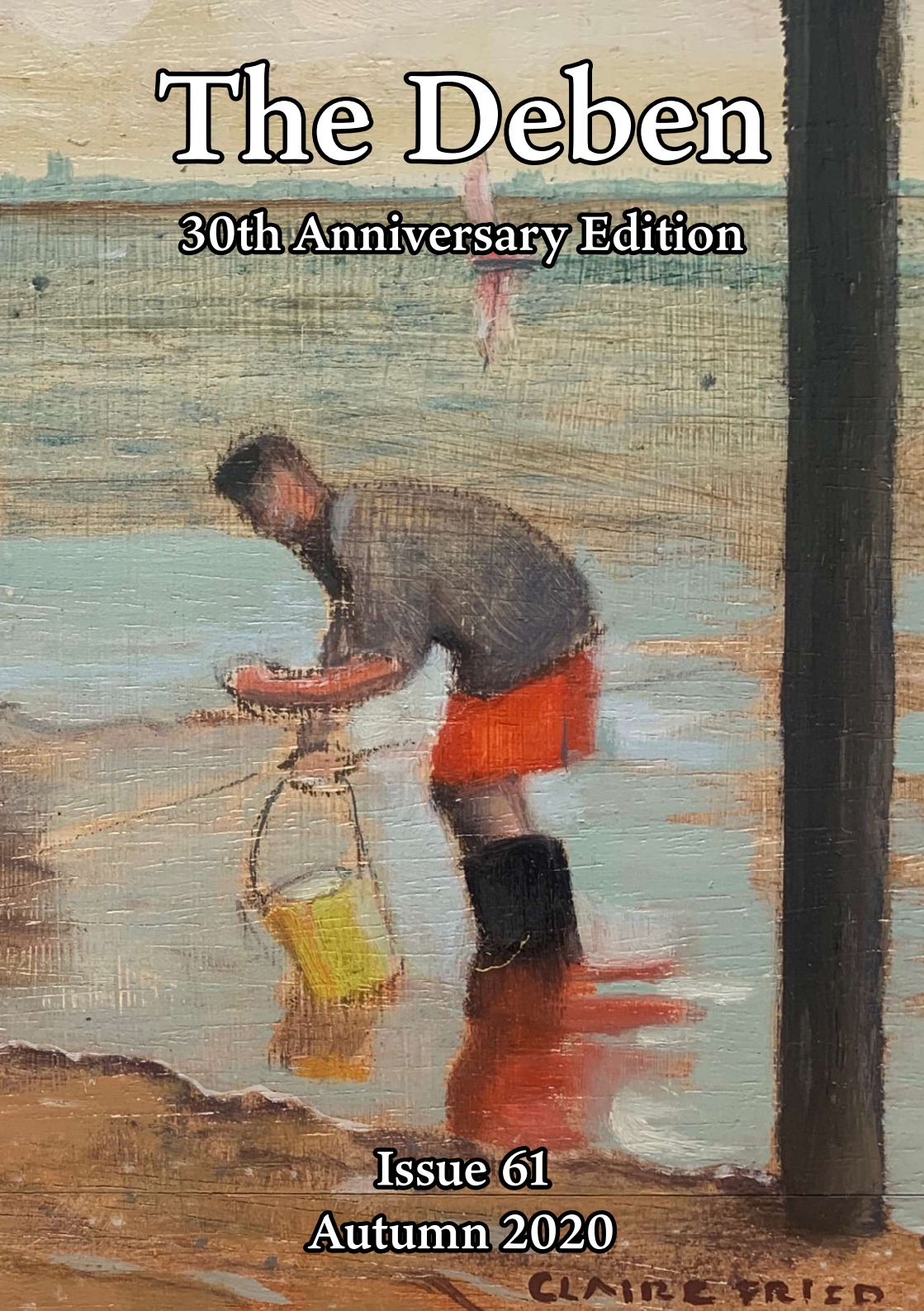


# The Deben

30th Anniversary Edition



Issue 61

Autumn 2020

CLAIRE FRIED

Aspall  
Debenham

Brandeston  
Cretingham

Kettleburgh

Easton  
Letheringham

Wickham Market

Campsea Ashe

Loudham  
Ufford

Rendlesham

Melton  
Bromeswell

Woodbridge  
Sutton Hoo

Martlesham  
Methersgate

Sutton

*The Tips*

Waldringfield

*The Rocks*

Newbourn

Shottisham

Hemley

Ramsholt

Kirton Creek

Hollesley

Falkenham Creek

Bawdsey

Trimley St Martin

Felixstowe Ferry



# RIVER DEBEN



# The Deben, Autumn 2020

<b>Editor's Introduction</b>	4	<b>The River Deben Association at 30</b>	20	<b>Review: <i>The Lost Village of Ramsholt</i></b>	31
<b>Bawdsey Quay Beach: Breathtaking!</b>	5	Robert Simper		Julia Jones	
Kate Osborne		<b>The River Rats</b>	21	<b>Halyards of Woodbridge</b>	32
<b>A Bitter Day Afflicts the Present</b>	6	Roland Mann		Jan Pulsford	
Peter Wain		<b>Holding the Line</b>	22	<b>Review: <i>The Suffolk Coast</i></b>	33
<b>Ship of Fools? Surviving Lock Down</b>	7	Robin Whittle		Sue Ryder Richardson	
Grant Crawshaw		<b>Saying Hello to Slugs</b>	24	<b>Review: <i>One Line at a Time</i></b>	34
<b>Getting Involved: On the Water</b>	9	Stephanie Perks		Nick Cottam	
Neil Boast		<b>The River Deben from Source to Sea</b>	25	<b>Open Boats on the Deben</b>	34
<b>Profile: Tony Lyon</b>	10	Jane Haviland		Robert Simper	
Peter Willis		<b>Ufford and Rendlesham: A Saxon Trail</b>	27	<b>News from the Hards</b>	36
<b>Blossom Goes West</b>	12	Nick Cottam		Sarah Zins	
Gwen Thorogood		<b>Profile: Claire Fried</b>	28	<b>The River Deben Association</b>	38
<b>Birds and Photography on the Deben</b>	13	Julia Jones		<b>Extraordinary Times</b>	38
Sally Westwood		<b>Review: <i>Waldringfield</i></b>	30	Julia Jones	
<b>Getting Involved: Environment</b>	16	Peter Willis			
Stephen Thompson					
<b>Getting Involved: Environment</b>	17				
Brendan Joyce					
<b>Chairman's Report</b>	18				
Joeske van Walsum					



Claire Fried

3 Men in a Boat. The Maybush, Waldringfield. Oil on Canvas.

# Editor's Introduction

This issue marks 30 years of the River Deben Association, officially at least. The first AGM was held in May 1990, after which newsletters were produced summer and winter. These quite soon changed to autumn and spring – probably to allow the editors a little more time to enjoy the river and contributors more time to write about it. I'd like to thank our website editor Alan Comber who has uploaded all the past magazines onto the RDA site. I commend them for your winter reading. Alan is also marking this 30th anniversary milestone with an RDA on-line Journal – of which more to follow.

The River Deben continues to be an inspiration and a solace, as well as a source of pleasure, a place to live and a means of making a living. The summer of 2020 has intensified these aspects for many people. In spring and early summer the need for infection control 'locked down' the population, while 'social distancing' (the need to keep physically apart from one another) still remains a priority. People flocked to the river as soon as they were able, however the regular activities of its societies and businesses have been made unusually difficult – often impossible. For better or worse, the impact of COVID-19 runs throughout the wonderful range of articles and photographs included in this issue.

Once again more articles were offered than could be accommodated – an outstanding example is Stephen Thompson's fascinating article on Sea Bass. This is a must-read but only a summary can be included in this issue. The full article will inaugurate the online RDA Journal and will be followed at

Oriel Laws



regular intervals by other longer, more detailed and scholarly articles, as well as outbursts of individual enthusiasm. These will be offered at least monthly and announced by various means, including the Facebook page. Please contact the editor with your ideas.

In this 30th anniversary issue, I would like to pay tribute to former RDA newsletter / magazine editors: Richard Hare, Tim Midwinter, Michael Atkins, Dennis Hawes, David Copp, Nick Wright, David Buckley and Robin Whittle. For the benefit of our new chairman and committee members, however, I recommend them to study the indefatigable Rosemary Schlee who was the dynamic face of the RDA for many years. Here she is remembered by her daughter Oriel Laws:

*I have many memories of mum on the trail. My favourite happened at a sailing club working party when I was digging a hole with someone I didn't know. I spotted mum coming down the steps with a clipboard and eyeing up me and my new friend. As she approached us I said to him "Just Sign It – it will be much easier that way." He looked at me, looked at the columns, the DD request etc, looked at me again, and duly signed. When she had gone he said "Who is that woman?"*

Editor Julia Jones is a writer and lifelong lover of the Deben. Email her at [magazine@riverdeben.org](mailto:magazine@riverdeben.org).

The Deben is the magazine of the River Deben Association ([riverdeben.org](http://riverdeben.org)), who are on Facebook and Instagram @[riverdebenassociation](https://www.instagram.com/riverdebenassociation). Its articles, however, represent contributors' personal views, rather than RDA policy.

Kate Osborne

## Bawdsey Quay Beach: Breathtaking!

Striding out to the 'corner' past the chain link fence and the tamarisk the air always feels stuffy and wet, regardless of the season, and the sand sticks to my shoes.

It's lovely to break out, past the rusty sea defences, to crunch across the stones and take a deep breath of clean air, or have it taken from your lungs! The wind is always blowing contrarily and at the 'corner' the water swirls and churns, often in the opposite direction to the tide.

The grey/green clumps of sea kale (magenta in the spring) are surrounded by the bright green of the spreading, and scarce, sea pea. Every time I go there are new strand lines to explore, some of them scarily high up the beach showing just how far the water has travelled, marked always at Bawdsey by the white common whelk shell.

You'll find one of the best hauls of shells of any Suffolk beach; from the ubiquitous white whelk to the mother-of-pearl top shells once used by the Victorians for buttons and the apostrophe shaped fragments that are all that remains of the rock boring piddock that makes such perfect circular holes in the London clay. The flintstones yield up fantastical shapes, those with a hole all the way through them sometimes still showing the trace of the fossil sea sponge they formed around over 80 million years ago. And it's the only place I've ever found a piece of amber.

Rivers traditionally having been used as rubbish bins

**PLEASE BEACHCOMB SUSTAINABLY.**  
Take away as much rubbish and sea glass/pottery as you like but everything else belongs on the beach. Our shingle beaches are a complex & fragile habitat – the plants & animals that live there need that driftwood, shell or stone far more than your bathroom shelf. Thank you!

over the ages it's a good spot to find sea glass and sea pottery, smoothed and frosted by the stones.

The beach is big enough that you can feel you have it to yourself and, if you go beachcombing in the 'out of season' months as I often do, there's a feeling of being alone at the end of the earth.

