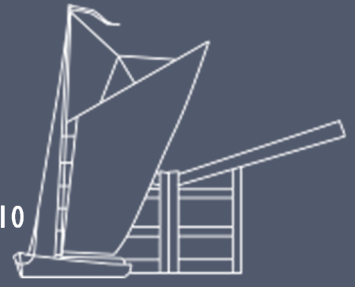


QUAGMIRE

NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL TRUST CIO



VOLUME 4 ISSUE 4

AUTUMN 2020

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Weasel awaiting tlc - February 2020



Weasel being jacked up ready for underwater inspection (see pages 10-13)

£2

Autumn 2020

Meet Margaret and Terry Willoughby



Terry pointing at Ebridge Lock
(I. Cane)

Terry, - there is rarely a work party event where you are not on the scene, either as leader or worker. What attracted you to join the canal volunteers in the first place?

After five years I completed my apprenticeship at Laurence Scott and Electromotors in Norwich. Then left and went into the Ford motor trade and finished there forty five years later. On completion my wife Margaret had lined up various volunteer situations as she didn't want me idling at home getting in her way. So in 2014 I joined two of them the first being the Norfolk Wildlife Trust which I work every week on the Trinity Broads i.e. Ormesby, Filby and Rollesby broads. This work is mainly scrub clearance around the broads and public access areas. The second one I joined was the North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust, this I found out about from a friend of our cycling group who was a volunteer at the time - Peter Owen. I thoroughly enjoy working on the canal projects and to see

the enhancements in the six years that I, and the other volunteers, have achieved has been amazing. About two years ago I was asked if I would like to be a work party leader, this I did and found this very rewarding, although there is more to it than just the job in hand.

There is organising getting equipment to the sites and returning it all at the end of the day. Then the typing the reports that evening and forwarding them on. Since the lock down Margaret, who volunteers in a charity shop, has been coming down helping out Balsam pulling, raking cut reed, being my banksman/woman whilst chain sawing fallen trees etc. She had volunteered at various times previous to that.

From all the encouraging comments from the public who talk to me whilst working are keen to know what we are doing and hope to achieve. It is nice to know that people are interested in what we have achieved and what the future of the canal will be. Our work can only enhance the area and bring in a diverse array of wildlife and plant life. It will look amazing when completed.

Margaret - having managed to get Terry out of your way for the last six years on his various voluntary duties, why did you decide to come along and join in?

Just to get matter straight when Terry retired after 40 plus years being so active for his working life I was worried that if he then did nothing he might "pop his clogs". I should have known better and he soon found plenty to do volunteering, walking and biking in groups.

I have helped out in the canal over the years at odd times with balsam picking and helping with the removal of Ivan's Island.



Margaret Balsam Bashing at
Purdy's Soke (A. Bertram)

During the pandemic the charity shop, where I volunteer closed, and walking groups etc. ceased, So when the canal work parties re-started it was an opportunity to get out and do something, so I came along with Terry.

I like to go to the work parties where there were things I could do. I started with the clearing of Purdy's Marsh and the picking of the balsam. haven't joined the ones doing work on the locks, as I'm not keen on ladders prefer to have my feet on terra firma. I hope to continue to volunteer on parties that I can be of use to.

Terry as in his working life gave a 100% commitment to anything he did and that is the same for the canal. If a job has to be done he likes to get it completed. An example of this is the Ebridge lock project where he spent a large amount of time with Nigel and Frank to get the lock ready on time for the new gates to be fitted. They all achieved this and did an excellent job.

Terry - whatever the job is, whether bricklaying, sorting the mechanical breakdowns or wallowing in mud -you're always there in the middle, calmly guiding us along the right track. However, there must be some tasks that you prefer, and others you wish on other WP leaders - so any preferences and dislikes?

Really I am happy doing any job that needs doing. Having had done a chain saw course for the Wild Life Trust I can use that skill for the benefit of the canal. That is something I enjoy doing as it helps when clearing areas where a hand saw is not sufficient.

I particularly enjoyed the Ebridge Lock project. This was an involved job had to be done within a quick time frame to enable the new gates to be fitted. Working with Nigel and Frank we spent many hours last summer on renewing the brick work damage both in the lock and at the side approach wings. I can now add brickwork to my skills. It was satisfying to see the completed gates and walls and how safe the lock looks now.

The other job which I enjoyed was helping in the making of the large gates for Bacton Lock and the fitting of them. Now there is job of adjusting them to fit better so that the canal will be one step further to rewatering.

There is always something different to do which makes it interesting

In the early years it was great when we clearing all the overgrown brush, trees etc and having huge bonfires which lasted days. Also sitting round them having our lunch breaks and a good natter.

Christmas times we would be sitting round the fires consuming mince pies and wine that Chris and Mary had bought along, great times.

Margaret, you mentioned pulling Himalayan Balsam at Purdy's Marsh. You have a reputation that Balsam is your bête noire , and none within reach is safe from your grasp. Is this so?

I think balsam pulling is what I enjoy the most and together with Alan and sometimes Terry we have nearly cleared the balsam from Purdy's Marsh. Next year hopefully we will be able to access land over the soke dyke to clear it there. Some was done at Honing Staithe whilst I was bank man for Terry cutting fallen trees on the path, that will be a project for next year.

