

NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL TRUST

In co-operation with the East Anglian Waterways Association Ltd

Subject: Work-party on NE and SW banks of canal near Pigneys Wood nature reserve.
Date: Sunday 21st August 2016.
From: Chris Black, NW&DCT.

THE PLAN:

- To take dumpers from Spa Common up to area near Pigneys Wood, to be used to move spoil on the SW bank further downstream to build up the height of the bank.
- To continue the seeding of the NE bank of the canal, working downstream from the previously sown area of bank and re-seeding patches of bank where the grass seed had failed to take.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT: The weather was very warm, sunny, slightly tempered by a light wind. Seven volunteers turned out, well down on our last work-party but it is holiday season. We gathered in Laurie's yard by the old workshops and following an introductory lesson on driving the dumpers we set off upstream until we reached the road at Royston Bridge. To make crossing the road safe we had people in Hi-Vis jackets watching out for traffic. All four of our vehicles safely crossed the road and we continued upstream until we reached the bund just below the sluice. The dumpers crossed over the bund onto the SW bank and travelled up to the area opposite Pigneys Wood. Laurie then walked back downstream to pick up his digger.

Meanwhile the rest of the work-party sorted out the grass seed into small bags and commenced seeding the NE bank, which had been harrowed by Daniel earlier in the morning. The soil at this point was devoid of large stones and weeds so it made the grass sowing reasonably easy.

We worked on the seeding all morning but as we neared the upstream section previously sown we noticed that the seed had not taken in odd parts – maybe because it was black peat. We continued upstream towards the old railway bridge sowing over patches which were not coming up from the previous sowing. Dick enlisted some of the walkers using the bank by thrusting seed into their hands telling them that they could say that they had helped to sow the bank! Meanwhile on the opposite bank... the dumper crew were moving the spoil down the bank. There was not enough room to turn around the machines so it was forward downstream, reverse upstream.

Lunch was called at 12.30. Some stayed with the dumpers while we sat near Laurie's truck.

Some further seeding was carried out and a lot of talking took place with people out walking with their families. Towards the end of the afternoon we noticed that work had stopped on the NW bank and there was some serious looking activity around the engine compartment of the digger. As our seeding team was down by Laurie's truck we couldn't contact the digger/dumper crew so we put a can of diesel in the wheelbarrow and went upstream to meet them. It soon became apparent that the diesel pump had air in it and needed bleeding – but no-one had a spanner! Jerry managed to fashion a 'spanner' from an old window catch and it worked, the digger engine soon burst into life. We walked back with the machinery behind us and safely crossed the road to return to base.

Work ceased at approx. 15.30

Chris Black, work-party leader