



RIVER DEBEN
Association

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All change at
the bar

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Success story

SPRING 2003

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RIVER DEBEN
Association

NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2003

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Editorial

That we are now not threatened by the Howard Homes development is a recognition that good sense has prevailed in that The Inspector found the proposed plans wholly unsuitable for the site and the area. Much good work was done by many to achieve this end, which is as it should be but we, who protested



that such a development was not suitable for Woodbridge, now have to create what we believe is, which requires a far greater commitment of effort, imagination and achievement than merely preventing. Just sitting back and leaving it to others is not an option for that way lies more failures - it is our town and if we care for it we have to commit to its health by helping initiate, and drive, the way we want to see it.

Consensus is far more easy during an engagement than in creating the peace that follows but adequate common purpose now needs to be achieved to draw strength to make things happen. It is historically characteristic that effecting a peace that satisfies most following the unity of conflict is invariably overlaid by the destructive jostlings for private benefits, personal paranoias and ideologies which militate against the efforts of those seeking to draw together a view that can be made to work while reflecting the visions for which the engagement was undertaken. I pray that all of us engaged in the next stages may bear in mind that rowing a dinghy against wind and tide requires effort in concert.

While helping coalesce the forces against the proposal I came to recognise that there were two main types of people

involved. At that stage what we all did not want was amply clear, though the reasons why were sometimes cloudy, but it was also clear that what we did want afterwards was fuzzy indeed. People fell into two groups; the institutionalists, those within the planning circle or working on the periphery of the Council who saw everything in terms of planning speak, statistics, master views and 'civic amenity' - planning to put things in place very positively now - though SCDC itself proved to have no ideas on such nor any overall plan for the waterfront. The others were those outside the institutional stockade who saw the future more in terms of far less 'planning' but more the prevention of further development predations and the assistance of a more generic style of growth, with an overall light hand, the sort of growth that characterises the serendipity of the human condition.

The former favoured the fully planned, top down, approach with 'civic amenity' style building everywhere, all neat and pre-conceived, abhorring the lack of order and tidyness at the present. The latter felt that there were many ways the area could develop, many indeed that were not on the immediate menu or not imagined now, and that to plan and build the whole thing could only preclude the vision of the generic and varied growth that characterises the past and creates living environments for being created by the varied endeavour of different people. Pre-planned versus living organism.

Two, in my view highly commendable, common views did emerge though. The

first was that the waterfront should have wide access to everyone and that whatever it offered and however it was generated it should "face the river" and mirror the steady progress of Woodbridge over the centuries. The second was that there should be, however achieved, a public launching facility from the Whisstocks hard for small boats launched from trailers, for that is what the river is about and what brings the waterfront alive; like all the ideas that have emerged of the generic sort it was recognised that some light controls and understandings would need to be in place to help prevent abuse, but the principle was widely supported. There was no difference of view about Woodbridge being what it is, and what we all enjoy, because of its relationship to the Deben and the activities that a river frontage engenders, but the two types of people found that they agreed less on how that might be preserved and presented for the future from where we stand now.

I am happy to fall firmly in the 'without the stockade' camp but recognise also that some civic amenities will add enormously to the value of the whole area to people who come to enjoy it and also that it is mixture that will bring success. A light touch is the essential to achieving a virile living environment as, as most have recognised, so many waterfronts have been destroyed by the heavy, developed, civic amenity or expensive private development, approach. We can not create Woodbridge's future in one hit nor should we be so arrogant as to assume that we know all the answers. We do

not have the remit of Charles II after the Fire of London nor that of Baron Haussman in 19th century Paris and most certainly there are not the vision nor talents of those who recreated those cities in the style we know and acknowledge as inspired.

Woodbridge waterfront is a tiny enterprise, even if we allow that it starts at Wilford Bridge and ends at Kyson and the heavy hand would overlay it to the detriment of us now and those who will inherit what we permit. Classically we plant trees for later generations to make landscapes from and I believe we must seek to emulate this responsibility in how we make our steps into the future for those who will come to love Woodbridge as much as we do. I believe that in asking why we do lies much of the answer to what we do.

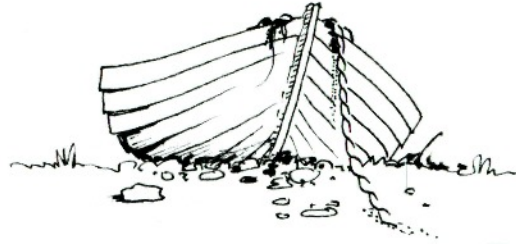
It has been agreed at the Woodbridge Waterfront Group, of which the RDA is a strong part, that this position we have just been through must not be allowed to occur again. Aware of the lack of an overall strategy by those we imagine have created one, and in many views should have created one, we agreed that our next step is to build an overall scheme, or envelope, that, primarily, prevents future developers picking off any of the area for the sort of unwelcome ideas we have just seen and to use this to work closely with those authorities to bring that overall envelope into the official view so that it may be given substance and power. Its aim will be to protect, by preventing predations and suggesting future generalities, but in no

way to predicate so as to preclude possibilities. Since the WWG embodies a wide opinion base from most of those who have interest in the area it does not present a narrow nor partisan view.

We have a unique chance to take charge, in the gentlest way, of the future of a main feature of our town. We should consider it a privilege and address it with humility, flexibility, vision and energy. I would counsel no-one in this debate ever to say "It can't be done" for that is the road to sterility and vacuum. A splendid suggestion from a reader to this end is the preparation of a map of the waterfront with all the riparian sites and ownerships on it. This is no little task but I intend that your Association set about it, so anyone reading this who has anything, or any help, to offer would be gladly welcomed 'at this office'.

The Centrefold. I am much saddened that my initiative of commissioning drawings of the Deben and offering prints has not been taken up, at all. Thus this centrefold's printing is of lesser quality and no copies are offered while to keep costs within our budget I have bought the original myself as pleased to possess John Roberts' gorgeous work.

The Vote Some 100 people returned the voting slip which means, roughly, that four fifths of the membership did not care enough about our town to do so. A reflection of modern Britain? I had hoped for more from a county that has earned its spurs over history as a hotbed of dissent.



Chairman's Report

Denzil Cowdry

I have to dwell for a moment on the Public Enquiry regarding the future of the WHISSTOCKS site which took place in November. Many members and other objectors to riverside housing wrote to me, as well as a few who supported the project. I did my best to represent all the diverse views in a brief for the Inspector which included an Annex with your letters. Thus all your opinions were aired and helped to influence the outcome of the enquiry. The Association vote, so ably conducted through the Newsletter by Mike Burn, put me in the powerful position of being 80% against and 20% for housing: consequently I had the opportunity to join in the cross-examination of the witnesses for both the Council defence and the Appellant!

The Appeal lasted for 51h days, of which I spent 5 on a front seat squarely opposite to the Inspector. I think it was plain to her that the Association meant business and that any unfair representations would be corrected. As an example, it was surprising how the Counsel for the Appellant purported our river as so silted that it was practically

unnavigable at Woodbridge and thus the yard had little further use for marine purposes. Our mud problem had to be put into proper perspective for the Inspector.

A great deal of credit for the unequivocal determination of the Appeal in favour of SCDC has to be to the Council officers and their well briefed QC. The defendants dealt fairly and competently with many technical planning issues.

When, towards the end of the enquiry, the chance came for me to speak, I skipped over the brief, referred to your letters, and then spoke up for the wildfowl and waders, not previously mentioned, who could not speak for themselves, As Anni Healey kindly said "it was different"! Thank you! Thank you for your interest and support. Now we await the SCDC plan for development of the Woodbridge river frontage and possible interactions from Spirit Yachts, who expressed interest in the site.

Since I last wrote the Committee has been strengthened by Simon Read, taking over environmental matters, by Greg Pritchard, concentrating on the Woodbridge reed-bed, and by the return to the fold of Anne Moore, with her footpath interests. Welcome.

