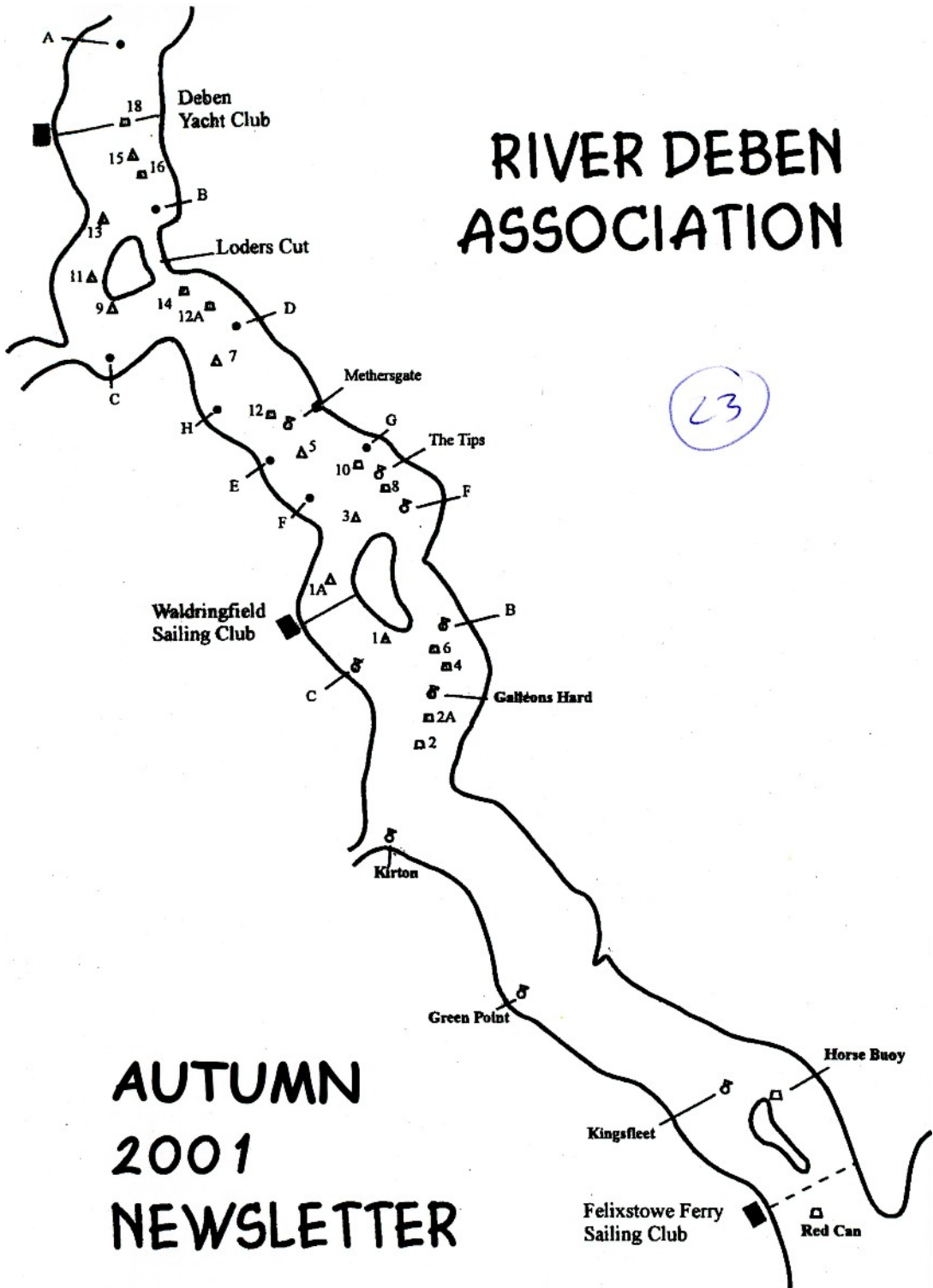


RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

23



**AUTUMN
2001
NEWSLETTER**

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2001

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EDITORIAL

This Newsletter is very thin. Sorry! Not enough time to hunt up articles, but I don't take all the blame. The Association is quiescent and needs new blood.

