

**RIVER DEBEN  
ASSOCIATION**

**Spring 2005  
NEWSLETTER**

**No: 30**

# RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

February 2005

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## Anni Healey: Founder Member

Although I have been a member of the Association from the outset (recruited by Rosemary Schlee one day on the beach at Waldringfield), my active involvement came much later. Thus I know little of the earliest meetings and the writing of our Constitution.

History has it that a small group of Woodbridge residents were incensed by the proposed fencing of a triangle of marshy ground at Kyson Point, previously used freely to store a random assortment of dinghies from boats on the Kyson moorings. Although not directly involved at Kyson, two powerful players, Anni Healey, already prominent in local government, and Ian Battye, soldier and geographer, set out to protect Deben users from this restriction or from any other encumbrance or intrusion on their free enjoyment. That's how we all started. Anni was Chairman and then an active committee-member for more than fifteen years. Her unique contribution was in recognising how little understanding there was in Local Government of the importance to the District of keeping the Deben unspoiled and accessible to all.

The change of attitudes towards the river is remarkable. Some years ago, it was commonplace to hear people say that we could keep quiet about the joys and serenity of our estuary or we would be overrun. Now we acknowledge some change and try to manage it sensibly. The rewards of our founders, not least Anni Healey, can be seen in the quiet enjoyment of sunny summer days and in the continuing memorable sight of so many geese, duck and waders in the winter.

Denzil Cowdry

## Editorial

Late-February is a splendid time to be editor of your Newsletter. There is snow



lying deep on the ground outside my window. Contributors, for the most part, are docile and accessible. I have two actual letters this time for my Correspondence section, neither of which will be allowed to escape the printing press as was the regrettable fate of Mr Downer's letter in the last edition. Thanks to Peter Clay and Robert Simper for these.

Because Anni Healey's wonderful energy touched so many features of our community, we have seen many tributes to Anni in many different contexts over the last few months. The RDA was not the least of her commitments. I am grateful to our past chairman, Denzil Cowdry, for his brief notice of her precious involvement with our Association which precedes this editorial. We deeply regret her death and will find it hard to fill the gap she has left.

It is perhaps fortunate that Denzil's fishing has not been very successful this winter, because he has also managed another set of River Deben observations, gathered this time from tranquil moments on board his "Dabbler", and published here. I feel sure that fellow-members will join me in the hope that the shoals of herring stay away from the Deben for another season, or two, so that we can continue to enjoy his eloquent reflections in this Newsletter.

I am very pleased to welcome Jenny James to the ranks of our regular contributors with her article, the first of three, on Deben birds. Jenny is the nearest I've come to a genuine expert on such things (although she is modest enough to deny this expertise). Having had the pleasure of walking with her near the river, I would advise impatient readers to read her articles and books in the comfort of their own armchairs, and at their own pace. Walks with Jenny are frequently interrupted by binocular-stops because she can never be satisfied with the

conventional and convenient wisdom that every long-billed wader on the riverbank is a "curlew".

Thanks, too, to regular contributors, like Simon Read who always has something interesting to contribute (usually at the last minute!) Like Jenny James, he comes as near as we'll ever get to expertise, and a coherent expression of it, in this case on the subject of Deben mud and our area's flood defences. He even tells me that "Sewage" is to be added to his already-substantial portfolio and we await his next contribution with un-strained enthusiasm. On the subject of last-minute contributions, I am also delighted to have something, in this morning's post, from Jo Masters, another hard-pressed member of your Committee. She writes on the work which she, and her teams, do for all of us to keep the Deben riverbanks free of litter.

Our artist, Ron Wragg, also deserves a personal message of thanks from me for his consistent, on-demand, supply of quality art-work for the Newsletter. He makes no charge for his services. Just think how stodgy the Newsletter might appear without his contributions, and how much poorer we'd be if he charged a market rate for them!

We are pleased, also, to have a contribution from the Woodbridge and Melton Riverside Action Group whose activities complement our own in that particular area of the Deben.

Finally: congratulations to our chairman, Ed Stanford, for leading us so ably, cheerfully and tactfully during the last year. His Chairman's Notes in this edition will give you an idea of the scale and depth of his commitment to the river and to your Association.

Please, members, note the announcement of the next AGM on the back cover of this Newsletter. Friday 22nd April is the day, and I know that Glen Cooper's talk will be more interesting than its rather forbidding title suggests!

Nick Wright

## Chairman's Notes

The latest half-year started off on a sad note with the untimely death of Anni Healey in September. Anni was a tremendous supporter of the RDA and a doughty fighter for everything which she believed in: we shall miss her.

In this half-year, the river has flowed serenely on its usual way but there has been a great deal of activity around it. Starting at the seaward end, you will have noticed the increased amount of rock armour

in place on the Ferry shore beyond the Martello tower. Some 4,000 tonnes of Norwegian granite were put in place after the bank was threatened in October. 2005 will see a similar placing, if sufficient funds are available. Further up the coast, at East Lane, a very large amount of granite has been put down to reinforce the bank where erosion is threatening the Martello tower. We held our half-yearly meeting at Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club in October at which our speaker, Mike Steen, from the Environment Agency, clarified something for us on the issue of sea/river defences. Suffolk Coastal is responsible for the cliff works at East Lane, because there the problem is erosion, whilst the Environment Agency is responsible for sea and river walls because it takes responsibility for defences where failure would lead to flooding. You can easily imagine situations where there might be room for disagreement between the two bodies as to who is responsible for a particular piece of coast!

I should mention that the meeting at the Ferry was a considerable success. Thanks to some very diligent canvassing in the area by Denzil Cowdry, David White and Leigh Belsham, the Ferry clubhouse was full to overflowing. My only regret was that we didn't exactly get a stampede for





membership forms. Incidentally, a date for your diary: the autumn half-yearly will be held at Waldringfield Village Hall on Friday 28th October, when I'm hoping to get a speaker to talk to us about the changing coastline.

