



THE EASTERLING

JOURNAL OF THE EAST ANGLIAN

WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

VOLUME NINE, NUMBER THREE

JUNE 2012

Edited by Alan H. Faulkner
43 Oaks Drive, Colchester, Essex CO3 3PS
Phone 01206 767023

E-mail alan.faulkner22@btinternet.com

NW&DC BI-CENTENARY ANNIVERSARY EVENT

On Saturday and Sunday, 5 & 6 May 2012, the 200th anniversary of the passing of the Act of Parliament for the North *Walsham* & Dilham Canal was celebrated an event at Ebridge Lock and Mill.

On 17 September 1810 a preliminary notice had appeared in the *London Gazette*

“that Application is intended to be made to Parliament in the ensuing Session for Leave to bring in a Bill for making and maintaining a Navigable Cut or Canal for Boats, Barges and other Vessels from the Rivers Ant and Bure, at or near a certain Place called Wayford Bridge, between the Parishes of Dilham and Stalham, in the County of Norfolk, to the north side of the Town of North Walsham, in the said County and that such Cut or Navigable Canal is intended to be made and pass through the several Parishes of Worsted, Dilham, Honing, Witton, North Walsham, and Swafeld, in the said County of Norfolk.”



This resulted in an Act of Parliament (52 Geo III c.69) receiving the Royal Assent on 5 May 1812 under which the Company of Proprietors of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal was incorporated.

The commemorative event was headed up by the Old Canal Company on whose land it took place and was organised largely by our members Chris Black, Carole Bullinger, Ivan Cane, Roger Hopkinson and David Revill with help from other members of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust.

The space along the west side of Ebridge Lock was filled with stalls and exhibits and the weather, which earlier in the week had been decidedly hostile with a series of flood alerts throughout Suffolk and Essex, relented for the occasion. The Association's gazebo hosted an informative display about the history of the canal being manned by Ivan & Terry Cane on the Saturday and Ivan and Darren Cooke on the Sunday. And through the good offices of Graham and Dawn Brown our new membership leaflet had arrived from the printers in Aylsham only the day before.

Perhaps the star of the show was the "Victoria", a steam-driven road roller which looked very smart. Another attraction was provided by The Canoe Man, who had brought along several canoes which were let out for a modest fee for half-an-hour sessions enabling patrons to explore the river up towards Bacton Wood.

And by the end of the Sunday over £1,500 had been raised which will be used by the Canal Trust to further its work on the canal. Roger Sexton, EAWA's Chairman, was able to visit the event on the Sunday with Treasurer Alan Faulkner coming up on the Saturday. Unfortunately owing to the short notice given to us about the event, it was not possible to let members from outside the area know about it beforehand.



Another view of the site taken from across the lock, which is shown in the foreground. With a navigational level now maintained at the lock and with the recent rains there was a good flow of water both over the top gates and over the weir upstream.

Canoeists returning to base from their trip upstream. With the clearance work the channel is now wide and clear. It has also benefitted wildlife with different species of birds and animals now a common sight.



THE EASTERLING

With the increase in postal rates the despatch of our three-times-a-year journal is becoming an increasing financial burden. We are therefore grateful to the 30 members who have already opted to receive the journal by e-mail. If you feel you can contribute to this money-saving scheme please e-mail the Editor alan.faulkner22@btinternet.com who will be delighted to add you to the list.

FENS WATERWAYS LINK

A meeting was held on Friday 24 February at the Peterborough offices of consultants Halcrow to review proposals for extending the navigation from Donington through to the river Glen. Ten routes had been suggested for the extension and most started by following the South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD) southwards from Donington (12½ miles from Boston) with several negotiating the Black Hole Drove Pumping Station (BHDPS) (19½ miles) via a new lock on the way.

