

## **The Hanneys Flood Group Chairman's Working Parties Reports 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023.**

Volunteers attending each month 9 – 14, average attendance 11.

29 individual volunteers, including 3 more new members who have been more than once!!

10 working parties; with 8 volunteers attending 7 or more sessions.

### **Saturday 18th of June 2022**

A good turnout of thirteen volunteers today despite the pessimistic weather forecast who tackled the invasive Himalayan Balsam from Lower Mill as far as discretion enabled towards where Gods Ditch joins the Brook. In some areas it was very evident that the efforts of recent years to reduce HB has been effective but there are still some areas where stubbornly remains and these were dealt with this morning. Thank you to Ian, Dickon, Peter, Paul, David S, David B, Sean, Gill, Phil, Clive F, Oliver, Mick and Clive M.

### **Saturday 16th of July 2022**

Nine volunteers this sunny morning, enough people to tackle one long running task clearing out the drain behind the block of Brookside garages. Thanks to Keith, Meryl, Mick and Adrian for removing the vegetation and some of the considerable volume of silt that has built up here. The horrible piece of plastic hanging over the Brook is the next target! The rest of us undertook the annual inspection and maintenance tasks for the Flood Group, Woodland and Emergency Team equipment. Nicer to do this in the warmth of the summer than the bitter cold of midwinter. Thanks to Ian, Phil, Denis, Paul and Clive M.

### **Saturday 20th of August 2022**

The weather was perfect for the working parties. We had three groups of volunteers, twelve in total.

Group 1 was led by Mark Bradfield with a final push of the season pulling Himalayan Balsam from the banks of Letcombe Brook in the meadows associated with Willow Barn at the far end of Ebbs Lane. The team with Mark Bradfield was Phil Manvell, Richard Paterson and Alastair Johnson. Thank you to them for a long morning's work with just a little HB left to finish off another time.

Group 2 was led by David Stubbington clearing a short stretch upstream of the weir and sluice of Lower Mill. This had become clogged with debris from further up the Brook which was hindering flow over the weir and sluices under Lower Mill. As well as clearing debris, litter and a few reeds, some dead and other overhanging branches were also trimmed back. The team with David was Paul Sayers, Lamorna Zambellas, Ian and Dickon Green. They were joined later by Group 3 team members.

Group 3 was led by Clive Manvell intent on removing the bubble wrap from a tree behind the garages associated with Brookside. This eyesore and potential litter threat was removed by the application of science and nifty ropework. The team with Clive M was Adrian Bodimeade and Mick Mantle who then joined the team by Lower Mill.

### **Saturday 17th of September 2022**

A crisp but brilliantly sunny and dry morning to achieve many objectives.

Once again we have cleared the drainage ditches around Philberds Manor and the land associated with Willow Barn at the end of Ebbs Lane. This involved clearing Gods Ditch and its side arm of brambles, nettles, dead elms, willow branches and other fallen trees. A further drainage ditch was cleared in the small wood which drains Poughley Farm and the fields of the farm to the north of the village.

It is a task that needs doing annually and is the responsibility of the riparian landowners to keep these important village drainage channels clear of obstructions. They are all clear now ahead of the autumn and winter.

Many thanks to Ian and Dickon for pulling the trailer, Phil for pulling more Himalayan Balsam, Peter, James, Mark, Richard, Adrian, Clive F, Mick, Phil, Ian, Dickon, Alastair and Clive M for their efforts in the ditches today. A long morning with a great deal achieved.

### **Saturday 15th of October 2022**

The weather, despite varying forecasts, turned out to be a fine, dry sunny autumnal day with a total of eleven volunteers turning out, all meeting up at the Iron Bridge.

The main effort was to clear back some of the reed bed from the Iron Bridge heading down stream towards Lower Mill. After a hard three hours graft the group reached as far as the old bathing place, and did so ensuring all work that was undertaken with great care, with regards any known water vole habitation.