Thank you both for everything you do to help oil the wheels of the restoration effort. Just one last question - where would you hope to see the Canal's restoration by November, 2022?

We would love to see the Canal with its water in up to Swafield. We feel that all the work, time and enthusiasm that Laurie Ashton has out into this project has to be applauded and rewarded by its completion. Then we can tackle the downstream from Ebridge in the future.

Work Party Roundup

As reported last time, after the then COVID-19 lockdown ended, work parties resumed on June 11th.



Earlier in June, Ebridge lock had had the bund sealed, readying it for the clearance of the chamber. However, once pumped out, the chamber promptly refills itself with groundwater and leaks from the gates. The cill area for the refurbished gates needs to be regularly pumped dry to enable work to progress. Because of this, the decision was taken to purchase, rather than rent, a suitable pump. The new pump can deal with the mud, silt, sand and foreign objects that the lock contains without dam-

aging itself (known as a 'trash' pump and able to manage with objects up to 25mm in diameter).

This is shown above, emptying the lock at one tonne a minute.

August was a busy month for the volunteers. A thoroughly enjoyable day was had at Swafield on the 6th, helping Mike Starling and his family remove saplings from the canal banks, with the assistance of Chris H. and his mini-digger. It also gave us a chance to look at the Swafield Locks and the remains of the wartime defensive line. The high point of the day was the home-made sausage rolls and Victoria Sponge at lunchtime, awesome!



A socially-distanced information day was held at Ebridge in August, just to let the local populace know that we were around and still cared! Although the turnout wasn't huge, many kind remarks were made about the canal environs and how much they had been appreciated during lockdown as places to exercise.



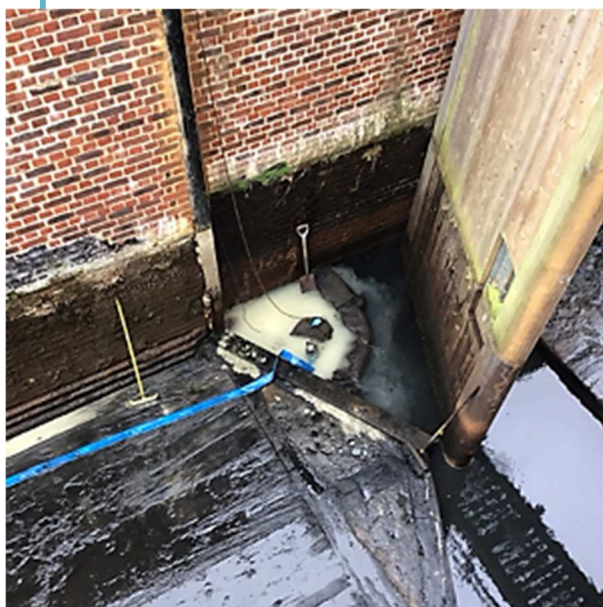
Work parties took a distinctly maritime turn during August, starting with clearing Laurie's canal frontage of saplings, using his pontoon. He managed to terrify us all by pulling out the roots with his mini-digger, with no visible means of support and a maniacal laugh, despite just having had a hip replacement!

The end of the month saw a return to Purdy's Marsh to re-establish access to the drain, so that rotting vegetation could be removed to improve the water quality and flow

rate. A long-term problem with the culvert was also rectified at this time, allowing water to flow more evenly through both pipes.

The pontoon was again used in early September, when we took it down to Muckle Farm's frontage, removing overhanging vegetation which was limiting access along the canal. This was very much a combined operation, with one group on the pontoon cutting and then transferring the arisings to the opposite bank for the other group to load up the tractor and trailer to take back to Bacton Lock for disposal.

The high point of September was the repair of the lock gates at Bacton Wood. These had been first installed several years ago, before developing a problem with one of the lower bearings which turned out to be the collapse of its support pot seating. The lock had to be first pumped out with the careful removal of its inhabitants, the gate examined and then a fix devised using a resin-based concrete. The actual repair and re-installation happened a fortnight later.



The actual repair and re-installation happened a fortnight later.

October's first work party was a follow-up to the storm which had necessitated the lifting of the paddles of Ebridge Lock, so as to manage levels after the 90+mm of rain that fell in the catchment area. This included recovering the staging access planks that had floated downstream.

A quieter visit to Ebridge on the 15th had volunteers seeding the newly built up section of the canal bank. Then, on the 11th, a return visit - after several years' absence - to



Royston Spillway. The volunteers cleared the soke dyke down to the culvert outlet, another stage towards the re-watering of this upper pound.



Our thanks to all the volunteers who have continued to support the work parties, whilst sticking to the COVID-19 requirements.

Mark Shopland

Do you have any pictures of recent, or ancient, work party activities. Mary Black continues to keep a hard record of these for use at Trust events? Please contact her at mdablack@btinternet.com if you are able to help. Thanks.

MONSTERS OF THE DEEP?

What's going on in the Canal?? A series of aquatic plant surprises have been sprung on Boating Officer Graham Pressman and myself this year, with new (and mostly alien) species suddenly appearing from nowhere and dominating the scene, only to unexpectedly decline and be replaced by something even stranger. Graham is in the front line of these metamorphoses, as it is he and his trusty weed cutter who have to grapple with these 'eruptions from the deep' (well, five foot of water). I'm then called in to identify the newcomers and try to offer a solution to the invasion - if a solution exists.

