

The Deben



50 Spring 2015

The River Deben Association

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Cover: 'Parade of Sail' Claudia Myatt.



Editorial

25 Years of the RDA

In this edition we celebrate 25 years of the RDA. As you read this, no doubt you will be eagerly awaiting the outcome of the election, which will be partly of interest in the make up of the government and whether Alex Salmon having failed to gain control of Scotland will gain control of England. Perhaps like me, the main political parties have failed to inspire you with any sense of a vision for the future of Britain. I read recently 'manifestos are out of date the day they are written, policy is at the mercy of events. What is woefully lacking is a politics of values; by which the elector has the chance of voting for someone who can be expected to be in sympathy with his or her broad views.'

In contrast this complaint could not have been made of the founding members of the RDA who we remember in this edition. Characters such as Ian Battye, Anni Healey and Rosemary Schlee loved the river and were passionate in defence of its charm and beauty. This manifested itself in their values and ideals for the river and what should be protected and campaigned for. They were 'one offs', who were determined, focused and worked with energy to develop the RDA. While they 'stood up to be counted', they did it with charm and humour and this enabled them to share their vision for the river and inspire others to join the fledgling organisation.

Much has changed in those 25 years

with the growth of 'quangos' and government agencies. After a long process of discussion and consultation the Deben Estuary Plan has been approved. The river has changed with the increase of moorings but many of its qualities remain to be enjoyed by everybody. It is still special and inspires those who enjoy its landscapes, its peace and tranquility together with the history and the 'stories' that underpin its character. These are the qualities that inspired those who founded the RDA 25 years ago. So as the RDA goes forward, perhaps it is timely to remind ourselves of the values and enthusiasm the founding members brought to the RDA and its campaigning activity.

Sadly one of the great characters of the river, Mel Skeet died in February. Somehow, perhaps like Frank Knights, he epitomised so many of the qualities we love and celebrate this year.

In this edition with the help of Anne Moore and Richard Hare, two founding members, we remember how it all began and the characters who were influential at the start. Robin Whittle updates us on the flood defences at Waldringfield and we hear about two remarkable women with strong connections to the river; Jane Stone has become the first woman to be a Pilot for the Harwich Harbour Authority and Claudia Myatt who is an illustrator and cartoonist inspired by the river. Jane Bradburn writes about the history of the Waldringfield Dragonfly and the Deben Reflections theme continues with pieces by Chris Hart, Susan Pogue and Anne Heath as she enters her 95th year.



River Deben Association

Chairman's Report

We are emerging from another cold winter and can consider ourselves lucky that we have not been hit by floods and extreme storms so far. There have been some wonderful calm and sunny days for walking by the river and enjoying its tranquillity.

Committee: I am sorry to have to report that both Wendy Brown and Will Green have had to resign from the committee due to ill health in their families. I would especially like to thank Wendy for all her hard work as Secretary over many years. She has been a real stalwart. I am also sorry to report Simon Read's resignation due, in part, to his commitment as Associate Professor of Fine Art at Middlesex University and all the practical work he does on the saltmarshes. I am glad to say that his links with the RDA will remain strong through the DEP Saltmarsh Committee, in which the RDA have representation.

25th Anniversary: This year is the River Deben Association's 25th Anniversary and we will be celebrating with a 'Parade of Sail' on Sunday 5th July. (details below). I do hope many

yachts and dinghies will be able to take part.

Whisstocks Project: Further delays have dogged this development but I am assured that demolition will be starting in February and work on site is programmed to start in July. Don't hold your breath!

River Walls: Work on strengthening and improving the river walls has continued. The Waldringfield project is reported elsewhere in this edition of The Deben. One important piece of news is that Karen Thomas has now left the Environment Agency and has started work with the Water Management Agency for the Internal Drainage Board (IDB). I understand that she will still be active in the flood management of the River Deben.

RDA Membership: Some of you will have been irritated by the way the Committee has set about checking the membership numbers, for which I apologise. We found that the information held on our data base has not been as clear as we would hope. Rather than going into the complexities of it, I would prefer to inform you that Richard Smithson (our co-opted Membership Secretary) and Peter Thubron (our Treasurer) have put in a lot of time to resolve the problems. The result is an increase in membership subscriptions and a much clearer knowledge of the membership numbers. I would like to give my thanks to both of them for this work.

Deben Estuary Plan: The Plan was published in mid November 2014 and the period for public comment came

to an end in early January 2015. The RDA comments have been posted on our Web Site. The response to these by the Deben Estuary Partnership has been mainly positive. However, at the time of writing this report I have concerns about one important issue. This relates to Point 4a of the RDA's comments: **'River walls:** *A very important subject of the Plan (and Action Plans) is the protection of a) the river walls, b) the entrance to the river and c) the coast from Bawdsey Manor to Shingle Street. The Plan (and Action Plans) should give more emphasis to this. The RDA strongly support the preferred option of maintaining the existing river wall defences (8.032 and 8.033) To this end it is proposed that the first paragraph of 'Defence of rural flood cells' (8.038) is rewritten – 'It is accepted that Government finance for rural defences is likely to be a low percentage, even where it is labelled 'economic'. However, the landowners and communities, recognising the economic, environmental and social value of the estuary may decide that many of the walls should be maintained and improved. In particular the river walls for Flood Cells 1, 4 and 7 are important, in order to preserve the Estuary as it is, and should be given priority in terms of maintenance.'*

This is followed by the RDA proposal for a change to the Action Plans –

'Flood Risk Management: The RDA proposes, with the support of John White (Harbour Master at Felixstowe Ferry), that changes be made to this part of the Action Plans in as much that the river walls for Flood Cells

1, 4 and 7 should be maintained to the full height of 4m AOD for a 'one in seventy five year' flood event recommended by Andrew Hawes (not making an allowance for overtopping). Fortunately, the river wall for Flood Cell 7 was brought up to an acceptable standard after the 1953 flood.' I believe that it is important that these points should be included in the revised version of the Plan.

I look forward to seeing you at our AGM on Thursday 23 April in the Woodbridge Community Hall starting at 7.30pm at which we will hear anecdotes from past Chairmen.

Robin Whittle

'PARADE OF SAIL'

To mark the 25th anniversary of the River Deben Association there will be a Parade of Sail on **Sunday 5th July**. All boats are welcome and should aim to arrive at **Waldringfield at 15.00**; so start from up-river or down-river at a time appropriate to your speed and the weather conditions. (HW is at 15.45)

There will be a barbecue later at Waldringfield Sailing Club starting about 17.00 for which reservations will be required. Please send a cheque made out to "the RDA" for £10 per head to Peter Thubron 17 Turner Gardens Woodbridge IP12 4JP by 15th June to get your name on the list. There will be a limited number!

(Please note this is not a race so should not affect your insurance but check with your insurers if in any doubt. The RDA will not accept any responsibility for damage sustained during the Parade.)

HOW IT STARTED !

R.D.A. - 10 YEARS AGO

Anni Healey RDA Newsletter 2000

In the 80's anyone could apply for planning permission on anyone's land and many did. Developer's helicopters flew up and down the Deben eyeing their chances. There were plans for marinas, holiday complexes, large residential developments on the water-front and even at one point a Ferris wheel. For the first time by the river, a piece of land, traditionally enjoyed by bathers, picnickers and families was fenced off. The River which had served as a transport system, livelihood and a recreation area for centuries, was at risk of irrevocable change, without any regard for what local people wanted.

An initial exploratory meeting to establish any interest, was attended by 150 people from boatyards, wildlife societies, angling clubs and houseboat residents: river-users of all sorts. The result was a group that was given the task of getting together a constitution to present to a Public Meeting.

The steering committee was made up of people with diverse interests, many talents, strong opinions and above all-stamina. We enjoyed much discussion and endured hours of frustration over mind-numbing details, helped with the hospitality of the back room of The Kings Head. Many months, pints and drafts later a perfectly good constitution was thrashed out and has had only one minor alteration since.

