

# River Deben Association

Spring 2002

24

Chairman's Notes  
Early History of the Deben  
On a Different Plane  
Lottie Blossom  
Celebrations at Felixstowe Ferry  
New Lamps for Old  
Planning Update  
Trinity House

Anthony Mason  
Geoffrey Brown  
Denzil Cowdry  
Richard Hare  
Anthony Ratcliffe  
Jim Wyllie  
Anni Healey  
Chris Brown

## From the Chairman

There is a lot of 'substance' in this issue with an extract from Geoffrey Brown's History of the Deben Yacht Club which many of you have probably read and may even own a copy. Arthur Ransome's boats are well known on this part of the coast and apart from those mentioned in Richard Hare's article he was responsible for having the original Peter Duck ketch built with several of the class still moored on the Deben. And Chris Brown's brief history of Trinity House and its responsibilities for the safe navigation of shipping around our coast will be fascinating to those of us who put out to sea in our boats.

But probably the most important article is that of Denzil Cowdry who on our behalf has been attending

meetings on the development of the Deben Estuary and as you can see from his article we do make a difference. By representing all users and lovers of the Deben we are in a strong position to put their views and to influence decisions.

The defending of the foreshore at Felixstowe Ferry, the rebuilding of the quay at Bawdsey, the opening of the Sutton Hoo project by the National Trust and hopefully the re-opening of the ferry link across the river are all very positive steps. The Woodbridge Town Quay desperately needs a major refurbishment and your Association has become a sponsor of this by committing £500 to the project at this stage. The Millennium Green at Felixstowe Ferry is progressing well, more money has to be raised but the donation that we gave to secure the option to purchase has proved a good

investment for the future of this open land.

The development of Whisstocks Boatyard site is of major concern to a great many people as it dominates the riverfront in Woodbridge. If the planners get this wrong we will have to live with the consequences for a very long time. We will be discussing this at our AGM on the 19th of April so please come along (put the date in your diary now!) and air your views whilst also enjoying the slides and talk by Chris Parfitt on the river Alde which is almost as nice as the Deben!

Anthony Mason

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### **Early History of the Deben**

*reprinted from Geoffrey Brown's History of the Deben Yacht Club*

The early Britons chose to settle on the sloping, sun-facing banks of a tidal, sparkling river about 12 miles from the sea at Woodbridge. They found excellent hunting in the surrounding forests and abundant fish in the streams and upper reaches of this estuary. They gave this life-giving river the name which still survives, the Deben; meaning 'The White Waters'.

By the ninth century, the Angles were making full use of the Deben as a means of supplying their Court situated at the head waters of the estuary at Rendlesham. The grandson of Offa was Redwald the King of East Anglia and it was at Sutton Hoo, on the east bank of the Deben opposite Woodbridge, that his treasure laden burial ship was unearthed in 1938/1939.

As time passed the river Deben gradually increased in importance, especially its haven near its confluence with the North Sea. As today, both the mouth of the river and its associated shingle bar were constantly changing, posing yet another hazard to the boats and sailors wishing to enter; at one period around 1390 there were two river mouths and the area around Bawdsey was an island.

Work began in the 16th century to control the river by the establishment of the river walls, the tall banks on both sides of the river; well engineered, fabricated with layers of green rushes and earth and sufficiently tall to contain the water at the highest flood tide. Together with these improvements came the growth of Woodbridge as a port and more especially its renown for ship building and the skills of its shipwrights and rope-makers.

In 1587 the generous benefactor Thomas Seckford died and Woodbridge mourned; however, there was much greater concern at the time from the expected invasion of the Spanish with their awe-inspiring Armada.

It was decreed that the three important towns Woodbridge, Ipswich and Harwich must supply three vessels to be fully fitted out, well victualled and manned, with a total crew of 120 sailors.

The three vessels, William (140 tons), Katherine (125 tons) and Primrose (120 tons) were despatched on time and with much local hardship. They stayed on our East Coast and assisted in the victualling of the fleet under the flag of Lord Henry Seymour.



The combination of the wars against the Dutch, the ever present Privateers and Picaroons seeking to capture craft sailing even within the mouth of the estuary, also the almost complete lack of leisure time meant that for the inhabitants of Woodbridge there was no true opportunity to sail as a pleasure. Sailing craft were used for fishing, as tenders to the larger sailing vessels and they were particularly popular as a mode of travel on the Deben as sailing was more comfortable than driving in horse-drawn coaches on pot-hole ridden highways; that is prior to the invention of treated turnpike roads which reached into Suffolk in the early 19th century.

