



Newsletter

Summer 1991

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Chairman's comment

THIS newsletter comes shortly after our first AGM in April. There are some resignations on the committee and some new faces.

Ian Battye regretfully felt he should stand down as chairman due to being abroad for much of next year.

I can only say how lucky we were to have the benefit of his years of experience running organisations. Then there was his incredibly hard work following up contacts, taking on issues and to say nothing of his great enthusiasm for the river.

We haven't lost him altogether, as he is still on our committee.

At the AGM the constitution was adopted with any present future amendments dealt with by Brian Scott. What a relief.

Ian Battye reaffirmed that the association should reflect members views and he called on people to make known their interests, to volunteer time on any activity that takes their fancy and to keep a watching brief on our river and surroundings.

Activities mentioned in the last newsletter went ahead with varying success:

Two river walks aimed at improving our awareness and understanding of the Deben valley were held in February and March. Led by Anne Moore, a well known rambler, they were sadly not well attended. This opportunity

to see the river free for once of boats was missed. However, as many people expressed an interest, more walks are planned for the autumn, perhaps the most beautiful time of the year.

The litter collection went ahead and a bevy of volunteers removed amazing items out of the river. It was a tremendous effort and many thanks must go to all volunteers who did the dirty work, the people who provided the boats and those who co-ordinated it. This sort of action really shows that the association isn't just a cosy lot of armchair naturalists. More volunteers for the October collection please. I hope it will become an established annual event.

To survive, to be an effective association and to have a powerful voice in local affairs we need members to go on being members. DO RENEW your membership with this newsletter. A bankers order is the most helpful way of supporting the association.

Suffolk Coastal District Council mention the existence of a Heritage Coast Walk from Lowestoft to Felixstowe, with warnings that it is difficult to walk, perhaps non-existent in parts. What do you feel about lobbying for improvements?

Suffolk Wildlife Trust in conjunction with various bodies offer prizes for environmental projects. Shell Better Britain Campaign offers grants towards practical needs of your projects. For more details contact me.

Anni Healey

Housing gift-horse

IF ever there was a gift-horse that can solve so many problems so easily it has to be the withdrawal of USAF airforce from Woodbridge and Bentwaters airbases.

Mindful that there is an economic downside to the issue that will indeed hurt some - hopefully only in the short-term - the withdrawal provides an ideal solution to Whitehall's insistence that South East Suffolk must shoulder an even greater share of the county's housing programme.

Until now the pressure has been on to save the unspoilt farmland and valleys of the Felixstowe peninsula from the ravages of development.

But, the Gulf conflict, combined with East West thawing has had an obscure effect on our valley - defence policy makers are now convinced that the siting of airbases in East Anglia is no longer essential to the success of any likely military campaign. It certainly was forty years ago, but it isn't now.

Whitehall planners need to be made aware that an opportunity to gain the affection and admiration of almost everyone is at their disposal. By using the existing Woodbridge base as a site for domestic housing they can kill two birds with one stone. They can provide instant domestic housing to satisfy the undoubted need; and they can save the Deben valley from further landscape mutilation which will be greatly applauded by conservationists.

This is one gift horse that should not be dismissed lightly.

Not only does the base have a range of houses of all sizes, but the site has an abundance of mature trees and is surrounded by common heathland - an enviable environment for children and families to grow in, and certainly one that betters anything any new town site at Newbourne will ever be able to provide with its designer playgrounds and, worst still, video shops.

Richard Hare

New settlement

THE latest news in the saga of the proposed new town on the Felixstowe peninsula - either at Kirton, Bucklesham, Newbourne or Waldringfield Heath - is of preparations for the Secretary of State for the Environment's examination in public at the beginning of July of the county council's proposed alterations to the County Structure Plan.

This plan does not include plans for a new settlement, as the planning officers wanted, because it was voted out by the county councillors at a planning meeting last November. Nevertheless, proposals for it will still be put forward by builders and developers.

The examination is expected to be an informal affair with invited representatives from all the parties concerned answering the Secretary of State's questions.

Action for access to Kyson Point

Public access to Kyson Point is an "issue of merit" and should be granted "if needs be by means of compulsory purchase".