At the moment the Ebridge Lock to Bacton Wood Lock section of the Canal is the only part 'in water'. To keep it navigable means that submerged water plants are cut regularly during the growing season by Graham, with the arisings dropped onto the adjacent banks. He and I keep an eye on these cuttings to see what's growing under the water. Until 2020 they mainly comprised the long strap-shaped underwater leaves of Branched Burr-reed *Sparganium erectum*. But this year, a sudden explosion of Waterweed *Elodea* (mainly Nuttall's Waterweed *E. nuttallii*) occurred in early summer. This is an alien from North America which is a popular pond and aquarium plant, and could have been introduced by humans – either accidentally or deliberately; but could also have come e.g. on the feet of water fowl. We'd only found it in tiny amounts before spring 2020, but for some reason its growth accelerated from nought to sixty this summer. Why, we don't know; but many aquatic species can regrow from small plant fragments and cutting the Canal bed obviously creates and spreads such propagules. This probably happened with the Waterweed; and Graham suddenly found himself struggling to grapple with the choking quantities facing his Weedeater. In addition to the practical problems it was causing, we were obviously also concerned about the effects of this invasion on the Canal water

ecosystem, and Graham wanted to know what - if anything - could be done to control it. Alas, research shows that it's very difficult to control vigorous unwanted aquatic plant growth in many natural/semi-natural water bodies, where herbicides can't be used safely, leaving only pulling/cutting/ dredging as options. So we resigned ourselves to trying to love our enemy, as *Elodea* is in fact a great oxygenator, extractor of excess nutrients, home to small aquatic creatures, and food for many species.

But our concerns regarding the rampant Waterweed proved unnecessary, as - suddenly, in August - everything changed again. The *Elodea* reduced to nearly nothing and was instead replaced by equally choking amounts of what appeared to be industrial quantities of Brillo pad. What on earth was this? By now the Weedeater was trying to saw through a Canal chock-a-block with a new monster – a tangled mass with the texture of coarse hair. I had never seen anything like it, neither had Graham . . . and nor had the members of the Norfolk Flora Group (who know *everything*) to whom I brought samples for identification. We therefore passed them along to Eilish Rothney of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, who has much experience with freshwater aquatic plants. She suggested that this is an unusual genus of filamentous green algae – again from N. America - called *Pithophora* and commonly known as Horse Hair algae. Which species she doesn't know, but I have since contacted experts at Natural England and Plantlife, in case they were interested and/or could identify it more definitively (haven't heard back yet). Once again we wanted to know what - if anything - could be done to control this remarkable upstart; but once more we had to assume that cutting was Graham's only option

Canal, full of *Elodea**Pithophora* - Horse Hair

16/08/2020 16:33



Pithophora - Horse Hair

and that we had to try to love this new invader too. And again, poking into the great rolls of 'Horse Hair' which Graham was landing on the banks showed that they were alive with aquatic invertebrates (water shrimps, snails, worms etc) which had presumably been enjoying what this novel colonizer of the water had to offer in the way of shelter and food. We also discovered that this weed does not quickly break down on the bank, whereas most aquatic plants do.

But the saga doesn't end there. In September, the dominant *Pithophora* suddenly began to wane, and was soon restricted to a mere 100 m of Canal. 'Why?' we wondered, of course. It now seems likely that its August explosion was caused by high summer temperatures coupled with significant nutrients in the water. Lessening heat in September, and less direct sun on the water seem to have discouraged it. And finally, as the *Pithophora* declined, yet another surprise visitor appeared in significant amounts at Ebridge - the water plant Rigid Hornwort (no sniggering at the back,

Pressman) *Ceratophyllum demersum*. Once more, it's a newcomer to the Canal in the sense that I've never seen it there before; but this time we can be wholeheartedly enthusiastic about its presence, as it's a welcome *bona fide* native species and also indicative of decent water quality.

Whatever will happen next, we wonder? Obviously, we don't know, but I think we've learned to be a bit more sanguine about the surprises that the Canal can spring; and hopefully, we'll take the next 'Monster From the Deep' in our stride. **Suki Pryce**



Ceratophyllum demersum - Rigid Hornwort

Pike Fishing - A Reminder

Please remember that this is a Canal under restoration. At times this means that water levels may be variable, and banks closed so that further restoration and maintenance work can be undertaken.

Pike Fishing - Close Season - 1st March to 31st September.

- ◆ Hooks - Single and barbless, max size 4, NO TREBLES.
- ◆ Baits - Sea fish and dead baits only, NO LIVE baiting.
- ◆ Traces – Stainless steel traces 15 inches minimum.
- ◆ Line - 20lbs Monofilament and 30lbs Braid minimum.
- ◆ Equipment - Large knotless landing net with a minimum of 36in. long arms, large unhooking mat, 12in long artery forceps, side cutters.
- ◆ Dawn till dusk fishing.
- ◆ Catch and release, no keepnets.
- ◆ Avoid dangerous gorging, strike early!