During the 1630's the port of Woodbridge continued to flourish and large quantities of timber for shipbuilding were felled in the inland areas to the north of the town and shipped to the yards at Woolwich and Deptford. Shipbuilding continued locally and very large vessels were being built. In 1675 probably the largest vessel ever to be made at the port was launched. She was the boom ketch 'Kingfisher' (663 tons) which later assisted in the capture of Gibraltar. The name 'Kingfisher' was to play a prominent part in the later history of the Deben Yacht Club.

Woodbridgians would have sailed the river Deben in the 18th century, but there was no real pleasure sailing as we know it today. The local population, having close association with a thriving port, would have been well aware of yachting as followed by royalty and the nobility in their fleet of large royal yachts. Various monarchs since Queen Elizabeth had supported yachting as a pleasurable past-time

and as a sport to be enjoyed, their yachts often providing a novel spectacle for the local inhabitants, more especially at Harwich.

In 1735 the Duke of Marlborough became the owner of a fine new yacht and in the June of that year sailed her against the 'William and Mary', the yacht belonging to the King. His Majesty's vessel was reputed to be one of the swiftest sailers in England at this time. The race started at the Nore and finished at Harwich; however other details including the result of the race are not known.

Sailing for pleasure on the river Deben from Woodbridge started in the 1740's. These early sailing boats were the usual working craft which had been slightly modified to promote a little comfort. Sometimes floor boards would be added, additional side thwarts and often the hull would be lined internally.

The very first advertisement relating to a pleasure sailing boat for sale was for a vessel at Woodbridge and appeared in the local Saturday newspaper - the Ipswich Journal - in 1749. A typical advertisement appeared in the 2nd October 1756 edition printed as follows:-

*"To be sold by Auction at Orford Key. A PLEASURE BOAT, 21 foot long and 7 foot wide about 3 years old, with Mast, Sails, Blocks and Rigging all in good Order. She has a floor laid the whole length and underneath she has ballast, her sides ceiled, and she is comfortably seated round, and is allowed to be a prime sailer".*

This craft would be typical of that being produced by the Woodbridge shipwrights at that time; constructed of heavy, local timber, substantial clinker



planking and having a gaff mainsail of canvas; her rigging would have consisted of mainsail, foresail and jib. The ballast of iron bars would have been stowed as low as possible in the bilges.

This heavy broad design would have changed little over the next few decades and the legislation introduced in an attempt to combat the smuggling, so rife at the time further consolidated these characteristics. The anti-smuggling laws of 1780 introduced two features: the first, that the name of the vessel be painted on the stern with letters at least four inches high. The second, the design restriction, that the beam of the vessel be not less than one foot for every three and a half feet of length. Thus, a typical Woodbridge 21 footer must have possessed a beam of at least six feet.

Geoffrey Brown

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## **On a Different Plane**

### **Denzil Cowdry**

During the last six months I have attended two more meetings of the Deben Estuary Development Committee called by Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Project. The purpose of the meetings were threefold: to review legislation and initiatives by various other official and semi-official bodies affecting the Deben Valley; to comment on a draft paper for the "management" of the river and its valley from Wilford Bridge to just below Methersgate Quay; and to take a particular look at the transport issues for residents and visitors recreation or going to the new National Trust site at Sutton Hoo.

Other attendees have included representatives of the Project, National Trust, Woodbridge Town Centre Initiative, Woodbridge Chamber of Commerce, Suffolk Coastal Business Forum, Suffolk County Council, First Eastern Omnibus Company, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Anglia Railways and Suffolk ACRE. English Nature, the Environment and the Local Heritage Initiative are also involved.

At both meetings the Committee spent a lot of time reviewing current initiatives affecting the Deben such a bus routes, cycle paths, fare packages, dredging, tourism, a ferry service at Woodbridge, repair of the Tide Mill wharf and development of the National Trust site at Sutton Hoo. Transport issues relating to river access above Methersgate, particularly to the Sutton Hoo site, were a principal concern. There may be a shuttle bus from the station and arrangements are in hand for cycle and pedestrian access from Woodbridge.

There were few comments on the Upper Deben Management Plan. The river will be divided into three sectors and each will have its own plan. The document certainly achieves one of its aims which is to set out an inventory of legislation, regulations, interested bodies and contact persons. In addition the document contains a list of indicators of good environmental practice, references to the aims of biodiversity, details of five EU directives related to Habitats and Fishing and mention of over-arching planning such as the Wetland Bird Survey, Coastal Habitat Management Plans, Local Environment Agency Plans and Local Heritage Initiatives!

