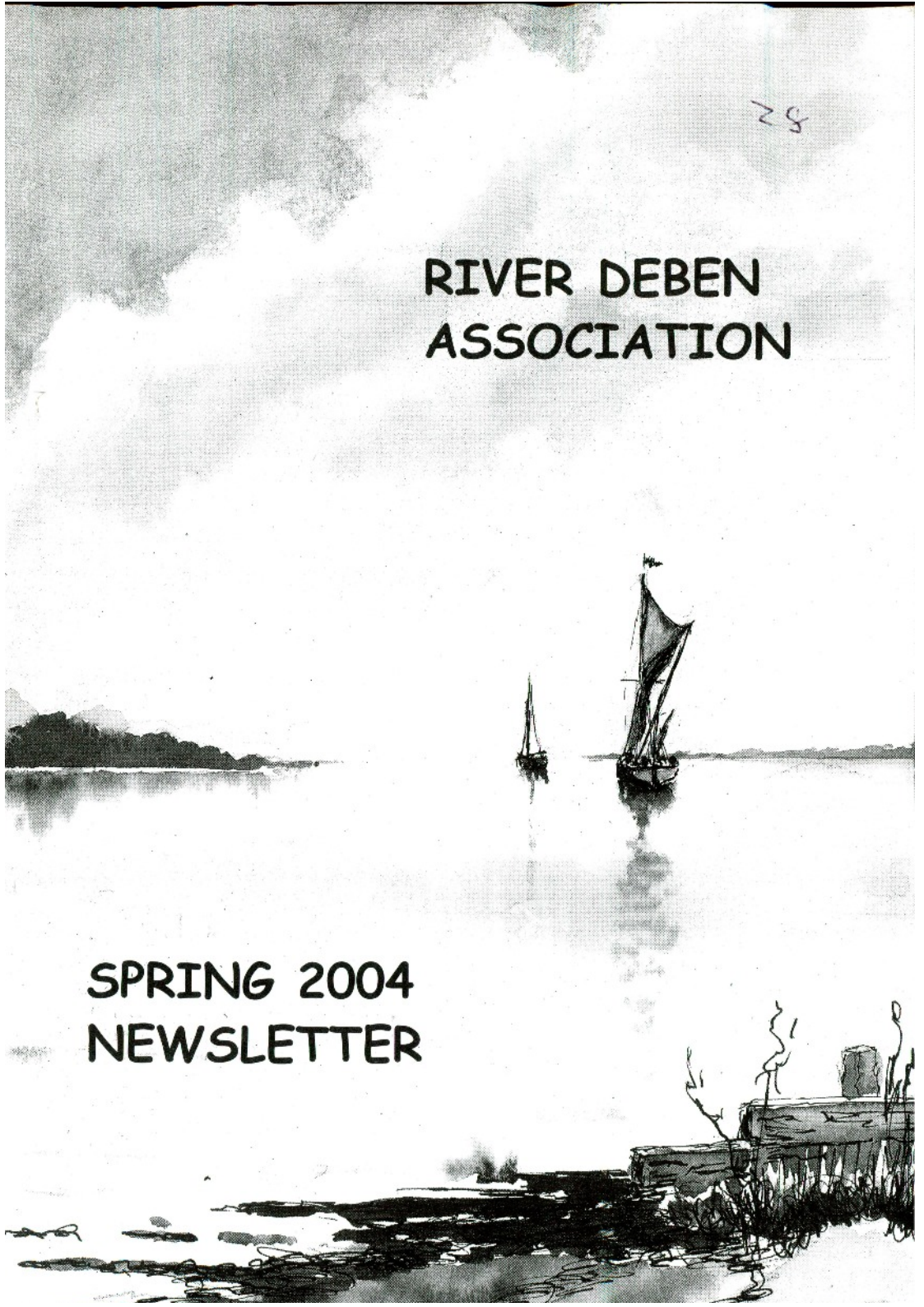


28

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2004
NEWSLETTER

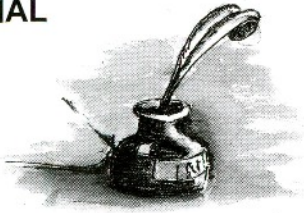


RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

March 2004

- Chairman:** Denzil Cowdry, The Mews House, 105 New Street,
Woodbridge IP12 1DZ 01394 383625 fay.den@talk21.com
- Vice-Chairman:** Robert Simper, Plum Tree Hall, Ramsholt, Woodbridge IP12 3AD
01394 411273 rnsimper@aol.com
- Treasurer:** Chris Brown, 4 June Avenue, Ipswich IP1 4LT
01473 259674 cbrown3323@aol.com
- Secretary:** Wendy Brown, 4 June Avenue, Ipswich IP1 4LT
01473 259674 cbrown3323@aol.com
- Press Secretary:** Rosemary Schlee, Deben Lodge, Melton Road,
Woodbridge IP12 1NH 01394 382740
- Newsletter Editor:** Nick Wright, 62 Victoria Road, Woodbridge IP12 1EL
01394 610134 narwright50@tiscali.co.uk
- Felixtowe Ferry:** David White, 6 Coniston Close, Felixtowe IP11 9SW
01394 283972
- Rowing:** Paul Lacey, 4 The Granary, Tidemill Way, Woodbridge IP12 1BY
01394 386481 lacey.paul@virgin.net
- Litter:** Jo Masters, Hillhouse, Sutton Road, Bromeswell IP12 1QU
01394 383825 familyhillhouse@aol.com
- Wildfowlers:** Adrian Judge, 29 Bredfield Street, Woodbridge IP12 4NH
01394 383350 adrian.judge@virgin.net
- SCDC Liaison:** Anni Healey, Jesters, 7A Burkitt Road, Woodbridge IP12 4JJ
01394 382291
- Water Ski:** Wayne Johnson, 10 Hunters Ride, Martlesham Heath IP5 3SQ
01473 410341 wayne@eswsc.co.uk
- Anthony Mason, 1 Hemley Hall Cottages, Hemley,
Woodbridge IP12 4QF 01473 736740
- Simon Read, "Jacoba", Robertson's Boat Yard, Lime Kiln Quay,
Woodbridge IP12 1BD 01394 384060 s.read@mdx.ac.uk
- Anne Moore, 2 Grundisburgh Road, Woodbridge IP12 4HG
01394 383559
- Ed Stanford, 21 Ipswich Road, Woodbridge IP12 4BS
01394 386362 stanforddebenvane@tinyworld.co.uk

EDITORIAL



A Newsletter all of my own! My own organ, on which I can play anything I like! Better still: from which I can exclude anyone I don't like! My imaginative schemes for the enrichment of the River Deben and its settlements, once indulged by only a few close friends, will now be listened-to by the masses and debated beside a hundred hearths!

With such intoxicating thoughts, I circled the bait which Denzil had dangled provokingly before my nose and . . . of course . . . swallowed it whole. I am now, gulpingly, the latest editor of your Newsletter: already wondering how I can possibly preserve the traditions established by Mike Burn and its previous editors, and live up to their fine campaigning, artistic and literary styles. You can already see how the splendidly-illustrated magazine which Mike Burn developed has been reduced, in the interests of a stingy economy, to what he once called the "school mag" format (but with which I must confess to being squalidly comfortable!) I am honoured by the appointment, and especially grateful to Mike for the smooth hand-over. Another Michael, Michael Atkins, has also given me encouragement. His "Reminiscences of Deben Reminiscences" is a delightful evocation of a Newsletter editor's life of a few years ago. His warm and friendly relationship with his contributors is a comforting model for me.

