



**RIVER DEBEN  
ASSOCIATION**

**AUTUMN 2004  
NEWSLETTER**

**No: 29**

# RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

August 2004

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## EDITORIAL



Editors usually have an advantage over other contributors in having read everyone else's pieces before writing their own. They can then appear to be more knowledgeable than they really are. Late-August, however, is a bad time for an editor to be

lecting on earlier promises, and this editorial has to be composed with only some of the contributions on his desk. Having been a teacher, I am always interested in "late notes" and the wild excuses presented by students for their tardiness. One of my contributors, for example, told me that he is at anchor in the River Alde without access to computers. Can you beat it?

In fairness to that contributor, I can confirm that he is (21.08.04) indeed on the River Alde, with his family, and has handed to me a characteristically well-informed article on the dangerous situation of the flood defences on the Bawdsey shore as well as a sensitively understated obituary to a well-known and much-missed character of the Woodbridge waterfront, Roger Edmunds. I'd be prepared to wait until the last moment for Simon Read's excellent contributions (although I'd be grateful if he didn't  
\* to hear of this lapse in discipline).

I do also have before me Ed Stanford's first Chairman's report which is a succinct survey of the main issues which face us on the Deben river, with particular reference to our battles with rising sea-levels and with accumulating silt. We wish Ed all the best in the delicate art of chairmanship. I also have Robert Simper's article on the history of ferries on the Deben: Felixstowe Ferry; Ramsholt; Waldringfield and Woodbridge, with Robert's wonderful mix of fascinating historical detail (did you know that Bawdsey Manor had its own chain-ferry in 1894?) with a passionate concern for present-day issues (public access to the

Ramsholt hard; a possible revival of the Woodbridge-Sutton ferry). I also have our past Chairman, Denzil Cowdry's, "Riverside Thoughts" which are not, as the title might suggest, the smoke-filled dreams of a riverbank poet (although there is a strong and delightful flavour of Rudyard Kipling in Denzil's piece), but serious and imaginative proposals supplementary to the developers' dreams for the Woodbridge waterfront. The commercial developers' dreams are now gradually (sometimes alarmingly) coming to light, as in the very useful and welcome exhibition of plans for Whisstocks and Nunn's Mill, presented recently at the Crown Hotel. That presentation seemed to be well-attended when I was there last week and the WAMRAG survey of opinions will make interesting reading.

I am delighted, too, to have news for you, in Paul Kingston's article, of the Amadis voyage which began in July at the Woodbridge Tidemill and is now, as I write, entering the Bay of Biscay. We wish Lily and her tiny crew a safe passage to the Canary Islands.

Mike Burn's proposal for a Thames Barge centre at the Woodbridge Tidemill has also provoked an actual "Letter to the Editor" from someone who disagrees with it. I hope this may be the start of some constructive dialogues within the pages of this newsletter, even if the opportunities for quick-fire repartee are somewhat limited by the six-month delay between proposal and response. My thanks to Derek Downer for his letter and to Mike for generating the letter. I have also received a letter, which, alas, is too long to include here, from an old friend who lives in Franklin, Tasmania, and who has visited Woodbridge several times. On ceasing to be an academic at Adelaide University, John Young and his wife, Ruth, set up a wooden boatbuilding school on the Franklin River. He doesn't propose such a school for the Whisstocks site, in such close proximity to the international school at Lowestoft, but he urges the revival of the ferry link with Sutton Hoo and the introduction of small-scale wooden boat repairs and of training courses for young people in boat-maintenance and handling. He also

wonders about the feasibility of a Sutton Hoo replica ship construction in the Whisstocks yard, followed-up by courses in sailing her on the Deben as the Danes do so successfully (and profitably) at Roskilde. "Something like that", he concludes provocatively "would be entirely possible in the U.K, with its huge and largely mad population."

It is "mad" schemes such as these that may moderate or relieve the relentless advance of executive house-building in our area. My thanks to John for the ideas of a Woodbridge-lover on the other side of the world.

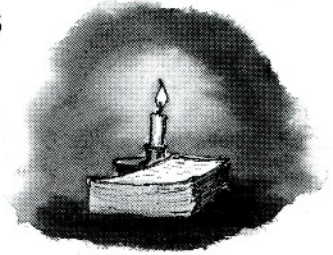
This should remind us that our river gives delight to vastly more people than merely ourselves, the members of the RDA. Owing to the generosity of the Deben Yacht Club, for example, in lending its clubhouse; thanks also to the good-heartedness of several boat-owners who came there with their boats on the 17th June: a dozen African asylum-seekers from Ipswich had their first experience of boating, not on the Nile or the Zambezi, but here on the Deben. Once reassured that there were no crocodiles in the river, they became very merry and tuneful. I feel sure that this exercise will be repeated.

My thanks too to our Secretary, Wendy Brown, who has the tedious task of condensing the lengthy, sometimes murky, RDA committee meetings to summaries of transparent lucidity, and to our Treasurer, Chris Brown, whose brief note to you about subscriptions conceals a mountain of frustrating work by him. The Browns contribute more individual items to these newsletters than any other committee member, including your verbose editor, and I am very grateful to them.

Please, members, note the important announcement of the next General Meeting of our Association which you can find on the rear cover of this newsletter. It is very important that we get a good attendance at Felixstowe Ferry on the 28th October.

Nick Wright

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES



Since my election to the Chairmanship in April, we have held two committee meetings with increasingly long agendas. The RDA is involved in a number of important issues relating to the river: some old, some new, and some new approaches to old problems.

