

**RIVER DEBEN
ASSOCIATION**

**Spring 2007
NEWSLETTER**

No: 34

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

September 2006

- Chairman** Ed Stanford, 21 Ipswich Road, Woodbridge IP12 4BS
01394 386362 maryedstanford@aol.com
- Vice Chairman and History** 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 cjlbrown@onetel.net
- Secretary** Wendy Brown, 4 June Avenue, Ipswich. IP1 4LT
01473 259674 cjlbrown@onetel.net
- 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
- Felixstowe Ferry** Leigh Belcham 45A Western Avenue, Felixstowe, IP11 9SL
01394 285674 lbelcham1@aol.com
- Rowing** Paul Lacey, 4 The Granary, Tidemill Way, Woodbridge IP12 1BY
01394 386481 lacey.paul@virgin.net
- Wildfowlers** Adrian Judge, 29 Bredfield Street, Woodbridge IP12 4NH
01394 383350 adrianjudge@keme.co.uk
- Other Members** Denzil Cowdry, The Mews House, 105 New Street, Woodbridge. IP12 1DZ
01394 383625 faycowdry@hotmail.com
- Simon Read, Barge Jacoba, Robertson's Boat Yard, Lime Kiln Quay,
Woodbridge IP12 1BD
01394 384060 jacoba@simonread.demon.co.uk
- Anne Moore, 2 Grundisburgh Road, Woodbridge IP12 4HG
01394 383559
- Jo Masters, 2 Fayrefield Road, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1NX
01394 383825 familyhillhouse@aol.com

Editorial

Welcome to the
spring edition
of the
Newsletter!
The mild



weather, and the steady rain outside my editorial window, suggest that we have a glorious season to look forward to. Perhaps our mild winters will persuade some of our boat-owners to abandon the seasonal migrations of their boats from river to land to river. I am not such a boat-lover that I can't admire the river when it is free of them. Nature, however, still has the capacity to reassert itself in the shape of a great freeze, or a hurricane, and then there'll be a great nodding of wise heads on the "hards" and much note-taking by our correspondent, Denzil Cowdry. I am delighted, by the way, to report Denzil's offer of a regular, salty, gossip-column, in "News From the Hard", the first of which appears today. He also does sterling work on this Newsletter, as assistant editor, which I have never been gracious enough to acknowledge.

And . . . while on the subject of ungraciousness . . . when did I last thank Ron Wragg for his illustrations? They are given freely and promptly for each edition of this Newsletter, and I am grateful to him. They are often infected by Ron's gentle humour which must be a pleasant relief to you from the hectoring and bludgeoning administered by your committee.

Denzil's own report, in this edition, set me to thinking how un-parochial and broad-minded is the River Deben Association. He describes a small boat, lying in Robertsons yard at Melton, which had arrived from the West Coast of America by way of Cape Horn and was soon to

embark for Australia. When you watch the regular rise and fall of the tide on the Deben, reflect, sometime, on how it connects us to the wider world and forces us to confront it. Simon Read's summary of, and reflections on, Tim O'Riordan's talk after the last meeting, are so un-parochial that they transport us to the Amazon River and the tundra belt of Siberia! This is no parish news-sheet! Luckily, Simon seems as capable of negotiating the extreme shallows of our own, home-grown, "bureaucrat-speak" ("Risk management strategies"; "Adaptation Toolkits"; "Wellbeing Power") as he is of steering Jacoba through such muddy shallows in the Deben, and we must be grateful that someone is prepared to deal with the fidgety bureaucracies that produce it and exercise - largely unaccountably - such control over our lives.

I am delighted too . . . (there are so many delights to this job that I never cease to wonder that I should still be in it, completely unchallenged) . . . delighted, as I said, to welcome back Jenny James with her contribution on Deben nightingales. These are not narrow, parochial, birds either, as Jenny reminds us, but migrate to us from tropical Africa. We may take a parochial delight in the fact that we are getting more and more of them when everyone else in Britain seems to be getting fewer and fewer. But that would be an ignoble and unworthy sentiment. Instead of which, you will be interested to discover the gender of the nightingales you hear on the Sutton bank of the Deben and the sentiments being expressed by the ones you hear in late-May. I won't tell you what these are. You must read about them in Jenny's characteristically absorbing and well-researched article.

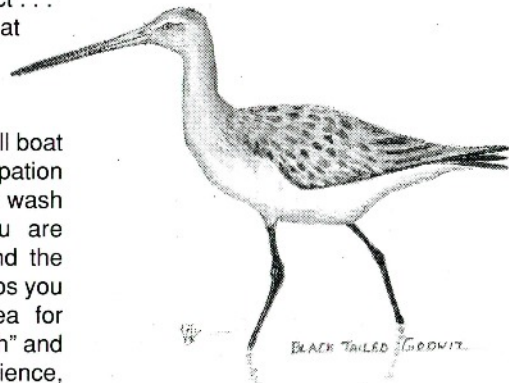
Our Deben historian, Robert Simper, has produced another little gem for us in the form of an article about an old boat in his back shed. It links us, through Robert's literary magic, to the fascinating world of the nineteenth-century Deben pilots.

Our Chairman's report is redolent of the quiet and understated frustrations of an active member of our community as he tries to stir our elected representatives, their agencies and servants - and the public itself - into useful activity on behalf of the river. The tell-tale signs are: "To summarise a long debate . . . there was no agreement"; "There was no agreement on these two suggestions . . ."; "The project moves forward rather slowly . . ."; "I have a sizeable file on this subject . . ." Remember, dear RDA member, that his concerns for the River Deben are your concerns too if you ever walk along its banks expecting paths still to be there, or take a small boat out on it with a reasonable anticipation that you will not be capsized by the wash of a speeding powerboat. If you are concerned about such matters, and the security of boats on the river, perhaps you might take note, also, of his plea for someone to take over "Deben Watch" and for someone else, with legal experience, to help advise on the Sutton shore footpath (and other) issues.

