

The Village Pond Clean-up

Approaching the pond on the Saturday morning of the Pond clean-up I was amazed to see a line of wheelbarrows stretching as far as the eye could see – which admittedly is not too far in my case. It was akin to the feelings that Lawrence of Arabia must have experienced on seeing a Bedouin camel train approaching him from an oasis in the Arabian desert (*there's always room for an historical reference with local connections*). The majority of the wheelbarrow drivers were ladies. Taking care not to impede their progress I followed them into Peter Riley's garden where they crossed the bridge spanning the stream to empty their barrow contents in the field beyond. Walking up Sutton Road towards the pond I encountered Louie O'Leary –



keeping a Councilor's eye on progress? - then a horde of willing volunteers working extremely hard. I was immediately concerned for Erica Ferrari who was standing in the pond up to her armpits in rushes. It seemed that any minute she might sink under the greenery never to be seen again. She was cutting and collecting the severed ends for the wheelbarrow operatives to carry away. In the middle of the pond was a stepladder being used to reach and cut the willow

branches. Note to self, don't cut branches directly above you!! They land on your head. The cut branches were being raked out of the water, cut up and placed in yet more wheelbarrows. Two



villagers were working away and debating the name of the White Horse (*who said men can't do two things at once*).

The name is of course but I'll keep that to myself in case it's a question in the Mission Hall quiz on Saturday 26 February. The excellent turnout of volunteers were cleaning up not just the pond itself but the pond surroundings, the top o' the pond and the area up to and including the Waterworks. A



hosepipe was being used to clear mud from the drainage channels, and

the Land Rover shuttle service was obviously a very valuable asset. Disturbingly there was no sign of the ducks.* I am assured that there is no truth in the rumour that the SP Soc had arranged an all expenses paid holiday at the Lodmoor Premier Inn for them, nor in



the cynical suggestion that the dish 'duck a l'orange' might be appearing on many local tables



soon. No doubt they had just moved away to quieter quarters. By now my fingers were becoming tired and cold from holding my pencil and notebook and exhaustion was setting in from writing so much,. Thankfully the arrival of a choice of excellent bacon or sausage butties supplied by the Springhead, followed by a warming coffee from the bar, restored my spirits. It also revitalized the real workers, for activity recommenced at pace.

The morning's activities brought everyone out, whole families included, and the result is a delight to the eye. It was a fine example of villagers combining to do their best for the village. Well done to everyone who contributed.

*Post report report. The ducks are back