- 1: Deepened/widened SFFD to Guthram Gowt with lock round the BHDPS and another lock to link through to the Glen. [*13km widening, 8 road crossings, 16 service diversions, 7 mooring locations, 2 new locks, water resource reservoir(s)*]
- 2: Deepened/widened SFFD with lock round BHDPS and new channel to the west of the SFFD to Guthram Gowt with lock to link with the Glen. [*10km widening, 3km new channel, 11 road crossings, 14 service diversions, 7 mooring locations, 2 new locks, water resource reservoir(s)*]
- 3: Deepened/widened SFFD to Rippingale Running Dyke (17½ miles from Boston) then new channel with lock to Guthram Gowt located west of the SFFD with another new lock to link with the Glen. [*17km widening, 6km new channel, 9 road crossings, 15 services, 7 mooring locations, 2 new locks, water resource reservoir(s)*]
- 4: Deepened/widened SFFD with lock round BHDPS and new channel east of the SFFD to Dovehirne Farm at Pinchbeck West on the Glen about 3km north-east of Guthram Gowt. [*11km widening, 3km new channel, 8 road crossings, 16 service diversions, 7 mooring locations, 2 new locks, water resource reservoir(s)*]
- 5: New channel from just south of Donington running to the east of the SFFD and then from the south of the BHDPS east to Dovehirne Farm on the Glen. [*1km widening, 14km new channel, 11 road crossings, 15 service diversions, 7 mooring locations, 2 new locks, water resource reservoir(s)*]
- 6: Deepened/widened SFFD with lock round BHDPS and new channel eastwards across to Dovehirne Farm on the Glen. [*9km widening, 4km new channel, 13 road crossings, 16 service diversions, 7 mooring locations, 2 new locks, water resource reservoir(s)*]
- 7: Deepened/widened SFFD to Kingston Bridge (16½ miles) with lock and new channel eastwards and then southwards to Dovehirne Farm on the Glen. [*7km widening, 7km new channel, 14 road crossings, 8 service diversions, 5 mooring locations, 2 new locks, water resource reservoir(s)*]
- 8: Deepened/widened SFFD to Mallard Hurn (12¾ miles) then new channel with lock eastwards and southwards to Bull Bridge, Westfield Farm and to Dovehirne Farm on the Glen. [*2km widening, 12km new channel, 12 road crossings, 5 service diversions, 1 mooring location, 2 new locks, water resource reservoir(s)*]
- 9: New channel from Donington eastwards and southwards via Bull Bridge to Westfield Farm and to Surfleet on the Glen. [*15km new channel, 9 road & 1 main line railway crossing, 3 service diversions, 4 new locks, water resource reservoir(s)*]
- 10: Deepened/widened SFFD to Kingston Bridge then eastwards using Risegate Eau to the river Welland downstream of Surfleet Seas End. [*7km widening, 15km new channel, 18 road & 1 main line railway crossing, 5 mooring locations, 8 service diversions, 4 new locks, water resource reservoir(s)*]

The discussions focussed on a wide range of topics and noted these difficulties:-

Flood Risk: This tends to discount options 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10; Main Line Railway Crossing: Discounts options 9 & 10; Cressy Hall (scheduled monument): Discounts option 10; Tidal navigation: Discounts Option 10; Compulsory Purchase (residential) at Guthram Gowt: Discounts options 1, 2, 3. This leaves routes 4, 5, & 6 which, being fairly similar, appear to offer the best option. Of these EAWA favours Option 4 as providing best value for money.

42nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

In contrast to last year's very well attended meeting at the Sutton Staithe Hotel just 14 members attended on 29 April 2012 at the Best Western's Claydon Country House Hotel on the outskirts of Ipswich. The poor weather may have been partly to blame but the lack of a boat trip was a major factor. The Directors' Report and the Annual Accounts had previously been circulated to all members and were approved and John Hodgson and Roger Sexton were re-elected as Directors along with Alan Faulkner who had been omitted from the formal agenda. David Revill, our work party organiser gave a detailed report about the year's work and the Chairman wound up the meeting with a general overview of the waterways situation.

Spencer Greystrom, the Treasurer of the River Gipping Trust, then gave an illustrated talk about the river and as by then the weather had improved he led a party to inspect the nearby Baylham Lock through which the river was flowing at a very high level, hiding most of the work carried out to the lock.



Three of the directors and their wives who were part of the group led by Spencer Greystrom that, after the AGM, inspected Baylham Lock through which the river Gipping was flowing at an impressive rate. The lock now only needs the fitting of lock gates to make it fully navigable.

(Picture courtesy of Ivan Cane)

