

River Deben Association

News Letter Autumn 1999



Number 19

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EDITORIAL

This is to be my last Newsletter. The Chairman (God bless him) has accepted my plea to be relieved. A new editorial Team is being recruited, and it is hoped that further details will be available at the Open Meeting. This meeting has had to be postponed as the Community Centre was not available when we wanted it. The date is now Friday, October 29th at 7.30 p.m. when we hope to have a speaker from Posford Duvivier to tell us about the Estuarine studies they are conducting for the Deben and the coast.

I do not find the word 'Estuarine' flows easily from the lips. I have seen it referred to as Estuarian, but this seems to have now lapsed. The word 'Estuarine' reminds me that my father-in-law claimed (and I have no reason to doubt him) that many many years ago, the Rhine and the Thames shared the same delta. But that only confuses the issue. For those who have no idea what estuarine studies are about, here is a brief explanation. The Environment Agency have appointed Posford Duvivier to initiate research and advise on the sea defence problems caused by global warming on the coast and estuaries of England. The Deben forms a very small part of this brief, but a preliminary report has recently been issued as a discussion paper together with some recommendations. Our Chairman has included in his comments the address of Posford Duvivier where members can make comments, and maybe copies of the reports can be obtained from that address (or from SCDC).

I would stress that at this stage, we are dealing with a discussion paper which may take some 20 to 30 years to implement - except that I do hope that the problems at Felixstowe Ferry will be dealt with immediately. There is a further report on the protection of the coast line from Shingle Street to Bawdsey where any erosion is

bound to have implications for Felixstowe Ferry. To help members to understand the possibilities for the Deben we have included in this Newsletter a map of the Deben where residential areas which would have to be protected are coloured yellow; agricultural land which might be protected is coloured red; and the green areas would be allowed to revert to mud flats and saltmarsh.

I must stress that I am not an authority on the study, and I may have misinterpreted some of the issues. But I felt that members would want some idea of the studies which, I suspect, may become a bigger issue than Bentwaters.

Michael Atkins

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT

I feel like the proverbial bad penny turning up again as your Chairman. It is rather sad that there were no volunteers for the post as it is not particularly onerous. Jobs are shared by all members of the committee and we do get involved in some very interesting projects.

At the moment we are looking at the Suffolk Estuarine Strategies as they concern the River Deben. This report has been commissioned by the Environmental Agency to look at coastal defences over the next 30 years and considers which areas should be defended, and those where the sea walls should be allowed to be breached to create new saltmarshes, so called 'managed retreat'. Comments by individuals appear elsewhere in this issue but your committee is studying the report, which is a consultation document, with a view to putting forward our views. If individual who have read the report wish to send their views they may do so by writing to the consultants who prepared it: - Posford Duvivier, Rightwell House, Bretton, Peterborough. PE3 8DW.

So where were you for the eclipse of '99? I was on my boat on the Alde and if I had not realised what was happening I could easily have passed the occasion off as a slightly eerie

light caused by cloud and a drop in temperature for half an hour or so! Because of all the publicity and hype we all knew exactly what was happening, and this is what the River Deben Association is all about; making people aware of anything that affects the river and its immediate environs and if necessary taking action.

'Fatal Blow to Airport Plan' read the headlines of the East Anglian on August the 12th. The report, which no doubt most of you have seen records the fact that the Government inspection came out very strongly against the Bentwaters site being used for flying, mentioning in particular that there was 'no national, regional or even sub-regional need for an airport in this location'. I personally have no doubt that the Association was right to oppose the airport as a flight path came straight up the Deben estuary but I also want to make it clear that the development of a business park on the site where most of the jobs will be created has never been opposed by the Association and in any case it is really outside our jurisdiction. As individuals we may be concerned with the increase in local traffic that this will produce but if sustainable jobs can be created, limited development is probably right.

This is the last newsletter prepared by Michael Atkins, number 19, and he has been responsible for 16 of them as editor. The newsletter become the main form of communicating with the membership and keeping you aware of proposals that affect us all. So many people tell me how much they enjoy reading it and so many interesting articles about local life and activities have appeared over the years. Thankfully Michael is staying on the committee but we owe him a very sincere vote of thanks for all his work and for developing the newsletter into the fascinating publication that we have today.

Anthony Mason

THE DEBEN ESTUARY - A VERY SPECIAL PLACE

We've been on it, under it, over it through it and across it. We've been up it and down it, in it and out of it. We've swum in it, splashed in it, fallen in it and sunk in it. We've paddled by it, paddled in it and piddled in it. We've smelled it and drunk it and been sick in it. We've lost watches and glasses and boathooks in it, and found fenders and boathooks, and delight in it. We've had our happiest moments on it and on it, and our most frightening ones.

On its banks, we have walked, camped, picnicked, barbequed and lain. In its saltings, we have gathered flowers and seaweed and litter, watched the seals basking and slid down the seawalls to poke the flat mud. Along its banks, we have crabbed, thrown stones, sandied and washed ourselves. We've hunted sea-bass and oyster in it, and picked sloes and blackberries by it; we've watched the herons haughtily fishing, the terns plumb straight dropping, the cormorants lazily fanning themselves. At both its ends, we have cursed it for its sleepy relentless tides and shifting sand and shingle. Different each year, the bar bars all but the most intrepid intruder, leaving it free for the native few. We prided ourselves on knowing its secrets, but one dark night we crunched, and lay tossed in the surf until released by the rising flood. By Wilford Bridge and the rows, we've revved and furrowed our way through the sticky channels to escape a vertically challenged night on the side.