There is much that can be done with your help. If you can't actively help, please take note of the good work that your River Deben Association is doing and support its growth as an important pressure-group for the Deben. You can do this by encouraging new members; by making sure that your own membership is up-to-date, and by coming to the AGM on 27th April, as announced on the back cover of this Newsletter.

More contributions to the Newsletter, in the form of articles and letters, are always welcome, especially when attached to an e-mail to the editor. The quality of what is submitted to the Newsletter is rarely short of excellence. The editor doesn't remember the last time he rejected a contribution, and he has never done more than the mildest of editing. His biggest problem is normally in shutting himself up . . .

Nick Wright



This bird's beak intruding into my editorial reminds me to draw your attention to the new RSPB panels erected on the riverside, Woobridge, on 12th December.

James Bidwell, The Mayor, officiated and the RDA was well-represented

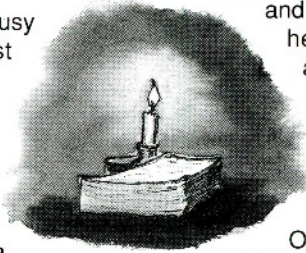
Chairman's Notes

We have had our usual busy time since the last newsletter.

Those who attended the lecture by Professor Tim O'Riordan at the Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club in October heard a most interesting talk on climate change and its likely effects on coastal processes. Simon Read has summarised the talk elsewhere in this newsletter. Tim O'Riordan contributed to the Stern Report on the economic consequences of climate change which sets out a view of the manifold consequences of climate change, not just on coasts, but also on water supply, agriculture and most other areas of human activity. There may be room for debate about the precise drivers of climate change but there is little about the medium and long-term effects. Is your house at least one metre above the current High Water Springs level?

At the end of November, the RDA in association with Suffolk Coast and Heaths organised a meeting at Waldringfield village hall to discuss the tricky problem of excessive speed on the river. We had the benefit of contributions from Brightlingsea Harbour Authority, Clacton Watersports Club, the Hamford Water Management Committee and Suffolk Constabulary, as well as representatives from sailing clubs, fairway committees and boatyards.

To summarise a long debate (a copy of the record is available from the Secretary), there was no agreement that there was a problem with speeding such that any new measures needed to be considered. At the river mouth it is a



different story where the jet-skiers and kite-surfers cause problems for residents and yachtsmen alike. The solution here is that the police have agreed to have a presence at the ferry during summer weekends and at bank holidays to "have a word" with any who behave thoughtlessly.

On the river itself, it was suggested by me that a four-knot speed limit through the anchorages and an increase in the size and relocation of the speed limit signs would be useful steps. There was no agreement on these two suggestions. Suffolk Coast and Heaths considered that there might be some specific problems in particular parts of the river which should be reviewed and they proposed setting up some small meetings of local people to look into these further. No final arrangements for this have yet been made.

In any event, I would encourage all members of the RDA to watch out for examples of thoughtless behaviour on the river and be prepared to report it, either to me or to Mr Bill Parker at Suffolk Coast and Heaths (bill.parker@suffolkcc.gov.uk). The police are prepared to follow up well-authenticated complaints, but this does presuppose that good evidence is always available: a video for example or several people witnessing the same event. You probably don't need reminding that sailing club safety boats are exempt from this. It is also the case that the speed limits only apply between the beginning of May and the end of September.

You may be wondering what is happening on our project to protect the salt-marsh on the Sutton shore, opposite the Tide-Mill. The project moves forward rather slowly but progress is being made. We have

established that the ferry landing and the footpath to the shore almost certainly belong to Suffolk Coastal. They may be prepared to grant us a licence to do some restoration of the footpath provided that any work is approved, inter alia, by Natural England and the Environment Agency. The key point is that it is much easier to repair an existing structure than to work something up from scratch. We also know that an essential precursor would be an Environmental Impact Assessment which we would have to commission.

In case you missed it: Natural England was set up in October last year as the Government body responsible for the protection of England's natural environment. It is made up of the former English Nature (the guardian of SSSIs in particular), that part of the Rural Development Service concerned with agri-development (horrible term) and the Countryside Agency's landscape, access and recreation division. In time it should become a very powerful voice on all matters to do with the natural environment.

I should draw your attention to two matters financial. The Treasurer told a recent committee-meeting that there are numbers of members who are still paying

their subs at the old rate. There are others who have forgotten to pay altogether. He will be sending letters to those in default but would much appreciate it if members could pay their subs when they fall due and without further prompting!

At the same committee-meeting we had an extended debate about whether the RDA should become a Charity which would enable us to get a rebate on your sub of 20p in the pound. The increasingly demanding regime from the Charity Commissioners and the small sums involved led us to the conclusion that the required effort would not be justified. If you have a view on this, please come to the AGM (see outside back cover) and let us have your opinion. I have a seizeable file on the subject.

Finally, whether you are sailing, swimming, angling, canoeing, bird-watching, shooting or just strolling, I hope that you will enjoy our beautiful river to the full during the coming months.

Ed Stanford

Post script: Is any member of the RDA a solicitor, practising or retired, who might be prepared to give me some advice on matters to do with insurance? We only need general guidance at this stage. E.S



STOP PRESS: It is now confirmed that the Ramsholt Ferry landing and the footpath leading to it are part of a public footpath.

