

# River Deben Association News Letter - Autumn 1995



Number 11

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Compilation : Tim Midwinter

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## Chairman's Comment

Those of you, and I suspect that it is the majority, who have picnicked at The Rocks, know of its isolated splendour and magical qualities. Regrettably, the cliffs that back the beach are now very seriously eroded and the tree line above, so badly damaged by the 1987 storm, seriously depleted. Much of the erosion is caused by natural elements, particularly winter gales that undermine the bank and cause trees to fall - but visitors are also causing major problems. In several areas children slide down leaving nasty scars where grass and other plants are not binding the surface and then, of course, the rains scour the cliffs. Probably more serious than that is the cutting of trees for barbecues and bonfires. The trees that have fallen form a breakwater and, apart from tidying them up, they need to be left. Many trees on the bank have had branches ripped off, are badly damaged and will not develop fully.

The River Deben Association put up some signs earlier this season but within a short time, they had been taken down and burnt - which is a very sad reflection on some "yachtsmen". More signs have now been put up, but it must be up to all of us to help police this problem, and, if we see people cutting down trees, we should try to persuade them not to. There is nothing wrong with modern portable barbecues if disposed of properly, and if groups of people want to organise a bonfire then they should take their wood with them. But please, please save the trees and with them the bank.

Anthony Mason  
Chairman

## Editorial

But we have never had an editorial in the River Deben Association Newsletter before. True, and I was not anticipating that there would be one this time. But just as I was getting all the copy in, my plans were thrown awry with the news that the Whisstock site was for sale, and that plans were being made to acquire it for the development of a Maritime Heritage Centre. And would I publish this, and would I publish that. You will find a copy of a letter to the Suffolk Coastal District Council in the following pages, and also an appraisal of what is involved. It is such an imaginative idea, and so worthy of consideration, that I believe that members of the River Deben Association should be amongst the first to know about it.

At our Open meeting on October 13th, there will be plenty of opportunity for views to be aired on this important idea, and I do hope that members will be prepared to contribute. The promoters of such a project as this need plenty of encouragement to overcome the hurdles ahead, and if the ideas meet with general approval, I hope that we will be able to send them forth with renewed vigour. The concept we hope will involve the Sutton Hoo Society, and Woodbridge Museum. You will have the opportunity at the

meeting to hear Dr. Rosemary Hoppitt speaking about the centre at Roskilde in Denmark where a Viking Maritime Heritage Centre has been developed. It is hoped that some plans of the development of Whisstocks Yard will be on display at the meeting.

The article on 'Ginger Dot' certainly relates to the concept of a Maritime Centre. She is on Whisstock's yard at the moment, and is worth a visit. She is 86 ft. long, and any claim to be the longest boat ever in the Deben is promptly refuted by the Anglo Saxon Ship at Sutton Hoo which was 89 ft. I hope that Susan and Angus Clark will keep us informed of developments. And I endorse Ian Battye's suggestion that we should have more information about historic boats on the Deben.

This Newsletter, being the forum for ideas about the Deben, should have a lively correspondence section. I welcome the letter about the clash between Deben and Aldeburgh week, and hope that I may have more letters in future on this and any other theme.

Finally, I have decided that I do not mind writing an Editorial, and I warn you that you may have them again in further Newsletters.

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## Association Business

### Forthcoming Events

Friday, 13 October 1995

Open Meeting

Woodbridge Community Hall, 19:30.

Speaker: Dr Rosemary Hoppitt on "A brief view of the development of the Roskilde Viking Museum in Denmark"

Sunday, 15 October 1995

Litter Clearance.

August 10th - 17th 1996

Deben Week

## Who's Who

### Officers

Chairman	Anthony Mason. 29 Ipswich Rd, Wdge. IP12 4BS	☎ 01394 386601
Vice Chairman	Michael Atkins. Rudd's Barn, Waldringfield Rd, Martlesham. IP12 4PJ	☎ 01473 736668
Secretary	Harry Norris. Deben Vane, Ipswich Rd, Wdge. IP12 4BS	☎ 01394 384442
Treasurer	Terence Kermode. 8 Carmelite Place, Wdge. IP12 1DR	☎ 01394 386613
Press Sec.	Rosemary Schlee. Deben Lodge, Melton Rd, Wdge. IP12 1NH	☎ 01394 382740