The postage of Newsletters has made me aware of the wide membership of the River Deben Association, most of whom (because of my abysmal attendance at meetings) don't know me at all. So, before I start to bore you - as editors are inclined to do - with my schemes for the Deben (and, by implication, for The World Beyond), and with complaints about the pitifully meagre contributions to my Letters Column (no disrespect to my one precious correspondent!) I should introduce myself to you . . .

My family arrived on the Deben from Australia in the summer of 1992, on board our 38-foot timber cutter, "Amadis". (We didn't sail ALL the way, but that's another story . . .) We have lived in Woodbridge ever since, forever smugly congratulating ourselves on our fortuitous landfall. Amadis was moored, until recently, near Methersgate, but is now being prepared by her new owners in the Tidemill Marina for the second half of her circumnavigation of the world. Lily Kozmian-Ledward's letter about her plans for Amadis is published in the Correspondence section. I do, therefore, have a certain, sometimes friendly, sometimes antagonistic, feeling for the sea "out there", and a strong sense of gratitude to the Deben whose bar at Felixstowe allows only small, and tamed, dollops of it "in here". The Deben is, quite simply, one of the nicest of places. If a love for the place, and some experience of the sea, are sufficient credentials for the job, then your committee is justified in making my appointment. The fact that I have spent most of my working life as a teaching and writing historian, mainly in Australia, may, or may not, be further justification.

Although normally of a timid and conservative nature - not at all in the combative and robust mould of previous editors - I do see that our delightful river requires the constant protection and vigilance of groups such as our own. Local government is becoming increasingly reliant on groups such as the RDA which are attuned to informed, local, public opinion. I have just (18/2) attended a packed meeting of the Woodbridge and Melton Riverside Action Group at which river-front issues were discussed in a friendly and informative fashion, and a permanent executive committee elected. Several members of the RDA were there, and Mike Burn was one of the five elected to the executive committee. We do not need to impute base motives to our public officials and representatives to appreciate that the voices of private interests are sometimes very shrill and insistent and often hidden from the public. By the time issues get to the point of press statements and public meetings, we may have lost the battle. This newsletter, I hope, may continue an honourable tradition of being one of the first places where opinions about the river and its surrounds may be expressed before they have hardened into acrimonious slogans, and where early alarms may be sounded. It should be emphasised, however, that contributions from individual members do not necessarily represent the attitude of the RDA and, although the editor may have made a few corrections in the interests of clarity of expression, their styles and contents are their authors'. Mike Burn's "Woodbridge and Its River-front" contains an imaginative proposal for our new Town Quay, although (as he points out) one which does not accord in every respect with the covenant which financed the reconstruction. It follows on from David

Pollock's letter in the Autumn 2003 edition. We should also, I think, be grateful to Mike, not only for his years as distinguished editor of this Newsletter but also for attempting to unravel the unfortunate issue of the enlargement of the Deben Mill housing development in Woodbridge. Simon Read's article on the current debate about the "managed realignment" of our river, and his own researches on the matter, is also a very necessary call for an informed discussion of this desperately complex issue. I hope that readers may respond to his invitation to participate in his Working Group's discussion and walks.

In addition to these "political" matters, I also feel that this newsletter should remind us of what a wonderful river we've got. The sighting of an otter or a visiting Thames Barge, or the reminiscences of people who know the river well: people who have, for many years, "poddled by it, paddled on it and piddled in it" (apologies to M. Atkins), will be treated with quite as much respect as any strident call to arms . . . especially if they're short! Michael Atkin's own charming contribution to this edition reminds me that he was the initiator of this admirable tradition. Peter Uloth who has become a familiar figure to me on the river as he "poddles" around his "Mijn Klomp", always ready to lend a hand and to exchange a friendly word or two, has offered something from his family's store of knowledge and reminiscences. I hope this will become a series. Frank Knights, too, whose quay welcomed Peter's "Cora" in 1938, and our own "Amadis" in 1992, has offered something to the Newsletter from his own, even vaster, fund of Deben experience. His contribution, "Early Days in Small Boats", describes his first

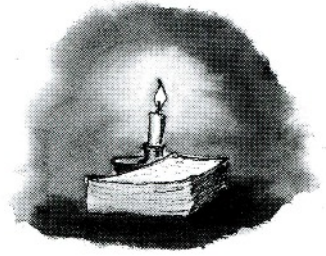
(and we hope last) "shipwreck". Readers hoping for stories of survivors clinging to floating spars may be disappointed by this early evidence of Frank's seamanship and ability to get out of difficulties without fuss.

I would like to make a special mention of Ron Wragg who has donated the art-work which decorates the cover and punctuates this Newsletter. I hope that contributors will forgive me for occasionally replacing their excellent photographs (which do not reproduce well) with his sketches, some of which are based upon them. This represents a lot of work for Ron. I appreciate it very much. Finally, a note about the Chairman and his Report. Perhaps I should howl (carp?) at Denzil for having so deftly hooked and landed me into this job. But I can't bring myself to it. Like the vast majority of our membership, I feel deeply grateful to him for his skilful, tenacious and good-humoured leadership of the River Deben Association. If, from time to time, we other members have to take a small share of the pain, then he well deserves it . . . and so do we. There was really no need for him to ply me with so much of his beer: I would have surrendered sober. Please, members, note the remarks which you will find in his "Chairman's Notes" about your Bankers Orders. BLOCK CAPITALS should draw your attention to them. The relevant form is enclosed with this Newsletter.

Please also note the Annual General Meeting which will be held in the Woodbridge Community Hall on 30 April at 7.30 pm. The Agenda is on the back cover.

Nick Wright

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES



Have you ever tried to define in your mind exactly what the Deben Estuary, the Association's principal concern, means to you? Finding the right words is no easy task. "Recreation" is an obvious start with much evidence of its many forms apparent during the summer months - cruising, power-boating, dinghy racing, rowing, swimming, crabbing, fishing and painting are all common pursuits, things that people do. Yet there has to be more. For some, enjoying the tranquility of quiet summer days is the important issue. Others relish the exciting feel of the open sea as, with wind against tide, they open up the reach between Green Point and the Horse Buoy. The crux, perhaps, is that the environment of the Deben has a capacity to refresh spirits and to challenge minds and bodies as readily today as for the last hundred years. Conservation of the estuary has many interacting aspects, so it is important that those who use the river and know it well should guard against unsympathetic and irreversible changes.

With so much at stake, it is not surprising that occasionally we cause offence by stating the case for conservation too strongly or in a manner capable of misinterpretation. An editorial reference to the Planning Branch of Suffolk Coastal District Council in the last issue of the Newsletter was capable of being misread.

Certainly it was not intended to imply that there had been wrong-doing in the planning approval for substantial extensions to the Deben Mill development. The council had, in fact, opposed the buildings that now obstruct river views, but the case was lost on appeal.