This year we have sadly lost Ian Battye. Reflections on this sad loss appear later in this Newsletter.

There are a number of projects, or potential projects, that just need someone to put their weight behind to get them rolling. The prime project that I, as a Woodbridge resident, would like to see completed properly is the dredging of the Woodbridge dock. As Anthony Mason reports below, Frank Knights is taking some action, but this appears to me to be a short term fix, rather than the necessary long term plan to remove the mud from the river bed altogether (and use it for a useful purpose like filling in between the river wall and the railway line).

An exciting rumour which first came to my attention at a recent Committee

Meeting is a project for making a film of Shackleton's boat voyage, with (I understand) major participation from the people at Robertson's Boatyard. No doubt we will all hear much more of that in due course.

Please come to the Open meeting on Friday 12 October. This is an excellent occasion to air views about issues that concern us all on the river.

This is also my last Newsletter. Many thanks to those who have contributed; and to those who have not contributed this time, I know that you are saving up some good stuff for my successor.

David Copp
Editor

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

BASS DOCK - WOODBRIDGE

The Woodbridge Dock Company have 'plough' dredged part of the Woodbridge Dock.

So far they have removed an estimated 1000 tons of mud which has been dragged into the river and spread out on the ebb tide. Their target is 2500 tons and they will complete the rest next year.

1000 tons is roughly equivalent to 2 foot over a third of the dock area and Frank Knights says that this is back to the same level as in 1975. The mud is removed by dropping a steel plate held in the vertical position by steel shafts into the mud and pulling it with steel cables by a very manoeuvrable boat.

The question of course is 'where will the mud finish up?' Maybe some of it from whence it came but nobody is exactly sure where that is. There is no doubt that the silting has increased since both the Tide Mill Marina and Wyllie's Pool were built.

Further down river Andrew Brown at the Waldringfield Boatyard was having the same problem with silting alongside the quay. He has used the same contractor to drag mud away from the quay and again spread it out into the river on the ebb tide.

Unfortunately, although assured by the contractor that it would have no adverse effect anywhere, over the next few tides the beach at Waldringfield was covered in a thick film of very sticky mud, just at the beginning of Deben Week. Andrew Brown was most apologetic and would have waited until later in the season to have the work done if he had realised the consequences. However, that apart, Andrew is trying to run a

business in which the quay plays a very important part and he must be able to get boats alongside.

Plough dredging is a relatively simple way to overcome some silting problems but the effect elsewhere must be monitored to ensure that problems are not just being moved from one place to another.

Anthony Mason
Chairman

IAN BATTYE



IAN BATTYE

Jan 14th 1918 - July 19th 2001

Ian's impact on the River Deben Association was incalculable.

There are many things I could write about his influence on the River Deben Association, as he was involved with most of its activities in one way or another. So I have just picked out some of his more important contributions.

I was introduced to him after the first public meeting as someone who had

had contact with the river for 70 years and had a great passion to conserve and develop it for the future. I quickly realised that he was an ideal person to chair the Steering Group and oversee the writing of the constitution.

His experience in running diverse organisations was a great asset and stood him in good stead in negotiating the numerous, often conflicting ideas that floated around the Kings Head during the many early meetings. His patience with a diverse and lively bunch of people, resulted in a constitution and a new organisation 'The River Deben Association.'

His use of his East Coast Tide Tables as a personal Diary intrigued new-comers to the committee and was typical of his relaxed way of doing things.

He became the first Chairman of the new Association in 1990.

Thoroughness, attention to detail and a stubbornness to pursue an issue to its conclusion resulted in some far-sighted actions, which enabled projects and ideas to have a concrete form.