Lee Siggins with his 15lb 30oz pike, caught at Ebridge earlier this year. Photo - Scottie

Floating Pennywort



Floating Pennywort near to Hundred Stream Junction.
A. Bertram

The Broad's Authority Facebook Page on 5th October, with a follow-up in the EDP of the 6th October, reported the spotting of Floating Pennywort on the Lower Canal. They quote the source as possible dumping of unwanted pond plants in the associated waters, although this invasive species can also be transported on canoes, fishing tackle, or the legs of wading birds migrating from other areas polluted with this horrible weed.

Floating Pennywort was introduced to the UK in the 1980's by the aquatic nursery trade, this fleshy-stemmed plant grows into thick floating mats of lush foliage across waterways, is highly invasive and difficult to control, due to its rapid growth rates (upto 20cm per day!) and its ability to re-grow from a small fragment. It has caused considerable problems to navigators on the Great Ouse system over the

past few years (I know, my boat was stranded on an island of the stuff, engine ceased and floating towards a weir on the River Cam a couple of years ago!)

The EA and BA report that the weed is in the lower reaches of the Hundred Stream and at the confluence with the Canal, plus one of the soke dykes, and the Trust's volunteers have spotted it below Honing Lock. The EA are organising a meeting of the key partners to discuss the next steps. It is important that canoes and other craft, fishing tackle, clothing and even yourself, are checked to ensure that any suspected specimens are removed, before transferring to other waters. Any sightings elsewhere on the Canal should be reported to the EA on 0800 80 70 60, with photos if possible.

We will keep you updated with any further information from the EA and BA, on the Trust's Facebook Group Page, as we hear.

Ivan Cane

COMING UP

Wherry Maud Trust - Art 7 Craft Show

Hoveton Village Hall, Stalham Road, NR12 8DU

Sat 14th November, 11-5 Sun 15th November 10:30-4:30

Free Entry - All Proceeds For The Maintenance of Maud



For your protection COVID 19 Restrictions will apply.

WWW.WHERRYMAUDTRUST.ORG

Press Date for the February 2021 edition of *Quagmire* is Wednesday 20th January. Please keep those articles and photos coming in, to: qeditor@nwdct.org



Membership Matters.

Over recent years the membership of the NW&DCT has grown strongly and it is the support of our members that drives us forward. The increase in numbers and the responsibilities that come with the holding of data have driven us to seek out the best solution in membership management. We have always taken great care of your data but it is clear that we are duty bound to move with the times. Over the coming months we will be migrating our membership data to the highly regarded 'membermojo' platform. There are several advantages to this:

- Your data is stored on servers in a modern, secure, purpose built data centre in the UK.
- Mailing lists send emails to each member individually. A member receiving each email cannot see other member addresses.
- Automated notifications will be produced to remind members of renewal dates - this is something many members have requested.
- Each member will be able to administer and control their own data - change address, email address etc. (if they so wish).
- There will be the option to opt in to a listing, visible on the membership platform (perhaps name and email address) to facilitate communication between members and foster common interests.
- Online payments may be made for membership subscriptions, donations etc.
- Online membership cards may be downloaded (a new card on each renewal). Physical cards will still be available.
- Data can be securely accessed by specially authorised officers of the NW&DCT allowing the Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Chairman to utilise data in the course of their roles. Currently data is held only by the Membership Secretary.
- The member mojo platform will assist us in our Gift Aid submissions.

Fear not! Amidst all this change, your Membership Secretary will still be here to administer data and respond to your queries.

For those who prefer not to administer their own data on the *membermojo* platform I will be happy to perform any admin required and you will be able to contact me via email as you currently do. Our postal members are valued members of our group and we will continue to support and value you. Letters can still be sent to me as at present.

In essence, whilst we hope that many of you will enjoy the advantages of this new platform, we will still be here to ensure the personal connection is maintained. Please feel free to email or write to me with any concerns or questions you may have.

Andrea Lamyman

AGM

The Charity Commission, recognising the problems of holding of the AGM during the current climate, is allowing them to be held "online" up until 30th December. Hence the Trust are planning to hold a zoom AGM during the third week in December. Notice confirming the date and other arrangements will be circulated within the required time period. *Tom Carr, Chair.*



WEASEL'S TLC FEB-OCT 2020
Acknowledgements, G. Pressman, I. Cane



Weasel - the story so far



I'm not clear yet if I have all the facts exactly straight. Therefore, I can only submit the evidence for now. Messrs Whitlock first designed a narrow beam dredging boat in the early 60's. They sold quite a number to British Waterways at that time. By some means, BW got to building their own to a very similar design. They

might have been constructed at a number of the country's yards. Which one built Weasel is, as yet, unclear.

Overhaul of the hydraulics is well underway, with new flexible pipes where needed, oil and filter changes and a darn good clean-up. Then there is a re-wire planned to replace anything which is as old and tired as me. In a bid to reduce rolling, special new bilge pumps - which ensure the bilge is as dry as possible, so as to avoid water slopping from side-to-side - are to be installed.

We know the JCB plate gives an engine number for a *Lister HA2*, built in 1970. The same kind of engine is still fitted now, but it was built in 1975. The original Whitlock digging arms were really quite light-weight. The JCB 3C arm fitted to *Weasel* is almost three times the weight of that. The boat design remains the same in width and draught. As a result, the boat tilts from side to side alarmingly, even with an empty grab. Because of this, Laurie has bought a much lighter Massey Ferguson digging arm, to mount in place of the JCB arm. The "spud legs" were where much of the water ingress originated. Now all double-strength.

