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**BREAK THROUGH ON THE OLD BEDFORD RIVER**

On Tuesday 4 April three boats led by John Revell's 41-foot long cruiser *Olive Emily*, and accompanied by Chris Howes's 45-foot *Lily May* and Geoff Walters's 50-foot *Ever After*, finally managed to cruise up the Old Bedford River to reach Welches Dam Lock after several previous unsuccessful attempts. This represents a very important development and all those taking part deserve our warmest congratulations. Unable to navigate through Welches Dam Lock into the Forty-Foot River meant the three boats had to turn and they tied up at Welney overnight before the trip back to the Great Ouse on the following day.

The trip reflects great credit on John who was one of the last boaters to use Welches Dam Lock before the Agency, without warning, erected a line of steel piling across the entrance to the lock in 2006 and has refused to do anything about the obstruction ever since. One would hope there could possibly now be a change of heart by the Environment Agency, which has been far from helpful in the past. In advance of the trip, the Agency had raised the water level in the Old Bedford making for an easier passage and it had also arranged to lift the guillotine gate at Welney which is usually a bar to navigation.

Not that the trip was trouble free. The entrance to the Old Bedford is such that silt from the tidal river has built up making passage extremely difficult and involves considerable manoeuvring through the mud. We are delighted to be able to report that the Agency has belatedly brought up some dredging equipment to deal with this hazard from the Great Ouse.

Lack of use of the Old Bedford in the past has been a major factor and it is vital that as many boats as possible navigate the stretch up Welches Dam, particularly as some of the worst of the silting is now being removed. We also need to see progress being made with the inspection of Welches Dam Lock to assess its condition and we must continue to build up our fighting fund to contribute to the expected repair costs.

## **WELCHES DAM, WHAT IS AT STAKE HERE?**

**JOHN REVELL writes -**

I have been involved in this struggle for a long time and it now seems that matters are coming to a head. Perhaps we should reflect on what is at stake.

The Inland Waterways Association was set up to deal with seemingly intractable problems just like the Old Bedford, Welches Dam and the Horseway Channel. We owe it to those who founded the IWA and those who follow us to succeed.

I cannot believe this situation would have been left unresolved if the British Waterways Board or the Canal & River Trust were the navigation authority and if this had occurred on the main canal system. Compared with other restoration projects such as the Rochdale, Huddersfield Narrow, the Liverpool Link, the Chesterfield, the Kennet & Avon what is required is extra ordinarily simple.

A short leaking section needs to be re-lined – remember that restoring the leaking pound at Limpley Stoke on the K & A was just a small part of that project re-opened 20 years ago. A single lock, Welches Dam Lock, needs to be modernised and lengthened and the piling removed. CRT and Waterways Recovery Group RG do this all the time.

The Old Bedford (about 14 miles) needs to be made deep enough for boats, either by dredging or putting more water in. It has not been filled in or covered by car parks or roads and buildings, it holds water and it flows through countryside.

The operation of the Welney gate needs to be sorted out. In the short term a guarantee that the gate will be “up” unless Welches Dam pumping station is working should be acceptable.

Even if a proper lock is required this hardly compares with tunnelling under Asda or restoring a 3-mile tunnel (both on the Huddersfield Narrow) or restoring a long flight of locks (Caen Hill on the Kennet & Avon or above Worksop on the Chesterfield Canal).

A more user friendly and practical way is needed for entering and leaving Salters Lode. In the short term dredging/deeper water in the Old Bedford and dredging the tidal channel would help a great deal.

One short tidal channel needs to be regularly dredged or flushed out with water just like Denver or Torksey, Cromwell or Brentford.

None of this is cheap but the real stumbling block is not money but the unwillingness of the Environment Agency (the navigation authority) to tackle the problems that exist either themselves or by using the voluntary sector or by transferring responsibility for navigation to someone else who can.

I believe we must enthusiastically support IWA/EA/CRT transfer campaign and waterways organisation need to pull together at local and national level, whatever their differences in the past.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The tradition of holding the Association's Annual General Meeting in different parts of our large and diverse region was continued again this year. The chosen venue on Sunday 23 April was Hemingford Grey, a picturesque Great Ouse riverside village where we held the AGM in the rather quaint Victorian Reading Room. But members first gathered at Jones' Boatyard in nearby St. Ives, where we learnt some of the history of the site, one of the first inland marinas and now in the third generation of the same family ownership. We also saw the newly dug additional marina basin below the lock and now connected to the river; it is slowly being completed with the installation of pontoons for 110 boats.