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31ST 2006

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

	2006		2005	
	£	£	£	£
Income				
Subscriptions	2,723		2,541	
Donations	400		336	
Sutton Shore Project	250			
Gift from Walkers			664	
Bank interest	288		220	
Other			3	
Dividend			30	
PABA Consolidation	150			3,794
		3,811		
Expenditure				
Postage	269		294	
Offices services/stationary	99		107	
Newsletters	780		841	
Other Printing	9		10	
Hire of hall/meeting room	55		107	
Meeting costs	221		30	
Insurance	-		190	
Civic Trust	175		175	
Other	5		76	
Woodbridge Regatta	250			
Support for Ramsholt Access	294		1,062	
Bank Charges	15		13	
Web Page	150			
		2,322		2,905
Excess of income over expenditure		<u>£ 1,489</u>		<u>£ 889</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2005

Assets				
Bank	12,572		11,232	
Cash	73	12,645	48	11,280
Less Liabilities				
Creditors				
Advance Subscriptions	68		66	
General Creditors	174		151	
PABA Account		242	150	367
Net Assets		<u>£ 12,403</u>		<u>£ 10,913</u>
Representing				
Balance brought forward	10,913		10,024	
Excess of Income	1,490		889	
Balance carried forward		<u>£ 12,403</u>		<u>£ 10,913</u>

C.J.L. Brown

22 Feb 07.

C.J.L. Brown (Hon Treasurer)

I have examined the papers and vouchers of the association for the year ended 31 December 2005 and confirm that the above income and expenditure account and the balance sheet are in accordance therewith.

T.J. Moorby

22.2.07

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

Notes to the accounts:

1. Subscriptions: The subscription income in 2006 was £2723. This was an increase on last year. About 20% of members are still not paying the increased subscriptions approved for 2004.

2. The subscription income that the membership contributes was £3052. The Association is grateful for the generous donations paid by some supporters.

3. Statements will again be sent to members this year in April. These will show how the last subscription was paid so that any action to ensure the correct payment this year should be clear.

4. 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 if that is not correct. **The Association is not able to change standing orders of members.**

The subscription rates due in 2006 are: Single Member £4, Couple £6 and Association £15.

6. The contribution from the Suffolk County council of £250 is towards the work proposed on the salt marsh opposite the Tide Mill yacht harbour.



Tim O’Riordan talk, 27th October at Felixstowe Ferry

Tim O’Riordan is currently serving as a member of the Government’s Sustainable Development Commission and, although now retired from being Professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia, he remains deeply involved with the work carried on there through his collaboration with the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change. Together their task is to explore ways in which, through government policy, it might be possible to safeguard the future of our culture by mitigating the effects of an increasingly volatile nature. It is not often that we have the opportunity to benefit from the insights of someone who is able to discuss with authority a matter that so directly affects our landscape, livelihoods and security.

As he put it, Tim wished to “talk from the heart”, and in a deceptively conversational manner, he proceeded to give a stark prognosis of the predicament that we are getting ourselves into and shared some thoughts upon how this may be addressed. His interest lies in the way that the coast represents one of the critical spaces between society and natural processes. However, before picking up this theme, he gave us a short and salutary summary of some basic projections. With particular reference to the recent publication of the Stern Report on the economic effects of climate change, he emphasised the prediction that if society carries on in a “business as normal” mode, making no allowance or preparation to mitigate the effects of climate change and the eventual downturn of fossil fuel supply, it will experience an economic depression five times greater than that of the 1920s.

Although between them the United States and China may be responsible for 50% of

CO₂, this is not a reason why, as a comparatively low offender, weighing-in at 3% of all global greenhouse gas emissions, it does not behove us to set a good example. Indeed, being a post-industrial society, it is no wonder that we produce so relatively little because new industrial powers such as China and India are now doing the dirty work for us. Taken within the framework of sustainability, our lifestyle is unacceptable. Whether the effects of our behaviour impact hugely upon the global picture or not, it must be remembered that the relationship between producer and consumer nations is symbiotic and restraint in the west is certain to be felt in the east.

It is now clear that, without a change of heart, we could face an average 3-degree temperature rise by 2075. Some fundamental facts are that, when the great glaciers melt, they not only raise the sea level, but also deprive major river basins of feedstock water. One example of this is the Amazon basin, which is exhibiting signs of stress and starting to dry out, with the effect that its capacity to recycle water and absorb CO₂ will become greatly diminished. Another is the effect of the warming of the great tundra belts of Canada and Siberia, which will release methane into the atmosphere from their unfrozen boglands. These are clear indicators that something is amiss on a global scale and, if it continues, there is the potential of a “positive feedback” situation that could accelerate beyond our ability to predict its outcome. Our understanding from Tim is that, although we still may not yet be at the tipping-point where this is likely to happen, we are getting close. The certainty is that poor human stewardship is central to this and

that the only responsible action we can undertake, as custodians, is to moderate our behaviour.

Back on the coast, the manifestation of the problem could be a 0.35-0.5-metre sea level rise by the period 2050-2075. Although at first sight, this may not seem catastrophic and is a "best guess", what must be factored in is an increase in the incidence of extreme weather events, such as storms. This will exacerbate the likelihood of flooding in and around those areas not already lost to the sea. The Government's response is to explore "risk management" strategies that on the best scientific advice will provide guidance for future coastline change. Of course this is bound to be fraught with contradiction. Opinion is beginning to harden around a commitment by Government to defend for a limited time only those areas under threat from either inundation or erosion in order to establish breathing space for policy to be defined and accepted by those communities most at risk.

