

## NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL TRUST

In co-operation with the East Anglian Waterways Association Ltd.

Subject: Work-party at Briggate Lock and mill-pond area.

Date: Sunday 1st March 2015

From: C.J.B. Black, NW&DCT and EAWA

### THE PLAN:

- To clear the brambles and brash from the east bank of the lock, as agreed with the North Walsham Canal Co. Ltd.
- To identify and tape off a safe working area around the collapsed east paddle chamber culvert in preparation for the propping work to be carried out later in the year.
- To remove the small trees growing in the wall of the lock around the cill area.
- To clear the reeds and deepen the pond in the vicinity of the west bank of the mill-pond as the water is too shallow, which encourages aggressive reed growth thus choking the pond as agreed with the N.W. Canal Co. Ltd.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT: The early morning was sunny and dry, but accompanied by a keen north-westerly wind. The work planned on the east bank beside the lock represented a hazard due to the collapse of the paddle chamber culvert. For this reason a detailed method of working was written up by the work-party organiser and presented to the Canal Co. for Health and Safety reasons. 16 volunteers arrived, continuing the good turnout.

A briefing was held explaining the H&S hazards on the east bank of the lock and where necessary hi-vis jackets and safety hats were worn. Two safety throwing ropes were positioned either side of the lock.

As work-party leader I had already made the decision to have as few people as possible on the east bank of the lock. The plan was to approach the bank through the chain link fence and to work northwards towards the collapsed culvert, spearheaded by two experienced work-party members who would cut the brambles and pass them back to be stacked by others behind. On reflection I decided to enter the site via a wide roadside grupp, just east of the fence. We would leave the brambles in front of the fence, to stop access to the bank once it was cleared.

Entrance to the bank via the grupp was now nearer to the collapsed culvert area so I briefed those volunteers who were working with me that they were not allowed anywhere near the collapse. The method adopted was to clear towards the road using the spearhead technique outlined and have some of the team working towards the north fence, again remote from the collapse.

Eventually, the site going south, was cleared to within a metre of the roadside fence and the brambles were left here to discourage access.

We then carefully tackled the brambles around the collapse by using the long reach hedge cutter and rakes! Although not possible to confirm, there may be voids to the east of the collapse, as indicated by deep probing. The original collapse had been fenced off with orange safety fencing, which remains in good order, so an outer ring encompassing the potentially hazardous void area was staked off after it had been cleared of brambles and brash. Before leaving the area, hazard tape was affixed to the outer ring of stakes. I am of the opinion that the collapse has not deteriorated since I first saw it several years ago, probably as a result of the positioning of a 'diverter' to deflect the water flow from the paddle chamber some years back. We did not clear brambles from within the orange safety fence as it was deemed too hazardous.

The brambles and a large fallen tree were removed from the bank towards the north end fence and were stacked, together with the rest of the brash, in the woodland area, lock-side of the backsoke.

Clearance of the site made it safe to cut and remove the large saplings growing in the wall above the cill. Left here they would have caused more damage to the brickwork.

The remainder of the work-party continued the clearance of the east bank south of the bridge. This had not been completed at an earlier visit.

Dr. Tom Moore had agreed with Sir William that he could clear some of the shallow area on the west edge of the mill-pond with his digger. Very shallow water encourages uncontrolled reed growth leading to a choked un-watered pond.

The clearance of the east bank of the lock has now made it safe to access when we come to install the temporary wall props. Before leaving the site the 'grupp' entrance was blocked by branches and bramble cuttings to inhibit entrance to the area.

Work ceased at approx 16.00.

Chris Black, Work Party Leader