This winter, more than any I can remember, the Association has been involved with important proposals likely to have long-standing effects on the course of the river, its scenery, and even on its use. The Third Option for flooding the pasture immediately up-river from Waldringfield and removing the existing sea-wall will provide the biggest alteration to the banks of the river since the 1953 floods! Other changes will be proposed in the Environment Agency's Management Plan for the Deben, now under preparation. The main theme, of course, is managed realignment. Put simply, this involves creating more space for water to flow into, and out of, the Deben and even faster currents at the mouth, already fast enough for many yachts. Habitats also change: mud replaces salt-marsh and salt-marsh may replace pasture, all of which alters bird populations. It can be hoped that the instruments placed in the river this winter to read tidal flow and to measure the nature and amount of transported sediment will provide sound scientific evidence to back decisions that have to be made.

The marked increase in silting along the stretch of the river opposite to Woodbridge, and above, is also of concern. The Association has asked the Environment Agency and English Nature to give specific consideration as to how these mud deposits should be managed. The present expedient of dragging the mud to the centre of the channel simply redistributes the problem.

A good deal of time and effort has been given to advising on the proposals for developing Woodbridge riverside. The Association has been invited to provide a member for the development team and we look forward to making a substantial contribution based on Members' views.

Within the space of a month there were no less than three planning applications for buildings that would alter the distant views in a particularly favoured area of the Deben valley above Ramsholt. The arbitration of such applications do require fine judgement. So far, the General Committee has been almost unanimous in resolutions relating to planning.

This brings me to the point of how greatly we should value the respect that the Association has earned over the dozen or so years of its existence. We started with a well-written charter and that continues to be the guide for all our deliberations and actions. However, innovation and re-invigoration are necessary from time to time. Members should note that the next Open Meeting in the autumn of 2004 will be held in Felixstowe to reflect our commitment to the whole estuary and to encourage wider interest and membership at Felixstowe. As far as re-invigoration is concerned, this will be financial! The decision to increase subscriptions made at the AGM in 2003 now comes home to roost. This change does require action by all Members and provides the Treasurer with an unusual opportunity to simplify his book-keeping. PLEASE POST THE REVISED BANKERS ORDER WITHOUT DELAY. Those who pay by cash or cheque are asked to make the change to bankers order to avoid annual reminders. You pay only once in a calendar year. I hope you will agree to alter the date of your payment to 1st April, whatever the current date. This will greatly assist the Treasurer when he reviews membership.

Whilst thanking all of the General Committee for their continued willing endeavours, I will explain how a relatively small event in the autumn of 2003 gave us heart. Resulting from earlier sporting rivalries between two local families, a swimming race was organised with the tide from Woodbridge to Waldringfield. For safety the swimmers comprised teams of two with a dinghy, the idea being that one should swim and the other row, alternately, as expedient. It was a great race on a cold day, executed quietly and with tremendous sportsmanship and involving twenty competitors. The surplus from the entry fees, amounting to £366 was generously donated to the Association. Apart from this, the event was pleasing because it demonstrated how the river can be used and enjoyed in a simple way, available to all. The Deben is recognised as the jewel in the crown of the East Anglian rivers for its water quality. Swimming and rowing are healthy pursuits for which little provision is made in our current sporting calendar. Perhaps we can look forward to an expanded and well-supported Woodbridge Town Regatta in 2004, linking other communities along the estuary with its historic port. Whatever aspect of the Deben you enjoy, I wish you a season at least as good as the last with just a little more wind for the sailors. If you have a query to raise, an opinion to offer, or if you want to be more actively involved with the Association's work, please contact me or a Committee Member.

Denzil Cowdry

Committee Meeting Minutes

Wendy Brown

11th September 2003

Present:

Denzil Cowdry (chairman), Chris Brown, Simon Read, Anne Moore, Rosemary Schlee, Mike Burn, Paul Lacey, Anni Healey, Ed Stanford, David White, Jo Masters and Wendy Brown. Terry Davey, Vice Chairman of the Woodbridge Rowing Club, had been invited to attend.

Apologies:

Anthony Mason, Adrian Judge and Robert Simper.

Minutes of the 19/06/04 meeting were accepted as a true record

Matters Arising:

(a) Wendy had spoken with Greg Pritchard concerning management of the riverside reed bed and they had decided to try and arrange a meeting with a SCDC representative.

(b) The Wilford Bridge footpath - Rosemary reported that she had received a letter from the Rights of Way and Traffic Management sub-committee of Suffolk CC stating that they had agreed to add the route to the Definitive Map as a footpath on the raised ground.

Planning:

(a) Anthony and Denzil had visited the site of a planning application for 12 log cabins above The Rocks. Subsequently it had been found that none of the agencies would support this application.

The committee decided that they would not oppose a development that used or was within the perimeter of existing buildings.

(b) Mike said he wished to write a letter of protest to SCDC about the housing development beyond the SCDC offices in Woodbridge.

Newsletter:

Mike's editorial had been circulated before the meeting. It was agreed that his views did not reflect those of the committee and Mike agreed to rewrite it. Mike reported that the printing would cost £500. It was estimated that the total cost would be at least £670 and the majority of the committee agreed that £70 over the budget should be allowed.

Treasurer's Report:

Chris asked committee members for help and information about lapsed subscribers. Denzil said that the entrance fees for a swimming race from Woodbridge to Waldringfield were to be donated to RDA and that he would write the letter of thanks.

Simon Read's managed retreat update:

This project is going ahead and Chris and Wendy had been asked to join the sub committee.

AOB:

David White reported from Felixstowe Ferry:

- (a) a new slipway
- (b) a new pay and display car park by the cafe
- (c) that the Millennium Green was being well maintained and included the grass in front of the Ferry pub.
- (d) the Felixstowe Ferry Forum (i) has a working group dealing with the question of jet skis and finding an alternative launch site because of the danger and noise at their present one. (ii) is hoping for more visible speed limit signs (iii) is trying to get a 10 knot speed limit out as far as the bar buoy.

The committee commented that speed limits are irrelevant unless there is policing.

27th November 2003

Present:

Denzil Cowdry (chairman), Chris Brown, Anne Moore, Rosemary Schlee, Ed Stanford, Rober Simper, Adrian Judge and Wendy Brown.

Apologies:

Anthony Mason, David White, Anni Healey, Paul Lacey, Simon Read and Jo Masters.

Minutes of the 11/09/03 meeting were accepted as a true record

Matters Arising:

- (a) The Wilford Bridge footpath - Rosemary had received a letter from the Environment Agency saying that steps were out of the question because of safety.
- (b) The committee congratulated Jo on her organisation of the October litterpick.

Planning:

- (a) Jonathan Simper had planning permission for improvements to the equestrian centre above the Rocks.
- (b) Denzil said that he had written to object to the planning application to pull down Elm Row Cottages and replace them with two detached houses nearer the river.
- (c) Denzil had also written to object to a large extension to the timbered house in Hemley as it would be unsightly from the river.
- (d) Some committee members had attended the Environment Agency's (EA) meeting at Waldringfield to publicize the "Preferred Option" for the future flood defences. The new EA Study was discussed and the committee decided that they could support this option.