The Inaugural Meeting was held on May 4th 1990 in a packed community hall. There was a centre spread in the East Anglian and a slot at Radio Suffolk. The new Committee went away to organise the innovative litter-clearance of the River Deben, the first of its kind and to bring out our Summer newsletter. There were campaigns to pursue: -

Who's who

UPDATE

Chairman	Ian Batty
Vice Chairman	Anni Healey
Secretary	Anne Moore
Treasurer	Terence Kermode
Press and Newsletter	Richard Hare Clare Wade
Membership	Stephen Ashworth
The Committee: made up of association members who co-ordinate specific areas of interest.	
Anglers	Tim Pryke (Solicitor)
Recreation at Felixstowe Ferry	Robert Wright (Member FFSC)
Farming-Rocks	Robert Simper (Writer)
Business	Adrian Overbury (Robertsons Btyrd.)
Melton Resident	Bran Scott
Houseboats- Environment	Lil Tudor Craig (ML.26050)
RSPB	Nick Marshall
Anglian Wildfowlers Association	Adrian Judge
Waldringfield- Conservation	Annie Hart
Planning	Rosemary Schlee
Woodbridge Water sports	Tim Midwinter (Deben River Centre)
Minutes	
Secretary*	Annette Burt
*Denotes co-opted member	

*Taken from the first RDA Newsletter
Summer 1990 (Ed. Richard Hare)*

25 Years of the RDA - Chairs

Ian Battye 1990-1991



Richard Hare writes:

Ian Battye was nominated by Anni Healey to be chairman of the steering committee that would lead to the formation of the RDA. His credentials were impeccable. He was a trustee of the Woodbridge Cruising Club and he was heavily instrumental in the development of the Riverside swimming pool. Equally important

were his personal qualities: extraordinary energy, reasonableness and boundless common sense.

Independently of Anni, Ian had spoken to me of his wish to form a river conservation society. Indeed, my first trip down the Deben in January 1989 was aboard his wooden motor yacht 'Sophie Sea'. How can I forget his coffee on that cold day – a concoction of instant coffee, condensed milk, sugar and whisky. It was like drinking hot vomit.

But that was Ian, his mind was a constant generator of ideas, his energy almost unlimited. "I need the energy" he told on one occasion as he loaded his coffee cup up with sugar. Nothing, and nobody, seemed to disinterest him. Indeed, his curiosity was one of his engaging characteristics.

A retired army colonel, and an MBE, Ian subsequently became a school teacher locally in both the state and private sectors, and that was typical of him and his openness. He was a tireless organiser and, importantly, a motivator. He knew how to get people on board, and he did this with consummate ease during the formation of the RDA. He was always a pleasure to be with and I was fortunate enough to have him as a neighbour and later a good friend. Hardly a single committee meeting – RDA or Woodbridge Society – would pass without the two of us adjourning to a pub afterwards, usually with Penny Austen-Brown if it was after a WS meeting.

With the RDA up and running Ian stepped down as chairman to make way for Annie Healey. All of us on that steering committee remained on board. Anything else was unthinkable.

Ian died in July 2001, his ashes now under a red oak in Ramsholt churchyard, not far from his friends Frank and Christine Knights. As his daughter Lindsey has just

said to me: “He continues to battle with the elements to survive, only this time as a tree.”

Who knows, one day he might be turned into a nice piece of furniture. I’m pretty sure the idea would have appealed to him.

Anni Healey 1991 - 93



Richard Hare writes:

I first met Anni at my back door. She had been brought around to our house by my cousin Edna Cotgrove who, like me, was a member of the Woodbridge Society.

“Anni’s interested in forming a group to protect the river” Edna told me excitedly, mindful as she was of my enjoyment of the Deben. Anni then proceeded to outline her embryonic plans for a river protection

organisation. Being the late ‘80s we were all concerned for our river.

Anni was tall, striking, energetic, and passionate. She was the essential ingredient of any aspiring new organisation, an igniter too. A ‘talking shop’ was not what she had in mind, she was acutely aware that time was finite.

A few years after the RDA’s successful launch, and her appointment as chairperson, it seemed to lose momentum. I recall her asking me what I thought she should do about it. “Has it run its course?” she asked. Flattered that I should be asked I shrugged and muttered something about keeping it going, on tick-over if that’s what was needed. You never know when it might be needed in future, I suggested.

She would have reached that conclusion, with or without me. As it transpired shortly afterwards we had to lock horns with the threat of an international airport on Bentwaters. Anni and the RDA, built a formidable alliance of local and national environmental, conservation, and amenity societies and organisations that ranged from Friends of the Earth to The Woodbridge Society. With two previous proposals for the site rejected many felt the big guns would be brought out to decimate ‘difficult’ local opposition. Arguably, I suppose, it was the RDA’s finest hour. The airport developer backed down.

Or should that accolade be awarded to her RDA’s defeat through Public Enquiry of the lunatic neo-Georgian Empire housing development on Whisstocks about 15 years ago?

Anni died in her middle age in 2004 following a characteristically defiant battle with cancer. She was spared growing old. She did make a brief recovery though and I remember having a great weekend in the Swan in Southwold with a group of about 12 of us. One of my enduring memories of her is from that weekend. She was positive, happy, and she looked well too. Alas, it was only a reprieve.

Anni was a Liberal Democrat District Councillor, who became Chair of SCDC, and had been a Woodbridge Town Mayor.

Anthony Mason 1993-96 and 2000-2002

(Speaking at the AGM)

Denzil Cowdry 1996-99 and 2002-04

Ian Battye was a wartime soldier, a good teacher of geography (my two sons got A`s), a rugged cross-channel sailor, with great children and a charming wife who was the daughter of a Woodbridge School headmaster.

I was an early member, having been asked to join by Rosemary Schlee as I hurried to get my dinghy into the water for the Squib start. I fiddled for a couple of pounds and then thought no more about RDA for several years. (As well as Rosemary, I recall Ian Battye, Anni Healey, Mike Atkins, Harry Norris and Anthony Mason as early protagonists)

Glancing at the Newsletters, I gathered that the aim was to retain the River in its rather unknown and private form. We were, in any case, not easily approached from land or sea, so we were not too crowded. Above all, we recreated in a quiet place, largely populated by well behaved sailors. I never expected to spend six years as Chairman, nor did Anthony Mason, with whom I alternated.

The bid to use the long Cold War runway at Bentwaters for international air traffic was the principal event in my time. The take off flight path was down the Deben! A greater surprise was a bid from a foreshore resident to include the `cut` at Woodbridge in his curtilage. That was a non-starter for the Crown Commissioners. Then there was the unfortunate remark about Planners by an earlier Newsletter Editor, for which I had to report to the Council Chairman early on a Monday morning to apologise. All in a day`s march!

The Association has grown steadily in numbers and financially. Opinions are well backed by river users and, when carefully expressed, have great credibility. The opinions have to cover topics as diverse as wildfowling and bird-watching! Meanwhile, the River has remained a quiet haven. Rosemary would be pleased. Recent members should check the RDA tree at the downstream corner of the Woodbridge Yacht Pond, with its apt inscription.

Ed Stanford 2004 -2010

(Speaking at the AGM)

Leigh Belcham 2010- 13

“It’s best to think of the RDA as a car,” I said. Robin Whittle didn’t look entirely convinced by my analogy.

“When I took over three years ago,” I continued, “the vehicle had been driven hard and successfully for twenty years. If it was to continue working effectively, a major service was needed – fast! I suppose I saw my main role as a mechanic.”

“All it needs now is a competent driver. And you’re the man,” I told him.

Foremost among my memories of those three years, however, are not the administrative nuts and bolts. They aren’t the modern website, the new logo or the revamped promotion materials. They don’t include even our redesigned and renamed magazine, with each issue described as “the best yet”. Not even our ability now to keep members up-to-date by email.

What really stand out for me are the growing partnership, understanding and co-operation between Deben-related interests, with the RDA’s voice being heard as the river-users’ representative on the Deben Estuary Partnership. Others include the increased willingness of statutory authorities to involve voluntary, local bodies in such matters as flood protection and saltmarsh regeneration.

