



**RIVER DEBEN  
ASSOCIATION**

**Autumn 2008  
NEWSLETTER**

**No: 37**

# RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

## April 2008

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the autumn edition of your newsletter!



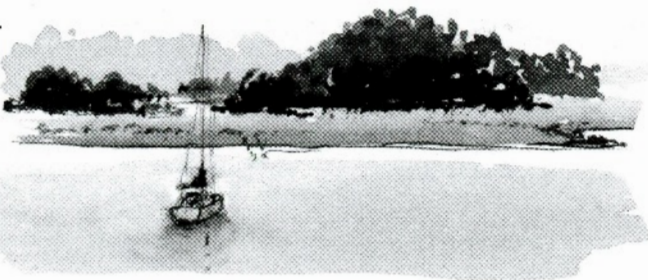
The two outstanding issues of importance to the River Deben, at present, appear to be the risk of flooding during exceptionally high tides and the subject of boats moving along the river at speed. I am grateful to Robert Simper for his sober analysis of the former problem and for his plea for modest repairs and improvements to the existing defences in order to protect important agricultural land and saltmarsh. I have been lucky enough to view his new book, "Woodbridge to the Coast", which contains a final chapter on this very issue. The book itself is well-illustrated and is written in a characteristic style which blends a deep knowledge of local history with a lively interest in what's going on right now. At a sensible price, of one penny under £10, I have no hesitation in recommending it to you.

Ed Stanford's description of the current situation regarding the riverbank opposite Woodbridge, the "Sutton Shore", in his Chairman's Report, is very closely related to this issue of flooding and we must hope that the RDA's modest efforts to improve the situation there will not be stifled by our governmental and semi-governmental bureaucracies. It may even form a model for future community involvements on the Deben. I have just participated, for the RDA, in the superb Maritime Woodbridge event during the week-end of the 13th-14th September, and there was a

lot of public interest in our photographs of riverbank erosion. Let us hope that it doesn't end there.

During that event, two of the crew of the 100-foot "Sea Stallion", reconstruction Viking ship, of the Roskilde fiord in Denmark, spoke of their recently-completed voyage around Britain. This timber ship was powered by one square sail for the entire voyage, with sixty oars to help in the rare conditions of a flat calm, and their audience in Whisstock's shed in Woodbridge was held spellbound by the account. The Sutton Hoo mounds on the other side of the Deben looked down on the eager scene, for the ship from Mound One must have been rather similar.

The other important River Deben issue of the moment is speed limits on the river. Regrettably, I do not have space in this Newsletter to print all the correspondence that was generated by Derek Downer's letter, published in the Spring 2008 Newsletter and which condemned the "growing menace" of boats exceeding the 8-knot limit. As editor, I have never concealed my sympathy for this point of view. The substance of the argument against it, however, is contained in one paragraph of an equally welcome letter from Steve James:



"So, the situation that prevails is that nobody can identify what problem is caused by exceeding the speed limit below Woodbridge. Derek Downer attempts such an explanation in his letter and cites danger to the river banks, wildlife, CO2 emissions and danger to those in small dinghies as problems. I would welcome Mr Downer to show me any damage to river banks caused by excessive speed, likewise wildlife. It is a well known and accepted fact that wash is reduced when a hull is planing (and therefore exceeding the speed limit), and there is not even a suspicion by anyone with knowledge that wash thrown up by craft is damaging the river banks. CO2 emissions will be reduced when a hull is planing as less energy is required to drive it.. Despite many requests, I am not able to get any evidence for any incidents where people in small dinghies have been endangered by speeding craft ..."

I hope that Mr James will not mind the foreshortening of this important debate in this Editorial and that he will allow me to extend to the wider membership his generous invitation to meet with him "to discuss the facts of these grievances so that we can work towards agreement and harmony on the river rather than hostility" It should be pointed out that Mr James is Chairman (but not, in this case, spokesperson) of East Suffolk Water Ski Club. The editor will continue to publish (short) letters on this subject and will also forward e-mails to Mr James from those who wish to engage with him in a friendly discussion.

