

The Hanneys Flood Group Chairman's Working Parties Reports 1st June 2023 – 31st May 2024.

7 – 21 Volunteers attending each month, average attendance 14. 11 working parties; with nine volunteers attending 7 or more sessions.

38 individual volunteers, with 14 attending only once, 2 twice, 4 three times, 2 five times, 4 six times, 3 seven times, 5 ten times and just 1 eleven times. We have managed to retain some new members.

Saturday 17th June

It is that time of year again when we continue our quest to rid Hanney of the invasive plant Himalayan Balsam which was once rife all along the Letcombe Brook in our parish. Today we had 12 volunteers who tackled the task from Lower Mill to the point where Gods Ditch joins the Brook to the north of the village. We split into several teams with some people in the water, some on the banks and some cutting access routes so that we could get to the areas where this is still found. Thank you to two new recruits Tim and Duncan, old hand Ollie returning after his DOE Award stint with us a couple of year ago and Ian, Mick, David S, Keith, Meryl, Lamorna, Andrew, Clive F and Clive M. Thanks too to David for taking his car with the tools. Many thanks too to those who sent apologies, it really does help with the planning.

Saturday 15th July

Despite the threat of heavy rain and high winds a merry band of 13 Flood Group volunteers assembled at the gate of Willow Barn and set off to battle the invasive Himalayan Balsam, alongside Letcombe Brook from Gods Ditch towards Venn Mill.

The main effort was to clear as much HB as possible on the eastern bank, the decision being made on safety grounds to stay on dry land and not enter the water due to the high level, fast current and rather deep stretches. The Himalayan Balsam was indeed in flower and varied in height from the hard to find six to twelve inches in height, hiding amongst the nettles and undergrowth, to some that were as tall as six feet and nearly two inches in diameter.

Mark Bradfield commented on how improved the areas were compared to previous years, which is always a good sign that the battle is being won. The team managed to spend a couple of hours gainfully employed pulling up the dreaded weed. Large clumps could be seen in places on the western bank of the Brook and Paul stated that he and Tom would tackle this later in the week before it started to spread its seed.

All in all a good session during which we managed to stay dry and Duncan, Mark, Alastair, Peter M, Lamorna, Mick, Ian, Dickon, Paul S, Andrew, David B, Sean and David S are thanked for volunteering, Paul Dyer for enabling access onto his land and David S for taking and returning the equipment.

Saturday 19th August

Nine volunteers enjoyed the early sunshine and cool breeze in Winter Lane clearing the main drainage channel from West Hanney northwards. It is our understanding OCC Highways responsibility is for the road surface and extends only to the edge of the tarmac. Beyond that, where the drainage channel and its corresponding banks and culverts run, the responsibility for maintenance and keeping this water course clear is with the adjacent landowners, no matter where fences or other boundary markers are. It may not even state this on house deeds. It is not a Flood Group responsibility but at the request of WHPC the ditch north of Rectory Farm Close to the footbridge has been cleared of overhanging vegetation, grass verges trimmed along with other vegetation and cleared of litter. This flood prevention measure has been undertaken in the interests of West Hanney residents and Winter Lane road users in keeping this vital drainage channel clear.

David and Clive also cleared the drain slots along the Causeway which have filled with silt and straw since the road was resurfaced.

Many thanks to Ian and Dickon for the road safety signs and other measures, particularly the vegetation trimming expertise, David for transporting the equipment and Mick for the macaroons!

Thank you to all the volunteers who turned out on Saturday, Lamorna, Andrew, Peter M, David S, Mick, Ian, Dickon, Phil and Clive M. Thank you too to those who indicated they could not make this working party (12) as it really does help with planning the work schedule.

For your information, the rather unsafe wooden footbridge has been reported again to the OCC Countryside Team for the eighth time!!

Saturday 16th September

Seven volunteers enjoyed the sunshine and mild weather in Summertown Road, drain rodding the culvert that is approximately 38m long requiring 40 x 2 m drain rods to be pushed and pulled the full length five times throughout the morning, clearing the pipe of silt and soft tree root matter, the end result being that water could be seen to be flowing once more. Many thanks once again to Ian and Dickon for the road safety signs and other measures that are so essential on such a busy road, and a particular thank you to Stephen Mckechnie for the surprise delivery of a most welcome cup of coffee for all the volunteers.

A shorter session than normal as tasks completed by 10:45 with a big thank you to all the volunteers who turned out on Saturday Andrew, Peter M, David S, Mick, Ian, Dickon, Peter M-S.