Highlights included chairing the annual Deben Forum. The RDA brought together representatives of rowing and sailing clubs, fairway committees, local councillors and other local bodies, and gave them each a few minutes to bring us all up-to-date on matters such as Adastral Park, Whisstocks, Waldingfield Community Boatyard and windfarm cabling – and, of course, the long-awaited Deben Estuary Plan.

Any disappointments? Yes, some people still treat the river as the marine equivalent of a BMX track. After 10 years looking for a solution, I am convinced there is only one: establish a River or Harbour Authority by act of parliament.

Robin Whittle 2013 - present

Anne Moore

The River Deben Association 25 years ago

Regrettably I have been unable to obtain copies of East Anglian Daily Times photographs, now lost, of the early days of the River Deben Association, with Anni Healey and Ian Battye, bobble-capped and leaning on the controversially erected fence at Kyson Point. The fence which has not had the feared effect of setting a precedent for further fencing of the riverside along our beloved estuary.

Much has changed however in those years since we began and I am not just thinking of our reflections in the bathroom mirror, but certainly, as to be expected, our Committee.

I well remember the afternoon that my husband walked through to me in our kitchen to say "R. Schlee on the phone for you".

"R. Schlee" was colonel-in-chief when it came to mustering "volunteers" and it was not the first time she had rung to tap into latent talents that might be lurking undisturbed in me.

"There is going to be a River Deben Association she piped down the phone and we are looking for a secretary", "you'll do it won't you?"

It was always easier to agree with Rosemary than to resist and so, as I blew the dust off my Father's old typewriter, unsure whether my skills had improved much since jamming

the keys as a child, afternoon tea was arranged in the Schlee's conservatory, to meet others on the Steering Committee.

Col. Ian Battye was to be Chairman and Anni Healey an enthusiastic Vice Chairman. She and her busy G.P. husband David, who sailed a Mirror dinghy aptly named 'Placebo', supported Ian's concern that what he'd seen happening on the south coast with Marinas popping up everywhere should not happen on the Deben.

There were some among the dinghy-racing community who mistakenly, thought it would clear the river of swinging moorings if marinas were constructed, but with Crown Estates responsible for the former and entrepreneurs for the latter, our Association would seek to inform and to conserve the tranquility of the estuary. Furthermore, the fees for Marinas would carry an extra naught that would financially exclude those mainly local sailors, currently on swinging moorings, but attract more boats into the river.

The sailing season that first summer saw Rosemary, every weekend 'setting up office' with her rickety card table and typewriter perched on the path, veritably tripping up Club members and passers by to compel them to join this newly formed River Deben Association.

Ian Battye was a keen bird-watcher and walker as well as an experienced sailor. Having only heard of him through my daughter, who'd come home from school one afternoon saying, "I know the name of the

highest lake in the world, Lake Titti Kaka, Col. Battye told us in class today ", it was a pleasure to meet him and feel his concern for the River. Clearly, he and Anni would inspire others to join us.

Anni had already shown her strength as a Councillor and would prove to leave her mark in many ways, not least in her vehement campaign against the first proposal for a Civil Airport at Bentwaters in the early nineties. I was to enjoy many mornings discussing issues with her over our kitchen table with her infectious keenness to 'make change' for the better wherever she could.

It was a sad day when we exchanged news in the Thororoughfare one morning and she told me of the signs of cancer that her doctor had confirmed to her just a while earlier. After a long illness Anni died in 2004. There is in Woodbridge a Suffolk Housing Association development named after her, recognising her years of hard work and concern, as a Councillor, for the under privileged and for the preservation of the unspoilt quality of the area.

Rosemary, I had known for some years at Waldringfield Sailing Club where she had made me feel very welcome as a new member back in 1982.

She was awarded an MBE for her work in setting up the Oxfam Bed and Breakfast scheme and showed her strength when the new Food Health legislation was introduced, telling those young inspectors where to go in the face of women who had brought up families. There is a particular memory I have of her, with a shower-cap upon her head, determined to practise her board-

sailing in a murky rather windless harbour in the Limfjorden. We had, had the board strapped on deck, she, having been determined to bring it with her and, now, determined to use it, in preference to joining us on a beautiful afternoon walk. Startled on our return to see her still out there and watched all round by many local spectators, we were then amazed to hear her say that she had been back on board for afternoon tea. She was utterly dry, shower-cap still in place.

But for Rosemary, we would certainly not have won the battle to sort out the access to the riverside path from Wilford Bridge, which was inadvertently physically diverted from the definitive route, when the river-walls were raised in the eighties.

David Bucknell

Mel Skeet



We will all miss Mel. If you were asked where you kept your boat you always

answered 'at Mel Skeets' not at Melton Boatyard. And that is how it was, when you came back to the yard in the winter it was like coming home. There would be Mel and Simon to welcome you.

You would see Mel around the yard going about his work, normally with his wooly hat on. Sometimes he would stop to arrange work for someone with a boat in the yard or they would stop him to ask for advice. Mel's experience of repairing boats was second to none and he would always offer friendly advice, gently proffered. If you had a decision to make, like whether to change the rigging, he would help you make your mind up. 'Well you could look at it this way or you could look at it that way ..' - guiding you towards a sensible course of action without telling you what to do. Invariably you followed his advice.

Mel would always greet you with his smile and his lilting Suffolk accent. Often he would throw in a little story from his experience. Mel was a wonderful story teller and his voice alone was engaging. Mel was a great raconteur. He had a remarkable memory for detail and in his stories he would reconstruct conversations and dialogue with the people involved. Listening to him was like reading a good novel. He was never boring, always entertaining. His stories were laced with humour wisdom and universal truths. He would give praise where praise was due but not afraid on occasion to provide a critique.

Mel had seen people do everything on the river, bumping into things,

going round in circles, sinking, swimming, losing their oars. He never seemed judgmental and was always sympathetic about the difficulties of wind and tide by the pontoon. Whether we featured in any of the stories we will never know.

People trusted Mel. Claudia Myatt said to Mel 'Do what you think needs doing till the money runs out.' She said 'If Mel says the boat is 'good enough' it is good enough for me'

Mel was part of so many projects and the yard reflected this. It has become a community of people, all with their own projects, hopes and aspirations. No matter how large or small your boat and your income you are treated the same. No project was too big for Mel and Simon, sometimes you thought the bigger the challenge, the better. Mel was 'quietly' proud of Simon's skills and all round ability.

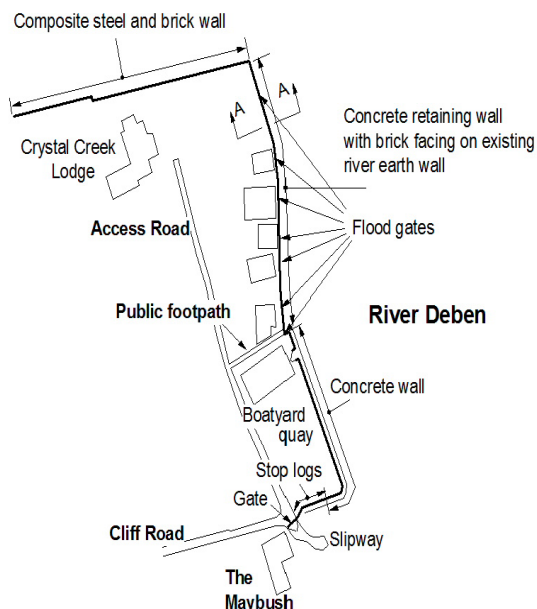
Mel and Jenny worked hard to develop the yard and things had not always been easy. Mel was his own man, he took his opportunities when they were there and used his initiative. His fire engines, his unique dredger and the foresight to purchase a travel hoist - still the only one on the Deben.

Jenny recounted the decades they had worked hard to build the yard. The decade building up the pontoons, the decade of the travel hoist and the basin. She ended her account with 'For years we looked after the yard. Now we hope the yard will look after us.' Sadly Mel did not have long to enjoy what he had built up over the years.

Extensive work on river wall defence at Waldringfield

In the Autumn 2014 edition of The Deben I described repair work that had been carried out on the river walls as a consequence of the tidal surge of December 2013. I noted that the worst affected place that had suffered from the water overtopping the river walls was Waldringfield. Several properties were flooded to a depth of three or four feet. This article describes Phase 1 of the defence project which was completed in December 2014.