This was the decision of SCC right's of way sub-committee when they met on June 24. They voted to recommend that the SCC planning committee take action to re-establish access.

Cllr. Bernard Roshier sent this message to the planning committee "the people of Suffolk have strong feelings on this matter".

On the morning of the meeting work started on improving the boggy stretches of the footpath to Martlesham Creek, so it really does seem that after more than a year of upheaval, tranquility could be returning to this once beautiful area of the Deben.

Many thanks must go to Cllr. Roshier and all the rights of way sub-committee for their tremendous support and hard work in presenting the case.

update

The working party which combines all the parish councils on the peninsula, is the main local opposition group. It is supported by Suffolk Coastal District Council and it will be putting forward its case, as forcibly as possible, that the potential housing which might become available after the closure of USAF Woodbridge and Bentwaters bases in 1993 will add weight to their cause.

It will also concentrate on the fact that inward migration of population into the county has been much lower than anticipated over the last few years, which is a vital aspect of the debate. Many other smaller pockets of building land are now reported to have been found in the Ipswich area and these should satisfy whatever demand remains after the effects of the recession.

Motoring association alternative

NOT that there's much alternative at the moment but you may be reassured to know that owning a car doesn't necessarily mean that you're anti-environment.

We are informed that the AA and the RAC are both members of the British Road Federation, the powerful body that lobbies for a massive increase in road building. Apparently, the AA sits accused of claiming that even more roads will help the environmental problem; an obscure rationale if ever there was one. More to the point though, if you're a member, it's a statement it's making with your money.

There is an alternative - the Environmental Transport Association.

ETA receives support from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and details of its services - for cars and motorbikes - are available from ETA, 17 George St, Croydon, CR0 1LA; tel:081 666 0445.

No manors, no rights

THE imminent sale of Bawdsey Manor is leading to fears among locals on both sides of the river mouth that the perceived rights that have been associated with the property will be lost for good.

These rights include a path to the beach and the public use of both the ferry jetty and Bawdsey car park.

But during a recent visit to the site local MP John Gummer stressed that all governments are required to sell public property at the best possible price, irrespective of how worthy any particular cause may be.

The outcome is that a petition of some 443 signatures has been handed over by locals to Mr Gummer. I calls for the right, as locals see them, to be written into the sale contract - a feature which Mr Gummer, who appears to be a supporter of the case, is also claimed to have originally suggested.

Locals are pinning their hopes on Suffolk Coastal District Council negotiating for the continuing rights of ferrymen and the public to use the jetty which also forms an important link in the Heritage Coast footpath.

Any loss of this link will mean ramblers may have to make a 20 mile detour around Woodbridge.

Historic dance returns to regatta

THE 1991 Woodbridge Regatta is scheduled for September 1 and according to the organisers, The Regatta Association, the event will be as good, if not better, than any of the former events. All it asks in return for its sterling efforts is your attendance and support.

Vacancies still exist for those who want to set up stall for charities, or business even. Details are available from Hon secretary Peter Bacon on 383399.

In the 1950s, the Woodbridge Regatta always

started with a dance and, thanks to the Woodbridge lion's Club, it's an event to be repeated this year. The dance will take place at the Woodbridge Community Hall at 8pm on August 31 and, included in the price of £7.50, there will be a traditional seafood dinner (fish & chips), bar, and dancing to the live music of The Sonics. All proceeds will go to the Lion's charities.

Tickets for the dance can be obtained either from the Lion's Club or the Regatta Association.

Other events include boat trips, swimming, sailing, plus a new 'try your hand at sailing' feature. Also included will be the helicopter rides, which proved very popular last year, and the NRA's research boat will be open to the public.

A new 'greasy pole' has been purchased as the old one was becoming a bit unsafe after ten year's (ab)use.

In addition to the usual local dignitaries, round the world yachtsman and local hero, Josh Hall will be present.

Assoc' membership healthy

RDA treasurer Terence Kermode reports that the association had a membership 759 strong as of mid-May.

This figure breaks down into 154 single members, 300 couples, and five clubs.