Members then enjoyed a peaceful electric-powered boat trip through St. Ives with its unique 14<sup>th</sup> century stone bridge and on to the quayside at Hemingford Grey, experiencing the rather slow guillotine gate at Hemingford Lock on the way.

An excellent cold buffet lunch was served by Margaret Martin with assistance from our Chairman and was much appreciated by all. Our display boards showed some of the current work of the Association, in particular Project Hereward. The formal business of the day was completed quite quickly with all the board members re-elected and re-appointment of our accounts examiner John Cordran. In addition to an update on current issues from our Chairman, we were pleased to hear a very positive report on progress by the North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust.

Thank you to all the members and guests that took part on the day.

## HERE AND THERE

**IVAN CANE:** Belated congratulations to Ivan Cane who may be taking on the role of Chairman of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust. He needs no introduction to most of our readers having been actively involved with the canal for many years and with the waterways in general for even more years. He joined our Association in August 1993, was one of the earliest to be involved with the voluntary working parties on the canal, and is now the proud owner of his own boat that he moors on the river Wissey. For a short time he was an EAWA director and he now serves us as our archivist for the canal. Unbeknown to most members he also plays a crucial role in the production of "*The Easterling*", checking the draft of the copy received from the editor, arranging for the issue to be printed, and then distributing the printed copies to members or sending it out by e-mail.

**RIVER STOUR:** We are delighted to report that the River Stour Trust has obtained a grant of £85,000 from the Cory Environment Trust of Great Britain towards the construction of new lock gates for Stratford St. Mary. The gates are currently being built for the river by Hargreaves Lock Gates at its factory in Halifax, West Yorkshire.

At the same time the Stour Trust has received a grant of £8,600 towards the lock's restoration from a bequest from the estate of the late Tony Harrison, a long-standing supporter of the waterways in East Anglia including our own association. Without this donation it would not have been possible for the Stour Trust to accept the large donation from Corys to be accepted.

The Stour Trust's annual "Sudbury to the Sea" event was, as usual, a sell-out with the entries again having to be capped at 300 boats, but enabling 500 participants to enjoy a weekend on the river. One task before the event was to renew the landing stage at Bures. Work started there in July with the old decking being removed and six new oak posts being hammered into the river bed together with side supports. In August new decking was added, much of the work being carried out by the 1<sup>st</sup> Bures Scouts who received a £250 grant from the Bures Music Festival.

Another problem at Bures had been in July last year when the automatic gate would not close properly and this drained the water level upstream. The gate had been built in the 1930s and its age and design made the task of removing it very difficult. Fish were moved to deeper parts of the river and the hard to reach portage point was adopted temporarily to facilitate river use. Last November there was a similar problem at Cornard Weir when a piece of wood became jammed under the gate causing it to become stuck in the raised position and allowing the water level to drop.

**RIVER NENE:** There have been several developments on the Nene including starting work on the new Islip Bridge. These have prompted the Friends of the River Nene to highlight other recent developments. For instance over the winter it has opened two new moorings, first at Manor Farm, close to Doddington Lock No 11 and the second nearer Alwalton Lock No 36 on the approach to Peterborough. This makes a total of six moorings the group has so far provided for visitors. There has also been an increase in the number of new marinas including the recently opened Lilford Marina upstream of lock No 25. It followed on from White Mills Marina at White Mills Lock No 9 and Blackthorn Marina near Upper Ringstead Lock No 18. And scheduled to open in July near Ditchford is a large new retail park – Rushden Lakes – which will no doubt will attract waterborne visitors.

**HALESWORTH:** At the Annual General Meeting it was reported that the New Reach has never looked better. Due to the efforts of Millennium volunteers trees and hedges have been cleared and the towpath strimmed, opening up the waterway to the rest of the Green. Strimming the park section of the towpath followed and later some of the weed was cleared. Meanwhile the wild life is thriving; there's a new brood of mallard ducklings; the moorhen are busy and there are several water vole. And a Friend's Scheme has been launched whereby members agree to pay a monthly sum to the New Reach bank account.

Roy Sutton recently visited Halesworth and over two days produced an accurate survey of water levels in the New Reach and Town River. This report will help assess the amount of de-silting that needs to be done. Meanwhile the new punt has been put to good use picking up litter and fallen branches from the canal.