Unfortunately, although a rather random selection of local plans are included, there is no mention of or

general statement concerning the seven yacht yards, four sailing clubs, canoe club and rowing club who actually use the river. At some stage the Committee will have to decide on a suitable introduction which weighs the interaction between new legislation and current use.

A sinister note occurs in the reference to Natura 2000 (a scheme to protect particular birds) for which legislation is being sponsored by English Nature. The offending paragraph reads: "designation of a site will not initially change rights of public access or existing sporting arrangements". Since the proposed species for the Deben are Brent Geese and Avocets, I managed to persuade the meeting that there was plenty of room for these birds below Methersgate Quay! The provocative sentence was deleted.

I proposed the following insert to the plan to cover local management:

**FAIRWAY COMMITTEES** - The waters of the estuary in Zone 1 are governed by four Fairway agencies on behalf of and with the authority of the Commissioners of the Crown Estates; Kyson Fairway Committee from Methersgate Quay to just below Woodbridge Town Quay, Knoll Fairway Committee from Town Quay to Robertson's Yard and SCDC from Robertson's to Wilford Bridge. These agencies buoy the channel, allot moorings and liaise with sailing, yachting, canoeing and rowing clubs with regard to areas of open water, racing marks, start lines, pontoons etc.

**WILDFOWLING** - The Deben Wildfowling Association holds a lease for the shooting rights on river areas assigned by the Crown Estates.

I was not sure how to tackle the omission of fishing but will take advice and look after that interest next time round.

We are not alone in being under scrutiny. Plans are also in preparation for the Stour, Orwell, Aide and Ore. Happily, perhaps, we are the last to be worked on so we will be able to learn from the other four, none of which is yet very far ahead.

I do have sympathy for the enthusiastic staff of the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Project and great admiration for their positive achievements in the areas of conservation, foot-paths, cycle paths and literature which enables us all to understand and enjoy the area of outstanding natural beauty on our doorsteps. However, they have to cope with a vast pile of legislation and sit between sometimes unrealistic conservationists and those who currently are out and about enjoying the river and its environs. Thank goodness that the River Deben Association is around to help forge a way ahead that is sensible and acceptable for all. To this end your Chairman will be inviting English Nature, RSPB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and others to send a member to some of our Committee Meetings, so that opinions about the Deben valley can be shared and priorities understood and agreed. Then we may have Management Plans for the Upper, Middle and Lower Deben that are more specific, practical and implementable.

Denzil Cowdry

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## **'LOTTIE BLOSSOM' - MEANT TO GO TO SEA**

**Arthur Ransome's 27ft Hillyard 'Lottie Blossom' - currently moored in the Tidemill Yacht Harbour - was charged with great aspiration, yet he sold her within months of her launch. So, what went wrong? Richard Hare finds out why.**

Like Maurice Griffiths, Arthur Ransome had the aura of a man at ease in his environment, content within himself. Scratch the surfaces though and we find mortal men, not unlike the rest of us, complete with flaws and frailties. Significantly, there seems to have been a restlessness too, buried deep within both men - Griffiths particularly - and the clue to this is the way that both men regularly changed their boats. Each boat was invested with the new owner's dreams and aspirations, many falling short.

One such victim of Ransome's restlessness was a little Hillyard that he owned in the latter years of his life. He was 68 at the time and he named her 'Lottie Blossom' after a character in a PG Wodehouse novel, Wodehouse himself being a writer who Ransome admired. That said, 'Lottie Blossom' has long since been re-named 'Ragged Robin III' - a name that she seems happier with - and she is currently owned by retired

neuro-science professor and Woodbridge resident, Ted Evans. According to Evans, Ransome had a role call of eight cruising yachts throughout his adult life, and 'Lottie' was the penultimate. He first clamped eyes on her at the 1951 Boat Show and fell under her spell, even though she was un-finished.

Few of us can resist the idea of a partially completed boat with scope for us to apply our own finishing details. Indeed, for me, part of the charm of Ransome's wonderful 'boo' illustrations was the fact that it was outline sketchwork, drawings that left room for young readers to fill in their own details and colours.

It is also interesting that Ransome's commissioning of 'Lottie' with David Hillyard contrasts against his maxim: "Fools build and wise men buy." For current owner, Ted Evans, the fact that he 'built' 'Lottie' might have been a bid by him to square the elusive circle, that being: "How to afford the perfect boat?" Many will empathise.

