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NEW MOORINGS AT THREE HOLES

On Saturday 29 June new moorings were opened at Three Holes at the northern end of the Sixteen Foot River in the Middle Level. A small flotilla of boats from the Middle Level Watermen's Club attended. This opening follows on from the opening of moorings at Benwick on the course of the Old River Nene 2½ miles south of its junction with Whittlesey Dike at Flood's Ferry. This is a welcome development and will help to make the Middle Level more attractive for visitors and for boaters based on the system. Meanwhile additional moorings have been created by the District Council at March.



THE CANAL & RIVER TRUST'S TAKE OVER IS OFF

On 3 July Richard Benyon, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Natural Environment and Fisheries announced that the planned transfer of the Environment Agency's waterways to the Canal & River Trust that had been tentatively pencilled in for 2015 or 2016 would have to be postponed until the finances of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs had improved. This is as a result of DEFRA having to identify further savings in 2015/2016 to help deal with the government's overall deficit

This was somewhat ironic because on the evening before, at a meeting of EAWA's Council in Mildenhall, it had been agreed we needed to ascertain what the view of waterway organisations and users in East Anglia to the proposed transfer was. In turn this followed on from possible concerns expressed by members about various aspects of the transfer.

For instance we had learned that DEFRA had been very actively working on the plans for some considerable time and that if the transfer was to go ahead it was likely it would be achieved through the medium of the British Waterways Board Act and a Ministerial Order. But the latter requires only one month's notice to be given leaving little time for objections. And there are certain aspects of the C&RT's structure that could cause some concern.

In some quarters, notably on the river Thames, there has been strong opposition to the transfer plans. Up to now our own view has been not to oppose the transfer but we need to ensure there is no cut back in the Environment Agency's already stretched finances. All in all it was perhaps not quite so neat and tidy as some quarters might suggest. Whatever, the 3 July announcement puts the whole matter on hold, but we shall continue to monitor the situation closely.

HERE AND THERE

NEW DIRECTOR: We are delighted to announce that David Mercer has been appointed as a director of the Association. David lives at Hemingford Grey and has long been interested not just in the Great Ouse, his local waterway, but in much wider waterways matters such as the activities of the Environment Agency. He has contributed interesting and well researched article to "The Easterling" and was solely responsible for digitizing copies of our journal covering the years 1991 to 2011 (Volumes 6 to 8) and making this into an extremely useful information and research tool. His address is 5 Payn Close, Hemingford Grey, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE28 9WL – phone 01480 466877 and e-mail address djm@djmercer.co.uk

KING'S LYNN: At the beginning of July contractors for West Norfolk District Council started work opposite Marriott's Warehouse at the South Quay on installing three new mooring pontoons which are designed to attract visiting leisure craft to the town. The work which was approved by the King's Lynn Conservancy Board earlier this year and more recently by the Environment Agency includes access bridges to the pontoons and the installation of CCTV cameras. The intention is for them to be in

place for a trial five year period. EAWA members may well remember that years ago our Association was offered two dredging barges no longer needed by the local Dredging & Construction Company to provide the foundation for two floating moorings but lack of interest by the town and by boaters led to the offer having to be declined. The construction work went well and early in August the first boats tied up to the new structures. Previously craft were unable to moor along Lynn's quays because the tide in the swift flowing river can rise or fall by more than 20-feet.

WEST LYNN: Anglian Water has drawn up plans for a new pumping centre on farmland off the Clenchwarton Road in West Lynn. Instead of lorries delivering sludge to the existing treatment works in Clenchwarton they would unload at the new centre from where the waste would be pumped through a 4.5 kilometre pipeline to the works. Members may well remember that the possibility of using water transport for the sludge from the water company's various works was being considered at one time, but this sensible option seems to have been surreptitiously dropped.

NEW BEDFORD RIVER: Early in August the Environment Agency announced that Jacksons Civil Engineering was going to remove silt from over 400 yards of the channel between Earith Sluice and Earith Bridge to improve the flow of water and reduce the need to use the Ouse Washes as a flood storage area. The dredged material is to be stored close to the work until it is dry enough to reuse on the flood banks. The Washes store vast amounts of water in flood times as they were designed to do by Cornelius Vermuyden, the Dutch engineer. This water is then pumped from the River Delph at Welmore Sluice into the tidal river which discharges into the Wash at King's Lynn. Recently flooding has become more prolonged leading to the closure of the A1101 Welney Causeway and disrupting the breeding season for wading birds, many of which have lost their nests.