RIVER NENE TIME LINE

1714: 28 May	(Act – 12 Anne c.7) Commissioners appointed to make the river navigable from Peterborough to Northampton, but no one could be found to undertake the work. At the time the tidal river was passable up to Alwalton.
1722	The humped back bridge was built at Fotheringay
1725: 20 April	(Act – 11 Geo 1 c.19) New commissioners appointed to find contractors to undertake the whole work.
1726: September	Robert Wright & Thomas Squire appointed as contractors and work started
1730:	River opened to North Bridge, Oundle
1737:	River opened to Thrapston Bridge by Thomas Squire. This became known as the Eastern Division of the navigation
1756: 15 April	(Act – 29 Geo III c.60) Commissioners to resume work from Thrapston Bridge and empowered to raise more money
1758: 22 June	Contract signed with John Smith junior of Attercliffe, work resumed.
1759:	River opened to Wellingborough
1761: 7 August	River ceremonially opened to Northampton and became the Western Division of the navigation.
1793: 30 April	(Act – 33 Geo III c.80) Grand Junction Canal authorised including a branch to the Nene at Northampton
1793: 30 April	(Act – 33 Geo III c.98) Leicestershire & Northamptonshire Union Canal authorised to run from Leicester to the Nene at Northampton
1794: 17 April	(Act – 34 Geo III c.85) To resolve problems over the different contractors between Peterborough and Oundle and between Oundle and Thrapston
1794: 9 May	(Act – 34 Geo III c.92) Wisbech Canal authorised
1796: 1 January	The Wisbech Canal opened from Outwell to the river Nene at Wisbech
1815: 1 May	The Grand Junction Canal's Northampton branch opened
1817:	A single span road bridge opened over the river at Wisbech replacing a steeply humped structure. It was replaced in 1931 and is known as the Town Bridge
1827:	Act to straighten the river in the Eastern Division (Peterborough to Thrapston)
1830:	Cross Keys swing bridge over the river at Sutton Bridge opened by the Spalding & King's Lynn Railway. It was replaced in the 1850s and again in 1897 when it carried both the Midlands & Great Northern Railway and a road (now the A.17)
1837:	Alwalton staunch built by Thomas Atkinson
1866:	Whitworth Brothers' mill built at Wellingborough
1881: 14 May	First ship entered the short-lived Sutton Bridge Dock
1911:	Weston Boat Club formed; it went on to become the Northampton Boat Club
1926: 14 June	The Wisbech Canal was closed by Ministry of Transport Order following an application by the Isle of Ely County Council.
1929:	A new Great North Road bridge carrying the main A.1 road was built at Wansford bypassing the village.
1930:	Under the Land Drainage Act the River Nene Catchment Board was established
1930:	A major lock re-building scheme was started working up to Northampton with former staunches being rebuilt as locks. Guillotine gates were fitted to all the locks at the downstream end enabling them to act as discharge structures.
1937:	Dog-in-a-Doublet Lock opened below Peterborough. It could pass craft up to 140-feet in length and 21-feet in beam.
1939:	Orton Lock built with a guillotine bottom gate, replacing Orton Staunch.
1946:	The Nene Barge & Lighter Company established at Wansford, acquiring a tug and lighters from A. V. Jackson.
1948:	Wheat traffic from London to Wellingborough resumed having been diverted away from the Nene during the Second World War.
1952: 1 April	The Nene River Board takes over from the Catchment Board
1966:	Thames sailing barge THYRA was sold bringing an end to the regular wheat traffic to Peterborough from the Thames.
1968:	The Inland Waterways Association's Northampton Branch was founded.
1969: May	Last narrow boat wheat traffic to Whitworth's Wellingborough Mill.

1971:	The Inland Waterways Association's National Rally of Boats held at Becketts Park, Northampton.
1974: 1 April	The Anglian Water Authority took over from the Nene River Board
1979: 1 April	The National Rivers Authority took over from the Anglian Water Authority.
1979: Summer	Under the Washlands Scheme at Northampton Abingdon Lock No 3 was rebuilt on a new site and fitted with mitre gates as part of flood alleviation measures
1980:	The stone traffic from Wansford downstream finished
1981: Spring	The guillotines at Northampton Lock No 1 in Becketts Park and Rush Mills Lock No 2 were replaced by mitre gates.
1985: 12 April	Higham Old Bridge demolished.
1987: Autumn	Sutton Bridge Port opened.
1993: 28-30 Aug	The Inland Waterways Association National Waterways Festival & Rally of Boats held at Peterborough.
1996: 1 April	The Environment Agency took over from the National Rivers Authority.
1999:	The guillotines at Weston Favell, Clifford Hill and Billing locks were electrified, starting a rolling programme to deal with most of the locks on the river
2001: 15 October	Work started on Wellingborough Upper Lock No 13 and Higham Lock No 16 to replace the guillotine with mitre gates. It was completed by Easter 2002.
2002: 4 November	Work started on Wellingborough Lower Lock No 14 to replace the guillotine with mitre gates and was completed by Easter 2004.
2005: 20 January	The Wathen Wigg footbridge opened over the Nene in Northampton
2011: May	The IWA's Northampton Branch annual boat rally in Becket's Park celebrates the 250 th anniversary year of the opening of the navigation
2011:	Northampton Marina was opened in Becketts Park.

HERE AND THERE

NENE LOCKS: In March Whiston, Doddington, Wollaston and Alwalton locks were closed for two days each to allow the guillotine chains to be replaced whilst at the end of February repairs were carried on to Upper Ringstead and Wansford Locks.