The layout plan shows the extent of the walls constructed in Phase 1. The height of the walls has been designed to a level 3.8m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). They will significantly reduce the risk of flooding (to a 'one in a hundred year event').

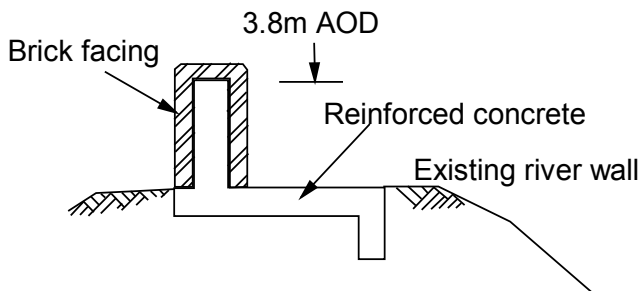


Layout Plan of Phase 1.

At the south end of the site, adjacent to the boatyard, a wide flood gate has been provided to allow access to the Waldringfield Sailing Club slipway close to the Maybush Inn. The gate is missing from the photographs shown in this article as it is being galvanised. It will only be closed at times of flood warning from the Environment Agency.

Around the outside perimeter to the boatyard quay a combination of concrete walls and stop logs have been constructed. These are stepped back from the concrete face of the quay by 1.5m to allow sufficient access for launching and retrieving boats.

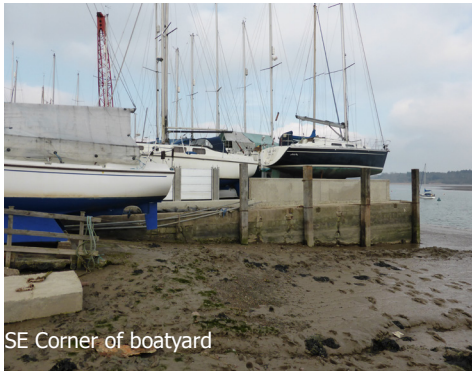
To the north of the boatyard a concrete retaining wall was built on top of the existing earth river wall. The concrete wall has been clad with facing brickwork. Section A-A of Figure 1 shows the construction of this. A floodgate has been provided adjacent to each dwelling.



Section A-A

To the west of the north end of the retaining wall, a composite steel and brick wall has been constructed to protect Crystal Creek Lodge and the other dwellings from flooding from the north. This wall has been extended to high ground. The accompanying photographs show the different parts of the construction.





SE Corner of boatyard



NE corner of boatyard looking south



Retaining wall looking upstream



Composite wall to north of Crystal Creek Lodge



Retaining wall protecting Crystal Creek Lodge

The Project was developed by the Waldringfield Flood Defence Group supported by Waldringfield residents and a number of organisations and prominent local and national figures including The Environment Agency, Suffolk Coastal District Council, the Deben Estuary Partnership, Lord Deben (Chairman of the UK's Independent Committee on Climate Change) Dr Therese Coffey (MP for Suffolk Coastal) and Waldringfield Parish Council.

The cost of Phase 1 has been in the order of £650K.

The Pilot's Story

At 44 I am just embarking on a new career in what I believe is one of the coolest jobs there is. On the best of good days someone is going to pay me to cruise up and down the Stour and the Orwell, normally in the company of an interesting person I have never met before with the sun shining, beautiful scenery all around and at one end of the trip or the other, doing something I have enjoyed right from the very first time I tried it – ship handling. OK so there are days when the wind is blowing, it's freezing cold, raining or foggy but if it was all good you wouldn't appreciate the sunny days so much.

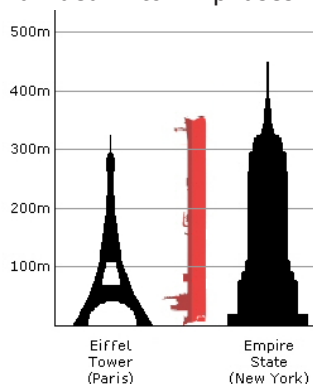
How did I end up here is the question. It all starts with a problem that a lot of people will have experienced at school (and some not until much later in life) what to be when you grow up. I didn't have a clue but I had already decided that unless I really couldn't come up with anything else I wasn't going to sixth form. So after a long time in the careers library I finally decided on a career at sea, mostly for the pay, travel and long holidays. As it turns out I also enjoyed the work and spent the best part of 12 years travelling the world at the expense of various shipping companies.

The passage from school kid to Officer of the Watch takes about 3-4 years and is a sandwich course. 6 weeks basic sea survival and induction with a bunch of similarly skinny/chubby/spotty 16 and 17 year olds then straight off to join your first ship.

I was flying off to join my first ship the SS Lepeta. 350 metres long, 55 metres wide, and a maximum draft of 23 metres in New Orleans with a change at Miami. Considering a school trip to Boulogne was as far as I had been before this was a bit of a change. Trips away were 4 – 5 months with 4 – 6 weeks at home then back to



sea again. Leave was longer for the full crew but cadets' training is very compressed and so it was important to get the 18 months sea time required before examination. Most cadets did 4 – 5 trips divided into 2 phases with the first 2 trips being mostly deck work and the final 2 more navigation. A total of 5 terms at a nautical college, again divided into 2 phases covered



the theory requirements. Finally, to qualify there were 2 written exams with a combined pass mark of 75% - so get 74% in one and you take them both again – and an oral exam of about 1.5 hours which is possibly the most nervous I have ever been in my life.

Not long after I found myself in Wilhelmshaven, with a shiny new Second Mates licence and not much clue about anything. It was the middle of winter it was -15C and I really wondered what the hell I was doing there. First time on the bridge on my own and straight out into the North Sea. 5 months in the North Sea certainly was a quick start – one of the busiest shipping areas in the world – If you don't believe me just type "marinetraffic" into Google and take a look at the map that comes up. As a Third Officer you are the most junior onboard. Watchkeeping on the 8 – 12, and looking after lifesaving and fire fighting appliances on deck. The Second Officer is the Navigator. He will work out the passage plans and voyages in conjunction with the master, looks after the charts and publications and in my company was the safety officer as well.

Eventually I stopped enjoying the travel so much and this is how I came to Ferries and to Harwich Harbour. I was lucky enough to sail with some forward thinking Captains who believed everyone should be able to drive the ship, so from day 3 I was "on the sticks" being talked through my first ship manoeuvre. The ships were designed for lots of harbour work. Powerful twin screw propulsion at the back and 2 big bowthrusters. It was a great experience and due to a lot of luck and enthusiasm I quickly made it to Chief Officer and then Captain during the

regular Masters absences. I wouldn't say it was the pinnacle of my ambition but it certainly was a big tick in my "things to do in this life" list. I probably would have stayed with Stena and eventually retired as full Captain of some ferry or other but circumstances changed; Stena consolidated 4 ships into 2 and I took a step back. It was not long after this, after nearly 15 years of going back and forth between Harwich and Holland, I was offered a position as a Harwich pilot. So after 26 years, 4 months and 17 days in the merchant navy, I walked off my last ship as a seagoing officer and 5 days later walked into Harwich Haven Authority as a Pilot (trainee). Having sailed in every rank all the way up to Captain, (occasionally in the same week during the last few years of changes in Stena) I was happy to be moving on.

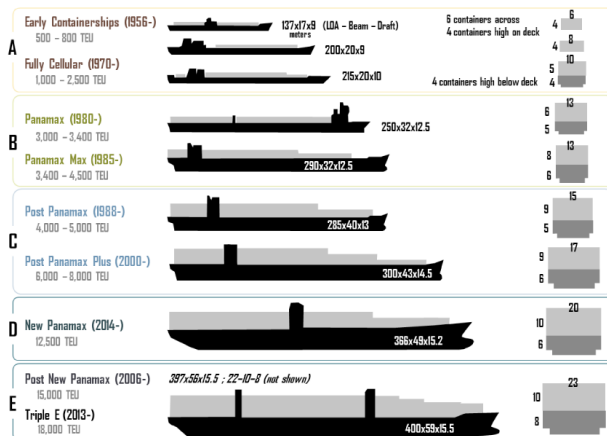
After an induction week the next 4 months went by in a blur of ships and more ships at all hours of the day and night. For a trainee pilot this practical time is spent building experience and confidence under the supervision of an authorised pilot. There are also all the regulations and procedures of the Authority to learn plus the courses, distances, depths, tidal flows and berth details for the area.