I am grateful, also, and as always, to other contributors to this edition. I wonder what Jenny James' oyster-catchers might have to contribute to the speed limit debate? They look to me like birds of firm opinions. It is splendid to have Jenny - this time with her "sea pies" - on board again. Denzil

Cowdry has produced another fascinating summary of topics of interest to the Old Salts who frequent the Deben "hards", and has continued to give me great assistance as Assistant Editor. I am deeply grateful for his tactful and reliable advice, and his painstaking proof-reading. Ron Wragg, our illustrator, has been patient once again with an Editor who never quite knows what he wants until the last minute. If the illustrations in this edition are rather sparse, it is not his fault

Peter Ling's letter about the little snails of Martlesham Creek is hugely welcome, too. The original mistake in the scientific naming of this creature was entirely my own and I take full responsibility, and very great pleasure, in the correction.

It is a sadness for me to announce the death on 17th April of our friend, and fellow committee member, Rosemary Schlee. She was a regular contributor to this Newsletter; a doughty champion of the River Deben Association; a hard-working committee-member. She will be sorely missed. Denzil Cowdry gives a fuller appreciation of her many talents inside this Newsletter. Readers will not forget her wry, self-deprecating humour.  
Nick Wright

#### IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Editor regretfully announces his retirement from the editorship of this newsletter, due to other commitments. It is nearly five years since he took over this enjoyable and rewarding job and he will continue to offer his assistance to the new Editor. Anyone who might think about taking over this post should be assured of full support from a very active RDA committee. Mark, in Bettaprint, cheerfully supplies all the technical knowledge – contributors, all the local knowledge, literary, and artistic style -- needed to keep it going well, with only the lightest of hands on the tiller. For a few hours voluntary work, twice yearly, the Editor gets a lot of undeserved credit for other people's hard work.



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



The time is now right to update members on the status of our Sutton Shore project.

The minutes of a committee meeting in October

2005 record that Simon Read had had a meeting with Suffolk Coast and Heaths about the erosion on the Sutton Shore. Simon suggested that the RDA should consider whether a defence structure could be built on the riverbank opposite the Tide Mill. This is an area where the river, probably influenced by the Tide Mill Yacht Harbour, swings out and undermines the bank alongside the old ferry landing. The proposal caught the imagination because it might be possible to do the work quite inexpensively and, if successful, the approach might be useable elsewhere on the river.

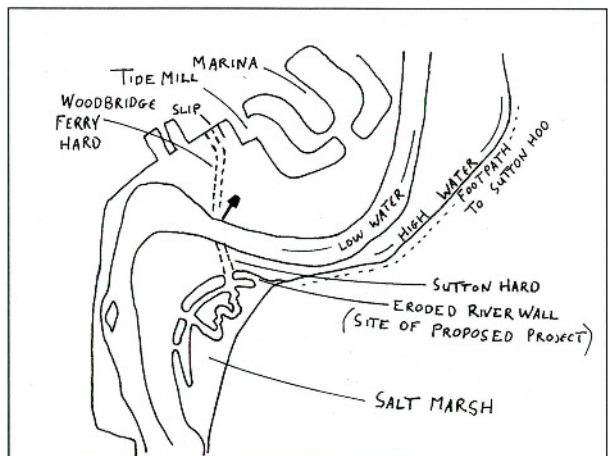
Advice was sought from Andrew Hawes Associates in Aldeburgh, helped by a £500 grant from Suffolk Coast and Heaths.

The engineers suggested that a "tide attenuation barrier" (the upmarket name for what we are about) could be constructed using oak posts set in a zig-zag pattern and linked together by heavy gauge perforated plastic mesh. This would have the effect of slowing the falling tide, thereby getting it to drop some of its load of silt behind the barrier, thus arresting

further erosion and perhaps starting the rebuilding of the bank. The line chosen for this defence would be just behind the stumps of a former defence work which are visible at low tide.

OK that was the easy part – how do we set about progressing the project? Our original plan foresaw the defence work plus the rebuilding of the old ferry landing by constructing a board walk from which the work could be done. In addition, the board walk would have been available to anyone who wished to restart the ferry service. Although we had strong evidence that the ferry landing belonged to Suffolk Coastal, their legal department told us, after some delay, that they had no registered title to it. Rather than get involved in a long legal debate, we decided to do the work from a boat, thus avoiding the ferry landing altogether. This also reduced the likely cost because we no longer had to build the board walk.