A belief that the Officers and Councillors of the local District Council should know more about the river resulted in several enjoyable trips in 'Sophie Sea' and 'Driftwood'. In these trips his famed hospitality added light and colour to the importance of the sites visited. Councillors and Officers could see how new developments might affect the scenic beauty of Martlesham Creek, the waterfront at Waldringfield or the particular

charm of Felixstowe Ferry. This understanding of the River's unique qualities and potential has been reflected in the Local Plan and in the numerous projects that the Council now support or initiate.

The now freed-up foreshore at Felixstowe Ferry owes much to Ian, who had faith in the Felixstowe Ferry Foreshore Trust's endeavours from the beginning and was prepared to put his own money and later donations from the RDA into the venture. In the long struggle to buy the land with its precious access to the River, Ian was a constant presence quietly encouraging the Trust and keeping the RDA on board during difficult times.

Every year in October, until his last illness in 2000, one saw Ian collecting rubbish during the litter clearance day, often in Frank's Knight's flat-bottomed work boat. On one occasion, enthusiasm for the job resulted in serious over-loading of the boat. But true seamanship and a carrying voice, showed how a boat and its cargo could be brought ashore with a good third submerged and not a black plastic bag or child lost.

Ian believed that everyone should have a chance to sail, fly or climb mountains once in their lives, to enjoy challenges and develop self-reliance. He certainly had those qualities, along with great humour, a deep affection for people and a long and profound love of the River Deben. The continuing interest in and multiple enjoyment of the river by so many, is one of his legacies.

Anni Healey

A TRIBUTE TO IAN BATTYE

It was in nineteen seventy nine when the name Ian Battye first came to my notice: our daughter Madeleine at bedtime declared "I know the name of the highest lake in the world -Lake Titicaca - Colonel Battye told us in school today".

It was ten years later that I actually met Ian; over a cup of tea in the Schlee's conservatory, to discuss the River Deben, not a lake.

Having joined the Steering Committee of the newly formed River Deben Association, of which Ian Battye was Chairman, I was to grow to know Ian well.

He was an enthusiast of the kind "to get things done".

An utter gentleman and generous to a fault it was a pleasure to be in his company.

His reduced hearing due to wartime damage, although an impediment, never seemed to affect his mood.

He last spoke to him along the Deben west bank about nine months ago. A shadow of his former striking physique and still recuperating from an op, he talked of taking a boat on the Broads that forthcoming summer. Irrepressible to the end, without a doubt.

Anne Moore

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE - OR NOT?

These are the sounds of the Deben in summer.

The first grey light of dawn is filtering across the sky, and suddenly the wood pigeons begin. One minute it's silence, then an unseen conductor waves a baton, and all of them start at once. The air is filled with soft pulsating cooing, which fades into the background as the day gets going.

A heron stalks in semi-frozen slow motion along the bank - not a sound from him. But as he uncoils to suddenly snatch a fish, two herring gulls mob him with harsh cries. Diving onto him, screaming raucously, well he won't catch any more here with that going on. The great wings unfurl leisurely and flap him off to somewhere quieter.

The tide is turning, and the boats on their moorings swing round slowly. The mooring ropes creak slightly, and little waves pat against the boats' sides. A slight wind has come up, and a couple of loosely tied halyards start their regular metallic slapping, another constant background accompaniment that blends into the collage of sound.

As the day warms up, the human users of the river add their contribution. A family is settling down for a day on the beach, and after the bustle of unpacking, there's the gritty sound of a plastic spade digging, pat pat thump as another sand castle is made, and - wallop!, demolished with three-year old glee.

The tide is ebbing strongly now, and all up and down the river banks you can hear the water trickling muddily out of the saltings. Find a dry patch and lie down in the sun among the samphire and the sea lavender, and you can hear millions of little pockets in the mud give up their water load, the tiny clicks and plops as shells close up for the hours of low water. If you listen very hard, just as you drift off in the heat, was that the sound of a crab's furred legs scuttling over the seaweed? Overhead, the skylarks soar on waves of shrill song, and the oyster catchers and curlews cry.