*Kate Osborne is the founder of Beach Bonkers, a not-for-profit that aims to inspire people about Suffolk's rare and fragile shingle beaches. She does this by taking people beachcombing, taking the beach to them and by giving talks. See more at [www.beachbonkers.org.uk](http://www.beachbonkers.org.uk) or call Kate on 0751 255 7200.*



Kate Osborne

Peter Wain

## A Bitter Day Afflicts the Present The Black Death on the River Deben

*'O lamentable Death, thou dost plunge multitudes into the lowest pit! Now these, now those, now everywhere thou ravagest, O Death!'*

These words, painted on a wall in the church at Acle, Norfolk, express the despair and horror that would have been caused by the advent of the Black Death of 1348-9, a pandemic that was responsible for killing about half of the population of England. There are no direct records of the Black Death and its effects on the communities on the Deben. However other contemporary accounts leave no doubt of the devastation and misery wrought in this corner of Suffolk.

Carried on trading ships, one of the plague's entry points into Suffolk in early 1349 was the Deben and the port of Goseford. This pestilence made its inexorable way inland spreading out to the villages such as Falkenham, Ramsholt, Waldringfield and Woodbridge, for there was no hiding place.

The plague was deadly and swift in its passage.

*'How many valiant men, how many fair ladies, breakfast with their kinfolk and the same night supped with their ancestors in the next world.'*

Giovanni Boccaccio 1313-75

The death toll was massive. So great was the mortality one contemporary chronicler wrote that:

*'The living were hardly able to bury the dead.'*

Thomas Walsingham circa 1390

Plague was no respecter of rank or title. It was at this time that the names of the great ship owners of the Deben, the Essoulls, Gardiners, and Cortelers disappeared from all records. Whilst no respecter of person or office it did not kill indiscriminately. The poor, as is always the case, died in disproportionate numbers.

Particularly vulnerable were the secular clergy. Their duties involved entering the homes of the sick and the dying to administer Extreme Unction. They were the 'front line' workers and this is shown by the records of the incumbents of the churches on the Deben. In 1349 Waldringfield, Hollesley, Newborne, Shottisham, Sutton, Trimley St Martin, Woodbridge and possibly Bawdsey all had

Peter Wain



Ramsholt was one of the churches affected by the Black Death.

new priests installed. In Falkenham Roger Lay replaced William Lolt in May only to be replaced by William de Colyer in July. The shortage of priests to hear confessions caused the Church to make concessions to the dying:

*'If on the point of death they cannot secure the services of a properly ordained priest, they should make confession of their sins.....to any lay person, even to a woman if a man is not available.'*

The pre plague population of England was approximately 4.8 million. The consequence of halving the population was that villages were emptied, land was abandoned and left uncultivated. Crops rotted, weeds proliferated and animals wandered free. Revenues of landlords fell dramatically, the construction industry declined affecting the forestry industry as fewer trees in surrounding forests were cut. Everywhere on the river's banks there was decline and desolation.

By the winter of 1349 the plague had gone from the Deben. The survivors were then faced with the task of reviving an economy with the additional pressures of a severe shortage of labour, demands by workers for increased wages and seriously neglected land.

Despite the difficulties faced by the local population of, for example, Ramsholt, Sutton and Guston, the villagers were perhaps thankful to have survived.

Of course they did not know that they were to come face to face with the Black Death again in 1361, 1369, between 1374-79 and 1390-93.

*'Our happy times of old have been wiped out, for a bitter day afflicts the present.'*

John Gower circa 1370

*Historian Peter Wain's specialist subject is the lost mediaeval port of Goseford on the lower Deben, which he has been researching for ten years. We hope more of his work will be in the RDA Journal.*

## Grant Crawshaw

# A Ship of Fools? Living on a Boat in Lockdown

Islands, boats and ships have been used for centuries and by many countries, to remove social undesirables from society and to protect society from criminals, people with perceived psychiatric disorders and from particular communicable diseases. This was done as a means of protecting the population from the risks these people potentially posed, and was known as sequestration. The affected person had no say in the matter, and the end result was a complete removal from society to the point that that person was generally forgotten.

The use of islands is well documented, and mainly used for criminals, but the use of ships for

sequestration was frequently used in France and other countries for psychiatric cases (dubbed the ship of fools) and infections such as Syphilis and Tuberculosis which were highly prevalent and highly infectious for a number of centuries.

The one thing that could be said for sequestration, whatever the reason, is that it was effective; criminals on Devil's Island did not escape (excluding one or two high profile cases) and the ships completely prevented their 'patients' from being a risk to others on land. The 'Ship of Fools' ethos was recently used by the US among others for the management of our more recent plague, Coronavirus.



*Monbretia* is an MFV (motor fishing vessel) built in 1942. Grant is engaged in a long-running project to replace her larch planking.

COVID-19 is a very small (100 micrometers) virus which generally causes the common cold and can cause diarrhoea. It is highly infectious due to its size, so is able to travel deeper into the lung. It's also highly transmissible due to its ability to travel in very small particles, expired by the affected persons lung. This means, as with the common cold, there is very little defence against it apart from two main strategies: wearing high filtration masks (FFP3 filtered masks have a filter which will stop the organism from passing through it) and social exclusion (removing the affected lungs from other lungs or vice versa).

Which brings me neatly to living through COVID-19 on a houseboat on the Deben.

The social exclusion of the boat community on the Deben was not sequestration as it was self-imposed, and it was all based on community as well as individual risk. Obviously any risk to one individual could have resulted in a risk to the community. So bearing in mind the 'ship of fools' the gangplanks were figuratively raised, and because the community is so close and friendly, supportive systems organically evolved particularly for people who were vulnerable or lonely. These supportive systems were based

on science and common sense and everybody was overseen, though not overtly, by their neighbours. This was not the finger-wagging exercises I have seen elsewhere, this was making sure that everybody was alright; people needing assistance (with shopping etc.) were provided for in a safe way and people were mentally supported without being nannied.

This last point was very important as the more unsettled people on the boats were given more confidence and felt more secure by the relaxed support being given and the people were able to communicate at any time with others on the quay. As time went on many of the quay residents had safe gatherings which could be attended by anyone living on the quay and bolstered the mental support. More and more support was provided in many different ways as time progressed.

Happily we have never had a case of COVID-19 (to date) and our community has only got stronger with the vast amount of social support we have provided each other. As this support was created organically, by people wanting to help people, not only to protect themselves but the community in general, and without any sign of judgmentalism or politics.

'Ship of Fools?' I don't think so. After having spent 26 years working in Infectious Diseases I have never seen such an effective system of control and support. All with the backdrop of the beautiful Deben River to look out on. No fools or COVID-19 here!

Welcome to Ferry Quay.

*Grant Crawshaw worked 26 years in the NHS for many years, mainly specialising in infectious diseases, public health and critical care. He also spent 6 years at the University of Essex developing and leading MA courses.*



Neil Boast

## Getting Involved: On the Water

### Introducing the River Deben Paddlers

This spring and summer you have probably noticed a far greater number of canoeists and paddleboarders on the river. The increase in 'paddlesport' has been attributed nationally to several factors, with COVID-19 'staycations' and the wonderful weather being just two.

Paddlesport is the broad term to cover canoes (open boats, often called Canadian canoes), kayaks (where the paddler is sitting in a cockpit covering their legs), paddleboards (usually inflatable boards like surfboards), and 'sit-on-top' kayaks (wide kayaks that are very stable).

The Burgesses in their new family canoe.

Another reason for the increase in paddlers is that for quite a small outlay, you can get on the water and enjoy all the wonderful sights and sounds of the river- and get fit!

I'm a paddler who has been into canoeing since I was 12. I'm now 58, and living very close to the river in my little cottage on Lime Kiln Quay is a dream come true. I launch at Robertson's Boatyard, the oldest boatyard on the Deben, and feel like part of the family there. I try to paddle every day, 365 days a year, tide permitting. I also paddle at night on occasion. Christmas Day this year is a nice tide time!



I saw the numbers of paddlers start to grow on the Deben and thought I'd start a small Facebook group to share my knowledge of the river, that I first paddled aged 16. It now numbers over a thousand. People in the group all contribute with hints and tips. The main questions are about tides and launching sites.

The things that I and the more experienced paddlers in the group try to get across, are safety messages and information on the tides/weather/craft etc. We review different craft and products people are likely to need.

We share and encourage people to paddle together, putting experienced paddlers with 'newbies'. We try to make people realise that the estuary can be dangerous if you don't know what precautions you need to take.

I'll try and help anyone get into the sport, and have craft that people can try. Other members of RDP do likewise. It's a very friendly group.

Paddling the Deben is where I feel most content and at peace. As a former police officer, 32 years service, I always used canoeing as my chance to 'clear my head', and I still do. I'll try and help anyone get into the sport, and have craft that people can try. Other members of River Deben Paddlers do likewise.

Feel free to contact me if you want to try 'paddlesport' by joining RDP or email me ([neilboast@gmail.com](mailto:neilboast@gmail.com)).

*Former police officer Neil Boast still works full-time as a medical oxygen engineer. This can be stressful, especially in these pandemic times.*

**Peter Willis**

## Profile: Tony Lyon

'It's been a strange summer,' reflects Tony Lyon, Waldringfield's Harbourmaster. And it still is when we meet up on the terrace of the Sailing Club on a hot, sunny 25°-plus morning in the middle of September. The exceptional weather and the changes in group behaviour due to the coronavirus have meant the beach has been much busier than usual.

'We've had big groups of teenagers coming down from Martlesham on their bikes – to be fair, they've been as good as gold about taking their rubbish home with them.' Tony uses what he calls 'a bit of psychology', thanking them for being so thoughtful, and it seems to have worked. But he does wish they knew a bit more about tides – 'They go in swimming and get swept down – or up – and we have to go out in the launch, throw them a fender and tow them back.'

'The wild water swimmers are used to the river, but others swim into the channel, and don't realise they can't be seen. We had one incident with a big motor cruiser and a load of small children swimming in the channel – I had to get him to slow right down, and go out and rescue them.'

Tony's been Harbourmaster for seven years now. Before retirement he was 22 years with Trinity House, on their ship *Patricia*. In a sense, he still has a connection with Trinity House. The Harbourmaster is employed by the Fairway Committee, responsible for the river from Early Creek to Methersgate Quay, and answerable to the Crown Estates, to whom they pay rent, and to Trinity House, for whom they maintain the sea marks – the 10 navigation buoys in this stretch.



‘On the 20th of October, the Inspector of Sea Marks will be coming round to look at the marks the length of the Deben, and before that I’ll have to be out making sure they’re clean and in good order.’

The other side of the job is managing the moorings – about 220 of them, let out at £105 a year (there’s a long waiting list – villagers get priority, then Sailing Club members, then anyone else). Tony also handles letting vacant moorings to overnight visitors – people usually let him know when they’re going to be away. ‘It’s a £10 donation to charity – we usually split the year’s take three ways: the RNLI, the Woolverstone Project and the committee’s choice.’

