the two insects.



The first one was remarkably easy, having very distinctive features. The cream-coloured edge to the pronotum with the three 'dots' behind it left me in no doubt that this was a Roesel's Bush-cricket.

Roesel's Bush-cricket

I first checked 'Grasshoppers and Allied Insects of Great Britain and Ireland', by Marshall and Haes. This book contained distribution maps dated 1988. At that time, there were no records of Roesel's Bush-cricket anywhere in Norfolk.

I then referred to 'Grasshoppers and Allied Insects of Norfolk', by David Richmond. This book, published by the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society in 2001, also contained a distribution map for the Roesel's Bush-cricket which showed that, by then there were four recorded sites for this species in the County.

Since then, it had spread widely across the county as is beautifully illustrated in the most recent distribution map. (See below.)

The other insect I photographed that day was a 'Conehead', of which there are two separate species in Britain; Long-winged and Short-winged.



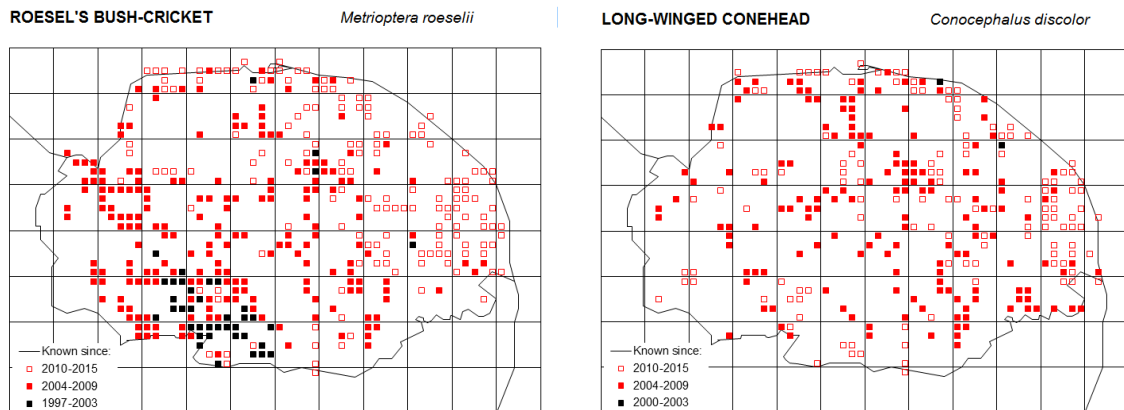
Long-winged Conehead

I identified this as a Long-winged Conehead and sent the records of the two species, along with the photos, to David Richmond*. The only trouble was, somewhere along the way, I had a 'Senior Moment' and my record stated that this was a Short-winged! I have no idea how I managed that, but fortunately David corrected it for me.

Again, I checked 'Grasshoppers and Allied Insects of Great Britain and Ireland'. The 1988 map showed a small group of known locations clustered along the south coast of Britain, but nothing further north, and definitely not in East Anglia.

I went back to 'Grasshoppers and allied insects of Norfolk', again. The 2001 map showed only one site in Norfolk, that being at Beeston Common near Sheringham.

Once again, the map shows the rather remarkable spread of this species across the County over a comparatively few years.



Distribution maps (2105) reproduced by kind permission of David Richmond, Norwich and Norfolk Naturalists' Society.

I was pleased to have added these two species to the list of the wildlife around the canal; even more so because they were both completely new species to me.

*David Richmond is the County Recorder for this group of insects, and I am grateful to him for his help and guidance.

I quote David from our correspondence regarding the maps, "I have used time bands which should help reflect the spread of the insects across Norfolk - Roesels out from the Brecklands only getting into the north-east quite late on, but LWC seemingly all over at once, its fully winged form and one-year egg cycle giving a faster colonisation. Roesels is normally short-winged and has a two year cycle, and is dependent on the production of macropterous (long-winged) forms to make incremental jumps."

Perry Hampson Wildlife Officer North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust



Work party near Pigney's Wood

A new occasional column –“ taken from a book...”

A recent find in a Holt second-hand bookshop describes **a trip by steam driven yacht** in the late **1880s**. The trip started at Gt. Yarmouth and travelled up the canal as far as Ebridge. This short extract is very relevant to us today!