Another thing that emerges about Ransome is that he was very particular about yacht names, almost to the point of jealousy. When he sold 'Racundra' - the yacht he used to cruise the Baltic - to Adlard Coles, a condition of the sale was that Cole was not only to change the name, but he was also not to use it in his literature.

Similarly, when Ransome sold 'Lottie Blossom', she also was to lose her name. Perhaps, for Ransome, a boat's name is the vital link between a yacht and her owner. Perhaps the link personalised the relationship.

As it transpired, it seems that her second owner was happy to oblige with the name change. He evidently,



was hooked on the name 'Ragged Robin' and Lottie Blossom rapidly became 'Ragged Robin III'. Furthermore, when Ransome later moved onto another Hillyard - almost identical, but with the major exception that she had an aft cockpit. She became known as 'Lottie Blossom', - not 'Lottie Blossom II'. Was he re-establishing the link? Was he having a second attempt at a disappointing and failed relationship?

It seems that one important reason why Ransome couldn't get on with 'Lottie Blossom' (1) was the irritating way that the mainsail smothered the cockpit whenever it was dropped. On the face of it, it hardly seems reason enough to 'fall out' with your boat, but irritated they were, Evgenia particularly. They were also scathing about the little wheel helm. Ransome missed the tillers of his former boats. That said, as is so often the case, this irritation may well have had its origins elsewhere - he was suffering from prostate trouble.

### **Ransome's experience of 'Lottie Blossom':**

For this insight we have Ted Evans to thank for his research into the Ransome archive at the Brotherton Library in Leeds.

Part completed when he first saw her, Ransome decided wisely to ask Evgenia to work on the interior details. Much of this had to do with the strong will of his Russia-born second wife, Evgenia. A former secretary to Trotsky, no less, she is reputed to be formidable.

Ted Evans: "She had strict requirements if she was to be his perfect 'mate' and entertain others properly on board." Interestingly, she

was far from complimentary about 'Nancy Blackett', for many of us the enduring 'Goblin' of 'We didn't mean to go to Sea'. Understandably, Ransome didn't want a repeat experience.

Ransome tells us through his diary that Evgenia wanted their new acquisition to be "a summer annex to which to escape from the (London) flat during the noisiest times." She also had her opinions on sea-going capability, and after a stiff sea trial in 'Novad', a similar Hillyard to 'Lottie' before her purchase, she was impressed: "If she will stand this she'll stand anything that we shall put her into."

So, duly completed, and under the looming shadow of AR's increasing health problems, 'Lottie Blossom' was launched on April 15th 1952. Once outside Littlehampton harbour they shut down the engine and hoisted the sails. It was the moment all new owners await with a mixture of anticipation and trepidation.

They were not disappointed. Ransome: "Quite good. Sailed herself, but, of course, does not point high. Comes about admirably. Heave's-to quite well."

Between April 19 and May 12 the couple sailed 'Lottie Blossom' to Birdham Pool, despite AR's increasing prostate problems. Evgenia is quoted as saying that she liked Lottie as much as ever and, in a letter to Colonel Busk on April 21, Ransome comments that "Genia keeps on considering our chances of bringing Lottie to the East Coast before winter."

It was not to happen though, and this despite Lottie's evident good sailing qualities. As Ransome himself noted: "At least this time I know that Lottie can sail and sail well. In fact", he



continued, "she is not a 50/50 boat but a 75/75. We thought first 75 per cent motorboat on coming round from Littlehampton and after yesterday's good sail thought her at least 75 per cent sailing boat."

By July 17 1952, a mere three months after her launch, Ransome was contemplating future hospitalisation. Lottie's prospects didn't look promising either. Heath issues aside, neither Ransome or Evgenia could get on with the "hardish" wheel steering, and one observer recalls Evgenia's fury when AR enveloped her in the lowered mainsail. By September 8, an ominous log entry records: "Talking of 'Lottie Minor' with identical hull but tiller steering, and a real single-hander which 'Lottie' can never be." Her fate was sealed.

Fifteen years later, in 1967, Arthur Ransome died, although not before he enjoyed one last yacht, 'Lottie Blossom' (2), and he did enjoy her. It seems that he went out on a 'high'.

Sailing on:

In December 1952, only eight months after her launch, Ransome sold 'Lottie'. If it is at all possible for a name change to affect a little boat's prospects, we need look no further than the day that 'Lottie' metamorphosed into 'Ragged Robin' III.