The steel hull was built with 3/8" bottom and 1/4" sides. Much of this metal has found its way into the water in the form of rust. We have blasted off any remaining rust, tested for hull thickness, which is still perfectly adequate except here and there, where it has rusted through completely. We have had D B Wright Pipework Ltd (who donated a day's work for us) repair all the little leaks which we found, we UHP blasted with water at something in the region of three times the speed of sound. This took us back to bright steel and allowed us to apply Duraplate paint, designed to last at sea between 10 and 20 years. This is often used on oil rigs, railway bridges, and so on. That was a tough day's work for our stalwart volunteers!

I asked Laurie what colour he would like the cabins painted. "Whatever's lying around," was the easy-going reply. What he didn't know was that I don't keep paint lying around. I asked others. I had suggestions of "blue," "green," advice not to "...paint it pink," "I don't care," and "red". So! I mixed red, blue and green (just a tiny touch of the green), and came up with Royal Purple. We have the RAL number, so are able to buy different paint types, for various purposes, all in the same colour. The moving parts, decks and handrails are all painted a bright yellow, to make sure the operator can see them in dim light. The Royal Purple is dark enough not to blind an operator in bright light or headlights, if ever we meet somebody coming the other way. We live in hope!

Laurie's 4" pump, and likewise our *Weedeater* and *Weasel*, are now all the same fleet colours. Hopefully, nobody was offended that we didn't use their idea of colours, because we used them all. The paints are Container Paint on the upper metalwork, designed to be long-lasting for worldwide travel on ship's decks, and a special paint designed for the fibreglass cabins.

At the time of writing, we have the yellow paint to apply, and the first coat of Royal Purple to sand down before giving the cabins a second coat. There is still the need to swap the two digger arms over. Then, we can look at re-launching.

Graham Pressman

Weedeater on the Lower Canal

The **Weedeater!** that's what we have decided to call our aquatic weed cutting machine. It has 2 implements. There is the U-shaped cutter blade, which is 9 feet wide. This works on an Alun Scythe principle. At the height of summer, we have been cutting for around 1-2 days every week. Why? Because excessive weed blocks the propeller blade on our passenger boat; swimmers get caught up in it; fishing tackle gets fouled by it; weed damages the balance of the gases in the water; and, finally, in quite a short time, weed gathers silt and the canal gets blocked again, creating a stinking mess. Now that would just not do!

So, that's the story of the weed and the *Weedeater* on the Ebridge lock to Bacton Wood pound. I think the owner of Bindwell Ltd may have seen the photos of what we were doing on Facebook. In any event, he contacted the Trust and I phoned him back. "Could you please run your weed cutter down the section between Tonnage Bridge and Honing lock?". "Of course we could". Bindwell's lifting machine turned up a few days later and loaded the boat onto its

*"I ploughed
right into the
bottom,
breaking a
ram.
Whoops!"*



trailer. We towed it down to Tonnage Bridge and launched. It wasn't long before we had our first breakdown. The canal there is much shallower than I had expected, and I ploughed right into the bottom, breaking a ram. Whoops! Off with its ram and home to weld up the broken part, whilst placing an order for a new replacement. We managed to get that fitted just after I had broken the repaired part. A delay, but not

much of one!

Then, a second disaster! One of *Weedeater's* paddle wheels crashed to pieces on a series of underwater logs. Working in unfamiliar waters is tough, especially when one is navigating where previous operators have been leaving the cut logs in the water. Never mind, that just meant we made a new paddle wheel. They're easy enough to make. A sheet of plywood, a welder, and a few nuts and bolts. Let's face it, the machine would have been built around 1970, and has done very well. The old dear is not quite as robust as it once was. I guess it comes to us all!

Back onto the trailer and home to Ebridge! Jeremy lifted us back into the water and back to our usual work, keeping Ebridge mill pond clear for our public.

Graham Pressman

Archive Slot—A Mangel and a Baptism

Dilham (Canal)

A centenary contrast ✓

SIR—As we have only seen one small account in the "E.D.P." of the great drought of 1868, we thought we could not let the centenary year pass without more notice taken of it. We should say it was one of the longest droughts ever known in this country. Our father was a lad in his 18th year and we have often heard him talk about it. He told us there was only one hour's rain from March until September and that was a thunderstorm. He drilled a small field of mangel that year near Honing Lock (part of which we still farm), and only one mangel came up in the field, as near to the middle as possible!

He told us a tale of the man who farmed the Dilham Beds at that time (the low-lying lands which stretch from the Broad to the road). They were set with mangel that year and the farmer to whom they belonged

through the marshes and common land which provided the lifeline of water for so many horses and cattle.

A farmer in Honing had four acres of hay that year and after he had cut what there was he took his horse and tumbril, put all the hay on, got on the top of his load and rode home!

Some farmers drilled their roots three times on baulks during that hot summer, and after the rain commenced in September all three sowings came up together in October, but they were too late to be of any use.

Owing to the salt air from the sea the farmers along the coast did get a few mangel to use. The wheat crop that year was very good, so wheat must like dry weather.

What a contrast, a hundred years ago and now!—Yours faithfully,

F. & M. BUFFHAM

Bush Farm,

Honing,

North Walsham.

October 10th, 1968.