But who was the owner of the land? Because we wanted to work below the level of high tide, the first point of contact had to be the Crown Estate Commission



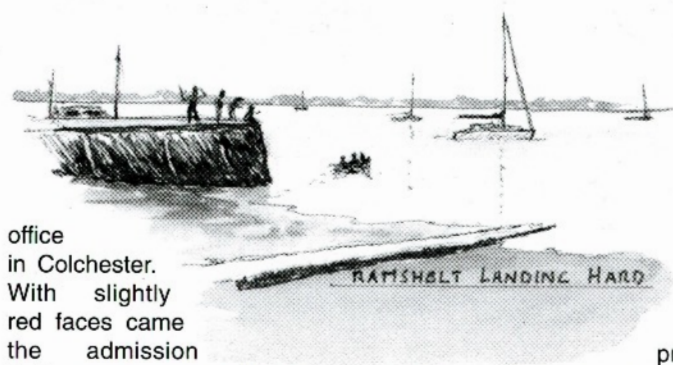
prepare the papers to get planning approval from Suffolk Coastal.

Those members who came to the AGM in October last year will recall the lecture by Steve Colclough, Senior Advisor, Fisheries, at the Environment Agency. A chance meeting between Simon Read and Steve led to Steve proposing to come to the

Sutton shore and at high tide place a fine net across one of the creeks draining the salt marsh. When the tide fell, a surprising number of fish fry were found in the net, thereby confirming that the salt marsh is a very important fish nursery.

Armed with approvals from the National Trust and Natural England, plus the research findings and some academic papers from Steve and an appraisal from Hawes Associates, we were in a position to apply for planning approval. Application CO8/1180 was approved with commendable speed on 14th August. We still have to apply for Flood Drainage Consent as required by the Water Resources Act of 1991. In something of a rush to beat a closing date, I applied for a grant to Suffolk Coast and Heaths Sustainability Fund and was delighted to be advised that £2500 had been agreed for us. We are also very grateful for a grant of £200 from the Woodbridge Society.

We have committed ourselves to annual inspections of the barrier over five years and to remove it if it is doing no good. Why bother? The Committee felt that it



office in Colchester. With slightly red faces came the admission

that some years ago there had been an administrative oversight (there are other names for this!) as a result of which title to the river to the centre line was actually invested in the Pretty Estate, now, of course, the National Trust. There was some doubt about this which was resolved by consulting a large-scale plan of the Sutton Hoo site. After an exchange of letters and a site visit or two, the National Trust agreed that we could do the proposed work on their land, on the strict understanding that we wouldn't ask them for any money.

Liaison with the Environment Agency confirmed that the next approval had to come from Natural England. Here I made a mistake which cost us time. I wrote to Natural England in Bury St Edmunds using the address previously used by English Nature. When I didn't get a reply after a month, I telephoned, to be told that the package of papers hadn't arrived. Natural England had moved across town and government departments don't pay to have their mail redirected. I finally got the papers to the right address and got the original set back from the Post Office some weeks later. Natural England gave their approval so that I could start to



was time for the RDA to do more than talk and represent views about the river. Our low-cost/low-tech proposal, if successful, would point the way for other stretches of the river where the technique may apply. Remember that salt marsh is a very efficient protector of river walls because it slows flow rates. It is also important for young fish and birds. In some places salt marsh has been replaced by mud flats. These too are important bird feeding areas but are not suitable as nesting sites and offer little protection against predators. I would like to think it possible in a few years time for the mud-flat

downstream from Mel Skeet's Granary Yacht Harbour to be treated in the same way so that either salt marsh or a grazing meadow could take the place of the mud.

I've gone on at length about this project because it does involve the expenditure of some of our accumulated funds. I hope you will agree that this is a worthwhile project for the RDA. We anticipate that work will commence in the autumn.

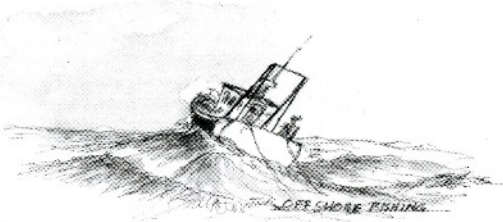
Ed Stanford

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## NEWS FROM THE HARD

As you sail down the river, whatever the strength and direction of the wind, there is always a state of confused air as you go below Waldringfield and enter the waters off the Rocks. No serious rocks in sight, of course, since it was here that barges were put ashore, on the fairly steep shingle, for bottom cleaning. Currently, in summer, this sheltered spot is a rendezvous for many sailing and power craft, whose crews anchor off and many row ashore. One day this year there must have been twenty-five dinghies and their accompanying rescue craft, up for lunch from Bawdsey....a happy scene.