Two important issues currently on our Agenda are the alternative proposals for the severely weakened sea-wall running towards the Tips from Waldringfield (i.e. North) and the closure by barbed wire of the sea wall path at Wilford Bridge, albeit with a diversion provided by the bargee now renting the small pocket of land down-river and west of the bridge. The latter is a problem for SCDC, since there is no licence for a barge mooring and the



closed footpath was never property registered as a right of way. Meanwhile, Rosemary Schlee is collecting forms of evidence for path usage. If you use, or have used, the new sea defence wall or the original sea wall path at Melton please phone Rosemary for a form.

Waldringfield Village and the Association will probably both divide on the alternatives for future flood defence at Waldringfield. The Environment Agency are undertaking a Consultative Exercise so every individual has the opportunity to voice an opinion.

One choice is to strengthen the existing wall and to build a connecting concrete wall around Nunn's Yard so far as the Maybush. The second is to build new embankments which would protect the low-lying houses beyond the Yard and to limit the flood plain; then to breach the sea-wall so as, hopefully, to get a new area of inter-tidal marsh. This course of action has the

strong support of English Nature who constantly campaign to replace lost habitat of this kind elsewhere on the East Coast. I hope to have a speaker on habitat replacement, work sponsored by the EU, at the AGM. Sailors will fear the outflow of mud into the river, already shallow at this point. They may also question the likelihood of inter-tidal marsh developing: evidence elsewhere is that flooded compartments gradually

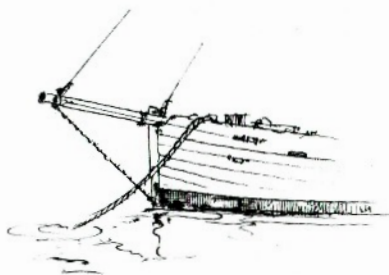
revert to just mud (if the flooded land opposite to Larkman's Yard at Melton is an example). Our fellow Association, the Alde and Ore, call this the Blythborough effect.

It will be a nice argument and I declare now that the Association may not attempt a consensus view. As for fox-hunting, it will be a free vote. One might have hoped that economic arguments would point one way or another but the costs, I believe are about the same.

Talk of money brings me unashamedly to the question of our own finances, particularly since we face our first annual deficit. It was occasioned, largely, by an attempt to make the Newsletter more colourful. Thus there were extra artwork and printing costs. Several people approved of the Editor's efforts, which was encouraging. However, the underlying problem is a subscription scale that has been unchanged for ten years, since the birth of the RDA. When, to economise on insurance costs, we joined the Civic Trust, they kindly looked over our Charter and Rules. Their only comment was the intriguing remark that any Association with such a low subscription simply could not expect to have much clout from any official viewpoint! I note also that the Alde and Ore Association have a subscription rate more than three times our own. Thus, at the **AGM** in April will propose a doubling of our subs to take place from April 2004, which will give the Hon Treasurer, Chris Brown, time to sort out the revised Bankers Orders. We may contrive to include a suitable blank in this issue of

the Newsletter in anticipation of your favourable vote. Six pounds a family for promoting peace and quiet on our much favoured estuary and for providing a mechanism for communication about river affairs seems to me to be about right. So, with my usual injunction to keep in touch with the Committee I leave you with news both good and less good.

Denzil Cowdry



Treasurer's Note

Chris Brown

Another note from your Treasurer. I do not intend to make this a regular feature but there is one more matter that I would like to share with the membership in this newsletter.

You will notice that there is a deficit in this year's income and expenditure account. The reason I have explained in the notes to the accounts. It has revealed how limited the annual income of the association is. We do have a healthy surplus but only a small extra activity would start to consume that easily.

We were also threatened, during the year, with a very large increase in public liability insurance. To alleviate this, following investigation this was kept to a



minimum by the association becoming members of the Civic Trust. One of the recommendations of the Civic Trust is that the pressure groups that have a very small annual subscription were generally not taken seriously. Your committee has thus agreed that we should seek authority from the membership at the annual meeting in April for an increase in subscriptions to £4 for a single member, £6 for a couple and £15 for an association.

As the subscription is payable each year on the 1st of April this could not be introduced until April 2004. If the resolution is passed we hope that members who have standing orders will contact their bank and changed their standing order to pay the new amount on the 1st of April each year.

Finally I should like to thank those members who have taken the trouble to change the date their standing order is paid since my last note.

Committee Meeting Minutes

Wendy Brown

Monday 11th November 2002

Present: D. Cowdry (chairman), R. Schlee, C. Brown, M. Burn, J. Walker, R. Simper, A. Judge, G. Rufford, J. Masters, A. Healey and W. Brown.

Denzil reported that following his request for assistance at the public meeting on 8th November Greg Pritchard had offered to survey the reed bed beside Everson's yard and Simon Read, a local artist, had volunteered to take on the environmental work of the RDA.

Minutes of the 2nd September meeting: David White is acknowledged as an appointed representative on the Felixstowe Ferry Foreshore Trust not a full member.

Matters Arising: The results of the voting slips concerning the Whisstocks' site, enclosed with the newsletter, were as follows: 101 against the published housing/office development and 23 in favour. There were no letters to support the 23 in favour although there were requests for a WC and a chandlery. In the anti lobby there were 25 passionate letters which included not wanting housing of any description, not wanting to attract too many tourists but on the constructive side requesting a chandlery and open space.

Chairman's Update: He thought that the Whisstocks' controversy had brought in new members. Denzil said that the new ideas in the newsletter had cost money and that in line with the discussion at the public meeting suggested that the subscription rate is doubled. This would have to be voted on at the AGM.

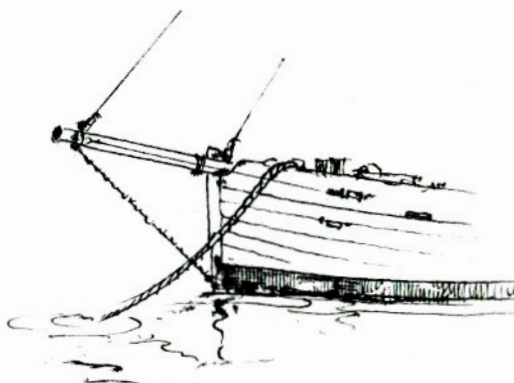
The Whisstocks' development: was discussed and various points raised. The chairman represented the majority of the committee when he said that the development should be in sympathy with the Tidemill and the Sutton Hoo enterprise and in keeping with Woodbridge's maritime character - boats and boat yards. Photographs of the recently "sanitized" Wivenhoe were circulated showing its waterfront housing development and the majority of the committee would not like to see this in Woodbridge. Neither would commercial development of a warehouse nature instead of houses be acceptable. A vast increase in traffic was discounted on the

evidence of the Sutton Hoo experience - many more visitors than expected not having not made traffic problems. Constructive ideas were called for.

Treasurer's Report: Chris reported previously that the Civic Trust reinforced the higher subscription rate lobby. He said that expenditure this year was expected to be £550 more than income.

Newsletter: The print in the centre of the newsletter had not sold so it was decided the prints would be available for sale at future public meetings. Mike agreed to edit the next edition.

AOB: Jo reported problems with the footpath along the Deben near Wilford Bridge and Denzil said he would investigate and write to Suffolk Coasts and Heaths. It was reported that rowers had complained about their lack of access to the river. Denzil said he would look into it.





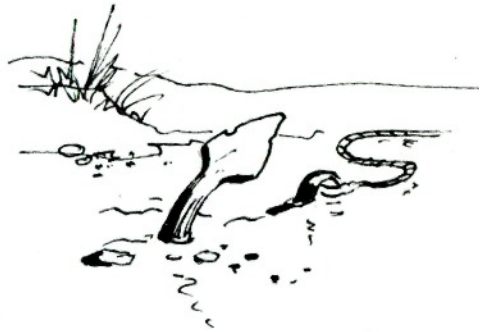
2nd December 2002

Present: D. Cowdry (chairman), R. Schlee, C. Brown, M. Burn, G. Rufford, P. Lacey and W. Brown.