(e) Denzil reported that water flow and sediment in the Deben was being monitored by the EA. Denzil and Ed had taken a representative of English Nature to see the Sutton shore breaches in the path and he said that he considered that nature should take its course. Denzil said he would ask the EA to monitor the water flow and sediment at Sutton.

(f) Denzil circulated a draft letter to Black and Veatch, the consultants preparing the studies of Waldringfield and the whole Deben. He requested that the Woodbridge area be treated as a separate entity with its mud problems. He asked that the RDA be sent these studies when they became available.

(g) Notcutts' site for housing and a medical centre was discussed. The committee voted for Denzil to write to the Director of Planning and Leisure at SCDC saying that the RDA committee felt that the Town Plan, including the river-side and Notcutts, should be reviewed as a whole.

(h) The flood lighting at the tennis courts, distracting yachtsmen after dark, was again discussed and the issue would be taken up with the Tennis Club direct.

Treasurer's Report:

Chris again requested information to assist with his list of non-payers.

AOB:

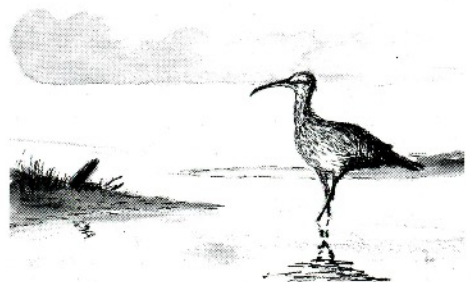
There was a query about the Woodbridge Quay and whether the visiting barge had permission to tie up to it. The lack of ladders for low tide access was noted.

THE RIVER DEBEN: THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME.

I volunteered last year to give my attention to environmental issues for the R.D.A. I did this for a couple of reasons. The first was that I had, through the course of my work as an artist, some exposure to the Environment Agency's national flood-prevention strategies and I anticipated having an opportunity to dig deeper and see them in the context of a landscape I have come to think of as my own. The other reason, also stemming from an artist's vocation, concerned the value which we place upon the stability of landscape in our culture and how any proposal to surrender land to the sea is a highly emotive issue that resonates beyond what would otherwise be a pragmatic understanding of coastal morphology. Recently at the "Estuarise" conference held by the Planning Partnership for the Ore and Alde Estuary, John Selwyn Gummer made the clarion call that, on no account, should we allow our coastal landscape to become flooded, and that we should have learned from our close neighbours, the Dutch, never to contemplate giving up hard-won land. This strikes an emotive chord to which we all instinctively respond, despite the quietly reasoned arguments of the professional hydrologists to the effect that what we have at present is vulnerable and, to an extent, unsustainable. It is with a mind to explore the reconciliation of what, on the face of it, are antipathetic standpoints that I undertook to take a part in the conversation.

Ostensibly, my role is to be in receipt of Environment Agency proposals for flood defences; review them; consult with our

membership, and come up with an opinion. This is a reactive role the ad hoc nature of which makes it difficult to place one isolated project (such as the managed realignment of the pasture upstream of Waldringfield), in the context of an understanding of the dynamics of the estuary as a whole. I have taken to heart something that Mike Burn, the previous editor of this Newsletter, wrote, urging us to become proactive in matters concerning our river. Two words are important to bear in mind here. The first is "stakeholder" and the second, "partnership". As denizens of this river, we are all, in one way or another, stakeholders, a word which corresponds directly to the interests we have in it, as a community, and the belief that its future lies very much in our care. It is vital that we have a voice, but it must be an informed one to be of any use. We have to get ourselves up to speed so that the "partnership" word can come into play. Only when we understand that what we can offer is complementary and necessary to the deliberations of the statutory agencies, can we truly enter into a partnership where, hopefully, a third word may be entertained: "initiative". My view is that initiatives can only flow from a sound understanding and a well-established trust between representatives of a community and local, regional and national authorities.



Although soon to be superseded, the most up-to-date, publicly available, data is the 1999 Posford Duvivier, Suffolk Estuarine Strategies Report for the River Deben. Although a challenge to read, once understood, it is found wanting in detail. Getting to grips with it means overcoming an almost overwhelming sense of inadequacy and the first steps towards addressing this for me was to design a map of the estuary at a scale of 1:10000. The intention was to clarify the identified "flood compartments" which are areas of land with a strong likelihood of flooding in the event of failure of the current river defences. It was necessary to superimpose the topography of the river valley as taken from the Ordnance Survey data and the "indicative flood plain map", published by the Environment Agency, to set down those areas affected by a 0.05% likelihood of inundation. Unsurprisingly, this corresponds closely to the 3-metre contour. My own map is an ongoing exercise and I intend to add to it as the story develops. Our chairman and myself have been on little "works outings" to walk those areas under question: an exercise I would recommend since, on the ground, the assessments made by the surveying team are much clearer, as are our own reactions to them. This has generated a conversation between us based upon the need for a clear management strategy to embrace the entire river as an amenity, a wildlife habitat and a stable flood-control regime. We would like to be able to identify a means by which we can place the debate and the outcomes of our perambulations more clearly in the public arena.

It is no wonder that the Estuarine Strategy appears Byzantine in its complexity for it encapsulates the need to accommodate demands which are not sympathetic to each other, and to address a baffling interpenetration of cause and effect of which we, as river users, may only have a

rudimentary grasp. We know that our river is silting up in its upper reaches. We can see that the salt marshes fronting the river walls are becoming depleted. We are perhaps aware of the age and potential inadequacy of many of our flood defences. We will all have our favourite culprits and preferred solutions, but the certainty is that, yes, this is all taking place and, yes, remedial action has to be undertaken. I, for one, am intrigued by the connection between the loss of salt marsh and the accretion of silt. Are there ways in which the creation of salt marsh habitat by realigning flood defences can go hand in hand with the protection and stabilisation of existing, viable, marsh? For a river which has a narrow entrance, is there not a real peril of increasing the problems we already have by allowing some defences to fail, thereby increasing the amount of water flowing through the estuary on every tide, its velocity and its potential to further erode both salt marsh and remaining flood defences. The Environment Agency has my sympathy for it cannot walk away from the problem and is painfully aware that there are too many constraints to allow everybody a happy outcome.

We have debated what our approach as an Association should be over the need to react to proposals as they arise; the need to ensure that the debate is placed in the public arena; and the need for a clear perception of the issues at stake. We have formed a small working group to continue this discussion and I would be only too happy to be contacted by anyone interested in joining. We have been thinking of a practical project which might capture the imagination and make the issues in question more tangible. The idea has been mooted to renew the river wall structure connecting the ferry hard on the Sutton side of the river, opposite the Woodbridge hard, to the Sutton Hoo

circular walk. This wall is disintegrating and opening up the salt marsh behind it to potentially disastrous erosion. To stabilise this wall would be to re-establish an ancient right of way from the river, with, of course, the potential to visit Sutton Hoo by means of a dinghy-crossing from Woodbridge. The trend of the river towards the Sutton side and the undermining of Ferry Cliff have accelerated over recent years: no doubt exacerbating the tendency for Ferry Quay to become a silt trap. To renew the wall could have the beneficial effect of directing the flow on the ebb further towards the recently-dredged Town Quay and Ferry Quay, but I see this also as an opportunity to focus on two further concerns. The first is to protect salt marsh habitat where this is feasible. The other is to use dredging spoil as a means to recharge depleted salt marsh. We are well aware of the need to find a viable alternative to plough-dredge operations which, whilst fine for remedial work, when carried out on an ambitious scale, simply spreads the grief around and causes a great deal of bad feeling amongst the river-using community.