After the Rocks you turn into the Ramsholt stretch and the true wind, generally south-west, becomes more obvious. Negotiate the moorings and you are soon at Green Point, where you face a truly open piece of water. Here the real strength of the wind becomes clear as it sweeps over the marshes at Kingsfleet or, less often, comes down the valley at Alderton. If the wind is to the south and the tide ebbing,



quite a swell can develop on this last stretch of river before Felixstowe.

There are three "hards" at Felixstowe Ferry. The Ferry plies between two of them, the slip at the yard in Felixstowe Ferry and the Bawdsey slip on the other side. Both are well used throughout the year by dinghy sailors, small motor boats and water-jet skiers. The third slip belongs to the Felixstowe Ferry Yacht Club and is used for launching dinghies from their park. All of these slips are different in character from their upstream counterparts. Except for a few minutes each day they are subject to swirling tides and, except for the yard slip, are much exposed to winds.

Thus I complete my survey of the places to launch or recover boats on the Deben. Readers with a good memory will recall that the object of this column was to review the places where people might gather and to record their exchange of views about river affairs.

Current river gossip may be about the number of empty moorings: at Ramsholt, over thirty, and Felixstowe, over forty. Presumably there are more boats left in the yards, not being sailed this year because of the recession. Better news from the dinghy sailors. The three-day event at Waldringfield, replacing Deben Week Regatta, was declared a success with a good attendance, fair weather and good, spirited, competitive racing.

One subject of conversation is about twenty-three-year old Oliver Hicks who is a local lad, already significant among long-distance rowers as the

youngest ever to cross from New York to Falmouth single-handed which he did in 2005. His latest plan is to row and drift right around the southern hemisphere at latitude fifty-five degrees South, from Wellington New Zealand, back to Wellington. This would make him the first person to go around the world by rowing. The help that he may expect from wind and waves has been carefully calculated. His twenty-four foot double-layer fibreglass Kevlar covered boat, is capsizable and has an easily repaired cell-like structure. It is also extremely well equipped with no less than four salt-to-fresh water converters. This is no

lightweight venture. The professional hands at Robertsons Yard have done some final fittings and adjustments. We do wish him good fortune on this extreme fifteen thousand mile endurance test.

Denzil Cowdry

## OYSTERCATCHER OR SEA PIE

The pied oystercatchers of the River Deben must be the smartest birds on the estuary, with their black and white dress suits, bright red beaks and pink legs. They could also be said to be the noisiest, whether in conflict, in amorous pursuits or in protection of their young. Their confident, aggressive, accelerating 'pic, pic, pic' call, followed by a resounding trill draws our attention to these conspicuous, stocky birds.

It seems that 'the sailors' bird' is an apt name for our sea magpie (sea pie) because, unlike many of our other regular waders, who are only passage migrants and winter residents, oystercatchers are around during the summer sailing season. Last summer, there were estimated to be between 50 and 60 breeding pairs along the length of the river.

Territorial disputes are frequently observed on the foreshore, as pairs of birds or even small groups indulge in noisy confrontations across invisible boundaries. Calling loudly, with hunched





shoulders and beak pointing down, male birds, and also females, will launch themselves forwards, running and turning in an attempt to intimidate the opposition.

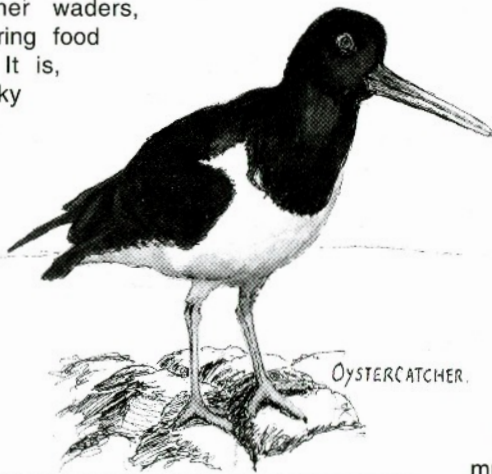
Their simple shallow nests are hard to find and their eggs and chicks are well camouflaged. They are above the high tide line at the top of the salt marsh, near to the river wall, or in the drier parts of the grazing marshes. An oystercatcher has even, in several recent years, nested on the Woodbridge swimming pool roof. This is not an isolated event, oystercatcher nests have been frequently observed on flat gravel covered roofs in coastal towns such as Lowestoft, and in Aberdeen 220 roof-top nests were counted last year. This is only possible because, unlike most other waders, oystercatchers bring food to their chicks. It is, though, a risky strategy as many chicks perish as they attempt to leave the nesting site before they are fully fledging.