**SLEAFORD:** Over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend boats gathered on the Sleas at South Kyme to commemorate 30 years of such get-togethers and a special cake was cut aboard a narrow boat to commemorate the event. New visitor moorings and a new winding hole are planned for the village but at present the Sleaford Navigation Trust's application for funding has not been successful. This was made to the LEADER rural funding programme and was based on the premise that members would carry out

much of the work, whereas LEADER had assumed that a contractor was going to be employed.

**KINGFISHERS:** Kingfishers are making a comeback following a programme of improvements to their habitats. Engineers have been drilling holes in pilings at pumping stations and bridges in the Middle Level and last year 14 pairs of birds made their homes in these man-made burrows. Several wrens have also been spotted nesting in the 60-millimetre tunnels. At the same time otter holts have been constructed which the creatures recognise as providing sanctuary. This is all part of an on-going programme throughout the Middle Level.

**ELY SOUTHERN BYPASS:** Work is now well underway on constructing Ely's Southern Bypass. The work involves the construction of two coffer dams that extend out from both sides of the river bank but leaving a 260-metre passage for boats to pass. The site will be lit at night and advanced warning signs have been erected up and down stream.

**CURIOSITY NOTICE:** On 8 May 2017 an Emergency Closure Navigation Notice was issued for Welches Dam Lock on the Forty Foot Navigation/Old Bedford River effective from 1 July 2006 and until further notice. It stated the river would be closed until further notice due to a failure of the lock structure and pointing doors.

It is worth remembering that there is no provision in the Anglian Waterway Authority's Act (1977) which allows the Agency to close a recreational waterway other than for "the construction, maintenance or alteration of any lock or other work in or adjoining the waterway." In any case Section 15 (1) allows them, in these circumstances, only to temporarily prohibit, restrict or regulate navigation". Although dated 1 July 2006 the notice was actually created on 2 May 2017 at 16.53 by the Administrator and was signed by Irven Forbes, Waterways Manager. But in 2006 Irven was not signing these notices and they were always issued in the name of the "Waterways Team."

It seems that this is nothing less than at best a cynical, or at worst, a dishonest attempt by the Agency to pretend that the Emergency Navigation Closure Notice required by Section 15 of the Anglian Waterway Authority's Act 1977 was issued in 2006 with the legislation to cover their backs now that questions are being asked.

**CHELMER & BLACKWATER:** One of Essex's favourite tourist attractions – the passenger trip boat *Victoria* - is operating again from its base at Paper Mill Lock at Little Baddow near Chelmsford. She will host groups and parties wanting to explore the delights of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation.

Essex Waterways Ltd are the new owners having bought the boat from its previous owners and are now taking bookings for trips along this scenic and pretty waterway. The company has been assisted by a £30,000 grant from European Leader Funds via the Rural Community Council of Essex. The boat can provide accommodation for 46 guests and can handle wheel chair and push chair friendship and can provide food and drinks. Sue Clift, Essex Waterways booking officer, can arrange cruises to Chelmsford or High Bridge and back.

## MIDDLE LEVEL BILL PROGRESS

The Middle Level Commissioners' renewed proposals for greater waterway management powers and introduction of registration and for new navigation byelaws were presented to Parliament in November 2016 as the "Middle Level Bill". It soon passed its Standing Order examination stages and received its First Reading on 24 January 2017.

The Private Bill, which if it becomes law as the Middle Level Act, could provide increased facilities for recreational boating on the Middle Level is supported by the Inland Waterways Association and our Association. EAWA has worked closely with the Commissioners over many years, supporting them to make improvements, but recognising their inherent difficulty of having no specific funds available and the problem of such outdated byelaws.

Six petitions opposing the Bill were deposited within the time allowed from individuals with varying interests in the navigation of the waterways, from the March Cruising Club, and from the National Association of Barge Travellers. The Commissioners are considering the points raised and have recently offered meetings to discuss the issues raised by the petitioners.

The Bill failed to receive a Second Reading in eight subsequent Parliamentary sessions largely, it appears, because of the general reluctance of MPs to allow Private Bills to proceed further without time for scrutiny.

After a debate on the Bill on 29<sup>th</sup> March, it finally received its Second Reading. A government minister was amongst MPs expressing support but several other MPs drew attention to the content of petitions against the Bill. It must now go before a House of Commons Opposed Bill Committee for further detailed examination of the petitions and to hear representations from the petitioners.

The announcement on 18<sup>th</sup> April that there would be election on 8<sup>th</sup> June has inevitably imposed further delay. When Parliament is prorogued any Bills which have not been completed must then normally start again from scratch in the new session. However, an application can be made for the Bill to be revived and providing that both Houses of Parliament agree, it can resume from the stage it reached in the earlier sessions.