In certain lights and seasons, its history conjures past shadows. In misty mornings, the clinker built barques crept, muffled on the tide, to Kyson Point to terrify the good burghers of Woodbridge who, in later years, turned to face the wall whilst the gentlemen sailed by in their cutters to land lace and gloves and brandy. And the big barges still glide by bearing tourists, and no longer dinosaur dung from the

coprolite caches of Waldringfield to fertilize fields of newer lands.

Its views of town, village, pub, church, wood, harbour, cliff slowly change through the year. The big skies above threaten and beam on everything between. The river's aspect, moody and quixotic, restive to wind and tide, is never the same. Tales and photographs show the extremes of 1947's freeze and 1987's hurricane, but each spring tide brings some excess to wonder at.

For these and all manner of memories, the Deben is for us, and you alike, a Very Special Place.

Jenny Auber.

LITTER CLEARANCE

Sunday, October 17th, 10.am.

What are you doing on this day ? If you are familiar with the litter clearance routine, you will be scribbling this date in your diary. If you don't know much about it, it is your opportunity to participate in the R.D.A.'s flagship annual event.

If you are involved with a club on the river, they probably have been allocated a section of river bank to clean. There will be a team leader to coordinate manpower. If you are unable to find a team, contact me and I can place you (somewhere on the river bank) in another team where more hands are needed.

It is often very pleasant seeing the river from an other angle. Each year, a little less litter is collected, so please support this event as a morning's effort makes a lot of difference.

Jo Masters (Tel: 01394 383825)

DEBEN REMINISCENCES

Pre-First World War

My earliest memories of holidays at Waldringfield are of being met by my grandmother in a horse drawn carriage at Woodbridge station. I don't remember much about the accommodation except that certainly one year, it was at The Maybush. I didn't like the nasty smell (beer) that came up from below, but there was a lovely poppy wallpaper in my room. My parents had a day boat with just the forepeak with a roof, and my brother and I were stuffed in there when it rained. There were two moorings on the Stonner side, ours and the Kisarki, and on the beach were just one dinghy and two duck punts. In order to get ashore dry shod, there was a heavy plank with two legs on wheels in the front and two handles like a see-saws at the back for lifting it and wheeling it out to where those who didn't want wet feet could climb out and with much steadying, walk to the shore. One of our great pleasures was getting out on the firm slippery mud near our mooring and sliding about on it. When we could swim, of course, the swim back to the boat was enough to clean us off.

Another pleasure was sliding down the end of the cliff - not too good for clothes though. Rectors boat house at the foot of the cliff (still there ?- Ed) was the only "building" between the Maybush and the end of the beach. and I can remember the smell and feel of the wet sand on the floor and the post-bathe ginger nuts that we were given. The cliff was not railed off then, and there were fascinating little paths along the side where I could get lost, also a big oak tree with exposed roots where I could sit and read and eat scrumped apples. There had been a cement factory which had been blown up (deliberately) sometime between 1914 and 1918, and that was another popular play place for us. The quay had been built for the cement barges plying up and down the river. With the

coming of Clytie, we spent much less time on the Deben and were, in any case, in our teens, and changes had begun to take place.

Joan Brown (nee Paterson)

FELIXSTOWE FERRY SAILING CLUB

It is hard to believe that thirty years ago, there was a large marquee in front of Felixstowe Ferry Club House. Since that time, the sea has eroded the beach. The authorities then put a concrete mesh down to the bank, which it did until this spring when a combined high tide and easterly wind broke up and undermined the concrete (3 ft in some places) making the area unsafe and dangerous.

After many phone calls, we had a meeting with the Environmental Agency who hoped to start work in July. Unfortunately the cost was more than they had money for, so the plan had to be put to higher authorities, who have appointed a flood defence manager who is monitoring the situation. What is worrying is that if they leave it and don't do anything before the winter sets in, the Ferry could be in serious trouble.

One thing that looks hopeful is that in The Suffolk Estuarine Planning for the area the Ferry is designated as a holding line. This is not only the Sailing Club which is affected but the seven bungalows, the boatyard and, of course, the Ferry cafe. Let us hope that the Environment Agency will take action before any more damage is done, and everyone will be able to enjoy the uniqueness of The Ferry for many years to come.

Betty Smith, Commodore, Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club.

RUNWAY STILL THERE

Recent hot windless days have given ultra quiet conditions on the river during all the hours of light and dark: even the helicopter pilots seem to be on leave. Enjoy it before what may prove to be yet another winter of debate about Bentwaters.