The term "risk management" appears as a substitute for "flood defence" in DEFRA's "Making Space for Water" policy document 2005. This implies a tacit acceptance of the inevitable. It is due to be followed by another "risk-based study", the upcoming "Shoreline Management Plan" which will emphasise the strong likelihood of future danger for coastal communities. The conclusion has been reached that it is neither economic nor sustainable to carry out a "hold the line" strategy for all sites. The perception is that, if this kind of protection were undertaken, the whole system would not only become prohibitively costly but would also end up disrupting the very coastal processes upon which a dynamic equilibrium depends. This is a tough situation that, given the sheer number of

substantial settlements on our coast, does not easily lend itself to the comprehensive application of the principle of sustainability.

The move to a "no active intervention" or "managed realignment" policy has made the relationship with stakeholder communities fraught. Having denied the automatic right for land to be protected, it has also become clear that because of the likelihood of detrimental effects further along the coast, it is highly controversial for landowners to take matters into their own hands and to build their own defences. This has provoked an extreme sense of betrayal on the part of some coastal and estuarine landowners. To regain trust, national agencies now have the responsibility to develop effective adaptation strategies for communities. Although this is still very much in its infancy, there is the awareness that thought must be given to easing the process of relocation, designing houses that will accommodate periodic flooding and, lastly, the need to recognise that a reconfigured coastline should be accepted as an asset.

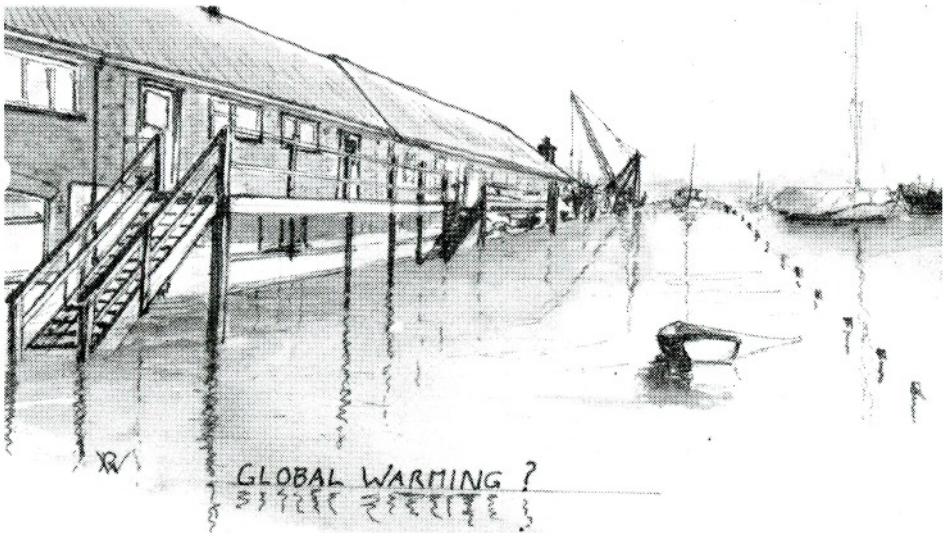
The reality is, however, that those agencies responsible for addressing the coastal and estuarine environment have devoted most of their efforts to structural and ecological analyses and to identifying future management strategies. They have not given sufficient regard to the immediate and long-term impacts upon communities. This is an issue that Tim has recently explored in collaboration with the team at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of East Anglia. This is in a report commissioned by English Nature called "Designing a Sustainable and Ecologically Resilient Coastline for Norfolk and Suffolk". Within this document

there is reference to the intriguing proposal by DEFRA of an "Adaptation Toolkit" to address the societal impacts of coastal change. With regard to this, it recommends that English Nature - or "Natural England" as it has become - has the obligation in future to be more proactive in fostering policies that take into account the community perspective.

Although the principle of adaptation has been established, it is unclear what form this could take. Under consideration are ways in which the financial impacts of coastal change upon communities might be alleviated, such as the possible use of a means known as "Wellbeing Power". This would be a mechanism for local government to form managerial and financing arrangements to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their communities. The issue of compensation is also being considered for those communities displaced or properties lost as a direct result of the application of coastal policies. However, it is predictable that this will be a matter of dispute since the term "sustainability" is

bound to come under scrutiny in the issue of whether a site is surrendered to the sea because it is unsustainable, or is deliberately allowed to be lost as part of a wider scheme. Although there should be little to distinguish between a coastal community that will lose its land due to a decision to carry out a managed realignment exercise and, say, a settlement displaced by a new reservoir; even the most cursory examination reveals the potential to become bogged down in perceived liabilities and the definition in law of the distinctions between the words, "avoidable" and "inevitable". Nevertheless, it is reassuring that as a national application of a European initiative, the potential of compensation on a national, local and private level is being actively explored.

An element of any mitigation policy must be the creation of new sustainable communities and in Tim's view this must be on a national level. However, he was at pains to point out the present inadequacy of the planning system to deal with coastal and estuarine change and that



although responsibilities lie with local authorities, the existing planning policy guidelines do not address the need to control development in endangered areas. The only caution here may well be one pragmatically imposed by the insurance industry on the basis of the liability associated with owning property situated below mean high water. Suddenly to realise that your assets have become valueless due to their location comes as a huge shock and this is one immediate dilemma that must be addressed. For the future, the principle behind "adaptation" is that building in an area of known risk will simply not happen and this will be enshrined in the Local Development Framework. The aim is for the creation of a new approach to planning which will incorporate area action plans for coastal districts that will subsequently be central to the process of redesigning our coasts.