BEDFORD LOCK: On Monday 13 February contractors CW Engineering Ltd started work on Bedford Lock causing it to be closed until Easter. The lock has been electrified, one of the last to be dealt with on the Great Ouse, and has been improved bringing in a safety delay feature. The guillotine has also been raised to increase the headroom under it, this being one of the recommendations in the recent Bedford Waterspace Study.

ST. NEOTS LOCK: Replacement of the lock gate started on 6 April with the contractor controlling boat traffic as the state of the work allowed. A temporary 4-day closure was planned from 17 April to permit the installation of the new lock gate frame, followed by a two-day closure from 25 April to install the new guillotine gate and remove the old one, but both dates had to be postponed due to high river flows. The work was eventually carried out at the end of May but the lock will remain subject to restricted access until the beginning of July.

ST. IVES LOCK: Work started on 21 November on the major improvements, the main contractors being Jacksons. The mitre gates were removed, refurbished and fitted with new slackers and walkways before being reinstalled. Meanwhile a new concrete floor has been installed in the chamber and parts of the lock walls have been rebuilt, with voids behind the walls being filled. The guillotine has been refurbished, repainted and fitted whilst a new floating landing stage has been

installed downstream. Originally planned to finish by the end of February further work was found to be necessary delaying the reopening until Easter.

GREAT BARFORD BRIDGE: Bedfordshire Highways are undertaking major repairs to this historic road bridge across the river. Most of the work has not affected boat traffic but when either of the two navigation arches are being dealt with, a traffic light management system will be in place as only one arch will be open. This is expected to be from the end of May until the middle of June.

RIVER CAM: The prospect of greatly increased charges for boaters using the Cam above Bottisham has been modified in a new agreement between the Conservators of the River Cam and the Environment Agency that was announced on 23 February. It allows freedom of movement for power craft owners between the two authorities without them having to purchase two full-price registrations. Power craft based on the Cam above Bottisham must now be registered with the Conservators and will pay an additional 10% on the relevant EA tariff, entitling them to access to both sets of water. Power craft based below Bottisham Lock will continue to register with the EA and will now have the option of paying an additional 10% at the time of registration, giving them access to the Conservators waters.

Visiting boats not registered with the Conservators will be able to purchase an annual visitor licence priced at 15% of the relevant EA tariff. Commercial craft and hire-craft operators will have no increase in their registrations and can continue to use both navigations. And from January 2013 Gold licence holders who already pay a premium to both the EA and British Waterways will now need to register separately with the Conservators. Additional income generated by the new agreement will be shared fairly between the two authorities.

COLNE TIDAL BARRIER: This barrier across the Colne at Wivenhoe was formally opened on 30 March 1994 and was designed to protect property upstream from flooding. On 28 February 2012 extensive maintenance work began under which the 13 small radial gates will be removed, a few at a time, for refurbishment and repainting, their place being taken temporarily by “stop-logs” which will fill the gaps. This phase of the work should be completed by September. Next year the large mitre gates that cross the main channel are to be refurbished.

BRIGHTLINGSEA FERRY: The Brightlingsea Harbour Commissioners have acquired a 12-seat passenger boat for £40,000 with a view to operating daily trips for pedestrians and cyclists along the six-miles of the Colne up to Colchester and back. As part of the scheme Colchester Council plans to build a row of five pontoons at the town’s King Edward Quay, which will be used by the new ferry service and by the sea cadets based at the TS Colne Light Ship tied up at the quay. The pontoons, costing about £210,000, have largely been financed by the European Regional Development fund. The Commissioners already have one ferry boat running between Brightlingsea, East Mersea and Point Clear whilst the privately operated Wivenhoe ferry links Wivenhoe, Fingringhoe and Rowhedge in the summer months.

COLCHESTER: In a project costing £4,500 Colchester Borough Council hired in a long-reach excavator for a week in March to clean out rubbish from the tidal part of the river in the town. Workers in boats scoured the waters for abandoned items such as supermarket trolleys and bicycles and towed them to within reach of the

excavator, which then plucked them out of the water and dumped them in skips. The work which will be a major benefit to navigation followed complaints from residents who have recently moved into some of the new homes built along the waterfront. Then on 25 March several groups of voluntary organisations got together to clear rubbish from alongside the Wivenhoe Trail that links Colchester's University Quays with Wivenhoe.

RIVER GIPPING: The work has concentrated on the repairs and maintenance of the bridge at Pipp's Ford where the overgrowth of scrub and two sizeable ash trees have been removed and the bridge deck has been cleared. The four retaining walls have been cleaned down with partial demolition and some rebuilding being necessary and three have been largely completed. The fourth props up the River Gipping Footpath and will need more substantial work to create more space for a future balance beam when a lock gate is eventually installed. At Baylham the Trust has been asked by the landowners to repair the sluice which controls the water level above the lock and which has deteriorated badly. Luckily the mechanism to raise the gates has survived and a source of local oak has been found at Glenham. This is now being milled to size and should be assembled at Baylham in the autumn.

