

Champion COMMUNITY Page

Mill Pond committee wants action now

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

The time for action is now, according to Pat Duignan, the Mill Pond Committee chair.

Ms Duignan has joined forces with petitioner Keith Timbers to get the Mill Pond cleared of weeds and dredged.

"People who see the pond look at it as a reflection of the rest of the town," said Mr. Timbers. "It's part of this town's heritage."

Mr. Timbers called for immediate harvesting of weeds and a restoration of the water flow.

"The time for consultants is gone, the time for doing is now," said Ms Duignan.

Mr. Timbers said plans for paddle boats on the Mill Pond for Canada Day celebrations were scuttled because of the pond's problems with weeds.

Ms Duignan's brother John screened two films of the Mill Pond at the committee meeting. The first film was shot last week with a camcorder and showed a weed-choked swamp with no water movement. Nobody would dare swim in it.

Felt like Bogart

Mr. Duignan said he felt like Humphrey Bogart slogging through the jungle in *The African Queen* as he moved his small boat to the pond's narrows at the western end. His pictures bear out the description.

The second film shows a Canada Day bath tub race from the late 1970s. The water level is noticeably higher, there is obvious movement of the water and people are unafraid to launch themselves into the depths.

"Those films give you an idea of what the pond was and what it can be again," said Mr. Timbers.

Mr. Duignan said currently the pond is about six feet deep. The weeds slow water movement, which increases temperatures and allows more weeds to grow.

He estimated there is at least two meters of silt and decayed aquatic matter at the bottom of the pond.

In fact one of the ideas is to dredge the silt and sell it,

or have it carted away, as high quality composting material.

The lack of water movement is evidenced by no spillover at the damn section near Martin Street. According to Mr. Duignan, after a heavy rain, water actually flows backwards out of the pond at the western entrance.

Part of the problem, according to Mr. Timbers, is the lack of a wooden wall to divert water from 16 Mile Creek into the pond. Apparently it was removed when some remedial work was done on the pond about four years ago.

That diversion continually brought cool water into the pond, keeping the temperature down and insuring water movement which slowed weed growth, Mr. Duignan said. Ms Duignan added that the pond has a long history of being dredged and cleaned out, only it has not been done for several years.