EAWA hopes to see good progress on the Bill in the new Parliament and we will be offering the Commissioners further support as appropriate through the many stages yet to come.

## BROADS NOTES AND NEWS

**BROADS OPEN DAY:** On the morning between 10am and 2pm on Saturday 13 May the Broads Authority held its annual Open Morning at Whitlingham Country Park. Those attending were able to learn more about how the authority operates whilst John Packman, the Chief Executive, gave a presentation about the authority's operations. .

**THORPE ST ANDREWS:** Electrically-powered hire boats are planned for a new venture that is being launched by Freedom Boating Holidays and MBA Marine at River Green, Thorpe St Andrews on the river Yare. At the same time the Town Council has put forward plans to regenerate the riverside area with new toilets, a ticket office and

a centenary garden. The project would see at least four electric and diesel hire boats being available – the electric boats being available for up to seven hours for each charge and the diesel boats for a full day hire. This has been prompted by the transfer of the quay headings from the Broads Authority back to the Council which, from this year, will have to pay out £10,000 to maintain the 180 yards of River Green quay heading.

**POTTER HEIGHAM:** An Environment Agency scheme has saved 100,000 fresh-water fish from an influx of salt water at Herbert Woods Potter Heigham boatyard. Under the scheme a barrier installed across the boatyard's entrance can be raised during surge tides to ensure salt water is excluded. Otherwise the salt can get trapped in the still waters of the boatyard and this then kills the fish. At the boatyard water quality monitors called sondes are used and these record the level of salt in the river. Hence the level of salt can be tracked as it moves up the river giving the staff enough time to raise the barrier.

**SPARK OF LIGHT:** One of Herbert Woods' original wooden motor cruisers has been renovated by the Potter Heigham company and has re-entered regular holiday service being re-launched on 16 May. She became the private boat of Lindsay Cutler who had taken over the company in 1954 and then had several different owners. Her dimensions are almost 11 metres in length, just over 3 metres in width and she can sleep four people. The boat underwent several changes of name becoming *Spot of Light* in April 1934, *Shimmer of Light* in 1947 and then but she has now returned to her original name.

**LOWESTOFT:** To protect and develop Lowestoft's maritime sector two bursaries have been set up to train young people in boat building and other forms of woodwork. Funded by the Coastal Communities Fund and run collaboratively by National Historic Ships UK, a government funded group that provides guidance on historic vessels, and the International Boatbuilding Training College in Oulton Broad North which provides boatbuilding and joinery classes. Whilst funding for the project was meant to finish in December it will now continue allowing NHGS and IBTC to develop the project and provide more training.

**DAD'S BOATS:** A pedal boat manufacturer is planning to leap the channel to show his new product to Dutch shoppers. This is a two-boat design and is based on a boat used on his honeymoon and was shown at the Amsterdam Boat Show from 8 – 12 March. The design allows two people to face each other as they pedal with a sophisticated gearbox to improve efficiency. Designed with the Scottish lochs and Cumbrian lakes in mind, the company hopes the boat will turn heads in Holland – a country famed for its canals. The boat has been in development since 2012 and a production model is now ready to exhibit alongside the company's ornamental wooden propellers. The business was founded by David Williams and is now run by David and his son in law Stephen Pitkethly.

**THORPE ISLAND:** The long running dispute about mooring on parts of Thorpe Island in Norwich shows few signs of resolution. In April Thorpe St. Andrew Town Council agreed to introduce 24-hour mooring regulations along the quay heading at River Green. But under these rules boat owners who stay beyond 24 hours or return within

48 hours risk being issued with a charge. But it would appear none of the residents have been consulted and some of them need access for work and to go about their daily lives. This has all come to a head following the sale by the previous owner Roger Wood of the 7½-acre site at the beginning of April for £200,000. Prior to this sale the site was the centre of a decade long legal wrangle between Mr Wood and the Broads Authority.

Until the beginning of May the Thorpe Island boat owners seemed to be facing a truly horrendous situation with the possibility of their having to pay a £100 fine every time they wanted to visit the mainland and there were no arrangements for islanders to regularly using the moorings without incurring the charges. But early in May and following an outcry from residents, Thorpe St Andrew Town councillors have now agreed a small space for them to use their dinghies.