The new owner was Sir William Paul Mallinson, and he loved her. As far as we know, so also did all her subsequent owners. One was the author Anthony Rushworth-Lund, and in his book 'By Way of the Golden Isles' he describes his family's voyage in 'Ragged Robin III' to the Mediterranean and back.

Another owner, Peter St John Howe, confounded AR's views on her by sailing her single-handed - yes, single-handed - over 1,000 miles. Concluding an account of the experience he commented: "Ragged Robin' was a splendid partner but this was to be our last voyage together. I had no doubt that her first owner, Arthur Ransome, who has inspired my love of sailing, would have approved of our time together, not least our 1,000 miles sailed single-handed between September 1991 and July 1992."

When the Evans's - already Hillyard owners with their 21-footer, 'Twinkler' - came across 'Ragged Robin' III, she was being lived aboard in Brightlingsea, Essex. She was owned by Tim Boagey, who worked in the Tim Lawrence sail loft. Ted and Diana bought her in December 2000 and sailed her up to Woodbridge on the Saturday before Christmas. "The little diesel heater did make a difference though", Ted recalls.

### The legacy:

Restlessness aside, what can never be taken away from writer/yachtsmen like Ransome and Griffiths is that both men touched serenity, and they knew it. Furthermore, both men concentrated this experience - the essence of it - and forged it into an art form for us all to enjoy. Few will doubt that those of us who have read their books are enriched by the experience.

Ransome's ability to influence those who were exposed to his books seldom fails. For Ted, who grew up in Birmingham, it was his first 'taste' of the sea. For me, today as a middle-aged journalist, to browse through photocopies of his diaries, I feel a sense of privilege. As a small boy, I studied his drawing and enjoyed his



prose, and 'Swallows & Amazons' was my first insight into the English Lakeland. When I finally made it there as a 21-year old student, the recollections flooded in. Derwentwater was, for me, the sea between the High Hills and the Great Mountains. The island on the west shore was Wild Cat Island. The Lakes lived up to my expectations completely. It was as though I had already been there.

On the other hand it came as a disappointment to find that I can hardly read his handwriting! It's terrible! But when I show a journalist who doesn't have woeful handwriting, I find the fact appealing, and reassuring.

People question how much longer Ransome's stories will remain relevant in an increasing instant-gratification society. In my view, so long as children have imaginations there will remain a clamouring for his stories. Look no further than the success of Harry Potter. Give a youngster a good book, a little encouragement to flex imagination, and that child will read.

Ragged Robin irony:

The irony of this story is that this particular little Hillyard never seemed happy under the ownership of a man who many of us recall with affection.

In fairness to Ransome, he was getting on in age - he died in 1967 - he was in poor health and probably not in the best condition to accept a cataclysmic change in life-style like a centre-cockpit. Perhaps he 'bit off more than he could chew'. He was indeed much happier in 'Lottie Blossom' (2), which he owned during 1953/4.

From the moment of her parting with Ransome, 'Ragged Robin' III has been put through her paces like a work dog

that needs to be exercised and challenged. In an almost Dickensian twist she appears to have provided her subsequent owners with tremendous safety, shelter, and enjoyment.

As for current owners, Ted and Diane Evans: "She certainly continues to do so." Their grandchildren love her as well. There's a new map of the Walton Backwaters 'Secret Water' to show for it as well.

Richard Hare

**Editor's note:** I am indebted to Ted and Diana Evans. Their extensive research at the Brotherton Library has made this story possible.

January 2002  
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## **CELEBRATIONS AT FELIXSTOWE FERRY**

The FELIXSTOWE FERRY MILLENIUM GREEN TRUST has become the new owners of the open space at the fishing hamlet of Felixstowe Ferry as a Millennium Green. It will continue in its natural 'meadow regime' of long grass, a wildflower and wildlife area accessible to all for ever. It will be a welcoming place for families to picnic, for groups of school children on sea-shore/estuarial studies, the sailing fraternity, walkers and cyclists taking the long-distance Coastal path and the many visitors who are drawn to this unique magnet for artists and photographers.

For those who are attracted to the "Ferry", be they landsmen or sailors, they will find the place with its character unchanged and unchanging. Almost thirty years on from the date when the centre and community of this

distinctive Suffolk fishing hamlet first fell under the threat of despoliation by a large weekend holiday chalet development, the dark cloud, which has hung over this delightful part of the designation Heritage Coast and Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty has been removed forever. We would encourage members of the River Deben Association to come and see for themselves what has been achieved.