### Committee Members

Felixstowe Ferry	David White. 6 Coniston Close, Felixstowe. IP11 9SW	☎ 01394 283972
History	Robert Simper. Sluice Cottage, Ramsholt.	☎ 01394 411273
	David Cavey. 10 Crown Place, Woodbridge	☎ 01394 387099
Wildfowlers	Adrian Judge. 29 Bredfield St, Wdge. IP12 4NH	☎ 01394 383350
Watersports	Tim Midwinter. 37 Coopers Rd, Martlesham Heath. Ipswich. IP5 7SJ	☎ 01473 623020
SCDC Liaison	Russell Geen. 41 Hasketon Rd, Wdge. IP12 4LE	☎ 01394 383696
Water-Ski Club	Steve James. 28 Burnham Close, Ipswich. IP4 4ED	☎ 01473 274254
General Liaison	Ian Battye. Upson Cottage, 8 Crown Place Wdge IP12 1BN	☎ 01394 382338
	Anni Healey. Jesters, 7A Burkitt Rd, Wdge. IP12 4JJ	☎ 01394 382291
Angling	Don Johnson. Ivy Dene, Melton Hill, Melton. IP12 1AX	☎ 01394 383661
Planning & Footpaths	Anne Moore. 2 Grundisburgh Rd, Wdge. IP12 4HG	☎ 01394 383559

## Litter Clearance

Trevor Ambrose has now run the Litter Collection for three years, and we are all grateful for all he has done. The Collection this October will be his last, before David

Cavey takes over from him. Anyone who would like to help in this year's collection should ring Trevor Ambrose on 01394 386021.

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## Reports

### Committee Meeting Jottings

At the time of writing, your Committee has met only once since the Annual General meeting. Our new venue is the British Legion Club in the Thoroughfare at Woodbridge where we were given a warm welcome, and a wide selection of beers to tempt us. A glass of 'Old Speckled Hen' went down well after the meeting. This was our first opportunity to welcome David Cavey. It is important to have new faces on the Committee, and David contributed much to our discussions. Maybe it was inevitable that he should be 'volunteered' to take over the litter collection from Trevor Ambrose.

At the Annual General Meeting, and thanks to the efforts of our Chairman, plenty of draft copies of the Association's "Guide to the River Deben" were available for everyone, and in the discussion on the Guide, many valuable points were made. In the end, there was a strong vote that we should go ahead with the Guide, but an equally strong undercurrent that it should not be in the form as presented. The chief point made was that much more emphasis should be made on conservation. In consequence, a new editorial group has been formed, and is in the process of rewriting the Guide.

It was at the previous meeting that Anni Healey stirred our imagination with the thought that we should re-establish a highway over the river from the Ferry Hard in Woodbridge to the Sutton Bank opposite. Visions of moo-ing cows being transported peacefully across in a flat bottomed boat

seemed a little impractical, and thoughts then concentrated on sheep. I gather that the Suffolk Wildlife Trust was cautious about lending their sheep, and there was some concern that carriages, horses or cows could establish a highway, but maybe not sheep. And, in this safety conscious age, could the sheep swim or should they have lifejackets? The writer saw for himself a young black sheep swimming and baa-ing in the middle of a small lake in the Lake District this summer with the occasional baa turning into a splutter as water got in the way, but eventually swimming to its mother (who was baa-ing but not spluttering) on the shore. So sheep can swim.

I left the meeting with a ditty ringing in my head:-

Anni had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow,

And everywhere that Anni went (except across the river) the lamb was sure to go.

I understand that the technical difficulties of the venture have necessitated a postponement of a few weeks. But I will keep my readers informed of the latest developments.

Michael Atkins

## **Bawdsey Haven Yacht Club**

Early in the summer of 1995 a new sailing club was opened on the River Deben. Strictly speaking there has been a sailing club at Bawdsey Ferry since sometime in the mid-1960s when the RAF opened a sailing club to people in the Services. A clubhouse was built and at sometime members laid down a slipway under the shelter of Bawdsey Quay, almost to the low tide mark.

The RAF club seems to have had its highs and lows, but generally speaking, it's limited number of members had very little contact with other boating people on the Deben.

When RAF Bawdsey closed, the sailing club closed too, in fact everything regarding Bawdsey Manor remained in limbo for a few years while the PSA tried to find a buyer. In the end the Bawdsey Manor House and most of the surrounding property was sold to Neils and Anne Toettcher who had been running the Alexander International Language School near London. This Language School was then transferred to Suffolk under the name of Bawdsey College.

It was John Toettcher, Neils' younger brother and property manager at Bawdsey college, who was entrusted with the job of bringing the sailing club back to life. John gave it the name Bawdsey Haven Yacht Club, not knowing that in the 18th century the lower end of the Deben had in fact had this name. The name crops up in the reports of harassed customs officers who found that all the fishermen at Bawdsey Haven were involved in smuggling in some way. But these reports were about the hamlet we now call Felixstowe Ferry.

The idea behind the new Bawdsey Haven Yacht Club is that it should be used by local

people, while Bawdsey College plans to run sailing courses for their students. Basically the College will use the clubhouse in the week days while members will use it at the weekends. Members are keeping their boats in the club yard and have the use of the slipway at any time. The club has no plans to get involved in racing and is for those who like messing about in boats or, in some cases, those who wish to help Bawdsey college with its plans to start a sailing school.