CHELMER & BLACKWATER: We welcome the return of "*Coates Cuttings*", the newsletter of the Chelmer Canal Trust, which had temporarily suspended publication after issue No 43 in July 2010. Whilst the difficulties concerning the editorial staff have not been fully resolved, issue No 44 April 2012 has been published and contains a report about the restoration of "*Susan*", the last wooden lighter on the navigation which is intended to provide educational trips on the river once the work has been completed. The Trust has made a £5,000 grant towards this objective.

Some time ago a 200-year old chunker under the canal near Heybridge Basin was replaced with a modern concrete pipe. But what on earth is a chunker, a word that is not listed in the New Oxford English Dictionary. It is thought to have originated in the 1950s and the best description we can come up with is "a tubular passage or duct for liquid". So now we know.

PROPOSED MALDON TO BRAINTREE NAVIGATION: Research by Charles Phillips (charlestphillips@yahoo.co.uk) into the history of Maldon has turned up a proposal for a navigation from Braintree to Maldon similar to the Chelmer & Blackwater from Chelmsford to Heybridge. It seems a proposal was made in the 1790s and was given serious consideration in the mid 1800s. There is no mention of the proposal in any of the standard references books – can any member shed any light on this project?

RIVER STOUR: At Stratford St. Mary Lock a large amount of undergrowth was cleared from around the area last autumn and the Trust has allocated some funding to enable the completion of a slipway there and to continue work towards the restoration of the approach to the lock. It had been hoped work on the lock itself could resume this year but this now seems unlikely, instead some refurbishment work will be carried out to both Stratford and Dedham locks. Meanwhile restoration work to the Trust's headquarters at the Granary in Sudbury has been carried out including overdue repairs to the balcony at the rear of the building.

A new waterbus service was launched at the end of May to operate between Stratford and Dedham on Saturdays through the summer to the end of October. Provided by *Stour Trusty II* which had previously only operated round trips on summer Sundays and bank holidays, there will now be four services in each direction each Saturday between Flatford Mill and Dedham Boathouse jetty.

ELY: Black Prince Holidays which operates a series of boat hire centres on the canal system, has opened a new centre at Ely based at the Bridge Boatyard.

DENVER: Earlier this year there was good news from our member Brian Holt that the Environment Agency had dredged the entrance to the lock at Denver and the pontoons are now floating. Brian's visit was about half tide and a tug was moored to the pontoons and was afloat.

Sadly the improvement was short-lived for when Brian arrived at the lock from Salters Lode on 21 May he ran aground at the tidal entrance to Denver Lock. He managed to back off and by crossing from the end of the New Bedford River across the Ouse immediately downstream of the Denver sluice gates he reached the lock and was able to turn into it. Not surprisingly the incident was reported to the Environment Agency and Brian received a reply from Nathan Arnold, the River Manager, to say that the entrances to both Salters Lode and to Denver Lock had been dredged in March. Despite this the silt at the lock had returned very quickly following heavy rainfall and high river flows in April. It seemed the lock-keepers were unaware of the problem until Brian's visit but immediate action has been promised to try and clear the channel again for this year's boating season.

WELCHES DAM LOCK: The long running impasse over the six years closure of this lock may have been eased by recent negotiations between the Inland Waterways Association and the Environment Agency. Until now the EA has refused to take any action over the restoration and has resisted all suggestions for bringing in volunteers in the shape of the Waterways Recovery Group. Now the EA may be willing for the IWA to take over the lock on a leasing arrangement. If successful a local restoration team would need to be set up to lead the initiative. The discussions have provided a greater insight into the problems here and one option may include relining at least some of the Forty Foot River below the lock to prevent leakage and this could lead to the lock gates being kept permanently open.

MIDDLE LEVEL: The IWA's Peterborough Branch has obtained planning permission for the construction of temporary public moorings at Three Holes Bridge at the junction of Popham's Eau and the Sixteen Foot River. A costing is now being carried out with a view of putting the necessary funding in place.

MAXEY CUT: Members may be forgiven if they are unaware where this artificial channel lies, but it runs for nearly 6 miles from near Peakirk on the river Welland in a westerly direction to rejoin the river at Tallington. If navigation could be restored up to Stamford it would be logical to use the cut rather than following the circuitous course of the old Stamford Canal through the Deepings. Whatever, the cut achieved national news fame recently as parts of it were drying out, due to the lack of rain, and the Environment Agency had to mount an emergency operation using a small portable boat to rescue fish trapped in isolated stretches. Over several days the

entire cut was cleared using an electrical stunning procedure with the fish being transferred to the main river.