I can imagine our Association becoming a broker in a partnership to accomplish a project like this, but there still remains the immediate need to ensure the debate gets to those members of the local community most likely to be affected by the Estuarine Strategy. It was very heartening to see that the Planning Partnership for the Ore and Alde estuary has ensured that the interests of the community who earn their livelihood from those rivers are represented. I did note, however, that this community was in a minority at that conference. There is a challenge for us to find ways to engage the views of riparian

landowners, boatyards and river-related businesses, for they are at the receiving-end in the event of dramatic changes to the flood strategy, and are the ones without whose knowledge and experience our efforts are meaningless.

By the time this Newsletter goes to press, the Environment Agency will have unveiled a new Estuarine Strategy for the Deben, perhaps making some of my observations redundant. No doubt there will be unwelcome proposals to cease maintaining some food-defences and to carry out managed realignment of others, with knock-on effects of increasing ebb-tide velocity, changing the morphology of the river and affecting navigation at certain states of the tide. We have to be prepared to enter into this discussion from an informed point of view for there is now an enhanced perception of the importance of the community as stakeholder in the debate. If this is indeed so, we should not pass up the opportunity to affect, challenge, and even initiate, some of the changes which are now in the wind.

Simon Read

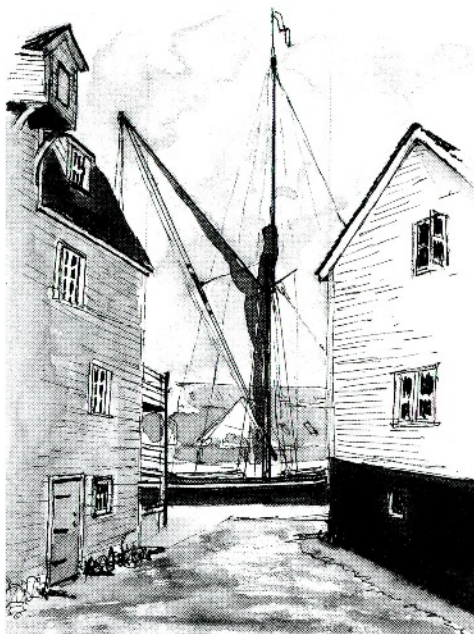
[Members who wish to contact Simon about the Working Group should note his address in the list of Committee Members]

WOODBIDGE AND ITS RIVER-FRONT

Woodbridge built its shape and its essence from facing the river and earned much of its life from the trade it produced. People world-wide, seeing countless postcards, measure Woodbridge by its Tide Mill, now so proudly restored, and its river frontage. The number of people who paint it is legion. This is not some sterile council park but a happy, if untidy, clutter of boats that look faded but always used and alive. Early photographs of Woodbridge are often distinguished by the topmasts and distinctive tackle of the East Coast's unique sailing speciality, The Thames Barge, whose regular trade produced a vibrant life that fed much of the town.

Despite this historic foundation there is a view in the town that wishes to face it away from the river-front as messy and untidy, not clinically clean, at best a place of "Council amenities" and "attractions for tourists" which it could thus segregate out of its sight. I recognise that the present state of the river frontage is neither the former nor the latter - but the current interregnum allows Woodbridge to decide whether it wishes to embrace its historic past and the life it brought, or sterilise it by 'op-down' "amenity planning" and face away from it.

The view which embraces the historic past is amply possible if Woodbridge can step back from driving a planning view forward and, by making some simple things possible (and adding some very simple amenities) to welcome a new style of organic growth for which there is at least one fine example. The restoration of the Tide Mill Quay gives Woodbridge that chance.



*TB Reporter lying alongside the new quay.
21st September 2003*

It should be pointed out that the covenant on the Tide Mill Quay for "visiting yachtsmen to stay for two tides only" is very unlikely to work for a number of strategic and sailorly reasons. The most important is that modern yachtsmen do not use sea walls any more (certainly not sloping ones) especially when a fine marina, with all services and full floating capability, is accessible just round the corner and for a greater tidal range. There are a number of more practical reasons also, to do with the arrangements and design of the quay, which militate against its use by visiting yachts- but:

The full circle to our past could be achieved by having Thames Barges as regular inhabitants of the quay to and from which they sailed so often in the first 50 years of last century. None of the reasons for yachtsmen's non-use apply to them.

When I led TB REPORTOR up to the quay on 20th September, last year, she sailed, topsail, jib and mizzen, and I watched everybody walking the sea wall stop, some for a long time, to watch her majestic progress. They were clearly enthralled. She had a full charter on board which quickly dispersed into the town. There are a number of simple reasons why this is not a normality for Woodbridge but all may easily be resolved with a little will and the focus to see Woodbridge's river frontage become a vibrant living organism again. A welcome for the Thames Barge fraternity could provide that real purpose for the river-frontage that it lost when boat-building ceased and a genuine pride in the re-creation of a living tradition today.



The Thames Barge Scene Today:

Today the Thames Barge is still a trader. There is no other way to keep them sailing. But where they once traded in goods, they now trade in people, giving them a feel of and a chance to take part in an essential part of East Anglia's past. It is not, of course, a literal re-creation of the past for, although their distinctive gear still graces the East Coast skyline, they now ply their trade of chartering and racing. Their success as survivors in a modern age is a tribute to their flexibility and the enormous enthusiasm of those who spend time and huge sums of money on their preservation and sailing - and who preserve these unique skills to pass on to following generations.

They sail during the summer, returning to pick up charters from their base, on a weekly or weekend basis. They act as hospitality bases and training camps. They employ people in substantial numbers. During the winter they lie alongside for repairing, restoring and improving, for which local skills and manpower are necessary. Most of them have teams of volunteers and club members who come to help in the ever-present maintenance.

Money, skills, people and activity surround them always, as does a substantial reverence. Where Thames Barges are, people congregate to make things happen.

We are right to be concerned about "tourism" in its crude terms, for excess easily sterilises and destroys fragile and compact environments, especially when it needs to be serviced with "attractions" and "facilities". Yet life is essential or another form of sterility, death, takes over. Attractions tend to be artificial, but a working Thames Barge (arguably East Anglia's greatest attraction) is working real and historic: fizzing with real people. Barges bring tourists in the form of their charters who visit the town and spend money there. A number of them sail with children, of all sorts and conditions, and for a wide range of philanthropic reasons. The whole business is a very real trade - which depends on effective and welcoming host bases.

The Sailing Barge Association members are based in three distinct locations: Maldon, Faversham and St Katherine's

Dock. There used to be a presence in Ipswich but that is fading as the new marina takes over. St Katherine's, apart from being a long way up the Thames, has no repair facilities. Faversham, a historic base, is under threat from new development. Maldon, however, makes a great deal of its Barging trade and prospers accordingly, not only from the Barge fraternity but from a wide range of spin-offs. Its example is a fine one upon which Woodbridge could model and improve.

