

NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL TRUST

In co-operation with the East Anglian Waterways Association Ltd

Subject: Work-party at Ebridge spillway
Date: Sunday 6th August 2017
From: Chris Black, NW&DCT.

THE PLAN:

- To complete the concrete retaining wall, remove most of the shuttering and start laying the bricks on top of the wall.
- To clear the spoil from the spillway surface.
- To measure accurately the surface area of the spillway left after completion of the new access track to the east bank.

WORK ACHIEVEMENT: The weather was warm and dry with no rain forecast. 11 volunteers turned out however the best laid plans for the day's work had to be changed as unknown to me Laurie had noticed a problem with the east side ground paddle, and had manufactured a new paddle which he wanted to install. He had also been on site during the week to complete the concrete retaining wall which meant that we could remove all of the shuttering and proceed with laying two courses of bricks two bricks wide on the top of the concrete wall.

David and I accurately measured the spillway from which David could calculate the number of the new surface bricks required, seeing as a large triangular section of the surface of the spillway was now taken up by the new access road. Meanwhile the shuttering was dismantled and removed.

We had several visitors past the site and I spent a considerable amount of time seeing to requests for our new Access Maps and dealing with Trust matters. Jane had brought down the old banners and the two new tear-drop banners, one of which we erected - prominently displaying the presence of the Trust volunteers today.

The first few bricks were laid at the top end of the retaining wall but laid such that the WRG work-party could key into them when they re-brick the top wall of the spillway.

Lunch was called at approximately 13.15

Lunch over we resumed the bricklaying but Laurie wanted to get the new ground paddle in place so he and some of the work-party concentrated on that task. It was not easy as the Canal water was at its normal height. With this height of water the pressure on the paddle is very high but Laurie had devised a method of removing the old paddle without draining down the Canal which would have had consequences for the fish population.

He placed a reinforced board in front of the old paddle, bearing in mind that the water depth here is some 5ft. This board was then tethered to the ground paddle mechanism by

strong rope. As the original and worn out ground paddle was letting water through, the pressure of the water acting on the face of the reinforced board would press it against the paddle retaining frame so removal of the old paddle in theory would be relatively easy.

We dismantled the ground paddle lifting gear with some difficulty, but crucially without breaking anything or losing any nuts and bolts in the water. This done, the old paddle could be lifted out by the hydraulic hoist on the truck. However as soon as it was pulled up a few inches the pressure of water inrush to the paddle chamber was so great that part of the reinforced board was ripped away and a substantial flow of water then entered the lock chamber taking a lot of cut weed with it which was awaiting removal to the bank. Nothing could be done until the weed cleared allowing the temporary board to be pushed back down. Eventually the old paddle was extracted and the lifting rod was removed to be attached to the new paddle.

Laurie made the new paddle out of greenheart and to the size of an old frame he had in his yard - so there was a chance that the frame on Ebridge lock was of a different size and the new paddle would be too big. However after several abortive attempts the new paddle was finally located into the frame. The mechanism was reassembled and the paddle was lowered resulting in no flow into the lock chamber. A great sigh of relief from all – including the visiting onlookers on the other side of the lock!

Interestingly during the whole exercise the Canal water had only dropped by around 9 inches.

With this task completed it will be easier for the WRG to lower the canal water whilst working on the spillway.

The rest of the afternoon was spent on bricklaying but unfortunately we didn't have time to reach the end of the retaining wall, falling some few feet short.

We cleared the track and site of debris for safety of the public and loaded the plywood sheets onto Laurie's truck. All the tools etc. were removed from site and the loose new bricks were stacked behind the new retaining wall.

The work-party ceased at approx 16.00

Chris Black,
Work party leader.