The Hanneys Flood Group is supporting the Michaelmas Fayre in the afternoon of 30th September, in West Hanney so do please pop in and see us and have a chat and should you be able to assist in setting up or on the day, please do drop Clive or myself a line clivemanvell664@gmail.com or djstubbington@icloud.com

Saturday 21st October

After no further significant rain and a much lower water level in Letcombe Brook, the sandbags in all areas were removed and the flood barriers taken down from the HWMH. The opportunity was taken to do some training and labelling of the HWMH flood defences and to clear some blocked gutters. Childrey Brook continued to rise, and 4 vehicles have now become stranded. The brambles and other overhanging branches along the footpath from the Iron Bridge to Lower Mill were dealt with today.

Thank you to the many people who spontaneously turned out to see what assistance was needed on Friday, some even wading through from West to East, those wading in to rescue stranded cars and those alerting us to where there were problems. I hope we have everyone's names but thank you to Steve K, Jason, Annabel, Peter M-S, Keith R, Mick, Stewart, Adrian, Jane, David S, David C, Andrew, Paul, Tim, Graham, Alastair, Jackie, Meurig, Ian, Dickon and Clive M.

Saturday 18th November

Two teams undertook to reduce the volume of road surface water very evident in both villages and to improve drainage systems where possible. It is understood that there are no county budgets for drainage work and any road sweeping is funded by parish councils.

West Hanney

The team cleared all the culverts and ditches that serve the western area of Church Street mainly outside Aldworths, The Barn and Jubilee Cottage, removing some 40 barrow loads of leaves and other detritus. Overhanging branches and brambles also trimmed back from the nearby western ditch and a number of road gullies (drains) were cleared out here and along Church Street. Gullies in The Meads were also cleared of silt, leaves and other debris. The hard work of David S, Richard C, Keith R, Lamorna Z, Phil M, Jason K and Owen M was rewarded with the very gratefully received ginger cake baked by Helen S.

East Hanney

The team here started by re-establishing the badly neglected roadside grips in both verges of the road leading to Summertown, from the A338. A very disappointing amount of litter was found and removed from this area. It appears that fast food containers and many beverage cans and bottles are discarded from passing cars. Moving on from Summertown along Main Street as far as the main road again the roadside gullies were cleared of leaves and in some cases the gratings were removed and large amounts of silt and mud were dug out, some even needing established roots to be cut before digging out. These were particularly bad in the area east of St James View. Unfortunately, energy and time ran out before being able to carry on around The Green, Morlands, Halls and Ebbs Lanes and into Ashfields Lane. This team were also rewarded with ginger cake baked by Helen S, sandwiches from Mick and a much needed coffee from Meryl and Keith, whose house was miraculously near-by.

A significant effort from Ian G, Dickon G, Mick M, Tim G, Peter M, Duncan M, David S, Adrian B, Keith C, Meryl C and Clive M. Additional thanks too to Ian and Dickon for providing and manoeuvring cones and road signs to keep the team safe whilst working.

Saturday 16th December

Once again, we were very lucky with the weather as it was very mild and dry with thirteen volunteers tackling some of the flooding issues in West Hanney. Many, if not most, road gullies were full of silt and leaves appearing to not have been cleared out for quite some time. Gullies were tackled in Church and Main Streets as well as some by the Buttercross. The long covered culvert alongside Thorncomb proved problematic with tree roots in the pipe catching leaf litter and willow debris mixed with silt and forming a blockage which was very hard to shift. It is recommended this culvert is regularly jet-washed clear and a grill placed across the entrance to trap debris before it enters the pipework.

We enjoyed Phils mince pies and Helens rich fruit cake before adjourning to The Plough for a well-earned drink at the end of the morning. Special thanks to Phil and Helen for the food refreshments and David for some of the beers. Thank you to everyone who brought along additional tools and were prepared to get stuck into this task Paul S, Peter MS, Andrew W, Tim G, Adrian B, Mick M, Ian G, Dickon G, Richard C, David C, Jason, Clive F and Clive M.

Thanks to Jim S for taking a photograph of the team.

No Meeting in January

Saturday 17th of February

We had a good turnout this morning of nearly 20 volunteers including two walk-ins keen to help. Timing meant we could only continue the work started in December on the many blocked gullies and culverts at the western end on West Hanney Main Street. This included a number of gullies in the Meads and those around Headings pond in Church Street where further work is needed. All gullies and culverts that we cleared of debris. Mainly silt and tree roots urgently need flushing through by contractors with jet washers and we encourage WHPC to get this done as soon as possible.