Other letters on page 8

decided to give them some water because the crop was dried up by the drought; so he cut a tunnel beneath the ten-feet high bank into the Broad which received its water from the upper reach of Honing Lock. When he had tunnelled through, the water came through with such force that it was impossible for him to stop it, so the low-lying beds became the mill pond and he drowned all his mangel.

Green food for cattle was only to be found in boggy places, and some farmers had to saw branches off oak trees for their cows to feed on the leaves.

Honing, like other parishes, was very fortunate in having the River Ant peacefully winding its way

Mangelwurzels are usually grown as a fodder crop, especially as they are a

"scarcity crop" i.e. grows where other crops struggle - although even they struggled at Dilham!

EDP Letter 10 Oct 1968 - with thanks to Tom Carr.

Pic - Notes from Suffolk Smallholding.



Mangelwurzels

NORTH WALSHAM.

LATTER-DAY SAINTS.—On Sunday last, much excitement was created in this town, in consequence of a report that a number of persons were to be baptized in the North Walsham and Dilham canal, about a mile from the town. It being a fine morning, about 2000 people, of different ranks assembled who were addressed by two speakers from Norwich. The congregation consisted of people on foot, as well as on horseback, in gigs, and in carts. One of the speakers explained the nature, subjects, mode, and end of the ordinance of baptism, although much annoyed at the latter part of his discourse by the conduct of certain ill-behaved fellows, who amused themselves by throwing dogs into the water. He stated that it pained him greatly to see how his countrymen conducted themselves, although a clergyman was located in every parish as their minister. He hoped some kind friend would inform the clergy how their congregations behaved, and that they would lecture them on the impropriety of their conduct. If they could not make them religious, he hoped they would try and make them moral. After a short prayer, nine persons were baptized by immersion.—In the afternoon, the Rev. Thomas Dry preached in the church, and in alluding to the Latter-day Saints, said with much warmth, that though they called themselves Latter-day Saints, latter day rogues, or latter day fools, would be more appropriate. He cautioned his poorer brethren, and advised them to shut their doors against such people.

Baptism - I like the way that the Rev Thomas Dry, curate of N.W. Church, and Master of the Free Grammar School, defended his parishioners, in the final part of the account.

From the *North Norfolk News* 10th March 1840, c. British Library Board . With Thanks to Chris Harvey, and to Leigh Caudwell for information on the Rev Dry.

Waters Elsewhere—Schoolhouse Bridge

To the extent that the NW&DC is the most easterly English canal restoration, the 35-mile long Montgomery Canal is probably the westernmost. Branching from the Llangollen Canal at Frankton, in Shropshire, it headed SW, crossing the Welsh Border to Newtown. A serious breach near Perry in 1936, reportedly started by a water vole, isolated the remaining 33 miles, and the whole canal was abandoned as part of the infamous LMS Act of 1944. Several low-level road crossings replacing bridges, and other road improvement works have contributed to the expensive and protracted restoration, started back in the 1960's, by the Shropshire Union Canal Society.

Of the 11 miles in England, 7 have been restored, connecting the main system at Frankton to Gronwen. A further 12 miles and 11 locks have been restored in Wales, centred on Welshpool; additionally, 5 other locks have been restored on the smaller detached sections. The Montgomery Canal Partnership's current project is to open the canal to the Welsh Border at Llanymynech. However, the 1950/60s low-level road crossing, on Long Lane, following the demolition of Schoolhouse Bridge, is a major obstacle to be overcome, and its rebuilding is one of the key works on that section.

Long Lane crossing over the dry canal as it is now.

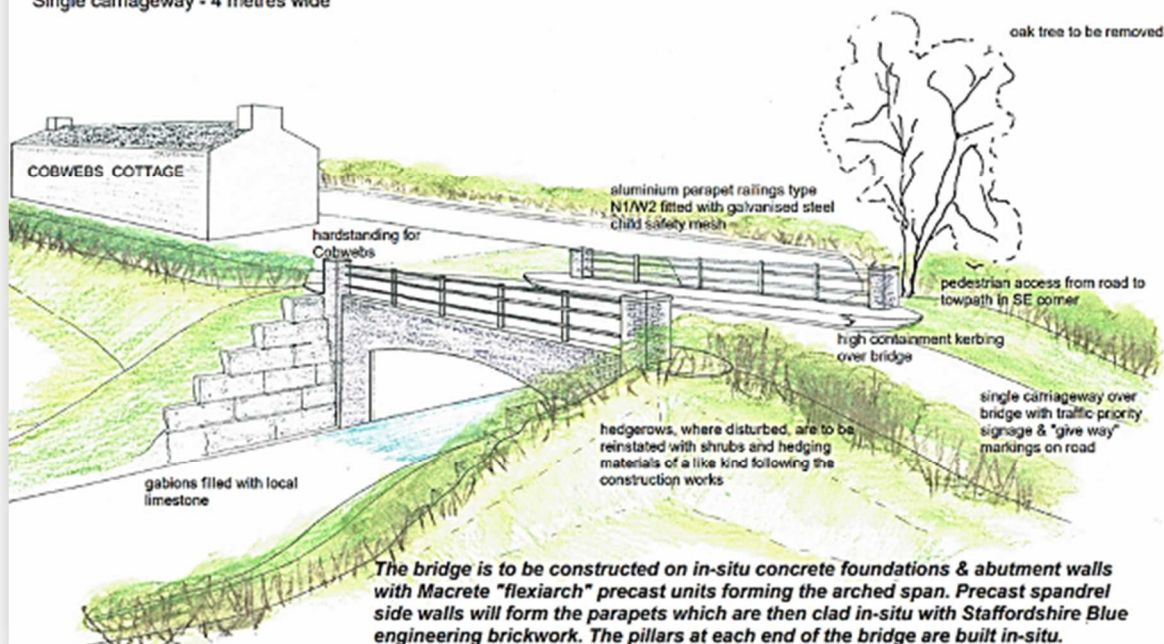
"The rebuilding is to be undertaken by volunteers."