The Inspector's Report on Suffolk Coastal District Council's Structure Plan will be received in early August and the Council are likely to make it available to the public almost immediately. In the normal course, if the Inspector agrees with the draft plan, which he reviewed in the light of many public comments then, apart from minor amendments, the Council go forward with their own draft, and planning applications are determined accordingly. Bentwaters watchers recall that it was the SCDC Draft Structure Plan which caused so much awkwardness for the planners themselves, as well as for those against the project, during the determination of the first application for an Airport. If the Inspector disagrees substantially with the draft wording which he has reviewed then he is likely to propose an alternative draft which the Council should then adopt. Those who attended the hearing will be vitally interested in the Inspector's view. In the long run it will affect us all.

Anglia International Airpark are simply waiting for the Report, as we are. I believe them when they say that it is simply not worth recrunching their numbers for aircraft and decibels until the outcome of the review. Meanwhile, the development of the wider Bentwaters estate has gone ahead well.

John Liniker was entertained at Stansted recently. He was impressed by the vast infrastructure that the airport has brought to Stansted: roads, railway, parking, industry, hotels... and wonders if it bears repeating.

At the request of the new Chairman, the General Committee remain alert for the next move over Bentwaters and I have agreed to remain at the forefront of any future involvement on behalf of the Association.

Denzil Cowdry

STOP PRESS - 13h AUGUST

I read the Inspectors Report today. Mr George MAPSON criticises the ambiguous wording of the SCDC Policy Statements on Bentwaters, notes the lack of a proper strategy to mitigate the effects of an airport and perceives a biased appreciation of the harm that an airport would cause because of a misplaced desire to regenerate the site. He concludes that development for civilian aviation is unacceptable and recommends the deletion of the entire airport policy section (LP 141,4).

In view of the Council's previous strong objections to recreational flying, which is highlighted, it seems to me and probably to the Inspector, that "civilian flying" embraces all flying. From my reading of the Report there will be no loopholes left for any potential developer when/if the Council adopt the Inspectors recommendation.

Woodbridge Regatta Day

Regatta Day was perfect - the sun shone out of a cloudless sky, a light breeze set the flags fluttering and thousands of people thronged the riverside to enjoy the Woodbridge Regatta. There was plenty to do and to watch, from the power boats weaving through a complicated course on the Model Yacht Pond to the children wobbling along the Greasy Pole; in the field stalls selling a variety of things did a good trade, and children had a choice of archery, fairground games or the whoopy dipper. On the river the dinghy races were in just two

classes, Fast Handicap and Slow Handicap and this made a great spectacle. The Great Tender Race was won by Richard Hare, and in a tight finish The Anchor just beat The Angel in the Pub Challenge Knockout rowing race.

The Regatta provides a splendid day out but also raises money for a variety of charities. The RNLI caravan was busy all day, the Jubilee Sailing Trust stall by the Town Hard collected about £200 from people enjoying river trips on the four boats provided by Frank Knights, and stalls of many kinds from the Cats Protection League to Cancer Charities also made a good profit. The Barge Thalatta could not get up to the Deben because of bad weather earlier in the week; and the proceeds from the Tender Race and Guess the Weight of the Cake and I hope some more money will be given to the East Coast Sail Trust to try to make up for some of the "losses" they sustained by being weather-bound in Maldon.

In the evening the Swimming Regatta was held in the Deben Pool. This event had fallen off very much, and it is entirely due to the determination of Regatta President Ken Wilding that it has been revived. 14 children from the ages of 9 to 16 swam for our trophies which include the Hayward Cup for Boys first presented in 1907 and the Sullivan Cup for Girls first presented in 1939 as well as other more recent trophies. The event went very smoothly thanks to the organisation and skill of the staff at the Pool and we hope it is well and truly back on the calendar.

The Woodbridge Regatta Association is very grateful for the publicity which you have given us and we wanted not only to say "Thank you" but to tell those of you who were unable to join us what it was like in 1999 - and to tell you we have great things planned for 2000!

Sonia Pollock.

KNOLL FAIRWAY COMMITTEE

Edward Fitzgerald of Omar Khayyam fame in 1863 owned his schooner yacht "The Scandal"; he explained it was named after the staple industry of Woodbridge. Far be it from your correspondent to suggest that any Woodbridgian should indulge in gossip or scandal, but the staple industry of Fitzgerald's time has grown into a very healthy and efficient "grape vine".

Back in 1990 the grape vine reported that the Crown Commissioners were proposing to the Knoll area of the river bed to commercial interests to regulate moorings on the upper reaches of the Deben. A number of local residents who had had moorings in the area for many years got together as "The Knoll Moorings Holders Committee" to see if they could take a lease and grant moorings at cost price. John Chapman was appointed Chairman by the then boat owners with private moorings in the area and a public meeting was held on 8th February 1990 under the Chairmanship of Col. Ian Battye. Interested people attended from the Yacht Clubs, Royal Yachting Association and the Crown Commissioners.

A full discussion was held and the Crown intimated that it was prepared to grant a lease. A Committee was formed to enter into negotiations with the Crown for a lease over the River Deben bed from Sun Wharf to the Town Jetty. It was further agreed at the Public Meeting, after doubts had been raised by Frank Knights, that the existing rights of the commercial and riparian owners would be respected.

The Committee had, and has, representatives of all interested parties including one from Suffolk Coastal District Council. The managers of the NatWest Bank in Woodbridge have always been good enough to act as Treasurer.