Returning to my main theme of recent developments: we are aware of the continuing problem of jet-skis at the Ferry. Although the police can no longer offer a river patrol, they are prepared to send a uniformed officer down to the Ferry at busy week-ends and we hope that this will have a calming effect on behaviour. If the officer is there, please do not hesitate to bring instances of anti-social behaviour to his/her attention so that immediate action can be taken. Elsewhere in this Newsletter, I have written a report on the establishment of Deben Watch: set up partly to address the issue of anti-social behaviour.

Further up the river, at Ramsholt, we are involved in a debate about the exact status of the access to the river at the old ferry landing. It has yet to be determined whether the access is via a right of way, as some believe, or via a public footpath, as others maintain, or whether it is privately-owned and can be closed at any time. We will let you know how the matter is resolved.

I am told that in early spring there will be further consultation by the Environment Agency about the next stage of the River Deben strategy, particularly in relation to Waldringfield, with a "preferred option" consultation scheduled for August or re-consultations. Of course, whether funds will be available to do any work on river walls has not yet been made clear. Mind you, we can't accuse the Environment Agency of not thinking laterally! At a recent meeting of the Alde/Ore group, the Agency put forward options which included breaching the river wall at Slaughden and letting the river out to sea at that point. Another option was to cut a new channel for the river across Sudbourne Marshes (Ferry Point Corner). To say that these two proposals raised strong adverse comment is putting it mildly! One might expect the Aldeburgh Yacht Club to have a point of view! Suffice it to say that no such grand proposals have

been put forward for the Deben.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter, Jo Masters has written an article on the litterpick which she organises every year and for which we all owe her a huge vote of thanks. The cleanliness of the river banks is important and I trust that none of the litter and other rubbish that Jo and her team pick up has been left by members of the RDA. Wouldn't it be great if one year the litterpick was not needed because there was no litter to pick up!

Meanwhile, in Woodbridge we continue to be involved with issues to do with mud – either too much of it or in some places too little, particularly where the salt-marsh is being eroded, as on the Sutton shore. I've been trying for some time to get English Nature to recommend that a simple brushwood barrier on the upstream edge of the salt-marsh would help to reduce the rate of erosion and maybe even encourage some deposition, thus allowing the salt-marsh to regrow. Simon Read and I continue to be active in the Woodbridge and Melton Riverside Action Group and we are hopeful that an early start may be made on cleaning the reed-bed which lies between the Cruising Club and Andy Seedhouse's yard.

Finally, you will all know that the footpath at Wilford Bridge has now been restored to its former line. Our thanks go to everyone involved, especially Rosemary Schlee and Denzil Cowdry of your Committee.

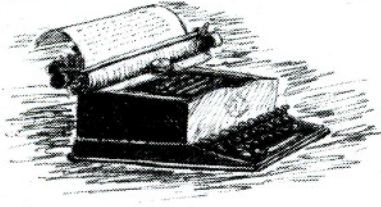
The river may flow serenely on, but, like one of its mallards, there is a great deal of activity below the surface. Committee members devote a lot of time to the river and the issues which it raises and I would like to thank each one of them for their contribution during the year. I should add a special word of thanks to our tireless Editor for getting the Newsletter produced and for the interesting articles which he inspires.

My best wishes for the coming summer to all members, whether you are swimming, sailing, canoeing, rowing, fishing, shooting, bird-watching . . . or just walking the banks.

Ed Stanford.

# Committee Meeting Notes

Wendy Brown



## 30th September 2004

Present: E. Stanford (chairman), C. Brown, R. Schlee, S. Read, N. Wright,

J. Masters, L. Belcham, P. Lacey and W. Brown. Paul Callaghan had been invited to attend the meeting; he was introduced and welcomed by the chairman.

Anni's sad passing was noted. A £50 donation had been sent to the Hospice in her memory.

Apologies: R. Simper and D. Cowdry.

The minutes of the 22/07/04 meeting were accepted as a true record.

Subscriptions and membership: The treasurer said that mailing all the members about their subscription had had a beneficial effect. He recommended that a similar mailing is repeated in 2005.

Wilford bridge path: Ed reported that, following the public enquiry, the inspector had said that the footpath was to be restored. However, there could still be an appeal.

Wilford bridge barge owners' appeal: Ed reported that the appeal will be heard on the 8th December 2004 at the Council Offices; this is to consider whether the barge owners have breached the terms of their lease.

Foxborough Farm, Waldringfield: Ed said that planning permission had been applied, for 120 log cabins on this site. Although outside RDA remit the committee was sympathetic with anyone trying to stop this development because of the increased traffic in Waldringfield and the lack of facilities available.

Ramsholt footpath: Robert asked whether RDA money could be used to employ lawyers to fight for this cause. Rosemary offered to speak to a lawyer friend before any decision was made.

RDA Waldringfield walk: Ed reported that 40 people had turned up for the talk and walk and that Mike Steen (Environment Agency speaker) had been interested to hear views from the local people.

Future walks/talks were discussed and East Lane and the rock armour at Felixstowe Ferry were suggested. Rosemary asked for the walks to be open to the public.

Paul commented that on a walk organised by the Rotary Club red arrows indicating the route had been painted on walls and paths. Ed said he would write to the Rotary Club chairman and ask them not to do that again.

Melton and Woodbridge Riverside Action Group: Ed said that the five groups reporting on their sections of the river had prioritised five issues each - four in Ed's case. These would be costed and the results sent to SCDC.

Felixstowe Ferry Foreshore Trust: Ed had written to the chairman, Mr. Storer, to find out whether the RDA's shares (only in existence as a faded fax) made the association liable in any way. It was agreed that this was an urgent matter to be resolved.

October 28th public meeting at Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club: Denzil and Leigh offered to do a leaflet drop in the neighbourhood and Leigh had also advertised the meeting though the FF Forum. It was decided to charge 50p for refreshments.

AOB: (a) Jo reminded the committee that there is no fishing representative; Simon offered to speak to the "Will Lord" owner on this matter.