Paperwork completed, the restorers are now planning the rebuilding. Although Long Lane is a country road, it is the only HGV crossing of the canal in the area. As such, a temporary trackway must be built alongside for the duration. Additionally, a water main and septic tank system have to be moved. The rebuilding is to be carried out by volunteers - both local and WRG Camps - who will undertake bricklaying, gabion support works, and backfilling around the bridge abutments and road. Professionals will make efforts with, amongst other things, environmental surveys and putting in the pre-cast segments.

The bridge cost is £250k, plus another £200k for "other works". Although some of the monies are coming from legacies, certain charitable trust grants and an anonymous donor, most will be thanks to public donations.

Bridge Span - 6 metres

Single carriageway - 4 metres wide



Work should start in March, 2021, with completion by the end of the year. We wish our western neighbours a fair wind.

With gratitude to: John Dodwell, Chair of the MCP for help with this article, and Roger Bravery for photo and sketch -

For more, see <http://restorethemontgomerycanal.uk/>.

Boating News

Well, COVID creates us quite a challenge. After much thought, we managed a few weeks in the height of summer, with special arrangements in place. Those procedures saw passengers and steerer wearing masks on boarding, keeping groups to only families and their COVID bubble, and cleaning the boat with a special anti-viral solution before and after every trip. We had to change to a maximum of 6 people on board including the steerer, so we were forced to work without a separate crew member to give the talk. As a steerer myself, I must admit that concentrating on both tasks at the same time was interesting. Finally, because of the limitation on numbers, we changed from charging 10 people a fiver each to letting the whole boat as a charter for up to 5 passengers for £30.00

Having said that, the boat brought in well over a thousand pounds for the Trust in our short season. Public demand is still very strong, and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. We did have two trips when the electric motor let us down. On one of those, I drifted back in the wind, with help from the quant. Meanwhile, Laurie towed us back from the towpath with his little flatbed truck. That was an exciting experience. Towing from the path can be extraordinarily fast! It reminds me of my days on the Grand Union Canal when I was being towed, by a tractor, in a Leeds and Liverpool Short Boat. This was because I was carrying "live" concrete which - when using our own boat's power - was being compacted in the skips by the vibration of the engine, causing it to get thoroughly stuck and almost impossible to transfer. We were building a number of weirs between the M25 motorway bridge near Apsley, then through Hunton Bridge lock to Lady Capel's locks, and on to Iron Bridge lock in Cassiobury Park, near Watford. The weirs were being built to accommodate the extra water flow caused by the construction of the M25. Believe me when I say that stopping 50 tons of concrete and 20 tons of short-boat (60ft x 14ft), travelling at high speed, single-handed, was demanding of every ounce of my attention and effort as a boatman.

As the virus has progressed, more is learned and guidelines are modified to suit. I was not completely happy with the recommended mitigating arrangements, so for now the trips have been suspended. When we re-start, I think that additional measures would be wise. I am watching developments to see what should be done to ensure the safety of everybody involved, passengers and crew alike. For instance, I am enquiring as to the availability of a more robust and powerful electric motor, which, although much more expensive, would be more reliable and possibly able to convey passengers on a separate craft, and at an even safer distance from the steerer.

Graham Pressman

ICT Notes

We welcome Julie back as our ICT Officer. She has been updating the website - www.nwdct.org - adding a few new pages, such as *Plants & Wildlife*, which includes two images of rare species recently seen on the canal; along with *Wild Swimming & Paddleboarding*. The *Ebridge Model Boat Club* and the *Canoe* pages have likewise been updated. You can also read back-numbers of *Q* from the *Newsletters* page. Wile away an hour or two browsing through the wealth of fascinating data Julie has collected for the site.

The membership numbers of our Facebook Group have doubled since this time last year to 859. This group (www.facebook.com/groups/www.nwdct.org) is where anyone with an FB account can join to add and share any photos and/or stories for supporters of the canal to enjoy. There are some remarkable pictures in this Group - thank you to all who contributed.

From The Chair

Elsewhere in this edition of Quagmire you will read of work done since my previous report of July this year. Therefore these notes will concern some of the incidentals and the changing background of our efforts.

It has been very apparent that during those heatwave periods, earlier this year, that the canal land and its immediate environment have been a popular recreational resource. We have seen wild swimming as usual, with the addition of water polo practice and jumping and diving by a wide range of ages. Strangely the amount of water over the spillway at Ebridge hardly diminished during some extended dry spells which says something about ground water reserves further up the catchment towards the Cromer Ridge.

