

NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL TRUST

In co-operation with the East Anglian Waterways Association Ltd

Subject: Work-party at Bacton Wood Lock No 4
Date: Saturday 4th & Sunday 5th March 2017.
From: Chris Black, NW&DCT.

THE PLAN:

- To assist with the installation of the lower gate quoins (hinge posts) at Bacton Wood Lock. Days 1 & 2
- To carry on with the clearance of the north side of Royston Bridge. Day 2

WORK ACHIEVEMENT: (DAY 1) - The weather forecast for the weekend was mixed, with Saturday being the drier day and Sunday forecast for a sunny start but with rain later. On Saturday morning 9 volunteers turned out, enough to split off two of the group to clear the brambles and small saplings growing in the upper mouth of the lock, the remaining 7 to be employed on the job of bolting the new steel quoins into place.

The first task for Laurie was to pump out the lock to enable access to the chamber. Groundwater bubbles up through the floor which means that the pumps have to run continuously to keep the water level low.

More safety hard-hats and hi-vis waistcoats have been purchased to ensure that all new volunteers, who attend a work-party, are issued with a personal hard-hat and hi-vis waistcoat which will be worn when in the lock and on site. (These are also available to regulars who have forgotten their PPE!)

With the lock free of water we were able to access the lock. The west side quoin was lowered into position and the holes for the fixing bolts were drilled out. Threaded rod was 'glued' into the fixing holes using two part epoxy resin and after waiting for it to cure we bolted the quoin in place. Packing pieces were put in place to effect a temporary seal for the hydraulic lime mortar to be placed behind the steel quoin. Volunteers cleaned and puddled clay to use as a temporary sealing material around the packing pieces.

Lunch was taken at approx. 12.30

The next step was to mix up some mortar to try to back-fill behind the west side quoin. All went well with fixing of the retaining studs, however the packing placed between the quoin and the brickwork and the temporary clay seal didn't fully stop the mortar from escaping. The east side quoin was put in place and eventually bolted up to be safe. Mortar back-fill was also tried in this quoin but it also leaked out.

We tried various ways to get the mortar to hold in but eventually reached the end of the day so we would have to leave the problem until Sunday.

Work finished at approx. 16.00

WORK ACHIEVEMENT: (DAY 2) Sunday started dry but rain arrived soon after mid morning. 12 volunteers turned out so it was possible to split the work-party, 1) to enable the weed/bramble clearance of the north side of Royston Bridge and 2) to help with the fixing of the lower gate quoins.

1) The Royston Bridge clearance party continued the clearance of the north side of the bridge begun a few weeks previously. The detritus was burned safely with the breeze taking the smoke away from the road.

2) The Bacton Wood Lock party continued the work of fixing the quoins in place and trying another method of temporarily sealing the quoin edges to stop the mortar back-fill from escaping. This time, expanding foam was used – a messy and unsightly method but more likely to be successful.

Lunch was taken at approx. 12.30

Having left the foam to harden, a slightly drier hydraulic lime mortar was gradually fed behind the west quoin and the foam held. Several barrow loads of mortar were mixed, enough to back-fill both quoins to above the water line, but no higher as we ran out of hydraulic lime! The site was tidied up and all the tools and wheelbarrows were cleaned and put into the lock-up. Some of us then walked up the canal to see how the work-party was progressing at Royston Bridge. We helped them to finish their work then returned to the lock-up to put the remaining tools away. A discussion took place before we left regarding the installation of shelving in the lock up to make greater use of the space.

Work finished at approx. 16.30

Chris Black, Work-Party Leader