The Bawdsey Haven YC was opened by the author Hammond Innes while it's first President is Neils Toettcher and it's first Commodore is Robert Simper who grew up in Bawdsey during World War II when RAF Bawdsey was a very secret radar base. Martin Wenyon, who made a courageous effort to restart Whisstocks' old boat yard at Woodbridge and has thrown himself into local politics, is the secretary. From the 70 people who have joined the new club, Bill Hurst, a committee member, was a keen member during his time at RAF Bawdsey. The wife of the treasurer, Brian Foster, has sewn the prototype of the club's burgee. It is a representation of one of the Chain Home radar pylons from World war II against a background of green.

So far the Bawdsey Haven YC has been more of a DIY builders club because parties of members have been repairing the club house and its surroundings, but slowly the club is gathering momentum. This winter there are going to be a series of talks on maritime subjects at Bawdsey Manor which will be open to members and non-members. However the club, which was warmly welcomed at its opening by all the commodores of the other Deben clubs, looks forward to getting local people afloat on this beautiful river.

Robert Simper

## Articles

### **A Maritime Heritage Centre for Woodbridge.**

*Letter from Martin Wenyon to Trevor Archibold the Chairman of the S.C.D.C. Recreation and Amenities Committee.*

Dear Trevor,

As you know from our brief talk recently the site of the former 'Whisstocks' boatyard has been put up for sale by the present owner as a whole or in parts. I should like to propose that your committee, if appropriate, should look into the feasibility of the purchase of all or part of the site to fulfil the following objectives:-

1. Public access to the River Deben via the slipway and the Ferry Hard. At present, there is no public access for boats into the river. This would be supported by the River Deben Association and the Knoll Fairway Committee. There could also be a dinghy storage area on the site.
2. Provision of visitors' berths and a berth for a barge near the Town Quay. The Town Council have been considering how to achieve this for some time, but without access to the ooze at present part of the 'Whisstocks' site, this has not been possible. Each berth could be capable of generating at least £400/year if occupied all the year round by a vessel of 30 ft in length. One can also see the possibility of staging a traditional boat rally/ festival based around the historic riverside centre.
3. Car park and access could be provided.
4. A boatyard with slipway for the hauling out and repair of vessels up to about 60 tons. This could be let to commercial interests (perhaps Frank Knights) and would enable the

continuation of a boatyard on the site which is considered essential by many people. It would also provide a continuing facility for owners of larger vessels who would otherwise have to look elsewhere. On the basis of slipping one 40 ft vessel each week and charging £3.50/ft for a slip and launch, and £20/day ,for storage for three days, this would generate £10,400 per year.

5. The new building on the site, for which planning permission has been given, could be a Sutton Hoo Museum in conjunction with the British Museum thus bringing Raedwald's treasure back home to its natural resting place within site of the burial ground. This would provide a tremendous tourist attraction to enhance the historic Tide Mill area. The Tourist Information Centre for Woodbridge could also be incorporated along with a restaurant and lecture room. The present shed could be a Maritime Museum in partnership with the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, with space for outside exhibits.

The whole project would provide a coherent proposal for a Maritime Millennium bid for Woodbridge.

Funding could be from a variety of sources in tandem with a major public appeal. Such sources might include:-

1. Lottery/Millennium.
2. Suffolk Coastal District Council.
3. Suffolk County Council.
4. Woodbridge Town Council.
5. East Anglian Tourist Board.
6. Konver.
7. River Deben Association.

8. British Museum.
9. National Maritime Museum.
10. Local businesses.
11. Others.....

This idea is at the proposal stage to see if there could at least be backing from SCDC to enable a more thorough feasibility study to be undertaken. What is certain is that a historic site in the heart of Woodbridge is up for sale and the time is right to put together a bid for Millennium funding for a project that would have widespread support from the local community and that will really put Woodbridge on the map.

I look forward to your comments.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Wenyon.

## **An Appreciation of Martin Wenyon's Letter**

Woodbridge: An attractive small market town with market square, church and river - similar features found in countless other towns of the same size in Britain BUT Woodbridge has a Tide Mill and the Sutton Hoo site. The former is the 'trade mark' of the town and attracts many visitors each year from home and abroad. The Sutton Hoo site is unique and Sir Thomas Kendrick describes it as "the most marvellous find in the archaeological annals of England". Professor Martin Carver led the most recent dig from start to finish and plans to publish the definitive history in 1996. The Professor has said "the cultural value of Sutton Hoo - England's first royal cemetery - stretches beyond local interest and includes school children (who study it in the National Curriculum) and visitors from all over the world..... By the turn of the century, visitors should be able to appreciate the story of the cemetery, its claim for Kingship, its Scandinavian links, its human sacrifices, cremations and ship

burials, and experience the unique variety of the Sutton Hoo historic monument in both atmosphere and detail". ('East Anglian Daily Times 20th December 1993).