So once again I have been let loose on my own for the learning process to begin in earnest. The progress to Senior Pilot is about 5 – 6 years starting on smaller ships and increasing size. A pilot said to me during my training that your comfort level goes up by about 50 metres a year. We'll see. As a Harwich pilot our main trade is with the container ships and these just keep getting bigger. The 130 metre ships of early containerisation are

now the small feeder ships of today, taking containers from the super ports of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Felixstowe to smaller container ports around the coast of Europe. Felixstowe is still expanding for the future and I believe will continue to play a key role in European shipping logistics. So because of this it is rare we have a visit from a ship between 150 and 280 metres which means that for pilots

in the world at 19,100 TEU, to see that pilotage is very high profile. Together they have invested in complex modelling and simulation for the harbour and its approaches in order to train pilots like me, moving up through the ship sizes and also to conduct berthing trials and feasibility studies on new vessels.

Beginnings and endings are the hardest part and as I could talk for hours on ships and pilotage it is particularly hard to find a neat way to finish off here; so I will end with a quote.

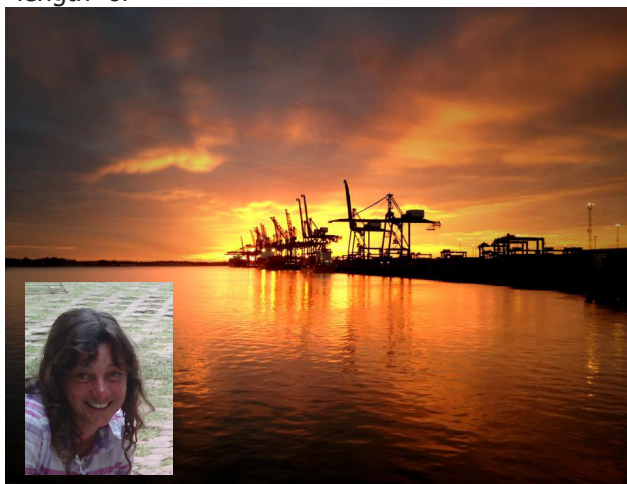


"We are never prepared for what we expect"

I think that probably sums up the challenges, surprises and pitfalls of this profession but is also what makes it so enjoyable.

progressing up in length have the prospect of an increase in length of considerably more than 50 metres. A happy problem for future job security but a problem none the less.

Harwich Haven Authority and The Port of Felixstowe recognise the huge commercial sensitivity of pilotage in the port. You only have to look at the public interest and media coverage of the recent arrival of the CSCL Globe, currently the biggest container ship



Chris Hart

BETWEEN TOWN AND SEA

Some people 'discover' the Deben, in my case I think the Deben 'discovered' me, it seems like a soul connection and not one I had a conscious choice in.

One of my earliest joined-up memories is of being in an open topped wooden box with a little boy called Tony. I am eating a tomato, (I can still sense the tomato pips). Every now and then the box leans over to reveal an enormous expanse of water. A tree-clad shoreline lies in the distance. Memories derived from family photos, or parental stories, don't usually have the sensory quality of 'pips' or of a 'box leaning over', so I can tell this is an authentic memory. As an adult recalling this with my parents they confirmed that a colleague of my father's had a son called Tony and a Deben 4 tonner (whose cockpit would resemble a wooden box to a toddler), which he kept at Waldringfield, and we went sailing with them when I was about two.



My parents met during WWII in Lowestoft. My mother, a WRNS, was driven to my father, a RNVR medical officer. Their courtship

included dinghy sailing on Oulton Broad, and later, with two boys and Arthur Ransom in mind, they decided to take up sailing as a family. Their first boat was a Twinkle 12, destined for Cambridge and later the Broads, but on collecting the boat from Wright's yard in Ipswich we drove straight to Waldringfield and launched for a maiden sail in front of the Maybush. Later the Twinkle 12 evolved into sailing cruisers and we migrated from the Broads down the coast to Slaughden. From there, Ramsholt and the Rocks were favourite destinations to be explored on family holidays to the Deben.

Later still we ventured to Holland and on one trip found ourselves in company with Claude Whisstock and his family on 'Landfall'. I was in awe of this magnificent ketch and had a crush on Claude's daughter. Back at school I had to write an essay on 'My Future Life' and imagined how I would marry the daughter of the boatyard owner and live by the river with a boat moored off the beach.



In teenage years I worked one holiday at Whisstocks boatyard, made friends with some of the guys there, with the result that when in 1970 I bought an old Norwegian fishing boat to live

aboard, it was to Woodbridge I brought 'Bilbo'. The boat lay in a mud-berth in front of the Tidemill, which at the time was being restored. These two dilapidated old wooden constructions appeared together in many photos and paintings at that time (the photo below appeared in the Times).

'Bilbo' had a slow revving single cylinder semi-diesel, a Grenaa Motor, which sounded a distinctive 'tonk-tonk-tonk'. The starting procedure for this beast was as follows. Climbing into the engine room, first turn the huge flywheel to 10 degrees after top dead centre and jam your foot against it,



heat the cylinder head with a firework or blowtorch, when good and hot, pump fuel primer, then quickly release compressed air valve, and pull foot back smartly. If things went well the engine would go forwards or after a pause - possibly backwards! When not in use I kept a galvanised bucket over the upward facing exhaust. One day forgetting to remove the bucket before starting the engine, an observer in the boatyard reported that on the first 'tonk' it went higher than the Tidemill!

These were my 'boat-bum' years. I worked for David Melanie and Terry Clark at Small Craft Deliveries, sailing, what would be considered by today's standards, small yachts across the North Sea and around the UK coast. It was all done with dead-reckoning and duffle coats - no GPS or Goretex - no VHF or mobiles.

My connection to the river deepened through membership of the Ferry Quay community presided over by the paternal Frank Knights. I had grown up in Cambridge, had never been part of that intellectual hothouse, but here by the river I was included and at home. I loved the nicknames, for example 'Ship's Biscuit' for salty John Burgess, because one day clambering ashore from his boat he had asked, "Can anyone tell me where I can get some good ship's biscuits?" John had 'run away to sea' and wrote for Fishing News. One day he told me, "Boy! Don't ever sell your boat, if all else fails you can always climb aboard and sail away". Well I didn't take his advice and before long 'Bilbo' had been sold and I was introducing my own children to the river.

It is uncanny how twenty years after writing "My Future Life", I married Anne Stollery, sister of the owner of the boatyard quay in Waldringfield, we lived by the river in one of the 'concrete cottages', and had a boat moored off the beach. We spent summers in 'Gorse Cabin', the Stollery's hut with the round roof next to the sailing club, our kids always in or on the river; while Annie developed an organic vegetable garden on the cliff above the huts. Happy days!

One event will serve to capture this stage of my Deben odyssey. It was my son's 5th Birthday; a torn fragment of a map dropped through the letterbox; it showed buried treasure ten steps north from the burnt oak tree at the Tips. After school he and his friends gathered on the beach and climbed into 'Dot', a flat-bottomed ex-military dory with a big outboard. The tide was just right to make a landing (you will see that some preparation had gone into this!) At the Tips the kids ran wild but gradually, despite some cynics, the party studied the map, identified the tree and paced out ten steps. Digging started and hit something hard, by now even the cynics were interested. Bit by bit a metal box was dug out and inside? - Chocolate pieces of eight!! 'Dot' had multiple uses, such as fishing for herring or collecting seaweed from the Sutton shore as mulch for Annie's garden.

It seems the river has the capacity to meet me in different stages of life. Something about the restless ebb and flow between the Town and the Sea has sustained me through ups and downs. At one vulnerable point during career moves, I became relief ferryman between Bawdsey and Felixstowe. Like Siddhartha in the novel by Herman Hesse, I helped people across an obstacle on their journey at a time when I was struggling with one on my own path.