THE FISH & DUCK MARINA: There was some concern earlier this year when boaters mooring at the marina at Popes Corner at the junction of the Old West, the Cam and the Great Ouse rivers, had to vacate their moorings to allow major improvements to be carried out. The marina re-opened on 13 May following extensive alterations with the number of mooring places increased to well over 100, the jetties have been refurbished and fitted with new electrical and water points, and the whole site has been landscaped and tidied up. The marina is in a peaceful location well away from the pressures of everyday life and the owners are promoting this aspect by offering visitor moorings, refreshments and other attractions.

MIDDLE LEVEL TOLLS: At present boaters do not pay for using the Middle Level waterways although from 1 April 2003 the Middle Level Commissioners have insisted that all boaters have to satisfy the requirements of the Boat Safety Scheme. One of the local Members of Parliament – Stephen Barclay representing North East Cambridgeshire – has been in discussion with DEFRA about the possibility of introducing a Private Members Bill in Parliament entitling the Commissioners to impose charges. DEFRA is unlikely to oppose such a Bill and it would almost certainly apply to other navigable waterways where charging is not currently provided for. This is not the first time the Commissioners have been in discussions about introducing charging for pleasure vessels but previous attempts under the

Transport & Works Act were ruled invalid by DEFRA. It is estimated charging could bring the commissioners £50,000 per annum in income.

PETERBOROUGH: To preserve eight rare Bronze Age log boats that were discovered in a quarry at Musk Farm near Peterborough in 2011 a two-year conservation project is now well under way. The 4,000-year-old vessels were moved to the Flag Fen Bronze Age site where a £100,000 grant from English Heritage has funded the provision of a large refrigerated storage unit. Here the boats are being stored and to prevent them from drying out too quickly to they are being sprayed with a special wax to stop the timbers from being degraded – this is a similar technique to that used to preserve the Tudor warship *Mary Rose*. Previously log boats have had to be cut up into pieces for preservation whereas these ones will be preserved intact, the longest being nine metres in length. It is hoped that the process will reveal more about these boats including how they were used. Visitors to Flag Fen will be able to view the boats through the storage unit's glass sides.

CHELMER & BLACKWATER: A new trip boat has been launched by Blackwater Boats that can accommodate wheel chairs users and other people with disabilities. "*Blackwater Dawn*" which can carry 42 passengers was officially named on 28 April by Councillor Freda Mountain. She operates from Sandford Lock and replaces "*Blackwater Rose*" that has been operating for the last ten years during which time she has carried nearly 2,000 passengers during 400 trips and 170 private charters.

COLCHESTER: A new 42-metre pontoon has now been installed on the King Edward Quay at The Hythe in Colchester and the first vessel to use it was the Brightlingsea Foot Ferry when it arrived at high tide on 21 August. Meanwhile work has started on creating a new public space by the old Hythe Bridge and this will be followed by a feasibility study on the remaining length of the King Edward Quay river wall and the rest of the quay wall down to Fieldgates.

B&MK TRUST: The Trust's new trip boat, the 70-seater "*John Bunyan*", was delivered by lorry from the builders Colecraft Engineering Ltd at Long Itchington in Warwickshire to Priory Marina in Bedford on Wednesday 3 July. The boat undertook its first trial runs through Bedford Lock and on up to Kempston on the Saturday and down through Cardington Lock towards Castle Mills on the Sunday before being ceremonially named at 3pm on Tuesday 9 July. The boat survived an unfortunate accident when she was struck more than once by an out of control narrow boat at Priory Marina but fortunately the damage was slight.

RIVER SLEA: A site meeting between the Slea Navigation Trust and the Environment Agency was held at Taylors (Lower Kyme) Lock on 17 June to discuss the scour blocking the channel below the lock. The EA stated they had no money to pay for the required dredging but they would have no objection to a third party carrying out the work. They would also be happy to deal with and advise on the necessary measures and to meet any consents that may be required to enable the work to proceed. This then may have to be the way forward and EAWA would hope to be able to help the SNT in whatever ways it can.