The Whisstocks' development: At the time of the committee meeting there were still two days of the appeal outstanding. George suggested that if the appeal is disallowed the RDA should have positive ideas to put forward. Denzil and Mike, and others have already instigated The Waterfront Group, an ideas panel for the whole waterfront. Rosemary thanked Denzil for his attendance at the appeal.

The Wilford Bridge Footpath: Denzil said that the Environment Agency had moved the footpath 10 years ago and that they had failed to register the new one. Rosemary said that the ramblers were preparing a petition to be given to users of the path to assist reinstatement and Denzil offered to write to John Davis of the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths project. Paul pointed out that more boats moored up to the barge would restrict the passage of rowing boats under the bridge and their turning at the bridge.

Treasurers Report: Chris reported that although the three Bank accounts were well in credit this year's deficit was likely to be in the region of £1200. Rosemary proposed that the subscription should be a flat rate £10 per household and Mike seconded. A proposal would be put to the members at the AGM.



30th January 2003

Present: D. Cowdry (chairman), R. Schlee, C. Brown, M. Burn, G. Rufford, A. Mason, P. Lacey, D. Copp, S. Read, A. Moore and W. Brown. Denzil welcomed Simon Read, a new co-opted member and the return of Anne Moore to the committee.

Whisstocks' site: Following on from the failure of the developers' appeal the Chairman reported that the owner of the site and the local council were in discussion over the site and the boat builders were still interested in using it. The RDA hope to have a positive input into the site development. Chris praised Denzil's stamina in attending the appeal. Town Quay - Paul reported that dredging was to take place during next two weeks

and that permission had been given to drag the mud into the river. It was noted that the RDA contribution of £500 was on condition that the mud was taken away. Core samples proved the mud was non-toxic and could be used for 'managed alignment'.

Planning Matters:

- a) Wilford bridge footpath enclosure: Rosemary reported that the Ramblers' Association were issuing 'evidence forms' obtainable from 01394 382740 to protest about the blocking of the path.
- b) New chalets at Bawdsey: planning permission has been granted and the chalets will not be seen from the river.
- c) Sea wall at Waldringfield: the Environment Agency has published a leaflet 'Waldringfield Flood Defence Improvement Works Consultation Document setting out the options for the future - to raise the existing wall or build two shorter new ones to protect property and breach the sea wall to make more saltings.
- d) Simon, having taken on the environmental concerns of the RDA had prepared a large, to scale, map of the Deben showing the high water mark and the 5 metre contour. He said he would write a formal request to the Environment Agency for their most recent survey of possible flood compartments and habitat replacement areas.

Treasurer's Report: Chris presented the draft annual accounts and said that the deficit for 2002 was £861. He said that during 2002 membership had risen from 829 to 851 and that 19 people had applied to join since 31/12/02.

Subscription levels were discussed and it was agreed to propose £4, £6 and £15 (single, double and association) to the AGM for implementing in April 2004.

AOB: David Copp's resignation was accepted reluctantly.

The following were mentioned:

- a) Future surveys of the river mouth
 - b) The ferry crossing from Woodbridge to Sutton Hoo
 - c) To ask the local council if they have details of riparian ownership around the Deben.
 - d) To have an AGM resolution changing the name of the Bentwaters' Fund into the Project Fund.
 - e) The recently formed Felixstowe Ferry Forum to oversee local matters
- (Not officially adopted)**



Melton Footpath

Rosemary Schlee is heading a campaign to sort out the right of way on the riverside footpath by Melton Bridge which is in dispute and now obstructed. Since this campaign is being spread as widely as possible the leaflet is printed separately. She urges you to act on it as evidence presented to SCDC will help enormously in sorting the matter out.

The nature of the work to be undertaken will involve the barge *Neljan* being told to vacate her mooring to allow firstly the dredging phase. This will allow a strip of mud to be dredged to approximately a metre. Spoil will be deposited in an area on the edge of the main channel, roughly straight out from the Whisstocks slipway. Ideally they would like to dredge more towards the Whisstocks slipway by getting *Koronef* to move. This appeared to be part of a longer term plan to facilitate the ferry!!

English Nature have approved the recommended dredging technique of dragging. It is the only viable method and the river can cope with the tidal wash away.

To clean the Quay walls and cracks, a compressor would be used, causing some intrusive noise for about 4/5 days. The area of the quay being worked on will be enclosed by security fencing for some 3/4 months. The road should remain open throughout this work.

End result is a strengthened quay wall, with 5 visitor moorings for day visitor boats and 3 benches on a level pedestrian area.

Paul Added some views which he has had from residents which seem to me to be highly relevant to this particularly scenic site which I append as he sent them to me. DO PLEASE CONTACT PAUL WITH YOUR VIEWS AS HE IS A FINE CO-ORDINATING CENTRE AS HE LIVES IN THE GRANARY. ED



Refurbishment & Enhancement of Tide Mill Quay.

Paul Lacey

Overview

A briefing meeting was held at The Shire Hall on Tuesday 11th February at 0915 am between the Stan Hewitt, Fred Reynolds, Don Tucker and the immediate residents of the Tide Mill Quay to discuss the plans of work for the quayside.

Main Points Presented

It was confirmed that the Lottery grant application by the Tide Mill Trust had been approved for the refurbishment and enhancement of the Tide Mill Quay. Currently additional quotes being sought for structural stabilisation, dredging and surface operations. This has meant work is now been re-scheduled to commence April 2003 with completion in July 2003.



Some other viewpoints local residents have are stated below but when ever raised are not really answered by the working committee, instead they say its mere detail and that they are doing it for "greater public benefit".

Aesthetically the classic view of Tide Mill is in danger being undermined by allowing modern boats to moor and not managing the flow of traffic & people into the area. Seems to be a lack of creative thinking -told they can't use double yellow lines by SCDC, so why not use subtle maritime/river items to block/deter car parking eg. thick mooring rope, anchors etc. We currently have historical trilogy to view on the quay -The Mill that ground the grain -The granary that stored the grain & flour -the barge to transport the ingredients (be it not true east coast type, but still more photogenic than a series of white grp yachts).

The quay repair is essential, but it is being used as an opportunity to add other elements (nothing necessarily wrong there). However they are being introduced without real openness.

It is often stated that it is for public benefit. So with most of the visitors to Woodbridge coming by car and walking around on foot, are they really going to benefit by 5 berths. I just feel the practicalities of harnessing a tidal river and managing the mud mean a lot of money is being spent for limited public benefit and at an ongoing cost of subsequent dredging to keeping moorings open.

Felixstowe Ferry Forum

I have these preliminary notes from David White. Meetings have been held but, so far, little action has been taken. This seems a pity as many of the landowners at the Ferry are changing and change is in the air- a strong local body would seem useful to work with new owners to preserve the character of the ferry.

Summary of the FF forum proposals

The main purpose of the forum would be:

- To improve communication between different interests in FF
- To help keep residents informed of issues and ideas
- To provide a way for residents to raise issues
- To help bring together the various interests at FF to enable them to work together for mutual benefit
- To provide a mechanism for residents to influence appropriate bodies (including accessing resources) such as the local authorities, Environment Agency and others that impact on the area.

The 'ground rules' for running the forum were likely to seek to be: open & transparent tolerant & courteous supportive & constructive honest & law abiding inclusive able to listen avoid personalising issues democratic collectively responsible

The geographic area of interest should be restricted to Felixstowe Ferry and include the golf club.

Structure & operation

- a. The forum will be a way to focus the thoughts and energies of the community and provide access to particular organisations. The forum would also be able to act in a reciprocal way providing route for those organisations to seek the community's viewpoints.
- b. The forum would establish a framework for discussion, learning & debate. It may require decisions to actually be made by full open meetings (or other methods).
- c. In principle, the structure and operation of the forum should be kept 'elastic' to allow particular interests to be invited to attend when required.
- d. Its structure and operation would need to be reviewed and should be able to be modified in light of how it progresses.
- e. The forum needed to be established and to tackle (and achieve) something, which will help build its credibility.
- f. The forum would be able to invite key interests to attend and speak when required - be they people/organisations from the Felixstowe Ferry Community or from outside this.
- g. All the meetings would be open, and anybody would be welcome to come and observe.
- h. An agenda would need to be publicised in advance.
- i. A secretary would be needed who would be a point of contact for people to submit agenda items to and who would ensure necessary paperwork was prepared.
- j. A formal/official notice board should be

erected in Felixstowe Ferry to ensure forum information was available for all to see (even if other methods of distributing material were used).