By way of summary, Tim reminded us that our environmental duty is one of stewardship. Locally we can see what happens if nature is pushed beyond its limits, when topsoil is lost through intensive farming practices. The novel concept of having a "carbon footprint" together with the awareness that all of our actions have some kind of impact demands a heightened sense of individual responsibility for the environment.

This sense of responsibility also extends to our political behaviour. We live in a participatory democracy and, especially where we are confronted by new and unfamiliar challenges, we should be aware that informed opinion is vital in the process of establishing the debate for the future.

Sounding a valedictory note, Tim

emphasised that if climate change is to be approached with determination, it should be expected that at the outset this will be very hard and will need preparing for. The emergence of a new world will not be possible without a new cultural perception of the world.

Provoked by Tim's presentation, there was some sceptical response from the floor. Even if unpromisingly at first sight of the "flat earth" variety, it nevertheless represents the continuity of a place through people's contact with it and underscores the importance in this debate of a sense of belonging. It was appropriate that we were meeting at Felixstowe Ferry where fishermen daily have first-hand experience of climate and are often in best position to say whether predictions of the movement of this shoal or that bank are correct or not. When a long-time denizen of Felixstowe Ferry afterwards said to me "We have both sets of teeth down here!" I was forcibly reminded of George Crabbe's lines in his poem, "The Borough", describing the inhabitants of Aldeburgh as:

A wild and amphibious race
With sullen woe displayed in every face;
Who far from civil arts and social fly,
And scowl at strangers with suspicious eye.

The determined independence of a community that knows its own patch need not be seen in opposition to a considered scientific opinion that can articulate the wider implications of local circumstance. Together they represent the kind of symbiosis that must be fostered if real partnerships can develop between the frequently disparate voices of knowledge and direct experience.

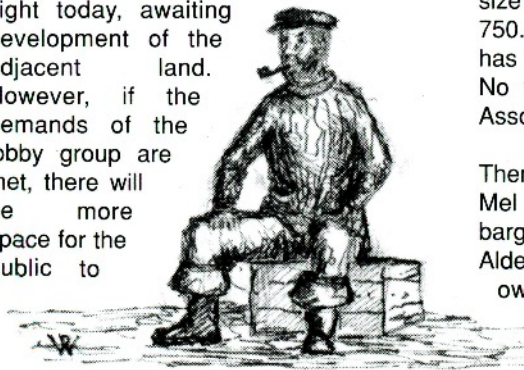
Simon Read

NEWS FROM THE HARD

The title of this new, perhaps regular, contribution to the Newsletter is an admitted plagiarism. Doing some family history research in Brightlingsea museum, I came across some hundred-year-old Parish Magazines with a similar column. Typically there were comments such as:

"YACHTING – The River Colne has presented a remarkably fine show of yachts, both steam and sailing craft, in the course of the last month, prominent amongst them being the splendid American SY Venadis, 1,283 tons. With fully the average number of yachts in commission, we don't think there are many of our yachtsmen without a berth." In those days Brightlingsea lived off fishing and yachting, so the gossip from the hard mattered a lot.

No doubt the Whisstocks hard in Woodbridge, reputedly the longest, best equipped and deepest on the East Coast, occasioned a similar interest. Here the talk would have been about barges, freight rates, crops, vessels under construction and timber supplies, as well as about yachts. Well covered with mud, the hard is a sad, inactive, sight today, awaiting development of the adjacent land. However, if the demands of the lobby group are met, there will be more space for the public to



congregate at the top of the old hard, to gossip and enjoy the river in all its moods. The tide-mill may even be working again by then, if present plans are fulfilled. Great credit has to be given to those who have worked so hard for restoration funding. Without attention, the piles supporting the mill would assuredly have slipped away in one of our ever-increasing high tides.

A twenty-first century columnist is going to have difficulty in competing with the glories and interests of the past: but let us see what we can find.

Those with a good knowledge of the river will be able to count eight hard (as distinct from launching ramps) as they proceed in the mind's eye from Felixstowe up to Melton Bridge. Try it. Some are used more than others these days, but none is without interest. Rather than run on, I will just visit a couple at the top of the river - this time - and leave the others for later.

The first thought to seize my attention was the ever-increasing number of boats wintering at Larkmans and the Melton Boat Yard (surely soon to be called "Skeets"). Five years ago, I walked all the yards above Ramsholt and counted the number of sailing, and motor-boats of a size enough to make tea on. There were 750. At the top of the river alone, there has been an increase of more than 20%. No wonder we need the River Deben Association to harmonise interests!

There are some exciting boats too. On Mel Skeet's slip was the beautiful half barge- yacht, recently rebuilt up in the Alde on its original 1880 frames. The owner was out in the early spring weather, attending to his gear. Stored a hundred yards away was the modern motor adventurer, Kiwi,

a Solent 40, built with a bluff bow like a Grand Banks fisherman. The Canadian owner had phoned from Portugal, en route from the West Coast of America via Cape Horn, to "little old" Woodbridge. No call again until he was off Robertsons! Next stop: Australia. So we can still compete with the Colne news of a hundred years ago.

Fred and Stephen Larkman are serious sailors on their own account: never mind all those boats they look after and service so well. They will be out in their lively, varnished, thirty-footer again this year. Built in Finland and rescued by the Larkmans from the South Coast, the boat draws two metres. Good job they started in Cadets and thus know every centimetre of mud! If customers leave them alone, they will do "Sail East". Tempus fugit. Wait for it – rumour has it that the elder brother has been on a cruise ship recently.

