

# River Deben Association News Letter Spring 2000



Number 20

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## Editorial

As the new Editor of your Newsletter, I am in no doubt about my first task. It is hard to follow such a 'class act' as Michael Atkins has put on for the last few years; a twice yearly newsletter brimming with good things. Thankyou very much Michael. I am sure that reading your successor's first issue will be more relaxing than the anxious time before copy date, wringing articles out of your contributors. I have to say however that it has not been as difficult as I imagined; there is obviously a keenness to write about the river.

What are the issues in front of the Association today? The Bentwaters threat/opportunity (I must confess to having been one who saw it as an opportunity) has gone away, possibly not for ever. The erosion of the shingle at Felixstowe Ferry seems to me to be a most worrying matter. No doubt the officers of the Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club and Ferry residents are deeply exercised over this, but it seems that even if money was available, there is no clear idea of what could or should be done to reverse the natural process taking place there, much to the dismay of those who live, work and spend leisure time down there.

The National Trust's plans for Sutton Hoo will have an effect on the river and its surroundings at Woodbridge and the extent of this is presently difficult to estimate. An article about Sutton Hoo appears in this Newsletter, following a meeting of the Woodbridge Society, attended by inter alia your Editor. As you will see from the AGM notice, we are to be treated to a presentation on this subject on April 14, and having heard Richard Hill once, I

would urge everybody to come and listen to a very interesting presentation which will have the added gloss of the views of the Sutton Hoo Society's views.

As Anthony Mason says in his Chairman's notes; *"how lucky we are to have such a beautiful river to live by and to enrich our lives. It is the purpose of the RDA to help to keep it that way."*

**David Copp**

### Chairman's Comments

At 0730 hours on the morning January 1st 2000 I was standing on the cliff in front of Bawdsey Manor waiting for the sun to rise on the new millennium - well over the Deben actually. Why, I asked myself, did I want to be there at that moment?

There are so few constants in life today, change and progress are the buzz words with which the modern generation live and tradition does not seem as important as it used to. But the Deben was there to see in the last millennium and the one before, slightly different in shape no doubt, Bawdsey was probably an island and I wonder if there was a shingle bar to help deter invaders?

But the tide would have come in and the tide would have ebbed as it does today and somehow it was that constancy and just the joy I feel when I am on or beside the river that made me want to be there at that moment in time.

We are so fortunate.

Anthony Mason

### On Foot around the Deben

*Anne Moore is the 'footpaths' representative on the RDA Committee, but also runs a newsagent's business in Woodbridge which, as you will read below, gives her opportunities to experience nature that come to few of us who get in our cars or onto trains in the early morning, travelling to work on 'autopilot'. Thank you Anne.*

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When asked by David to "write something footpaths" for this Newsletter, my thought was of previous "bits" I'd written in earlier RDA days.

One, of a trusting nature to get help for some clearance work brought only one response: a father and his small son.

Another plan, to clear the Public Right of Way through Nettle Wood, although forestalled by the landowner's understandable concern that we might disturb the herons there, would have been a quiet event also due to no replies forthcoming!

A programme of Winter Walks' drew the support of a few committee members only and although we had very enjoyable times, my conclusion was that those members who wanted to walk already did so, preferring walk alone and probably knowing the footpa... as well as I did. I have, therefore, been rather quiet since. Until now..... when my thoughts turn to an experience I would like to share with readers who, I am sure, have similar stories to tell: we all (don't we?) have magical moments ingrained on our memories of time spent in some way near the Deben: which must be the prettiest east coast area.

The experience I relate now occurred at the time when we used to distribute wholesale Sunday newspapers. The order of call could be varied and on this occasion I'd planned to finish at Waldringfield.

Having recently (then) acquired a "very busy" collie/lab puppy (d.o.b. Sept 1980) who demanded at least an hour's exercise before he'd allow me to string two thoughts together, I would sit at the kitchen table of an evening plotting the next day's "route march": which would be selected for its undulations or its proximity to river and water meadow.

On this occasion, it was the first of the very hard winters we had in the eighties - 1981 - and it was mid February at about 7.30 in the morning. I had chosen Hemley, which "looked nice" (what an underestimation!) on the map: it was by the river and there were water courses in the land behind. About six inches of snow was still lying, which had fallen several days before and was now surmounted by an extremely heavy hoar frost.

Having pulled our little yellow ex-post office van on to the verge by Hemley church I set off, map in hand (don't I wish I could be so free now: I mean to be able to read a map without the irritation of having to fumble for reading glasses) accompanied by my little, black, canine chap, to see what those mapped features would feel.

I was filled with wonder as I walked into each "fold" of the approach to the river, passing, first, along the (as it was then) barely trodden path down from Drift Cottage to the marsh, through the tall stemmed grass, topped here and there by such pretty, yet shaggy, frosted heads, all emitting fresh cold air that was rising in the warmth of the early morning winter sun.

Then, as I turned to take the river route, passing through a gap in a bank, I drew breath and beheld "another world" - it seemed - a sight I shall remember all my life and felt then that I would surely recall on my deathbed. It was as if being led by a spirit into this very special place with what seemed a unique ambience. The February early morning sun appeared to sit "two feet" above the horizon of the river: massive and orange.