Visits to London were necessary and a lease was entered into on 31st. January 1991 whereby Charles Notcutt, William Jacob and John Chapman act as trustees for what was now The Knoll Fairway Committee, their liability being restricted to the funds in the hands of the Committee.

One would have thought that the completion of the lease would have resolved all the difficulties but in fact it was the commencement of much worry and distress. The Committee sent out letters for mooring fees, upon which objections were raised about the ownership of the area granted by the Crown. As a result the lease, or the area under the lease, had to be renegotiated. Claims were made by Woodbridge Town Council, the successors in title to Whisstocks, The Quay Company and others. Most of these have been resolved over the years but there are at least two claims still outstanding.

A new area has been agreed with the Crown through their agents Messrs. Whybrow, Riches & Dodds, which deals with the undisputed area. A new rent has been negotiated and there are 65 private moorings (a few are still available), but all of them dry out. In addition there are a few commercial moorings still to be negotiated.

The Committee has agreed that the barge Neljan which is berthed on the Town Quay (the water and mud are part of the Committees' area) should be permitted to lie there free of charge from the Committees' point of view as long as the owners pay rent to the Tide Mill Trust; this they are doing.

Suffolk Coastal took a lease up river to Wilford Bridge in 1992 and the Committee offered to administer their moorings and it is understood that the Council is still considering the matter.

After a long and worrying time the difficulties are slowly being resolved.

The Chairman of the Committee who has seen this article has asked me to thank all members of the Committee for their hard work and patience, and in particular the Mooring Secretary and the Boatman, Brian Catterwell.

If the grape vine has painted a different picture your readers must choose the version they prefer.

Suffolk Estuarine Strategy

In their report Posford Duvivier considered three main strategies:

- Do nothing
- Maintain some flood defences
- Maintain all flood defences as now existing

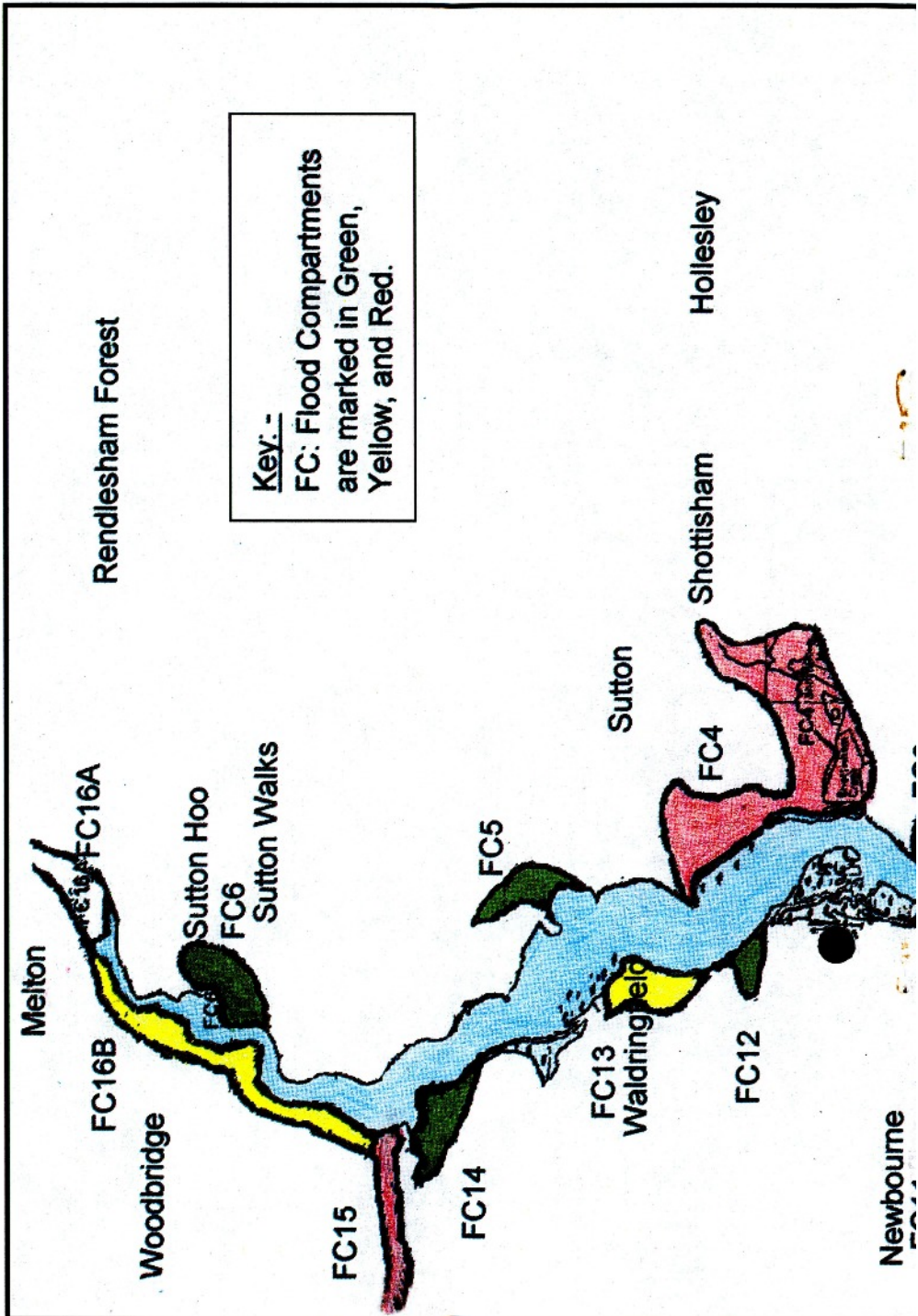
When assessing all these options they realised that all residential areas would have to be defended. These areas are coloured yellow on the attached maps.