The Trust has surrendered the planning permission which would have destroyed this tiny place and has commissioned landscaping, planting of native trees and scrubs, so that it will be ready to welcome its summer time visitors. Local residents have enthusiastically co-operated in forming a working party to help in the creative work. The whole achievement owes much of its success to the help of many organisations and individuals who have supported the work of the trust by their generous contributions and it is planned to acknowledge this important help, for which we are most grateful, within a permanent millennium feature on the green.

However success has been at a price!! In order to meet deadlines because funding could not be completed within the very tight timetable of acquisition, the Trustees accepted funding aid from both county and district councils which itself has to carry strict terms and conditions on both capital repayment and interest payments. To prevent failure of the whole scheme and the loss of a 'not to be repeated opportunity' this vital move was made. The Millennium Green Trust must now secure this outstanding balance of funding amounting to seventy thousand pounds and is drawing up plans for an additional appeal.

If you can help please telephone or email Anthony Ratcliffe, Chair, Felixstowe Ferry Millennium Green Trust

01394 282306,  
anthonyjratcliffe@hotmail.com  
for details.

Elder Cottage  
Felixstowe Ferry  
Felixstowe  
Suffolk  
IP11 9RZ

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### **NEW LAMPS FOR OLD Bawdsey Quay**

Very few of us like change and when something new is offered we might not trust that the new would be as good as the old.

I well remember when the restoration of Woodbridge Tide Mill took place. That wonderful red, rusty, corrugated iron cladding, so beloved of artists, was to be removed and replaced with white timber boarding. I fully accept that the external fire escape is an eyesore but otherwise, the mill once re-clad must look very much as it did when it was first built. How many now would want to see it return to its derelict state? It is a vibrant addition to Woodbridge and its amenities and thankfully, due to the dedicated few, not only is it open to the public but the wheel is turned by water.

Bawdsey, that tiny community at the mouth of the Deben, is soon to be faced with another new for old. The Quay is to be re-surfaced and the heading, that part fronting the river, is to be re-built. These works are necessary otherwise the end of the



quay will continue to crumble into the river and we might end up without a quay at all.

Suffolk County Council and the East of England Development Agency have found some £130,000 to fund the project and work begins on February the 4th. It should be finished within eight weeks and we are assured will not effect the smooth running of John White's ferry which starts its regular daily schedule from the beginning of April.

re-built quay will look new. It will have stainless steel railings round its perimeter dividing a footpath from the car park and in the fullness of time there will be a hoist to enable disabled people to be lowered safely into boats. The model for the quay is Orford a thriving part of that village's community. Who knows perhaps one day Bawdsey Quay might have a fish stall or some other appropriate commercial activity?

There is no doubt that some people will not be pleased about the new works. But let us remember Bawdsey Quay is one of the few places where one can park a car and while away the time watching the ebb and flow of the tide. If this work was not undertaken at pleasure might not have been possible for much longer.

Jim Wyllie

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## PLANNING UPDATE

Anni Healey

New Planning application for Whisstocks Boatyard at Woodbridge - C02/0029

This comprises of 13 residential

properties, some 3 -4 stories high, (higher than the present Boatshed) right on the River front. There is to be some 1038 sq ft. office space at the back of the site with parking and possibly some yacht moorings for owners in front.

The design is mixed. The central element is a version of the Old Custom House on Ipswich Docks, with a Victorian Factory look-alike and an Elizabethan House on either side, but the whole development is tall, of a large mass and will dominate the Tide Mill, Ferry Quay and the surrounding area.

The designation in the Local Plan is for employment use, if possible associated with boat building or allied small industries, [as there is at the moment] and could include a pub or wine bar but not residential.

We have a large mixed development at the old Deben Mill site, with residential and office accommodation. There is the possibility of another site behind the Tide Mill being developed for the same mixed use. All with a maximum housing element to bring in a substantial profit.

Is this what we want along Woodbridge's waterfront? What are the alternatives? Is development along the River Deben inevitable and if so where will it stop?

With the new Green Paper on Planning encouraging high density building on every spare or 'underused' piece of land in towns and villages, we are at a critical time.

I hope members will come up with some ideas and let us know their views.

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## Trinity House

### Chris Brown

Most people, when they hear the words Trinity House now think of the Lighthouses. Although they are correct to do so in fact the relationship between Trinity House and lighthouses is, as you would expect from an organisation that has been in existence since 1514, much more complex than at first seems.