(b) River Patrol - not viable because of the health and safety aspect. The Police are involved in a Deben Watch Initiative and a similar one at Felixstowe Ferry to stop crime.



(c) Ed agreed to write to the Chief Constable to ask for Community Support Officer surveillance of the river.

(d) Ed reported that the £400 offered to the Tide Mill Trust was now committed but not yet paid.

(e) Paul offered to speak to Andy Smith, deputy leader of local council and ask for information about the £100,000 for sea defences at East Lane.

## **13th January 2005 (unadopted)**

Present: E. Stanford (chairman), C. own, R. Schlee, S. Read, L. Belcham, R. Simper, D. Cowdry, A. Judge and W. Brown.

Apologies: P. Lacey, J. Masters, A. Moore and N. Wright

Minutes of the 20th September 2004 meeting: were accepted as a true record.

Matters arising: Ed had received a reply to his letter from Tony Storer, chairman of the Felixstowe Ferry Foreshore Trust, and was reassured that the RDA, with its two shares, was not liable if there were a claim. The letter did not enclose a copy of the RDA shares, which had been asked for. Ed said he would ask FFFT if Leigh could be the RDA delegate at the FFFT AGM.

It was decided that the two shares, worth £1,000, should be shown in the RDA accounts.

Membership and accounts: Chris reported that there was a surplus at the end of the year of about £2,000; he was reminded that £400 had been promised to the Tidemill Trust. Chris said that he had returned £150 to the Waldringfield Fairway's committee; it was given to establish a fund for policing the river that had not been possible to establish.

Chris said that during the year, principally as a result of sending statements to each member, there was a reduction in membership of 58. However, recruitment had added 55 new members.

Litterpick: Jo reported that SCDC had wanted to charge for the skips but had relented.

Wilford Bridge: Ed reported that the path had been reinstated and he thought that the barge owner was not now living on board so the problem was solved.

RDA meeting at the Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club: Ed felt that the meeting was successful as it was very well attended; having the October 2005 meeting away from Woodbridge was discussed and it was decided to try and hold it in Waldringfield.

Suffolk Coastal against retreat: This was the title of a meeting convened by John Gummer MP which Simon had attended. Simon said that "SCAR" would go ahead when a convener was found and that he was prepared to represent the RDA when it did.

Deben Watch: Ed had attended meetings of this group and was told by the Police that any observed vandalism or crime on the River warranted a 999 call.

Denzil circulated an "Antisocial Behaviour" reporting form issued by and available at the SCDC offices.

Derelict pontoon on the Sutton shore: Ed had written to Dave Annett at Everson's Yard and had offered a small financial contribution and manpower to help get this pontoon removed. Chris said that removal had become difficult because the pontoon had sunk but he would speak to Dave about it.

Denzil said he would take his dingy down the river and assess the situation.

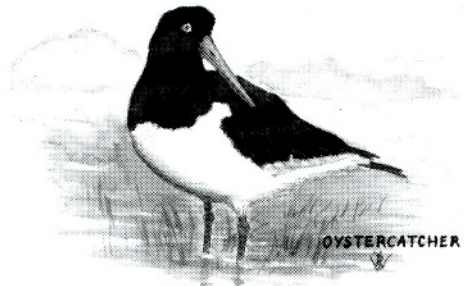
Ramsholt Hard: Robert outlined the four-year-old history of the dispute between the trustees of the Estate and the users of the footpath and the hard. Recently Robert had employed, on behalf of the Ramsholt mooring holders, a firm of solicitors to find grounds for an appeal. Robert asked for a contribution from RDA towards the solicitor's fees of £3,000 and after a discussion it was agreed that £400 should be given to support the Ramsholt cause, without prejudice.

Suffolk Estuarine Strategies: Simon had attended a presentation and he circulated a copy of the Alde and Ore Strategy; he briefly outlined the proposals for four options one of which was to make a channel through to the sea at Slaughden.

## Deben Estuary Birds

It would be easy for the casual observer to underestimate the importance of the Deben estuary, together with the other Suffolk estuaries, in the annual cycle of birds of north-west Europe. Many of the birds present on the Deben at a particular time are likely to have spent a good deal of the year elsewhere, at latitudes ranging from the Arctic to southern Africa. The rich feeding grounds of salt marsh, reed bed and inter-tidal mud are the main attraction at all times of the year. Estuary mud is said to be as rich in food as a tropical rain forest and is indeed one of the richest of environments. Its twice daily renewal of nutrients by the incoming tide is supplemented by material brought downstream from the upper reaches of the river. A plentiful supply of invertebrates, such as ragworms, *Corophium* shrimps, *Hydrobia* snails and *Chironomus* midge larvae, feed in the mud and are in their turn food for the birds. In winter, particularly large numbers of waders and wild fowl take advantage of this. In spring and autumn, there may be shorter visits by waders and song birds stopping to feed and refuel on their migratory routes between north and south. In summer, the reed lined creeks, the salt marsh, the water meadows and scrubby thickets of willow and bramble provide a range of breeding sites for the summer migrants as well as for the resident birds that we see throughout the year.

As a member of the Woodbridge RSPB Local Group, it is a great privilege for me to live near the Deben and to walk frequently along its length. The river is relatively narrow and there is excellent access on



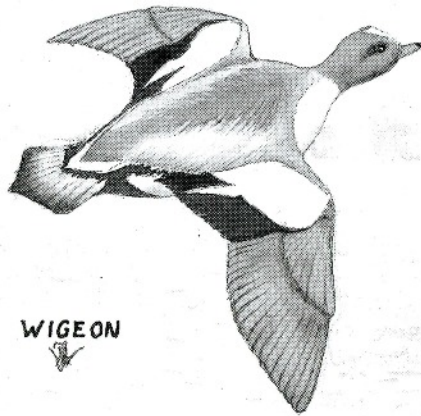
river wall paths along a good deal of its length, so with a pair of binoculars and good light most of the birds are near enough to be identified. Bird watching on the Deben is occasionally for twitchers, who do see unusual birds, but the main thrill is in the sheer number of birds, particularly the wintering flocks of waders and wild fowl feeding on the mud at low tide, rising in grey clouds as the tide rises and retreating to the fields and salt marsh, to roost, until the tide starts to ebb. One of the delights of walking by the River Deben is thinking about the annual cycle and migratory journeys of the birds one is observing. For the winter birds it will be the journey to their breeding grounds in the north, to the Arctic, Siberia, northern Scandinavia and Iceland, maybe also northern Canada or to other parts of Britain and mainland Europe. For the summer birds it will be to their winter feeding grounds in southern Europe, the Mediterranean or West Africa and beyond.