But this year, to avoid handling cash, it’s all to the RNLI – ‘I tell people if they want to make a donation to put it in the box next time they see one – some do a transfer on their phones straight away.’ This year though he’s tending to send visitors to the boatyard moorings –

Harbourmaster Tony Lyon with his bike and buoys.

‘They’ve lost income from the *Jahan* boat trips being cancelled and we wouldn’t want to lose Mark – he’s an asset to the river, and the village.’

Tony’s pay, and that of some of the officers, comes out of the mooring fees. In his case it’s supposed to cover 400 hours, but it’s clear he does a lot more than that. ‘It’s a community role,’ is how he describes it. ‘I’m down here every morning, put the tides up on the board and have a scout around. And I’m on call 24 hours – you’ve got to be.’

Wewander over to his ‘office,’ the Harbourmaster’s hut, and he points inside the door. ‘That’s the most important piece of kit we have here,’ he announces. It’s a bucket full of toy fishing nets. ‘Children are always forgetting them and asking to borrow one.’

*Peter Willis is President of the Nancy Blackett Trust and a former Deputy Editor of Classic Boat magazine.*

Gwen Thorogood

## Blossom Goes West

The original plan was for Dad to sail *Blossom* down to Cornwall with a skipper, and for all of us to bring her back after our week's holiday down there. However, the plan changed when school shut and we all ended up going (Mum, Dad, me and my 11-year-old twin siblings).

We left Waldringfield on a Thursday and planned to take six days to sail as far as possible. Mark at the Waldringfield Boatyard brought *Blossom* up alongside the jetty so we could load on supplies and then Gingan (our grandmother Julia Jones) came to bid us farewell. It was a great feeling crossing the Deben bar knowing this was going to be the furthest away from home we've been in *Blossom*.

About quarter of an hour after crossing the bar we had got the sails up and then we suddenly heard the anchor running! It had accidentally come untied. It was hard work getting it back on board. I was at the tiller, Mum and Dad were wrestling the mainsail and the anchor, Mum nearly got swept overboard by the boom!

Thankfully we sorted it out with no damage. It was a bit choppy that day especially when we got out of sight of land!

It was very nice to see land again even though it was still quite a way to our stop at Ramsgate. We ended up getting as far as Weymouth in four days and someone else sailed her the last two days to Falmouth.

On the return journey after an amazing holiday we stopped off at a few beautiful towns and we ended up having one day stuck in port in Brixham because our diesel filter needed changing. We got the spinnaker up for the first time and my experience in Cadets helped a lot with knowing how and what to do.

My favourite part of the return journey was crossing Lyme Bay. There were dolphins jumping around alongside and I even managed to touch one! We ended up stopping in Weymouth again because of bad weather. My uncle took her to Dover and Dad and Gingan finally brought her home to the Deben.

*Gwen Thorogood is a member of Waldringfield Sailing Club's Cadet Squadron and has been part of Team GBR at two world championships. She and her siblings attend Thomas Gainsborough School in Sudbury.*

Julia Jones



Gwen and her family on *Blossom*, an Artenko-35.

Alice Thorogood



Making do during lockdown in April 2020.

## Birds and Photography on the Deben

### Birds on the River Deben

The River Deben is an ideal place for observing birds, especially waders. Due to the original forests and woodlands in the area surrounding the river being thinned, and as a result of agricultural practices over the last few decades, there has been considerable soil erosion by the prevailing winds. These blow the top soil into the Deben, which in turn causes the river to silt up.

This is good news for the waders since this provides more nutrients for their food, which they sift through the rich banks of silt on the river edges. Black-tailed Godwits, Redshanks, Greenshanks, Ringed Plovers, Little Egrets, Lapwings, Cormorants, Black-headed Gulls, Common Gulls, and Swans, are common birds



Sally Westwood

A Little Egret and its reflection.

on the river. Occasionally, the odd Osprey turns up during their migration south. Avocets and Black Swans frequent some areas.



Sally Westwood

Black-tailed Godwit taking off.

Other birds regularly present around the river are House Sparrows, Goldfinches, and Greenfinches, as are birds of prey, such as Sparrowhawks. Crows are always present. Kingfishers and Pied Wagtails land on conveniently moored boats. Swallows too, take advantage of the boats and nest up in any nooks and crannies they can find. At dusk, you may be lucky enough to see a Barn Owl emerge from the hedgerow of the river bank and fly in a circle out over the water. Little Owls may be heard, if you are strolling along the river bank as it gets dark. Whitethroats



©SallyWestwood

and Chiffchaffs are fairly common birds flitting about amongst the reeds, nettles and the purple flowers of Buddleia plants. On some parts of the river bank, a stream runs parallel to the river, shrouded by hedgerow and reeds. In the spring and summertime, you can observe Reed Warblers, Sedge Warblers and perhaps, hear, or if you are lucky see, a Cetti's Warbler. Coots and Moorhens reside in the reeds and are easily seen if they are feeding fledglings.

## **Bird Photography on the River Deben**

The variety of birds on, and around the River Deben makes it an excellent location for taking photographs. I am a birdwatcher, an amateur bird photographer, and I am fortunate to live on a boat moored on the river. I find myself in an ideal position.

Timing is crucial in bird photography. The River Deben is tidal. The incoming tide drives the fish into the river, which the birds eat and as the tide goes out, the birds are able to access the crustaceans living in the rich silts. Of

An Oystercatcher and its young.

course, then the birds move further away from you. Most waders, like Redshanks and Ringed Plovers hunt for food at the edges of the water, where the water is shallow. Some birds, like the Little Egret, hunt for food along central currents of the water. This is only for a limited time, as they have to be able to reach fish with their beak. Picking an appropriate time for photographing Little Egrets hunting is restricted to about 45 minutes in one particular place, as the tide is at an optimum level for their fishing. Then they fly off to find another suitable area further down the river.

Light is also an important factor with bird photography. The River Deben is naturally rather dark, with the brown of the mudflats. There is very little greenery in the central areas, when ridges and mounds are revealed as the tide goes out. However, even with low light and rain, it is sometimes possible to get an interesting image of a bird. The bird's wet feathers may create a more detailed image despite the greyness of their surroundings and the sky.



©SallyWestwood

An Oystercatcher bathing.

The angle of the bird and their activity may make it more or less difficult to take shots. Sometimes birds are facing the other way or flying away from you. If a bird is hunting for food on one part of the river, perhaps facing the incoming tide to catch fish driven in, I wait and watch, to see if the bird moves forward, and turns its head, allowing the face and eyes to be seen. Sometimes a good action shot can be taken, despite the bird flying further away.

I am fond of taking pictures of birds in flight, particularly on windy days. East Anglia is often subject to strong easterly winds. Birds usually fly into the wind. It is a good idea to keep your back to the wind, to take advantage of this. If you are lucky, it might be possible to obtain good images of birds flying towards you. They usually fly a lot slower and this makes them easier to follow and focus on with your camera.

*Sally Westwood is currently supported by Zeiss optics as a birdwatcher and photographer. She usually spends her winter in warmer climes, travelling around Spain and Portugal, birdwatching and taking pictures of birds during the winter months. Her journey can be followed on Twitter @theladybirders and Facebook @theladybirder.*



©SallyWestwood

Sally Westwood

A Little Egret with its wings extended.

Stephen Thompson

## Getting Involved: Environment

### The Other Side of the Mirror

I've long enjoyed the Deben estuary but my interest in river locations has always been driven by a desire to know what's happening 'on the other side of the mirror.' I think this probably started watching Jacques Cousteau on *The World About Us* and poking about in streams and ponds. Fishing, and later on SCUBA diving, fed this ambition, and when it came time to choose I selected a Marine Biology degree. Whilst completing that I realised the importance of truly sustainable utilisation of natural resources and that people are actually a very important part of the ecosystem. I have now brought the same approach to my work at Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA).

The Suffolk estuaries are protected areas for several species and habitats; they act as nurseries for a range of species including some that are of great importance for the entire marine ecosystem. One such iconic species is the Bass. These are very versatile fish, living in a variety of environments. They do however have a need for nursery areas with particular characteristics, and this is where estuaries and sheltered inshore waters are very important.

As a local person, you probably have favourite places, to which you return time after time. But it might be surprising to learn that the same applies to bass. Relatively recently, sophisticated tagging using devices which respond to sonar 'pings' and uniquely identify individual adult fish into which they have been implanted have shown that the same fish often return to the same small – garden sized – piece of sea time after time, over periods of years and even after months away from the area.

This provides a great opportunity for 'citizen science', where motivated local people can make real contributions to the science needed for effective management of natural resources. The equipment and methods of sampling for small fish in estuaries and sheltered inshore waters are quite straightforward. The identification of the fish is the only area where there is a need for scientific input, as it can be difficult to differentiate species when they are small.

We would very much like to see more such surveys, and are happy to provide the technical input needed in for instance fish identification. There is a real opportunity for bodies such as the RDA to arrange such surveys, and take ownership of them for the future. The surveys are always great fun. It is possible for all to contribute – pulling ropes on the nets, counting and measuring fish, recording information, taking photographs of the area and the activities. This takes appreciable manpower, and that is something that we as a publicly funded body can struggle to find. But the combination of our technical input, and the enthusiasm of all involved, can make for an interesting, productive – and usually very muddy – survey.

Let's see if together we can discover a bit more about what's happening on the other side of the mirror.

*The full, fascinating, text and images for this article can be found on the new RDA Journal page of our website: [riverdeben.org/rda-journal/the-other-side-of-the-mirror](http://riverdeben.org/rda-journal/the-other-side-of-the-mirror).*

*If you are interested in joining a fish survey please email [volunteer@riverdeben.org](mailto:volunteer@riverdeben.org).*



Brendan Joyce

# Getting Involved: Environment

## Together for Rivers

Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust exists to protect, promote, and enhance our freshwater and estuarine ecosystems for both people and wildlife. We are a small organisation with big ambitions!

We have undertaken a number of projects on the River Deben since our inception in 2013. Working with owners at Aspalls Cyder, Hill House Farm and Debenham Hall Farm we created three natural flood management features as part of a wider project to manage low and high flows in the Deben catchment. Other projects have included restoration of 650m of water meadow dyke at Easton, channel restoration and creation of an interception pond at Shottisham.

I started in the new role of Director of the Trust in March 2020 and, like everyone else, promptly went into lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic. This has had a big impact on our work as, until recently, we have been unable to get out into the field. However it has given us the opportunity to take stock and produce a new strategy to guide us through the new post-lockdown normal.

We are keen to work with landowners and community groups to engage them in practical conservation work and citizen science projects. We are particularly keen to undertake more work on the Deben and, as members of the RDA will know, there is much that needs to be done.