As if to order, the tide was slack and the air was quite still.

There was a sound; a low murmuring pervaded and I soon realised, a moment before spotting them, that these were the Brent Geese: a rare excitement in those days which some people went to great pains to achieve - the sight of these birds arriving from Northern Russia, as they stopped en route to their summer resting grounds. nesting

Nowadays, their numbers have increased hugely due to provision of managed feeding grounds in the Essex area, so that they seem almost to spend all year here and are something of a menace to arable farmers - causing puddling in fields where they habitually gather, pattering and eroding the topsoil. But, that day: that early morning, I felt the privileged rarity of the moment. Seed heads embellished with hoar, in the foreground; the sun seeming to floodlight the similarly whitened saltings; a perfectly placed clinker dinghy drawn up on the riverbank and the glasslike water of the slack tide reflecting the rising orange ball above the river, together with the paradoxically murmuring stillness of the scene, will never leave my memory.

There have been other times since but none quite like that first: the magic of the Deben was only just beginning to reveal itself to me.....

Yes, I know about the wall-to-wall puddles between the Art Club and Lime Kiln Quay and hope to have them remedied. Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Management Project, with Suffolk Coastal District Council, have the matter in hand. (More phone calls to either body all add weight to the matter, however!).

Leaflets of walks around the Deben Valley can be obtained from the Council Offices on Melton Hill, Woodbridge and from the Information Centre by the Station. For those preferring a challenge, all the Public Rights of Way are shown on the Ordnance Survey Woodbridge Sheet No TM24/34, or on the Explorer Map for Woodbridge which now supersedes the Pathfinder series, covering a much wider area. Both available from local bookshops.

Good walking!  
Anne Moore

**Editor:**

*After you have read Rosemary Schlee's report below, you may like to explore the wall-to-wall puddles which Anne Moore refers to and follow Robert Simper's guide to the wrecks and see if you can identify each of them!*

**Wrecks on the Deben**

There are about 12 of these long abandoned boats sinking into the mud; several have metal bits sticking up, which can't be seen at high water. Now that we have an active Rowing Club, and also small sail boats and picnic rowers operating in that lovely bit of the river, it is time in the immortal words of the Prince of Wales 'Something must be done.' A few years ago a big effort was made but the money was to come largely from SCDC and the effort foundered on that rock, despite the best endeavours of Denzil Cowdray. However now we have begun and are told by Suffolk Coasts

& Heaths Project that there is a pool of money which could be got at. It has to do with Landfill Tax, and if we as the River Deben Association put up a fee, the landfill operators will produce quite a decent sum. Twelve colour photos have been taken, the wrecks have been numbered and the worst three can be totally removed at a quote of £2,400. We hope also to make some of the others safer to boaters. I shall believe that the money is to be spent when it happens; and very much hope that there will be something other than aspirations to report in the next magazine.

Rosemary Schlee

**Guide to the Wrecks**

Prepared by Robert Simper. Jan 2000.

It is very difficult to say which is the most important historical wreck on the upper Deben because no one knows what future generations will be interested in. It is more likely that future generations will be interested in 4, 5 and 7.

**Wreck number 1**

Former ship's lifeboat. No historical importance.

**Wreck number 2**

Former ship's lifeboat. No historical importance.

**Wreck number 3**

Former ship's lifeboat. No historical importance.

**Wreck number 4**

Appears to be an inshore fishing boat. If the type and name of this craft could be discovered it might be of some historical importance.

### Wreck number 5

Appears to be a former Scottish inshore fishing boat, possible a Fife of the 1930s build. If the name and type of this could be discovered it might be of some historical importance.

### Wreck number 6

Impossible to say what this craft was. Little remains so it is unlikely to be of any historical importance.

### Wreck number 7

The 83ft Thames sailing barge Westall built at Wood, Kent in 1913. Typical of the Medway permanent and brick barges. Reputed to have taken part in the 1940 Dunkirk Evacuation. Later converted to a motor barge and then became a houseboat. Arrived at Melton in 1986. Owner is rumoured to have set light to the barge so that the council had to re-house him.

This is the only one of the upper Deben wrecks which has confirmed historical importance.

### Wreck number 8

Appears to be a former Bailey bridge converted to a houseboat. Very little historical importance.

### Wreck number 9

This appears to be a former motor craft of some type. No historical importance.

### Wreck number 10

Very little of the Iron Duke remains but she was the last cargo craft on the Deben running shingle up from the Bar. Slight local historical importance.

### Wreck numbers 11-12

Difficult to determine the origin of these remains. Presumably of no historical importance.

### Wreck number 13

Steel hulk of the dredger Holman which was broken up at Lime Kiln Quay in about 1935 and abandoned here when the firm gave up. No historical importance.

## Counting The Deben's Birds

### **THE WEB COUNTS**

These counts have been going on for some 30 years under one name or other. WEBS actually stands for the Wetland Bird Survey so it includes other large pieces of water and not just the estuaries such as the Deben.