“Before coming to Dilham our course is arrested by a lock, but by the payment of a small fee this difficulty is easily overcome. It is quite exhilarating to feel one’s self “rising in the world”, as the great flood of white water comes rushing in between the massive gates from the upper river, and we once more find ourselves on a level with surrounding country. And a very pretty country it is, right away to North Walsham, being in many parts beautifully wooded; some of the plantations come quite down to the water’s edge. These, however, are kept as preserves for game, especially pheasants, and being private property, may be looked upon as sour grapes; so we have to content ourselves with the voices of smaller birds, who make the woods ring with their noisily joyous songs.”

And on the same topic, the following item was noticed on a blog written by two New Zealanders currently narrow-boating in England and Wales:



*“There obviously hasn’t been sufficient walking of late because my belt has been let out another notch. After dinner yesterday evening I went for a stroll down the towpath. It was actually after dusk and I could hear what appeared to be **pheasants** in the trees on both sides of the canal. Knowing the camera lens takes a reasonable photo in the dark I pointed it at the trees and pressed the shutter...*



...I knew they were up there somewhere!”

It is good to know that pheasants are not disturbed even on busy canals with many passing boats, people and dogs!

Queries and Questions!

An enquiry was recently received via our website from a group of canoeists wishing to **canoe our canal**. The following is a précis of the correspondence:

...I have canoed up the canal from Barton Turf to Honing Lock. Is there another section of the canal which can be accessed? How far above Honing Lock can we get or is it overgrown/dry?

... you can canoe a section from Ebridge (near White Horse Common) on the Happisburgh Road out of North Walsham. You can park near Lock No.3 and put your canoe in there. It's a very wide area of water as it is the millpond for the mill - now redundant and being turned into apartments. From here you can paddle upstream to Lock No.4 at Spa Common. The canal was de-weeded in the summer so should be clear of obstructions. You can paddle up to Spa Common road-bridge and going through it you will see the beautifully restored lock. You can't paddle into the lock as there is an earth bund in front of it. Upstream of the lock the canal is dry at present but if all goes to plan this section will be re-watered soon and you will then be able to canoe all the way to Swafeld bottom Lock No. 5. The canal ends at this point. Please bear in mind that the canal is privately owned but the owner of the section above Ebridge is keen to promote access to the canal.

...can we get from Lock 3 all the way back to Barton Broad on water allowing for routine portages around the locks? There will probably be a dozen canoes...

...the problem is that downstream of Lock no3 at Ebridge the canal is owned by the North Walsham Canal Co. Ltd. who are somewhat less accommodating than the Old Canal Co. Ltd who own the canal upstream from Lock No3. There is shallow flowing water in the canal from Ebridge to Honing and it has been canoed in the past but the Canal Co. who own this stretch, make it plain that they do not want canoes on it! So your only 'legitimate' canoeing water is from downstream of Bacton Wood Lock No4 at Spa Common to Ebridge then from Honing Lock No1 to Wayford and on to Barton.

Chris Black, Vice Chairman

Ten years ago...

Thanks go to Ivan for suggesting this yearly look back at work-parties ten years ago.

Briggate Lock 30th Jan 2005



Spillway at Ebridge discovered, 4th June 2005



Items of interest to members:



Our congratulations go to Edward Cubbit who has recently completed the Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award. The following item is taken from the report written by Ivan Cane confirming Ed's hard work and involvement with the Canal.

Edward first attended a work party on 27th July 2014 and has attended most of the work parties since that date. Times are flexible, depending on daylight and weather, but his input to date would be around 66 hours. Whatever the weather, Edward will turn up, on his bike, if he can and is one of the most regular attendees. One of Edward's goals was to further his interest in conservation, another was to support the Trust's aim to restore the canal, as he could see the benefits that the restoration work was already bringing to the local community. These goals have easily been achieved. Edward works well in a team, and is a respected and welcome participant by the other members. Despite being the youngest in the group, he communicates easily and cheerfully with others of all ages, and has become a natural member of the group.

Over the last 15 months, Edward's skills and confidence have grown in leaps and bounds. He willingly and safely works with the various conservation hand tools e.g. bow saws, loppers, to prepare cleared trees for logs or the chipper and bonfires. He is also happy to work alongside plant machinery such as chippers and excavators, and is fully aware of the health and safety requirements and risks of the various tasks undertaken. Other skills learnt include working alongside brush cutters and mowers to clear brash and other undergrowth, whilst being aware of wildlife and using the materials to provide wildlife havens. One member whom Edward worked with whilst undertaking an archaeological style dig at Swafield Locks, commented on his pleasure and interest in the various artefacts that were uncovered. Again this was another new skill for him. Edward has also been a member of those groups that have operated from floating bases such as the Canal Companies pontoons or the Trust's workboat.