- k. An independent chair - at least to start with - would be important.
- l. Cllr Harris indicated that she would be able to supply some money from her County Council locality fund to pay for the initial costs (although this could not become an annual payment).
- m. The local authorities appeared to be keen to support this process and might be persuaded to provide the secretariat in the first instance. The thought of 'training up/supporting' a local person to take on this role in due course was recommended.
- n. The frequency of meetings would be flexible. It was thought that in the beginning there may need to be relatively frequent meetings to make progress.

Representatives

The forum would consist of representatives of the following:

1. The boat yard (Andrew Moore)
2. Fisherman / Asst. Harbour Master (Duncan Read)
3. Residents Association
4. Businesses (*see foot note below)
5. Sailing Club
6. Golf club
7. Millennium Green
8. Wildlife interests (Suffolk Wildlife Trust)
9. Foreshore Trust
10. Felixstowe Town Council (a councillor)
11. Suffolk Coastal District Council (a councillor)
12. Suffolk County Council (a councillor)

*footnote:

Can one person put across the businesses views?



LETTERS

Dear Michael Burn,
I was interested in Robert Simper's article in The Newsletter and his sighting of otters on The Deben. What a thrill! Perhaps Members would be interested to know that otters are recovering in numbers and that East Anglia is in the forefront, thanks to the success of a careful release programme.

I helped in an otter Survey (my patches were on the non-tidal Deben) carried out in 1996-97, a joint enterprise of the East Anglian Wildlife Trusts, Anglian Water, Essex & Suffolk Water and the Environment Agency, and run by Simone Bullion based at the Flatford Field Centre. She found evidence of otters in all the river catchments of Suffolk.

There is ongoing work by The Anglian Otters and Rivers Project whose Project Officer for Suffolk is Sarah Norman, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Ashbocking. The Otter Project welcomes help - from reporting sightings to involvement in surveys - very particularly from sympathetic riverside landowners.

The Little Egret seen by the Frasers is becoming far less rare in this country, along with other birds from further South, and is even breeding here. Global warming is already having a noticeable effect on our wildlife.

Yours sincerely, Dr Ann Bannister

(It is fascinating watching the efforts of the Green Lobby trying to support their hallowed "global warming nemesis" scenario against the incontrovertible evidence emerging from long measured research that very few of the indicators they espouse to support their theories are actually happening, indeed most are reversing. It is suggested by many bird observers now that what they and Ann Bannister have seen are the results of much more complex effects. Nevertheless man messing up his home is the deepest sin as an abuse of his neighbour, good housekeeping and good manners would embrace what the Greens call for without the biblical shrieks propounding the end of the world if we don't.

When talking to Ann Bannister she remarked that there seems a lack of Wildlife representation on the RDA Committee; there is, so might we have a rep, from the premier organisation Suffolk Wildlife Trust please; the RDA is an effective voice for your views and activities. Ed)

ARTICLES

Riverside Businesses:
Granary Yacht harbour
Mel and Jenny Skeet



Melton Boatyard in 1983

In 1982 Mel and Jennifer Skeet and their family moved from Ipswich to start a business in the boating industry at a very run down premises at the bottom of Dock Lane Melton.

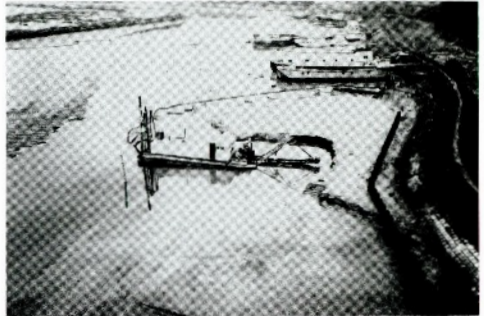
One of the first problems they encountered was the whole of the quay area had never been laid to accommodate heavy craneage, and promptly collapsed. This necessitated the complete filling of the old historic barge dock, which then assured solid hard standing for boat lifting and moving.

Many months were spent clearing junk accumulated by businesses before them, each trying to succeed in the boat business but never making a go of it. But instead just added to the junk which was left before them.

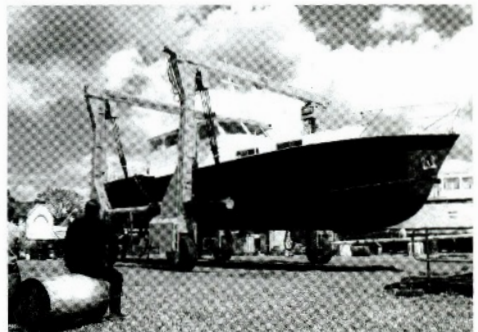
During 1983/4, Richard Upshall a friend of Mels from Ipswich purchased the historic granary (which is in the doomsday book) also land and waterfront, from the Melton Corn and Coal company who had ceased trading after many years in business. Between them Mel and Richard acquired a dredger and dredged a small yacht basin making several deep water berths, hence Granary Yacht Harbour was born. The berths proved very successful and continue to do so.

Mel and Jennifer's son Simon joined the business in 1991, which was no surprise, bearing in mind he had been brought up with boats since he was a toddler. With his abundant energy and enthusiasm he has helped in creating a modern boat yard which caters for all types of boat repairs. These services cover: osmosis treatment, glass fibre repairs, gel coat repairs, re-sprays, Hull polishing, shipwright services, re-planking and caulking, teak deck refurbishment, welding and steel fabrication, blast

cleaning, antifouling, engine rebuilds, stern tubes, anode replacement, marine electronics, rigging overhaul, chandlery, lifting and launching, pontoon berths.



Mel began his apprenticeship in the marine trade in 1964 learning all aspects of the workshop with Ernie Nunn at Waldringfield. In between ship-wrighting he had a spell teaching sailing and canoeing for Ipswich Borough Council Schools. Further development in all areas of building in wood, glass and steel was acquired. Mel then moved on to work on broads cruisers at Oulton Broad and Wroxham. This general all-round ability proved vital in the role Mel helped





View Downriver from

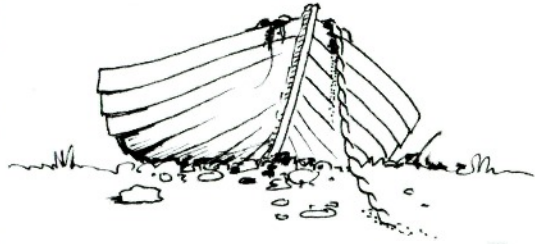


om Wadringfield.

John Roberts

play in setting up Fox's Marina in Ipswich. When we came to develop Melton Boatyard and Granary Yacht Harbour he was very competent indeed. Naturally his skills have been passed on to Simon whose hands on training have served him well in the last ten years.

During the late nineties a travel hoist, able to lift up to 36 tons was purchased, and the travel hoist dock dug out and built - very many hours went into this venture. It has however proved a huge success.



living up to expectations by giving big yard facilities at small yard prices. It is also the only travel hoist on the Deben. Mel and the company would like to expand their services and extend the pontoon berths to cater for the ever growing needs of the yachtsman but the local authorities are never very helpful and do not share the same foresight.

Granary Yacht Harbour today
www.granary-yacht-harbour.co.uk

DEBEN ROWING CLUB

2001/02 has been a tremendous year for the club, notably the successful conclusion on our option to purchase the freehold on the boathouse site, ably 'coxed' through by the sterling efforts of David Neal. What this purchase includes is a 160-foot frontage on the river wall complete with a building, which is our current boathouse. We also secured an option to a strip of mud, which allows us, with suitable planning permission, to erect a pontoon to launch the boats from at most states of the tide.

Those of you who walk the river wall will have seen the boathouse have a lick of paint, the wilderness at the rear cut back and in its place decking and racking magically appeared to provide much needed storage. The willing voluntary efforts of many members in completing this task demonstrates the prevailing spirit and optimism in the club.