Seasons come and go, boats come and go, even wives have come and gone. Children arrived, grew up and have left to find their own rivers. But for each stage the Deben contains my ebb and flood just as it does the salty brown

water.



Recently I attended the RDA autumn meeting in which Andrew Hawes in his talk 'Defence of the River Walls' wove a subtle story showing us how since 1953 our understanding of sea defences has changed, has become more collaborative between agencies, between different interests, and with Nature. There is now an acknowledgement that at times we must allow some flooding. Not a bad metaphor as a life lesson I think.

Thank you River Deben, one of my teachers.



James Palmer - builder of 'Phoenix' a new Dragonfly in 2014

The Waldringfield Dragonfly

Imagine, you are a sailing club and you decide that you would like to have a new class of boat for your club. How would you go about it? As with choosing any new boat you might think about what it will be used for, how fast it needs to be, what sort of sails, its construction, price and what you are going to call it. These decisions are not easy but so how much more difficult when they are being made by committee!

This was the task taken on by the Committee of the Waldringfield Sailing Club in 1947 when they decided to create a new one design class of boat for the club. The earliest reference in the committee minutes states: "Mr. E. A Nunn raised the question of a one design class of boat for Club racing and suggested forming a small committee to talk the matter over and make a report for discussion at the next Annual General Meeting. Mr. Nunn had apparently elaborated saying that the boat should be comparable in size to the 14' International, have the speed to



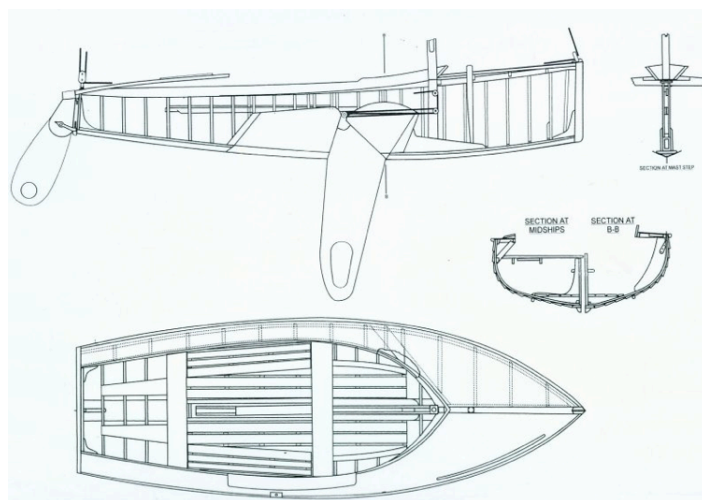
match the 12' National and a beam sufficient to take 'grandmother' sailing on Sundays. He didn't disclose the size of grandma's beam!

The one-design design idea was created by an Irishman, Thomas Middleton of the Shankill Corinthian Club, Dublin, in 1887. As manufacturing technologies became more efficient and effective, sailors realized that there was an important need to equalize the design of the vehicles that they were competing in. One-Design boats are with identical or very similar designs and all competitors in a race are then judged based on a single start time. Winning is about the skill of the sailor – no arguments about handicaps.

Having identified the basic criteria for the class, the sub-committee set about the task of finding a suitable boat. After inspecting various boats and class designs they concluded that the most suitable was the North Norfolk 14ft, and it was agreed to borrow or hire one for a forthcoming regatta. But just two weeks later an emergency meeting was called at which Dr Palmer reported that he had obtained plans for a 14 ft dinghy of a modern design known as the "FUSS" type designed by O'Brien Kennedy for the Irish Dinghy Association which appeared to meet the Club's requirements and this was the design chosen.

There seems to have been no shortage of interest from club members. Mrs Digby of Martlesham Lodge wrote to Dr Palmer “please may I have one of your new Waldringfield One-designs. I have not eaten any bread or potatoes for two days, so next season I hope to have more of a 14 foot figure”. Each boat was to be painted a different colour to the owner’s choice. To encourage more interest the boat was taken into Ipswich to be exhibited at the club’s annual dinner dance held at the Great White Horse. An order was placed with Mr Nunn and Mr Robertson for 21 boats at a cost of £150 each including sails. Such was the enthusiastic take up, that a draw was held in April 1949 to select the 21 new owners.

Once the boats had been commissioned the next decision to be made was the name of the class. A number of suggestions were made – most based on local



birds – waxwing, peewit, mallard and sandpiper. There were some more frivolous suggestions – Deben Jolly Boat, Deben Mudlarks and Deben Fusspots. However, the one chosen was the Dragonfly Class – perhaps influenced by the planned multicoloured hulls, although this never materialised. The emblem of the class

was to be the silhouette of a Dragonfly – cut out and attached to a sail by Dr. Palmer’s wife on the billiard table of their house in Ipswich.

This was not the end of the controversy about the name of the class – a number of other clubs decided to order similar boats and it was suggested that all these should be known as Dragonflies. This was too much for the WSC who said that the registered design and name applied to Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex only. However this did not stop the Christchurch Sailing Club from calling their boats Christchurch Dragonfly Class and WSC Vice Commodore writing to them saying that the club had hoped to be allowed exclusive use of the name ‘Dragonfly’ “which they chose and applied to their own class”. The class is now known as the Waldringfield Dragonfly.

The first race was held on 11th June 1949. Some 40 Dragonflies were built on the River Deben, for the Waldringfield Sailing Club between 1940s and '50s. Nine of the original Dragonflies are still actively raced at Waldringfield Sailing Club

today, with several boats currently under restoration. The Class hopes to continue expanding its fleet, after resurgence in the boats popularity over the last few years.



Question: How long is the life cycle of a dragon fly?
Answer: A little over a year.
The emergence of this 'dragonfly' took 2 years but it is still in existence 65 years later.

Extracts from: His Honour Judge David Stinson 'The Waldringfield Dragonfly Story' and www.waldringfieldsc.com/dragonfly_site



Postscript

I was fortunate to have a conversation with John Palmer (whose father Dr Kenneth Palmer was instrumental in the development of the Waldringfield Dragonfly) and his son James in preparing this article. Both are passionate about the Dragonfly class. James has recently built one from scratch (See page 21) and John rebuilt Number 9 (his father's boat) for the 60th anniversary of their launch in 2009. Enthusiasts continue to race their boats, with the occasional 'world championship' and there is an annual Dragonfly Dinner. John Palmer said "They are great boats to sail. The trouble is they were not designed to last 60 years." He has 11 Dragonflies waiting to be renovated and would welcome offers from anyone who has a year or two to spend on doing one up! JB.

Artists and Writers

Claudia Myatt

Having stepped off the A12 and on to Claudia's tugboat 'Else' I was somewhat shell shocked by the transition to the Deben. I was revitalised by a 'whistle stop' review of Claudia's life and times with all its intriguing facets, ups and downs, twists and turns; each episode punctuated with the wisdom of experience



and humorous asides. Claudia is a remarkable and resourceful woman who lives aboard her tug boat 'Else'. She describes herself as a marine illustrator and cartoonist. Her pathway to becoming an artist is interesting.

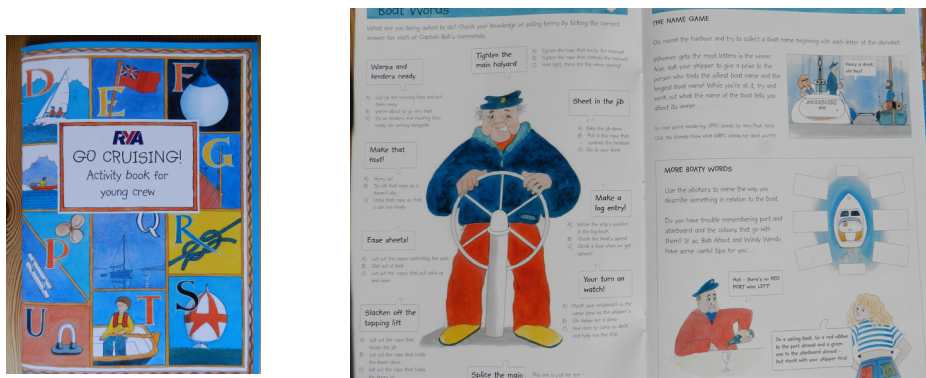
Her father worked as a meteorologist attached to the RAF. His work meant that the family stayed for three years in England, usually in a caravan, and then abroad for three years in places like Singapore, returning to RAF Wattisham.