The idea is to give a year by year account of how the birds that use the Deben are doing. Are their numbers increasing, decreasing or staying fairly steady? You can imagine that with 30 years of data we can have a fairly good idea of what has been happening to their population over that time. This is not just their success in feeding through the Winter but how well they fared on the breeding grounds which for many of our Winter birds may be thousands of miles to the North.

The counting is actually done at High Tide. This makes it easier and more accurate. This is because most of the birds, especially the waders, have to leave the mud and go to roost. At that time they are in large groups on nearby fields or saltmarshes. We concentrate on these roosts. Also birds that are in the saltmarsh creeks cannot be missed.

The birds counted are:- Waders, which probe into the vast expanses of mud for worms and shellfish; Ducks, Geese and Swans which may be feeding on the mud (Shelduck) or on the saltmarsh or the fields behind the wall (Widgeon and Pintail) or diving for molluscs or small crabs (Goldeneye); Cormorants; Herons;

Grebes as well as any other species that use the Estuary to feed or roost.

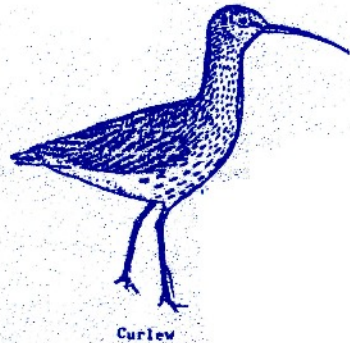
So, why is it birds that are counted? I suppose the answer to that is that they are large enough, easy to count, readily identified and behave in a way that we can understand. The alternatives would be fish or perhaps shellfish, neither group being easy, although their populations would have an interesting tale to tell us over the years.

When I started counting the Deben, 25 years ago, there were only 3 or 4 sections. Somehow I soon found myself co-ordinating them. With the help of more volunteers, for that's what all the counters are, we increased the coverage to 9 sections, which in most of the months September through to April involves 12 or 13 people.

Each of the sections has its own character and some require more footwork than others! For my sins I have to walk from Ramsholt to Stonner Point and back. This is wonderful on a warm September Sunday when the visibility is clear and there is a good chance of that odd migrant passing through, but takes on a different dimension when, in February, it is freezing cold and wet from the mist that allows you to see the water's edge but not the geese you can hear just beyond! The counters who slip and slide through the mud and spend most of the time on these damp days wiping their binoculars show an amazing commitment.

At the lower end of the river you are most likely to count the geese and the visiting swans while in the Martlesham Creek and Woodbridge area the grazing ducks, such as teal and pintail are found. Since we count at high tide most of the birds, especially the waders are in close roosting flocks on the saltmarshes or in the fields behind. They are easier to count in this way. The section just

downriver from Waldringfield is probably the most important because of this. The saltmarsh on either side of Early Creek may hold over 2000 Redshank and hundreds of other species such as Curlew, Grey plover, Dunlin and Oystercatcher as well as ducks and gulls. We have two counters in this section! At high tide the birds arrive from all directions trying to find a quiet and safe spot to roost while they wait for the tide to drop. They can then fly off again and continue to probe in the mud for the food they need to keep themselves going.



In some years we have also taken part in Low-Water counts. This involves actually counting each bird on a given piece of mudflat. The numbers can be extremely large, especially of the smaller species such as Dunlin. Picking up the Shelduck or Curlew, both large birds, can be straightforward. The Dunlin, however, are tiny and are forever on the move. Often have been in the middle of a group of 100 or more and the flock has suddenly lifted off. They may only move 100 metres but you have to start again!

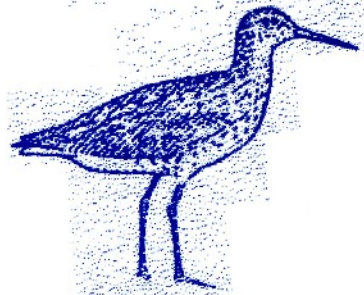
Three years ago these low water counts were done specifically on certain patches of mud. These patches are also photographed by satellite. From the data it is possible to say exactly what type of mud it is. The computer can recognise subtle differences in different

sections such as the relative amounts of silt or sand. This information is correlated with the birds counted on the mud patches. From this information it should be possible to say how "good" a patch of mud is for wildlife. This could be of use, for instance, when planning permission was sought along the river.

The Deben, although a small estuary without the deep water seen in the Orwell or Stour, has some excellent birds. Among the waders there are good numbers of Redshank, Dunlin, Curlew, Grey Plover, Avocet and Black-tailed Godwits. All of these at some stage will use the mud, which is one of the most productive habitats known. Regular ducks include Shelduck, Mallard, Widgeon, Teal and Pintail. We have thousands of Brent Geese as well as the feral Canada and Greylag populations. Goldeneye are concentrated in the deeper water either side of Waldringfield. They are diving ducks. Sometimes we have wintering Berwicks or Whooper swans.

Other regulars in the winter include Cormorant, Heron that breed by the river, Great-crested and Little Grebes. More unusual winter visitors to the river including Peregrine Falcon, Scaup, Slavonian grebe, Eider and Red-breasted Merganser. The Ramsholt Arms even had its own Great-northern Diver a couple of years ago!