We have continued to make excellent progress in developing the club. Our new Induction Course has attracted new members and enabling us to establish safe rowing from day one.

In addition we have made progress with the beginnings of a junior section. We now have a junior scull, via a grant from *The Rowing Foundation*. We have recently won a grant from 'Awards for All' that enabled us to purchase a new concept ergo (land-based rowing trainer) and a coaching launch. All of this allows us to apply for accreditation with The National Rowing Programme for juniors, *O-Row*.



A year in the life of The Deben Rowing Club

Winter

Some of you may well be wondering "who wants to row in the depths of winter?" Well, many members do, because we have the river to ourselves, it can be an enchanting time to seek solace or work off the excesses of Christmas. Winter is also the time for taking on the competition and experiencing other rivers. The Club's first jaunt to the Huntingdon Head left all those who competed with a great desire to visit again. The Great Ouse provided 4,500m of meandering river with a number of hand-brake bends to test the steering skills big time! The Cambridge Winter League, run over three months - January-March, with three separate races, attracts competitors from throughout the East Anglia region from single scullers to 8s. 2,500m of the River

Cam has fond and frustrating memories for many of us. Club Quiz night was held in The Cherry Tree Inn. It was fun and fast-paced with David Neal as Quiz Master and Anna Hedington as Question Mistress together with over thirty members and friends exercising their grey matter and elbows.

In February, club members Kate and Jonathon Pirkis welcomed us into their home for a Celebration Party on successfully securing the Option.

Spring/Summer

Wednesday evenings sees the instigation of club rowing sessions. The more competitive take the opportunity with lighter river traffic, to improve on their technique either on the straight stretch at Wilford Quay or the expanse of Nethersgate. Those more inclined towards the pleasure will either unwind from the days work by watching the magnificent sunsets over the river. The 'Tub 4s' often take on liquid victuals at *The Maybush* before heading home to the boathouse in the gather dusk. Two single sculls were officially christened during our Boat Naming Ceremony in May. The existing 'club single scull' became '*The Rotary Club of Woodbridge*', in recognition of £1,000 donated from this organisation and the new junior single, purchased with a grant from The Rowing Foundation, was christened after the late '*Ian Battye*'. The Annual Woodbridge Regatta on 14th July was a great success. The BBQ & french crepes a popular stop for hungry visitors. The competitive appetite was seen during the rowing challenge with Simon and the boys encouraging the

'egos on the ergos' to demonstrate how far they could really row in one minute. This challenge was very popular and created a great atmosphere in front of the Clubhouse.

The red & yellow balloons drifting over the river were the second DRC balloon race, These were released by Gerry Cooper, Chairman of Woodbridge Community Council together with colleague Peter Bacon, head of Publicity for the Council. The winning balloon reached Megevette in southern France travelling a distance of 758km. May we extend our thanks to all those who supported the Club during the day and our many volunteers who ensured the activities progressed smoothly, and a pleasing £450 raised.

Autumn/Winter again!

Once again the clogged fairways begin to thin, and we start to have the river to ourselves again, or so it seems. The autumn tints are a delight when rowing under Sutton Cliff. The formations of migrating birds overhead make for a noisy but impressive distraction to the rhythmic or not so rhythmic strokes of ones blades.

The social highlight of the year is the Club's Christmas Dinner. One dark night in December brings fifty or so DRC club members and friends together to enjoy the culinary delights of the ever-resourceful Fiona (Women's Rowing Captain), at the Woodbridge Rugby Club. The suspense of stand-up bingo, modelling of the new club lycra one-piece rowing suit and the opportunity to catch up with friends in a relaxed atmosphere

is becoming quite a fixture in the pre-Christmas calendar.

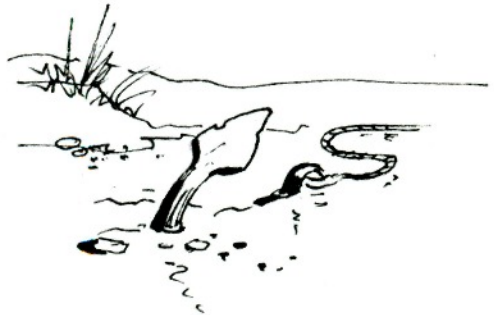
Deben Rowing Club Next Steps

Ian Parke, the new Chairman since late 2001 and the committee have identified and number of priorities for developing the club over the 2003/04:

Membership engagement & retention :
The DRC committee will look to new ways of getting the most from club sessions such that they appeal to all. Those who want to row for pleasure will be able to do so, finding it easier to get a seat. Those who want to compete can be supported through coaching and availability of suitable boats. Building the membership numbers from 70+ will help justify the development of the site.

Site development : The club is rapidly outgrowing the available facilities and needs to plan for a new boathouse and better access to the water. Target within the next 12 months to have prepared the way for a full lottery application.

Junior Programme : Achieve *Go-Row* status in the next 12 months and link up with one local school in East Suffolk.



Reaching parts of the river, few others can!

Why not experience the river really close up? 6 inches close enough!! One can really get in touch with the little eddies, the shifts of wind right on the surface of the water. You can reach the parts of the river few others can, get the most of the tidal window.

You can row in a single boat or be part of a crew, experiencing the thrill of working together as one, powering through the water under your own steam. It can be very liberating, satisfying and always enjoyable on such a marvellous river.

There is no excuse now with the all-new Rowing Induction Course. We have 10 DRC members who are ARA Instructors, enabling the club to take a step further towards our aim of being able to give every club member, especially new members, a basic introduction to the sport, instruction in getting afloat, basic boatmanship, confidence drills and general safety awareness.

These introductory courses run on the fourth weekend in the month comprising four hours of one-to-one tuition. A charge of £30 per course has been agreed which puts a value on the process and recognises the commitment made by both pupil and instructor. This fee is subsequently deducted from full club membership. Having attended one course, candidates are free to attend subsequent courses (spaces permitting) for further one-to-one instruction and progression at no further charge. Three

courses have taken place so far which has seen the following new members introduced to the club and the sport; Keith Baker, Christine Wilsher, Martin Oldfield, Nick Hall, Bev Griffin, Vicky Hough, Kelly Mann, Paul Garfield, Steven Powers.

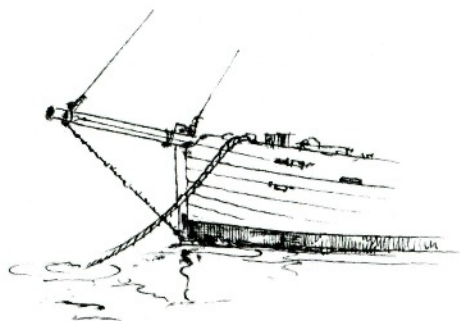
It is hoped that these members will progress to reach their full potential on the river whether that be recreational rowing or competitive rowing in fine boats.

Terry Davey and Sharon Robinson have agreed to do tuition on an individual basis.

The addition of a new coaching launch and two new ergos will mean that more instruction can be given both on and off the water.

If you wish to give it a go then please do contact Simon Hale 01394 388173 to get on the next induction session. Details and interesting bits & pieces are posted on boathouse window.





OTTER NOTES

Penny Hemphill, Wetland Advisor
Suffolk Wildlife Trust

The return of otters to Suffolk's rivers is a conservation success story. A recent survey shows that you are twice as likely to see an otter now as you were 5 years ago with the River Deben showing a 40% increase in site occupancy - one of the highest increases in the Suffolk rivers.

Membership

You have a choice! The membership fee is £44, plus £2 session fee. Or a monthly standing order of £14, or annual membership of £160 with all session fees included. Reductions for Juniors, Students & Unwaged, or for family members residing at the same address. The Induction course is £30 which can be offset against the membership fee (ie if the student subsequently joins DRC, the membership fee is reduced by £30).