BROADS NOTES AND NEWS

BROADS FORUM: Members may be aware that the Association is represented by our member Brian Holt on the Broads Authority's Forum which serves as a medium between the authority and all those interested in the system. Brian represents not only ourselves but the Inland Waterways Association, the Oulton Broad Users Community Enterprise and the Yare Users Association. The Forum meets several times a year and reports are circulated to all the interested parties.

DREDGING: Following on from the report in our last issue the Broads Authority has decided not to increase the amount of dredging but to retain it at its present figure of an annual 50,000 cubic metres. This followed an in-depth debate at the Broads Forum meeting at which the Broads Society urged the Authority to do more to deal with the symptoms and not the cause of the deposit of sediment. The Broads are suffering from hyperfertility and if this can be reduced it would result in a drop in the sedimentation rate. A case was cited where actions taken by farmers in the river Wensum catchment to reduce the use of nitrogen and phosphorus have led to a reduction in the sediment level in the river. Likewise on the Bure the levels of fertility were dropping as was the level of sediment. Currently the Authority operates a Sediment Management Plan developed in co-operation with Cranfield University.

GREAT YARMOUTH YACHT STATION: On Friday 26 July the Broads Authority's yacht station on Tar Works Road was re-opened by John Burroughs, Mayor of Great Yarmouth, after undergoing a major transformation from being a somewhat cramped, dingy and uninviting building into a bright and inspiring visitor information centre. The £25,000 project was designed and carried out by the authority's own work force supported by Great Yarmouth's tourist department.

VAUXHALL BRIDGE, GREAT YARMOUTH: The structural repair works mentioned in previous issues started last November and have basically now been completed but the £643,000 set aside ran out before the bridge could be re-painted. Fortunately the Council was able to find another £140,000 and this has enabled the bridge to be re-painted in its original red colour. This leaves the disused span which it is hoped can be dealt with at a future date. The bridge is one of its only remaining types in the country and is an important gateway for visitors to Great Yarmouth.

NEW WORKSHOP: On Friday 28 June the Broads Authority's new workshops at the Griffin Lane Dockyard at Thorpe in Norwich were formally opened by Nigel Pickover, editor-in-chief of Archant Norfolk. At the same time the authority's chairman, Dr. Stephen Johnson, named the authority's new wherry "*Iona*". Those attending were given the opportunity to take a short trip on the new patrol launch "*Spirit of Breydon*" and to tour the new building.

BROADS EXPENDITURE: A proposal by the Broads Authority to part fund the £45,000 cost of the appointment of a new marketing and promotion manager by a £13,500 contribution from the navigation account met with determined opposition. The British Marine Federation, the Broads Hire Boat Federation, the Royal Yachting Association and the Norfolk & Suffolk Boating Association all pointed out that the plan contravened the legislation that was passed when the authority was set up.

The key point is that “navigation income”, as defined by the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988 and confirmed in the Broads Authority Act 2009, must be spent on “navigation expenditure”. Faced with this determined opposition and in view of the relatively small amount involved the Authority decided to withdraw the proposal.

SAIL AND STORM: The book setting out the history of the Aylsham Navigation that was reviewed in our February issue has won two awards – Canal Book of the Year and overall Transport Book of the Year. The book resulted from collaboration between Aylsham Local History Society and Dr. Sarah Spooner, a landscape archaeologist at the University of East Anglia.

WHERRY YACHT CHARTER CHARITABLE TRUST: On Sunday 7 July the wherry *Olive* joined her sisters *White Moth* and *Norada* to sail together on Ranworth Broad where they made a wonderful sight. *Olive* had just undergone a year-long restoration at the trust’s base at Wroxham aided by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The trust was formed in 2002 and bought *Olive* and *Norada* and the pleasure wherry *Hathor* from their long term owner Peter Bower. *Norada* was dealt with last year and the trust hopes to part restore *Hathor* in 2014 and complete the work in 2015. Meanwhile *White Moth* is owned by Andrew Scull, one of the trustees. To keep all four vessels on the water the trust needs to raise £70,000 a year and it is hoping corporate hire and unusual holidays on a skippered craft will help towards this objective.