Many thanks to Ian and Dickon for the additional safety cones and signage, Helen Smith for another excellent and very welcome cake, Phil for washing all the Hi-Viz vests again and all those other volunteers whom we hope we made a note of: Paul S, Richard C, Owen M, Ian G, Dickon G, Mick M, Peter M-S, Keith C, Lamorna Z, Phil M, David S, Richard P, Alastair J, David B, Tim G, Julian and Clive M.

Saturday 16th of March

The team of seventeen volunteers were able to focus on the grips, gullies, drains, ditches and culverts from St James the Less, along The Green, Ebbs Lane to Gods Ditch to improve the drainage and reducing the surface water in this part of East Hanney. Road gullies which had been cleared in the autumn were again full of leaves, silt and other debris. These were cleared and, in many cases, drain rods were used to clear away solid built-up silt and to cut tree roots in the gullies and culverts. Grips were re-established just past The Green enabling the road surface water to instantly drain away into the ditch.

The ditches in Ebbs Lane were cleared of reeds and other blockages, grips re-established and culverts drain rodded. The diagonal culvert half-way down Ebbs Lane appears to have a blockage issue but a path for water to drain away was re-established. Small branches and other debris were cleared from the first part of Gods Ditch. Sincere apologies to the land owner who was unaware of the plan yesterday and of the need to keep this major village drainage channel as free flowing as possible, taking as it does, much of the water flowing around East Hanney and the water draining from roads and other hard surfaces into Letcombe Brook to the north of the village.

We enjoyed a very welcome break with Helen for tea, coffee, biscuits and cheese scones this week – thank you Helen. Other thanks are due to Phil for washing the Hi-Viz vests again, Ian and Dickon for deploying additional traffic signs and cones to keep us safe.

And thank you to the volunteers who turned out Stewart S, Richard C, David S, Peter M, Ian G, Dickon G, Paul S, Keith R, Tim G, Andrew W, Lamorna Z, Phil M, Adam B, Mick M, Alastair J, Owen M and Clive M. We achieved rather a lot.

Saturday 20th of April

Thirteen volunteers turned out in beautiful spring sunshine to remove a fallen tree from Letcombe Brook in the stretch that runs north from Philberds Manor. The tree was collecting litter and other debris and obstructing the flow. Adjacent brambles and other vegetation were removed opening this area to more light, benefitting wildlife in this area.

Special thanks again to Helen for the coffee and walnut cake and Ian and Dickon for towing the trailer. Very pleased to say a warm welcome to Jude the new LB Project Manager who joined us and mucked in with today's project.

Volunteers today were Jude V, Andrew W, Peter M-S, Peter M, David S, Keith C, Ian G, Dickon G, David B, Richard C, Jason K, Adam B, Clive M.

Saturday 18th of May

Both teams enjoyed the dry morning warm weather and occasional sunshine to complete this month's tasks.

The West Hanney Team successfully cleared the road gullies of the former Headings Pond which have been sealed by heavy vehicles damaging the verges forcing mud into the openings. They were also able to reconnect the two culverts and the corresponding sump by drain rodding the lengthy pipework. One blockage needed rodding from the exit end over the drainage ditch as it was sealed by a combination of very thick, smelly mud and tree roots. Thank you to Paul for leading the team and washing the equipment, Ian, Dickon, Tim, Richard and Peter for this morning's strenuous efforts. It appears these culverts need regular clearing and the roadside gullies almost constant attention. Some thought could be given to protecting the verges and reducing the damage to the edges.

The East Hanney Team also had a successful morning removing some fallen trees and brambles from Letcombe Brook behind Brookside, above and below Lower Mill. Thank you to David S, Mick, Andrew, Adam B, Clive F and Clive M.

River Fly Monitoring Project

The River Fly Monitoring Team have finally been able to get back into the water this May after five consecutive months of fast currents and high water levels. Counts have been fine whenever sampling the two sites was possible. Thank you Phil and Stella.

Himalayan Balsam

The invasive Himalayan Balsam has started germinating again and Phil and Clive M removed many plants from around Lower Mill and behind Brookside.

Monkeyflower – Mimulus guttatus.

A new and emerging threat invasive species. Colonises watercress beds (Letcombe), asked to keep an eye open for it and remove it if seen. Report it back to Jude Verdon Letcombe Brook Project.

The Olde Housen

We need to thank Denis Houldey and Clive Fewins for keeping the Main Street stream clear of weeds and other plants alongside The Olde Housen.

There are other unnamed volunteers to thank who keep the ditches flowing from time to time all around the villages.