Deben is actually important for certain of its populations of birds. This means that the populations are usually 1% or more of either the national or international totals. Little grebe, Shelduck, Brent goose, Black-tailed Godwit and Avocet populations are of national importance on the Deben. The Avocet numbers have built up from nothing over the past decade to over 130 in 1999. These are birds from Holland.



Redshank

The one bird that is of international importance is the Redshank. We may have more than 2000 of this medium-sized wader in some years. I rather thought that The Redshank would have been the most fitting name for that new/old pub that was eventually named after a mammal.

Nick Mason

### East Suffolk Water Ski Club

The club was formed in 1977 to represent the sport of Water Skiing on the River Deben. Today the ESWSC continues to represent this exciting sport, providing the best facilities available in the area. Operating between Green Point (Ramsholt) and the Horse Sands at Felixstowe Ferry, the club offers skiers launching & Jetty facilities, a full Slalom Course and a Jump Ramp.

In 1987 the club formed a lasting association with the Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club. Membership of the Sailing Club provides our members with excellent changing facilities, hot shower, a Galley and of course the club bar. It is also an ideal way for Water Skiers and Sailors to mix together off the water.

Today our active members practice all the varied disciplines of the sport, from Slalom Skiing, Jumping and Wake Boarding to the high speed thrill of Barefoot Water Skiing. We offer fully qualified Water Ski Instructors to

teach all levels of Skiing, from beginners to competition standards. Our affiliation to the British Water Ski Federation gives us national representation and support as we try to develop the sport in this area.

This year sees the launch of our first ever club boat. We have, thanks to a "Millennium Festival Awards for All" grant, been able to purchase a tournament standard ski boat, to use as our primary teaching and training vessel. We have a youth introduction policy and hope that this new boat will allow us to further promote the sport of Water Skiing on the Deben.

We are an active and go-ahead club, keen to pursue our sport and to share it with others who want have a go. We meet at the Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club, have a club night every Monday evening and regular Skiing on Wednesdays, Fridays and over the weekends. Skiing starts in May and continues through to October.

The highs of water skiing are the early mornings and late evenings when the river has a smooth mirror flat surface, and the Skis just fly through the water. The thrill of barefoot skiing or the sensation of flying off the jump ramp.

The lows are the cold, wet evenings, windy days and everyone else's boat wakes !

So next time you see us skiing along at river's edge you'll know we are looking for a flat bit of water to ski on. You're welcome to come over and see what we are up to, but please don't try tacking thought the Slalom course !

Ian Mitchell

Chairman

East Suffolk Water Ski Club

The Sailing Club House

Felixstowe Ferry

[www.eswsc.freeserve.co.uk](http://www.eswsc.freeserve.co.uk)

## Early memories of Felixstowe Ferry and the River Deben

*Some memories of Felixstowe Ferry from Robin Whittle who has been himself actively sailing at and around the Ferry for many years.*

This short article describes some of my early memories of Felixstowe Ferry and the Deben from just after the war. A second article on my recollections of the dinghy sailing for this period will follow.

My father was born in Felixstowe and his father was headmaster at Eastward Ho, a small private school situated at the corner of Cliff Road and Stanley Road in Felixstowe. He died when my father was very young. My father became interested in sailing at an early age through his uncle, Bernard Thompson, who had become Headmaster of the school. He owned a yacht in which he took my father and his girl cousins for many trips.

Many years later in the early nineteen thirties, after my father had qualified as a doctor, he and my mother spent a holiday at the Ferry renting the large wooden bungalow at the north end, close to where the tenders are pulled up on the shingle. They both fell in love with the place and immediately set about looking for somewhere as a holiday home.

This resulted in the purchase of Ferry Beach. In 1933, a bungalow at the extreme south end of the hamlet. It was situated immediately adjacent to one of the greens of the golf course and had been part of a larger bungalow placed on the shingle opposite the Ferry Boat inn. The then owners were concerned that it was in a too vulnerable position and organised its transportation to the current site, at the same time dividing it into two and placing them on brick stilts. The other part, Fairway (the name



of the original bungalow), was positioned just to the west of Ferry Beach. It was owned by Dr Houndsfield at the time that my parents purchased Ferry Beach and is still owned by his descendants.

My parents soon found that they needed to extend the bungalow and added two bedrooms and a living room in 1936. This is how it remained for most of my life apart from the addition of two precast concrete garages and a further extension to one of the bedrooms that my father added after he had retired.

... that time on the foreshore between the bungalow and the sea was a small garage on stilts, a beach hut and a large boat shed (later purchased from Captain Wells of Mariner's Cottage). There was a further twenty five yards of shingle before reaching the high tide mark. In addition, to the north east of the garage there was another bungalow set at an angle of about thirty degrees to the line of the shore. A track just inland of the beach huts provided access to this and also a back entrance to our land. Our front door faced the golf course to the south. I have described the layout in some detail since it has changed dramatically since the storm and flood of 1953 (this is well recorded in Allan Jobson's book "The Felixstowe Story"). The sea took a very large bite out of the shore line, finishing up within a few feet of the Martello Tower which is situated close to Harbour Villas. It swept away the ground where the boat shed had been (luckily removed the summer before), our beach hut and garage. Far worse, it completely swept away the adjacent bungalow to the north east of Ferry Beach leaving a small triangle of land just large enough for a beach hut. For us in some ways the storm was a blessing in disguise. It resulted in the construction of a very strong concrete sea wall that runs from just to the north of Harbour Villas to half a mile south of Ferry Beach. This protects the most vulnerable

part of the hamlet and golf course. One other outcome from the construction of the wall is that the sea has receded to its former line, leaving a stretch of beach a hundred yards wide which is no longer our property.