Paul Lacey lives in Woodbridge in the shadow of the Tide Mill (Yes, people do live in The Granary!!) and is very privileged to wake to such a beautiful river each morning. Having enough friends with boats, who were always asking us out on the river, it seemed unnecessary buying a boat. However he wanted some flexibility to get on the water and after giving up rugby, rowing with its teamwork and friendly members from all walks of life, provided the ideal compromise. He is a partner in a property renovation business and uses the river to relax & reflect. He uses his rowing & canoeing skills to take photographs of the Deben from unusual perspectives.

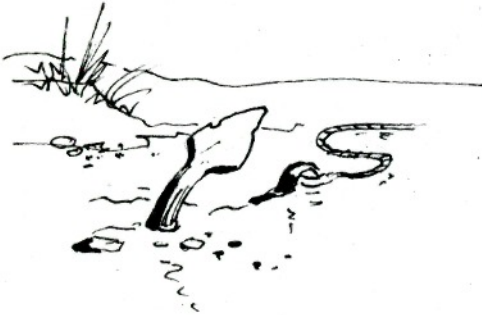
As they are a shy nocturnal animal, seeing an otter in Suffolk is a rare treat but if you are patient in the evening or early morning, you may be rewarded with a sighting. It is easy to spot signs of otter presence in the form of footprints and spraints (otter droppings). These can often be found under bridges where the otter will mark its territory by depositing spraints on ledges, logs and sandbanks in or adjacent to the river.

Otters hide up in the day in 'holts' which can be under the roots of bankside tree: in scrub and in artificially created holts. Several landowners are now constructing these log holts to encourage breeding otters to visit their land. Otters require several holts up and down their territory and many artificial holts succeed in attracting them. If you are interested in constructing a holt, please contact the Suffolk Wildlife Trust 01473 890089 and we would be happy to come out and give you some advice.

Sadly there have been 5 otter road deaths this winter. This usually occurs when the rivers are in flood and the otter has to cross the road to avoid the high waters. If you happen to see a dead otter on the side of the road, please let Suffolk Wildlife Trust know, as important data is continually being gathered from these sad events.

Generally the picture is very encouraging and otter have made a successful comeback to our rivers.

It is always worth knowing that otter are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and it is therefore an offence to harm them in any way.



THE BAR - A SEA CHANGE?

Club Tops'

For those who sail beyond the Deben's boundaries this is sufficient title to describe what is a rubicon that governs how they go and when. When Orford was the largest port in England and faced the sea and Dunwich was a major

town with a bishopric (though there is still a token suffragan) The Deben had a wide entrance sufficient to house a substantial fleet. But then came the series of storms which demolished Dunwich and deposited its mass, as it were, down the coast, closing off Orford's access to the sea and creating the shingle banks that run down the coast. We witter on about climate change and its possibilities to extinguish human life but imagine, in one lifetime, a major town being swept away for ever and your magnificent port being closed to the sea and its whole raison d'être being extinguished at a stroke; indeed around the same time over half of Norfolk and Cambridsheshire was under water for a number of years - a sea wall is a small thing in comparison.

Both the Deben, and the Ore, as formed by the deposits from Dunwich, flow out into the sea against the main tidal flow up and down the coast - that is when the water is flowing out of the rivers it meets the ebb tide at sea flowing North, and vice versa. Thus at the entrances instead of there being a happy confluence of flows to scour the way clear there is a nasty war of tides meeting each other causing much swirling and deposition of shingle and sand that form the shingle banks, "The Bars".



The Deben bar is just at a major point of change now. When I first sailed out of it in the late '60s the river flowed into the sea just below Bawdsey Manor, with large shoals closing the river's exit on the south edge. Slowly over the intervening years the shingle banks on the south edge have given way and built up on the north side so that the entrance has drifted south. Some 15 years ago the entrance lay about halfway from Bawdsey and where it is now, right down the coast (nearly by the golf club) and parallel to it. Then one approached the entrance head on to the coast trying to find the "Bar Buoy" which traditionally was a starboard green marking the southern limit of the North Shoal and line up 'The Meets' - fun in poor visibility and a blow. At the exact entrance, just before one passed the buoy, there was a 20ft shelf which, specially with an on-shore wind, caused a considerable plunging overfall - a very sporting ride under sail in a small yacht. Since this entrance was not technically available at low water springs knowledge of the precise height of this shelf gave one a gauge as to the depth in the entrance itself when one was pushing one's luck coming in at low water - if it were less than 25ft a smart sheer off and an hour hove-to for a cup of tea was advised. At

that time also it was possible to mark the line of the entrance with the 'meets' on the shore which one lined up as one entered - these were the province of the Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club working with the ferryman and were often changed even in one season, particularly after a gale which would move the sands - I well remember when leaving a few years back hitting a curl of sand that had formed, overnight as it were, and spending a jolly day viewing the shore from our horizontal position and providing entertainment for the locals before we lifted off to proceed on our way.

On entering, and just before actually hitting the beach, one turned up river and sailed into Felixstowe Ferry, where the water continues to swirl and surge in the narrow passage. For those under sail this state of the entrance presented at least a possible passage out as one could tack down against the prevailing south westerlies in the slightly wider area above the entrance then square away to make the exit - somewhat sporting in light airs while being heavy oilskin stuff in a blow. Coming in was a real romp, rollercoaster of a ride and enormous fun. (real 'coming home stuff'), after one had located the entrance buoy itself and knew exactly where one was - not always obvious in a blow as the waves tended to hide the modest sized buoy!



In the last couple of years all the side channels have, essentially, closed off and the south shoal melted away to leave the proper, deepwater, entrance

lying right close in to the shore and parallel to it some way down the coast. Initially this was fine, for those with engines, but since it pointed directly into the prevailing winds sailing out became impossible, very specially as it became very narrow. Last year it became almost impossibly narrow, and a little twisty too and there have been a number of strandings for those who have lost their concentration.

But nature is forgiving to those with a little nous and some skill and sense of adventure, for the change is happening. Early in the year I and a friend went down to survey the entrance (a rather grand word for a landside squint) that is forming just under Bawdsey Manor, as it was some 30 years ago. There was water in it, though not much, at low water neaps so we chose a couple of landward marks that fitted it and I cheered for the Deben's tidal rise is (roughly) 15 feet so I reckoned that a couple of hours after low water would give our 4ft draft a passage. In the early summer I and son left Kyson for the Alde at low water and reached and tacked down river against the rising flood arriving at Bawdsey just two hours later - now for the test. Tacking down in that wide area just below the ferry we lined up the two marks on shore and squared away out under the manor with the wind on the quarter. Now normally one used not to sail out against the tide (unless there was plenty of wind free) but here was a real plus since the majority of the flow is out of the main entrance down the coast and

the rest out through gaps in the sands, so the speed of flow round the Manor is modest indeed. With a gentle force 2 on the quarter we made good way over the rising tide in this entrance and set off up the coast to Aldeburgh. The joy of so free a passage, specially as someone told us we were the first cruising yacht to try it, was immense. A few days later we pushed it even harder coming back in as we arrived under the Manor from the north just an hour and a half after low water. Interestingly the entrance viewed from the sea presented a quite different



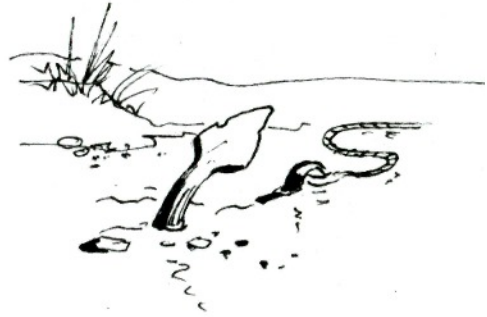
aspect as to line up our marks we had to proceed further south than I imagined. As we sped in (I could just feel her beginning to 'drag' telling us that we were in less than a ft of water) we faced a solid line of mini breakers, good heart-stopping stuff, but sense told us that this was just the tideline of the flow here meeting the main flow up the river.

Hauling our sheets for the turn up river was a deeply satisfying act as we met all those boats who had trekked the near mile south to come in through the main entrance.....**BUT**.....