**BREXIT:** Last November the Broads Authority launched outline plans designed to protect the Broads after Brexit and seeking the public's views on the topic. The plan hopes to see the development of so-called "climate smart" communities. Over the next 50 years global warming is likely to see hotter drier summers with slightly wetter and warmer winters in the Broads as well as increased water levels, possible heatwaves and drought and "more extremes" in the intensity and frequency of rainfall and storms. To cope it suggests adopting a climate smart approach, where residents, businesses and visitors are educated about what they can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Schemes that encourage low energy use will be expanded and promoted. Funding should be sought through the Broads Climate Partnership with a pilot project launched this year and a potential roll-out in 2018.

**RIVER WAVENEY:** In February the Trust was awarded with the prestigious "Community Group of the Year" award by South Norfolk District Council. This amounted to a prize of £250 together with a very handsome engraved glass trophy. This is in recognition of the Trust's volunteering work and its position in the Waveney Valley as an established and credible organisation.

## **ANGLIAN WATER – CAMBRIDGE DIVISION**

### **FORTY FOOT DRAIN – SEEPAGE TESTS APRIL 1987**

1: **BACKGROUND:** In order to establish geological information and thereby gain a better understanding of seepage losses, a second seepage test was prepared and undertaken in April 1897 following site investigation.

2: **PREPARATIONS AND WATER LEVEL DATA:** A series of 6" diameter observation bores were drilled by Contract Drilling Ltd., mainly on the back of the south bank of Forty Foot Drain on land owned by the Division. Two bores were drilled from positions adjacent to Welches Dam Lock where surrounding ground levels were lowest and where problems had been observed or reported by farmers on adjacent land. Two further bores were drilled on the north bank by courtesy of the Church Commissioners tenants, Allpress Farms Ltd.

2.2: The temporary dam upstream of Welches Dam Lock sealing the lock from the Counter Drain had been fitted with a 6in diameter valve to enable transfer to fill the

Forty Foot from Middle Level retention level to the proposed navigation level of 100.04 SLD. Past experience showed that insufficient water was available and a sheet pile in the temporary dam was raised to permit additional water to enter.

2.3: The navigational level of 100.04m SLD was reached on 4 April 1987 and maintained at or above 100.08 until the early morning of 16 April. At this time an unauthorised operation of the paddle gate on the Horseway downstream lock gate occurred, coinciding with a report by the farm manager of Allpress Farms site at Holly-House Farm that a boat had been moored downstream of the lock gates on that day.

2.4: The slacker was reshut on 21 April and navigation level of 100.04 was regained on 22 April 1987. On Monday 27 April the Welches Dam paddle gear was closed and attempts made to seal the lock gate leaks with polythene sheeting and it was not until 48 hours later that the sheet piles were closed. Considerable leakage was recorded past the Welches Dam Lock gates and the same conditions as the October test were not attained, although this has not proved to be critical.

2.5: The water level had dropped to 99.54 SLD in the Forty Foot by noon on 5<sup>th</sup> May, close to the Middle Level Commissioners drain level on the downstream side of Horseway Lock. The 6" valve was reopened to provide a residual flow on 6 May.

2.6: Water level measurements had been made in the observation bores. From these readings over the period 2<sup>nd</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May it is evident that all bores reflect variations in level with levels in the Forty Foot, variations being most marked at the western end and least at the eastern end of Welches Dam in general.

2.7: Levels in the Internal Drainage Board ditch southwest of Welches Dam Lock were recorded over the period 24<sup>th</sup> March to 7<sup>th</sup> May 1987, and chart records and gauge board readings indicate the extent of IDB pumping during the duration of the test. Observations of levels in the Counter Drain were made over a limited period 15<sup>th</sup> April – 7<sup>th</sup> May and there was a general reflection of level movement between the IDB drain and the Counter Drain showing that there was inflow through the Counter Drain bank into the IDB drain. Changes in the IDB drain caused by filling and emptying the Forty Foot drain were noted – the drain level rising by 140mm between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> April and dropping by a similar amount during the period of 27<sup>th</sup> April to 3<sup>rd</sup> May.

2.8: Fluctuations of the IDB drain level also coincide with the pumping routine at the drainage pumping station in the Sutton and Mepal IDB. The pattern changed from pumping once every 2 days prior to 29<sup>th</sup> March to daily pumping and then back to every 2 days from 19 April onward. Level variations caused by the IDB pumping ranges from 10mm to 80mm per day – not enough to mask changes due to the filling and emptying of the Forty Foot.