BROOM BOATS: On Saturday 27 July and to celebrate 115 years of building boats there was a sail past of boats built by Brooms at its Brundall yard. As reported in our February 2013 issue this company has made a welcome return to the Broads hire industry and is now about to enter the lucrative Russian market. More than 40 different models have been identified and most were represented on the day. The story began in 1898 when Charles John Broom bought the Brundall yard from the Norfolk Broads Yachting Company where he had been manager. In 1912 Brooms were one of the first companies to operate a hire fleet and was also one of the pioneers of introducing motor boats. Boat building is now doing well, despite strong competition, with 21 being built in 2012 and this is expected to rise to 24 this year.

LOWESTOFT BRIDGES: Suffolk County Council has produced plans for a new swing bridge to take pedestrians and cyclists over Lake Lothing a short distance inland from the notorious A.12 bascule bridge crossing. This could be completed in 2015 and involves compulsory purchase of land part of which is owned by Associated British Ports. The move is meeting with mixed reactions as many people in the town see the primary need as being for a third river crossing for motor vehicles as there is enough room for pedestrians and cyclists to use the bascule bridge. A local businessman has drawn up plans for a possible third road crossing that would be further inland and would be in the form of a barrage, with a lock for ships to pass through, and which would protect a large part of Lowestoft from flooding.

SALHOUSE BROAD: The Broads Authority’s £230,000 restoration project for this Broad was entered in the innovation category of the Water Renaissance Awards held in Birmingham and beat 30 others to become a finalist. Whilst the project was commended, the winner was the Tees International White Water Centre.

ELECTRIC BOATS: The Broads Authority actively encourages electric boats which are quieter and have finer hulls that create less wash as they move through the water. In turn this causes less bank erosion, habitat damage and pollution. In line with this in 2006 the Authority developed a ten-year strategy to develop the provision of charging points of which there were then 16. The number has now risen to 28 and several new sites are being investigated and the aim is to create at least one new installation every year. In addition there a number of private charging points throughout the system. The cost of each installation varies from about £3,000 up to £10,000 the main factors being the availability of electrical supply, the distance of cabling required and the isolation of a number of the Authority's 24-hour moorings. Each allows for 16 amp and 24 amp charging and can be used for domestic power by hire craft and for battery charging for powered boats.

RIVER BURE: Our member Paul Playford contributed a letter to the Eastern Daily Press on 10 August congratulating the River Waveney Trust for the good work it is doing, but lamenting the fact that on the Bure upstream from Horstead Mill the channel has been allowed to gather weed and, worse still, north of Mayton Bridge scrub willow is now closing the river.

THE CANOE MAN: Mark Wilkinson, who is perhaps better known as "The Canoe Man", set up his company, Active-8, some ten years ago specialising in taking school groups onto the Broads for climbing, sailing, shooting and archery. The canoeing and kayaking side took off faster than the rest and the business moved into a shop in Norwich Road, Wroxham some two years ago where it acts as a booking office, cycle shop and information centre. He now has some 25 kayaks and attended one of the Ebridge "Show the Flag" events last year.

LE BOAT: This company, which is part of a global travel group, has been operating on the Broads for 40 years but the last two seasons have been difficult for it. Last winter it closed a base at Somerleyton and it has now sold its remaining 30 boats that are based at Horning to Herbert Woods. The boats are luxury Admiral and Emperor 4 to 6 berth and 6 to 8 berth cruisers built by Porter & Haylett in Wroxham with central steering positions and a low level design making them ideal to pass under low Broads' bridges. Le Boat will now act as a global booking agent for Herbert Woods which should allow access to new overseas markets.

BACK TO THE OLD DAYS: In its issue of Saturday 7 September the *Eastern Daily Press* published a series of pictures featuring local waterways when they were used for commercial traffic. Several Thames sailing barges were shown such as the *Northdown* at Surlingham in the 1960s and the *Ethel Ada* tied up on the Yare at Coldham Hall. The steam tug *Richard Lee Barber* is pictured at Great Yarmouth in September 1965 as is the *Genstram* towing three empty barges at Coldham Hall in the winter of 1958. Copies are available via <www.edp24.co.uk/buyaphoto> or via Diane Townsend on 01603 772449 (Monday to Friday).

RIVER WAVENEY TRUST

The Trust has leased the old Otter Trust buildings and land at Earsham upstream of Bungay and has renamed the site the "River Waveney Study Centre". The intention is to use it as a centre for education covering courses on habitat and environmental topics. The centre is to be formally opened by Griff Rhys Jones on Saturday 19 October when there will be an open day that is planned to include with river walks, displays, a tea room and information about courses and river projects.