I have it from John White, the Felixstowe Ferryman, as this goes to press that The Entrance has now been positioned midway between Bawdsey and last year's entrance, going out East. Trinity House has moved the Haven Buoy and marked the new South Shoal with a red can at the entrance and a green con on the inside turn - a reversal of long practice. He is not planning to set any metes, as yet. He will have a chart at the end of this month when it has settled. Plus -ça -change and he tells me that the Bawdsey 'entrance' is less available than last year, what a swizz.. Last year's entrance has been walked over at low water as can be seen from these pictures kindly sent in by Derek King so it must have filled it extraordinarily quickly.

They show his wife Audrey on 25th January this year. On the S-E facing one above the red can can just be seen with a container ship



7 Year Old Goes Solo Rosemary Schlee

In late October I chartered a 29ft Mu to "Do the Caledonian" from Fort William to Inverness and back, as some grandchildren had an unoccupied half-term. It was great and I am going again if I can recruit some companions because the snowy mountains, belt of dark green, yellow and orange trees were far more spectacular scenery from the water than charters in the Aegean, Vancouver, Hong-Kong and the Adriatic. I took a son, two 11 year olds and a 7



year old; all was fine and every time we tired of sailing there was an empty jetty, a dilapidated castle and somewhere to eat. On the last day I came up from below well wrapped up - we never washed all week as it was considered rash to take layers off and no-one complained - to find my son and the two 11 yr olds, walking boots on, on the jetty saying they planned to walk to the next lock. I said extremely firmly that I was not single handed and had to have an 11 yr old as they had been trained for jetty work. They took no notice, chucked the lines aboard and set off with comments like "You'll be alright Mum, you can do it", despite my increasingly desperate pleas... so I did not have much choice. I let the 7 yr old steer closely supervised and she had half got the idea of the tiller going one way and the boat the other - the lock keeper cycled by and said "If you steer a course like that you'll be in my wee black book" - little did he know what might eventually figure in his 'wee black book'.

Then, as we approached the lock I got lined up with a deserted jetty going dead slow, with a mooring line made up amidships as advised for single-handed stuff - not that I had ever tried it. We had a copy-book arrival stopping dead at the jetty, and the gear lever in neutral. I stepped off with the coiled line and got it round one half of the cleat when the boat bucked like a startled horse and shot away; the line was wet and icy cold and I don't think that even a strong man could have held it. The child must have seen

us doing things with the gear lever and thought she would too. I reckon she pushed the tiller out of the way of the gear level cum throttle towards the jetty; then, as it was stiff, she used all her strength so that the engine went straight to full throttle. Before the boat cannoned into the opposite bank I had time to think that none of my daughters in law would ever speak to me again and it'll be front page in the Dunnadrochet Times if not the Inverness Weekly. However the little piece of initiative did not cry and I was able, over the roar of the engine, to talk her into going astern and coming off the tree lined bank. She then careered around at full speed in circles pushing the tiller wildly about. Then she must have thought about the jetty and came at it at right angles. I stood firm as I knew that the jetty would splinter and break the speed and I was going to hang on to the forestay whatever, but at the last minute she paid attention to my shrieks of "Push the tiller" and the boat did a huge U-turn and missed the jetty by inches.

Eventually I talked her into reducing the revs. (We had never had the yacht going so fast all week) then all by herself she lined up and came alongside to perfection. Why the length of trailing line had not reached the propeller.... Just then along the walking party saying "Why were you driving round in circles so far Granny" and they went pale when they heard who had been in charge. This was by far the most terrifying 5 minutes of my life - but then I suppose one does go sailing to have adventures. The



Wayfarer is going to seem very tame next year.

Rosemary Schlee has sailed dinghies on the Deben for 40 years, starting with two Dragonflies. Having bought a cottage next to the Maybush her husband sent her off to learn to sail and have a rest from the children. At Cowes free holidays were available to RYA sailing instructors so she learned to train as one which lead to running the Beginners Courses for the WSC. She also runs the Oxfam B&B Scheme which has made £220,000 - and might make £¼M if only she could find a few more hosts. The Editor is happy to add Rosemary's ad here for what is a fine scheme: If you can take just 4 guests a year it suffices, the charge is £100 for a weekend of which the host keeps £66. Many sailors come. Do try it, my address is inside the front cover.



TAILPIECE

War Or Peace ?

We drove round the corner and there they were marching, with great determination for such little balls of fluff, up the side of the Orford road in Butley. Our instinct to help the defenceless had us abandon our engagement and set off to try to catch 6 little shelduck chicks, which took some time and a great deal of squeaking which deadened any judgments about the validity of the

activity. In time the little squeaks were all inside the boot of the car; "Safe at least from the marauding fox and the traffic" we thought as the heat of the chase died down and the certainty dawned that, having stepped in, from now on their future was in our hands.

It was the time of year we know as 'shelduck time' since we recognise the individual flotillas of shelduck chicks and identify with those who live near our own mooring - we count the chicks and watch how they prosper during the year. As we drove back towards the water we knew, Woodbridge, our discussion was heightened by the plaintive squeaks from the boot and recognising that we had usurped their natural order. "Where are their parents" we wondered, "have they abandoned them and was their assurance simply because they knew no better"?

We rationalised away as we drove, but little clarity emerged and one question remained. If we put our chicks into wa where others swam would they be interlopers in territory already colonised by others? "Will our chicks be driven away and left unguarded to be herons' lunch or will they be accepted into the flotilla - will there be war or peace"? We did not know, but we did know who would. Gone were thoughts of a pleasant evening with friends, the only thing that mattered now was that we find a home for *our* little chicks.

Down in Bass's Dock lived Philip who had worked on wooden boats all his life and knew about the habits of sea-birds, so with the fresh assurance of a responsibility passed to others we drove down to the dock. The little squeaks seemed less accusing now as we thought of their troubles solved - but Philip was out and no-one knew about the shelduck chicks. They wished us well, but passed the responsibility firmly back to us.

We knew that in mid summer the shelduck parents do a deal with each other and some fly off to warmer climates leaving one or two pairs to look after all the chicks on the river. This results in flotillas of chicks, sometimes thirty strong, looked after by a pair, or sometimes even a single drake, cruising the river till late autumn. "Will ours be accepted into a flotilla to shelter from the predators?" We did not have an answer but we did have a choice and in the boot of the car the squeaks said that we must get it right. "Do we put them straight into the dock where there are no shelduck flotillas, and therefore no war but no protection or do we take them out in the dinghy and put them amongst a flotilla and court the possibility of war?"

We decided to find an extant flotilla. As we drove the couple of miles to Kyson where we kept our dinghy I was mindful of long discussions had with my younger brother on the subject of the interference of "superior beings" in natural orders. He had spent three years in Ethiopia as a

young doctor covering 500 sq. miles of the Danakil desert, running a health programme from the back of a Land-Rover. Backed by a well known charity it all seemed a 'good thing' on the surface as 'doing good' always does. He taught the people enough to reduce infant mortality hugely - and in so doing upset a frailly balanced food supply to consign those very children he would save to the charity of being fed by the outside world in conditions of less humanity than had been achieved by the natural establishment of millennia. He had been party to an interference with a natural order and came home recognising that the civilisation he had seen possessed a culture and dignity perfectly suited to its situation and arguably greater than his own. "Oh hell", I thought, "We have been guilty of the same" for we had interfered with an established natural order and our burden had become the necessary solution of that interference.



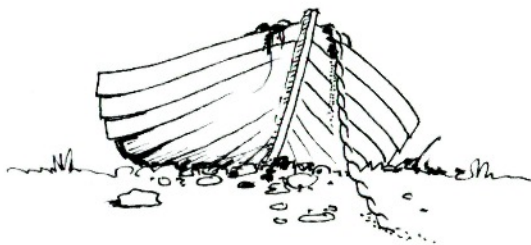
The beach is some 10 minutes walk from the car park and we had to get the ducklings down there and into our dinghy. I had a big hand-knitted 'guernsey' so we tied the arms together to form a sack and filled it with squeaking chicks. It was now late and the sun was just beginning to touch the horizon. As

we walked across the Broom Heath rail bridge we could see St Mary's tower lit with a crystal clarity, standing out the white of the stonework against the black flint flushwork and lighting the Tide Mill and the masts in the yacht harbour with a purity not often seen. Silence prevailed and there was no wind. The ethereal conditions quieted our concerns, "surely" we thought "no war can take place on an evening like this?" There was no hustle of war, no trumpets to announce it, yet deep down we knew that war in the natural world is a matter of stealth and silence, of disguise and the sudden strike.