One project we hope to take forward is riverside tree planting. Riverside trees are not to everyone's taste, but they are vital to the health of a river, helping to create resilience to floods, droughts and pollution. They are an important source of minerals and nutrients for aquatic animals and plants and help to prevent bank erosion as well as creating natural micro-habitats. During times of high temperatures and low flows, they offer shelter for fish and other species, and help to maintain oxygen levels.

Another project is control of Himalayan Balsam which has become a problem on some stretches of the Deben. This non-native annual plant is very invasive and causes the loss of native bank vegetation, often leaving bare ground in the winter which is vulnerable to erosion. Removal of Himalayan balsam is a major challenge, but we have to start somewhere.

Both these projects can be very labour intensive and we will be looking for volunteers to help. If members of the RDA are interested please email us ([info@essexsuffolkriverstrust.org](mailto:info@essexsuffolkriverstrust.org)). Any information members have on areas suitable for tree planting or where Himalayan balsam is widespread would also be welcome. We look forward to hearing from you.

*You can alternatively send your email to: [volunteer@riverdeben.org](mailto:volunteer@riverdeben.org).*



Himalayan balsam.

Joeske van Walsum

## Chairman's Report

### We Must Begin Thinking like a River

Joeske van Walsum



Joeske van Walsum, RDA Chairman.

It was an honour to be asked to take on the Chairmanship of the River Deben Association. I love the River for many reasons. I love the role it plays in the community, I love the beauty of it, I love the mental and physical health benefits. The River makes me feel grateful to be alive. We are so fortunate and privileged to have it there to enjoy and appreciate. I started working life as a professional musician. The River reminds me and stirs up memories of some of the most beautiful music, for example Claude Debussy's evocative symphonic poem *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. Rivers, such as our beautiful Deben, have inspired many artists, including painters, sculptors, photographers, poets and composers.

But, to be frank, I could not have started my Chairmanship of RDA at a worse time. The country was in lockdown within days, gloom and doom everywhere. My 12-year-old son Hans, took the photograph of *Next April*, which portrays the mood of despair. Looking on the bright side, the silver lining was the welcome I got, although 'sympathy' might be a better word to use! At any rate, everyone rallied round and we got the ball rolling despite the horrible virus. Perhaps it is fair to say we all needed distraction during this time and focusing on the Deben was a welcome breath of fresh air. My greatest luck was getting the unstinting help and support from my predecessor, Sarah Zins, who had surreptitiously strong-armed me in to the job!

My first task (which I gave myself) was to analyse the *raison d'être* of RDA and to make sure I understood what the Association was really all about. I found it had much in common with the Deben Estuary Partnership (DEP). What was the difference between RDA and DEP? There seemed to be some confusion. I boiled it down to the simplest terms, RDA being a pressure and lobbying group, protecting nature and our wonderful wildlife, promoting the river for the public's benefit, whilst DEP was primarily responsible for the vitally important management of flood defences.

Then I focused on what we should do to make RDA even more effective. RDA has a strong profile and its voice is respected. We have over 800 members, 3.5% of the population surrounding the river. But even so, it became clear to me that we needed to increase our profile and numbers, and so our clout, hence we

started a new membership drive with a target of 2500, 10% of the population.

With the resultant growth of RDA and its Committee comes more work and pressure of a positive kind. Our delightful and devoted Treasurer and Membership Secretary, James Goldsworthy, decided to retire and is replaced by two people as the job was growing! I am delighted to say that Gary Doggett has joined the

Committee as Treasurer and Moray McPail has taken on the task of Membership Secretary. Liz Hattan, an environmental lawyer, has joined the Committee with an interest in water quality. Former Chairman Robin Whittle retired. Architect, engineer, hydrologist Oliver Houchell joined. Sarah Zins and Jane Haviland became Vice Chairs.

We want to encourage more young people to get involved and to develop a Young Ambassador scheme. We started Household Membership for families. There is a marvellous quote by prominent environmentalist David Brower, the founder of many environmental organizations...

*'We must begin thinking like a river if we are to leave a legacy of beauty and life for future generations.'*

We were thrilled to get serious support from the Heads of Woodbridge and Farlingaye schools. At the end of the Summer Term, the two Heads wrote to the parents of all 3000 or so students, attaching a document from the RDA extolling the virtues of the Deben. The document suggests river associated activities which might be contemplated over the summer holidays by families and encourages RDA Household Membership... Shona Norman, Head of

Hans van Walstum



*Next April.*

Woodbridge School, herself a fan of the river, said in her letter:

*'We are extremely fortunate to have the River Deben on our doorsteps which for me, and many parents and students who I have met on my walks has been a sanctuary.'*

The response has been marvellous! The document, now to be found on the RDA website, will be updated from time to time.

Next our aim is to develop various ways to make membership even more stimulating, enjoyable and beneficial for all. In order to do that we now have a super Social Secretary. Pauline Bloomfield, an expert organizer, joined the Committee. Maybe next summer we will have a BBQ by the River for RDA members....?

Everyone should be able to enjoy their heritage. But here lies a problem too. The more people we attract and encourage to enjoy the river and its environs, the more wildlife is disturbed! Seriously, the challenge is to maintain tranquillity whilst encouraging enjoyment. We want to show people how the river can be appreciated in a thoughtful quiet way. How to find peace and how to let the river soothe. We want to encourage photography, we want to encourage people to take their sketch books and sit quietly by the river to paint. Help us identify, monitor and study plants, birds, trees, mushrooms, game, insects, fish and much more. We want people to visit the boatyards and watch the craftsmen at work building and restoring boats. Read about local history, visit the Longshed, the Tide Mill, Sutton Hoo. The list is extensive.

See you by or on the water. We mean what we say: Enjoy.

Robert Simper

## The River Deben Association at 30

Commercial shipping on the River Deben faded out in the 1930s leaving an empty river, enjoyed by the relatively small number of pleasure sailors. Even in the years immediately after the war the river stayed tranquil until someone invented fibreglass boats and the council decided to develop the Suffolk coast for tourism. The stress and strain of this new era soon became obvious.

Annie Healey had moved into Woodbridge from Maldon, which had the same pressures. Here the Blackwater Society had been set up to try and steer the course of events. Members of that society admired the Deben's unspoilt views, wild spaces, historic buildings and relatively unpolluted water, and advised Annie that the Deben needed a similar organization (run by river people) to try and safeguard the future. Although Annie was busy with Woodbridge Town Council work she began to generate enthusiasm and persuaded Ian Battye to become the RDA's first chairman, with herself as vice-chairman and Anne Moore as secretary.

The original meeting to set up the RDA was on May 4 1990 at the Woodbridge Community Hall with 270 members. A year later we had 650. Most new members were enthusiastic about stopping any further development in the Deben Valley between Bawdsey Ferry and Debenham. At the beginning we had committee members from the freshwater Deben, whose main concerns were about angling and canoeing rights, while the Woodbridge members wanted to stop new housing near the river. Actually as the two groups did not have much in common the RDA became primarily an organization to try and safeguard the tidal river up to the edge of the Deben valley.

The RDA was set up as a pressure group to help guide local government in its decisions for development around the Deben and by and large it has been successful in its mission. It has always drawn most of its members from Woodbridge. Frankly it has been very difficult to get the communities down river to be involved. The Mooring Committees and Yacht Clubs remain fiercely independent, but can be drawn together to discuss mutual problems and try and find a way forward. The RDA does not please all the people all the time, but manages to get most river interests to find a common path. To survive it has to remain a totally independent organization and have regular meetings and a good magazine to keep us all in touch.

*Robert Simper was a founding member of the RDA. His first task in 1990 was to undertake a boat survey. He continues to take an active part as President of the Association.*



RDA President Robert Simper sitting on the wooden barge boat *Atlas*.

Robert Simper

Roland Mann

## The River Rats

The lockdown was our opportunity for a longstanding idea to be born - The River Rats.

Practical skills are so valuable for children, building confidence and capability, teamwork and usefulness. Real skills, for real purposes, that really work.

We and a girl from a neighbouring barge formed our own small band of River Rats, heavily biased towards learning and practising seamanship skills. We designed a logo and built a 'shield' in the style of a dreamcatcher (the Rat Catcher) and a tipi clubhouse in the garden - and of course we have our own chant.

Every day we had a session. Just a few areas included knots, lashings, whippings and splices; decorative knots, woodworking, forging, semaphore (first making our own flags), boat repair and maintenance, pottery - even Japanese bo training! And naturally heaps of sailing.

It has been great to see how fast the Rats have sucked up these skills, and how chuffed they are at demonstrating a slickly tied bowline, a neat eye splice, a perfectly coiled line; and I defy the most seasoned sailor to defeat five-year-old Jasper in a contest of buoy identification.

As Nancy Blackett might say, 'By Thunder, I'm glad they're in my crew!'

*Roland, Martine, Charlie and Jasper live 'off grid' on a houseboat opposite Sutton Hoo on the River Deben. They home school the children and are very keen on learning and spreading all manner of empowering practical skills and capability. They also ran, and hope to run again when opportunity allows, the Hive Pop-up Garden Cafe in their riverside garden, and the Grab-a-Chance initiative.*



Roland Mann

# Robin Whittle

## Holding the Line

### Deben River Wall Defences

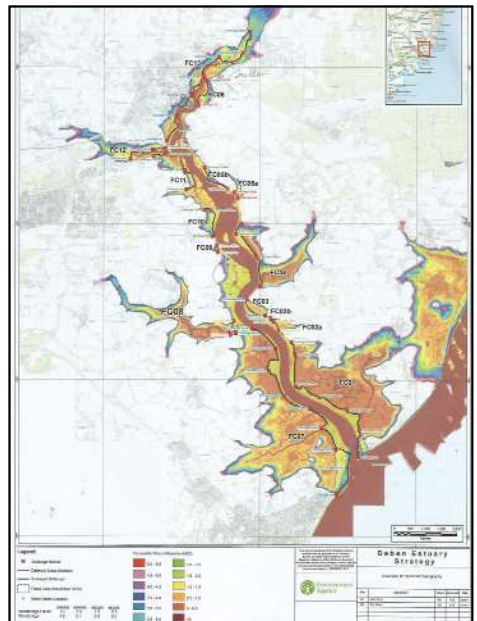
Historian Peter Wain's article in No. 59 edition of *The Deben* noted that the river walls were first built sometime in the 16th century. Ever since then they have had to be raised by between 500 and 600mm per century to counter settlement and sea level rise. Records of tide gauges around the world for the last hundred years confirm that the relative mean high water level has continued to rise at a constant rate of 3.5mm/year. The survey measurements at Loder's Cut Island and Waldringfield, carried out by the RDA Saltmarsh Research Group over the last six years, confirm that the saltmarsh is rising at this rate.

The river walls were built to protect specific areas of land, now known as 'flood cells', from becoming flooded with salt water. My article 'River Wall Defences on the Deben – Recent History' in No. 57 edition of *The Deben* describes how the management and repair of the estuary river walls has changed over the last hundred years. Following the formation of the Environment Agency in 1995 and its reduction in the support for the protection of rural estuary land in 2018, by an eightfold increase in the 'benefit-cost-ratio', this is now very much up to the landowners, as it was originally. The 'benefit-cost-ratio' is the proposed total cash benefit of a project divided by the proposed total cash cost of the project.