Claudia may be replicating this with the moves she has made and the different boats she has lived on. Her father was a keen amateur cartoonist drawing on the backs of the previous days weather charts. He encouraged Claudia to 'draw every day' which she didn't then- but does now. Although she was encouraged by John Constable, 'great nephew' of the landscape painter John Constable, she was advised to study French at University as it was felt she was 'too bright' to study art and in any event art was not felt to be a 'proper' subject. Claudia hated her French course and dropped out.

After university Claudia worked as a secretary in Southampton and London where she learned to sail. Claudia moved with her then husband to Pembroke to run a 'bed and breakfast'. She started drawing boats 'because I liked them' and began to think about earning an income from her art when her husband lost his job.

Following her 'marital capsize' three years ago Claudia came back to Woodbridge as she thought 'it would be 'a more fun place to live and a good place to earn a living'. She had to start from nothing without funds, without a job, without a house and without family. With help from friends she began to build her life and her confidence. 'I had several mid life crises - they are fun. You can get a lot in if you start young.' She decided she wanted to sail and draw, so she sold her house

and lived on a 24 foot gaff cutter and spent every Summer cruising up and down the English Channel ‘..drawing things and trying to sell them.’



Claudia's breakthrough came when the RYA asked her to illustrate a book aimed at teaching children and 'nervous adults' to sail, with cartoon style illustrations. Subsequently, the RYA asked Claudia to write the text for this book and commissioned a further six books which have sold all over the world. She now draws a cartoon for Practical Boat Owner every month and produces line drawings for Marine Quarterly and Classic Boat magazine, who send her 'lists of obscure subjects to draw.' One of her latest commissions was a project for the Britten Peers Foundation. 'It is about Aldeburgh and the life of Benjamin Britten... It is a family book they produced about the Benjamin Britten trail. Families can visit all the sites that Britten had something to do with, and there is a project on each page, like making your own stained glass window similar to John Piper, or go and sit on Maggie Hambling's scallop and draw the sea like she does....I had to go up to the Red House and draw the exhibits for them..it was lovely '



Claudia supplements her commissions through teaching people to paint and to sketch. While she has had no formal training in painting she says "I love to teach people to paint and to sketch. I am working on a book about my teaching methods.....I teach the way I would have liked to have been taught. But I have also dug into a lot of theory about art and I have been to a lot of

people whose work I admire and found out their working methods. I have read a lot of books on how to draw 'cos I couldn't draw very well and I really wanted to know how. There is a very good book by an American lady called Betty Edwardsshe analyses how your brain unravels the information that comes in and

scrambles it till you can't draw it. You need to get to it raw before your brain adds perspectives and assumptions about what you are seeing....

I have done a lot of workshopsI have tried to make the information as simple as possible so that people can understand it...so I try and find practical things that give people a 'way in', rather than just say here you are, "Draw it!" I try to debunk the myth that you can only draw if you have got talent. Because with a musical instrument you don't sit somebody down when they have just bought a piano and say now play Beethoven's 7th. and if they can't, say they haven't got any talent. Art she says is sometimes taught 'as if it is this mysterious esoteric thing which you can either do or you can't, and it is not - because I have learned it nut by nut by nut, and technique by technique by technique. I keep telling people, you don't sketch because you can draw you learn to draw because you sketch.'



Claudia has also led art classes as part of the sailing experience on the traditional pilot cutter 'Eve' in Cornwall. She now has a studio in Walsingham boatyard which in Summer doubles as the chandlery.

Although Claudia will make some local trips on 'Else' her passion is for sailing. She sailed with her three month old son across the North Sea and recently has been a crew on the Round Britain

Challenge run by the Old Gaffers Association to celebrate their 50th anniversary. When she is not cruising Claudia is sailing her West Wight Scow 'Poppy' based at Walsingham.

Part of Claudia's getting back on her feet was to play her autoharp- she has three on the boat. She met up with Tony who plays the guitar and together they play on the boat and in local pubs with other musical friends. Claudia talks of the freedom of being older, beginning to venture out. 'My life had already collapsed what is the worst that can happen?'

'There's something special about the Deben - it belongs to the oystercatchers, godwits, egrets and all the other creatures of the world between land and sea; I feel like a privileged guest. The light is constantly changing, from silver mudbanks at full moon to purple, blue and crimson skies reflected in the water at high tide. I never tire of sketching it and even in the harshest weather my spirits lift as I drive across the railway line into a different world.'

As Claudia says of her life, 'You get where you are meant to be in the end, even if it is through the back door.'

www.claudiamyatt.co.uk

Boats of the Deben

ELSE



Claudia Myatt writes:

The tiny photo of the Dutch workboat on Apollo Duck website looked promising enough to justify a trip to North Devon, though information was sparse and the owner hard to get

hold of (he'd put the advert on in June and then been away for four months). At 25k for a 42' steel boat my hopes were not high and she was indeed a 'work in progress'. The interior had been ripped out and the beginnings of a new galley and saloon were in place but the joinery was, to be polite, rustic, and everything was unfinished including electrics and plumbing. The sliding doors to the wheelhouse were jammed and threatening to fall off; locker doors hung off their hinges. She looked a mess and with only two berths, one in each cabin, the space below was smaller than I would have liked.

But her shape was fabulous. Built around 1911 she had the typical Dutch round counter stern and high straight stem. The decks were wide and clear – and they didn't leak. The riveted steel plating was battered but sound, and she had been over-plated below the waterline in recent years. The interior was something I could work with as finances allowed and she ticked all the important boxes – good looks, floating and affordable. A survey from earlier in the year gave her hull the thumbs up. Best of all, she had a new, functioning wood burning stove. I could live in a half-finished muddle with no galley, but at least I would be warm as well as dry.

'When I bought 'Else' (no 'i') she was called 'Standbye' - not her original name, but the name she was given, I think in conversation in around the 1960's. 'Standbye' wouldn't do for me as the name; think of the confusion it would cause

on vhf! And a Dutch boat needs a Dutch name, something simple something vhf friendly. Whilst crewing on part of the OGA Round Britian Challenge last year I met a lovely Dutch lady called Else (pronounced 'Elsa' by most of us). She and her husband Edgar were on one of the many Dutch boats who joined the round Britain cruise. Else is a professional musician and a great bluesy singer - word soon got around that there was a full sized keyboard in their modern gaffer and floating home. Anyway Else and I got on well and we had some great parties on board. She and I did regular performances of my song 'Hey big fender' which went down a storm at the final party at Cowes.

But, I digress.. when thinking of a Dutch name of course 'Else' came to mind, so that was an instant decision when renaming poor 'Standbye'. When I told Else I'd named my boat after her she said 'Well you know my husband knows your boat, don't you?' It turns out that Edgar had a schoolfriend called George whose Grandfather owned my boat, and Edgar remembers sitting on the deck with his friend.

All Edgar knew was that the boat had originally been a river tug on the Maas (in the days before the Delta Plan). When I took 'Else' to Holland last summer I took her to Middelharnis where she used to be based when cruising, and one or two people recognised her there.

Bringing 'Else' back from north Devon was not without its adventures.

"It was clear that the storm was going to be a big one and we would be stuck in Brighton for several days. By Thursday morning the wind was throwing spray over the breakwaters and walking down the pontoon was difficult, especially as it was slippery with salt spray and duck droppings. We made arrangements to go home and return again Monday, though Tony was happy to stay behind.

I had been so focussed on keeping the boat safe from the storm that I hadn't given much thought to what was happening on the east coast, until there was a phone call from Waldringfield Boatyard on the River Deben where I have my studio. The boatyard and studio had been flooded; Mark and Emma Barton who own the yard had spent several hours in rising waters in the dark saving what they could, but there was still a muddy mess to sort out. I took a train home.