The biggest long-term issue is the Suffolk Estuarine Strategy being developed by the Environment Agency, and covering the Blyth, the Ore/Alde, and the Deben. The agency has produced models of the Blyth and the Alde/Ore and is now engaged in preparing a model of the Deben. We hope to hear more about this at our half-yearly meeting in October. These models are intended to provide a planning blueprint for future work on the three rivers and also to act as a base-line against which further natural changes can be evaluated. For instance, you may know that the Environment Agency assumes in its planning that sea-level rises in the next hundred years will total 600mm. It is obviously vital to know whether this rate of change is actually occurring as far as the Deben is concerned. In the short term, we need to know whether salt-marsh is increasing or decreasing (because of its effect on river walls) and also where the deposition or erosion of mud is occurring. Unfortunately, all work on the river is constrained by a shortage of funds and, if anything, the situation has been made worse by the need to find emergency funding for the cliff-protection work at East Lane which is being funded initially by SCDC. There can be no doubt about the impor-

tance of this work. Failure of the cliff would initially mean the loss of the Martello Tower but would also have a major impact on the Deben since East Lane deflects the south-going tide which would otherwise erode the shore by the Ferry golf course.

The subject of mud has been debated at length in two meetings chaired by our last Chairman, Denzil Cowdry. As you may know, "plough-dredging" (the stirring-up of mud at high water for the falling tide to take away) is relatively unrestricted from a planning point of view. However, the volume of material being dispersed can be very large. Where does it go? The island off the DYC? Loder's Cut? The island off Waldringfield? No-one can be sure and the Environment Agency has not been able to agree that markers should be incorporated into the mud to determine precisely where it goes. Since the Deben's mud is high-tide recharged (i.e. it comes up the river rather than down as you might expect), the likelihood is that much of the mud will return over the next few years. A better solution might be to pump the mud behind the river wall or onto the salt marsh, but this is expensive and requires the approval of, amongst others, landowners, the Environment Agency, English Nature and Anglian Water. In general, the RDA would prefer on-shore discharge if mud has to be removed.

The RDA, in the shape of Simon Read and me, has been active in the Melton and Woodbridge Riverside Action Group. We have been looking at the general appearance of the riverside as well as the implications of developments at Whisstocks. We would like the riverside to be developed in such a way that development is consistent with the Tide Mill and Granary, but at the same time is presented as a working environment connected with boats and the river in general.

By the time you read this newsletter, the Planning Inspector will have come to a

decision about the footpath onto Wilford Bridge from the river wall and, separately, about the barge mooring. You will have received my letter giving details of the enquiry. Freedom of access along the river is very important to many members of the RDA. If you find that a footpath has been blocked or diverted, please let me, or a member of the committee, know so that we can take prompt action to secure restoration.

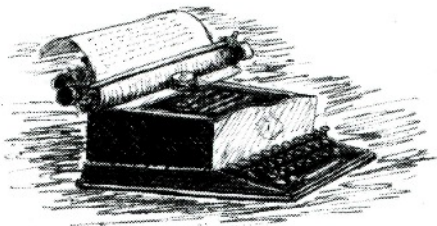
The RDA, in association with SCDC and the various fairway committees and sailing clubs, has tried to take action to ensure that speed-limits on the river (in case you've forgotten: eight knots except for the section at Kingsfleet where the water-ski club operates). The original proposal was for the sailing clubs to make a safety-boat available at weekends and bank holidays and for Suffolk Constabulary to provide an officer able to remonstrate with offenders. The scheme has fallen foul of insurance-related issues, and is currently in abeyance. It is, therefore, up to members of the RDA and others to keep an eye open for offenders. If you see a speeding boat and can make a note of its name or number or some distinguishing feature, please report this on the SCDC hotline (01394 444224) or by e-mail ([ftic@suffolk-coastal.gov.uk](mailto:ftic@suffolk-coastal.gov.uk)) The police are quite prepared to visit or write to offenders to ensure that the speed limit is observed. It is up to us to ensure that the river remains for the quiet enjoyment of everyone.

Finally a plea. If you have friends or neighbours who are interested in the river but who are not already members of the RDA, please encourage them to join us. After all, the annual subscription is very modest. The absolute number of members is very important when it comes to dealing with official bodies of one sort or another.

Thank you  
ED STANFORD

## COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wendy Brown



### Thursday 26th February 2004

Present: D. Cowdry (chairman), C. Brown, R. Schlee, E. Stanford, R. Simper, A. Judge, S. Read, P. Lacey, D. White, J. Masters, N. Wright and W. Brown.  
Apologies: A. Mason, A. Healey, and A. Moore.

Minutes of the 27/11/03 meeting: Robert proposed and Ed seconded that the minutes be accepted as a true record and it was carried unanimously.

Matters Arising: Denzil said that he wrote a letter to the SCDC planning department concerning the Notcutts' development. Denzil said that he had written to the chairman of the tennis club about the excessive lighting and was told that the matter was under review. Denzil said he would talk to Andy Seedhouse about the same problem.

Planning: (a) Deben Management Plan - Denzil reported that the Environment Agency's (EA) preliminary consultation took place on Wednesday 25th February, 2004. The study of water flow and silting in the river was expected to start in the spring. The EA has said that there is money available for the study but the Waldringfield project is postponed until at least 2005.

(b) Ore and Alde Working Group - Ed had been at the day's conference and said that following a morning of speakers, the afternoon was spent discussing the main issues. Sediment evolved as the big issue. EA policy concerning erosion, for

example at East Lane, is that the cost of repair has to be less than the benefits.  
(c) Woodbridge Waterfront Action Group - Simon and Ed reported that at an inaugural meeting on Wednesday 18th February they became members of a large steering committee.