In addition to this a fallen tree in the corner of the wood, which was partially blocking the fish bypass around lower mill was also removed and the footpath vegetation running along the side of the Brook trimmed back to allow clearer access. All in all a good mornings work and a big thank you to Paul, Keith, Meryl, Andrew, Mark, James, Dickon, Ian, Adrian, Mick, David and Lamorna for an excellent effort producing good results.

### **Saturday 19th of November 2022**

Great turnout this morning of eleven volunteers to continue reducing debris in the Brook below the Iron Bridge. Thank you too to another eleven people who sent apologies in good time. We have now finished this stretch for this year. No *Rununculus* was removed from the riverbed and the willowherb plants already fallen into the water were carefully cut and removed along with a few brambles and some other plants. The area around the Iron Bridge was also tidied up carefully this morning.

Work also started on preparing the ground for a new container to house some of the emergency sandbag stocks in readiness in case the Brook overflows. Although there has been a lot of rain recently the Ock catchment area aquifers remain low after two years of drought. We are just getting prepared for large amounts of rainfall over the winter pending

much needed repairs to the bank below the Iron Bridge.

Thanks are due to Phil, M, David, S, Paul S, Mark B, Mick M, Clive F, Ian G, Dickon G, Stewart S, James S and Clive M.

### **Saturday 17th of December 2022**

A very good turnout for today's limited and focussed tasks on yet another very cold morning with a special thank you to Phil and Adrian for the mince pies.

First the skilled team of Stewart and Keith completed a fact-finding survey of the towpath from the Iron Bridge to the stile. Stewart has taken the data away to number-crunch and will be producing a comparative graph with data from previous surveys in 2008 and 2012. This will establish if and to what extent the bank has been eroded since the restoration project of 2008. Results were submitted to EHPC.

A team of James, Paul and David C tackled the remaining dead trees and other obstacles in the drainage ditch between Lamb Cottage and 2A The Causeway. This channel is an important drainage route from the Woodland, Churchyard and areas around the Church and houses in St James Way. James has been working on this for some time and now, hopefully, a less demanding but routine maintenance programme can keep it clear and free flowing.

David S had been working away on creating a new storage container for the existing and new stock of sandbags located near the Iron Bridge where there are several low areas of the bank. A team of David S, Adrian, Mick, Peter and Clive M transferred the base, front and roof components from their construction site to the Iron Bridge. Several sandbags were transferred to the new container but not all as they were frozen solid and impossible to pack down. These were repacked when conditions allowed and the remaining stock of sandbags added. Thank you to all the volunteers who have helped keep the village drainage channels, ditches and other water courses clear throughout this year.

### **January 2023**

There was no January Working Party as we had the First Aid Awareness Training.

### **Saturday 18th February 2023**

Great turnout this morning and with fourteen hardy volunteers we were able to achieve a significant number of tasks after the break last month.

Firstly Phil and Lamorna cleared the western end of the stream running through the meadow behind Mill Orchard which was becoming overgrown with brambles and other vegetation.

Jim, Jane and Adrian made a start on lifting the gully covers around the HWMH and Community Shop and clearing out the litter and leaves.

David S, Ian, Dickon and Mick emptied the sandbag storage bin and reload it with all the sandbags, repacking some of the older damaged sandbags into new sleeves.

Clive M, Stewart, Andrew, Keith and Paul cleared a number of trees, branches, brambles and other obstructions from Letcombe Brook, gaining access from the Weir Farm west bank to reach the obstructions all of which originated from farm on the east bank. Several bags of litter were removed from the Brook. Thank you to everyone who took part.

### **Saturday 18th March 2023**

A rather damp and dreary morning greeted the ten volunteers, including new volunteer Peter, who turned out this month to undertake some overdue clearing and maintenance of the culverts, ditches and other water courses around Summertown.

We cleared the debris in front of, under, over and behind the coarse grill that feeds water back under Mill Orchard to Letcombe Brook, re-entering The Brook by the Legion where many hedge cuttings, leaves and silt had built up. The short culvert under the entrance to Sunset Strip, Rowans, Rowans Orchard and The Bungalow was rodded clear and silt removed above and below this access.