Meanwhile in April the Environment Agency announced plans to completely remove the concrete and metal sluice further upstream at Homersfield and create a series of gravel riffles and pools by bringing in gravel from a local quarry. The work was expected to take twelve weeks commencing early in August.

DISCOVER THE RIVER WAVENEY FROM SOURCE TO SEA.

Whilst there seems to have been little publicity about it, under this title the Trust has issued an excellent 36 page guide to the river covering from its source to the sea under this title. A wide range of topics are included from canoeing, sailing, cycling, walking, angling, heritage, wildlife and bird watching.

The course of the river is divided into six sections, most of four pages: -

Redgrave & Lopham Fen via Bressingham and Diss to Hoxne Mill (pages 10 – 13)
 Hoxne Mill via Needham and Mendham to Homersfield (pages 14 – 17)
 Homersfield via Earsham and Bungay to Geldeston Lock (pages 18 - 21)
 Geldeston Lock via Beccles to Somerleyton and Oulton Broad (pages 22 – 25)
 Somerleyton via Haddiscoe to Belton (pages 26 – 29)
 Belton to the Yare junction and Breydon Water and Great Yarmouth (pages 30 – 32)

Each section having its own large scale map (just over an inch or 2.6 centimetres to the mile) and there are photographs of many of the features encountered en route. The maps are remarkably detailed and helpful and are styled in the same way as the Ordnance Survey maps on which they are obviously based.

And at the end of the booklet is a list of Tourist Information Centres, a Directory of local organisations linked to the river such as boat and canoe hirers, cycle hire and river tours, and tips for discovering the river, river safety information and a note about the environment.

Certainly for anyone with any interest in the river the booklet is an essential guide. It has been funded by the Rural Development Programme for England with the design and map illustrations by Splice Creative of Diss, text by Geoff Doggett and Andrew Mackney with other Trust members contributing illustrations and photographs.

And it is available for free at several local Information Centres.

ST. NEOTS LOCK

St Neots Lock has been the subject of much controversy amongst Great Ouse boaters, for one reason or another, over many years. The lock has had nearly two million pounds spent on it in the last ten years, lengthening it to increase capacity and, more recently, to replace the guillotine gate. None of these works has ever gone to plan – always resulting in increased temporary navigation delays and massive over-budget expense.

However, love it or hate it, I think most boaters agree that it is better than it used to be – except for the awful bridge over Mill Lane. It is such a shame that this couldn't be improved when demolition of the mill and residential development on the island made work on the lock possible.

Local people are often inconvenienced by flooding of Mill Lane and the road is often closed for several days when the river rises. Diversions can add considerably to journey times for local drivers.

Neither Cambridgeshire County Council, responsible for the road and bridge, nor the Environment Agency, responsible for the sluices and the navigation has expressed any real interest in solving the problems for boaters or drivers. Usual reason, of course - no money - although there have been missed opportunities in the past.

Now, an interesting new idea is being proposed by a local residents' group – MilHEFAs. They are looking for support to promote a scheme to build a raised causeway over the sluices to keep the road open in times of flood. The scheme would also include a hydro-electric generating plant which, over time, could defray some of the capital costs. It's all in the very early exploratory stages at the moment.

The MilHEFAs website, where they are asking for views and support (and potential investors) is well worth a look – www.milhefas.org.uk

It surely has to be a good thing when local people look to find innovative ways to solve local problems where the authorities have failed to come up with a solution. That's just the sort of thing that instigated many improvements to the navigation over

the years. The authorities don't always get it right, as we know!

But, purely from a boater's point of view, it would seem to me rather a pity if the whole of the problem at this site was not addressed and the awful bridge improved both for navigation and road safety at the same time.

(Contributed by David Mercer)

St. Neots Lock during lengthening May 2005. Ivan Cane



FREEMANS - "THE PASSING OF A LEGEND."

By John Hodgson

(There are several hundred Freeman cruisers on the Great Ouse including John's own boat, pictured below at the 2005 AGM Cruise, and several others at the Bedford Boat Club - Ed)

With sadness I write of the passing of a legend of modern boat design and manufacture. The man behind those iconic boats I have heard described as the "Rolls Royce of the River," John Freeman, passed away on July 26th peacefully at his home in Devon, just two days before what would have been his 96th birthday.