(d) Water Bailiff - Anthony had attended a meeting of the Waldringfield Fairway Committee at which the last serving member of the Sir Ian Jacob had volunteered to be a member of a water bailiff team. Anthony promised £150 on behalf of the RDA to start the scheme. The team aim to enforce speed limits at weekend and holidays. The committee voted in favour of the bailiff with one abstention.  
(e) Felixstowe Ferry Forum - David White said he wished to resign from the RDA at the AGM and was thanked by Denzil for his long service on the committee. As David will no longer report back from the Forum Denzil said he would contact the FFF chairman about a replacement.

30th April AGM: Ed had agreed to stand for election as Chairman at the AGM and he was proposed by Simon and seconded by Robert. The treasurer and secretary agreed to stand for re-election and the committee were unanimous that they should continue. Robert and Jo were eligible for re-election and were willing the stand.

AOB: (a) Jo reported that there was a horizontal telegraph pole with some 20 tyres around it at The Tips. Denzil said he would contact Tony Brown, the Waldringfield Harbour Master, to ask for his assistance and Rosemary said she would ask Alan Davidson's help with his boat.

(b) Paul reported that the cafe in The Granary in Woodbridge had applied for an alcohol licence.

(c) The Ramsholt Hard right of way: Robert had received a letter from a legal researcher with SCC saying that there was no right of way. Robert asked Denzil to write and say that it has been used by

the public for 200 years. Rosemary said she would ask a solicitor friend for his advice.

(d) Denzil said he would ask the Woodbridge library to keep RDA newsletters and AGM minutes in a box file.

(e) Denzil said he would research speakers/films for the autumn public meeting, planned to be held in the yacht club at Felixstowe Ferry.

## Thursday 13th May 2004

Present: E. Stanford (chairman), C. Brown, R. Schlee, S. Read, J. Masters, N. Wright and W. Brown.  
Apologies: R. Simper, A. Moore, D. Cowdry and L. Belcham.

Minutes of the 27/11/03 meeting:  
Rosemary proposed and Simon seconded that the minutes be accepted as a true record and it was carried unanimously.

River Update:

(A) Woodbridge Waterfront Action Group - Ed and Simon, both RDA representatives on the Action group, said that their contribution to their section's report would deal with the riverfront from the railway bridge to the DYC. Ed said that they would be making recommendations concerning the reed bed and its future; also the green container in the Cruising Club grounds, which needed moving or disguising.

(B) "Mud" meeting: Ed said that all boatyards had representatives at a meeting on 28th April and they had agreed that further dredging should be discussed and registered. The RDA (Denzil to chair) had organised a meeting on Friday 25th June at the DYC, which will include English Nature, Environment Agency and the local boatyard owners to discuss strategy.

(C) Waldringfield Walk - 26th September 2004: a mail shot was discussed and agreed, (Rosemary suggested enclosing subscription information at the same time). It was agreed that Parish Councillors should be invited.

(D) (i) Wilford bridge footpath: Ed had contacted SCDC for information and was told that there would be a public hearing concerning the footpath on 24th August 2004.

(ii) Ramsholt footpath: Robert and Denzil had written to SCC protesting at the proposed closure. The Fairway's committee at Ramsholt had issued forms for those wishing to protest.

(E) Water Bailiff: Ed said that he would talk to John Davies at SCDC about the pros and cons of starting this surveillance. Committee members were undecided about the efficacy. A boat users' guide had been written by Denzil but was not available at the meeting. Rosemary wished it recorded that she was not in favour of the water bailiff scheme.

(F) Litter pick: Jo said that the best date, with regard to the tides, was Sunday 7th November 2004.

(G) Autumn meeting on Thursday 28th October 2004: has been arranged to take place at Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club. A talk by the Environment Agency about the research currently being done on flow and silt at the mouth of the river was suggested but no names were forthcoming. A leaflet drop, to advertise this meeting in the surrounding villages, was suggested and agreed.

AOB: (i) Chris agreed to get the joining leaflet reprinted with up to date information.

(ii) Jo asked for information about the Tidemill Cafe's request for an extension of their licence for evenings. No-one could comment.

(iii) Nick had queried SCDC concerning a footpath by the sewage works which he thought was closed; SCDC had replied that it was not.

## Thursday 22nd July 2004

Present: E. Stanford (chairman), C. Brown, R. Schlee, D. Cowdry, S. Read,

N. Wright, A. Judge, A. Moore, L. Belcham and W. Brown.

Apologies: R. Simper and J. Masters.

Committee membership: Ed had received Anthony Mason's resignation from the committee because of his time abroad; it was accepted reluctantly.

Ed recommended that the committee needed a member who could link into SCDC but no name was forthcoming.

Minutes of the 13/04/04 meeting: Simon proposed and Rosemary seconded that the minutes were accepted as a true record and it was carried unanimously.

Mud movement: Denzil said that he had written to the Environment Agency requesting special treatment for the Sutton foreshore. The EA had replied that until the River Study was available no decisions would be taken but admitted that there were three areas in the river that would benefit from mud placement, one of which was Waldringfield.

Woodbridge Waterfront Action Group Meeting 15th June: Simon reported that it was recommended by Mike Steen and Neil Lister that the river interest groups should amalgamate, to create a single point of contact between them and the Environment Agency.