Whilst the site itself has been protected and though it is only some 600 yards across the river from the town, there is no sign yet of his hopes being fulfilled.

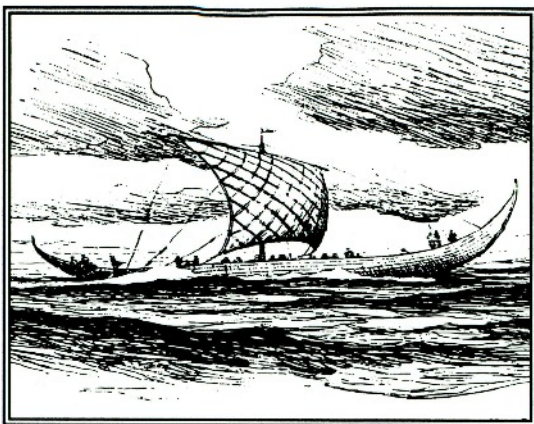
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For centuries the Deben estuary was one of the main routes for the many invasions and movements of people and in the 5th/6th centuries, Sutton Hoo became an important burial ground. In the 16th/17th to mid 19th century, the river was the main artery for Woodbridge. With its oak forests to the east and agricultural crops and sheep to the west and easy access to the Baltic and Continent, shipbuilding and many ancillary trades prospered. Raw and finished agricultural products were exported and coal, building stone, wine and luxury goods etc. imported from the continent.

For the last century and more the Town has lacked a real core and declined as the river silted up. The arrival of the railway in 1870 quickly reduced the river trade and eventually the last commercial delivery was to meet an emergency in the harsh winter of 1940 when a steam coaster landed 300 tons of coal at Sun Wharf. It became very quiet between the wars and remained that way until the 1970s with the arrival of yachting as a leisure industry. The boom of the 80s created an explosion of yachting and saw some 1000+ local and many visitors' yachts (mostly from Holland) using this beautiful estuary.

It would be fair to say that Woodbridge has drifted and sometimes stumbled in its development this century. Its biggest benefactor was Thomas Seckford some 300 years ago, followed by those who gave it its special open spaces, Elmhurst Park and Kingston Field. Such sources have long dried up.

In the 50s, post war planning established itself and did some good work. They exerted firm control but were often dependent on political and financial considerations.



Almost by definition they have difficulty in handling imaginative and "one-off" situations. This is when local Councillors could spark the imagination and, with the support of their electorate and the Press, break the mould of the last 50 years. Such opportunities are rare but one occurs now.

There is only one central site which could once again provide the key access to take Woodbridge into the next Millennium by reintegrating the Market Square, the Thoro'fare (the commercial centre) and the river - WHISSTOCKS. It has good access and river frontage, a slipway and ferry hard backed by approximately an acre of open space for public use as possible Sutton Hoo, Woodbridge and Maritime Museums, boatyard use, some car parking and public toilets.

In 1991 when Whisstocks was last sold, a golden opportunity was missed to look at it "ab initio" and see what could be made of most benefit for the town in the next century as opposed to individuals.

However the Council went by "the book" and planning permission was eventually granted for considerable development. The site is now up for sale as a whole or in parts and it is understood the price is in the region of £345,000.

Whilst there is interest in part of the site for boatyard activities it is unlikely that there will be a serious backer for long term

boatyard work on the site as a whole or major part of it. For such people there are larger, cheaper and less restrictive sites available elsewhere.

The serious developer who plans in terms of a 10 year land bank will not buy it for himself until the time is ripe. In spite of the protestations of Planners and Councillors with safeguards that theoretically should never allow it to happen, it is almost a mathematical certainty that they would ultimately be forced to agree to residential development. Few would admit it publicly.

The answer? Buy it NOW and SECURE public ownership for the future.

How? There is not much time.

**Grass roots.** If it can be shown that there is real interest and support at local authority level and by the public - backed by good Press coverage - then planned approaches could be made to a powerful range of public and amenity bodies and people of influence, (See Martin Wenyon's letter).

General apathy would kill it stone dead. It is worth a major effort to stir the Council's imaginations into action.