As a boy he was a keen woodworker and at 12 years of age he was making poultry houses to help to supplement the family income as farmers, so it was only natural that he would carry on in this vein and started building wooden framed caravans at 17. After war service in the RAF he returned to his caravans. Polyester resin was still not available commercially but he experimented with it. Fortunately for us it was too heavy for caravans and so he abandoned this idea and turned his attention to using GRP to build boats and he developed the first production line for cruisers in 1957.

Thus the fabulous Freeman marque was born with the introduction of the classic Freeman 22 at the London Motor Show. The construction of a Freeman is very special as we all know. The highest quality workmanship and materials were used from the beginning. Even the veneer throughout each vessel was carefully matched by buying a tree and using the same grain from it throughout the boat. John Freeman even designed and made his own fittings. He had to, there were none being made as this was an embryonic time for this part of the boatbuilding industry so there was nobody else yet focussed on it.



The last Freeman (a 27ft) was made in the mid 1980's marking the end of an era which saw the production of over 6500 vessels covering 27 models ranging from the 22 ft to the 41ft. There is, to this day, a Freeman Owners' Club based on the River Thames at Sheridan Marine at Moulsoford, Oxfordshire and the original Freeman fittings and other spares are still available and so that famous name can live on.

John Freeman will be greatly missed but his marvellous legacy will live on for a very long time to come and he will be fondly remembered especially by those of us fortunate enough to own one of his creations

SWAFIELD ON THE NORTH WALSHAM AND DILHAM CANAL



Swafield Locks 1923 - Norfolk Mills Website

Swafield is generally the least discussed of the villages along the Canal, but it is the only one that celebrates its links by displaying a Wherry on its Jubilee village sign, commemorating the “Last Wherryman”, Jack Gedge, skipper of the *Gleaner*. He died at the age of 100 in 1986 and is buried in the churchyard at Swafield.

The North Walsham & Dilham Canal was opened in 1826, stretching 8¾ miles from its junction with the Smallburgh River at Wayford Bridge to the Antingham Ponds. It was engineered by John Millington of Hammersmith, and cut, in the course of only

18 months, by contractor Thomas Hughes. The Canal had six locks, and was designed for small, 20-ton wherries. Although originally planned to transport coal as its main cargo, this traffic never really materialised. Instead, corn, flour timber, cattle



Swafield Staithe 1910 — Mike Ling Collection

cake and animal feeding stuffs became the principal trades; additionally phosphates were carried to the Antingham Bone Mills. However, the building of the East Norfolk Railway in 1874-7 led to the mills changing their mode of transport, and by 1893 the Canal had been abandoned above Swafield Locks, resulting in Swafield Staithe becoming the terminus of the Canal. During 1927, the top reach was de-

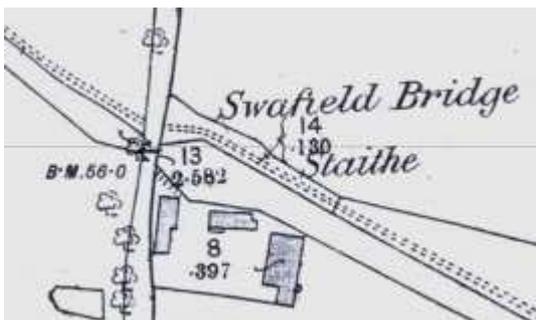
watered and returned to farmland. In 1934, the motor wherry *Ella* was the last to trade from Bacton Wood, and, from that time the Canal became dormant, except for the occasional canoeist. In the 1960's, the stretch of Canal from Bacton Wood Mill to just above Royston Bridge was de-watered, possibly to aid the lowering and strengthening of Royston Bridge, to cater for the heavy traffic resulting from the building of the Bacton Gas Terminal. As such the Swafield section became isolated from the remainder of the watered Canal.



In 1982, the stretch of Canal from Swafield Bridge to the top of the upper lock was sold to a local resident, Michael Starling, and, in 2009, the stretch below the bridge was purchased by the Old Canal Company of Bacton Wood Mill. In both instances the conveyances include the “locks banks towpaths back socks(sic) and easements...” Thus the Canal at Swafield now has two owners.