The main task of the day was to drain rod the blocked long culvert that carries water from Sunset Strip to the corner of Moreton where it connects with the drainage ditch running along the north side of the road back towards the A338 and between the Dews Meadow development and the eastern boundaries of the houses between Moreton and Lakeside which was also heavily overgrown. This is an important waterway as it provides water to the stream that runs along the eastern side of Main Street from Lay Cottage to the A338 opposite La Fontana. At this time of year the wildlife in this stream start their breeding cycles and some of you will have noticed the copious amounts of frog spawn. Later in the year Swan Muscles, cockles, sticklebacks and other fish will be evident. The Little Egret and Kingfisher have both been seen along here. We cannot stress enough how important it is for the riparian owners adjacent to this waterway to keep it clear of debris and undertake periodic maintenance tasks. The team cleared from Moreton to Waylands.

Thank you to Ian and Dickon for providing appropriate safety signs and cones to protect the workforce, Phil for washing the filthy Hi-Viz vests and a special thank you to all the volunteers Adrian B, Peter M, David S, Ian G, Dickon G, James S, Stewart S, Mick M, Phil M and Clive M.

### **Saturday 15th April 2023**

We had ten volunteers this morning and split into two groups to address some of the issues arising from the high water levels just over a week ago. This included collecting a large amount of litter from the high-water mark of the recent raised water levels.

The first team swiftly removed the tree that had become wedged under the new bridge connecting Poughley Farm stables with Halls Lane before moving on to remove a considerable amount of litter, including an inflatable guitar, from the pool below Lower Mill and then a fallen ivy-clad tree in the fish pass. A branch was also removed just above Lower Mill that had fallen into the water and collected a large collection of debris and litter. Thanks to David S, Mick, Andrew, Phil and Clive.

Team two made a start on the blocked drains and gullies in Halls Lane which was badly affected on the Friday night and Saturday morning. Hopefully OCC Highways jetting team can enhance the progress made here already by Ian, Dickon,

David B, Peter and new volunteer Richard. A sack full of litter was also collected by this team.

Whilst around Lower Mill we have taken some measurements of the height of this new bridge which held back a lot of water as well as trapping the tree. The routes of some road drain gullies were also confirmed as being a likely conduit for considerable amounts of water flowing from the Brook and down Halls Lane towards the village. Hopefully OCC Highways can be persuaded to fit one-way flap valves to the pipes linking with the Brook. The earth behind the western bridge support stone wall has been significantly eroded by the water flowing down the Brook and particularly last weekend when all the water that could not pass under the new bridge swirled around here. The stonework here has also deteriorated and some repointing is urgently required.

Just further downstream the wall supporting the footpath running beside the Brook and alongside Philberds Manor has also been undercut and there are significant gaps in the brickwork. Repairs are needed here too.

### **Saturday 20th May 2023**

Apologies to those other people who also volunteered for the working parties this month, especially those recently signed up at the Coronation volunteering initiative, but with the Himalayan Balsam hardly visible, nesting season in full swing, no known urgent tasks, Winter Lane running well and other areas in good shape we could not accommodate everyone so hope you enjoyed your month off. It is far better to have fewer people fully engaged than have too many people with not enough to occupy everyone. As it was we all had an early finish.

The drainage clearance was progressed in and around Halls Lane this morning, rodding the blocked gullies and culverts identified during the session here in April. There is still further work to do and this is scheduled for June. Thanks are due to Ian, Dickon, Peter, Richard and David B who are making good progress in this area. Hopefully local residents will have already noticed an improvement. The plan is to find all the drains, gullies and culverts and leave them clear and working for OCC Highways to maintain in future more easily.

A second team tidied up some overhanging branches improving habitat in an otherwise dark area. Many thanks to David S, Mick, Paul, Adrian and Clive M.

Opportunity was taken to repair the water vole signs near the Iron Bridge and to identify where the low points are on the eastern bank for future sandbag deployment when it becomes necessary. I intend further identifying where these are later this week. Thank you too to Denis H for constructively reducing the weed in the stream alongside Ye Olde Housen.