Migratory movements of birds in the northern hemisphere are triggered in spring by the lengthening days and in autumn by their decrease. These migrating birds achieve remarkable feats of navigation checking their positions by magnetic sense, by the position of the sun or stars in the sky or by local landmarks. For example many migrating birds follow the landmark of our coastline giving rise to the annual influx of passage migrants on the Deben in spring and autumn.

Perhaps the most elegant winter visitors on the Deben are the black-tailed godwits, with their graceful stance, long neck, bill



and dark legs. They are easily identified in flight by their trailing legs and bold white wing bar and rump. Small groups of birds feed near the waterline between October and February and can be seen probing deeply into the mud and manipulating the ragworms which are one of their key foods. This species is increasing in numbers and the birds arrive here in autumn from their widespread summer breeding grounds in Iceland, northern and eastern Europe and Russia. There is a second godwit species, the bar-tailed godwit which can be distinguished from the black-tailed by its somewhat shorter, slightly upturned bill and in flight its lack of white wing bar. The bar-tailed godwits are rarely seen here in winter, as they prefer sandier shorelines, but birds do stop in the estuary to feed during April and May as they migrate north to their remote and localised breeding grounds close to the Arctic Ocean in northern Scandinavia and Russia. From late June onwards they return on their way to wintering grounds on other British estuaries or further south in the Mediterranean and North Africa.



Other winter residents arrive from even further away. The knot, a medium sized grey wader with short legs and bill, arrives on the Deben from northern Greenland and the Canadian high arctic. Turnstones, with their tortoiseshell backs, seen frequently on the river wall in Woodbridge and on stony areas of the foreshore, may have made a similar journey. Many of the ducks such as wigeon, teal and pintail and geese such as brent geese arrive here from places north of the Arctic Circle such as Iceland, northern Scandinavia and arctic Russia. This coast must seem a welcome haven from the low temperatures and short

days of the far north. Our coasts also offer a refuge to birds from the near continent. Many of the avocets, lapwings and redshanks that winter here are retreating from the harsher winter climate of Holland and northern Germany. Indeed the River Deben is recognised as a nationally important site for over-wintering redshank.

One of the Deben's most characteristic birds at all times of the year is the oystercatcher. With their harsh call, striking black and white plumage and red bill and legs they are easily noticed feeding at low tide on the stonier parts of the shore and waiting patiently in line on the mud banks, shipwrecks and salt marsh at high tide. The Deben seems to be chosen by oystercatchers in preference to some other local estuaries. They prefer the meandering channel of the Deben with its mud banks and stony shores and the winter population is increased by local migration.

There are a number of other bird species present throughout the year and we tend to think that these are always the same birds. In fact there seems to be an ever changing population of birds such as goldfinches. Those seen feeding on the seed-heads of the sea aster flowers in the salt marshes in the autumn could be new arrivals from breeding grounds further north in Britain or Europe. Meanwhile the breeding birds from Suffolk may well be heading south to spend the winter in Spain or North Africa. Huge flocks of goldfinches fly south over the mouth of the Deben estuary in autumn following the coastline to their more southerly winter quarters.

Our distinctive summer visitors begin to return to the estuary from their winter feeding grounds in the south by March or

April. Some of these, such as whitethroats, nightingales, reed and sedge warblers, establishing their breeding sites in the reed beds or scrubby woodland, may have returned from south of the Sahara, whilst the willow warblers come from West Africa and chiff chaffs from North Africa, Spain and France with a few which may have been wintering in other parts of southern Britain. Most of the common terns, which breed in small colonies on the coast, will have made the long journey here from the west coast of Africa. These birds join the exodus north in spring as the days lengthen in the northern hemisphere.

We tend to overlook the variety of the ubiquitous "sea-gulls", but there are several species with clear differences between them. Our commonest gull, the black-headed, so called because of the black head which reduces to a black spot outside the breeding season, breeds locally and feeds on the Deben throughout the year, the numbers augmented by passage migrants and winter visitors. The handsome, grey-backed herring gull is similar in its distribution but here in smaller numbers. The common gull, a slighter relative of the herring gull, and the large and striking greater black-backed gull are both more common in winter as they breed elsewhere. By contrast the lesser black-backed gull, which has a large and successful breeding colony on Orfordness, is more common on the Deben in summer as many of the birds migrate to the coasts of Spain and Portugal in the winter.

Other birds may regularly stop in the estuary as part of their spring and autumn migration. Each year in spring and autumn, pale grey, long-legged greenshanks can be seen on many of the Deben's muddy shores using their long beaks to probe the mud as they refuel on their long migration between South Africa and their breeding sites in Russia, Scandinavia and northern Scotland. The much smaller common sandpipers which can be detected by their shrill cry and fluttering wing beats as they dart over the water, face a similar journey each spring and autumn.

The Shelduck has one of the more unusual migrations, with the adults migrating to the Heligoland Bight, off the German coast, to moult. Each July the young are left in charge of a few adults who herd the ducklings into large crèches. The pristine, brightly coloured adults return in October and November to spend the winter in large numbers on the estuary.

Some of the most exciting birds to be seen on the Deben do not stay for long. Buzzards, rough-legged buzzards, peregrine falcons, merlins and hen harriers, as well as the more local common marsh harriers, may drop in as part of their winter wandering, feeding in isolated water meadows and associated woodlands.