The Corporation of Trinity House of Deptford Le Strand was incorporated by Royal Charter By Henry VIII in 1514 to provide navigation into and along the River Thames. It has been said that it was to ensure that England had the expertise so that navigation was denied to the French for the protection of the realm.

It seems that over the years to 1889 it was profitable to provide aids to navigation at points round the coast to assist passing vessels at sea who were charged for the service when they reached a port. There are reports of large sums of money being paid for the purchase of lighthouses. An indication of the income they could generate.

The Merchant Shipping Act of 1898 laid the foundation for the present arrangement and resulted in the formation of the lighthouse service. That is the organisation that is often known as Trinity House.

The Corporation of Trinity House remains responsible for the Lighthouse Service. It is controlled by Elder Brothers of Trinity house who are elected experienced and successful seamen from various branches. It is headed by the Master of Trinity House.

The present Master is the Duke of Edinburgh.

The Merchant Shipping Act of 1898 effectively resulted in the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of appropriate aids to navigation being made available to all users of the sea round the coasts of Ireland England Wales and Scotland. The responsibility for the Irish coast was placed with the Commissioner for Irish Lights, the Scottish the Northern Lights Board and England and Wales became the responsibility of TI Corporation of Trinity House.

In the recent past Trinity House took responsibility for the majority of buoys, lighthouses, marks and lights for most of the applications except those very much for the use of a single port. Over the years a number of acts were passed that made differences to the authority and responsibility of the lighthouse authorities.

In 1998 the latest merchant shipping act came onto the statute book. One of the principal clauses of which required the user to provide the aids to navigation wherever there was a clearly defined user. Interpreted this resulted in the entry to all ports being the responsibility of the port authority. Thus Trinity House was no longer at to be the authority for aids into the port of London. All the buoys and lights inward from Seareach One became the responsibility of the port authority. Round the country Trinity House only maintained about 80 Buoys. That applied to the buoys marking the way into Harwich such as well known marks as the Shiphead, the SW Shipwash, the Cross and all those marks leading up to the Beach End and above are now the Harwich Haven authorities. However those marks that can be taken as being for general use



of navigation such as the Sunk lightship, The West Fort Massac, the East Fort Massac, including the Woodbridge Haven Buoy .The Orford Haven Buoy and the Orford Ness lighthouse are still Trinity House's responsibility.

All this work has to be funded. Ships at sea are very expensive and it is necessary to support the buoys and lightvessels. Trinity House runs two Lighthouse tenders the Patricia and the Mermaid a launch, the Vectis and a rapid response vessel the Ready. (Lighthouse Tender is a traditional name; they are actually used largely to attend buoys.)

It was the cost of Patricia in the early 1980s that highlighted the cost of the lighthouse service to those who are charged for the service. As one of the few countries in the world that makes the user pay for the service the UK has been in the vanguard for many years possibly ever since the service was provided. Many nations fund the navigation from general taxation. Every commercial vessel that enters a British port is charged lighthouse dues based upon the tonnage of the vessel. Regular visitors such as ferries are charged for about seven visits each year so it is not a serious impediment to holiday makers. The funds thus raised are paid into the General Lighthouse Fund which is ring fenced and administered by the Department of Transport. The fund is then used to run the Trinity House Lighthouse Service, the Irish Lights and the Northern Lights. This is a true piece of international cooperation that works. In the 1980s the whole ethos of the service had to change in order to control the costs. Traditionally cost was not a serious consideration it was reliability that was paramount. As the

stations were manned the most important matter was to ensure there was a tradition and an esprit de corps. that ensured dedicated observance of the methods required to keep equipment working reliably. The Lighthouse services did, I think, have that in abundance. Technology and social expectations changed and men were no longer willing to spend many weeks on end in cramped accommodation carrying out a regular meticulous routine in uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous conditions. In addition greater demands were being placed on the performance. Engineering was therefore required to improve the situation. By the middle 1990s most of the stations were automatic and the remote stations requiring small amount of energy were solar powered. The result has had very significant effects on the costs of the service without any diminution in quality of performance.

During the final decade of the last century there was a reduction of costs at constant prices of 25% which has reflected on the light dues in an increase of around 16% compared to a rise in the retail prices index of 30%. It is always pointed out that the service is provided for all those who use the sea. Those who pay are the commercial users. The sport and leisure users are not charged. However it is clear that consideration is given to the sport and leisure user when systems of aids are designed. There is no reason not to collect the light dues from the sport and leisure user other than the cost and complexity of collection.