My first recollections of Felixstowe Ferry were just after the war. The golf course had been taken over by the Ministry of Defence and much of it had been mined. The shoreline around the mouth of the Deben had a construction of scaffolding set up to deter the enemy from landing. Large coils of barbed wire placed on top of each other supplemented this and emphasised the point. A Nissen hut was placed where the green had been. The ruins of a row of red bricked coast guard cottages having suffered a direct hit from German bombers remained derelict. They were situated close to where Bligh Manor now stands. During our first holiday at the Ferry after the war in the summer of 1946 my brother and a friend returned from a foray to the remains of the coast guard cottages with two Persian kittens, one blue and the other pure white. His friend kept the white one and we kept the blue one naming it Jeremy. It lived to the ripe old age of fourteen.

It wasn't all fun at the Ferry in those days. The golf course was not clear of mines and every now and then there was an explosion caused by a dog or small animal straying onto the course and getting blown up.

I remember that the dunes of the golf course and all around were infested with rabbits. They were everywhere, even burrowing in our garden and under the bungalow. The first wave of myxomatosis in the nineteen fifties killed most of them and I have not seen a wild rabbit at the Ferry for many years.

After having our holidays every year at the Ferry we got familiar with some of the names

of the people living there. The Newsons, Brinkleys and Whites are three that I remember well. Billy and Ted Newson had open motor boats, similar to the ferry of today. Billy was the Pilot and spent most of his day sitting on the door step of a hut on the beach close to the ferry. On sunny days there were always one or two pretty girls sitting around chatting to him. Ted (Settler), his brother, I knew because he repainted our bungalow. Herbie Kerry took on this task in the sixties and became a friend of my father. They both enjoyed sketching in watercolours and each provided a stimulus for the other.

Charlie Brinkley I knew as one of the fishermen. He always appeared to be mending his nets. One day when my father and I were wandering around the point we found Charlie in a bit of a state as his son had managed to get a fish hook badly caught in his hand. My father set to and managed to extract it without too much damage. Charlie always greeted us from that day on.

Barry White was also one of the Ferry fisherman and I was a little frightened of him as he was obviously very strong and quite fierce looking. I often used to see his children, who were of a similar age, playing outside their home in Harbour Villas. Much later their mother, Trudi, became Landlady of the Ferry Boat Inn and Peter, the youngest boy, became World Champion in the 505 dinghy class.

Two other people that I remember at the Ferry in those times were Fred Pearce who owned the boatyard and Eddie Griffiths who repaired engines in the boat shed at the north end of the Ferry, close to the mud where the houseboats were moored. Fred Pearce always seemed a bit grumpy to me although I never got to know him and could have been misled by his looks.

Five or six World War I wingless wooden bodies of Felixstowe seaplanes augmented the houseboats at the point. Some of them were made from moulded Fairey marine ply. They looked incongruous amongst the more traditional houseboats (like the house of the old woman who lived in a shoe). They all disappeared at about the time of the flood of 1953.

Another landmark that has disappeared were the four radar masts, each with two lattice crossheads, standing in a line close to the manor on the Bawdsey side. They were very distinctive and I have only seen one other similar. This stands just outside Chelmsford, which I presume is some memorial to Marconi. All that is now left at Bawdsey to commemorate the first coastal radar station is a single pylon without any crossheads.

The sea defences around this bit of coast have changed dramatically. Before the war both sides of the mouth of the Deben were protected with wooden groins. Just after the war many of these were renewed and I remember watching a pile driver at work on the beach close to our bungalow I understand that a decision has been made not to renew the groins at Bawdsey and allow the coast to erode there. If so it seems very short sighted since, for a moderate investment, they stabilised that part of the coastline.

During the fifties there must have been a bit of a scare over at Bawdsey since the point started to erode dramatically. The decision was made to install a sheet pile wall right round the corner. Once complete it provided a dramatic sight when the sea was up and the waves breaking straight on to it. The spume shot up twenty or thirty feet above it providing anyone close by with a continuous shower. After about ten years the sheet piling started to rust through so a second line was added inside. Recently the

shingle has built up beyond the point and we are no longer treated to the display of crashing waves.

Further up the river I remember visiting Ramsholt in the late nineteen forties. The quay there was in a very derelict state and it was not until the fifties that it was restored to its current condition. We used to have a lot of fun climbing up the sand mounds close to the Ramsholt Arms. This has been rightly stopped because of the erosion it caused. Mind you, the rabbits were doing their bit at the time!