New weed takes hold

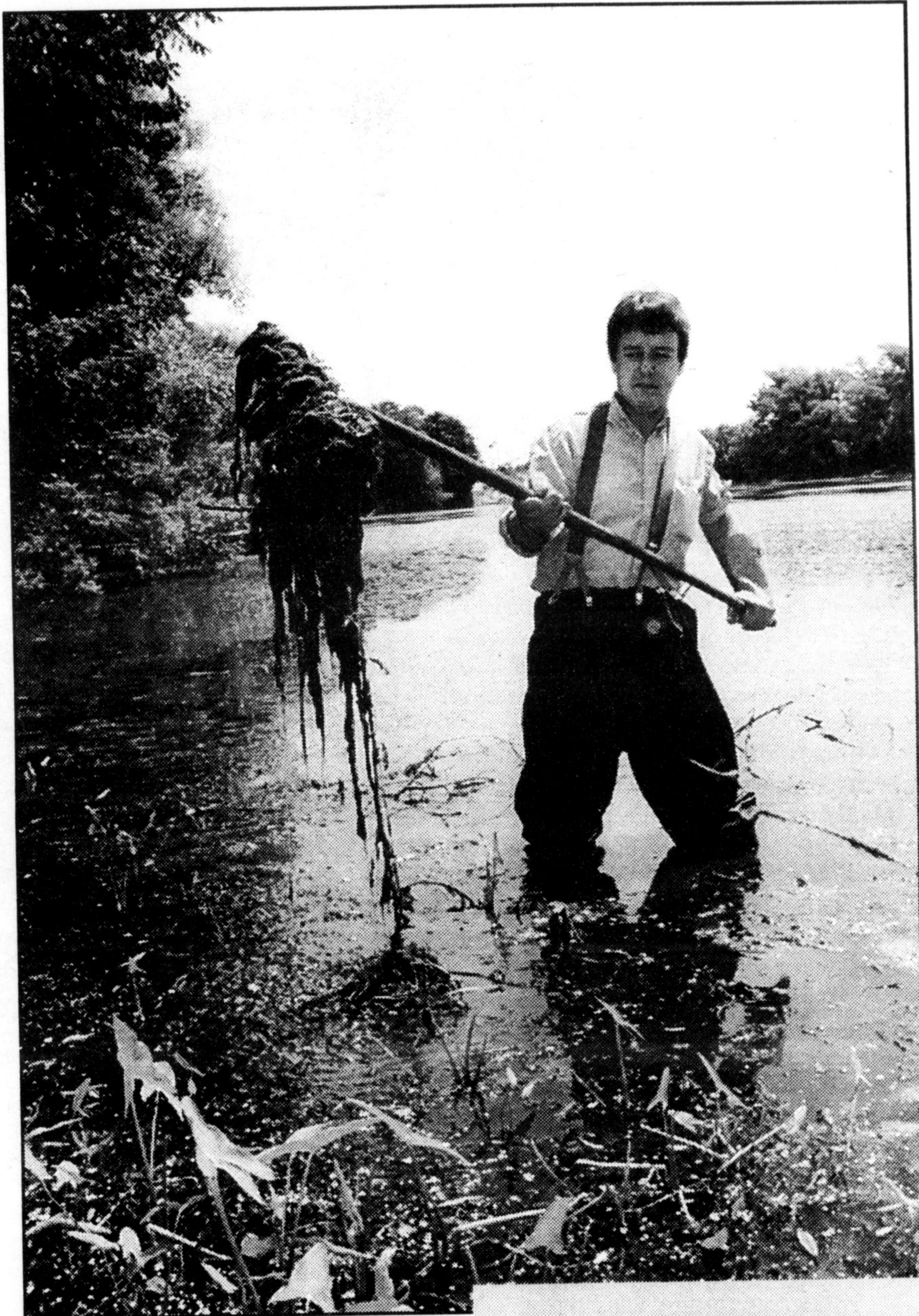
According to a November 1997 report by then consultant David Featherstone, the pond had substantial weed areas of two different types of plant. In a recent report by Mr. Featherstone, now a biologist with the Halton Region Conservation Authority, the pond has been completely colonized by the weed Eurasian milfoil, which was not even mentioned in the 1997 report.

The Mill Pond group is a sub-committee of the Downtown Business Improvement Area. Mr. Duignan said with growth and development in Milton the pond is a key to the viability of the downtown.

Officials of the Wye Marsh Conservation Area on Georgian Bay told Ms Duignan that they eradicate the Eurasian milfoil as soon as they see it. The plant is non-native, is said to be extremely aggressive and threatening to native species. Ms Duignan called the plant the aquatic version of the purple loosestrife.

There are other plans for the pond, such as a restoration of lights for pathways and a fountain for the middle that would be lit at night.

Ms Duignan said other agencies, such as the Ministry of Environment, have said the pond is not subject to special conditions.



John Duignan hoists some weeds out of the Mill Pond during a recent visit. He is one of the people spearheading a drive to clean up the pond. After toiling in the murky water he remarked that he felt like Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen* as he slogged around in a small boat through weed-choked areas.

file photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Pond petition has more than 2,000 signatures

A petition calling for the Town of Milton to clean up the Mill Pond has more than 2,000 signatures so far.

Keith Timbers, who is circulating the document, said interest is "really starting to pick up speed" with new signatures weekly.

A member of the Milton Mill Pond Committee, Mr. Timbers said many citizens have signed the petition during the Milton Farmers' Market, where a table is set up every Saturday morning in front of Quality Greens.

"It's still going strong," said the Kingsleigh Court resident.

Other copies of the document are available for signing at 18 Milton businesses including Fitzgerald Insurance on Main Street, the Postal Zone at Milton Mall and the Country Depot on Bronte Street.

He said he believes his goal of gaining 10,000 signatures before presenting the petition to town council is still within reach.

The main core pond is laden with

excessive weeds and algae and needs immediate attention, say members of the Milton Mill Pond Committee, a sub-committee of the Milton Downtown Business Improvement Area.

The petition calls for re-directing the flow of the Sixteen Mile Creek through the pond so "the water would once again be crystal clear and free of the putrid stench which now greets all visitors."

The issue is being looked at by municipal staff.



Keith Timbers

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