Else's journey resumed without me. After the flood I had too much still to do, but my team of three, Guy, Tony and Josh, left Brighton marina on

Monday evening, making Harwich by Tuesday afternoon. They had been thrown around by a lumpy swell off Beachy Head and Dungeness, causing 'Else' to roll so violently that the coal bucket took flight and scattered its contents all over the cabin (and there were photos to prove it!). They had to tack like a yacht to avoid beam seas until safely into calmer waters round North Foreland.

'The final few miles, Harwich to the Deben, provided the biggest challenge of all. The entrance to the River Deben is a narrow gap between shifting shingle banks; the entrance buoys are unlit and it is usually approached in good visibility on a rising tide. With high water early morning and evening, Else's crew didn't have the option of daylight.



In calm conditions on Wednesday morning they approached the entrance slowly, crew straining their eyes on the foredeck, and thick fog making the darkness even darker. Tony Watts has spent years on the river, but local surge could have shifted the entrance. Cartoonist Mike Peyton talks about the 'barking dog' method of navigation, which means that if you can hear a dog barking you are approaching land; Tony used the 'shingle on the beach' variation

of this and crept along the Felixstowe shore until there was a squeal from the foredeck 'Shingle ahead!' Combining inaccurate chart plotter images with the knowledge that it's possible to creep over the south side of the bar at the top of the tide, Tony successfully found the entrance and 'Else' made her way slowly up a river that was still shrouded in fog. 'You'll like the Deben River', we had told our Devon skipper. It's one of the prettiest on the east coast'. It's a shame he never got to see it!

I was waiting for them on a frosty pontoon at Waldringfield. Daylight had arrived, but visibility was still so bad that I didn't see 'Else' until she was almost upon us. As my crew enjoyed a well deserved full English breakfast at the Maybush Inn, I looked through the window at my little ship on the end of the pontoon. The final few miles to Woodbridge could be done with ease and in daylight. We were home!

Extracts from: 'A Tug up Channel' Claudia Myatt (2014)

'Deben Reflections'

Anne Whiting (nee Heath)

Hampton Lovett

Worcestershire

Writes:

In the early thirties my father Noel Heath was posted from RAF Halton to Martlesham, bringing his family to Suffolk. So began our love for the Deben. In Waldringfield, 'Old Maltings' was our home, almost on the quay, and a Nunn-built sailing dinghy became part of the family, and the misery of boarding school for me was soon forgotten. I was learning to sail, and loving it. 'Frolic' was bought from Mr Wickman. She was treated to a new mainsail by a generous friend.

In the Waldringfield Regatta, Frolic was entered for the novice race, and won a silver cup. My father was co-opted onto the sailing club committee, and 'Judy' became my mother's rowing boat. My brother Adrian, with Seamus Fraser's help, ran the 'Hood Club', which also included local boys Jim and George Turner. It was located in a hut built at the top of our garden. As the boys grew, they soon had to meet on the roof, which eventually collapsed !

We all enjoyed the river in different ways. Margaret Reeves (who lived near the sea wall) and I sailed a lot together, and once had the nerve to call on AP Herbert aboard his boat. We learnt to smoke woodbines bought from Mr Spurgeon's shop, hiding aboard her father's fishing boat to enjoy them (both in our early teens !) There were some exciting days spent with Batchy Carr RAF, sailing as crew on his sailing barge, Edith Mary (which my father helped him

to buy), going down the river and out to sea.



Harry Nunn on the beach at Waldringfield with Semon Kroes. Semon was one of the first Dutchmen to sail across from Holland after the war. The wind was light and they had to skull most of the way, dodging the mines. After 'shouldering' them around the bar, They were made life members of Waldringfield Sailing Club in honour of this achievement. Mike Nunn will be seeing Kroes who is in his 90's this Summer.

Letter From America

Susan Pogue

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

I step out of the car on Bawdsey Quay. There it is. Just as it was when I was last here. The River. I know there have been changes. The shingle bars for sure have shape-shifted in the storms. Yet my first impression taking in the river is a sense of timelessness. A feeling of peace and tranquility; a sense of the river as an eternal entity. It is one of those calm days: a gentle temperature to my cheek, a soft grey in the sky overhead and the river, a soft silver - grey, at once still and yet in constant movement. I cast my eyes to the beauty of the river and its surrounds. I note the multiplicity of boats - fishing boats, pleasure boats, sailing craft, motor boats, all colors and all shapes and sizes - seemingly stationary, yet pulling against the tide on their moorings. Across the river there is a variety of sheds and shacks, all fitting together. I think of all the histories I have read in "The Deben" magazine, histories that reflect the river as a source of life and livelihood - fishing, boatbuilding, ferrying and pleasure.

It is Spring so the river is calm in terms of traffic. There are no happy children on the beach. Only a few sailors. I live in the United States. I am lucky enough to come often and visit my brother and his wife in their Bawdsey cottage. So I have memories of summer visits - the busyness of the river swinging into life, supporting

sailors and holiday makers. I remember sailing up the river, marvelling at the lush lands on either side. Creeping up the river in a light breeze as the sun sets, listening to the plaintive calls of the gulls and other birds. Then to go below for a delicious meal prepared by my sister in law and relax with good company and conversation. I remember with awe and some fear the strength of the tides. I think of walking beside the river delighting in that magical interface where land and water meet.

I reflect on the way in which rivers the world over, are such important supports for communities and economies. My mother was brought up on the River Tamar which boundaries Cornwall. I treasure her childhood stories of the extended family - enough people for two cricket teams - going up the river in motor boats for family picnics. Picnic hampers packed full and the kettle for tea. I remember sailing up the river, taking in its beauty and its life - old wharfs reflective of trading days gone by, salmon fishermen casting their nets just as their forbears did.

Some friends recently came back from taking a ferry boat up the River Irrawady in Mean Mahr. Their pictures showed how integral the river was to the life of the society - trade, fishing, tourism and even the houses were built on stilts over the river.

But in this moment of arrival, this brief encounter, I leave my reveries as I am struck by the tranquility and the beauty of the river Deben; a beauty that is enhanced by the way the river is integral to local life and livelihood. As

I stand, honoring the river and its past and present, I can feel a peace come over me. It is as if my pulse calms to the river's flow. I can feel a stilling in me as I take in the scene.

So I am deeply grateful to all of you who work to respect and protect the river Deben and its surrounds. I live in the U.S.A. where the land is grand and vast, large scale and beautiful in its own way. Coming back to England for visits I am always reminded of the treasures and beauties of the English landscape, such a fine crafting of humans with land and water. Such finely and delicately moulded landscapes, steeped in history, and the River Deben must surely be counted as an outstanding example.

Despite the sense of timelessness, I know that these treasures can be damaged irrevocably and quickly, both environmentally and visually. I appreciate the work you all do to bring to light the history held by the river and to protect its continuing beauty and the intricacies of the surrounding ecology. I want to cheer you all on.

I heard, with horror, that jet skis have found their way in – noisy, too fast – paced for the river's tranquility. I want to shout: "Don't let it happen." Surely the jet skis can play at the mouth of the harbor where they can have more space and be less dominant. Surely there could be a speed limit that could be more in keeping with the pace of the river. So thank you all for your efforts.

I love receiving "The Deben." It keeps me informed on what is going on in terms of plans for the river and its surrounds. I delight in the histories. I learn about old boats, ways of life maybe dying out, of artist's viewpoints, of the challenges of keeping the river in its banks and so much more all of which enhance my appreciation of the river.

My brief encounters with the river are an important part of my life. When I read the magazine it brings me back to that same feeling of tranquility as I feel every time I arrive on Bawdsey Quay and step out of the car; a feeling which makes my brief encounters with the river so special.





River Deben Association

Annual General Meeting

Thursday 23 April 2015

7.30 pm.

Woodbridge Community Hall

The AGM will be followed by 'reflections' of past Chairmen

Anthony Mason (1993 – 1996) & (1999 – 2002)

Denzil Cowdry (1996 – 1999) & (2002 – 2004)

Ed Stanford (2004 – 2011)