As you know, since the beginning of the epidemic in March it has not been possible to resume the normal full meetings of the Trustees although a 'postal vote' was taken sanctioning some capital expenditure on portable plant and one separated open-air meeting took place. An interim management arrangement continues whereby four Trustees meet as the need arises in order to maintain the momentum of the Trust's work and deal with housekeeping matters. These meetings were first on Zoom, which was somewhat inhibiting. They now are in the storage building at Spa Common with open doors and precautionary distancing.

Poor weather saturating canal banks, remedial hospitalisation of a key player and other changing circumstances have delayed some of what we had hoped would have been achieved before the end of the year. However, when it comes to tasks we have the advantage that most are in the open air so apart from the proximity precautions and the availability of volunteers much work can continue. For example, recently, two groups of six assembled with the pontoon to bush invasive tree vegetation that was obstructing the trip boat.

The Trust has become a consultee for water management of invasive species and has been approached regarding advice for the management of the Bure below Aylsham.

Tom Carr, 15 October 2020

Funding Round-up

The Covid-19 lockdown has completely altered the face of charitable funding in the UK with the majority of organisations that we have previously applied to, changing their emphasis to the 'frontline' support of issues such as poverty, homelessness, unemployment and mental health. Our role is still seen as important in supporting physical and mental health in the community, but more as a background thing and not as a priority. Added to the dire financial situation the nation will find itself in when the various support schemes end and the absence of any new EU funding, the future is going to be challenging at the very least!

Before lockdown we had applied for a grant from the RHS towards seed for the raised banks and ecology areas. We also applied to the Geoffrey Watling Trust for support to purchase a new generator, brushcutter and cement mixer. The RHS has put their scheme on hold whilst the GWT made a contribution of £1,000 towards our new restoration equipment. This has allowed us to purchase the generator and brushcutter with the help of an additional anonymous donation. Chris and Mary Black have donated a really spiffy and completely refurbished cement mixer that is perfect for our needs.

We did not qualify for either of the local support grants that were initially offered in the North Norfolk area, however, we are eligible for the Norfolk Recovery Fund and we have applied for a grant of £8,218 for the purchase of material to build a series of landing stages around the canal to encourage community participation in water sports.

One notable donation to the NW&DCT was a whole range of garden, general and motor maintenance tools from Mike Atherley, who has relocated and wanted to clear his garage. This was both timely and very welcome as it will form the basis of our new equipment maintenance area in the unit.

Mark Shopland, Grants Officer



New brushcutter and generator at work. (AB)



Contact the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust CIO

Working To Secure Norfolk's Canal Heritage



North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust CIO
 117 Mundesley Road
 North Walsham
 Norfolk
 NR28 0DD

Registered Charitable Incorporated
 Organisation No 1180474

Email the Trust's Officers:

Chair - Tom Carr,	tomcart16@gmail.com
Membership - Andrea,	membership@nwdct.org
General Information,	secretary@nwdct.org
Boat Trips - Graham P	boating@nwdct.org
Fishing - Tom Webster	fishing@nwdct.org
Grants - Mark	grants@nwdct.org
Work Parties - Mark	workparty@nwdct.org
Project WP - Graham P	boating@nwdct.org
Quagmire - Ivan	QEditor@nwdct.org
ICT - Julie	ICT@nwdct.org
Wildlife - Suki	sukipryce@hotmail.co.uk
Treasurer - Barry	Treasurer@nwdct.org
Media - James	Press@nwdct.org
Archivist (EAWA) - Ivan	Archivist@nwdct.org

A3

Copies of the Trust's Access Map of the Canal - showing access points, car parks, pubs etc on one side, and an O.S map with enlarged sections showing the locks, on the reverse, are available from the editor at

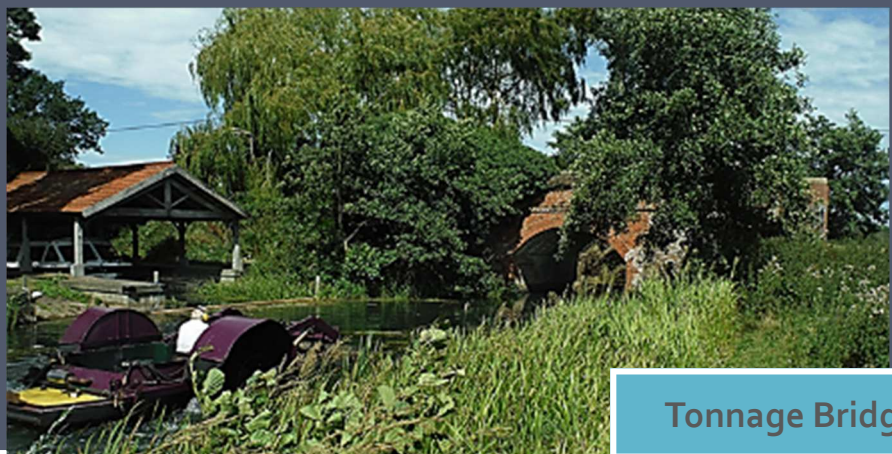
£1 + £1 p& p.



*Weedeater on
the Lower
Canal*



Approaching Honing Lock



Tonnage Bridge

The Trust were asked to clear the weed on the Lower Canal during July & August, more on page 13.