

## Guidelines for the Conduct of Work Parties

### Introduction

The Chelmer Canal Trust makes a significant contribution to the maintenance of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation through the organisation of Work Parties. These guidelines are provided to support those coordinating Work Parties and those participating in them. They are intended to ensure that Work Parties are run appropriately, and with due regard to:

- the valuing of volunteers' contributions
- the safety of volunteers
- the preservation of the environment
- the reputation of the Chelmer Canal Trust and its partners
- the safe use of all equipment
- the correct use of safety equipment
- the minimisation of risk to the Trust and/or the Trustees
- the adherence to the requirements of the Trust's insurers.

Volunteers give their time freely and their contributions to the maintenance of the Navigation and its environs contribute to the aims and objectives of the Chelmer Canal Trust. The Trust wishes to keep requirements on the way volunteers participate to a minimum. However, to ensure that Work Parties are conducted appropriately the following minimum requirements for the conduct of Work Parties have been agreed by the Board and only participants willing to adhere to them should take part in Chelmer Canal Trust Work Parties.

### 1) Coordinators of Work Parties

- a) Risk assessments for all Trust activities will have been carried out and those responsible for coordinating Work Parties will have any particular or unusual risks, with ways of minimising them, drawn to their attention.
- b) All volunteers taking part in a Work Party should meet together at the start of the work party and be made aware of these Procedures (an up to date version is available for download on the Working Parties section of the Trust's website).
- c) The tasks expected to be carried out, and the area in which they are to be done, should be clearly explained to participants. Their attention should be drawn to any safety issues or matters which might lead to unnecessary risk.
- d) Procedures in case of accident or emergency should be explained (participants should be aware of the fact that there are locations where mobile phones are inoperative).
- e) Participants should be reminded of the need to work within their own capabilities.
- f) No one should work on their own; there must always be at least one other person available to assist in the case of accident or emergency.

- g) Only participants who have undertaken a RYA Powerboat Level 1 Certificate training course should operate any work boat.
- h) Lifejackets must be worn at all times by all participants on board work boats for any reason.
- i) When working from work boats safe working practices should be employed including only having on board those participants that are needed for the task.
- j) Appropriate protective equipment will be made available and should be used as appropriate to the task being undertaken. Such items include gloves, goggles and hard hats.
- k) All tasks undertaken by participants must be within their own capability and not expose them, or others, to undue risk.
- l) A small First Aid Kit will be provided with each set of refreshments. All cuts and scratches should be washed immediately (with fresh, not river, water) and covered with a waterproof plaster. Advice should be given about the subsequent signs and symptoms of Weil's Disease (see comprehensive notes in Appendix 1).
- m) Young people over the age of 13, but under the age of 18, may take part in work parties as long as they are accompanied by, and under the direct supervision of, their parent or guardian at all times. Young people must adhere to the same guidance as other participants.
- n) Young people over the age of 13, but under the age of 18, who are members of other organisations (e.g Scouts, participating in Duke of Edinburgh's Award, etc.) may take part in Work Parties as long as it has been agreed in advance and they are accompanied by, and under the direct supervision of, their own staff at all times. Young people must adhere to the same guidance as other participants.
- o) Work Parties are intended to support the maintenance of the Navigation and the work to be undertaken must be the work that has been agreed beforehand with Essex Waterways Ltd.
- p) In general land on the towpath side of the Navigation is the responsibility of Essex Waterways Ltd. Land on the opposite side of the Navigation is private land. There is no right of access to this land, and trees, etc are the property of the landowner. Any trimming back of overhanging vegetation should respect this.
- q) Care should be taken to ensure that the activities and conduct of Work Parties do not detrimentally affect the reputation of the Chelmer Canal Trust or its partners (e.g. Essex Waterways Ltd.)

## **2. Participants in Work Parties**

- a) When working on the bank care should be taken of ill-defined edges, vegetation disguising mud and water, etc.
- b) Participants should always work in pairs.
- c) Participants should ensure that they work within their own capabilities. Care should be taken to avoid heavy lifting. Work must be done in such a way that the safety of other participants is always considered.