We are fortunate that oystercatchers have been increasing in numbers in Britain for over 50 years, both as breeding and wintering birds. Although the bulk of the birds breed in Scotland and northern England, the coasts, estuaries and river valleys of East Anglia are favoured sites. Orfordness, in particular, has a successful breeding population on

the shingle spit. Although, on the whole, they remain birds of tidal estuaries and rocky shores, they are regularly found in old gravel pits well away from the coast and will even nest on inland grazing pasture. There are now breeding birds in the Waveney and Gipping valleys with a few further West in the Brecklands. These iconic birds are, it appears, very long lived. Individual birds have been recorded with ages of between 30 and 35 years. They pair for life and pairs have been recorded returning to the same nest site for up to twenty years

The breeding birds are joined from July onwards by much larger numbers of wintering birds which have bred on mainland Europe. It is estimated that around 250 oystercatchers spend up to eight months feeding on the invertebrates in the Deben mud. However, these numbers are dwarfed by the 2000 to 3000 birds which winter on the more extensive mudflats of the lower Orwell and Stour estuaries. It is interesting that on the Ore/Alde/Butley rivers, with their much narrower bands of inter-tidal mud, oystercatchers are scarcely seen in winter.

Our oyster catcher is mainly a European bird, there being other species around the world. Information from ringing recoveries



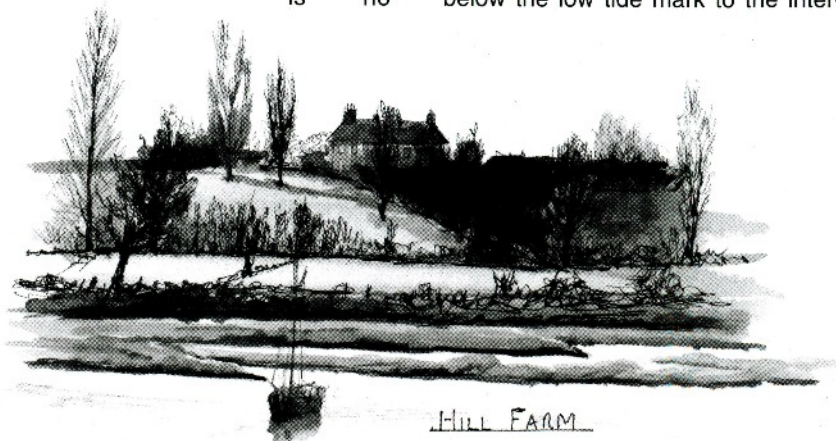
indicates that birds from Holland and Norway are among those which winter in Suffolk. In Britain as a whole, in winter, the numbers rise to 300,000 birds which may represent as much as 45% of Europe's population.

On the extensive areas of mud, found in East Anglia from the Wash to the Thames estuary, oyster catchers feed in gregarious groups throughout the winter. They move down the mud as the tide ebbs and return as it flows. At high tide they are forced up into roosts on any salt-marsh, adjacent water meadows, sand and shingle banks or any other territory which is not submerged. Spectacular flights of oystercatchers, as well as other waders, can be seen at the approach of high tide at the RSPB reserve at Snettisham on The Wash. On the Deben, the lines of oystercatchers strung out along the sandbanks at The Tips, are a memorable sight at high tide on a winter afternoon.

The name oystercatcher is somewhat misleading. They do indeed, feed on bivalves such as cockles and mussels and capture crabs and earthworms, but although they are immensely strong there  
is no

evidence that they are capable of tackling a full grown oyster. Their physical strength enables these birds to hammer a limpet from its rock and mussels are dealt with by some birds using their beaks to hammer and break the shells, whereas others prise the shells open. Young birds learn one method or the other from their parents.