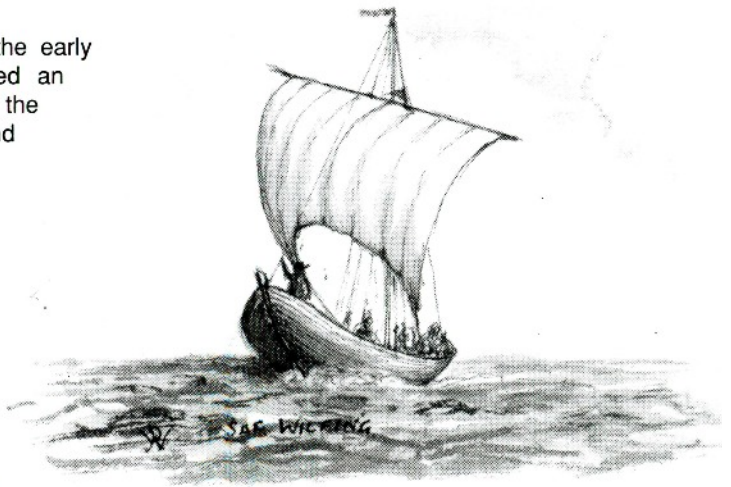
There are a number of other distinguished and versatile Deben yachtsmen who are reporting back from vessels from 7,000 tons up, but I am too kind to mention their names. That strong Deben ebb seems to want us to travel widely!

It was half-tide when the early February storm reached an afternoon peak. Despite the shortness of the send across the river from a westerly wind, two open boats were swamped at their moorings and sank. At least the two moorings held, since both belonged to responsible fishermen. Not all the Deben moorings

are in such a good state. Standard chain rusts away with surprising rapidity above the mud in our warm, shallow, fast-moving, waters (perhaps well-oxygenated). The men on the hards recommend a thorough check every three years at least. One Woodbridge mooring parted in the February blow, prompting a quick start of Everson's work-boat.

Mention of Everson's Yard leads me to regret the loss of a life in the river on Christmas Eve. Sadly, making his way back from the jetty to his live-aboard yacht, Colin Parish slipped into the mud whilst stepping into his dinghy. He was a careful man and it is difficult to appreciate how such a thing could happen. The river does claim a life about every ten years, so, in the modern idiom, take care until the next issue, and beyond.

Denzil Cowdry



THE WOODBRIDGE PILOT'S BOAT

The year 1877 must have been a good one for the Woodbridge pilot, Sam Marsh, because his son Edward was born and he had a new boat built, appropriately named the Teddy. Barge traffic on the River Deben up to the small port of Woodbridge was fairly constant in those days.

The beautiful Deben estuary was not an easy river for barges because of its dangerous bar of shingle at the entrance. Every month between fifteen and twenty barges came in and there was also the occasional schooner or even small square-rigger bringing timber from Scandinavia to the quays at Woodbridge about seven miles inland. The upper reaches are narrow and have a twisting channel that made sailing difficult in a head-wind. Sometimes barges went to three wharves above the town, which was even more difficult with a loaded barge.

The barge skipper, Harold Smy, who came here as a young man in the 1920s, told me that it had not been a problem to get up to Wilford Wharf in Melton, the very top wharf, because the pilots were particularly good at coaxing the deeply-loaded barges up the narrow channel.

All the Deben pilots were licensed Trinity House men. There were six at Felixstowe Ferry who brought the craft in over the bar and two at Woodbridge who piloted them on the upper reaches. The pilots' records at Felixstowe Ferry show that most barges spent about two weeks in the river, although sometimes they were out again in as little as four days.

The Woodbridge pilots used to be told by the merchant when to expect a barge.

They then watched out with a telescope for a barge's tops'l from a vantage-point in Woodbridge. When they saw a tops'l come in over the bar they started to row down to meet the barge as it came up. To do this they had to be able to get away in a shallow draught boat from Woodbridge at any state of the tide and get as far down river as possible, quickly.

These were the conditions that the Teddy was built for in Lower Brook Street, Woodbridge, in the mid-Victorian period. The clinker hull is 12ft (366cm) long with a 3ft 10in (118cm) beam and the hull is only 1ft 4in (40cm) deep: in fact a typical mid-Victorian rowing skiff. A functional craft that could be rowed very fast by one or two men. Barge traffic to Woodbridge petered-out in the 1920s and Sam's son, Ted Marsh and Nelson Oxborrow picked up a living as watermen. They used the Teddy to go down river about six miles to the Blackstakes Reach and go eel "pitching", using a long pole with a fork on the end. Ted Marsh used to like to row back up river because at least this was one way of keeping warm.

After World War II, Ted Marsh, then an elderly man, worked as a rigger for Whisstocks Boatyard and Frank Knights, a young shipwright just out of the Royal Navy, became the Woodbridge pilot. There was by then no commercial work and only the occasional yacht needed guiding up.

Once Frank and Christine Knights took the Teddy on a trip down to Felixstowe Ferry and got the tide wrong. They met the young flood at Ramsholt, so the last part of the trip was very hard work. However, they still managed to get back to Woodbridge. By then the Teddy was over seventy years old and had several patches so that Frank, who loves keeping

