

## **Recent Work on the Canal side of Stockers Lake Local Nature Reserve**

It would be difficult to miss the work just completed on 200 metres of the canal side of the reserve. It follows on from the first 200 metres of similar works in 2008.

A lot of people are worried – particularly by the felling of several large willows. We owe you an explanation.

The work was carried out by Maydencraft Rural Ltd., instigated and paid for by the Friends of Stocker's Lake (F.o.S.L.) and approved by the landowners, Veolia Water, also by British Waterways and by the reserve's wildlife managers, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

### Background

The ditch drains the flood meadow at Stocker's Farm and predates the 18<sup>th</sup> century Grand Union Canal, probably by a few hundred years. It is indeed ancient. When the area was farmed (up to the start of gravel extraction in 1920) the ditch would have been cleared and 'ditched' every year, and no trees would have been allowed on its banks. But that was 90 years ago and it has not been looked after since. It had silted up in many places and much rubbish has been dumped on it. (F.o.S.L. work parties have removed many bicycles, car and motorcycle body parts and engines, gas ovens, fridges, supermarket trollies, gas cylinders etc. etc. And there's plenty more to be done.)

### What work has been done and why?

1. We have cut down all willows on the canalside of the ditch and more willows on the opposite bank. The six largest were decayed inside and would have needed removing in the next 2-5 years. We left the oaks. This will allow sunlight onto our new hedge and onto the ditch banks. We hope we may now see new plant life which has been shaded out for 90 years.
2. We then redefined, deepened and widened the ditch making it more suitable for a wider variety of wildlife and making it a more effective barrier against human disturbance. We also removed sacks and sacks of man-made rubbish.
3. We have erected a wooden fence behind which we planted a hedge of mainly hawthorn. This is another barrier to human intrusion and will allow this area to be a proper, undisturbed, wildlife habitat.

### What work remains?

There is still much work to be done in this area. It is expensive work that has cost F.o.S.L. over £11,000 to date. We hope to continue with it, as funds permit, until the whole of the canal side of the reserve is fenced and hedged.

*Ian Watson  
Chairman of F.o.S.L.  
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