Ian Battye



## Island Cricket on the Deben

Long years ago at the Isle of Wight I saw a picture of the annual cricket match between Parkhurst prisoners and the nobs of the yachting world. No doubt there were warders sitting watchfully on piles of oars as well as sweaters but it all looked both romantic and unlikely. Most Deben Weeks we saw that lovely stretch of golden perfect sand exposed, called goodness knows why "The Horse Sands" - and indeed moorings were annually laid on the edge of it for the Dragonflies for the Regatta, after one or two of us did our backs in lifting those delightfully heavy craft up the beach after racing. So when at last I attained the eminence of being Class Secretary, I was able to arrange both a cricket match for the Dragonflies and a rounders game at the other end of the Horse Sands for the attendant cadets & there were plenty of both. Filled with nervousness despite much prior consultation with Mr. Brinkley *et al.*, our boat arrived first to get a toe upon a square foot of sand on the ebb, and a host of sails in view upriver. But neither Mr. Brinkley nor the Good Lord let me down and in no time a good big golden stretch was available for lunch, cricket & rounders: played with ancient tennis balls most of which ended in the river. There was one doctor more familiar with Woodbridge than Felixstowe who having anchored went back to his boat for more beer and disappeared up to his chest. We finished up with a race around the Haven and back to WSC line. What about the River Deben Association getting up such an event in the 90s, maybe with more interesting variations? I think some beer, along with younger children, were motored across from Felixstowe, and there's nothing to stop a few yachts anchoring nearby and rowing over. Any ideas?

Rosemary Schlee

## Waldringfield Ugly Ducklings

If you happened to be walking along the Deben at Waldringfield on the Tuesday of Summer half term this year you would have seen the "Ugly Ducklings". Six in the mornings and a second clutch in the afternoons. They were learning to sail on an "Oppie" course for 8-11 year old children run by the Waldringfield Sailing Club.

There have been a number of interesting ways of teaching youngsters to sail, from finding out yourself to a highly structured programme of learning. The French have used a system of putting the youngsters in the bare boat holding a piece of material attached to two poles upwind of the lunch basket. This has been used to introduce windsurfing to the "small" before giving them a complicated sail and rig. Instructor colleagues in Norfolk invented the "gate" method. To turn the boat around country children were asked to relate to going through a country gate. Opening the latch (sorting hands on the main sheet and tiller), Push the gate open (push the tiller away), walk into the field (change sides on the boat), close the gate (push the tiller back into the central position) and walk along the path (sail on your new course).

If you were in the Club area you would have seen that I favour the "dog on a lead" method. To teach the skill of turning the boat around - to the sailor tacking and gybing - there is a brief demonstration of how to do it, they have a go in the boat on a short line and when competent on a long line followed by free sailing. By the end of the first two hour session the children could turn the boat around either by pushing or pulling the tiller and arrive back at the same spot just off shore.

During the four sessions they practised being towed out to the sailing area, sailing around following Jonathan Fish or Debbie Watson sailing a Topper, learning about tides and the wind, stopping and starting

and sailing around a triangular course.

The fleet of boats was hired from the Eastern Region of the Royal Yachting Association. There are three trailers of Oppies, two of Toppers and two of Windsurfing boards which are available for Clubs and Organisations to hire for training. The fleets are spread around the region and more information can be obtained by contacting me on 01480 811099.

By the Friday session after sailing to the training area we set up a simple series of races and in true "Hans Andersen" fashion the Ducklings had turned into swans, well cygnets anyway! They had worked out how to sail around the course taking account of the tide and wind and the inborn competitive nature made sure that we had a race on our hands. Look out for these swans in future club championships.

John Laws

P.S. There will be another opportunity for youngsters to learn to sail in Optimists during the Spring Bank Holiday weekend next year.

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## Deben Reminiscences

Our family's connection with the River Deben dates back to 1947. Frank, my husband, had been demobbed after serving for 6 years in the Royal Navy and suddenly petrol was rationed again, with no allowance for the ordinary motorist. Never one to be beaten, Frank decided we would go to Waldringfield and buy a hut, and that we would travel by bicycle. We lived in Foxhall Road, and on Saturday mornings we would set off for the weekend, Frank on my bicycle fitted with a basket or the carrier for Ann (aged 2½ years). Our son Dennis aged 7 years was on a small Fairy cycle with legs spinning, but mostly pushed by Frank. I had his machine with an "errand boys" basket on the front

containing all the food for the weekend and spare clothes. A long hot journey but well rewarded with a swim in the Deben!

Deben Week always stirs the memory and in 1947 we only had the starting hut at Waldringfield and Mrs. Hawkes and Mrs Parker sat at card tables outside under sunshades to take the entries and the money. Competitors were yachts and big open boats. There were no facilities - no water, no galley, no showers, no Clubhouse! How lucky the sailors are today!

Shore events were a separate occasion but many of the events were the same as today - rowing, swimming, shovel race, etc. The prize giving was at Mr. Stolley's round hut adjacent to the Clubhouse with a huge bunch of dahlias from Bertie Bell in the village for the lady presenting the prizes.