Do Nothing.

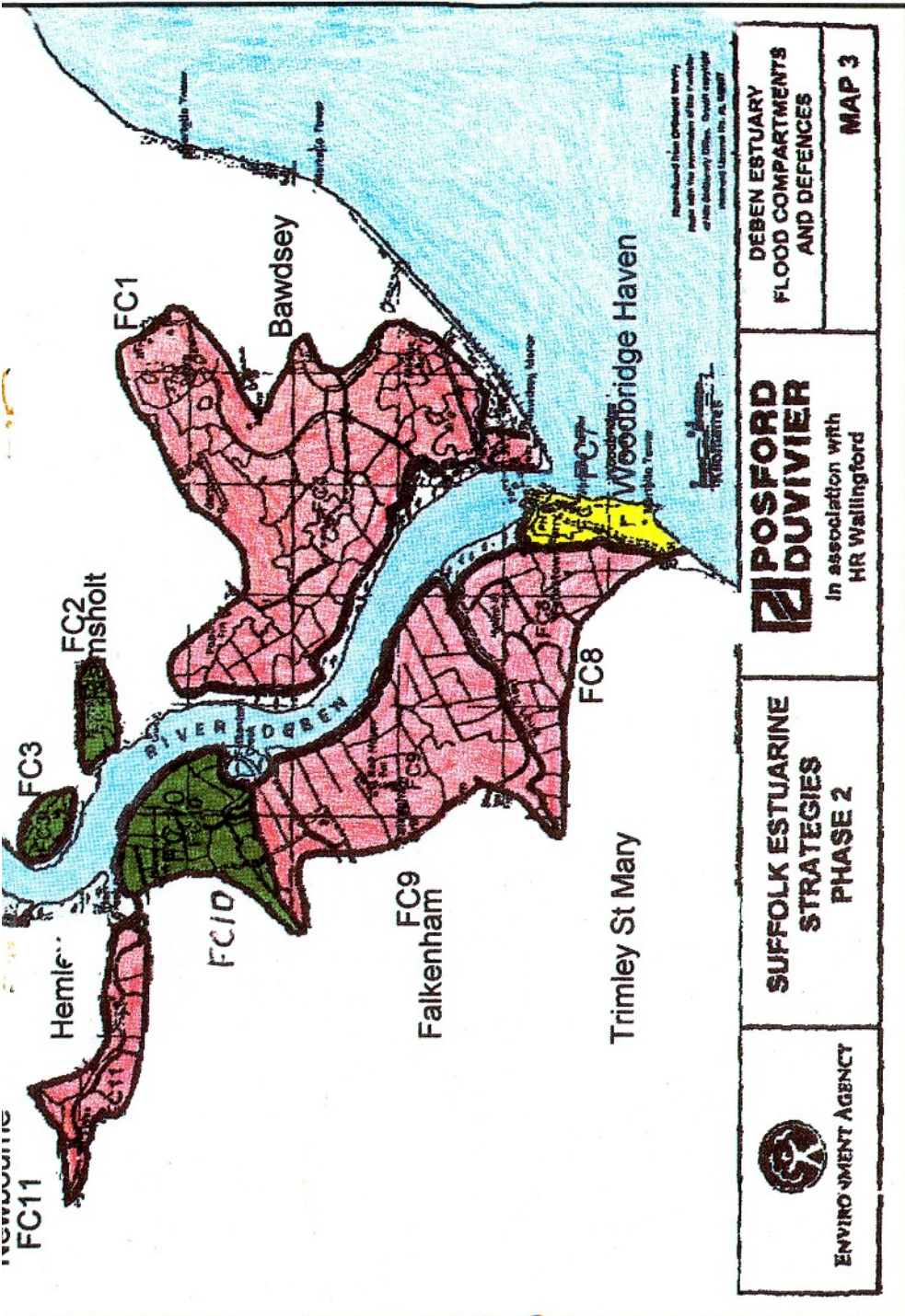
Clearly this is the cheapest option but there are serious disadvantages. All the coloured areas would sooner or later become inundated at high tides. The volume of water going through the mouth of the river at Felixstowe Ferry on each tide would damage the river banks and there would be a loss of properties. There would be a significant loss of agricultural land. Though there would be a gain in salt marsh habitat in the newly flooded areas there would be a loss of SPA which are currently farmland. It is anticipated that the entrance into the river and the foreshore down towards Felixstowe would be adversely affected.

Maintain all Flood Defences.

This is also clearly the most expensive option. As sea levels rise the salt marsh habitat will disappear thus affecting the food source of wildfowl and waders and which will lead to the destruction of all the important characteristics



Key:-
FC: Flood Compartments
are marked in Green,
Yellow, and Red.



that make the river a RAMSAR site. The European Habitats Directive requires all management proposals to incorporate environmental remediation measures where possible.