It has been a pleasure to have him join us, and he is a credit to the DofE Volunteering scheme. His efforts have helped to make a difference, towards the opening up this historic unique Norfolk Canal as a community resource.



Ivan commented to Ed:

We have appreciated the hours of labour you have given to the Canal project over the past 15 months - I can still remember when you first arrived on your bike. We were all having lunch when you cycled up, we thought you wanted to get past us - and were dumbfounded when you asked to join in!!!! And that asking took some guts too - all those elderly mud splattered people looking at you!

Photo shows Ed in 2014 looking at the newly uncovered Swafield Lock 6.

Dates for your diary

Thursday 25th February 2016. 7pm for 7.30, St Benet's Hall, North Walsham.

Those of you who attended the last film night presented by John 'Jonno' Parker will surely be eager to come along to see his film as he has spent many hours adding new footage, editing, polishing and **adding a commentary**. John has sent the following 'taster' information:-

I have entitled this film "The Battle for Bacton Wood" because it was a very difficult section to work on as the machines could only work off the South bank, with the exception of one lightweight mini digger. The film opens with felling the trees on the north bank and hauling them across the canal for chipping and logging, which went on for several weeks. The next task was to clear the section of reeds and vegetation that clogged the channel. Then all the tree stumps were removed, each stump having to be hauled across the canal. Some were easy but some were very difficult. After this the "Weasel" and the JCB were used to de-silt the section and restore the canal to something close to its original width. Lots of mud and water was flying about and also some very angry wasps after their nest had been disturbed. The last part of the plan was to bring the pontoon up to Bacton wood for carrying the spoil away. It took hours to clear the way under the bridge after the pontoon became well and truly beached, but finally the Pontoon makes it under the bridge and is loaded with the skips to carry the soil upstream. The film reflects just what an epic project this was.

This film runs for 60 minutes and Trustees and Officers will be available to answer questions. As an added bonus this year, there will be a running slide show of Perry's wonderful wildlife photographs showing the huge diversity of wildlife that can be found along the canal. Our renowned home-made cakes will be available and as before, **Trust members will benefit from free entry**, non-members £2 at the door.

Thursday 24th March. Another of our popular **coffee mornings** at St Nicholas Room, Vicarage Street North Walsham. 9.00-12.30. As always there will be home-made cakes and scones plus a display of photos and Trustees on hand for a chat.

9th – 11th June 2016 Moth Night. Members may remember reading Perry's 'Moth Night' article in the summer Quagmire. Perry plans to organise another such night and is keen to include any of our members who may be interested. Further details will be included in the spring newsletter.

Saturday & Sunday 18th & 19th June 2016 We will be holding another of our popular **open weekends**. Please put the date in your diary now and details will follow in the Spring newsletter.

Friday 26th June 2016 The Trust will have an information stall at the **North Walsham Fun Day**.

Saturday & Sunday 10th & 11th September 2016 The second **open weekend** for 2016, to coincide with Norfolk Heritage Open Days. Note the date now!

Thursday 24th November 2016 Yet another of our popular coffee mornings at St Nicholas Room, Vicarage Street, North Walsham. 9.00-12.30. Home-made cakes & scones, photos and information, plus W&DC Trust items for sale in time for Christmas!

Talks and presentations to groups:

Ivan Cane's forthcoming programme, all entitled 'The North Walsham & Dilham Canal 1826 – 2016'.

Thursday 3rd March 2016

Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society

Friday 4th March 2016

North Walsham University of the Third Age

Wednesday 16th March 2016

Pulham Market Society

Wednesday 2nd Nov 2016

Briston Wives Group

Thursday 10th November 2016

IWA Chelmsford Branch

Other planned talks to interest groups include:

Wednesday 6th July 2016

Freethorpe Women's Group. Chris & Mary Black

The Quagmire is a newsletter for all members of NW&DCT and members are encouraged to make suggestions for future items.

The deadline for items for inclusion in the Spring 2016 Quagmire (at the Trustees' discretion) is 10th April.

Contact mdablack@btinternet.com



Lunch time! Swafield bridge, looking north.