Interclub racing between Deben Yacht Club, Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club and Waldringfield Sailing Club took place at Ramsholt, and competition was fierce. We used to help Mrs. Nunn at Ramsholt Arms prepare the tea of sandwiches and cakes and I can still visualise the dark kitchen with huge ranges and kettles bubbling ready to make the tea. I think she charged us one shilling a head!

In 1957 a complete surprise, we were visited by the Vikings at the end of Shore events. It was nearly dark when loud war cries and shouts were heard from the River and 2 whalers containing "Warriors", war painted and bearded, appeared out of the mist. Three of our young girls, Chris Liddell, Sally White and Ann Mason were conveniently on the beach and were kidnapped and taken aboard the whalers. This was the sign for the Waldringfield boys, also war painted and bearded (some with beards hanging from one ear!), to appear and a big battle took place ending up with everyone in the river and covered in poor old Deben mud! Drinks and buns from

the galley were much appreciated. The "invaders" were boys from H.M.S. Ganges, Shotley.

Jill Atkins in her interesting article in the Spring mentioned the pond where the dinghy park now is. This was a source of great delight to our youngsters and a "regatta" would be held on a day unsuitable for river sailing. Boats would be made of tree bark and matchboxes with newspaper sails, and very serious racing took place. Cups were made of foil from chocolate bars and a bunch of sea lavender from the marshes was presented to the lady who gave the "prizes". It is interesting to note how we all made our own entertainment during the long summer holidays.

Joan Mossman

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## Camping on the Tips

My fondest memory of the Deben is only 20 years old but very strong. In early teens I and three friends used to spend a week each August camping at the Tips. It was the highlight of the summer for me, better even than the chance of winning the Under 15 Girls Cup in Cadet Week - The Tips is an ideal place for teenagers - the tide goes out and parents cannot interfere.

We transported a ridiculous amount of kit in 2 Cadets, one skiff & a rubber dinghy that remained inflated for just long enough to make the journey. The moment we landed anyone else daring to set foot on the beach was regarded as trespassing. The best part was watching unsuspecting visitors wading through the mud trying to re-float their boats.

Daily routine, apart from towing the skiff by Cadet to Waldringfield to raid the home larder, consisted of wood gathering from the dead branches laden with seaweed between the camp and Stonner. We made very sophisticated stretchers for the purpose. We also made many attempts to

scale the oak tree behind the tents, ruined what remained of the family frypans, and performed great nautical feats in the skiff & overturned dinghy. We used to tie the dinghy to the Tips buoy, until we ended up at Methersgate, buoy in tow. We once went to Woodbridge for supplies, but people stared, perhaps because no-one ever packed a hairbrush and there was no fresh water at the Tips so no washing was done. In the evenings we did the camp fire routine, played card games, gambled with acorns (5p) and rabbit droppings (a penny each). After dark we watched the stars, sometimes saw a shooting star! Quite alarming was the time a gamekeeper at dawn prised open the flap of our tent with a gun he happened to have over his arm at the time. In my rose-tinted memory it never rained, there was always sun and Force 3 by the afternoon. The only disappointment each time was getting home and having a bath - all that suntan just disappeared.

Oriel Laws

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## River Jottings

The Felixstowe Ferry Foreshore Trust's long haul assembling the best evidence available for their case in the High Court continues. The High Court is a one shot business so the evidence needs to be overwhelming: it is already good. Much has been assembled but it is surprising how much continues to turn up. We have been asked to see if anyone has anything of pictorial or written evidence as far back as anyone can go of the Ferry area, in particular from the Sailing Club building going upstream round to the west, covering all the area behind and to include the houseboats in their mud berths.

The new ferry seems to be having a busy time in this glorious weather, and it is clearly providing a valued public service. We wish it every success in the future, and, in particular, the endurance to survive the

trials of a long winter ahead.

At Waldringfield, one of the problems is the limited beach area, access to it and parking/storage space for boats and cars. The Sailing Club and the Parish Council are in negotiations over the slipway by the Maybush, although there is some doubt as to who is the present owner. Whatever happens, we support them in discouraging the launching of waterskis, waterjets etc. Lucky Orford, who, as a Trust, can make their own by-laws prohibiting such use legally.

Elsewhere you will find notes on the history of 'Ginger Dot' built in 1922 in the U.S.A. For the last ten years, she has been used as a houseboat in a mud berth at Melton without anyone being aware of her history. There are quite a few boats on the Deben with unusual histories. We would like to publish the history of one each issue if we can interest some owners or local historians to supply a few notes to build up a picture. It could be a valued part of the Newsletter.

Ian Battye.

## Letters

### Aldeburgh and Deben Week clash

Dear Sir,

Another Deben week has come and gone. A few bystanders comments could be made.

Having attended the "week" for thirty years and more, the one reason given for the complicated Regatta Programme is always THE TIDE. Our beloved river does cause some sailing problems.