Maintain some Defences.

This option treads a careful line between the other two. It recognises that not every acre of land needs protecting. It allows some salt marsh regeneration in areas of flooded field. It limits the volume of water passing through the river mouth on each tide to that which the banks can sustain - albeit with a little assistance by way of strengthening. The areas coloured red are protected (they would have been flooded under the "do nothing" approach). The areas coloured green will be allowed to revert to mudflats and salt marsh - managed retreat.

Timescales.

Generally it is not thought that any work or failure of existing defence except for the north bank of Martlesham Creek will occur in the next 8- 10 years. At this time most of the defences which are being abandoned will be on the point of failure. For anyone living in Woodbridge they need not worry - the existing defences are thought to have a 30 year life. The north bank of Martlesham Creek will need strengthening in 5 years, minor works at Waldringfield including re-alignment on the upstream side in 12 years, and other areas in 15-20 years.

Conclusion. My personal opinion is that the proposed plan represents a reasonable way forward. I would suggest that the RDA endorses it.

Adrian Judge

COMMENTS ON THE SUFFOLK ESTUARINE STRATEGIES CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

The Government, through the Environment Agency, commissioned Posford Duvivier to undertake a survey on the flood defences of three Suffolk Estuaries the Deben, Alde/Ore and Blyth over the next twenty years. English Nature then asked the Government to flood land and property, without compensation to the owners, around these estuaries in an attempt to compensate for habitat they had believed was being lost. No mention is made of protection for lives and property during very high tides.

The Posford Duvivier compiled a series of consultation documents at their client's request and suggested flooding certain marshes on each estuary. In Vol 2 the value of the agricultural land to be allowed to flood is two thirds below its actual value to the community. This is a serious flaw in the whole of the Posford Duvivier report.

Another even more serious problem, which Posford Duvivier have drawn attention to, is that the more water that comes into the Suffolk estuary, the greater the flow of the current and the more difficult it is to maintain river defences. In fact if this report was followed the whole problem of river defences would steadily escalate and become very expensive. The noticeable effect would be that the mouth of the River Deben would have to become larger. The Felixstowe Ferry hamlet and sailing club would be washed away. Also once this process had started then it is more than likely that the houses, quay and sailing club at Bawdsey Ferry and part of the Felixstowe Ferry golf course would also be swept away.

The larger river would also put under even great pressure all the water side places up the river. Areas such as Waldringfield beach are already under pressure from the tidal flow. Posford Duvivier say they will advise the Government to hold the present line of defences at the Deben mouth. However in practice it is almost impossible to get Government cash to pay for proper river defences.

er the next twenty years there is not going to be a decline in bird habitat on the Suffolk estuaries due to rising sea level or any other cause. In fact this is one area of the British coast where they are safe. Flooding on the Deben might not create more bird habitat, but open water.

Compulsory flooding on the scale suggested by Posford Duvivier would be a very serious blow to the local economy and cause the loss of jobs. The job loss would be in agriculture and tourism. There is a likelihood that flooding would be counter-productive. In the attempt to produce more bird habitat the increased flow would wash away the existing mud ooze and saltings so that there could be less, not more, bird habitat

SUGGESTED TWENTY YEAR STRATEGY

On economic grounds it is difficult to justify all the expense of maintaining some small lengths of river wall on the River Deben (and in one case the owners would be happy for them to be flooded for bird habitat). Limited public expenditure should be made on these walls (marked blue on Posford Duvivier map), but the owners must be allowed to maintain them if they so wish. The major lengths of river wall, because they are vital to the local economy and the wider community, should continued to be maintained.

Also a firm approach be made to holding the line of river defences at the Bawdsey and Felixstowe Ferry.

LONG TERM STRATEGY

It is not acceptable to people living on the Suffolk Coast that large areas are abandoned and become part of the North Sea or tidal waters. All the seventeen villages and towns along the Suffolk Coast and many more on the estuaries are under threat and they must have proper sea and river defences. It is an on-going problem, but technology to solve it is comparatively simple, and if the cost is spread over the decades, it is acceptable.

Robert Simper

Coastal Forces Gunboat

Our Second World War Coastal Force gunboat, MGB60 has finally left Woodbridge and the River Deben after 40 years.

She is part of Coastal Forces Heritage Trust's project to save for future generations; an example of one of the many types of Little Ships, which did so much to protect us in the 1940's. MTBs and MGBs attacking enemy shipping, and the superior German Eboats, whilst the maids of all work, the Fairmile B MLs and HDMLs carried out the convoy escort duties in the Channel and the North Sea. These, together with the Fairmile RMLs, which were equipped with a sick bay and medical facilities, were ever present to rescue "ditched" aircrew.

MGB60 was towed down the Deben by Frank Knights and helpers, from her berth in Sun Wharf, to anchor at the Rocks, and was picked up from there on 16th June, by a privately owned ex-Lowestoft Lifeboat, and towed up to Newsoms Yard on Oulton Broad, run by Keith Woods. For our sailing enthusiasts, being towed sternfirst to give some directional stability, the tow took five hours from the Rocks to Oulton Broad!