Woodbridge has all the facilities, the historic position and provenance and a superb new quay. It could triumphantly re-face itself towards its ancient source by welcoming Thames Barges back to the Tide Mill Quay. This would be a seed that could flourish along the frontage and really bring Woodbridge back to the life that I can remember when Whisstocks were building boats regularly 25 years ago. Indeed, the Thames Barge scenario would have the greater advantage of taking place in the public domain and offering a continuing changing attraction with plenty of public accessibility.

Knowing Maldon well, I have no doubt that this seed could well become the fruit we would all wish to see in a variegated, active, low key, development of the Woodbridge waterfront. One that would involve many, employ numbers and place Woodbridge more firmly on the map than just its signature Tide Mill does at present. There are barges keen to make this move now for I have been working with the SBA for some time.

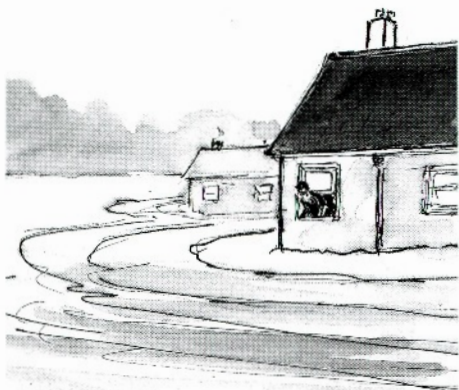
M R Burn, October 2003

REMINISCENCES OF DEBEN REMINISCENCES

It must have been three or four years ago that Nick Wright came with Anthony Mason to my house with the thought that he might take over as Editor of the River Deben Association Newsletter. Nick would either do that or be going to Malawi for two years. In the event, he went to Malawi and we had to look elsewhere for my replacement. I was delighted to hear that he had returned and Plan A could be resurrected. My welcome to the new editor inevitably produced a request for an article, and I said that I would do something on the early days of the Newsletter.

I took over the editorship from Richard Hare for the Spring 1992 Newsletter, after Richard had been responsible for the first three editions. In those days, anyone who could type was brought into the editorial team, and the finished product reflected the limitations of the type-face in those days. Tim Midwinter was responsible for the printing, and I recall the typing sessions at Anni Healey's house. By the time that I took over, we had graduated to laser printing on the computer, and professional production of the Newsletter. I decided to number the Newsletters, and the last edition, Autumn 2003 was the 27th newsletter that the RDA has produced. At one stage, Vivienne Midwinter became Assistant Editor, and we used to have evening sessions with Adrian Judge going through the copy correcting the spelling mistakes. In Spring 1998, Dennis Hawes, whose computing skills were better than mine, became Assistant Editor and he was a great help for a number of years.

For the Autumn 1994 edition, I must have been desperate for copy, and I started a series of "Deben Reminiscences", with myself as the first contributor, recalling my first visit to the river in 1954. This was



Flood, 1953!

followed by my wife who could fill-in the preceding years from 1928! Over the years, I persuaded a number of members to write articles about their memories of the Deben. The earliest, from Joan Brown, daughter of Sir Clifford Patterson, the first President of Waldringfield Sailing Club, recalled, through the eyes of a child, Waldringfield as it was some 80 to 90 years ago when, as she says, there were only two moorings on the river, and one dinghy and two duck punts on the beach.

Following Nick's request, I have taken the opportunity of re-reading these Deben reminiscences; and they make fascinating reading. Joan Mossman's description of getting to Waldringfield by bicycle immediately after the war with Anne and Denis peddling furiously to keep up with their parents; Liz Lord's description of walking from Waldringfield to the Ferry and up the other side of the Deben through Stonnor and crossing the river again at Wilford Bridge before completing the circumnavigation of the river to Waldringfield and a well-earned hot bath. The one which has always remained in my mind was by Charlie Taylor recalling how, in 1953, he returned with his new bride and after an evening in Felixstowe went to his in-laws at

Capel Hall Farm. They slept on the top floor and, during the night, the room appeared to be swaying. In the morning they woke up to find a sheet of water surrounding the house all the way to the river. His description of their efforts to contain the floods was memorable. The upper reaches of the river were the recollections of Don Johnson who spent his youth whilst living at Wickham Market fishing and swimming in it. He writes "the Deben is but a shadow, or should I say, a puddle of its former self". And Maisie Runnacles' recollections of her early holidays at Waldringfield under canvas when her two children played in the mud. She could also recall the old village shop run by Mrs Frost with "hanging rails full of all sorts of things from woollen vests to hams and the shelves packed with wool, sewing equipment, post cards - everything and anything could be supplied in that Aladdin's Cave."

Jim Turner could go back to pre-war days when his uncle, George Turner, ran the Maybush. And Jenny Auber's evocative words: "We've been on it, over it, through it and across it. We've been up it and down it, in it and out of it. We've swum in it, splashed in it, fallen in it and sunk in it. We've poddled (sic) by it, paddled in it and piddled in it. We've smelled it, and drunk in it and been sick in it . . ."

I am very grateful to Nick for giving me the stimulus to re-live those days and reminiscences. There may be others who have a complete set of all the River Deben Association Newsletters, but I would be very happy to lend anyone my copies, provided that they are returned.

Michael Atkins

[Editor's note: I would be delighted to have an editorial group such as Michael has described in paragraph 2, and volunteers would be very welcome indeed! Articles about reminiscences are also very welcome]

VIEWS FROM "MIJN KLOMP"

This short series starts from the time, long before "Mijn Klomp" was even a twinkle in its builder's eye - but when the River Deben first became a twinkle in the writer's eye.

My family arrived off the entrance one bright afternoon in 1938 and my father, in accordance with his "Pilots Guide", hung an empty bucket from the mast of his six-ton Harrison-Butler "Cora", while awaiting attention from the Pilot at Felixstowe Ferry.

He had come all the way from our home waters near Faversham and he had read a warning about the dangers of the Deben entrance. We stood-by at the Haven buoy. Cora drew all of four foot six. Within a half hour to our surprise, we boys aged 11 and 9 had to hurriedly suspend the game of Monopoly we were playing in the cabin, for sounds of the pilot in his motor boat interrupted, and he bid us follow.

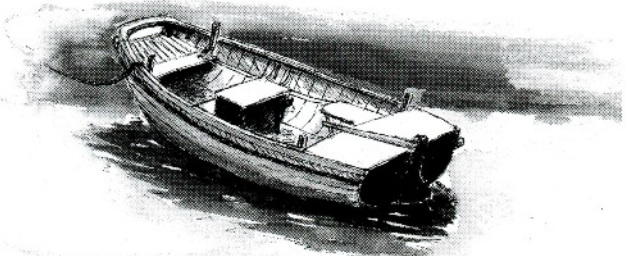
That evening we lay safely under the cliff at Waldringfield and we could have some welcome exercise up and down cliffs. We had entered a river such as we had never before seen, with trees right down to the banks. That was of course long before the Elm disease had taken its terrible toll, but even today the Deben is beautiful and unique.

The next morning we spied the "gleaming spires" of an attractive other-place nearly hull-down in the distance. We enquired whether we would be calling there. "Not likely!" was father's reply, "look at the chart, it shows 'Troublesome Reach' before you get to Woodbridge. I am not going to risk my ship negotiating such a hazard".