There is thus a wealth of birds to be observed and enjoyed at all times on the River Deben. It is an area to be treasured and preserved. We need to be constantly alert to any potential threats which might diminish the tranquility and diversity of this beautiful environment.

This will be the first of perhaps three articles in the River Deben Association Newsletter. In others I expect to concentrate on birds to be seen at particular seasons. For the data on bird numbers in these I will be indebted to Nick Mason whose article in this newsletter September 2001 describes the WEBS counts of water birds and wildfowl which I coordinates monthly in winter for the whole of the Deben.

Jenny James

*[Editor's note: Jenny James is a member of the Woodbridge RSPB Local Group and author of their recent book "Spread Your Wings" a Guide to the RSPB reserves of the Suffolk Coast. Further information on this book is available from Colin Coates 01394 385209.]*



## Working Boat on the Deben

When I first joined it, the River Deben Association had a Fishing representative on the Committee to represent the interests of freshwater fishermen above Wilford Bridge. Their chief concerns at the time were water extractions from the Deben, weed growth and the Environment Agency's stocking policy. For several years now we have heard nothing of these concerns: boreholes now provide water for the farmers; wetter summers and increased flow have cured the algae problem. This short paper is about the current methods and extent of fishing in the tidal reaches of the estuary.

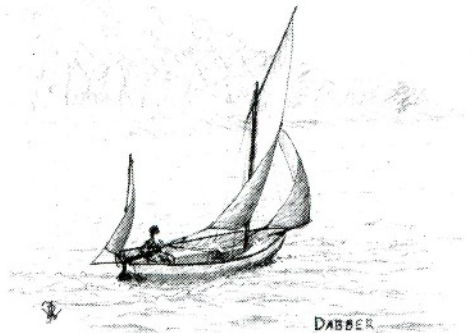
There are, of course, some well-known practitioners, including the professionals, mainly from Felixstowe. Getting any sort of fisherman to share his knowledge is not easy! My own first impressions of estuary fishing may therefore be of interest. If I go wrong, then I hope that those who know better will send a host of interesting letters to the Editor.

At day-break on a summer morning about five years ago, I was surprised to find a buoyed net stretched nearly across the river, downstream of the Waldringfield moorings. Bass were probably the quarry. Since then I have caught small bass on a sea-rod line during the summer months, mainly in the two hours before high-water.

They are plentiful enough throughout the estuary and are easily enticed with rather expensive lug-worm.

Line fishing is the predominant sport. As well as bass, a few codling and flat-fish (dabs) are caught, as well as eels, and, inevitably, many inedible crabs. Below the Rocks one occasionally sees a fishing boat towing a beam trawl, presumably for cod, skate, flatties and even sole.

During the months before Christmas last year there must have been some shoals of herring in the river, enough to attract a



couple of local boats to cast their seine nets above Ramsholt, though I never saw any caught. My own winter fishing has been limited. A long line with forty baited hooks, cast on three occasions, produced nothing. I learned a neat way of handling such a line out of a notched bowl from a couple of fishermen baiting their hooks outside a café in Croatia! My newly-acquired trammel net, designed to go to the bottom, has produced nothing edible yet!

Access to the estuary is by a 15-foot Drascombe Dabber, called "Dabbler", which pretty well sums up what I am doing. After years of racing and cruising in all manner of sporting craft, it is rather pleasing to face the new challenge of harnessing tide and wind to move a half ton of boat and gear to and from the potential fishing grounds. The Dabber's rig comprises a small foresail set to a bowsprit, a loose-footed balanced lug mainsail and a small mizzen sheeted to an outrigger. The layout is pretty but not weatherly. There is no hope of going to windward in anything like a Deben tide. On such occasions, I am reconciled to quiet use of an outboard set up in a well. The inspiration for the boat's design came from the scores of small lug-sail and spritsail craft used for fishing on West and East Coast estuaries and from beaches more than a hundred years ago. In those days one could set to windward with the help of a lad pulling an oar on the lee side. Since

I am singlehanded, the outboard seems justifiable.

Most of the interest so far has been in the winter journeying: more Brent than ever in the lower reaches of the river; no diminishing in the number of visiting Wigeon; even more Canada Geese; Turnstones mixed with Oystercatchers to see you off at Woodbridge; Curlew, Cormorants, noisy Redshank; fewer Sheldrake perhaps; Mallard, Teal, jumpy Avocets; a new Little Egret; plus many less obvious divers and waders that become more difficult to identify without binoculars as the years go by. Reassuring to know that the food supply for so many species is undiminished.

My apprenticeship as a fisherman has only just started, presumably at a time when the fish are all but gone. "Hope", however, "springs eternal". I will let the Editor know when and how I catch a good one.

Denzil Cowdry

## Estuarine and Coastal Strategies

Members may recall that when I wrote in the Autumn 2004 Newsletter, I dwelt at length upon the precarious situation at East Lane. Since then a great many tides have washed the cliffs and some preventative measures have been undertaken. As predicted these have been of the rock armour variety which, given the particularly soft character of the land to be protected, seem to be by no means a permanent solution. This said, the potential for the sea wall immediately south of East Lane Point and for the Martello Tower to tumble into the sea has been put "on hold" for now. Certainly the national press and television coverage of the state of the Suffolk Coastal Defences must have put the Environment Agency on its mettle and provided a focus for the attention of local and district councils. It may well have contributed to

what appears to be a change of heart over whether the Environment Agency would, after all, devote substantial funds to the protection of East Lane and the decision to secure East Lane Point. For this, no small credit goes to the East Lane Trust Initiative, which strenuously lobbied for the reinstatement of the withdrawn funding and came up with an independent strategy for protecting the land. The proposal is that three landowners in the area should each donate two acres of land to the common good. This land would be within the Bawdsey village envelope and planning permission would be sought for residential development. On the face of it this is a direct challenge to the local authority



planning guidance, not least in where the integrity of the local plan is concerned, and obviously would be seen to set a precedent.