Now at Oulton Broad, funds permitting, she will be restored to a condition as she was in the 1940's, when she was operating out of Felixstowe (HMS Beehive) with the 6th MGB Flotilla. Her restoration will take a little while before she is ready for the public, but when completed, with her beautiful swept deckline, a British Power Boat feature, she will have her gun turrets and Oerlikon etc. in place.

She will be restored internally as far as possible, together with the cockpit bridge area, but regrettably, no three Rolls Royce Merlin engines. Now! To see her at 40 knots again really would be something!

Incidentally, she survived the tow to Lowestoft from the Deben without taking on water, not bad after 60 years this year. She was originally built in 1939 for the French Navy by Scott Paine, but was switched to Coastal Forces in 1940. Just to finish, these small boats encouraged a fantastic camaraderie in their crews, and, today, the Coastal Forces Veterans Association has 2200 members, country and world wide, none under 70'ish! What an Association. Should any reader wish to know more, and was in Coastal Forces 1939-1946, please contact me on 01 394 385011.

Don Tucker

Living afloat on MGB60

My husband and I purchased MGB60 from Small Craft Disposals in May 1946, where she was lying at Brooke Marine Shipyard, Oulton Broad. Her engines had been removed, and we then had to arrange to have her towed to Ipswich Docks where she would be afloat at all times. Two "bargees", with the barge "Nellie Parker", arranged to do this, and after many mishaps on the way down we finally moored in Ipswich Docks, near the lock gates.

The first thing we had to do was to get some form of comfort aboard, and to this end we purchased an "Esse" anthracite burning stove, fitting a header tank in the wheelhouse, hired a

pipe vice, and put in a closed circuit heating system. We stayed up all night to finish this job. Such luxury! Fresh water was obtained from the Lock Hut, and we topped up once a Week, feeding the tank in the galley, and one aft, where it was delivered to the galley via a Whale pump. At this time we started stripping her out, at the same time cleaning her bilges prior to painting inside them, but that is a long story! We then fitted a skylight over the main saloon, and one over the galley, all the time trying to keep her beautiful lines. I cooked with primus stoves, and a Taylor Para-fin stove which proved quite adequate. Bringing up a family on an ex-Navy boat was quite exciting. My youngest son was then at RAF Cranwell and so it was just two pairs of hands.

For the conversion work, my husband prepared all the plans, sorted out the carpentry and woodwork, whilst I was happy to do all the dirty work, like cleaning out the bilges, where, it truthfully was rewarding to see the nice clean frames etc. That year Christmas arrived, and we decorated in true nautical tradition with a bunch of holly at the masthead, and invited friends and the Ipswich lockmen on board for drinks. However, it was very dirty in Ipswich Docks at the time, as not only did we have to contend with the cement plant and its clouds of grey dust, but we also had the colliers showering us with coaldust, as they delivered to gasworks. At that point we decided to move to Woodbridge!

We agreed a berth at Sun Wharf in Woodbridge, and remember, this was before the NRA decided to build all the anti-flood walls. It was clean, but tidal, which meant a gangway fixed from ship to shore, on the river bank, to cope with the rise and fall of the tide.

We put all our spare time and cash into her conversion, which took some considerable

time, but ended up with a very comfortable home with central heating, a small bathroom for'd with bath and a separate heads (or loo!). I think it was in 1962 that the Deben froze over, leaving just a small channel free of ice, but some of the swans froze into the ice, poor things, and I remember a helicopter from RAF Felixstowe who winched a man down with an axe to break the ice and free them. We even had a small seal come up and swim near the boat.

In Spring, the ship's bottom needed scraping and antifouling, and we had a very necessary day and the right tide, and had her towed over by Frank Knights to under the cliffs opposite. We let her tilt to port, and started scraping as the tide receded, and of course slept that night with some difficulty! The next tide we reversed the procedure from port to starboard, but I can tell you, it was a bit scary, lying under her, because if she moved we would have been crushed to death. However, we got the job done, and were towed back to our moorings, whilst the Spring tides were so helpful.

Jill Squire

The Unscheduled Event

The Regatta was due to start at 1 p.m. About this time a small black hulled Belgian sloop was moored opposite the Town Quay when a man suddenly leapt into the dinghy and rowed across to the DYC dinghy launch platform. He produced a 20" long (approx. 10lb) fish which he cut into steaks for supper. Having done that he returned to his boat which left downstream later in the afternoon.

Several reliable and sober sailing and rowing witnesses said the flesh was more red than pink and believed it was a salmon.

When was a salmon last seen in the River Deben? Has a large fish ever committed suicide jumping into a dinghy?

Any good fish(y) stories would be welcome.

MASTER AND MAN?

This is a tale of two men who worked on our river long ago, and maybe, just incidentally of present-day assumptions about those times. The first of these men was Ted Marsh. Ted was at one time the bosun of a mighty four-masted barque which, although she worked out of Liverpool, was entirely crewed by Woodbridge men. Her captain, Captain Proudfoot, lived in New Street and chose his own crew from men he had known since childhood. Life at sea in a wind powered leviathan no doubt provided enough imponderables without having to man her with the rag, tag and bobtail sent along by the shipping agent so if you had any choice in the matter you chose your own.