Wilford bridge path: Denzil said a Planning Inspector had been appointed to review and decide on the future positioning of this path. The hearing was scheduled to last for three days, and start on Tuesday 24th August at the Lindos Centre, Saddlemakers Lane, Melton. Denzil said he would be representing the RDA at the hearing but asked for all committee members to support it. Denzil reported that a planning Inspector had been appointed to consider an eviction order against the Wilford Bridge barge owner; this hearing is at the SCDC offices, Melton Hill on Tuesday August 31st and again RDA representation was requested.

Treasurer's Report: Chris circulated a document showing a shortfall in subscription payments; he presented a prepared sample subscription statement/letter for the members to receive in a forthcoming mailshot; it was approved by the committee.

Leigh requested to know whether the Felixstowe Ferry Foreshore Trust shares owned by the RDA should be shown as an asset in the annual accounts. He also asked whether the Trust had liability for those using the slipway. Ed said he would write to Tony Storer the chairman of the FFFT to clear up these queries.

River patrol: Ed said that the river patrol was in abeyance because the police insurance did not provide cover for the police officer involved; the police are prepared to follow up on information about offenders who are breaking the law.

Mail shot: Ed presented the committee members with a sample letter to be sent out to all members concerning the Wilford Bridge hearings and the Waldringfield walk on Sunday 26th September.

Litter pick on 7th November 2004: Jo had asked for help in getting the jet ski river users involved in the clear-up.

Tide Mill Trust: had requested a promise of a donation from RDA for the rebuilding of the inside of the Mill and enlarging Wyllies Pool. The sum was discussed and it was agreed that Ed should write and offer £400.

AOB: (i) Chris recommended [www.debenentrance.co.uk](http://www.debenentrance.co.uk) for a chart of the Deben entrance.

(ii) Ed said the report for the Woodbridge Waterfront Action Group on the section of the river that he and Simon had been allocated had gone to the SCDC planning department.

(iii) it was noted that the owner of Ferry Farm was displeased that the pontoon that Everson's had towed across the river had now sunk.



## A NOTE FROM YOUR TREASURER

As you will have noticed we have, for the first time, sent out to each member of the association a statement of their subscription payments. This has caused some confusion not least because there was an error in some of the statements which I corrected as soon as possible by sending out a further statement to all those affected.

Please accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused by this error. It was a mistake in handling the data from which the statements were prepared.

A number of members have kindly reacted by sending me cheques so that we now have a much larger number of subscriptions fully paid. However, some have paid before their standing order is due. Unless these members ask their banks to adjust the standing order we shall receive more than the amount owing. I shall need to know whether you wish me to treat this as a donation to the Association or whether you would like the surplus returned.

Some of these problems occur because the standing order to the bank ask for payment later in the year than the first of April which is the date at which subscriptions are due. Thus if you are contacting your bank to adjust the amount of the subscription why not also ask them to pay the subscription on the 1st April each year.

Finally may I thank all those who have been so helpful in their reaction to the request for payment and so generous with donations.

Note the annual subscriptions are now:

Single members	£4
Couples	£6
Associations	£15

All payable on the 1st April each year



Ferry Boat Saxon 1985 - 1990

## Deben Ferries

There is always something a little magical about a ferry, a short voyage between two different worlds. At least that's how ferries seem when you are on holiday. The most impressive ferry I have been on is between Staten Island and New York, a voyage dominated by the skyline of Manhattan. To me it was magical, but other passengers were totally bored New Yorkers going to work. They see it all every day. Then there was the ferry at Lamu in Kenya, a totally different approach to life. In the boiling heat the African women sang and chanted on their cheerful way across to sell their wares.

The Deben ferries were on a much smaller scale, but not less magical. The only remaining ferry, Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey, is a short trip with its own special excitement. Note I did not say 'across', because the ferry goes sideways in the strong tide. With the old rowing ferry it must have been a difficult route, they used to swim the horses astern of the boat. Would they have made the crossing at the height of the ebb tide? The landings have certainly changed. On the Bawdsey side the road used to come down through what is now Bawdsey Manor grounds. The London stockbroker who built this Victorian romantic statement had the public road moved out on to the present route across the marshes. The Felixstowe Ferry side has changed even more. The lane to the Ferry went straight past the 'Ferry Boat Inn' and down to a landing that is now buried in boat yard.

In 1894 the owner of Bawdsey Manor opened a chain ferry, chiefly so that he could get to Nacton Station quickly when the tide was not right for his steam yacht to take him up to Woodbridge Station. This was an early case of a second home being used at the weekends. The opening of the chain ferry meant it was easier for people living in the villages on the Sandlings peninsula to go shopping in the new town of Felixstowe, rather than take the old Ramsholt ferry to Ipswich.

The Ramsholt ferry is the Cinderella of the Deben ferries because we know so little about it. The landing on the Kirton shore is just a simple stone affair while the landing on the Hard near Ramsholt Dock quay was cemented over in about 1903 and is still in use. The ferry here has become back in the spot light because of the landowner's claim in 2000 that the public had no right to land at this point. This is still an on-going argument, but it does seem that the public has used this hard freely without asking permission since at least the late-eighteenth century and probably long before that.

The problem here is that in 1959 the Quilters sold this part of their estate, and thinking no one would buy the 'Ramsholt Arms' without a good road to it, had the road tarred and handed it over to the council. However the new owners wanted to remove this public right and a row broke out between them and the Suffolk County Council because the Quilter's agents had not defined where the public road ended.

In 1961 this dispute was ended when it was agreed the public road ended at the white gates at the top of the hill, effectively ending the public right to take a vehicle down on to the Ramsholt Dock quay.