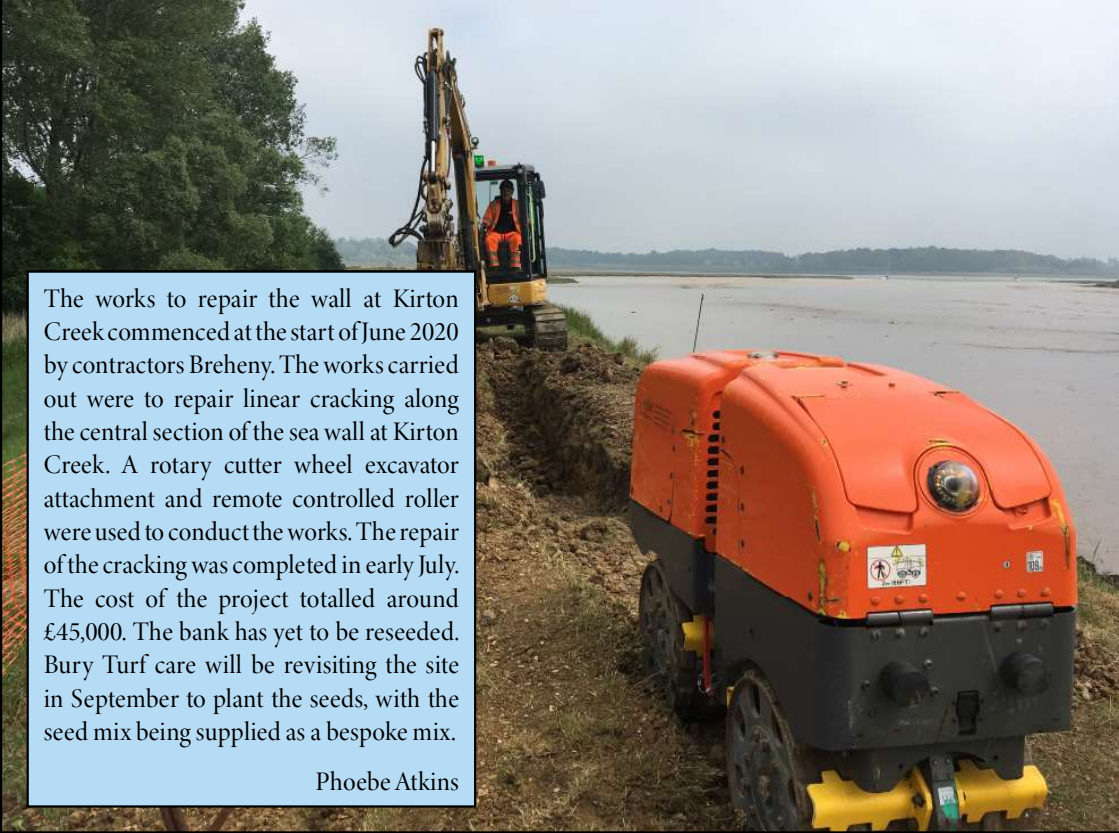
One of the government's main roles, through the Environment Agency, is to ensure that work to raise or maintain the walls is managed in a way to minimise flood risk to other flood cells. Work carried out before and after the 1953 floods brought the level of the walls high enough to satisfy the present surge prediction for a 1 in

75 year event. Much of the recent maintenance work has been to counter the settlement of the walls and bring them back to the level that they were set to in the previous round of maintenance (1948 – 1956).

As part of this maintenance work sills have been introduced in the river walls of two of the smaller flood cells: Hill Farm, Martlesham, (FC11) and Martlesham Marsh (FC12). These walls were breached by the 2013 flood. Instead of building the walls back up to the original level it was decided to introduce sills, a length of wall built to a lower level and reinforced to allow over-topping. These sills allow the pastureland to flood during exceptional high tides. One advantage of having the sills is that, once they



Flood Cells diagram.



The works to repair the wall at Kirton Creek commenced at the start of June 2020 by contractors Breheny. The works carried out were to repair linear cracking along the central section of the sea wall at Kirton Creek. A rotary cutter wheel excavator attachment and remote controlled roller were used to conduct the works. The repair of the cracking was completed in early July. The cost of the project totalled around £45,000. The bank has yet to be reseeded. Bury Turf care will be revisiting the site in September to plant the seeds, with the seed mix being supplied as a bespoke mix.

Phoebe Atkins

Digging at Kirton Creek.

are overtopped, the small flood cell area fills up quite quickly. At this point there is equal water pressure on either side of the wall and there is no further risk of breaching. However, to ensure least damage to the land, the water needs to be drained as quickly as possible after the river level has returned to normal. This requires efficient sluices.

‘Turf reinforcement’ (wire mesh held in place with ground anchors) is an alternative to raising the height of river walls with more clay. This surface will survive greater over-topping depth before the wall is breached compared with the normal grassed clay wall. However, although this ensures a resilient wall for the next fifty years, it does not prevent flooding of the flood cell. It acts as a sill and because it is at a lower level, it will cause a much higher risk of flooding

than it would have if the wall were to be raised with clay to a constant level, set to counter sea level rise.

Writing in the summer of 2020 and looking ahead to Brexit, I believe that arable land such as that of Kings Fleet (FC7) and Queens Fleet (FC1) will become more valuable and should be protected.

I would also like to add my personal support for the concept of ‘Hold the Line’ for the Deben Estuary. I consider this a legacy to the next generation.

*Robin Whittle is a Civil/Structural engineer and although retired still works several hours a week. He knows the Deben through dinghy racing, cruising in a Cornish Shrimper and picnics along the river. He is a member of the Felixstowe Ferry and Waldringfield Sailing Clubs.*

Stephanie Perks

## Saying Hello to Slugs

Stephanie Perks



An alarmed Large Black Slug (*Arion ater*).

Let me introduce to you the *Arion ater*, otherwise possibly known as the 'Large Black Slug', or the 'Great Black Slug', or even the 'Black Snail', a creature you may come across whilst walking down the banks of the River Deben.

Unfortunately, not all slugs are easily identifiable just by a sighting alone, and the *Arion ater* is no exception, as there are similar species such as the *Arion rufus* and the *Arion vulgaris*. However, I am pretty certain this is a Large Black Slug (*Arion ater*), as it does not have any redness in the sole. One special identifying feature of the Large Black Slug (*Arion ater*) is that when alarmed, or irritated, the Large Black Slug (*Arion ater*), contracts up into a tight bell shape, and sways about from side to side.

Slugs are fascinating creatures, as not only are their precise species not easily identifiable, but little is actually known about them, such as their geographical range, their diet, their habitats and their actual amount of different species. Interestingly, the British Isles have relatively few endemic native species due to their arrival in the UK around fifteen to five thousand years ago (Kerney, 1999). All our native species of slug can be found throughout western Europe, possibly



The *Arion ater*, busy looking about.

with the exception of a few of the *Arion kobeltia* slugs.

Interestingly, some slugs are carnivores, some vegetarians and some omnivores and it appears that they can change their eating habits according to their environment – not dissimilar to us? Armed with thousands of denticles or teeth, (a feature unique to molluscs), the Black Slug (*Arion ater*) is a happy omnivore and uses its radula – a denticle covered organ, similar to a toothy tongue – to munch on vegetables, fungi and carrion. It plays an important role in the breakdown of composting material, thus promoting the soil quality in forests and woodlands.

This little chap is a hermaphrodite, which means that both male and female reproductive organs are contained within the one creature. However, they prefer to seek out a mate, and when copulating, they join their male to female parts together to fertilise the eggs. Each slug then departs, taking with them a batch of fertilised eggs, which they lay in the topsoil. This can be as many as up to one hundred and fifty eggs every one to three weeks during the months of August through to October. The juveniles appear after

Stephanie Perks



three and a half weeks – 27 days, or longer if the temperature is low. It takes them up to 9 months to mature, where they will mate in the early summer. Sadly, Large Black Slugs rarely survive longer than a year, and die shortly after laying their last batch of eggs.

You may notice that they have a hole at the top end of the right side of their body, just behind their head and tentacles, this is called a 'breathing pore' or 'pneumostome'. This is where they take in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide from a single lung, whilst keeping moisture loss to a minimum. Their tentacles, which are used for smell, houses their eye spots which are light sensitive. Each tentacle is retractable



A slug-munched Fly Agaric.

into the head and can move independently. Amazingly, the whole tentacle can be regrown if necessary. Lower down on the slug's face, you will see two smaller tentacles, which are used for tasting and feeling.

Stephanie Perks

Hopefully you will look kindly on the Large Black Slug (*Arion ater*) when you come across it (or it comes across you) on your riverside walks, and bid it a good day.

*Stephanie Perks lives on her boat and has swum in, walked by, sailed on and generally admired the Deben for nearly three decades. She is fascinated by any creepy crawlies - insects, arachnids, gastropods, and other such delightful inhabitants of our planet.*

**Jane Haviland**

## The River Deben from Source to Sea

On 16 August 2020 Ruth Redgrave and I embarked on a cycling adventure along the River Deben – from its source to the sea and back to Melton.

Although we understood the source to be in Debenham, on checking the OS map there was a trickle of a stream flowing from Aspell. So we took the starting point to be in the vicinity of St Mary the Grace Church, Aspell. We did not see the stream itself in Aspell nor the river flowing through Debenham. Even the Ford across the road was dry. We only started seeing water as we

cycled along Thorpe Lane towards Cretingham.

There are many different routes one can take while following the River Deben from its source. One can be guided by delightful country pubs or historic churches. We were guided by the bridges and zigzagged our way to Melton. We crossed the river at Cretingham where there were poplar trees, weeping willow (*Salix alba*), sycamore and another willow type – possibly crack willow (*Salix fragilis*). I'm told by the Woodland Trust that the cricket bat willow, grown at Melton, is a hybrid of the white and crack willows.



The empty ford at Debenham.

Cretingham is home to the Bell pub (if we had sampled all the delights of nourishment on the route we would still be cycling!). Another feature of the village is St Peter's Church where the ring of five bells can again be heard chiming out following their recent refurbishment.

Crossing the river at Brandeston we heard the bells of All Saints Church singing away as we passed the cottage of Margaret Catchpole, who become notorious for stealing a horse and being deported to Australia. There is a cattle crossing under the bridge here. At Kettleburgh we cycled past the Chequers Inn as we headed towards Easton via Letheringham. Letheringham hosts the beautiful St Mary's Church and an Augustinian Priory which dates back to 1194 and is rich in wonderful historic names.