A sudden roar from the water breaks the peace: "Give me water, I say". A Wayfarer fleet races up to Methersgate buoy. With a rushing of water, and a crack of sails, they gybe round and head back up river. No thud or scrape of collision this time. A little behind, that furious muttering is from another dinghy sailor who's just realised his slow progress is due not to the ebbing tide, but to the fact he's stuck on a little ridge of mud.

Mid afternoon, and the tide is turning again. Back swing the boats, back creak the mooring ropes. Down at the Ferry, the sea rushes over the shingle banks at the half-hidden bar, shushing and sweeping the pebbles back and forward one over another, rolling away their imperfections, grinding them all down inexorably towards sand.

Back on shore, shrieks of delight and terror as the incoming waves attack this morning's sand fort. There are splashes from the swimmers, the little thuds of crabbing lines being thrown,

and an excited jabber when a crab is hauled in and added to the bucket.

Squee thonk squee thonk: a rowing boat is coming slowly and deliberately across the tide. A bit further out, a tender with an out-board is making its way down stream; the faint puttering is carried back long after the boat is out of sight round the Ramsholt bend.

As night falls, the tide is still rising, slowly covering the land where the black-headed gulls have settled. Once after another, they find their personal patch flooded, leading to a constant series of furious slanging matches, as they take off, wheel round, and squabble raucously about the remaining dry spaces.

Down at the Rocks, there's a picnic going on. Muffled waves of laughter come across the water; there's a rush and a crackle as more wood is put on the bonfire. Earlier in the year, the nightingales over at Methersgate would have been starting up, filling the night with their intense and intricate liquid trilling, but now at mid-summer they have found their mates, and the singing has ended.

Birds, sailors, water, children: these are the sounds of the Deben in summer. And above and through and round and intertwined with all of this is a great and peaceful silence, deep enough to breathe.

Celia Coleman

SPEED BUMPS ON THE RIVER?

Chris Brown has given us this report

Those who use the river will have noticed greatly improved speed limit signs along the river including signs that show where the speed limit ends between the moorings at Ramsholt and the moorings at Felixstowe Ferry. [The speed limit is 8 knots -Ed]

An incident line has been set up by the Suffolk Coastal District Council called the "Felixstowe Sea Front and River Deben Water Recreation and Incident Line". Try making an acronym out of that lot!

The number to call is 01394 444224. It is manned by an answering machine that asks for the Time, Date and Location of any incident and any possible identification of the craft involved or the registration number of the owner's vehicle.

It should be noted that the speed limit is not confined to the parts of the river along which boats are moored or anchored but extends to the whole river except where the restriction is removed in the lower reaches."

A WRITE UP IN PRAISE OF THE TIDE MILL TEA ROOM

Where did you last eat a superb salad? I can't wait to go back to the Tide Mill tea rooms to have a repeat of the one I memorably enjoyed a while ago.

Under new management this year, we found good natured and pleasant service and for those less inclined to

"rabbit food", as my husband has been heard to call salads, there is an excellent range of all sorts of alternatives to suit all tastes.

It is only regrettable that they are not allowed to put tables outside.

Apart from the pleasure of "al fresco" eating, tables, tastefully placed, could enhance the area.

We are so lucky and privileged to live in Suffolk with all it's attractions, especially in Woodbridge for those of us who do, and then to be able to enjoy walking, sailing, swimming and now eating by the Deben.

Anne Moore

LITTER CLEARANCE DAY

This Autumn, the litter clearance is scheduled for Sunday 7 October. Unusually, Jo has chosen a weekend with an afternoon low tide (Low water 4pm) so it is proposed that the teams meet, under the usual team leaders, at about 2pm. If you have done it before, you will know the form. If not, call Jo Masters on 01394 383825, and she will put you with a team.

An afternoon litter picking can be very successfully followed by an early evening opportunity to quench the resulting thirst, and we all know that there are some excellent pubs along the river.

Gloves and bin bags will be provided!

OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING

Friday 12 October

7.30 pm

Woodbridge Community Centre

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of last Meeting
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Any Other Business

Break for Refreshments

Digging Deep Down by the Deben

A series of short talks by a few farmers who earn their livelihood growing crops on the banks of the river