This "Week" quite rightly started with the tots sand-castle competition - they do not mind morning or afternoon as long as the elusive Waldringfield sand is available. Other shore events happens, it seems, at any TIDE. Either Sunday, the spectacular Yachtsman's Service is held. This year, unusually it was on high water (not quite - Ed) in a strong north-easterly pushing every floating object on to a dreaded lee shore. Some of us afloat were beyond reach of hymn sheets and blessings remaining out on moorings - but the Collectors came nevertheless. Getting there from Ramsholt is the highlight of the week, slowly progressing in an ever increasing fleet. Alas, those spectators who had come to Ramsholt duly at 5.15 p.m. as scheduled saw little as the leading boat with 'The Reverend' on board started way up river and not from the quay.

Monday morning was all bustle with the racers off to Felixstowe Ferry. The strong entry of Squibs bunched on the start line looked fantastic. No great gales this year but strong enough breezes to prevent the Cadets and Mirrors going out to sea. Groans from the young helms as it is their rare opportunity to be out on the waves, but strong currents round Horse Buoy and back to Martello tested their skills.

Plenty of long races for Squibs, Larks, Wayfarers, Lasers and others out round the

sea courses before coming back to Waldringfield for the excellent refreshments late Wednesday and all day Thursday. On to the narrow stretches of Woodbridge and a tasty Friday lunch at D.Y.C. - the various classes coping with the aptly named Troublesome Reach. Saturday saw the fun and games back at Waldringfield.

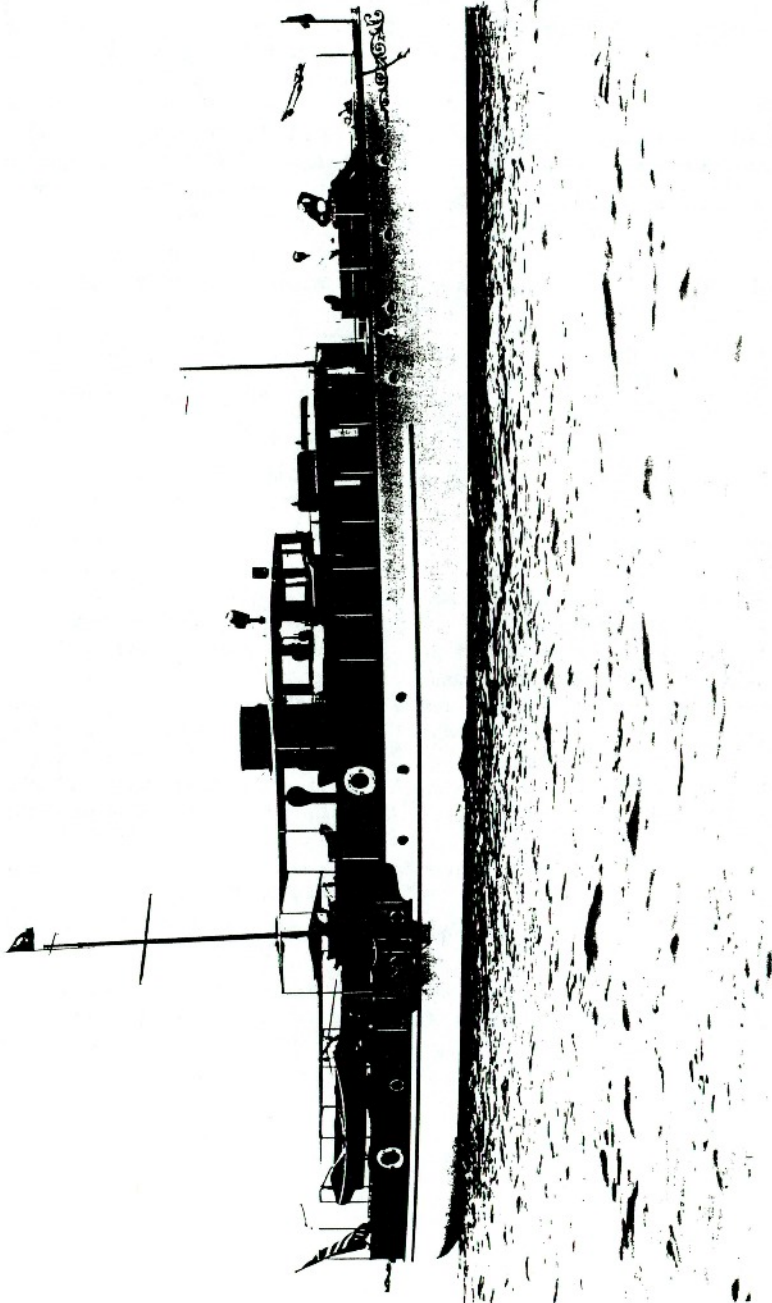
The difficulty for this bystander was to be in the right place at the right TIDE. Not only chasing up and down lanes to Deben venues but Aldeburgh week coincided so off to Slaughden as well. On questioning the important people known as Flag Officers, the answer again is always TIDES. So what! In the seven days, they change anyway. Close families were taking part on both rivers everyday - very difficult.