So what equipment is now providing the service for the user.? It ranges from very small unlighted buoys to

large class one buoys with a light range of seven miles. The majority of lighted buoys class two buoys with a five mile light range. There are 428 buoys. All the lighted buoys are lighted using solar power systems. There are 17 beacons and two lightfloats. Both the lightfloats are now solar powered. There are 11 lightvessels. Until a few years ago they were all powered by a constantly running diesel engine driving an alternator. Some of these are being replaced by solar powered vessels. Members may often see a lightvessel in the river off Harwich. Some of these are in the process of being prepared for sea after fitting solar systems. Some are on their periodic refit. It is expected that some lightvessel stations will always require the extended light range of the Diesel powered vessel. The Sunk is still diesel powered. Last but not least are the lighthouses. There are since 1998 no manned lighthouses.

There are a number of systems used to provide the light and sound for lighthouses. If they are on land the preferred method is to power them from the national electricity utility. It is necessary to provide a backup. That would be either a diesel generator that will start automatically on loss of mains power or a battery system. Orford Ness has recently been reequipped with a slightly reduced range of light and a new arrangement of the sector lights.

Apart from requiring mariners to be aware of the change to the sector lights it has reduced the power required removing the necessity to have a diesel powered alternator for backup. It now relies on a bank of float charged batteries.

Trinity House Lighthouse Service has further responsibility for all the aids to navigation in England and Wales. The Inspector of Seamarks is responsible for inspecting all the lights and marks in England and Wales. It is he who comes into the Deben and looks at the buoys and lights even those supplied by others. Although the Deben could be deemed the port of Woodbridge it is fortunate that the Haven buoy, the bar buoy and the two other buoys in the estuary as well as the Horse Sands buoy is provided by Trinity House. Trinity House as part of the service to the mariner also carries out hydrological surveys. Each March the Trinity House Vessel Vectis does a survey of the mouth of the Deben the result of which enables the position of the marks to be established.

Space does not allow a discussion of the means by which the lights are provided monitored and supported. Maybe next time!

Chris Brown



## WHO's.WHO at the RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

<p><b>CHAIRMAN</b> Denzil Cowdry St Edmundsbury 10 Ipswich Road WOODBIDGE IP12 4BU tel: 01394 383625</p>	<p><b>VICE CHAIRMAN &amp; TREASURER</b> Chris Brown 4 June Avenue IPSWICH IP1 4LT tel: 01473 259674</p>	<p><b>SECRETARY</b> Wendy Brown 4 June Avenue IPSWICH IP1 4LT tel: 01473 259674</p>
<p><b>PRESS SECRETARY</b> Rosemary Schlee Deben Lodge, Melton Road WOODBIDGE IP12 1NH tel: 01394 382740</p>	<p><b>NEWSLETTER</b></p>	<p><b>FELIXSTOWE FERRY</b> David White 6 Coniston Close Felixstowe IP11 9SW tel: 01394 293972</p>
<p><b>HISTORY</b> Robert Simper Sluice Cottage Ramsholt tel: 01394 411273</p>	<p><b>ROWING</b></p>	<p><b>LITTER</b> Jo Masters 49 Riverview Road Melton IP12 tel: 01394 383825</p>
<p><b>WILDFOWLER</b> Adrian Judge 29 Bredfield Street WOODBIDGE IP12 tel: 01394 383350</p>	<p><b>SSCDC LIAISON</b> Anni Healey Jesters, Burkitt Road WOODBIDGE IP12 4JJ tel: 01394 382291</p>	<p><b>ANGLING</b></p>
<p><b>Anthony Mason</b> 9 Calder Road Melton Park, Melton IP12 1PQ tel: 01394 380909</p>	<p><b>David Copp</b> The Mount, Pytches Road WOODBIDGE IP12 1ET tel: 01394 382531</p>	

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 19 April 2002

WOODBIDGE COMMUNITY HALL

7.30 pm

## AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM 2001
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's report
5. Treasurer's report and subscriptions
6. Election of Officers and Committee

Chairman      Denzil Cowdry                      Vice Chairman      Chris Brown

Treasurer      Chris Brown                      Secretary              Wendy Brown

Committee:      Anthony Mason, David Copp, Robert Simper,  
Jo Masters

The following members retire by rotation and, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election: - Anni Healey, Rosemary Schlee, David White

7. Whisstock's Development
8. A.O.B.

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Following a break for coffee, there will be a slide talk

**“Portrait of the River Alde”  
by Chris Parfitt.**