The second of our men was Claude Whisstock. He too went to sea, as did so many in the early years of this century but soon had to give it up. Although he was in steam not in sail his health was not robust enough to take the awful conditions and poor food and he came ashore. As many of you know, he then set up a boatyard, here in Woodbridge and, as Ted, a much older man, was retiring from a full career at sea at about that time, he became Claude's rigger. For the bosun of a four posted windjammer rigging the little yachts that Claude was building cannot have been too much of a problem. All this was in the mid to late twenties.

Now here is a story Claude told me, as a joke against himself. Let me re-tell it to you and see if you read as much between its lines as I did about those long dead days of strict hierarchy and "Master and Man" relationships.

Claude decided he would get up very early one morning and row down to Kyson to see if he could shoot a duck or two for the pot. He borrowed Ted's little dinghy and set off with his spaniel and his old Belgian shotgun, so

worn as he put it that "You could have shaved with the end of the choke barrel". As is so often the case, he got nothing. Never even fired a shot let alone got a duck so as he climbed back into the boat there were still two cartridges in the chambers. Now, in yet another of Claude's inimitable phrases, the old gun was "A bit light on the hammer", a slight jolt, the gun went off, terrified the dog and punched a hole the size of your fist in the bottom of Ted's boat. Disaster, for you see Claude had omitted the formality of asking Ted if he could borrow the dinghy. Scared stiff at the thought of what Ted would say to him, Claude took off his jacket, bunged up the hole with it, rowed back up to the boatyard, replaced the holed plank and had the new plank tarred over before Ted came into work at 7.30! In retrospect Claude saw his fright as very funny. I saw it as an indication that maybe our present day view of those times is over simplistic. Of course they had a more structured view of working and social relationships than we have. That is self evident. But maybe the structure was a little more complex than we allow for. The age and experience of the individuals involved clearly weighed in the balance as did the matter of whether you borrowed a man's property without asking first. "Master and Man" on pay day perhaps, but when you blew a hole in the bottom of a borrowed dinghy at four in the morning who then was master and who man? Not so simple then, was it?

TOM ELLAWAY

A CIRCULAR ARRANGEMENT OF CHURCHES IN THE AREA OF THE DEBEN ESTUARY

Much of the landscape we see in East Anglia is the result of human planning but the extent of the underlying plan is not always immediately

apparent. One example of this is an arrangement of churches based on a site in Waldringfield.

If on a 1:25000 (2 1/2 inches to 1 mile) Ordnance Survey map a circle with a radius of approximately 3660 yards is drawn centred on All Saints Church, Waldringfield, its circumference will be found to pass through the sites of All Saints Church, Ramsholt; All Saints Church, Sutton; St. Mary's Church, Martlesham and St. John the Baptist's Church, Brightwell. One cannot, of course, measure on a map at this scale to nearer than about 25 yards. Prior to the legal establishment of the statute mile of 1760 miles in 1593, in Suffolk a mile of 1830 yards was extensively used and there is evidence that this measurement was used in designing fields in the earliest period of Anglian settlement. As late as 1695 Robert Morden's maps show three scales to represent 'great', 'middle', and 'small' miles, which appeared to be 2430, 2200 and 1830 yards respectively. The radius of 3660 yards would equal two 'small' miles.

The church at Waldringfield is on high ground some 500 yards west of the River Deben. In 1841, a 4th or 5th century AD burial urn was discovered in the churchyard, which indicates that this was a pagan ritual centre taken over by Christians. Martlesham Church is some 200 yards south of Martlesham Creek: the present church is built in a style used between about 1290 to 1350. The present Brightwell Church is circa 1300 but there is circumstantial evidence that there may have been a church on this site since the 10th century. Ramsholt Church has an oval tower, which is at least of Norman date but possibly earlier and is conspicuous from the river. The tower of Sutton church fell in 1642 and the font is thought to be of early 15th century origin. Churches at Martlesham, Brightwell and Sutton are recorded in the Domesday Book of 1087.

Three of the churches have an All Saints dedication but this is probably a coincidence as I have traced 72 such dedications in Suffolk.

One is tempted to theorise on how in early times the survey work was done, particularly as three churches are on the west side of the river estuary and two on the east side. I suspect that some form of astronomy was used. Standing near Waldringfield Church and using a Magelan GPS instrument, as used for satellite navigation on yachts, the other churches are at 048, 129, and 324 degrees True.

David Aldred

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1999

Sunday, October 17th Litter Collection

Friday, October 29th R.D.A. Open Meeting

2000

Friday, April 14th, R.D.A. Annual General Meeting

Sunday July 30th to

Saturday August 5th Deben Week

Sunday July 30th Yachtsman's

Service on

Waldringfield Beach

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

OPEN MEETING

FRIDAY OCTOBER 29TH, 1999

Woodbridge Community Centre at 7.30 p. m.

The main part of the evening will be a talk from a representative of Posford Duvivier who will speak on the Estuarine Studies of the Deben and the neighbouring coastline.

As usual, there will be time for members to raise other questions which may concern the Association.

There will be an interval when tea, coffee and biscuits will be available.

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER Spring 1999

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