The spectacular number of oystercatchers during the winter in The Wash Morecombe Bay and South Wales, has led in the past to fears that these birds were depleting the stocks of cockles and mussels and damaging the local fishing industry. It is true that an oyster catcher can take a cockle every 72 seconds and eat a daily total of around 500 shells. Ten thousand birds were culled in the 1970's in South Wales but, it turned out, for no good reason, because following the cull, instead of recovering, the cockle stocks collapsed. On the other hand in the 1990's in The Wash, there was a failure in the cockle and mussel populations followed by a steep decline in oystercatcher numbers from a previous high of 45,000 down to 10,000 birds. Here the birds and fishermen now work to mutual advantage. The young mussels are moved from below the low tide mark to the inter-tidal





regions where the oystercatchers feed by selectively removing the smaller mussels allowing the larger ones to grow to full size without competition. The fishermen can then harvest a good sized crop.

The Woodbridge RSPB Group meets on the first Thursday of the month at Woodbridge Community Hall, for an illustrated lecture. This season begins on October 2nd with 'The Birds of Florida' by Bill Baston. For details of the group's other activities, go to [www.rspb.org.uk/groups/Woodbridge/events](http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/Woodbridge/events) or 01728 723155

Jenny James

## RIVER DEBEN FLOOD DEFENCE

River walls and sea defences are not sexy, nor are they vote-catchers in most parts of the British Isles. Many people dismiss the subject by saying that "nothing can be done against the sea", or, more honestly, that they could not care less. In fact every coastal county has problems with the sea and erosion, from Cornwall where it is a problem to East Suffolk where it is a major one.

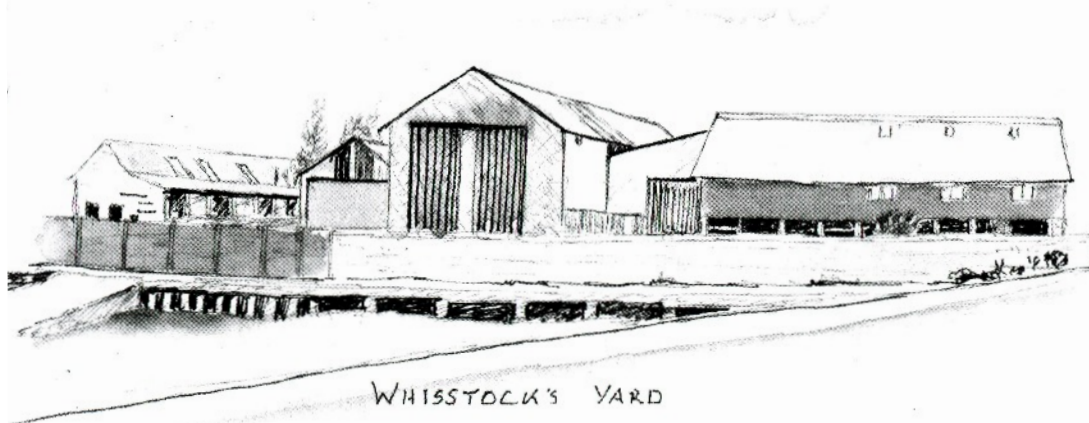
*Summary of the Tidal Defences on the River Deben*

Most of the river walls protecting the low lying land on the River Deben were probably put up in the late medieval and Elizabethan periods and some walls in Ramsholt and Melton may date back to Anglo-Saxon times.

The river walls have all failed at some time, usually around once in a century, and there has been major flooding. Always after the walls have been repaired, the land and wildlife have recovered within a few years and continued to give good value to the community at large.

The last major flooding was in 1953 when every flood defence on the east coast of England collapsed. After this, the government made a major investment to restore the walls and the community has had very good value from this investment. The leading benefit has been a rise in food production and the preservation of wildlife habitat. The public has great places for relaxation, mainly for walking beside the river.

The river walls from Kyson Point past Woodbridge to above Melton are in by far the best order, thanks to the investment made in 1992. Provided the floodgates are closed, the low land in Woodbridge



WHISSTOCK'S YARD



and Melton appears to be safe in a predictable high tide.

All the lower river walls received a major investment after 1953. These are just earth bank river walls, and are faced in some places with concrete slabs, usually where the ebb tide runs hard against the foot of the wall.

After the 1953 floods it was felt that high tides put pressure on the old walls and caused them to fall backwards. All the Deben river walls were heightened and a new, shallower, "delft" ditch behind them was moved further back. This seems to have been very successful because no walls have given way since then.