Robin Whittle

### Sutton Hoo

Your Editor was able to attend a talk recently given to the Woodbridge Society by Richard Hill of the National Trust. Richard is the Project Manager for the Sutton Hoo site. The plans being made by the Trust for the 'development' of the site certainly appear to be well thought out.

I am myself not familiar with the site. On the (probably only two) occasions I have been there, I have been overwhelmingly disappointed. As a place from which/around which to walk, no doubt it is very attractive, but as far as the significance of the site as the famous 'Sutton Hoo', there has in the past appeared to be nothing there.

No doubt that has changed in recent years. In researching this article, I have come across the Sutton Hoo Society who have an excellent web site ([www.suttonhoo.org](http://www.suttonhoo.org)) and who are working alongside the National Trust in the development of the site.

So, what are the plans? There are to be two main new buildings; a reception building with the ticketing facilities, a tearoom/restaurant and a shop (hopefully also toilets) and an exhibition

building where there will be - of course - an exhibition explaining the significance of the site, and with some of the treasures from the site on display. I think I understood that there would be replicas of the most significant treasures, the originals remaining in the British Museum, but possibly some original objects which at present are in the British Museum, but not on display there.

These timber framed buildings are of course designed to blend in with the site and to have something of a Viking feel about them. The exhibition building will probably just be visible from Woodbridge.

One interesting aspect of Richard Hill's talk was the fact that a team from the National Trust had visited Sweden and Denmark to see how their museums had presented similar archaeological discoveries, as part of the design process for Sutton Hoo. We are here of course talking about a site with its origins in Scandinavia.

The site is of course to have a car park (95 cars, 5 coaches). They expect around 50,000 visitors a year with perhaps 65 cars on a 'good' weekend. There will be a new road junction constructed where the Sutton Hoo lane meets the Bawdsey road (£250,000 just for that!). The site will be open throughout the year, but probably only at weekends in the winter. Opening is scheduled for Autumn 2001 (which in computer parlance will be a beta-test stage) with full opening scheduled for Spring 2002.

As to the ferry from Woodbridge. . . . The National Trust say they are keen for this to happen and intend to rebuild the staging on the Sutton shore. However they do not intend to subsidise ferry operation, and if the ferry is to run, someone has to come forward to operate it. Tidal restrictions seem to me to make this a doubtful proposition. However the foot ferry

used to run across there, but not I guess for the last 20 years. Has the river silted up a lot since then? Does anybody know how many hours either side of HW that landing could be made? There is an opportunity here for somebody to take up a most romantic job. The Trust proposes to build a replica of the Sutton Hoo ship on the site. Maybe when it is finished, this replica could be the ferry which crosses the Deben to bring visitors to and from the site. . . . who knows?

David Copp. (Editor )

### BOATS ON THE DEBEN

*More Deben reminiscences, this time from Yacht Surveyor Terry Davey who is also an active member of the Rowing Club.*

I was always fascinated by things that float and one of my earliest memories was of the rowing ferry at 'New Cut' in Ipswich. Every Wednesday the old boatman would row my mother and the infant Davey across to visit grandmother Ward in 'Stoke'. This must have been in the late 40's and if I remember rightly, the fee was three old pence (1¼p now) and may have included the return fare.

In particular, I was intrigued by the tiny whirlpools that went spiralling away from the tips of the oarsman's blades. In my memory I see them still and my nose twitches at the remembered smell of the river, the tar of the old boat and the ripe smell of malting.

Those days so clearly remembered, are now long gone. The docks were bustling with industry, barges still lined the Neptune quay, a belching gas works supplied tar for our bilges and the town with lethal gas. Great factories employed thousands of workers to build cranes, monstrous diggers and agricultural machinery to supply far corners of the world.

Now, on the site of Ransomes and Rapiers (asset stripped by a mad tycoon) is a silent warehouse for the storage of faulty (reject) goods apparently more in demand than mining equipment or machinery to grow the worlds food.

For all that the Orwell was my home river, it has been twenty two years since I found my home on the banks of the Deben and I could not love it better!

No roads follow the Deben shores, the boats are tide rode at their moorings and over all night sky is dark.

From my window on the ridge above the Ferry, the Deben valley stretches to the Northwest and hardly a light shows from Bawdsey to Woodbridge. There is a bright lamp at Ramsholt Arms and on certain winter evenings, the floodlights of the tennis courts are a bright star at the head of the river.

Pleasures are best enjoyed with a contrast and if I turn away from the peaceful dark of the Deben valley, the looming orange lights of Felixstowe docks are a sharp reminder of the creeping menace.

My love of boats and of the water, eventually led me to the occupation of 'Yacht & Small Ship Surveyor'. A curious profession, where there is no regulation, no specific qualification and no governing body! There are of course, respectable professional institutes (mine) with certification registers and also 'associations' for people in the trade. But legally, yacht surveyors, like the practitioners of hypnotherapy, may dispense their wisdom without government interference.

Looking at boats is what I always most enjoyed and it seems a shame to take the money. But given the ever increasing risks of litigation I

have to raise the indemnity insurance fee somehow.

Marine surveyors are at the very top of the list of people that may expect to be sued for negligence, with a national average of twice a year. I have been very lucky to miss it, but all surveyors know it is only a matter of time.