Later the landowners placed a barrier to prevent the boat owners driving down on to the quay and then in 2002 suggested that boat owners should pay for the right to use the Hard on foot. At this point, on behalf of the boat owners having moorings here or just landing, I applied for the public footpath to be recognised from just outside the pub down to the bottom of the Hard. The Suffolk County Council have stated that there is no

evidence that the public had a right to use this Hard, even though they have clearly been doing so for a very long time.

The Waldringfield ferry was probably just a short run affair to enable workers to get to the Waldringfield Cement Works. It ran from Girling's Hard, rather romantically called Galleon's Hard by the Waldringfield SC, to Hemley Point. The track across the saltings is still visible on the Hemley Point, but Girling's Hard has in the past twenty years been completely eroded away revealing another, presumably older, hard just slightly up stream. This hard is also rapidly eroding away.

One of the Waldringfield ferrymen was Isaac Stollery. He was also landlord of the "Maybush" and the agent organising barges, which came to load coprolite and straw. As well as moving people he also seems to have ferried goods across the Deben. Stollery died in 1880, but the ferry probably ran until the Waldringfield Cement Factory closed in about 1904.

In the past Woodbridge Ferry must have been the busiest of the Deben ferries. People walking from the coastal village going into Woodbridge found it quicker to go across the ferry opposite the tide mill than to go over Wilford Bridge. It was a very profitable ferry until just after the World War II, by which time buses had replaced it. However in 1919 the right to operate the ferry had been given to Woodbridge Town Council and the wording of the gift said they had to keep it running. The ferry, with just a few summer passengers, became more and more expensive to maintain and Woodbridge Urban Council decided to close it. Mr Pelly, the landowner on the Sutton shore, fought to keep it open because his workers, who were living in nearby farm cottages, now pulled down, liked to use it. In the end the Woodbridge UC, after a great deal of expense, went to the House of Lords and got the power to close the ferry down.

In 1985 the Sutton Hoo Society asked me to reopen the Woodbridge Ferry so that people visiting the archaeological dig at Sutton Hoo could visit by water. One former

Woodbridge councillor said that the 'Woodbridge Ferry would be reopened over her dead body.' Fortunately we didn't have to take that alternative. On the trial day I think we put across about 120 people, free of charge, and we never did as well again! Over the next five summers various ferrymen and myself ran the ferry at weekends when the tide was up.

The old Woodbridge Ferry had two boats, a large one for high tide and a 'flat' or punt for low tide. However the world had changed as no Sutton Hoo ferryman was interested in pushing a flat across at low water, besides the general public wouldn't walk on a muddy landing hard. The greatest drawback was that the public could not understand that the ferry could only run on alternate weekends when the tide was up. Although many people enjoyed the crossing there were not enough passengers to keep the ferrymen busy and they wandered off.

The National Trust, after they became owners of the Sutton Hoo Estate, sought to reopen the ferry. They talked about using a hovercraft, but finally settled for building large jetties. Not surprising the Suffolk Coastal District Council turned down their application to build these jetties. The National Trust had tried to reopen Woodbridge Ferry by injecting expensive technology. Perhaps the real need was the low technology of the old ferryman with his simple flat, so that it could operate at all states of the tide.

There is still hope for the Woodbridge Ferry because, although we didn't realize it twenty years ago, running a ferry as a service to the public has become popular. In 1992 the Wivenhoe Ferry was reopened and has run successfully ever since then. The following year the Butley Ferry, perhaps the most unlikely of all the East Coast ferries, was also reopened. In 2003 just 190 people crossed Butley Ferry, but it remains open. Any of the old Deben ferries could operate at this level.

Robert Simper



*EROSION at BAUSDSEY MARTELLO TOWER.*

## **East Lane**

On Monday 26th July there was an Extraordinary Council Meeting at Alderton to discuss the state of the sea defences at East Lane; it appears that the priority of stabilising the defences has been downgraded in favour of more pressing flood defence projects inland where clear threat to the built environment has been identified. The RDA has taken a keen interest in the situation at East Lane because it appears that whatever happens there will most certainly impact upon the stability of the Deben Estuary. Were the current defences to be breached, the long term effect this would have upon longshore drift is put into question along with potential

impacts upon the Deben Bar and the Felixstowe foreshore. Furthermore a study of the Environment Agencies "Tidal Indicative Floodplain Map" for the area indicates that in the event of East Lane failing, the area open to potential inundation could stretch from the northern end of Shingle Street, south through the low land between Bawdsey and Alderton at Stangrove Hall to the river wall at Queens Fleet and up as far as Ramsholt. This is not to say that this area will certainly flood, but it does expose it to a 1/200-year event and the real possibility of the spoiling of agricultural land and irrigation facilities through increased salinity. It is certain that the Martello Tower and the buildings immediately around it would become a

casualty were the cliff permitted to retreat further, however the most far-reaching effect would be upon the surrounding landscape were the sea to break through the remaining 40 feet of defence immediately south of the concrete fortifications at East Lane.

This adds up to a dire situation which for the time being DEFRA appear to have walked away from by curtailing the Environment Agency's proposed engineering works for the site. As a result of the 26th July meeting, Suffolk Coastal District Council have agreed a grant of £100,000 for emergency works: presumably further geotextile and rock armour. Further to this we understand that a syndicate of landowners in the area, called 'The Friends of East Lane', has been formed with the objective of exploring means of raising funds and lobbying central government to become more proactive. The Environment Agency has indeed indicated that, where an area has failed to qualify for defence works, the initiative remains with the local authority and the landowners.

So far so good, however the amount the Environment Agency had anticipated spending was upwards of £2.5 million and it does appear that any "hold the line" option carried out at East Lane would need sustained attention and therefore investment. In short, it doesn't stop there.