COWBRIDGE LOCK: Bad news is that vandals smashed the padlock and retaining bracket at the lock and, with the mitre gates open, raised the guillotine causing a flood of water from the Maud Foster Drain through the lock chamber. Signs of fish



nets in the chamber indicate this was done to catch fish as they were swept through. Falling water levels in Boston raised the alarm. The Witham Fourth Internal Drainage Board has repaired the damage and is putting a cover over the padlock that will be secured with a British Waterways Watermate lock.

RIVER WITHAM: British Waterways has completed work at Anton's Gowt Lock and a large willow tree that made mooring to the upstream pontoon difficult has been removed. Meanwhile there continue to be problems with the azolla weed and trials with a vacuum system at Bardney Lock were unsuccessful as the weed was so dense that the pipes simply could not cope. Elsewhere there has been more success and a study appears to have indicated the weed is coming into the river via some of the side channels, such as the Slea. Funding is being sought to purchase a larger weed machine, suitable for river work.

Brayford Pool in Lincoln is to be dredged with the silt being moved to a tip at Fiddler's Elbow on the Fosdyke. Once dredged new pontoon moorings will be installed replacing the old fixed ones that were under water in recent floods.

LOUTH NAVIGATION: The Environment Agency is to spend £60,000 dredging the waterway to its original profile at the northern end at Tetney and further south at Austen Fen. Alvingham Lock (No 6 from Louth) has been damaged by flood waters and the winter weather so the Louth Navigation Trust is drawing up contracts and tender forms for consultants to ascertain the costs of arresting the damage.

B&MK WATERWAY TRUST: In March Sir Samuel Whitbread KCVO was named as the Trust's first Patron. He recently retired from his role of Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire and his great-great-great grandfather was the driving force behind the ambitious plan to create a link between the Great Ouse and what was then the Grand Junction Canal in 1812. Another positive development has been that Milton

Keynes Council has agreed its Corporate Plan which includes support for the delivery of the new waterway across to Bedford.

BROADS NOTES AND NEWS

BROADS AUTHORITY: Four new members have been appointed to the Authority. Louis Baugh, who farms with his wife Fran next to the How Hill and Alderton nature reserves on the river Ant, and Professor Jacquelin Burgess who recently retired from her role as Professor and Head of the School of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia, were appointed by the Secretary of State. Paul Rice who has spent boating holidays on the Broads from the age of five has been appointed by Norfolk County Council and Michael Jeal was appointed by Great Yarmouth Borough Council where he serves at the cabinet member for business and tourism.

BREYDON WATER: On 1 June 2012 the Broads Authority took over responsibility for navigation on Breydon Water and the lower reaches of the river Bure from the Great Yarmouth Port Company. Both were already within the Broads Authority's boundaries and a provision was made for the transfer in the Broads Authority's Act of Parliament that received the Royal Assent in June 2009. Breydon Water is the trickiest part of the Broads to cross particularly for novice hirers and a single navigation authority will now provide a consistent approach.

THE DROUGHT: The lack of rainfall has already led to some problems on the Broads and unless things improve these could be magnified. Low river flows lead to low water levels reducing navigational depth and the level of oxygen in the water. Shallow lakes and ponds could dry up and larger lakes and reservoirs could be similarly affected leading to stress on species, particularly significant for the fens, for grazing marshes and wet woodlands. Peat that is widespread in the Broads could dry out and become subject to oxidation damaging its structure, making it friable and prone to fire. Less flushing of saline tides leads to tidal incursion and an increase in salinity upstream – this has already been experienced at Strumpshaw on the Yare. This also leads to a dilution in nutrients and an increase in pollution; in turn this can lead to more obvious blue green algae blooms which can be toxic. And heavy rain falling on hard dry ground will cause an increase in run-off.

DEFRA CONSULTATION: We have responded to an approach by DEFRA about the possible introduction of legislation to allow for members to be directly elected to the Broads Authority (and to the other English National Parks). We are generally in favour of the proposal which could involve a corresponding reduction across local authority and parish seats on the authority.

QUEEN'S JUBILEE EVENTS: On Saturday 2 June six of the eight historic wherries still sailing the Broads marked the centenary of the building of the last wherry – the *Ella* – at the Norfolk Broads Yacht Club on Wroxham Broad. Wherries taking part were the 114 year-old *Albion*, the 113-year old *Maud*, the 109-year old *Solace*, the 100-year old *Norada*, the 97-year old *White Moth* and 85-year old *Ardea*.

On Monday 4 June a special Diamond Jubilee Passage Race took place from Thurne Mouth to Honing open to traditional Broads river cruisers, production cruisers and half deckers. Then on the Tuesday the fiercely fought "Cock of the Broads" river

cruiser passage race took place from Thurne Mouth attracting over 20 traditional sailing cruisers.