It was not until a war had been fought and won, in 1946, that I finally navigated our lugsail dinghy from Waldringfield to Woodbridge - the Cora re-rigged with the dreaded hard-wearing Sisal, the only type of rope then available after the disappearance of hemp and before the arrival of nylon - lay once again at Waldringfield. Detergent had however appeared and we no longer had to wash-up with the old pre-war "seawater-soap".

It was a nice Saturday afternoon and we took our tide up to Woodbridge - all the world seemed to have the same destination. However, I remember being surprised when they - at the bend that we now know as "Little Haddon Hall" - all seemed to veer away to the Westward. It was near the top of high water springs and we saw no reason to follow them, but carried on with the Church tower as our leading mark. It was a little embarrassing when pieces of grass went past and even under us. We had to bring our little iron centre-board up a touch.

Of course later, having sampled some of the delights of what is now our very own little town, I know why those people had veered away to the Westward and navigated what we now know as: "Loder's cut", just off the trees at Kyson point.



Mijn Klomp

At the quayside steps under Frank Knight's crane where we made fast, there seemed to be many who had come to shop for provisions. One lady I noted, wore farm-worker-style puttees made from corrugated cardboard instead of the more formal leather. Another arrived in her dinghy complete with ship's cat, and propelled by something that seemed related to a present-day "strimmer".

Meanwhile, unbeknown by me until very recently, a certain Frank Knights had been commissioned by a local farmer to build a motor boat suitable for taking the wife and children from Waldringfield to the Rocks and landing them, so that he was then free to go racing on the river. This was before the days of the Squib, of course.

The farmer in question Richard Haywood was in a triumvirate including Michael Spear, of Levington Marina fame, and Clive Richardson who were engaged upon the importation of the well-tryed Norwegian SABB fishing boat engine as a yacht auxiliary.

Frank came up with a pram design which was remarkably similar to the Dutch motorvlet with, naturally, a SABB engine. He painted her battleship-grey; there was plenty available in those days! She was christened "Saxon Clog".

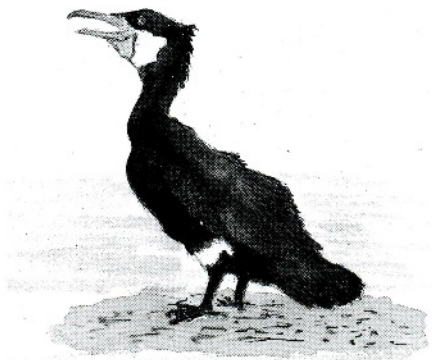
Michael Spear meanwhile obtained from Norway the plans for a similar hull, this one was slightly finer in the beam, had a smaller pram transom, was a few inches longer, and was finished in varnish. It was she that caught my eye, but I knew nothing of her owners, only that I was envious.

It was many years later after she had been through several owners, including a fisherman at Orford, and the Woodbridge-Sutton ferry, and been badly damaged during the '87 gale, that her value came down to a level where I could contemplate ownership.

As soon as I acquired her, I decided to change her name. Due to the Dutch connection with her type, and mindful that a change of name can be unlucky, I decided not to make too much of a change - her name translates as "my clog". It had been many years before she was actually mine.

I have since heard a Dutch yachtsman using his megaphone on the Deben hailing: "What are you doing, with my shoe?"

Peter Uloth



EARLY DAYS IN SMALL BOATS

Once or twice, over recent years, I have been asked how I became interested in the river and, following that through, to boats, and eventually to starting the yard at Ferry Quay. I have given this a great deal of thought and, as I was brought up by foster-parents, can claim no family involvement in maritime events other than living in the maritime hamlet of Ramsholt for a year or two after my mother died.

From then on, I lived on the Melton Road and went to the village school until the age of fourteen when I left to start work.

From my bedroom, I was able to see the barges' topsails as they proceeded up to Melton dock and Wilford bridge. My further steps towards a maritime life can partly be blamed on my school chum, Eric, who was a year or so older than me. Eric's father, a boatbuilder, had found for Eric a very elderly duck punt. I must have been about thirteen and Eric wanted someone to assist him to paint the punt which was tied up on the saltings, forming part of the tide-mill pond. I believe my help was enlisted because the "painting" was really a question of tarring the bottom inside and out with gasworks tar (available from Woodbridge gasworks): quite a messy job for a newcomer to the tar brush!

Once re-launched, Eric and I used his punt quite a lot, where I learned to row and acquired basic boatmanship. This led me to acquire a boat of my own.

Just about when I left school, I met Fred Upson (Russell's dad) who I knew let out boats for hire. I made contact with him,

and later purchased an elderly wooden (what else then?) skiff of some thirteen feet in length, together with two odd oars, two odd rowlocks and a bailer (essential), all for the sum of £2-12 in real money. Eric and I, therefore, had the means for rather longer rowing trips on the river from my base at Melton dock. On one occasion, I recollect, we made it down river as far as the Rocks, but mostly we went way up above Wilford Bridge, tide permitting. The seeds had by now been sown for my future life which I've never regretted.

As time went by, I felt the need for a more up-market boat. I was now fifteen years old, so I borrowed a sum of money from my foster-mother, sold the skiff for about the same sum as when purchased, and was able to buy from Eversons a brand new ten-foot dinghy, complete with a matching pair of oars, rowlocks and painter. It cost £10 (extra for anchor).

As I was now in possession of a much more weatherly boat, my thought turned to having a try at sailing. My dinghy was only meant to be used with oars, so it had to be converted by fitting a mast. Having acquired a s/h spar, this was stepped through the fore thwart. A centre board and rudder was not considered essential as we could steer with an oar, row to windward, and sail back, if we could obtain a sail! By this time I had made friends with a new near neighbour who had come from Harwich with his parents. Frank (also a Frank), coming from the seaport of Harwich, was very much more of a sailor than me. I still had no sail, but the other Frank solved this by borrowing his mother's striped sun-blind, which made a quite serviceable square sail. We then made a number of one-way sailing trips.

Sadly, Frank lost his life at sea when his ship was bombed off Orfordness. He now rests in Melton old churchyard.

As I now considered going on further trips with the ten-foot dinghy, the next step seemed to be the purchase of an outboard motor which I eventually acquired for the sum of £6, including carriage from London. It was monster of cast-iron and brass, weighing-in at about five stone. It was the first of only two outboards I have ever owned.

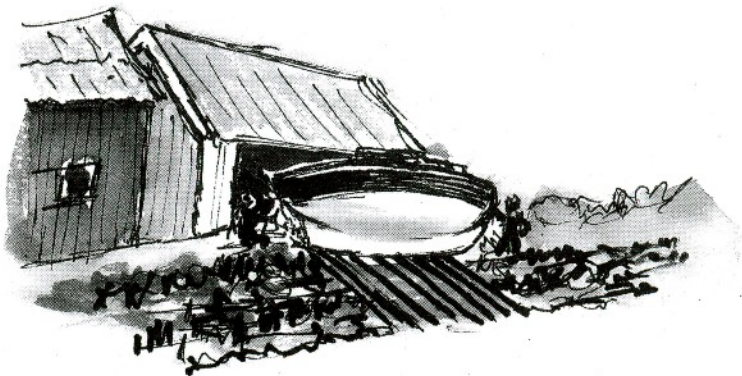
My (by now) friend, Bert Everson, assisted me to get the engine running, and had the blisters to show for it. It produced about 2.5 H.P. This ancient engine pushed the dinghy along very well, although a bit down by the stern. With a crew-member sitting forward, I was able on many occasions to venture as far as the Deben bar. On one summer's day this led to the only "shipwreck" in my lifetime, to date.