We launched the dinghy, and I rowed while the bright blue guernsey full of chicks was curiously quieted now that the hour was near - could they sense the water? It was nearly high water as we entered Martlesham Creek where we were sure that there would be a flotilla of ducklings. There is a small area of trees here that lie behind the old sea wall, breached in the great floods of '52; they stand gaunt and forever leafless and their arms spread Dali-like across the red and setting sun. As I quietly floated the dinghy up the creek the trees on the opposite shore reflected the red light on their foliage and the stillness and the supernatural colours enclosed us.

There was a duckling flotilla about 200 yards away and as I turned round to see it I saw silhouetted in the arms of the dead trees the crooked form of a heron, forever poised. We drifted slowly

forwards watching the flotilla of chicks as they swam unconcernedly about their business - and we watched the heron. Then two ducks detached themselves from the shadows along the edge of the water and swam to their charges and we could wait no longer, any closer and they must be frightened away. One last dreadful question remained; would they swim? We had no idea how they approached the water naturally; did they walk down to the edge and try it out carefully and was their fluff naturally waterproof? But the die was cast and we opened the guernsey close to the water and dropped them into the river - Plop-plop-plop-plop-plop-plop



Then the magic started as our ducklings turned to face the flotilla, now some 50 yards away and directly into the sinking sun. Off they swam, tiny feet going with the same assurance they had travelled the road. We sat enthralled with the dreadful unknown upon us - did that assurance stem from a natural knowledge of their certain welcome, or no knowledge at all? Would there be war or peace?



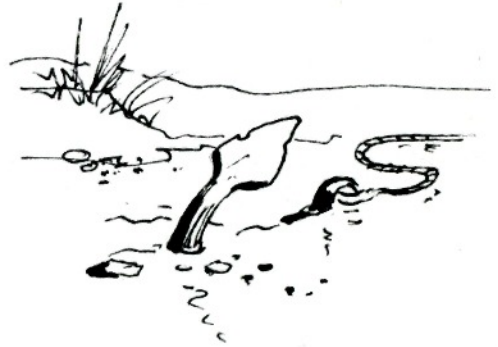
We knew, also, that we had been granted a reprieve in our meddling with forces beyond our knowledge. That message is always with me as I read of acts of 'good' and it taught me to leave alone those things which nature has ordained, for her to arrange as she sees fit for sentiment and missionary zeal are apt to overcome objectivity.

On they paddled into the sinking sun, now just an arc of red through the trees highlighting the blackened branches and the heron and turning our ducklings into little black blobs. For us, truly, it was not till the end that we really knew, and the suspense is with me still as we sat in the mirror calm water waiting for the answer.

Then it came for suddenly there was only one group of ducklings; it was not possible to tell the moment when it happened for like a drifting cloud enfolds another and appears no bigger than before our little ducklings had disappeared and we saw only one flotilla;

e the cloud those there had absorbed ours and no ruffle disturbed the calm. Nature had granted that there should be peace and acceptance of one with another.

We drifted down the creek on the turning tide, our eyes straining in the gathering gloom to separate our chicks from the others - but they had gone back into their own and we knew that we had been merely a temporary episode in their lives.



MEMBERS' ADVERTISEMENTS

For member's needs and sales of a directly Deben orientated nature only. Each piece £10

Wanted: Someone, or a couple, with some experience to help sail and helm a small keelboat (good engine) moored near The Maybush. Midweek preferred for an occasional outing. Rosemary Schlee (01394 382740)

Notes to the accounts:

1. At the 31st December the membership stood at 859 persons represented by 541 subscriptions. Of these subscriptions 10 were from associations or other bodies.
2. The subscription income that the membership represents is £1524. The subscriptions paid are shown as £1256 represents 82% of that available. The association is grateful for the generous donations paid by some supporters
3. There are a number of members who have not paid subscriptions for in excess of one year is as follows:
one year over 26, two over years 3.
4. The expenditure this year has exceeded the income. There have been two exceptional items during the year:

- 4.1 A reprint of the Association leaflet was undertaken to update it and provide for a drive for members. This amounted to a cost additional to previous years of £244

The drive for members has increased the membership from 505 subscriptions to 541.

This has been achieved by a modest distribution of the leaflets and the interest in the work of the association.

- 4.2. The autumn news letter was more costly than its predecessors. There was additional cost for artwork and the printing of both the centrepiece and the inserted picture. This was added to an additional mailing.

2001 2002 £3454 £34635. The Bentwaters account remains unused as follows:

6. Please remember that subscriptions are due each year at the beginning of April. Would those paying by bankers order please check and if necessary change the date on which it is paid.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE			
		2002	2001
Income			
Subscriptions	1,256		1,211
Donations	145		88
Other income	66		
Bank interest	40		83
Arrears of subscription paid	30		
		1,537	1,382
Expenditure			
Postage	320		205
Offices services/stationary	120		122
Newsletters	759		472
Other Printing	735		
of hall/meeting room	68		70
Lecturer Cost	30		
Meeting costs	53		
Insurance	160		210
Civic Trust	71		
Projects (Waterfront)	40		
Other	16		5
Bank Interest Charges			3
		2,372	1,087
Excess Income over Expenditure		<u>835</u>	<u>295</u>
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2002			
		2,002	2,001
Assets			
Bank	10,813		11,289
Less Liabilities			
Creditors (advance subscriptions)	151		66
Civic Trust+Expenses	274		
Assets		<u>10,388</u>	<u>11,223</u>
Representing			
Balance brought forward	11,223		£ 10,928
Excess of Income	- 835		£ 295
Balance carried forward		<u>10,388</u>	<u>£ 11,223</u>

C J L Brown (Hon Treasurer)

I have examined the papers and vouchers of the association for the year ended 31 December 2002 and confirm that The above Income and expenditure account and the balance sheet are in accordance therewith

T J Moorby, Chartered Accountant (Hon Auditor)
Spinney Hill, Fitzgerald Road, Woodbridge

THE RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 11th April 2003

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM 2002
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's River Matters' Review
5. Treasurer's report
6. Election of officers and committee:

Chairman - D. Cowdry

Treasurer - Chris Brown

Secretary - Wendy Brown

Committee: A. Healey, R. Simper, R. Schlee, J. Masters, M. Burn, D. White, P. Lacey, W. Johnson, G. Rufford, G. Pritchard and S. Read.

The following members retire by rotation and, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election:

D. Cowdry, A. Mason and A. Judge

7. The committee has proposed that the subscription fee is increased to £4 for a single person, £6 for a couple and £15 for an Association from April 2004, payable annually on 1st April

8. A.O.B.

Following a break for coffee there will be a slide talk

By Gregor Guthrie of Royal Haskoning entitled

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

This is the River Walk along the Deben at Wilford Bridge, photographed on November 7th last year and published by The East Anglian Daily Times: Photo Daniel Hambury.



When the sea defences along the riverbank were constructed about 12 years ago the Environment Agency failed to fulfill the formality of registering a diversion from the original footpath just below Wilford Bridge, necessitated by the sea defence wall at this point. That slip has given the owner of a barge moored near the bridge, who has leased some land there, an excuse to block off the footpath so that walkers now have to go a considerable distance from the right of way, and can no longer walk straight through to Wilford bridge. The River Deben Association is supporting the Ramblers Association who are putting in a claim to open up the barricaded route by removing the giant tractor tyres and barbed wire. For this claim to succeed:

EVIDENCE FORMS ARE NEEDED

If you have walked here in the last twelve years **Please Ring: 01394-382740** so that an evidence form (quite short and simple) may be sent to you. If this footpath is to be saved this evidence of use is vital.

Denzil Cowdry Chairman RDA.