We avoided temptation once again as we cycled past the White Horse at Easton and meandered along the river's edge and through Wickham Market. We nearly got squashed as we cycled over Glevering Bridge. It's a very narrow old bridge and the river becomes increasingly riverlike. Once we reached Ufford we were travelling on more familiar ground. The White Lion pub tried to tempt us in but we put on a spurt to get to the bridge. Swimmers were

gathering there and cows grazing the meadows. We even heard a green woodpecker.

On through Bromeswell and to the roundabout before Wilford Bridge where we swung left and pedalled to Bawdsey – not quite non stop as we had a snack at Sutton Hoo National Trust site. We resisted the turning to the Ramsholt Arms but enjoyed a very welcome cuppa and delicious piece of cake at the Bawdsey café before waving the bat for the ferry and starting our homeward journey.

The sea fret was rolling in and I do believe there was a ghost ship emerging from the mist into the mouth of the river. We took no notice of the Waldringfield Maybush but pedalled back to Melton up Ferry Road through the Trimleys, Kirton and Newbourn and then pedalled up Sandy Lane (a killer!) into Woodbridge for a well deserved cup of tea and sandwich. We covered approximately 70km and can highly recommend the route. A fine day out and another reminder as to how very beautiful our river is – I expect it may have more water in it now – especially up in Aspall and Debenham.

*Jane Haviland is a vice chair of the River Deben Association and an active river user. Her specialist subject is environmental law and she is looking forward to being actively involved in promoting and protecting biodiversity within the River Deben catchment.*



The *Mary Amelia*, a bawley, at Bawdsey.

## Ufford and Rendlesham: A Saxon Trail

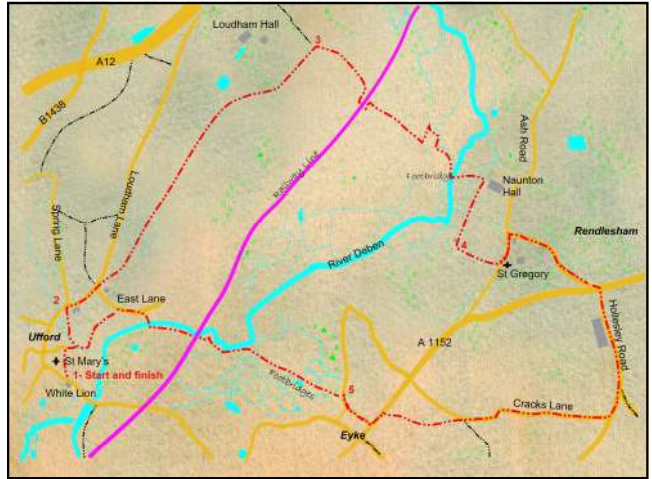
A Saxon Trail is the third walk in Nick Cottam's new publication *Walking the Deben: Ten Walks from Source to Mouth*. He describes it as:

*a peaceful, historic walk, starting at Ufford Church and criss-crossing the Deben at various points as it takes in water meadows, farmland, ancient byways, secluded tracks and what is believed to be the internationally important Anglo-Saxon settlement at Rendlesham.*

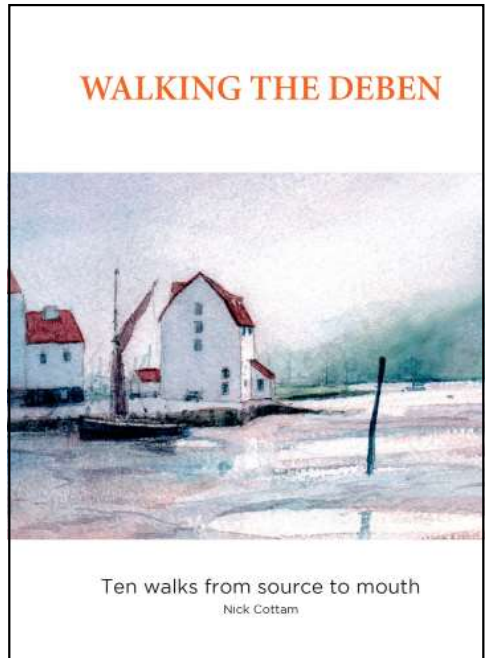
*Look across open fields where so many relics of the past have been found and you can see land largely unchanged for centuries. Follow the Deben back to Ufford as it winds its way through some of the most beautiful, unspoilt countryside in Suffolk.'*

- **Distance:** Approximately 9.2 km / 5.8 miles or 10.6 km / 6.6 miles
- **Time to complete:** 2.5 hours or 3 hours
- **Terrain:** Generally flat, easy walking although parts can be a bit overgrown in summer and muddy at other times.
- **Map:** OS Explorer Map 212 or Landranger 156 Route available for free download to smartphone and tablet on [www.ViewRanger.com](http://www.ViewRanger.com)
- **Parking:** In the White Lion car park of along the street just before the start of the walk.

Nick Cottam's commentary about this and nine other Deben walks from source to mouth is informative, companionable and well written.



Claudia Myatt



Nick Cottam

The book is illustrated by Claudia Myatt.

£9.50, [lifeonthedeben.com](http://lifeonthedeben.com)

Julia Jones

## Profile: Claire Fried

### When did you start painting?

I started painting very young with my siblings. We were led by our artist mother, Audrey Sant, who illustrated for *Vogue* magazine in the sixties. To keep her large family of five children in order, she asked us to draw a diary each day of the holiday, around the kitchen table. Even seemingly boring subjects like mother's shopping became a challenge; peas, potatoes, cabbage and carrots drawn onto the page with shading and colour.

It was only after a career in Paris and married with two boys that I suddenly took to oils. I was in Florence, attending a 'Gilding on Wood' course when I discovered a method for painting in oils which had been taught since the 16th century. 'This is what I have wanted to do all my life!' I declared. I went back for the summer and learnt the technique. It is called Sight-Size and is very useful when working live in front of a model, landscape or still life. Often now I work from memory and don't use this technique at all but from there grew my passion for oils.

### Going back to childhood, where did you live and spend your holidays?

Every little bit of holiday from school was spent in

Waldringfield and Hemley – feet in the water and wind in the hair; sailing, swimming and playing in the mud. I remember picnics at the Rocks and the Tips. These were often shared with two other families of five children which made us fifteen strong! A lot of fun and games.

We eventually moved out of London to live permanently in Suffolk. My parents bought Rivers Hall, Waldringfield, for a song and soon we found ourselves running all over the house choosing a bedroom each. My mother used her artistic skills and made it a beautiful home. We drew, sewed, painted, played music and made pots, bowls and plates in the outhouse. In our eyes our mother was definitely the best artist we knew: we loved to watch her at work.

Building a sailing boat with my father was fascinating. He was an architect and I loved his tray of sharpened pencils. They smelt so good, wood shavings and graphite. We potted

about with our dinghy, racing on the Deben and learning phrases to shout out that became early phrases for life 'Don't sail too close to the wind!' In the summer we might sail out of the mouth of the Deben in a 4 or 6 berth yacht. We'd feel such excitement as we lost sight of land, then, after many hours we'd arrive in Belgium for moules-frites.

Claire Fried



*The Deben from Ramsholt Church. Oil on Board.*

Claire's mother Audrey Sant contributed fashion drawings to *Vogue* and freelanced for advertising agency J. Walter Thompson. After teaching at evening classes at Camberwell School of Art, she moved to Suffolk with a part-time teaching position at Ipswich School of Art. Audrey's work has been the Royal Society of Portrait Painters and the Pastel Society and at the Mall Galleries in London. Aged 94 Audrey is still an active painter.

### What are you painting now?

I have just finished a challenging commission of a lovely family of six with their house and pets. Now I am looking forward to free gliding through some landscape painting catching the colours of late summer in the afternoon light.

I love walking to watch the sun rise over the Deben and going to Shingle Street to get blown about on stormy days. I paint in my studio, which is a cowshed near Martlesham Creek. I enjoy working in that stillness and walking out along the seawall. Earlier this year I got involved in painting portraits for the NHS heroes and was in contact with the COVID-19 team at the Homerton. This was quite a challenge but felt like really useful work.

### What does the Deben mean to you?

It's very special. I think I treasure it more so having left it for so long. I love the curves. I love swimming in it; the green either side, the birds and the human activity. I'm not going away for the next few months and I'm glad about that. I look forward to spending more time on and around the banks of the river with my brushes and oil paint.

Claire Fried



Claire in front of the Tide Mill.

Claire's work can be seen in Artspace Woodbridge week starting 26th November 2020. Other exhibitions include:

- **1st October:** Paintings by Sarah Baddon Price
- **8th October:** In the Company of Trees – Jen Hall Group
- **15th October:** From Life – Delia Tournay-Godfrey and Claire Fried
- **22nd October:** Waiting for the Tide by Matthew Kaltenborn
- **29th October:** Ipswich Art Society
- **12th November:** The Suffolk Group
- **29th November:** Pigments Group; Artists working with Alizerin Crimson
- **3rd December:** Paintings by Nicole Slattery
- **10th December:** Woodbridge Christmas Show 2020
- **3rd January:** Paintings by John Roberts

For details of these exhibitions see the Artspace website ([artw.co.uk](http://artw.co.uk)) and/or Instagram ([@artspace\\_woodbridge](https://www.instagram.com/artspace_woodbridge)).

*The cover of this issue of The Deben is entitled Searching on Waldringfield Beach and is the work of Claire Fried. Claire grew up in Waldringfield and now runs the gallery Artspace in Woodbridge. She has lived in France, designed for the couture, travelled all over Europe for her work, married a Frenchman and, after 30 years, returned to live in Suffolk. This time last year Claire was invited to China on a Painting Residency at the Nanxi Art Academy.*

*To see more of Claire's work, you can go to her website ([www.clairefried.net](http://www.clairefried.net)) and/or follow her Instagram ([@friedclaire](https://www.instagram.com/friedclaire)).*

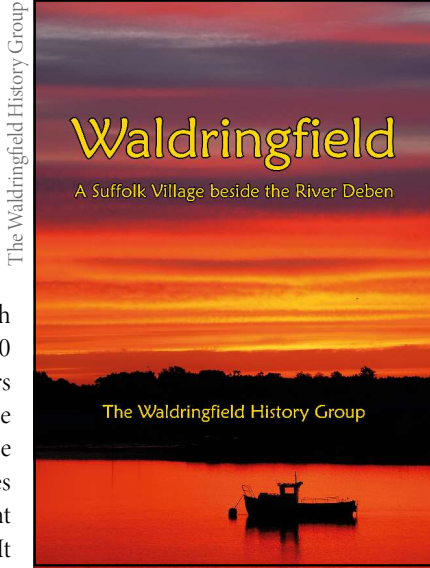
Peter Willis

# Review: *Waldringfield*

## *A Suffolk Village beside the River Deben*

RDA members know all about Waldringfield. Or we believe we do. This quite amazing book should quickly disabuse us of that notion. Put together by the Waldringfield History Society – fifteen members, though with the help of around 150 additional contributors – it takes us back into the 14th century, though the density of detail increases the closer to recent centuries it comes. It concentrates, intentionally, on the village's relationship with its river but that provides more than enough material.