Restoration of the whole Canal was first mooted by one of the North Walsham Canal Company’s Directors, Arthur Walker, in 1953. In the 1970’s, work was undertaken on the lower Canal by the Inland Waterways Association and Broadland Canal Group. The East Anglian Waterways Association took the helm of restoration during the early 1990’s, and their first decade was one of investigative paperwork, ecological and structural surveys and meeting the Canal and adjacent landowners, leading to work parties starting in 2001. One of the first was at Bacton Wood Lock, where vegetation and tree growth then damaging the lock structure was removed. Similar work was undertaken at Ebridge, Briggate and Honing locks. As well as maintaining the lock structures, work parties, over the next few years focused on specific areas in conjunction with the Canal owners, the North Walsham Canal Co. and Old Canal Company (OCC).

For example the clearing of Honing Staithe Cut and creating a circular “Canal Walk” linked to Weavers Way, which was presented with a North Norfolk District Council Environment Award in 2009. Other work carried out included channel clearing at Honing, to enable easier canoe portages and turning below the lock; the clearing of Briggate Mill Pond, to establish a water based nature; the discovery and clearing of the overflows on the Ebridge and Royston reaches; and the rebuilding of the overflows on the Ebridge and Royston reaches; and the rebuilding of the quay heading at the old Wherry Inn. The OCC has worked on the Ebridge Reach, re-establishing the water level to its 2005 height and de-reeding the millpond. Bacton Wood Lock has been rebuilt and the OCC has installed new top gates, and the channel above has been cleared of brash. The Environment Agency has also worked on the top reaches, undertaking some dredging to overcome flooding problems, and de-reeding the reach past Pigney’s Wood in 2011. In 2008, the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust was set up by the EAWA, to give a greater local emphasis and input for their Canal.



At Swafield, the old watermill, demolished in 1947, pre-dated the Canal and was powered by the waters of the River Ant. Whether the river was made navigable from above the Upper Lock to the Mill dam is uncertain, but, more likely than not Swafield Staithe was used for the mill’s purposes. Here, there were three buildings around a courtyard: the two storey granary building on the quay heading has now been converted into a house;

the former single-storeyed coal shed is also standing last being supplied by wherry in 1921; however, the two storeyed third building nearer the road, once a scout hut, no longer exists.

Swafield Bridge is unique for this waterway, in that it is a skew bridge, i.e. not built at right angles to the canal. As well as the fine crafted brickwork, seen from underneath, one can also spot the gashes in the north east abutment, where the wherries scraped the bridge as they negotiated the corner.

The present Canal owners at Swafield Locks have recently been clearing the area, allowing a greater diversity of wildlife, and revealing the original structures, whilst invasive vegetation has been removed with the help of voluntary work parties, so as to prevent further deterioration. Plans are underway to repair the brickwork and de-reed the water



course. This lock was once used by the Paston Grammar School boys as a swimming pool, and ropes hanging from the trees show that some of today's youngsters still play and paddle there. The Upper Lock is notorious in that the local

millier, Mr Benjamin Postle Woolsey, was "taken with giddiness of the head" when crossing the lock, falling into the water and drowning. He had been cautioned "by his medical man against crossing this dangerous place, which few other persons but himself ventured to do" (*Norfolk News* 6/10/1860). Today, the lock holds no water, as the flow has been diverted around the outside of the lock, with the infill placed into the chamber. However, this may mean that part of the original top lock gate and



ironwork still exist, some 150 years after they were last used. The owners are hoping that the Norfolk Industrial Archaeological Society and NW&DCT may be interested in excavating the site, as well as that of the former spillway between the locks.

Although the Canal environ is private land, the owners are hoping to open the area so that more can be seen, with the Canal becoming central to Swafield again. The OCC has cleared the towpath on the south of the Canal from Royston Bridge to Paston Way, and this is becoming a popular walk for visitors to Pigney's Wood Nature Reserve. There is a public footpath on the north bank from Royston Bridge to Swafield as well. West of the Swafield Bridge, plans are afoot to remove willows from the Canal bed and undertake de-reeding, giving a clear water vista from both sides of the Bridge and of the skew itself. Future re-watering of the dry section of the

Bacton Wood reach will also enhance the Canal through Swafield. The locks are on private land and access must be requested.

Swafield is a village that was once centred around its mills and Canal. Little remains of the former, but, with the benevolent attitudes of the Canal owners, hopefully the Canal will once again become an asset to the Swafield community.