Mind you, there have been attempts, for example:

- The man who hit flotsam and bent a propeller blade three months after my survey.

- e complete novice who motored into a gale
  - h his engine cooling water turned off.

Both these and a few others, all had the same response to the results of their incompetence; someone must be blamed!

When I first sailed the waters of the east coast, yachts were beautiful. They were things of grace. Their designers combined the principles of hydrodynamics, the theory of structures and pure art..... art being applied with the biggest spoon! Not all of them performed well. Some were cranky, some were dangerous and some sailed like a dream, but they all looked good and what is more, they were all different! Most boatyards had their own design.

From these traditions came yachts like the 'Vertue', the 'Dragon' and the 'Landfall'. Even

- humble working craft had a grace of line
- frustrates the artist's ability to paint.

Yachts such as these and many others enhanced the special beauty of the Deben. Their presence was never resented, but now, as they become tired relics, poverty stricken enthusiasts struggle to restore their treasures while fleets of white plastic pods with clanking masts generally prevail.

There are still some designers who have that magic touch and there are many fine G.R.P. boats, but perhaps the time is coming when

planning permission should be necessary before a swinging mooring should be granted to a specific vessel? For instance, Grade 1 listed vessels may have preference for moorings in Woodbridge and vessels at the other end of the aesthetic scale may moor in the upper reaches of the river Roach with sailing restricted to the hours of darkness.

You have probably guessed the weakness of this scheme. It is of course, who will choose? Well this is where I can help out (some of you won't like this) Terry Davey will decide!

### Felixstowe Ferry

Following concerns about the sea defences at Felixstowe Ferry and the mouth of the River Deben, the following letter has been sent by the Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club to all its members. As you will appreciate, the changes predicted at Felixstowe Ferry will affect all river users. Please show your interest and support by writing letters as suggested below, as soon as possible.

Get your pens and paper ready - help save our club.

We need every member to write two letters, one to the Environment Agency and one to the District Council. If each member can also get two non-members (and this is where you come in, dear RDA member) to write a letter each, we should have over a thousand letters to each office.

Your letters, as soon as possible, should be individual - a photocopied standard letter does not convey the right impression (for the cc recipients, photocopies are alright).

Use your own words. However the following list of topics might help you:-

- Worry about recent rapid deterioration of sea defences.

- Lack of interest or help from Environment Agency or Local Council.
- Felixstowe Ferry's long history. The Community; more than just the Sailing Club.
- The landscape and countryside setting. Approaches from land and sea.
- Popularity with visitors. Range of activities.
- Low lying golf course - in danger of flooding.
- Heritage, culture, cannot be replaced when lost.

**Letter 1.** should be addressed to :

Sir John Harman, Chairman  
 The Environment Agency, Rio House  
 Waterside Drive, Aztec West, Almondsbury,  
 Bristol, BS12 4UD  
 with a copy to:  
 Rt Hon J S Gummer MP, House of Commons  
 London, SW1A 0AA

**Letter 2** should be addressed to:

Mr Tom Griffin, Chief Executive  
 Suffolk Coastal District Council  
 Melton Hill, Woodbridge, IP12 1AU  
 with a copy to  
 Mrs Susan Robinson, Town Clerk,  
 Felixstowe Town Council  
 Town Hall, Felixstowe, IP11 8AG

### Deben Rowing Club

Deben Rowing Club suffered a bit of a setback at the end of last year when it became apparent that the land on which they hoped to erect a Boathouse, and for which they had obtained Outline Planning Permission, was no longer available. An alternative site was offered which turned out to be unsuitable and negotiations have resulted in yet another parcel of land, close to the water front, being made available. This would have to be developed in a rather different way from the Club's first proposals and discussions and negotiations with planners will begin soon.

The delay in being able to provide facilities that are very badly needed, or even to demonstrate to members that the project was really moving

forward, resulted in a slight downturn in numbers. These have improved again recently with new oarsmen coming to the Club sessions on Saturdays and Sundays.

Training for crews has improved and the Club is grateful to Simon Hale and Robert Alexander for their great efforts in this regard. The Club has also been able to provide something that has been lacking for a little while, social rowing. The acquisition of a fleet of tub fours, matching the pair that are owned by Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club, has meant that novice rowers, older members and some of the competitive oarsmen have enjoyed some delightful outings on the recent cold, crisp, sunny days. There is no doubt these boats will come more and more into their own both for recreational rowing and training and, depending on the tide, outings to well known watering holes such as Wilford Bridge, The Maybush or Ramsholt Arms have been pencilled in for the spring and summer.

The more competitive side of rowing at Deben Rowing Club has not been overlooked and a great spur has been the recent affiliation of the University of Essex Boat Club to Deben Rowing Club. Their boat trailer and three fine boats are now at Woodbridge and it is a pleasure to see even more craft on the water.

Rowers enjoy the winter months when the yachts have been craned away for winter storage and we have almost had the river to ourselves. We know this won't last much longer but at the time of writing it is only just over a month to the start of British Summer Time and rowing on Wednesday nights.