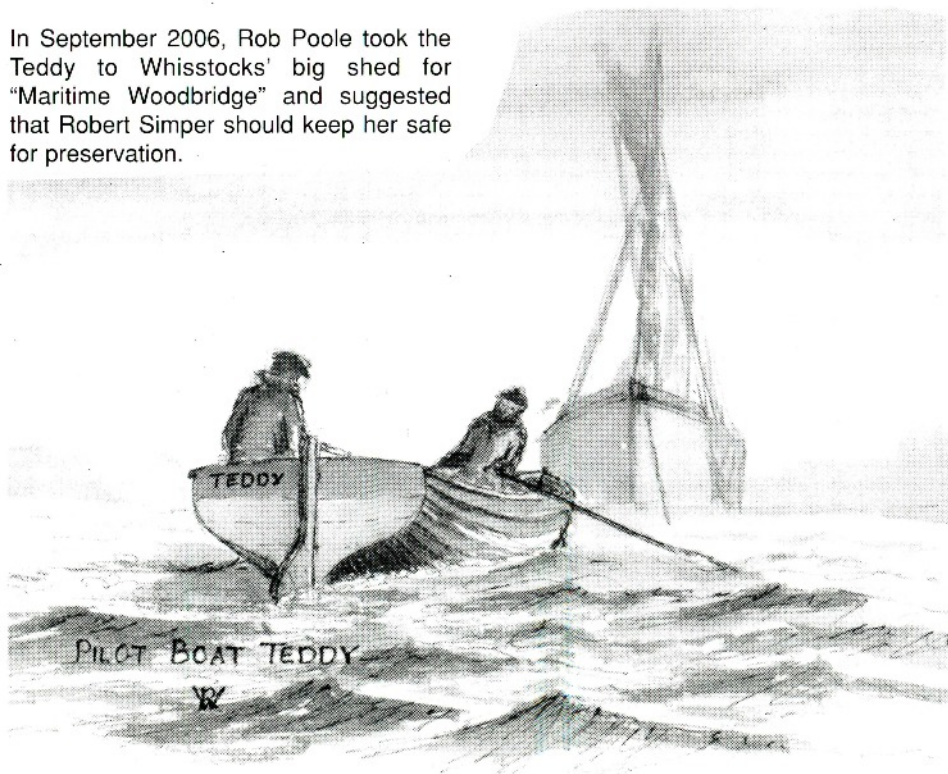
old boats going, decided to put her in the cellar behind Ferry Quay wharf. She spent over fifty years there and is probably the oldest surviving boat built in Suffolk.

In 2004, Frank gave the Teddy to Rob Poole, to use for the Butley Ferry, and he took her to the International Boat Training Centre at Lowestoft. Nat and Jill Wilson had taken over running the IBTC at Christmas 2005 and decided not to rebuild the Teddy but take the lines off her and to start building a replica, due to be completed this year. This project is part of the students' training in clinker construction. The replica will be larch-planking on oak frames, costing about £3,000.

In September 2006, Rob Poole took the Teddy to Whisstocks' big shed for "Maritime Woodbridge" and suggested that Robert Simper should keep her safe for preservation.

"Maritime Woodbridge" was held on the UK Heritage Open Day 2006 and members of the public were fascinated by the Teddy. Inspired by the gigs we see racing in Cornwall, my wife Pearl suggested that we should promote a class of Teddys and have an annual race on the River Deben. Martin Winyard, ever the enthusiast, said we could race from Bawdsey Ferry to Woodbridge for the Ted Marsh Cup. Four people have now suggested that they might have a Woodbridge pilot skiff built. Well, what about it? Is there anyone out there who would build one of these boats?

Robert Simper



Nightingales

*'I may be right and I may be wrong
But I'm certainly willing to swear
That when you turned and smiled at me
A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square.'*

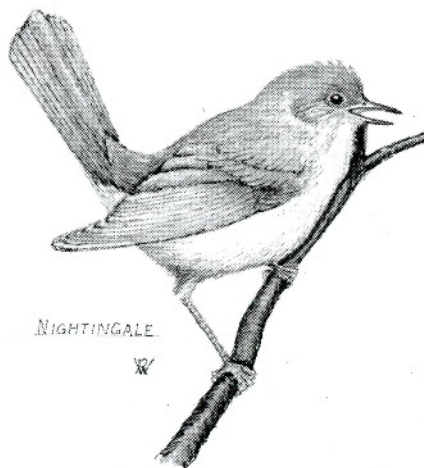
The song-writer in 1940 caught the romantic associations of nightingales but was almost certainly wrong in thinking that there were nightingales singing, and therefore preparing to breed, in the trees of Berkeley Square. For one thing, nightingales prefer to nest in low brambles and scrubby bushes and not in the tall London plane trees growing out of the manicured lawns of a central London square. For another, even though Keats was listening to nightingales on Hampstead Heath in May 1819 when he wrote his 'Ode to a Nightingale', by the 1930s and 40s the distribution of nightingales in London was limited to the outer suburbs and the Home Counties. It is more likely that the lovers were listening to a nocturnal robin.

The nightingale's reputation as a songster, with its romantic associations, goes back to Roman times. Poets and writers through the ages, from Shelley and Coleridge to Hans Christian Andersen, have responded to its haunting and compelling song with its hints of pain and joy. As a bird of the undergrowth, without striking plumage, its song is its advertisement and is unrivalled in the animal world. It is remarkably powerful, with rich and varied bubbling, piping and fluty sounds, mellow and liquid in tone, with a range of over 250 different phrases which can be combined in an almost infinite variety of ways. Between the phrases may come a silence as startling and passionate as the notes themselves. Although my father, as a boy in

Lincolnshire in the 1920s, was listening to nightingales and although my parents were together hearing them in Clumber Park in Nottinghamshire in the 1950s, we now have to accept that their numbers and their range of locations are shrinking. In Suffolk, however, as in other parts of East Anglia and the South East, we have always had the right conditions. Consequently, when the migrating birds arrive and find the gorse and scrub of the Sandlings and in particular the overgrown brambles and thick undergrowth in the woods beside the Deben estuary, many of them will stay to breed. This was certainly happening in the time of Edward Fitzgerald, the nineteenth century Woodbridge poet and translator of the Omar Khayyam, who lay in his bedroom at Little Grange and was kept awake by the singing of the nightingales. Indeed, I could still hear them singing at night in the derelict walled garden in Pytches Road until well into the 1980s.