Ivan Cane, October 2013

NORTH WALSHAM AND DILHAM CANAL



On Sunday 8 September a trial took place below Bacton Wood Lock to see if a possible workboat would be suitable for the North Walsham & Canal Trust. Our picture shows the boat, powered by an electric outboard motor, with four members aboard and about to pass under the road bridge below the lock. For reasons that are not clear the water level was very low restricting the draft available for the boat and rather hampering the assessment.



Negotiations between the Old Canal Company and the Environment Agency over the Stop Order continue but so far without reaching any agreement. Whilst the order only relates to dredging, for the time being virtually all work has stopped on the Ebridge pound and efforts have been concentrated on the dry reach above Bacton Wood Lock and particularly around the Pigney's Wood area and on Swafield bottom lock where a quite remarkable clearance has been made as shown in our picture

On 27 and 28 July the Old Canal Company held another Open Day at Ebridge which attracted a lot of attention. Meanwhile the work party sessions have been 2 & 16 June (Pigney's Wood), 30 June (Swafield Locks), 28 July (Ebridge), 11 August (Royston Bridge), 1 September (Bacton Wood), 22 September (Pigney's Wood area).

MEMORIES OF DILHAM DIKE

Through the good offices of our member Carole Bullinger we have been sent a photocopy of the programme issued by The Dilham Village Waterways Society covering "The Dilham Fiesta" that was held on Monday 2 September 1968. Attractions included side shows, produce stalls, refreshments, a procession of boats, a cabaret and dancing in a marquee to the Chris Gillespie Trio.

Dilham Dike is a short branch canal leading off the Smallburgh River to a public staithe in the village. EAWA first became involved here when its founder, Teddy Edwards, held a meeting at the Cross Keys Inn in Dilham in June 1959 to discuss the re-opening of this short waterway and a small restoration committee was set up. In 1961 May Gurney & Co. Ltd estimated it would cost £1,800 for its floating dredger to clear the canal to give a 4-foot depth at low water, the dike being subject to tidal influence, and to cut back overhanging trees and clearing others to allow the spoil to be dumped. At the time the money to fund this work was not available.

In 1963 Dilham Properties Ltd purchased development land at the head of the dike and this included the canal and the staithe. In April 1966 the company agreed to sell the canal, its towpath and the staithe to EAWA for the nominal sum of just £1. The transfer took place in February 1967, EAWA first having to be incorporated to become a limited company so that it could legally hold property. EAWA then opened negotiations to get the canal restored and the staithe leased to a suitable tenant.

The Dilham Village Waterways Society was a short-lived concern formed to try and advance matters and its members carried out some weed clearance on the canal. Likewise Dilham Parish Council was keen to be involved and wanted to lease the staithe but it was not in a position to provide the necessary funding.

EAWA's position as a registered charity made it difficult to negotiate freely and it eventually agreed to lease the staithe to the Bure & Waveney Commissioners who would then carry out the restoration work. In April 1970 what had become the Great Yarmouth Port & Haven Commissioners started dredging and clearing the canal and carrying out some quay-heading at the staithe. On the completion of this work EAWA was able to declare the canal to be a public navigable highway and from 1 July 1972 the staithe was leased to the Commissioners for 21 years at a peppercorn rent of 5p.

The centre pages of the Village Society's 1968 programme features an advertisement by Gordon H. Fitzgerald stating that the Fiesta and Fete was being held on land available for sale for moorings. At the time Mr. Fitzgerald was clearing the site and excavating mooring places, which he subsequently went on to sell. Today these moorings are the home of the Dilham Boat Club.

EAWA eventually sold the canal and the staithe to the Broads Authority but that is another story.

Alan Faulkner

NAVIGATING EAST ANGLIA



Ivan Cane spotted a new means of transport that is available at Ely where water bicycles and tandems can now be hired for half hour sessions.



Not seen before on the North Walsham and Dilham Canal at Ebridge was this visiting rowing skiff from Blakeney. Named "Hoi Larnton" it is owned by the Coastal Rowing Association based at Blakeney and the crew was able to navigate some way up the canal as part of the activities on 27/28 July on the Open Day. The boat is six metres in length and fit for use at sea and it is used not just for pleasure but for rehabilitation and recovery from medical problems. The Association was planning a fund-raising event rowing from Wells to Blakeney on 11 August to help towards purchasing another boat that costs around £4,000. (Photo Alan Bertram)