

Iain Ure's 2015 report received 20 November 2015

Himalayan Balsam Report

Otterton to Bicton

Summary

This was the 2nd year this area was tackled. Initial growth of Himalayan Balsam was much reduced compared with the previous year. Smaller stems, hidden from view in the undergrowth, continued to grow and removed in subsequent visits. No new areas were cleared.

Method

1. An initial trim was made on many open or semi open areas with the brush cutter. This was rapidly done and very effective. It was difficult to see hazards despite visual inspections. Hard objects were hit a couple of times.
2. Cut material was roughly gathered and piled up to dry out.
3. A long handle back facing hoe was used for subsequent work, particularly in the stream.

Observations

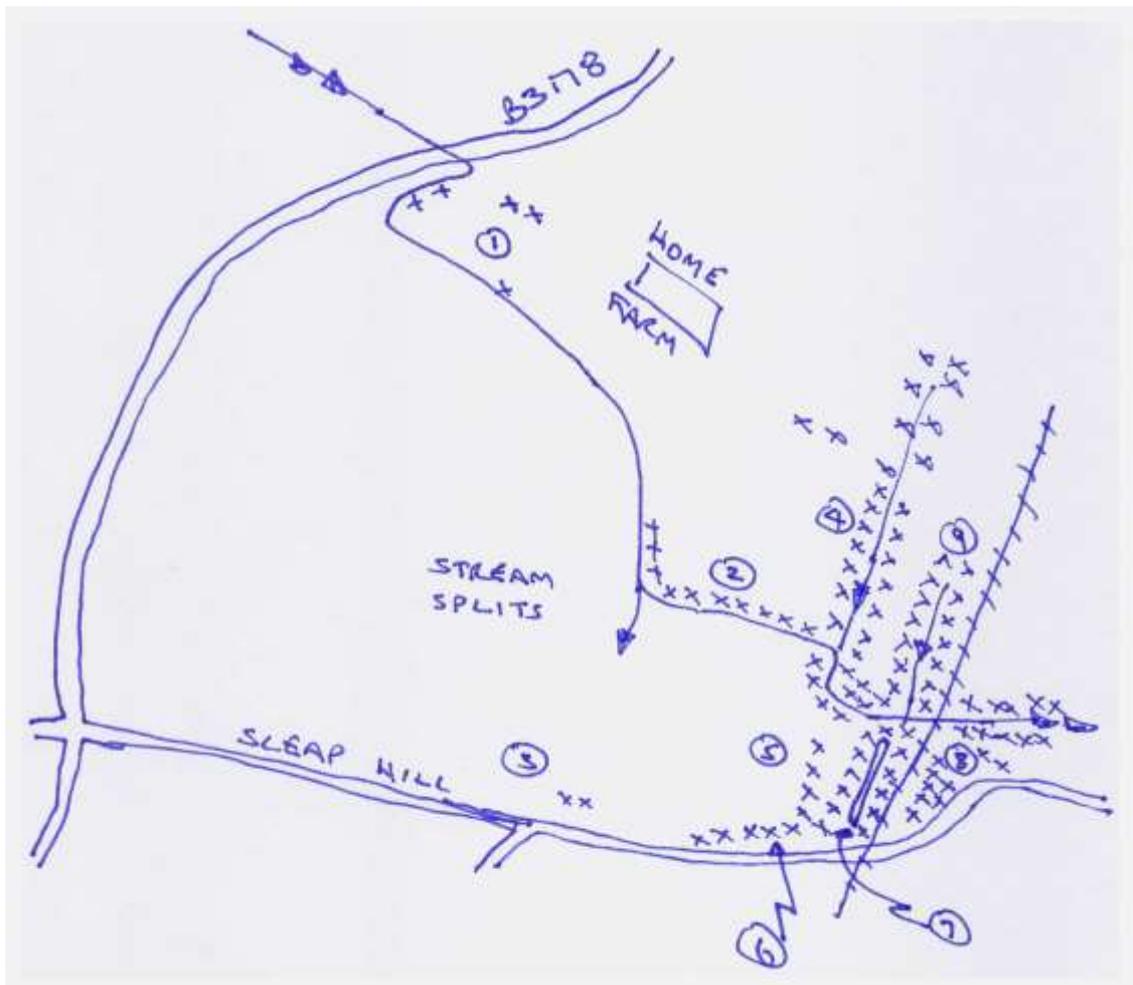
1. The lack of much serious flooding last winter probably contributed to the much reduced quantities of HB. There almost seemed to be two varieties of HB. One; fast growing early plants, easily cleared. Second; slow growing, short difficult to see or pick.
2. The HB in adjacent areas started to seed very early, thus making an expansion of the area none viable due to time constraints.
3. The team was only two (except on one occasion)
4. The summer was not that hot so we expected the rough gathering of cut material to be less successful but in fact there was still very little regrowth.

Dates of main working parties

(does not include casual trips to pick HB stragglers)

- 23rd June; lot better than last year, but nettles and undergrowth far more advanced so HB more hidden as it has not yet out-competed the nettles. Goose grass makes it difficult for brush cutter.
- 24th June; undergrowth very dense makes access difficult and difficult to hoe.
- 3rd July; shorter HB showing through
- 2nd Aug;
- 8th Aug; deep sediment and huge plants in stream, cleared.
- 18th Aug; tackled stream from C R (area 4 below), David got stuck in the deep mud. Very difficult due to deep mud and water.

- 1st September
- 4th September
- Various short visits



Key – showing main HB growths by crosses.

- 1 Only a few outbreaks of HB present, but source is far end of the lake in the Botanical gardens and Bicton arena further upstream.
- 2 All cleared. Some very large plants but quickly dealt with.
- 3 Last year this was Strimmed by gardener to Old Vicarage – state un known
- 4 Only a short length cleared late on in the period, very deep water and mud made progress slow. Huge plants with massive roots. David Hatch came to assist with this area as it was so difficult.
- 5 HB along field edges, south side was continuous and cleared, east side was bad but not continuous, all cleared. Much reduced compared with last year.
- 6 Access track had reduced quantities of HB which were all cleared.
- 7 Major success from last year. Much reduced density of HB along the ditch and adjacent wood. All cleared.
- 8 Field to the east of the old railway and along the old railway had lots of HB - another major success with a lot less than last year. Strangely there was new more along the road embankment but scattered plants difficult to access due to nettles.
- 9 This ditch was cleared by CDE and now takes much of the stream from Colaton Raleigh. Massive amount of HB – not tackled except for short length.