WHITE MOTH: The fleet of boats owned by the Wherry Yacht Charter Charitable Trust – the pleasure wherry *Hathor* and wherry yachts *Olive* and *Norada* – have been joined by the wherry yacht *White Moth* that was formerly owned by the Norfolk Broads Yachting Company. She has been acquired by trustee Andrew Scull and made available to the trust for three years to raise monies to support its aims to restore the original three craft. This work is making good progress with *Norada* being launched in May and it is hoped *Olive* will follow later this year, the latter being aided by a £60,000 grant from the Rural Development Programme for England. Work on *Hathor* should then follow on.

LIFE JACKET CAMPAIGN: Since April last year five boating people died on the Broads and none of them were wearing life jackets. It is believed four of the victim might still be alive if they had been wearing one. To try and combat this, the Broads Authority has launched a campaign to encourage boaters to wear life jackets and from Easter posters have been displayed at boat yards around the Broads to spread the safety message and hire boats have been issued with key rings displaying the safety message. Branded wind-up torches are also on sale in yacht stations and at the authority's information centres.

REED BEDS: The Broads Authority has announced a pioneering plan to increase the area of Broads reed beds used for commercial cutting in an attempt to address the decline in this ancient industry. Currently there are 19 commercial cutters and one of them, with 20 years experience, has been appointed to carry out a survey with a view to extending the areas to be cut and to bring neglected beds back into production. The aim is to extend the beds from 15% to 25% of the 2,000 hectares of open fen. Landowners have responded very positively about the initiative and the Authority has already trained new reed cutters through the Heritage Lottery funded scheme. At present 75% of the reed used is imported from as far afield as China and the Ukraine indicating there is plenty of scope to expand this local industry.

BURE NAVIGATION CONSERVATION TRUST: The Trust held a meeting in the Burgh Reading Room at Burgh-next-Aylsham on 27 March to agree its organisational structure, and to review progress with the book being compiled about the Aylsham Navigation. The centenary of the actual closure of the navigation is to be commemorated by an event to be held at Coltishall on 26 August and attended by the wherry *Albion*.

RIVER WAVENEY TRUST: Our Association has become a founding member of this new trust and we have already had useful talks with Geoff Doggett who is its Secretary and Treasurer. The trust, which held its first meeting on 29 March at Harleston, has widespread aims to safeguard and improve the amenities of the river from Lowestoft upstream and particularly from Geldeston, the current head of the navigation for most craft, past Ellingham and Wainford to Bungay and then beyond such as up to Diss. This follows on from the Diss River Care Group which began clearing sections of the river in Diss last December.

KILLER SHRIMP: Anglers have voiced their alarm about the likelihood of a devastating impact on fish stocks through a voracious predator – *dikerogammarus villosus* – that has been found at Barton Turf on the edge of Barton Broad. The Broads Authority, in company with the Environment Agency and Natural England, has set up a working party and has discovered the shrimp in all parts of the broad, and along the river Ant and spreading into the Bure. It is top of the Broads “Most Wanted” list of invasive species and threatens the delicate eco-system by killing damsel flies, young fish, insect larvae and native shrimps. It was first discovered at Graffham Water in 2010 but has now spread to three other sites including Barton.

RA: This was the first solar-powered boat in the United Kingdom when it arrived in Norfolk in 2000. She had been commissioned by the Broads Authority and built in Germany and offered wildlife trips on Barton Broad. On 13 April *Ra* was craned out of the water and inspected to ensure she was clear of any non-native shrimps before being taken by road to Whitlingham. There she will offer four trips a day around the Great Broad until the end of October with expert guides providing information about the wildlife that can be seen and how best to explore further into the Broads. It is hoped that moving her to Whitlingham will provide access to a much wider audience.

VAUXHALL BRIDGE: The Great Yarmouth Preservation Society has secured a substantial £365,000 grant from the Fair Shares Trust that enabled work to begin in April on a project to renovate and reopen the most dilapidated span of Vauxhall Bridge over the Yare near to the railway station. Other major funders have been involved and there have been a series of smaller donations from local businesses and people. The wrought-iron bridge was built in 1850 and strengthened in 1900 to carry rail passengers. It is essentially safe but badly corroded due to rust and age. The work should be largely completed by December.

NW&DC ARCHIVE: The Association has established The East Anglian Waterways Association’s North Walsham and Dilham Canal Archive to try and bring together all the records collected over the last 20 or so years with a view to making them available in Norfolk for those with an interest in the canal. Ivan Cane has been appointed as our archivist – he can be contacted at 36 Hayes Lane, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 9ER; e-mail iwlcfaken@btinternet.com 01328 862435. Alan Faulkner, who over the years has built up a large amount of material, has handed over all his files to kick start the new facility.