Denzil Cowdry and I went to have a look at the site and found that it has certainly reached a critical state; the beach has dropped considerably and the clay cliffs have become significantly eroded from the point where the sheet piling immediately south of the concrete fortifications comes to an end. Where rock armour and geotextile has been used, it is evident that the

process of erosion has been slowed but not arrested, at some points both rock and textile have been left slumped on the foreshore whilst the erosion continues inland. At this point we find ourselves in the precarious position of reaching an opinion but having no qualification beyond that supplied by a lively interest. This said, our impression of the current solution is that, in the absence of any associated engineering works, it is an extremely expensive and ultimately unsustainable quick fix. The cliffs at East Lane are extremely soft and the agricultural land drains seaward. This combined with the effects of wave action seems to make the use of rock armour inappropriate and, as was mentioned in the Posford Duvivier report of 1999, could well negatively affect the transport of sediment southwards to recharge the Deben Bar and the Felixstowe foreshore. This indeed is a complex issue and we are all aware that in so far as coastal processes are concerned, an action carried out at one site is sure to be felt further along.

We understand completely the need for a study to encompass the tidal dynamics of the Suffolk Rivers and the coastline and trust that, as a result, an action plan is adopted and carried out that clearly addresses the interdependence between coastal processes and estuarine stability. We have participated in the ongoing conversation with a growing sense of unease; our sense of how critical the situation is likely to become has sharpened, as has the suspicion that any action is likely to be of the damage-limitation variety. The commissioned studies have strengthened the understanding of what is happening, but knowledge alone will not solve anything without the desire and the resources to act decisively upon it.

Simon Read

## Roger Edmunds. 1933 – 2004.

Last year I received a phone call asking whether I knew anything about the Thames Sailing Barge, Dannebrog. The caller had a relative who had worked on her between the wars. A few days later, meeting Roger Edmunds on Ferry Quay and by way of conversation, I asked him what he knew; "The Dannebrog . . . I was



skipper of her in 1962".

Roger may have been a familiar sight to many as a burly presence at the end of a long lead joined to a scruffy and irrepressible white poodle; an incongruity which generated a tremendous fondness for him from all who used to stop for a chat. Only when there is an absence do we realise that a mere presence is often the most valued attribute a person can have, enhancing the world just by being. Getting to know Roger over the last twenty years or so has been like getting to know the layers of an onion; very gradual rewarding and not without a little discomfort. I was first aware of him as something to be wary of that rumbled in the corner of a boatshed, only to reveal his true generosity once reticence had given way to trust. Then a question about any technical boat matter would receive careful consideration and advice, albeit spiced with his lurid sense of humour. Roger was someone to tread carefully with for he would never hesitate to say exactly what he thought whoever he happened to be talking to. As a consequence when he put down his tools and took out his rollups you knew that you were among the privileged and would be treated to a rich yarn.

It is a pity that nobody sat down with Roger to put together the chronology of his life, for he was a part of that workaday brotherhood which witnessed the end of a way of life in the demise of the working Thames Sailing Barge. After the Second World War it was downhill for the much-depleted fleets; the pride and splendour of the spritsail rig was to give way to a total dependence upon a motor to deliver cargoes to schedule. De-rigged, they spent the rest of their working lives shuttling around the East Coast until eventually, worn out and redundant, they were sold, laid up or broken up. Only later were some to be revived and re-rigged by a new and enthusiastic breed of sailormen.

So it goes round.

Roger began his working life on barges in the late 1940s, when, as a teenager, he was mate to the notoriously irascible Reuben Webb of Pin Mill, under whom, on one trip, between leaving the London River and sighting Orford Light, he had been dismissed and reinstated no less than three times. The barges he has been associated with as skipper or mate include Spinaway C, Trilby, Venture, Raybel and Dannebrog, following which he served a spell on Everard's Coasters and then was found operating Cranfields motor tender, the CB, to shuffle lighters in Ipswich Dock. Here he had a severe accident. He fell into a coaster's hold when a ladder broke; damaging his back and legs. This effectively closed a chapter of his life but opened another as a presence in Woodbridge: caulking, splicing, rigging and painting aboard the many old working boats for which the waterfront is so well known, as well as crewing, skippering and for a while running the revived Woodbridge – Sutton ferryboat service.

He lived in Bass Dock on board the Mary Ann with his wife Norma who, when asked about Roger's enthusiasms, replied "boats, boats and more boats". That, I guess, was Roger. He never lost touch with the water, it was his whole life and with his passing, another unassuming but undeniable link with the once busy world of little East Coast trading ports has also passed.

[Roger Edmunds: Born, Yarmouth, 1933. Died, Ipswich, 2004.]

It may be of interest that the CB (standing for "Cranfield Brothers"), is now the Sea Bee, the Waldringfield Harbour Master, Alan Davidson's, workboat.

Simon Read

## Riverside Thoughts

Kipling's character, Harvey, was the spoilt brat who fell off the stern of an Atlantic liner en-route to Europe for a grand tour. He was rescued by the crew of an outward-bound Grand Banks fishing schooner. In the course of the ensuing month, the fishermen "brought out the best in him" as they filled the hold with line-fished cod. I.W. Taber's drawings in the first illustrated edition of 1898 admirably reflect the conditions.

Kipling was probably not the first to extol the virtues of sea-training, and that tradition continues. The sailing courses in our local clubs are part of it. Other maritime skills, such as boat-building, also have a lot to offer in the field of character-building. As Woodbridge waterfront develops, we need to keep in mind educational needs in their broadest sense.