2.9: The water level observations taken demonstrate that there is a strong "base flow" under the Forty Foot from the north to the south when considering levels in boreholes 9,10,11 and 12 in conjunction with IDB levels. This cannot be completely corroborated elsewhere, but all of the indications are that over the length of the Forty Foot Drain there is considerable underflow and in effect the Sutton and Mepal IDB drains a considerable area of the Welney and Manea IDB in the Byall Fen.

### 3: GEOLOGICAL INFORMATION:

3.1: The eleven observation bores indicated extensive and continuous seams of sand, silt and gravels underlying the Forty Foot Drain and emerging in the IDB drain. This corroborates the observed sand/gravel in the spoil from the dredging operations undertaken in July 1986.

3.2: The construction of the Forty Foot appears to have been to excavate the line of the drain and use the excavated material for the banks – material observed at channel bottom depth in observation bores occurs on the top of the banks and the past layers appear to have been left in situ. This may not have been important at the time of construction but with the general shrinkage of the fen soil, this means that seepage paths are now available due to the drop in water table in the fen that kept pace with the general shrinkage.

3.3: Between chainage 0.1km and 1.2 km (boreholes 7-9 inclusive) from Welches Dam, the base of the Forty Foot is in peat, and beyond this point sandy/silt bands also intrude, and by chainage 2.1km (boreholes 2 & 4) the base of the channel is in brown sand and gravel to Horseway Lock. This western stretch of the Forty Foot has no IDB drain adjacent and accordingly there was a greater variation in borehole water levels with change in Forty Foot level as the western end seepage contributed to storage in the underlying strata, while at the eastern end the seepage went straight into the IDB drain. The IDB drain runs roughly parallel but getting closer to the forty Foot as one moves westward, the IDB drain effectively ending near King's Farm, at chainage 1.3km.

3.4: By reference to the a cross section (ER/04/00/105) it can be seen that there is a uniform "base flow" water table gradient upon which the seepage "mound" created by the seepage from the Forty Foot lies, creating a general rise in water levels of 200mm locally to bores 10, 11 and 12 compared to the change of 140mm (referred to in 2.7) in the IDB drain.

4: Conclusions: Sufficient information was obtained from the test to indicate that the seepage lowered water levels in the Forty Foot at sensibly the same rate as the October test. This tends to confirm the previous seepage loss of 5tcmd is reliable. Seepage is distributed over the whole length of the Forty Foot. Construction of soak dykes, bank sealings or linings are not viable engineering solutions to the seepage problem. To hold the full navigational level would cause unacceptable seepage problems to the adjacent farmers and increase local IDBs pumping considerably. At the end of May, it is unlikely that there will be sufficient water resources to maintain a rate of loss of 5tcmd and navigation would have to be abandoned as a water conservation measure.

## **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Members are reminded that subscriptions become due on 1 July each year and for the time being payment (minimum £5 per annum) should be sent to the Treasurer – address on first page. Have you considered setting up a Bankers Order to avoid being troubled with annual reminders? Or have you thought of becoming a Life Member? This costs £100 or just £50 for a pensioner and can represent good value for money.

## NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL TRUST

Over the weekend of 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> of June the Canal Trust laid on another of its open weekends at Ebridge Lock and this proved to be a most successful event. Soon after an initial £1,245 was paid into the bank which covered such things as the boat trips that made £196 on the Saturday and Sunday, plant pot sales £90, refreshments & tombola £294, maps & books £90 and much else besides. All this was evidence of the continuing and growing interest being shown in the navigation following the re-opening of the stretch of the canal northwards to Spa Common and which has given such a major boost to wild life.

Further north the voluntary working parties have been very active with the work being concentrated on the Royston Bridge spillway, work starting there on 6 May. This has involved preparing the surface of the ground which was subsequently covered with semi engineering bricks lying on edge. This proved to be a tedious job as the back bank slopes at angle of approximately 45 degrees. Then the raised lip at the northern end of the spillway was concreted.

Future work party dates are 2<sup>nd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> July, 13<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> August and 10<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> of September.



For the sessions in May and June work has been concentrated on facing the Royston Bridge spillway with brickwork – this having to be laid on a prepared surface at a 45% angle to the vertical. With the angle involved this turned out to be a relatively skilled operation but one the volunteers took in their stride with Laurie Ashton over-seeing progress.



Royston Bridge Spillway progress to date – Sunday 21 May 2017.

Brick laying of the back face is well under way but to ensure the team keeps busy a “just in time“ system of delivering the next pallet has been evolved as shown here with a pallet being delivered just as the previous one has been emptied.