Just as with the action of Mr Boggis and his digger at Easton Bavents, the grasping of the initiative is heartening and underlines a deeply-felt frustration with the apparent unwillingness or inability of central government agencies to respond adequately to imminent threat. I could not pretend to be completely abreast of the complexities of the criteria for how one cause attracts funds from a national budget over another; however I do understand that there is a point-scoring system, which is there to give a sense of compatibility for projects competing for support from the



same budget. However, what seems to happen now is that if priorities for spending that budget shift in an unpredictable way, such as when urban developments on river floodplains are inundated, the only way to adjust is to change the points system in favour of this new and more persuasive emergency.

This is precisely why East Lane suddenly lost its support and why a much more proactive approach by the local community to the ongoing estuary and coastal defence debate has arisen.

One beneficial effect is that our MP, John Selwyn Gummer has been prompted to call together community representatives from all of those areas affected by the development of the Environment Agency Coastal and Estuarine Strategies. These have been made manageable by being parcelled up as individual strategies and carried out on a one-by-one basis. However, as the picture emerges, it has become apparent that diagnoses of the problems and the proposed remedial measures proposed are pretty consistent from one area to the other. This is not surprising since the morphology of our coast is also pretty consistent. Consequently, under the banner of "Suffolk Coastal Against Retreat" (SCAR), a confederation of interests has been created to pool experience, collectively discuss the way forward in each particular area as it comes up for discussion and act together as a lobby group where appropriate. The membership of the group comprehensively represents the whole of the coast and each estuary between Dunwich and Felixstowe. Representing interests on the Deben are John White, Graham Henderson and Chris Slemmings of Felixstowe Ferry and myself on behalf of the River Deben Association.

Whilst initially sceptical of the "against retreat" title and the hint of naivety that this could imply, I am aware that this group will become a tremendous resource. Already

we have been able to exchange views and experience of the effects of offshore dredging on the stability of the foreshore, which otherwise would not have gone further than idle speculation.

Suddenly it seems that we have a lot to talk about except, for the time being on our own river. Here the publication of the Environment Agency's survey and proposed actions have been held back due to a delay in the satisfactory completion of the computer model of the behaviour of the river and an exploration of all of the "what if" situations. For those who attended the presentation of the Ore/Alde strategy document and the perceived case scenarios, including the suggestion of a failure of the sea defence at Slaughden, I think we can look forward to some challenging proposals, to which we should respond in a robust and informed manner. This means that, for the time being, we must concentrate upon ensuring that the River Deben Association can act as a catalyst in bringing together communities and interests along the river to respond effectively to the Estuarine Strategy proposals when they are published. It is essential for all of our members to understand that there will be ample opportunity to feed into the Environment Agency's deliberations during and after the roadshow events that will be used as a basis for publicly launching their findings.

Simon Read

## **Deben Watch**

On 27th November 2004, I was present at a meeting at which Deben Watch was launched. Deben Watch is an initiative of Bill and Kathryn Hughes of Waldringfield which is supported by Suffolk Constabulary, Suffolk Coastal District Council and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. Its purpose is to reduce boat crime of all sorts by improving

security and awareness.

*The main objectives are to:*

- Encourage boat owners to help both themselves and the police to prevent crime
- Establish through co-operation and communication a community spirit so that everyone can contribute to the protection of their own and other people's property
- Provide effective communication links between the police and scheme members so that information regarding suspicious persons/activities can be speedily circulated
- Facilitate catching those responsible for causing damage to moored boats to ensure that they are made accountable for their actions
- Raise the general awareness of the speed limits on the river and make boat owners more conscious of reducing speed, particularly through moorings
- Make everyone aware of local boat crime and make them more security conscious about their own boats and equipment

Boat owners are encouraged to register with local co-ordinators details of their boats and equipment, especially the serial numbers of electronic equipment. Further details on registration are available on [info@debenwatch.co.uk](mailto:info@debenwatch.co.uk)

*What role might RDA members play?*

It is up to individual boat owners to decide whether to register their details and serial numbers with their local co-ordinator. The police strongly advise them to do so since they are keen to track down stolen equipment. Registration costs £35.95 per boat to cover administrative expenses.

I was surprised at the meeting when Inspector Ben Cook of the Woodbridge Police said that he wanted everyone to report anything suspicious or law-breaking by dialing 999 as quickly as possible. He said that the police could only act

effectively on information about a crime if it was reported promptly. Two days after the event wasn't any good. So the message is quite clear: if you see children throwing stones at boats, or a boat going down-river when you know that the owner is somewhere else, don't hesitate to use the 999 service. The RDA has around 950 pairs of eyes, so we ought to be able to provide some useful information between us!

If you see two boats collide – and even the best of us sometimes gets it wrong – Deben Watch has produced a report form in which the incident can be recorded and most sailing clubs also have incident report forms. "Anti-Social Behaviour Report" forms, are also available from Suffolk Coastal with reply-paid envelopes: much slower, of course, than the 999 service.

The overall message from the meeting was that crime and petty damage on and beside the river is increasing and that it is up to all of us with an interest in the river to take whatever action we can to prevent it. So, if you see something which arouses your suspicion, or is clearly an example of anti-social behaviour, do not hesitate to use your mobile.

Ed Stanford

## **Annual Litter Collection 2004**

There are those that don't and those that do. I used to be one of the former but now I am one of the latter.

I use to make phone calls and talk to people and deliver bags and sacks, but two years ago I became one of those that do and took part in the litter pick with my young family. You may be surprised to learn that we really enjoyed it and found some interesting "litter". Apart from hundreds (well, tens anyway) of bottles, probably from capsized dinghies, we found someone's pot of ashes (empty). Last year was really exciting. My five-year-old found a wallet of substance and the owner was very relieved and thankful for its safe



return. We also gave him an RDA application form! This happy story brings a word of warning to boat folk. Don't put



valuables in a back pocket, even if it does have a velcro closure, especially if you're bouncing around in an inflatable. If you do, make sure your wallet is from Australia and it will float! Other teams, especially at Kyson, have found used bags belonging to dog owners.