### *Sections at Risk*

Places on the river wall at Martlesham Creek do appear to be rather low and there are reports of water going over in a few places on a very high tide. On a high tide the quays at Ferry Dock in Woodbridge, Waldringfield, Ramsholt and

Bawdsey Ferry are all covered in water. Only at Bawdsey Ferry is this likely to be a problem and it could, but has not yet, run into the Bawdsey Manor grounds and possibly flood the cottages on the Bawdsey Level. Also the iron piling around the North Weir Point in front of Bawdsey Manor is badly corroded. The boatyard, café and other sheds at Felixstowe Ferry are outside the flood defences and do flood on a high tide.

It is probable that the first place on the Deben where the river wall will break through in the next few years is in the Rocks Reach at the lower end of the Cliff Wood, and then the Ramsholt Lodge Marshes would flood. Here, for the past twenty years, it has gradually been eroded away and the situation is now critical. This wall protects marshes that are grazed in the summer, and there is a heavily-used public footpath running along the top. This erosion could be stopped with the same kind of low-key investment that is being suggested for the Sutton shore saltings.

The greatest risk to the River Deben is the central government policy of trying to en- expenditure on defences and of allowing government agencies to frustrate individuals from protecting their property.

The first idea put forward was that the marshes from Kirton Creek to Felixstowe Ferry should be flooded. This was based on the assumption that the river walls were failing. In fact, on the section of river below Kirton Creek, they just need repaving. These repairs might involve a month's work for a small number of workmen.



The government had, in the not-too-distant past, tried to promote the idea that the Kirton/Falkenham level of marshes was suitable for "managed retreat". This would have been an economic and social disaster. These marshes have been drained at considerable expense by the landowners and

are highly

productive

agricultural

land. At

current

market prices,

this level of

marshes is

probably valued at

about £6.6 million and the

land does produce around

3,600 tonnes of wheat per year, plus

some other crops. In an era when there is

a world food shortage, it would be

irresponsible to flood this land. It would

have involved heavy public expenditure

and produced little benefit to local wildlife.

Had this scheme gone through, it could

have had two considerable effects on the

River Deben villages. The additional water

through the Deben would eventually have

widened the river mouth and washed

away houses at Bawdsey Ferry and

Felixstowe. This erosion might have been

stopped by considerable "arming" of the

foreshore at Felixstowe, which would

have cost far more than repairing the

paving on the wall near Kirton Creek. If

"arming" was put in place and the present

size of the Deben mouth stayed the same,

then only the same amount of water would

come into the river. The flooding at Kirton

would have reduced the flow up to

Woodbridge and the river would have

silted up. Woodbridge would turn into a

muddy backwater like Rye.

Another doubtful section of walling is

above Waldringfield Quay. Here the wall needs to be raised, perhaps a foot in height, which is not a major problem but a major expense. Although the small area of marshes has a high wildlife value in its present form, it is not currently being used

for food production but could become so as the need increases.

The government

mounted an

expensive

campaign to try and

get support from

the local people for

flooding the

Waldringfield

marshes but were

defeated by the powerful lobby of

river wall footpath-users.

#### *Future Policy*

Most of the river walls are in good order

and are withstanding the abnormal high

tides. With several small-scale repairs

they can continue to do this. The defences

could not withstand a major tidal surge

similar to the 1953 one. Temporary flood

ing is horrific for people whose homes and

land are affected, but it has little long-term

effect. Even if houses and land were

flooded for a short time, the land and

wildlife would return to normal within five

years. But permanent flooding would be a

national disaster.

With some small-scale repairs, there is no

reason why the river walls can't protect

important farmland and wildlife habitat for

another thirty years or more. The original

walls were made by people with shovels;

modern repairs should not be a serious

problem.

The role of central government is to

provide funding and prevent the various



government agencies from disrupting repair work to the river walls. The government's policy of allowing the North Sea to expand is a serious threat to Eastern England. River defences may not grab the public's imagination but land and space on our overcrowded island are our greatest assets.

Robert Simper

### ROSEMARY SCHLEE.

Rosemary Schlee died earlier this year. She had been a founder member and then a Committee Member of the Association since the early 1990s. Her strident endeavours and reliable presence are greatly missed.

Rosemary had been a friend of the River Deben for more than 50 years: at first as a holiday visitor to the cottage in Waldringfield and then, with retirement, from her new home in Woodbridge.