WORKING PARTIES: So far this year sessions have been held at Bacton Wood (8 January, 27 May); Briggate Mill Pond & Lock (22 January, 19 February, 4 March); Honing Lock & Staithe Cut (18 March, 1 April, 13 May) and Royston Bridge (15 April). That on 27 May was memorable as the volunteers were able to inspect the new top gates that have been fitted to Bacton Wood Lock and this is an important step towards the planned re-watering of the dry section of canal up to the Royston Bridge area.

These sessions have been led by David Revill, our hard working Work Party organiser, with major assistance from Chris Black and what is turning out to be a dedicated team of like-minded volunteers who have literally transformed the situation on several sections of the canal. Perhaps almost inevitably some of the work has come in for criticism in some quarters, mainly on environmental grounds and an

adverse affect on wild life. It was significant that at the recent Ebridge event wild life was very much in evidence on the cleared waterway, whereas previously little was to be found in the overgrown and impassable channel.

PROGRESS ON THE NORTH WALSHAM AND DILHAM CANAL



The transformation
Wood Lock, May



at Bacton
2012



Ebridge showing the weir upstream of the lock that the volunteers literally dug out after years of disuse. With the water in the canal now being maintained at a higher level the weir came into its own when heavy rains increased the flow of water.



Briggate mill pond showing the section running alongside the road that was cleared out and re-connected to the main canal. Meanwhile below the lock the abutments to the road bridge have been once again cleared of invading scrub.



And at Royston Bridge the bed of the canal has been largely cleared and it is hoped this section can ultimately be re-watered.

Photos courtesy of Alan Bertram, Ivan Cane and Darren Cooke.

CRESCENT SHIPPING

Robin Adams' note about commercial shipping in our last issue was timely as in 2011 a new book was published about "Crescent Shipping". This company had strong links with Colchester and its fleet of coasting vessels were regular visitors to many East Anglian ports such as Boston, Sutton Bridge, Wisbech, King's Lynn, Wells-next-the-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Norwich, Ipswich, Mistley, Brightlingsea, Colchester and Maldon to name but a few.

One of the constituent businesses that made up Crescent was Francis & Gilders Ltd. which operated from Hythe Quay at Colchester and was involved in the east coast grain and animal feed trades. It also supplied tinned fruit juice to Britvic of Chelmsford. Joshua Francis and Cecil Edward Gilders had both been involved with sailing barges and formed the company in 1933, building up a fleet of nearly 40 craft by 1939. In 1951 the company was sold to the London & Rochester Trading Co. Ltd, after which most of the sailing barges were either fitted with engines or scrapped but at the same time several new motor ships were built at Cooks Shipyard at Wivenhoe. Ultimately the combined businesses became known as Crescent Shipping.

As early as 1936 ships in what became the Crescent fleet had started being given names ending in "ence" in an alphabetical sequence such as *Cresence*, *Dominence* and *Eminence*. *Cresence* came to grief at the Winterton Gap in Norfolk in 1963 but was refloated and sold to a Dutch owner. Later several of the ships were given names ending in "tion"; high winds, the tide and a storm surge deposited *Function* onto the quay at Wells in January 1978 and she had to be lifted off by a 500-ton crane a fortnight later. Meanwhile *Kiption* was a regular visitor to Marriage's mill in Colchester and Paul's mill in Ipswich bringing in grain. Ultimately economics forced larger craft to be brought into service meaning that many of the smaller ports such as Colchester, were no longer accessible to the Crescent ships.

Another company involved in Crescent was Bowker & King Ltd. which operated a fleet of tankers. For many years fuel oil was delivered to the Cantley sugar beet factory on the Yare but its main operations were on the Thames, the Bristol Channel including the oil depots at Gloucester and on the river Mersey.

Several Crescent boats saw further service on the Colne being sold to J. & J. Prior (Transport) Ltd which operates a sand and ballast quarry at Rowhedge. In 1994 *Lobe* became *Mark Prior*, in 2001 *Roina* became *Nigel Prior* and in 2002 *Roffen* became *Francesca Prior*.

The book must have been a labour of love by its author Ken Garrett who has traced probably all the boats that ever worked in the Crescent fleet and its constituent companies and has found colour or black & white photographs of most of them. As a result the A4 book has 248 pages and costs £35 but it represents excellent value for anyone interested in East Coast shipping.

ISBN 978-1-901703-58-0. Published by Ships in Focus Publications (John & Marion Clarkson), 18 Franklands, Longton, Preston, PR4 5PD