Visits to such successful sea-port ventures as Mystic in Massachusetts, St Michael's in Maryland and Alexandria in Washington DC prompt me to recommend four possibilities, all linked to the wider context of Woodbridge and its residents and tourists. Financial support, as far as capital is concerned, should not be too difficult.

School parties visiting Sutton Hoo, other than those from eastern counties, are hampered by the lack of overnight accommodation, the nearest being at Flatford Mill. Thus, my first plea is for a decommissioned barge moored near to our own Tidemill and converted to accommodate school parties. An exciting visit to Woodbridge would then be open to all schools with the chance to spend a half-day at Sutton Hoo and a half-day along Woodbridge riverside. A lively start for the year-round use of our new facilities.



## On the Grand Banks

Complementary to the barge and to school visits, but for the interest and use of all, I think that we need a latter-day reading room in the style and spirit of the one at Southwold. The room would be fitted-out to illustrate the grain traffic of earlier years as well as the exploits at sea of Woodbridge sailors, past and present. A warm retreat on a cold day . . .

My third wish is for a place to teach and demonstrate traditional boat-building. The young man building a dory in Massachusetts is subsidised so that he is always ready to break off from work to give a lecture or just to talk. He lives above his Mystic workshop. The Alexandria seaport foundation is afloat. Every year families build simple skiffs in a nearby park and the building houses various courses for educationally backward children, young offenders, sea-scouts and an endless stream of enthusiasts for building and restoring wooden craft.

The ferry from Woodbridge to the Sutton shore is mentioned elsewhere in this issue. Recently, on the River Avon, below Evesham, I found a very simple, flat-bottomed, hand-operated chain ferry, big enough for about five adults, including the operator. My last wish is to restore the means of crossing the river at Woodbridge. The ferry I saw was a rectangular, low-cost, metal structure with obviously minimal upkeep, utterly safe and totally fun.

We have an interesting maritime history at Woodbridge as well as an ideal back-cloth for relevant educational ventures. Local authorities, agencies, schools, libraries and craftsmen need to be consulted. We ought to have the will to add to the interest and usefulness of our neglected, yet happily protected, waterfront.

DENZIL COWDRY



## The Amadis Voyage

Summer is now in full flow and once again the waters of the East Coast are full of craft. Amadis, alas, is not one of them. She has moved from her berth in the Woodbridge Tidemill marina to a temporary mooring at West Mersea for the final phase of her 18 month refit. My family home here is only a few roads away from where Maurice Griffiths, Amadis' designer, used to live. There is another wonderful coincidence. Peter Kozmian - Edward and his brother, Shaun, left from the Mersea Quarters (our current location) over thirty years ago to sail to New Zealand in their 60-foot ketch. Maud happily survives in new Zealand to this day but Peter was unable to complete the voyage on that occasion. Now he has the opportunity to fulfil the dream.

For a number of weeks now, Lily (Peter's daughter), Peter, Amadis and I have looked over the Blackwater Estuary, longing to be sailing and feeling restless to get the voyage underway, but feel that we must minimise Amadis' opportunity to misbehave by making everything on board ready and ship-shape.

Since our first report in the last newsletter, the project has expanded at an amazing rate. We have streamlined our objectives to focus on an internationally-significant study of the health of worldwide coral reefs. Working closely with Reef Check ([www.reefcheck.org](http://www.reefcheck.org)) we will access offshore and unstudied reefs with a view to comparing them with ones closer to human habitation and assessing the effect on reef health of human contact. Amadis will undertake local school workshops and teach local communities the Reef Check methodology so that they may continue this immensely significant task. The larger aim of the Amadis Project is to raise international awareness

of the threats to coral reefs through personal contacts, written reports and via our web-site ([www.theamadisproject.co.uk](http://www.theamadisproject.co.uk))

After many months and hundreds of applications, we have now recruited as far as the Marquesas Islands. Two more crew to complete the final leg to Auckland will be selected imminently. So, what started off as a project involving three people from the East of England has now become an international concern involving highly-qualified people from Holland, the Caribbean, the United States . . . and even Wales.

One can almost feel Amadis' restlessness in her timbers. She was designed to girdle seas and oceans while nurturing those aboard who lavish their time and affection upon her. She did this for the Wrights and will, we hope, do this for us as well.

Our voyage starts with a week-long sail to Falmouth where we will await a suitable weather "window" for Madeira and the Canary Islands. We intend to stay in the Canaries until the end of November, awaiting the trade winds to ease our Atlantic crossing.

So it is with the spirit of Maurice Griffiths watching over us and the goodwill of the two towns which have been most important to the Amadis Project thus far, Woodbridge and West Mersea, we make our departure.

Paul Kingston

[Editor's note: I have a letter on my desk, dated 16 August 2004, reporting Amadis' safe arrival in Falmouth. Paul is 22 and Lily is 24. Peter may not wish his age divulged! I feel sure that RDA members join me in wishing the dashing trio "bon voyage"]

## Frank Knight's "Yet": 1938-2003

During the mid-1930s, having had various small boats, mainly conversions of clinker open boats, I became interested in the smack yacht type of sailing boat. At this time, a number of sailing smacks came onto the market at various ports on the Essex coast.

Mentioning my interest in smacks to my good friend, Graham Poole (David's dad), he suggested a trip to Brightlingsea on the back of his motorcycle. No crash helmets necessary in those days.

The trip ended up with the offer of two smacks, one of which had to be rejected following very close inspection. Several motorbike journeys ended, a few days before the white Christmas of 1938, with my purchase of the 35-foot "Yet". As she had been laid up for 2 years, we had to re-rig with the help of the vendor's father. I learned some years later that she had been sunk during World War One by colliding with the boom defences of the River Colne!