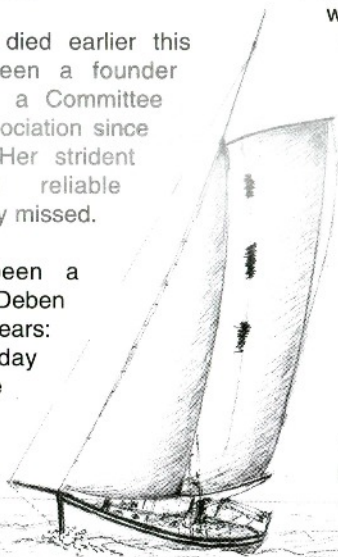
She was a very competitive dinghy helm, in a Kingfisher dinghy and then a Wayfarer, and had a great number of friends and acquaintances most of them made through racing and teaching sailing. With recollections of the river as it was in the 50s and 60s Rosemary, with others, could see by 1990 that the onslaught of dinghies, and the larger numbers of yachts, would create pressures on the space available for sailing and the need for a forum of discussion with membership

from all categories of river user. There was also a clear need to lobby against unsympathetic development.

From small exchanges on the beach at Waldringfield, the Association has grown to have a membership of 800 and has the respect of decision makers for sound judgements, based on the opinions of members. Significant events have been the involvement with the Felixstowe Foreshore Trust to acquire land that would frustrate a proposal for a marina at Felixstowe; the opposition to the Bentwaters plan for an international airport with an outward flight path down the Deben; and the Whisstocks site-planning enquiry for the proposed high profile residential estate.

Rosemary played an active part in all these main issues as well as in innumerable small ones. Two of these latter were peculiarly her own. The first was the disposal of unsightly wrecks on the banks of the river towards Wilford Bridge, for which she harassed Suffolk Coastal officials until they provided a share of the funds for the work. The second, quite recently, was to keep the path along the river bank to Wilford Bridge open, which had become enclosed by a leasee. Collecting two hundred signatures to complicated forms to prove former use of the path was one part of this operation. Rosemary tackled this single-handed, once again proving to be a good person to have on our side.

She will be remembered fondly by many members on a personal basis. The Committee have agreed to provide a





public token of appreciation for her efforts and style. The form of this is not yet decided but if the redevelopment of the Melton riverside site comes to fruition, that may provide an opportunity for a commemorative seat.

Denzil Cowdry

## Felixstowe. 11th April 2008

Dear Sir,

With reference to the article on page 4 of the Spring Issue of 2008, I may be able to help regarding *Vertigo Angustior* (there appears to be a "typo" in the magazine, as it was spelled *Augustior*)

In Martlesham Creek there are indeed *Vertigo Angustior* and they are an endangered Red Data Book species. But what are they?

The *Vertigo* are very small land snails, rarely more than 2.5mm in height. Contrary to their name, they do not necessarily suffer with a problem with their balance mechanism (although maybe some do, and this is why they are so rare!) Of all the *Vertigo* species, this is one of only two that are sinistrally coiled – left-handed coiling.

Six of this species are found in Suffolk and all but one are rare. *V. Angustior* is one of Britain's rarest land snails. It lives in permanent marshy grasslands or in moss in damp hollows on sand dunes. In Martlesham Creek, it only lives on the south side – obviously enjoying sun-bathing – and the zone that it inhabits is only 10m wide, mainly consisting of Greater Pond Sedge and other bog plants up to the saltmarsh line. Here it is only found in low densities with few specimens

seen on subsequent visits. It really is just hanging on there.

Yours faithfully,

Peter L Ling

(Conservation Advisor with Suffolk Wildlife Trust with a degree in Ecology)  
(For bibliography, see Ian J Killeen, *The Land and Freshwater Molluscs of Suffolk*, Suffolk Naturalists Society, 1992)

*The editor is very grateful for this information, and for the correction. His Dictionary suggests that 'angustus' (= base, petty), would be far more appropriate to this little fellow than 'augustus' (= grand, majestic). He hopes that readers will share his delight in this Latin lesson and will not think any the less of this doughty little snail: augustus only in spirit.*

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#### **FRANK KNIGHTS**

The death of Frank Knights has been announced too late for us to offer a tribute in this issue.

**Funeral: Thurs 2nd Oct at 11am**  
West Chapel Ipswich Crematorium



# THE RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

## AUTUMN MEETING

To be held at

**The Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club**  
Felixstowe Ferry

On  
**Friday 17th October 2008 at 7.30pm**

**Mr. Bill Parker**  
Project Officer with Suffolk Coastal District Council

will give a talk on

***Shaping the Estuary's future***

*The bar open at 7pm*