The format is a series of separate articles (unsigned, which I found disappointing though understandable). From them we learn about the businesses, the buildings (including the tunnel from the Old Maltings to the Maybush), the boats, the ecology and of course the people. The consequential families are here of course – notably the omnipresent Wallers (you'd be forgiven for thinking the village's name derived in part from them) plus



the Nunns, the Stollerys, the Joneses, the Palmers – and many other more incidental characters.

One of the most inspired features of the book is the four 'Walks' through the village, from the northern to the southern boundaries, taken at various points through history – 1348, 1881, 1944 and 1972. Their authors describe what they'd have seen and who they'd meet, creating a riveting series of slices through history.

For the final chapter, the group planned a record of village life in 2020, little realising how atypical this year was going to be. One thing however is all too probable. Change, in the form of massive housing development in its hinterland is coming to Waldringfield.



This is a big book – over 300 beautifully laid-out A4 pages – about a little village. For anyone who loves Waldringfield, or history, or both, it will make an essential possession.

**£29.50, Golden Duck**  
[golden-duck.co.uk](http://golden-duck.co.uk)

IC, a boat Roger Stollery designed in celebration

Julia Jones

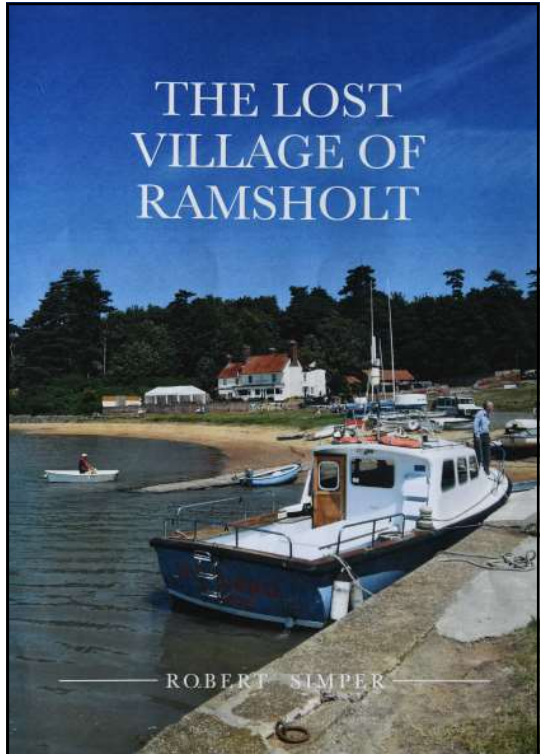
## Review: *The Lost Village of Ramsholt*

Robert Simper spent the spring 2020 lockdown well. *The Lost Village of Ramsholt* tells the story of the village to which he and his wife Pearl moved in 1959. Local people said ‘One winter and they will be gone’ but sixty one years later they are still there and, with their wider family, are making a significant impact on their surroundings. River users feel the benefit every time we land at Ramsholt Hard, which was kept open as a public right of way by Robert and ‘Young’ George Collins via a fierce legal battle 2002-2005. Movingly this was in response to his father Norman Simper’s dying wish.

Many individuals and families have left their mark on Ramsholt: some of them for the better, such as John Pretyman who extended the farmhouses, built new cottages and increased trade to the Dock. He’s commemorated in the river name ‘Pretyman’s Point.’ The influence of the Quilter family was less uniformly benign as they were more interested in their show village of Bawdsey. When family members became gripped by enthusiasm for shooting, pheasant covers were more important than cottages and the estate was transformed from open countryside to a wooded landscape. Then came the Adeane family, also passionate about shooting. They built new estate houses in Shottisham, pulled down twelve Ramsholt cottages and a farmhouse, then called in the Territorial Army to blow up the four Valley Cottages. The village was doomed. More recently a ‘new brand’ of resident has arrived as solitude-seeking artists and holiday makers enjoy the few dwellings that have survived.

Robert Simper is obviously a good listener, full of curiosity and ready to follow up an apparently random comment. ‘I don’t know what the fuss is about those old carved beams’ leads him to witness the destruction of what had once been a grand mediaeval hall. He’s also open to innovation: his father, Norman, introduced the first irrigation system in Suffolk and transformed the light land into a leading vegetable-growing area. Though it tells the story of a deserted village, this narrative is crowded with characters: smugglers, poachers, rabbit-catchers and bargemen. It’s a genial as well as an expert addition to the local history bookshelf.

**Forthcoming from Creekside Publishing**



Robert Simper

Jan Pulsford

## Halyards of Woodbridge

Much of my music is inspired by the river with an electronically created sound of 'The Boat Bells' as a backdrop. Reminding me of wind chimes and marimbas I eagerly awaited listening to the 'Halyards of Woodbridge' (which I now know they are called).

In my fanciful way I had imagined their rhythms might have blown up the river from India and Africa and got buried with Raedwald's treasures in the mysterious mounds of Sutton Hoo overlooking the shapeshifting Deben.

Unearthed over time. Unleashed by the wind.

'Halyards of Woodbridge' was composed and produced by Iain Chambers for BBC Radio 3 and inspired by the 'striking sound of the halyards of the many boats moored in Woodbridge. Audible from the platforms of the train station, when heard up-close they create a bewitching collage of pitches and rhythms ... constantly in flux, as different boat masts interact with each other, played by the wind.'

This composition amplified many familiar sounds to make the river path between Woodbridge and Melton sound quite a busy and bustling place. Starting off with the sound of the wind tunnel by the marina and walking up the path towards Melton, it was more of a layered and treated field recording than a standard composed piece of music.

They captured the sound of the wind mixed in with oyster catchers, curlews and birds of the estuary and tuned down the recording



of halyards to hear 'patterns resembling a less clangorous relative of British church bell change-ringing, the pitches closer to Tibetan singing bowls.'

I couldn't help but notice the ominous sound of the new train horn which cut through the walk like a strangled cat. (Greater Anglia what were you thinking?) The beautiful old horn, for so many years part of the audio landscape, now a cherished memory.

Next time you walk along the Deben, listen and soak up the sounds. You never know what you might hear.

*Jan Pulsford is a long time electronic Composer, Virtual Performance Artist, Songwriter / Producer. Listen to her ambient music world most evenings on RadioMothership.com and JanPulsford.com.*

*If you'd like to hear the 'Halyards of Woodbridge' Slow Radio episode, go to the BBC Sounds site: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p08bzy4f>.*



Sue Ryder Richardson

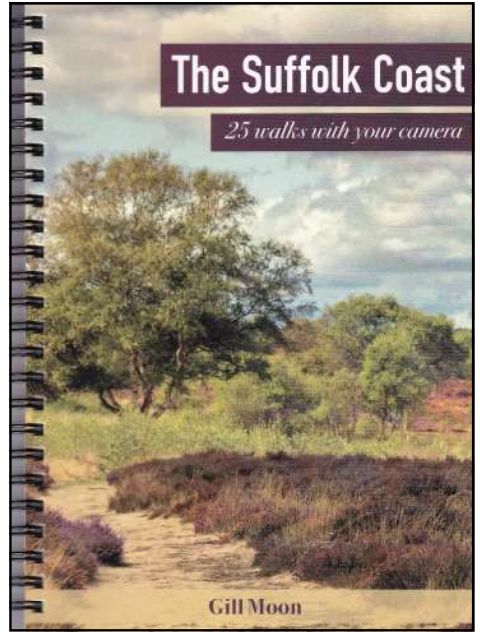
## Review: *The Suffolk Coast* *25 Walks with Your Camera*

Gill Moon entices us to walk along the East Suffolk coastline on paths familiar to many. These walks are not just for the feet, they are walks for the eye and the imagination. Gill encourages you to engage with the landscape and everything contained within it, rather than to 'stand and stare' as the famous poem might suggest.

These twenty-five walks will take you along our estuary filled coastline from the River Stour and Orwell, by way of the Deben, Ore and Alde, to reach the River Blyth at Southwold. This small part of the British Isles offers us forts, castles and Martello towers, you pass by huge container ports and tiny harbours, marvel at tide mills and windmills, and can visit a multitude of ancient flint churches, to merely touch upon some of the iconic buildings encountered.

But it is the landscape that is the subject of this book, a landscape Gill teaches us to see with new eyes through the lens of a camera. We learn how to compose a picture, where to place the horizon, where to focus our attention, she shows us the importance of colours, of harmonies and contrasts. Where to concentrate on patterns and textures, where to zoom into an image and where to offer the bigger picture.

Every walk in this book is an exploration for the eye as Gill sets us ten visual challenges. So, as we walk over crisp heathlands, slip along reed lined estuaries, crunch our way over strands of shingle, or wander through the chiaroscuro of forests and woods, we seek for new ways of seeing. 'Create an image that tells the story of the forest from beneath the trees', she instructs us in Staverton Park, or 'look for something that



Gill Moon

conveys a feeling of age, 'something twisted'. At Shingle Street we seek for shapes and patterns, and try to convey motion.

This is a book for every family. I can see grandparents and parents competing with children for the most compelling photos. There will be a joy in finding a new way of seeing a branch, a reed bed, or an insect. It puts me in mind of the 'letterboxing' we did on Dartmoor with our children. It taught them a love of walking that they have never lost. I think this book will do the same for those of us lucky enough to live in or visit East Suffolk.

£8. [gillmoon.com](http://gillmoon.com)

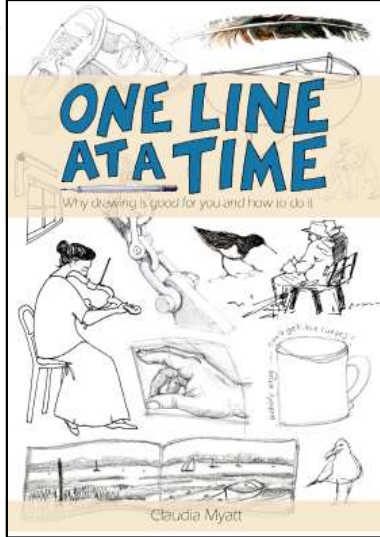
Nick Cottam

## Review: *One Line at a Time*

You don't have to be a professional artist to draw; drawing is for everyone. It's a skill that can be learned and it you're feeling a little tense or low, a bit jumpy about life, it can be the best possible therapy.

Claudia Myatt

These are some of the overriding themes which emerge in *One Line at a Time*, a delightful, quirky and engaging new book by the artist and illustrator Claudia Myatt. Drawing is up there with music and art as things which humans all over the world love to do notes Claudia, who lives on



a boat on the Deben and reflects the river and boating through different aspects of her art.

Through its conversational narrative and step-by-step imagery, including chapters on such topics as shape, perspective and shading, the book will encourage anyone who wants to draw, from out-and-out beginner to the more experienced amateur artist.