Contact :-

Terry Davey, Rowing Captain, on 01394 282033 or

Fiona Woods, Ladies Captain, 01473 785268, if you are interested in having a go at this enjoyable sport.

### Annual Litter Collection

Many thanks to everyone who gave their time to pick up litter. Every, October a core of RDA Members & Non Members clean up the shore line from, Ufford to the sea on both banks. The skips were filled to overflowing, and the weight of rubbish around 4.5 tonnes, this does not include the many additional bags also filled.

1999 finally saw the difficult 2.5 mile stretch from Ramsholt Arms to, opposite the water-ski ramp completed after five consecutive years of effort. The Last Great Problem is now the section from here to the sea, access will again be tricky anybody looking for a challenge?

We are always on the look out for more volunteers the weather is usually, fine and comments received from various teams make you realise that this, small contribution to the environment of half a day of our time once a year really does make a difference.

The Litter Clearance this year will be on Sunday 8th October.

If you are interested in helping please contact Jo Masters on 01394 383825

### Letter to the Editor

*Yes, the Editor has received a letter! and will be very willing to receive letters in the future relating to the Newsletter, or any other matter of matter of interest about the River Deben and its environs:-.*

20 Longhurst, Burgess Hill  
West Sussex, RH15 0TG  
Tel: 01444 246953

Dear Sir

I wonder if you can publish a request for information about the boat 'Nore' lying derelict at Felixstowe Ferry in the early part of 1999.

Information supplied by the boat's last owner, Mrs Dorothy Reilly, is that the 'Nore' is about 50ft long, is of double diagonal construction and is a single step hydroplane. It is believed to have been built about 1918 for the Royal navy, but failed its sea trials and was sold off. It is thought to have been twin-engined. Mrs Reilly and her husband bought the boat at Felixstowe Ferry from Dr Wight. It was used as a family holiday home until sinking in about February 1995, as a result of which it was hulked on the marshes. Mrs Reilly understands that the boat was used as a houseboat at Woodbridge prior to moving to Felixstowe Ferry. The name 'Nore' may not be original, but no other name has been mentioned in connection with this craft. I will be grateful for any information about the boat to enable me to trace its original identity and history.

Yours sincerely

Nick Hall Coastal Forces Historian

### Forthcoming Events

#### **The Annual General Meeting**

14th April 2000

#### **Deben Week**

Sat 29th July-Saturday 5th August 2000

#### **The Yachtsman's Service**

#### **Waldringfield Beach**

Sunday 30th July 2000

#### **Deben Litter Collection Day**

8th October 2000

#### **RDA. Open Meeting**

13th October 2000

## RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION NEWS LETTER SPRING 2000

### WHO'S WHO

#### OFFICERS

Chairman	Anthony Mason, 9 Calder Road, Melton Park, Melton IP12 1PQ. anthonymason_uk@yahoo.co.uk	Tel 01394 380909
Vice Chairman	Michael Atkins, Rudds Barn, Waldringfield Rd., Martlesham, IP12 4PJ. michaelatkins@lineone.co.uk	Tel 01473 736668
Treasurer	David Mace, Japonica Cottage, Waldringfield, IP 12 4QN	Tel 01473 736677
Secretary	John Lineker, Decoy House, Old Church Road, Melton, IP13 6DH	Tel 01394 460196
Press Secretary	Rosemary Schlee, Deben Lodge, Melton Rd., Woodbridge, IP12 1NH	Tel.01394 382740

#### COMMITTEE

Felixstowe Ferry	David White, 6 Coniston Close, Felixstowe, IP 11 9SW	Tel 01394 283972
History	Robert Simper, Sluice Cottage, Ramsholt	Tel 01394 411273
Rowing	Peter Wain 1 Whitehouse Cottage, Gulpher Road Felixstowe, peterwain@aol.com	Tel 01394 277669
Litter	Jo Masters, 49 Riverview Rd., Melton.	Tel 01394 383825
Wildfowlers	Adrian Judge, 29 Bredfield St., Woodbridge. rosemary.judge@virgin.net	Tel 01394 383350
General Liaison	Ian Batty, Upson Cottage, 8 Crown Place, Woodbridge IP12 1BN	Tel 01394 382338
Water Ski Club	Ian Mitchell, 9 Warren Heath Avenue, Ipswich, IP3 8TB ianmitchell@textfonturf.com	Tel 01473 728548
SCDC Liaison	Anni Healey, Jesters, 7A Burkitt Rd., Woodbridge IP12 4JJ	Tel 01394 382291
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Footpaths	Anne Moore, 2 Grundisburgh Rd., Woodbridge, IP12 4HG	Tel 01394 383559
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Without Portfolio.	Denzil Cowdry, St. Edmundsbury 10 Ipswich Rd, Woodbridge, IP12 4BU	Tel 01394 383625



**River Deben Association**

**Notice of The Annual General Meeting**

**To be held at  
The Woodbridge Community Hall.  
Friday 14th April 2000**

**Wine and Nibbles  
at 7.30 p.m.**

—  
**The Annual General Meeting**

—  
**A talk by Richard Hall  
of  
The National Trust  
About  
Developments at Sutton Hoo**

**All Are Welcome**