It happened like this. My late friend, Doug, and I had had a most pleasant voyage down river from Melton dock. The North Sea looked so inviting and a proposal was

made to venture off to the Cork Lightship. So we set off. Wind was slightly easterly, or north-easterly, and passage to the Cork, first class. Until we turned for home. After about three or four wave-tops had broken over the outboard, the exposed upright magneto gave up the ghost. We knew that trying to get it running again would be hopeless until it dried out. The only thing then was out oars and pull for the shore. It seemed a jolly long three miles that the Cork was off the land.

Since these early years, my wife and I have owned quite a few boats, and it is with regret that, last year, we decided to sell the "Yet". She has been a good friend to me for almost sixty-five years, but we are pleased that she has gone to a good home and we wish her new owner many years of pleasure such as we have enjoyed.

F.A. Knights

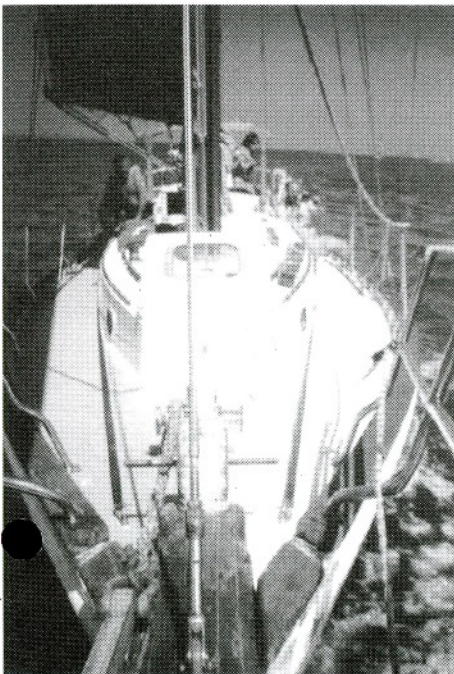


CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

I would like to bring to the attention of your readers the creation of The Amadis Project, an exciting marine conservation endeavour that currently bases itself in Woodbridge. The project revolves around a voyage from the UK to Auckland, New Zealand, via Panama, between July 2004 and November 2005, aboard Amadis, a

al Maurice Griffiths designed 'Good Hope' Class cutter.



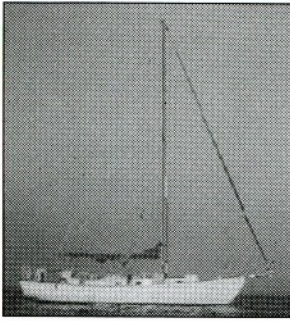
Amadis and her two permanent crew of Lily Kozmian-Ledward (Skipper and Expedition Leader) and Paul Kingston (Public Relations and Communication Officer) will stop off at around 15 designated sites en route in the Caribbean and South Pacific. Here we will lend

support, both scientific and logistic, to local research organisations looking into the development of sustainable fisheries and the designation of Marine Protected Areas. The project is in regular communication with these local researchers, via email, and is being supported whole-heartedly by REEF and REEFCHECK, two major international coral reef monitoring organisations, and the WWF, among others.

The impetuses for the birth of this project are multiple; the crew see it as an amazing opportunity to combine their love of the ocean and its bio-diversity, with a passion for sailing. A chance to give something back, if you will (both crew are also dedicated surfers and competent divers) This project also allows both crew members to follow in the path of their respective uncles, who sailed from the East Coast to New Zealand and settled there.

This trip will also see Amadis complete her, rather prolonged, circumnavigation. She was built in Adelaide, Australia, in 1990 for her previous owners - your editor and his family - who brought her to her spiritual home on the Deben via the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and French Canal Network. She is now moored in Tide Mill Marina, no more than 50 yards from Afrin, one of the original 'Good Hopes', and an old regular on the Deben. Amadis' latest adventure will see her complete the 25,000-mile journey by way of the Atlantic and South Pacific.

The crew of Amadis are hoping to develop communications with local businesses, and are offering advertising space on the hull and sails of Amadis, as well as on their website (www.theamadisproject.co.uk) in



return for financial and material assistance. A visit to the website is, by all accounts, well worth the effort, as it comprehensively describes every conceivable aspect of the voyage.

The Amadis Project represents a thrilling undertaking, and will be at least a small positive step to help reverse the massive decline in the worlds' fisheries. But the crew will always take heed of the fact that, wherever Amadis is in the world, whether it be in the Bay of Biscay or Galapagos Islands, she will ever be a transient vessel, for her real home will always be a swinging mooring somewhere on the Deben, halfway between Ramsholt and Woodbridge.

Yours faithfully,

Lily Kozmian-Ledward

STOP PRESS

E.W STANFORD (Ed) has agreed to accept nomination for the appointment of Chairman at the AGM on 30th April.

ROBERT SIMPER has agreed to become Vice-Chairman.

DAVID WHITE who has represented Felixstowe Ferry faithfully on the General Committee for a long time has resigned, partly due to advancing years.

LEIGH BELCHAM, prominent in the Felixstowe Forum, has agreed to be co-opted to the General Committee, vice David, and is nominated for election at the AGM.

Good wishes of all members go to **ANNI HEALEY** who is currently unwell. Anni is a founder member and has served on the General Committee from the start, at one time as Chairman.

SIMON READ has been elected as the RDA representative on the Woodbridge Waterfront Advisory Group: Mike Burn has accepted a position on the five-strong Executive for developing the riverside.

Tide Mill Quay will be opened formally at 11am on 16th April and a Tide Clock, to which RDA has contributed, will be unveiled after the Town Quay ceremony. These and additional events will be worth attending.

Practical work on the 3rd Option for flooding the field up-river from Waldringfield (page 4) has been put back until 2006. The Environment Agency has also deferred the task of putting instruments into the Deben to measure flow and sediment until the Spring (page 10). They are expensive and one has already been lost due to bad weather on the Alde.

NICK BUBB who learned to sail at the Deben Yacht Club was seen recently in the town. He is rapidly gaining stature as an off-shore sailor, seems to spend most of his time afloat, and is building a new racing yacht for the next Single-handed Atlantic. More of this in a later Newsletter. Visit his web site on www.nickbubbchallenges.com

DC.

THE RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Woodbridge Community Hall
On Friday 30th April 2004 at 7.30pm

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM 2003
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's review of the river
5. Presentation of the annual accounts
6. Election of officers
7. Election of committee
8. Election of auditor
9. Environmental concerns - Simon Read
10. A.O.B.

Nominations for election of officers and members of the committee at the Annual General Meeting must be made in writing, duly seconded, to the Secretary before or at the AGM and must carry the candidate's written consent to nomination.

* * * * *

Following an interval with refreshments

Martin Whitaker

Co-ordinator of the Woodbridge and Melton Riverside Action Plan
will speak on

"THE FUTURE OF THE WOODBRIDGE RIVERSIDE"