£12.99, Golden Duck  
[www.golden-duck.co.uk](http://www.golden-duck.co.uk)

Robert Simper

## Open Boats on the Deben

In 2017 I was given an old 13.4ft (4.4m) barge boat which was lying derelict in a garden at Shotley. It seemed a reliable clinker wooden workboat worth saving. It took nearly a year to find somewhere to get this sixty-eight year old boat restored, but eventually the Pioneer Trust in Brightlingsea took it on. With VAT this cost £6,008, a thing you only do for the love of old boats. Since the boat came from the barge *Atlas* it seemed appropriate to give her that name.

Brightlingsea has quite a lot of people interested in traditional boats and unbeknown to me the restoration was being closely watched. When the restoration was finished I was told that if

fibreglass replicas were made six people would order one.

The *Atlas* came home painted up, but to make a mould meant stripping off all the paint, a major job. However between my son Jonathan, Paul Winter and Melton shipwright Sam Dolman it was agreed to a venture to cover the cost. The paint was burnt off and the hull had to be sanded down absolutely smooth before the mould could be made.

Making the first hull took place in Ramsholt with Sam in charge and Peter and Harry helping and it took thirteen and a half hours of continual



The fibreglass *Longshore* in the Rocks Reach.

manual work. It had been agreed that Sam should have the first hull because he had done most of the work. On the first hull Sam pulled the bows in slightly to make her finer to sail fast and also fitted a centreboard. This boat he calls *Longshore* and she is a good all rounder, handy sailing and Deben cruiser. This boat was greatly admired in Brightlingsea, but they all said it was far too expensive.

The mould was then taken to Framlingham where another hull was made and Paul Winter had this one to use as a boat for his smack *Maria*. However the charge made by the company was higher than we expected to sell the finished hull for. The project came to a halt..

Unbeknown to us across the river Mark and Emma Barton had hatched a plan at Waldringfield Boatyard for a similar type of boat. They had found a 10ft dinghy which was probably the last survivor of the wooden tenders that Nunn's Boatyard had built for their customers. The Bartons produced the handsome 10ft *Cockle* which was sold to Jim and Maggie Wyllie and is now kept at Ramsholt Dock.

Basically the Bartons hit the same problem as us in the Ramsholt group. Making a fibreglass hull is not much more economic than a wooden hull if only one hull is produced. To make fibreglass a

viable venture it has got to be mass production. Of course the real advantage with fibreglass is that the hull needs very little maintenance..

In about 1960 John Chapman, who kept the yacht *Clyde* at Eversons, asked the yard to build him a 9ft3in clinker dinghy which could be sailed with a gunter rig. Many years later, when he retired, the clinker dinghy was sold but buyers said it was rotten and returned it. To keep everyone happy Yard Manager Geoff Stinton bought the dinghy back and produced a mould for a fibreglass hull from it.

In about 2008 three hulls were made from this mould These moulds are still at Woodbridge Boatyard. However there was little demand for fibreglass dinghies which cost about £3,000 when it was possible at Woodbridge to pick up a second hand dinghy for a few hundred pounds. So the fibreglass character open boats on the Deben have failed to attract buyers. The plastic 'bathtub' hulls with an outboard on the back or, more recently, the high speed inflatables have won the day.



The Wyllie's Waldringfield tender *Cockle*.

Sarah Zins

## News from the Hards

September 2020

The Felixstowe Ferry Harbour Master, John White, confirms that the mouth of the river is in a settled state and the entrance buoys have not needed to be moved since the spring. If you are going out to sea, look at his website ([debenestuarypilot.co.uk](http://debenestuarypilot.co.uk)) for the latest information.

The ferry service which **Felixstowe Ferry Boatyard** operates has continued to run every day during the summer despite the pandemic, but can only carry half the number of passengers due to social distancing. During October, they will run on weekends only from 10 am to 5 pm and will then cease operating during the winter.

From October, they will be busy with laying up and have a few free spaces for new boats.

**Waldringfield Boatyard** has had a very different summer to the one which was planned. Their trip boat *Jahan* has not run this season due to COVID-19 so they have taken the opportunity to spruce it up ready for next season.



Stephen Read

Calm at the bar.

They have welcomed a number of new customers to their moorings which are now full. Many people have chosen to buy a boat and go sailing rather than go abroad this year and the workshop has been flat out throughout the summer. They report that the beach at Waldringfield is busier than ever this year, and that it has been the 'year of the paddleboard'. As the Deben is a great place for safe paddling, they plan to be selling equipment from the boatyard shortly.

**Martlesham Creek Boatyard** is now almost at capacity, with 2 yachts and a motorboat joining this year and couple of boats using the boatyard for their 'staycation'. The winter holds the normal list of basic maintenance tasks, and there will be an extra 4 boats to be laid up. One of their live-aboard boats is currently going through the Caledonian Canal in Scotland and has plans to head to the Mediterranean next Spring.



Jane Hall

Waldringfield: Unusual numbers of yachts were still in the yard in May.



The former Thames Lighter *Lasher* being towed to Woodbridge Boatyard.

**Woodbridge Boatyard** would like to thank RDA members who voted for Deben Cherub *Ariel* in the *Classic Boat* 'Restoration of the Year (under 40ft)' Award and are proud to report that they won the award. They are continuing refurbishment of their 1912 Phoenix Works Shed, a landmark of the Woodbridge riverfront, with the installation of new glass windows to replace the plastic that has been covering the windows for many years.

They have saved a Whisstocks Deben Four Tonner from being cut up, and transported it back to Woodbridge where they are seeking a new owner to help to preserve a piece of local sailing. Do get in contact with them if this might be you!

With the help of Tam and Ben Grundy and Melton Boatyard, their new floating workshop, a former Thames Lighter, has been manoeuvred into position beside their pontoon where it will be tidied up to provide more covered storage and working space, primarily for wooden boats, to keep up with their growing workload and workforce.

The **Tide Mill Yacht Harbour** reports that it has been busy since lock-down ended, with people using their boats more than in previous years. However, it lost business from visiting yachts between March and June when sailing was not permitted.



Former WW2 landing craft *Guinevere* at Robertson's.

**Robertson's Boatyard** are carrying out the annual maintenance of *Guinevere*, the ferry from Orford to the Ness and Haverge Island.

They have completed the extensive work to make a much larger area of hardstanding equipped with water and electricity stands and will have spaces available for new customers. They are in the process of renovating their travel hoist so that it can take boats of 33 to 40 feet and up to 14 tonnes. They have also widened the barge mooring area to facilitate access.

Because of the great increase in paddling on the river during COVID-19, whether in canoes, kayaks or stand-up paddleboards, they have launched a new 'paddlers membership' which entitles members to storage and slipway usage.

**Melton Boatyard** launched many of its boats when lockdown permitted and is now gearing up for over-wintering.

**Larkman's Boatyard** was able to launch about 80% of the boats stored at their yard once lockdown was eased and as late as August some boats were still going in. They are now preparing for boats to come out for winter storage.

*Sarah Zins has been coming to Suffolk since she was a baby, but only finally saw the light and moved here permanently some 18 years ago. She enjoys the Deben at every stage of the time.*

# The River Deben Association

The postponed Annual General Meeting for the River Deben Association will be held by Zoom on 18th November at 6.30 p.m. For instructions on how to join, please look on the website under News, where you can also find the revised agenda for the meeting. It will be followed by a short interview with our president, Robert Simper, about his new book on Ramsholt.



## Our Committee

Robert Simper	Honorary President
Joeske van Walsum	Chair
Sarah Zins	Vice Chair
Jane Haviland	Vice Chair
	Conservation – Nature and Talks
	DEPlan
Gary Doggett	Treasurer
Jane Alexander	Secretary
Moray Macphail	Membership Secretary
	Maritime Woodbridge
Pauline Bloomfield	Social Secretary
	Young Ambassadors
Peter Clay	Woodbridge Riverside Trust
	Ferry
Liz Hattan	Conservation – Water Quality
Michael Holland	Planning
Oliver Houchell	Flood Risk
	DEPlan
Matt Lis	River Businesses
	Ferry
	Social Media
Richard Verrill	Wildlife
	Talks
Julia Jones	Magazine
Alan Comber	Website

## Our Contacts

**Membership:**  
riverdebenmembers@gmail.com

**Magazine:**  
magazine@riverdeben.org

**Volunteering:**  
volunteer@riverdeben.org

**All other matters:**  
chair@riverdeben.org

## Summer Photo Competition Results

Congratulations to our winners!

### Ages 10-14

- **Winner:** Harry Crane  
Photo 2 (Downriver)
- **Runner Up:** Laura Osborne Kember  
The Wreck

### Ages 15-18

- **Winner:** Libby Hannatt  
Single Swan
- **Runner Up:** Bea Hutchison  
Rowers

Julia Jones

## Extraordinary Times

Normally this last page would be full of diary dates. Instead, when issue 60 appeared in March 2020 the weeks were marked by the events that couldn't happen. No one now wants to commit to more than a zoomed AGM. So, to end on a cheerful note we consider the extraordinary fortunes of Simon Scammell and Matt Read at local Woodbridge business Suffolk Sails.

For Simon, the owner of the business, lockdown looked like a disaster: with no boats on the water, there was no trade.

*'The lows and highs of this year have been a stress test that I hope no one has to go through.'*

The sail loft was empty, his home was at risk. He was 'seeing the cliff edge approach in May, like a tsunami engulfing every aspect of our lives.'

Meanwhile Matt Read, redundant, and with time on his hands turned his attention to the needs of the local NHS workers. They were desperate for PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). He already owned a 3D printer and thought he'd experiment making visors for Ipswich Hospital.

His friends were interested; the rotary club encouraging, the NHS was desperate. Matt gave

his time and expertise for free but began crowd-funding for materials. Six months later Matt's back to work but the visors still keep coming:

*'18,002 visors completed since the 28th of March. It started out as doing 150 for Ipswich hospital.... That's about 108,000m of filament, over 1,026,000 minutes of printing and over 600 hours of building them up.'*

Simon, meanwhile experienced:

*'the highs of receiving messages and calls of goodwill from some of our oldest and newest clients and the ordering sails and covers to ensure I didn't end up in a debtors mess. Needless to say a huge thanks to those and all our customers this year and in previous years, we wouldn't be here without you!'*

Now the loft is full again and the 3D printer back to more usual jobs. The Suffolk Sails Facebook page records:

*'Another busy week, North sea 33 Vectran mainsail, Jaguar genoa, custom tacktick cradle for Merlin rocket and at home time we spotted a client going for a Friday evening sail in the gorgeous evening sun.'*

Suffolk Sails



Matt Read 3D printing visors in early April.



Suffolk Sails, back in business.

Suffolk Sails



The River Deben means many things to many people. From its source to the sea it offers pleasure, challenge, inspiration, livelihood and a home. As well as a home, the river is a habitat. It's a complex eco-system which must adapt to changing environmental conditions and new patterns of use. It needs our care as well as our celebration.



River Deben Association

£3 (where sold)

Printed locally by  
BetaPrint Woodbridge