- d) Equipment brought by participants or provided by the Trust should be used in such a way that it does not endanger other participants in Work Parties or members of the public.
- e) Lifejackets should be worn by anyone on the water for whatever reason (e.g. working in a canoe; working from a work boat or being ferried along the river by a workboat)
- f) Protective gloves, goggles and hard hats should be worn as appropriate to the activity being undertaken.
- g) Any open cuts or sores, either pre-existing or contracted during the Work Party, should be washed in clean water and covered with a waterproof plaster. When working on or near river banks there is always a risk of Weil's Disease (see comprehensive notes in Appendix 1)
- h) Strong non-slip water proof shoes or boots should be worn. Water proof trousers can be of benefit and warm clothing and a water proof top is advisable.

## Appendix 1

**Information relating to Weil's Disease** (source: NHS Direct. <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>)

### Leptospirosis

#### Introduction

The disease leptospirosis is caused by leptospira bacteria. It is transmitted to humans by contact with the urine of rats, cattle, foxes, rodents and other wild animals, usually by contact with contaminated soil or water. There are many different types of leptospira bacteria, each tends to be associated with a specific animal species.

The most common bacteria in the UK is *Leptospira hardjo*, which is found in cattle and *Leptospira icterohaemorrhagiae*, which is associated with rats.

The bacteria enters the body via cuts to the skin, or via the nose, mouth or other mucous membranes. In most cases the infection causes a flu-like illness and severe headaches. The severe form of the disease (Weil's disease) causes jaundice and liver damage and carries a reported death rate anywhere between 4-40%. Only about 10-15% of affected people suffer this more dangerous form.

Leptospirosis is rare in the UK, and Weil's disease is extremely rare. However, Weil's Disease is a very serious illness, and must be swiftly diagnosed and treated.

#### Symptoms

Leptospirosis starts about 10 days (it can vary between 7-12 days) after infection with the bacteria, and may be so mild as to be unsuspected. In more severe cases it starts suddenly with:

- headache,
- fever,
- chills,
- severe muscle aches and tenderness,
- redness of the eyes,
- loss of appetite,
- vomiting, and
- sometimes a skin rash.

Many cases settle after a week or two, but in some people the liver, kidneys, heart muscle and brain linings (meninges) are affected. Jaundice occurs in only about 10% of cases. Jaundice, heart failure and meningitis are danger signs.

Other symptoms and signs include:

- diarrhoea,
- joint pain (arthralgia),
- bone pain,
- cough,
- sore throat,
- enlargement of the spleen (splenomegaly),
- lymph node enlargement (lymphadenopathy),

- enlargement of the liver (hepatomegaly),
- heart beat irregularities, and
- internal bleeding.

The pain and tenderness in the muscles can be very severe and is an aid to diagnosis. The headache is usually intense, sometimes throbbing, and is associated with severe eye-ache. If persistent, the headache may indicate leptospiral meningitis.

Some affected people suffer mental disturbances such as delirium, hallucinations, and even psychotic behaviour.

## **Diagnosis**

The diagnosis is by history of exposure and clinical suspicion. Blood tests rarely confirm the illness in time to affect treatment but they may subsequently confirm it. Treatment with appropriate antibiotics should be initiated as early as possible. Untreated cases can progress to a more severe and potentially fatal stage. The Public Health Laboratory Service or hospital consultant microbiologist can offer advice and testing.

Leptospirosis is a notifiable illness in the UK, which means that the doctor who makes the diagnosis must notify those responsible for public health in their area.

## **Treatment**

Leptospirosis is treated with antibiotics such as penicillin, streptomycin, tetracycline, and erythromycin. Treatment with these medicines is effective if given within four to seven days of the onset of the illness. For this reason, the diagnosis may often have to be made on the history and clinical signs.

Once organ damage has occurred, antibiotics are less effective and may even be undesirable. They may cause a severe reaction due to the release of toxic substances from the killed or dying bacteria. This is called a Jarisch-Herxheimer reaction and the symptoms include chills, headache and muscle pain.

## **Prevention**

Leptospirosis can be prevented by avoiding water environments that may be contaminated with rat's urine or the urine of other animals.

If you are involved in farm work or veterinary work, or you are a water sport or caving enthusiast, you should take extra care (wearing protective clothing, for example) and be aware of the symptoms.