I have many reliable "team leaders" to patrol the eighteen sections of the Deben, from Ufford down to the mouth of the river. Several deserve a mention by name this year and I would like to extend my thanks to them and their associations from all of the Committee and RDA members.

*In no particular order they are:*

**Richard Markham**  
*5th Woodbridge Sea Scouts*

**Mel Ringer**  
*Woodbridge School*

**Frank Pynn**  
**Mel Ringer**  
*DYC*

**Mike Ingham**  
*Martlesham Boatyard*

**Adrian Judge**  
*Wildfowlers*

**Alex Winterborne**  
*1st Kirton Sea Scouts*

**Richard Hare**

**Richard Riggs**

*Kyson Fairway Committee*

**Frances Matheson**

**Janet Downer**

*Woodbridge Cruising Club*

**Anna Hedington**

*Woodbridge Rowing Club*

If you would like to contribute to the litter pick (and I don't mean by throwing rubbish in the river!) we would love to hear from you nearer the time. Perhaps you are a member of an organisation that could muster a team together. I will write another something in the next Newsletter giving more details.

Meanwhile, if you see anything unsightly on the river, let me know and I will "make a phone call and talk to people"!

Jo Masters (01394 383825)

## **The Woodbridge & Melton Riverside Action Group**

The Action Group shares a good deal in common with the RDA: the desire to protect and enhance the long-term viability of the Riverside. The organisation has moved on from its simple beginnings to its second year with a democratically elected committee pressing hard to live up to the "Action" embodied in the name.

Of course discussion is important, but the emphasis is on rolling up sleeves and getting involved.

Issues being addressed have been selected by the membership and the wider public through an exhibition in the autumn of 2004 which attracted over 500 people. A professionally-conducted poll identified a priority list of issues that exercised greatest concern.

The top five form the basis of the Action

Group's first phase. They are "Whisstocks";

"Design Brief"; "Bass Dock"; "Quayside Link Road"; "Station Reed Bed".

Sub-committees are currently dealing with each.

Whisstocks is an on-going issue with a constant dialogue with the new owners to press for continuing marine-related activity on the site.

Design Brief (a general guide on local aspirations for guidance of developers and planners) is an extremely important area for discussion involving environmental and lifestyle issues for local workers, residents and visitors. Discussions are at an early stage to bring on board a mix of contributors to draw together existing planning guidance and new ideas on the managed development of the area over the long term.

Bass dock is more of a watching brief. The poll revealed the public hope that this waterfront "gem" would continue as a working dock with all its vitality intact.

The Reed Bed sub committee members are about to roll up their sleeves, literally, as the first part of a general tidy up. However, expert opinion has advised against major intervention to what is largely a self regulating reed bed. So apart from a gentle spring clean and litter pick, (and perhaps a sympathetically-placed information board later)

this is a case of "leave well alone" for the world to enjoy just as it is.

The Quayside Link Road wish-list seeks to

integrate through traffic with improved pedestrian access and usability in an attempt to "join" the town to its historic river-frontage. Some of the buildings skirting the road date from the 1400's and improved road design and architecture could greatly enhance enjoyment and pride in the area.

The Action Group has a tough job on its hands because of the number of central and local government agencies with jurisdiction over diverse areas. Nevertheless, engagement has been established and will be maintained over what may prove to be a long haul.

These current Action issues are simply the tip of the iceberg. They lie in a small part of the Group's overall area of interest which extends from Wilford Bridge to Kyson Point. The aims of the Group (to work for sustained vitality, without inappropriate development), will surely throw up new and challenging issues for years to come.

The Group needs support from as many people as possible who have the interests of Woodbridge and Melton's unique waterfront at heart. Consultation with our membership and the public at large is vital to give us a credible mandate for action.

We hope you might consider joining us. The cause is just and your support would be most welcome. The scale of our support obviously enhances our standing when dealing with decision-makers.

You can join us by sending a cheque for £10 (for expenses on room-hire, postage, printing etc) made payable to:

**WAMRAG**





**c/o the Treasurer,  
No 2 The Granary,  
Woodbridge IP12 1BY.**

Our website is:  
**www.woodbridgeriverside.co.uk**

Action Group Communications  
Committee

**Dear Sir,**

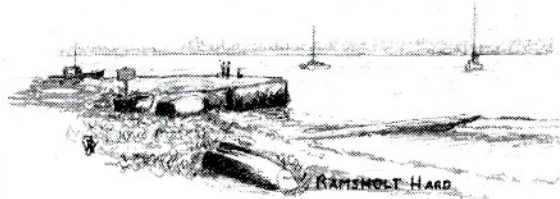
Ramsholt Landing Hard

There has been a long-standing "discussion" at Ramsholt Dock (ie the area around the "Ramsholt Arms") between the boat-owners and the landowners, the Trustees of the Bawdsey Estate, about the fee paid for dinghies kept in the dinghy parking area and on the foreshore. About 140 boat owners pay the Bawdsey Estate £40 per year, but many boat owners don't pay anything. This fee has been paid for about twenty years, but the Bawdsey Estate has never paid to maintain the Landing Hard as this has always been undertaken and paid-for by the boat owners.

The agent of the Bawdsey Estate has in recent years started to talk about also charging an extra fee to boat owners, on top of the dinghy parking, for the use of the landing hard, to raise more revenue.

Since the public have used this Hard, probably since the late eighteenth century (and no doubt before), free of charge without having to ask for permission, I approached the Suffolk County Council. To start with, the SCC were very helpful and said that if I applied it could become a public footpath from in front of the "Ramsholt Arms" down to the low water mark on the landing hard. The landowners resisted the attempt to have it acknowledged as a public footpath and managed to get the SCC to do a complete turn-around. The SCC legal department turned down the request because it was suggested that "boat owners were not part of the general public".

