



Dauntsey Parish Council Drainage Board

Flooding Update

Dauntsey Brook – West of Church Lane: In the last issue of The Pump there were photographs showing the dam across the Brook before and after we cleared it. Ed Kidner (Union Farm) has now cleared the section through his land from the recreation ground bridge to the motorway. This photograph shows what it looks like now – a dramatic improvement.



Toby Sturgis and Viv Vines managed to get WCC to pay to have their section alongside the recreation ground cleared so this photograph is typical for the whole length from Church Lane to the motorway. I've walked through the culvert under Church Lane and there was less than 6" of water.

Flooding in The Green: Moving upstream from Church Lane towards Old Sodom Lane however is a different picture. Under the Old Sodom Lane bridge there is about 2 feet of standing water and most of this length is heavily silted up.

The ultimate responsibility for clearing this section lies with the riparian owners – could that be you? According to the Environment Agency, if you own the land adjoining a river, stream or ditch then you are almost certainly the riparian owner, even if your title deeds don't mention it. If your property is just on one side of a watercourse then you will be responsible to the middle of the stream with the landowner on the other side having similar responsibilities.

The Environment Agency has permissive powers over main rivers (this section of Dauntsey Brook is classed as main river) – they can do work on main rivers subject to budgets, priorities and landowners allowing access, but they do NOT have to!



The riparian owner however is always legally responsible! And this could potentially result in VERY big bills. If there is further flooding in The Green, now that the downstream section has been cleared, there is a possibility that insurance companies of flooded householders may wish to

claim against the riparian owners whose lack of maintenance has contributed to the extent of the flooding. If this happened, it could be very expensive for the riparian owner – just ask someone whose house was flooded recently how much it has cost. How would you feel if you were flooded, in part, because a neighbour didn't maintain their bit of The Brook?

Action Needed - my suggestion is that those owners of land next to the Brook get together (a residents' group?) to jointly agree how you are going to maintain your stretch. The Drainage Board are willing to give advice, but ultimately it is your problem and responsibility.

Elsewhere: With representatives from Christian Malford Parish Council, I have walked about half of the section of Dauntsey Brook between where it leaves our parish and enters the Avon.

Dauntsey Parish Council Drainage Board

Generally this is not in as poor a state as through The Green, but it would benefit from some maintenance. However, due to the fall between The Green and the first problem areas downstream, the consequences of their poor maintenance will be generally restricted to those who are not maintaining their own section of The Brook.

Within Dauntsey, I have been working with Danny Everett (WCC) to try to identify the riparian owners of the watercourses which are outside the M4 boundaries but were introduced when the motorway was built. Potentially these could still be owned by the Highways Agency, WCC or the adjacent landowner... not unexpectedly, everyone claims that they are someone else's problem. Hopefully I will have more to report in the next Pump.

Earlier this month the Environment Agency came to Dauntsey. We walked the problem areas, and discussed what still needs to be done. They had flailed some of The Brook's banks a couple of weeks earlier but were apparently refused access by one landowner. At my suggestion, we also walked the length of Brinkworth Brook where (in my opinion) it needs clearing to stop overtopping and flowing down into Dauntsey Brook. They agreed that the work needs doing, some of which is again down to the Highways Agency and some to the local farmer. One of the EA staff said that he had been involved the last time both Dauntsey and Brinkworth Brooks were fully re-profiled... 20 years ago!

Andrew Chapman

November 2008