Many times, we have sailed through the tricky Shingle Street entrance to the Ore river to spend Aldeburgh "week" at anchor or on a guest mooring. Likewise, the Wayfarers, Yachts and others have arrived to challenge the Aldeburgh crews. The Waldringfield Dragons used to be great contestants. Mirrors were trailed by road to compete, the Deben sailors frequently won the trophies. Is this all to be in the past? Surely with goodwill, this clash can be remedied. Those wishing to have two exciting local sailing "weeks", traditionally a fortnight or more apart, would benefit from better planning.

However this last "week" was truly glorious on both rivers. On each TIDE, they were alive with sails, and at both Prizegivings, the many organisers were duly thanked and applauded.

This bystander enjoyed it all.

J. Doble.



## Ginger Dot

The motor yacht 'Ginger Dot' was built in 1922 by the famous Luders Marine Construction Company of Stamford, Connecticut, U.S.A. She was commissioned by Frank Ballou Stearns, the designer and manufacturer of the fabulous Stearns motor cars. He was interested, as a sideline, in the development of the diesel engine and had his yacht fitted with a pair of 80HP Mianus 4-cylinder 2 strokes. She was one of the first pleasure yachts to be diesel powered.

The 'Ginger Dot' was the ultimate in elegance and epitomised the golden age of American style and invention. There are many photographs and records of her life in America until she made the crossing to Europe in 1933. She then appeared at Le Havre owned by a well known and much respected Frenchman who, because of his Jewish ancestry, was forced to leave for America in 1939. His yacht was impounded by the authorities and then sold to an American living in England. He enjoyed her for a month or two before she was requisitioned by the Admiralty.

The war turned this beautiful old yacht into a heavily armed patrol boat, hunting submarines and escorting flotillas of landing craft in the channel. Her most glorious and final hour was on the eve of the invasion of Europe when she was sent off to go alongside six destroyers with sailing orders whilst they were assembled at Spithead. The weather was very rough and she took such a lot of damage by being repeatedly dashed against the sides of the warships that she limped back to her base on the Hamble and was pensioned off the following day.

'Ginger Dot' lay at moorings, property of His Majesty's Government, for about five years. She briefly became the headquarters of the Redclyffe Yacht Club at Wareham whose patron was the writer Percy Westerman.

There followed forty years of life as a houseboat, becoming more and more shabby until, in 1990, her then owner began to remove the trappings of houseboat life and reveal many original features. He also started on the quest to research her early history and was amazed to find so much. One of the most interesting episodes was in 1932 when she was used by Colonel Charles Lindbergh, the pioneer aviator, to search for his kidnapped child who was reputedly being held by his captors on a boat. It turned out to be a hoax and the story of the kidnapping held the headlines for two months - years later, during a wartime refit, a letter to Lindbergh was found in the bilges though, sadly, it has not stayed with the boat.

Now the history of 'Ginger Dot' is starting a new chapter. Her new owners, Angus and Susan Clark, are embarking on a full restoration and intend to bring her back to exactly as she was in 1922, with the aid of much work and the inspiration of old photographs. She will reside in a boat shed alongside the River Deben while the restoration work proceeds with Peter Benstead playing a major role in support.

The 'Ginger Dot' is 86 ft long and is built of yellow pine on American oak frames. With her original Mianus engines, she was remarkable in performance, being able to cruise at 13 miles an hour at a cost of less than a dollar an hour (in 1922). The name 'Ginger Dot' was in honour of Frank Stearns two daughters Ginger and Dorothy. Her subsequent owners called her 'Patricia', 'Marcon', 'Fifrelin II', 'Jaime', 'HMS Tormentor', 'HMS Judith', 'Cavatica', 'Daystar', and 'Ginger Dot' again.

*From notes supplied by  
Angus and Susan Clark*

# **RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION Open Meeting**

At 7:30pm on Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1995 at the Woodbridge Community Hall.

**Everyone Welcome**

The Maritime Heritage Centre will be the main topic for discussion.

It is hoped that there will be time for discussion on other matters concerning the River Deben.

**INTERVAL**

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available.

**SPEAKER:**

Dr Rosemary Hoppitt will give an illustrated talk on:-

**"A brief view of the development of the Roskilde Viking Museum in  
Denmark"**

The Talk will explore the potential similarities between the proposed Maritime Heritage Centre for Woodbridge and the Roskilde Viking Museum.