In order to make an appeal against this decision I engaged Johann Wylly, of Mill & Reeve, who specialises in this type of case. Mr Wylly seems very confident that the SCC have made a misrepresentation and that the four different landowners over the last two hundred years had already long acknowledged that the public has the



right to land and walk here. However I am faced with the cost of preparing for this appeal and fighting it through for the benefit of everyone including boat owners on the East Coast. The Ramsholt Fairway Committee has agreed to help with some of the cost of the appeal and hopefully other organisations and individuals will continue to do the same. Thank you to the RDA for £400 towards the £3,879 cost of lodging for an appeal.

Written evidence is needed from members of the public who have always used the path to the Landing Hard without asking permission, not necessarily for boating eg. just walking or taking a dog or horse, crabbing or painting etc

Yours faithfully,

Robert Simper

*[Chairman's Note: The RDA is vigilant in ensuring that access to the river is uninterrupted. For this reason we have supported Mr Simper, Ramsholt Parish Council and the Fairway Committee in seeking to ensure that access via the ferry landing is unrestricted. The Trustees of the Adeane Estate verbally assure me that they have no intention of restricting access, not least because of the effect it would have on takings at the Ramsholt Arms. Nevertheless, the RDA believes that the formal acknowledgement of a public footpath would be desirable as the only*

way to be sure of free access in the future. It should be noticed that early maps of the area do show a public footpath to the ferry landing.

If you would like to add your voice to those already expressed, the appropriate forms are available from Rosemary Schlee (address on inside front cover). Completed ones should be returned to Robert Simper (address on inside front cover).]

**Dear Sir,**

Walking our dog recently by the river, I was interested to see expanded polystyrene sheet being fitted as cladding round the wooden piles supporting the Deben Yacht Club's clubhouse. As the tide rose, the off-cuts and waste pieces of polystyrene began to float and were sailing off merrily down-river, driven by a gentle easterly breeze. I nipped round the front of the clubhouse and politely pointed out to the workmen who were having their lunch what was happening and how it would take several decades for the plastic to degrade. One of them came out and started

collecting the bits he could reach but could not do much about the rest as he didn't know how to row.

I passed the information to Eversons boatyard and all credit goes to young Peter who left his lunch and rowed out to collect the remaining pieces. By then I'd been willed away by an impatient dog but I asked Peter later what the response had been.

" Oh, the bloke said he didn't realize it was such a big deal ! "

A short walk along the litter-strewn Bawdsey foreshore would enlighten him!

Peter Clay

*[Editor's note: the "young Peter" of Peter Clay's letter is Peter Ulph who will soon be joining the Royal Navy where his boating skills will continue to be useful. Thanks for your effort and good luck with your new career!]*

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## R.D.A Accounts (2004-5)

Notes to the accounts:

1. Subscriptions: The subscription income has increase substantially in 2004 to £2613. This was due to the increase in the subscriptions authorised by the Annual Meeting in April 2003. However there are still a number of members who either have not paid or have not paid the full amount.
2. The subscription income that the membership represents was £3341. . The association is grateful for the generous donations paid by some supporters.
3. Statements will again be sent to members this year in April.
4. The committee agreed to support the Tide Mill Trust in their application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant. This commitment is included in the accounts
5. The cost of the News Letter has been contained this year.
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 as well as the amount paid. The subscription rates due in 2005 are: Single £4, Couple £6 and Association £15.
7. The entry under PABA is a fund that the Association undertook to hold on behalf of a number of organisations to provide a service to curb anti social behaviour on the river. It was found that there were technical reasons that prevented the project from proceeding resulting in it being abandoned. The money is being refunded. There was no net cost to the Association.



**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**

		2004		2003	
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Income</b>					
Subscriptions	3,013			1,348	
Donations	562			289	
Gift From Swimmers	366			-	
Other	10			-	
Bank net interest	166			112	
Arrears of subscription paid	264			100	
		4,381			1,849
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Postage	396			463	
Offices services/stationary	123			48	
Newsletters	924			1,326	
Other Printing	156			342	
Hire of hall/meeting room	123			70	
Printer Cost	15			-	
Meeting costs	5			1	
Insurance	190			190	
Civic Trust	175			175	
Other	73			-	
Tide Mill Trust	400			500	
Suffolk Coastal District Council				900	
		2,579			4,015
<b>Excess of income over expenditure</b>			1,802		- 2,166

**BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2004**

<b>Assets</b>			
Bank	10,697		8,488
Cash	31	10,728	37
<b>Less Liabilities</b>			
<b>Creditors</b>			
Advance Subscriptions	104		304
Tide Mill Trust	400		-
General Creditors	50		-
PABA Account	150	704	-
<b>Net Assets</b>		<b>10,024</b>	<b>8,222</b>
<b>representing</b>			
Balance brought forward	8,222		10,388
Excess of Income	1,802		2,166
<b>Balance carried forward</b>		<b>10,024</b>	<b>8,222</b>

*C J L Brown*  
C J L Brown (Hon Treasurer)

I have examined the papers and vouchers of the association for the year ended 31 December 2004 and confirm that the above income and expenditure account and the balance sheet are in accordance therewith.

*T. J. Moorby*  
T J Moorby, Chartered Accountant (Hon Ind Examiner)  
Spinney Hill, Fitzgerald Road, Woodbridge

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Woodbridge Community Hall

**On Friday 22nd April 2005 at 7.30pm**

## AGENDA:

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the AGM 2004.
3. Matters arising.
4. Chairman's report.
5. Treasurer's report.
6. Election of officers: the following are willing to stand for re-election: Ed Stanford - Chairman, Chris Brown - Treasurer and Wendy Brown - secretary.
7. Election of committee: Following retirement by rotation Rosemary Schlee, Paul Lacey, Simon Read and Anne Moore are willing to stand for re-election.
8. Election of auditor.
9. AOB.

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 the AGM and must carry the candidate's written consent to nomination.

*Following an interval with refreshments*

**Mr. Glen Cooper of English Nature will talk on**

**CONSERVATION DESIGNATIONS**

*SSSI, AONB and Ramsar - what do they mean for the River Deben?*