She had recently, after about 35 years as a purely sailing boat, been installed with a Kelvin P/P engine. This was an old (1914), but reliable, motor, very low in power by modern standards for a 10 ton smack.

Suitable tides came between Christmas 1938 and New Year's Day for Graham to help me bring "Yet" to the Deben. We left Brightlingsea at about midnight on a frosty moon-lit night, with the snow-covered shore glistening in the moonlight. I should mention that "Yet's" fore-castle contained a solid-fuel stove of ancient vintage which was a considerable comfort to the crew and for some years gave good service to the new owner.

Not entirely without minor incident, due to the new owner's inexperience, the passage was made and "Yet" was soon moored at Mr Gladwell's Lime Kiln Quay in Woodbridge. He was a good friend, and remained so for many years. Those early months of 1939 were used to sort out the smack and make her more suitable for pleasure cruising. Although the international situation was looking a bit grim, following the Munich agreement, I was able to use "Yet" quite a lot at week-ends, with and without crews, and the sailing season passed very quickly (it always seems to)

September 3rd 1939, when war was declared, found me unemployed from the boatyard and I had to give thought to my use of "Yet". My long friend, George Green, also unemployed and like me in a Reserved Occupation, said "What about fishing?" The Deben was still open for sailing at this time, although later it became closed for recreation below Kyson Point.

I registered "Yet" as a fishing craft and was given the local number IH 205 and George and I fished the Deben for quite a few weeks. He was the expert fisherman. I ran the "Yet", made the tea and rowed the dinghy when George used the net (mostly a beam trawl). This was a pleasant way to spend our time, selling most of the catch and waiting to be allowed to alter our situation of Reserved Occupation, and join the forces.

With the passing of time, "Yet" had to be laid up for the duration of the war. This was again in Mr Frank Gladwell's Lime Kiln Quay dock. While I was living at home in Woodbridge, I often used to sleep on board, having been given work at Robertsons Boatyard. This was quite useful because, when I was inclined to lay-in a bit, Bert Robertson would come next

door, bang on the hatch, asking "Are you getting up today? There's a war on, you know." (I found out later he was right).

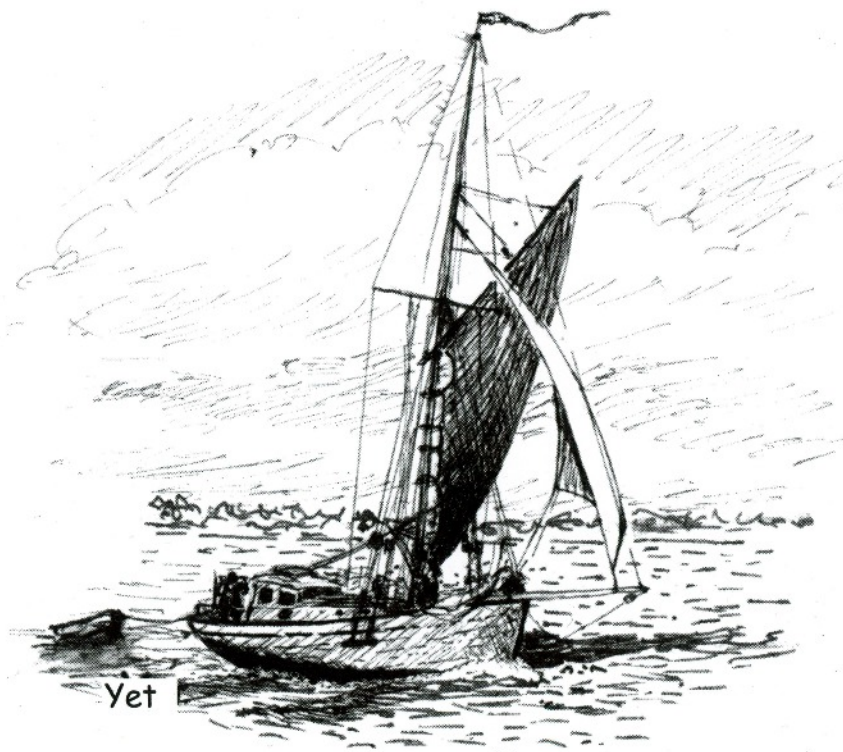
"Yet" was cared-for during my absence in the Navy by dear friends at home. She did move out of her berth, on one occasion, and filled on the next tide through her top-side seams. I had foolishly tarred the top-sides with coal-tar, to save cash, and this was not compatible with the summer sun!

World War Two ended and I had to give thought to refitting "Yet" after her long lay-up, not knowing then that my wife and I

would own "Yet" for a further 58 years. After eighteen months of major repairs, Christine and I moved on board and made "Yet" our home for the next five years. We sailed at week-ends during the summer months with the company of two cats. One was not a very good sailor and used to walk out along the boom when on a dead run!

"Yet's" saga was to carry on for many more years. She has now gone to a really good home with, I believe, many more years ahead of her. But that's in the future.

Frank Knights



# **THE RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION**

## **AUTUMN MEETING**

To be held at  
**The Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club**  
Felixstowe Ferry

**On Thursday 28th October 2004 at 7.30pm**

The Chairman of the RDA Mr. E Stanford will lead an update of River matters with time for members to contribute ideas and air their concerns

Following an interval with refreshments

**Mr. M. STEEN**  
of the **Environment Agency**

**will give an illustrated talk on**

**“THE AGENCY’S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE  
OF THE DEBEN”**