



# Dauntsey Parish Council Drainage Board

## Yet More Help from Wiltshire Council

In November and December of last year, Wiltshire Council continued helping with some of Dauntsey's drainage problems.

Danny Everett (WC Principle Drainage Engineer) is my main contact and he leads the team on the ground. Danny covers the whole of Wiltshire so, as we've worked well together before, Danny left me to guide the team (with him at the end of the phone if needed) and to act as a community interface. With an enlightened approach that other agencies could learn a lot from, we had men and machines for as long as we could productively use them... although only for maintenance and minor improvements but not able to increase the sizes of many road crossing culverts that are currently too small.

Ditches have reappeared after years of neglect like this one over the road from Good Monday's Farm – hopefully it will reduce risk to the nearby houses and road flooding.



Where The Bourne runs down the western side of to St James to meet Dauntsey Brook, the culvert was far too small... and so presented a flooding risk to St James. A request for a suitable length of pipe that "may be lying about" not only ended up with the pipe, but it installed and this section of main river cleared.

The digger shown here, despite its size and power, proved quite delicate when needed, in the hands of its skilled operator. The sheer weight was used at times to mould the clay banks to the correct profile and stop them collapsing before the spring growth reinforces them with new plant roots. On a number of

occasions, the machine could be seen with one track several feet off the ground. Doing these jobs by hand or with smaller machines just couldn't have achieved the same results.

The Highways Agency (actually Mott MacDonald) has continued its detailed surveying of the area before generating computer models. My understanding is that they will be trying to model Dauntsey pre the M4, with the M4 and correct maintenance... and with it in the condition it was in 2007 and 2008 when we had our last serious flooding. It remains to be seen how free they will be with the results, but the big stick of several large compensation claims has their attention.

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On the subject of insurance claims, there is also a more limited survey ongoing south of the M4. This is being carried out on behalf of one of the insurance companies, so holding people and organisations to blame clearly helps.

Learning from Dauntsey's success in this way, Wiltshire Council have stopped work being carried out by Network Rail on Bowd's lane. Network Rail wanted to put a lot more water into the stream that runs under the road at the end of Trow Lane – one of the two sources of Dauntsey Brook. Network Rail refused to cooperate until they were told that they could face similar compensation claims to the Highways Agency, so now they are cooperating and starting flood risk assessments and consultation.

We've been having difficulties with Wiltshire Council's Development Control and their failures to handle the Planning aspects of flooding in our area. Eventually, at the January Wiltshire Council Operational Flood Working Group meeting, we had Brian Taylor (Area Development Manager in Chippenham) and his boss Brad Fleet (Development Services Manager in Trowbridge) called in to explain their failures. As a result, there is more activity and cooperation... but words like "dynamic" or "proactive" don't spring to mind when dealing with them. Time will tell if there are any real improvements.

Brinkworth Brook remains in a terrible state despite the fact that it has been a known contributor to Dauntsey flooding for more than three years – no maintenance work has been done at all. Highways Agency and Environment Agency promised at the last flooding meeting that clearance would be completed before the end of March 2011. The Environment Agency then sent out details of the program of work that was limited to a few yards between the M4 culvert and the motorway fence. This is far too little to have much impact and much less than implied in other discussions. I've expressed my anger and am using other routes to put more pressure on them.

So, we're making progress, but have to fight every foot of the way. It often feels like the song "There's a hole in my bucket" – before we can fix the obvious problem there is another (usually people based) one to fix, and beyond that another and so on.

*Andrew Chapman*

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