The suburbs of the

From mid-April onwards, those of us who walk along the footpath on the far bank of the Deben, as it passes through woodland with dense thickets of hawthorn and blackthorn, may detect the moment when



a group of male nightingales has arrived from the wintering grounds in East and West tropical Africa. There may be a dozen or more males in a short stretch, invisible, skulking in the undergrowth, but singing loudly and strongly. Not all of these will stay but some will locate a familiar patch and then sing by day to establish their territories and to intimidate any rival males with ambitions in the same area. They may sing from a variety of perches thus tricking a rival male into thinking that there is more than one male present.

The females arrive a few days later, at night, and then the full throated nocturnal song of the male acts as a long-distance advertisement, travelling further in the cooler, denser night air. Thus begins the courtship. We humans, mere eavesdroppers, may find the song alluring, but if the female nightingale finds it irresistible she will respond and stay. She does not, however, sing in reply.

The nests are made low in the same secluded thickets and overgrown ditches in which we hear the males singing. A bulky nest of dead leaves lined with fine grasses and feathers will contain four or five mottled olive-green eggs. Once the eggs are hatched the male rarely sings and so the singing season is only around six weeks in length. I always suspect that the most determined males, singing fiercely well into late May, keeping the neighbourhood awake, are the unsuccessful ones, who chose the wrong territory and are still desperately trying to attract a female.

In a nightingale survey in 1999, the British Trust for Ornithology found that there had been an 8% reduction in numbers nationally since 1980. Compared with the loss of numbers in other species this is

relatively encouraging but the best news for us was that of the 4,410 singing males in Britain, 861 were in Suffolk, which is a 186% increase on 1980. This indicates a pattern of severe reduction in the number of nightingales in the west and north of Britain but an increase in Sussex, Kent, Essex and Suffolk, where 70% of the birds are now found. The most long-lived nightingale in the British Isles was recorded at Bawdsey: a ringed bird being trapped there many times between 1988 and 1996. Nightingales in Britain are at the northern edge of their range and are more common further south in Europe.

These birds may be reclusive but they do not avoid places frequented by humans. In Suffolk, as in southern Europe, we can hear them in countryside car parks, through an open car window when driving and extremely close to well-used public footpaths.

The most publicised relationship between a nightingale and a human was first broadcast by the BBC in 1924: indeed it was the BBC's first outside broadcast. Beatrice Harrison, a distinguished cellist, a favourite performer of Delius and Elgar, was practising in her Surrey garden when she noticed that a bird was singing along with her, trilling up and down the scales and perfectly in tune with her cello. The resulting broadcast was heard by one million people all over Britain and Europe. and in the 50,000 letters of appreciation which she received, Beatrice Harrison read of other nightingales being stimulated into song by hearing the broadcast through an open window.

The conclusion to be drawn about nightingales is that they require disorder - scrub, weed and brambles, the sort of messy hedgerows, copses and scrubby corners that many of us feel should be 'tidied up', cleared away and sprayed with

weed-killer. If we want to keep this marvellous bird in our countryside we will all have to tolerate and indeed encourage the gorse, blackthorn and brambles beside which, on a spring evening, we may hear their melodious song.

There are many who write about nightingales but the one who for me captures the spirit of the bird is Richard Mabey, from whose little 'The Book of Nightingales' I have taken some of these stories.

Jenny James

DEBEN WATCH

It is hard to imagine any property more vulnerable to theft and vandalism than a boat left on a mooring or mudberth, possibly unvisited for prolonged periods. If you own a boat, of whatever description, it is a likely target for the criminal.

Boat crime in our area is on the increase and there is no easy solution to this as the police readily admit to a lack of capacity to enforce the law on the water. As boat owners, we need to be vigilant and pro-active to make sure we minimise our own risk and exposure to this growing threat. The ultimate aim of Deben Watch is to help reduce the opportunities for crime by raising the awareness of security around moorings, marinas, boatyards and other places where boats and marine equipment are kept. The main aims and objectives are as follows:

- Encourage boat owners to help both themselves and the police in preventing crime
 - Establish, through cooperation and communication, a community spirit so that everyone can contribute to the protection of their own and others' property
 - Provide effective communication links between police and scheme members so that information regarding suspicious persons/activity can be speedily circulated
 - Facilitate catching those responsible for causing damage to moored boats to make sure that they are held fully accountable for their actions
 - Raise the general awareness of the speed limit on the river and make boat owners more conscious about reducing their speed, particularly through the moorings
- Make everyone aware of local boat crime problems and also make them more security conscious about their own boats/equipment

Bill Hughes established the scheme and, with the help of the various area coordinators, has been instrumental in running it for the last four years. Due to increased work commitments, he is now looking for someone to take over at the helm and a willing volunteer is sought to help take the scheme forward to the next level. The scheme largely runs itself and the role is primarily one of management and coordination. If you are interested in contributing to this very worthwhile cause, please contact Bill on 01473 736479 or by email at billhughes@btconnect.com

More information about Deben Watch may be obtained from www.debenwatch.co.uk

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On Friday 27th April 2007

Woodbridge Community Hall at 7.30pm

The AGM will be followed by

a talk given by

Mr. Bill Parker

**Estuaries' Officer
Suffolk Coast and Heaths**

entitled

**The New Management Plan
for our AONB
2007-2012**