Nothing it seems is ever simple, and these figures are based on the constitution's clauses which state that, whereas renewal date for subscriptions is April 1, membership lapses only if renewal is not made by July 1.

However, at the end of the first year, this latter date has been extended to August 1, hence the sticker and note to some of you at the beginning of this newsletter.

Confused? check your sticker. If you are being asked to renew, PLEASE do so. We need your support to care for OUR river.

A RED sticker is a request for you to pay your sub.

Houseboats - to be,

Richard Hare looks at some of the complexities that can affect the fate of Woodbridge's houseboat community.

THE Deben Houseboat Association (DHA), formed in the Spring of 1989 to protect the rights of people living on the river between Sun Wharf and Wilford Bridge, claims that the district council is trying to rid Woodbridge of houseboats that do not have moorings in marinas and boatyards.

DHA chairperson, Lil Tudor-Craig, says that those living between Sun Wharf, and Wilford Bridge are being particularly singled out for discrimination:

"We have been subjected to many months, if not years, of uncertainty as the council has consistently refused to recognise our rights" said Ms Tudor-Craig.

The Deben Houseboat Association claims that in 1989 it met Suffolk Coastal District Council and offered:

"-Co-operation with any clean-up that the council

perceived as necessary,
-further discussion on the council's problem over the long-term presence of houseboats, and over a possible mooring licence and,
-telephone numbers and addresses of DHA representatives for liaison."

Ms Tudor-Craig told us that none of these suggestions have been followed up by the council. "Instead, the council is planning to take over the lease of the foreshore from the Crown Estates Commission, for which it will have to pay. The apparent intention, she claims, is to gain control of those people who were offering their co-operation and discussion in the first place."

A council spokesman told RDA Newsletter that this transfer of the lease is indeed planned, but is not yet completed.

Also, according to Ms Tudor-Craig, the council's intentions have manifested themselves in

or not to be

derogatory statements in the press; deprecating remarks on radio and television; discriminatory policy statements in the Local Structure Plan; and the issuing of a "draconian, impractical and unnecessary" licensing system.

But is the district council's attitude quite so entrenched as Ms Tudor-Craig claims it is? According to council solicitor, Simon Burridge, possibly not, and he points to the fact that councillor's collective attitude can change according to who is elected.

"Four or five years ago there definitely was a wish to get rid of the houseboats" admitted Mr Burridge. A number of the houseboats are nothing more than hulks, he pointed out, and although the current consensus seems to be that well maintained craft will be permitted to remain, this is not a right.

The council's proposed licensing system is one that relates to the boats themselves, not the moorings. In item 26 it states: "The council has no power to grant to the licensee any rights on or over the river bank which is in private ownership". It then goes on to say: "The licensee responsible for obtaining from appropriate owner such rights as are necessary for access and for fixing the mooring into the bank".

But according to Ms Tudor-Craig, many of the houseboat owners own the land that they are moored to, and a significant number of the remainder rent it from owners.

"The licence proposal has to be seen to be believed" commented Ms Tudor-Craig. "It contains 34 conditions, most of which apply to the boat itself, and not to the mooring, as in boatyards, marinas and fairway committees.

Pollution controls

The draft licence also contains pollution controls. One



of the clauses states that: "...neither occupier or any other person resident on the houseboat shall dispose of such matter in any way which would be contrary to statute or in contravention of the requirements of the NRA". Residents of Woodbridge will welcome this, but the problem is it doesn't suggest any means of doing so, and what concerns the houseboat owners is that they are being singled out for harsh treatment:

"Other vessels in boatyards and in the quay are not being threatened with controls" complained Ms Tudor-Craig. "You can't have one set of rules for some and others for the rest. If you say that pollution is a problem, fine, but it has to be so for everyone, and that includes sewer outfalls" she added.

"We have to keep a sense of perspective. Why single out a handful of boats when the Hamlin Road pumping station frequently breaks down - three times in as many months last winter - and heaven knows how many gallons of untreated sewage is disgorged."

But in fairness to the draft licence, many of the regulations appear to cover routine safety and hygiene afloat - ventilation, provision of light, gas safety bilge cleanliness and so on. But there are elements which Ms Tudor-Craig claims are unacceptable - the non-transference of licences to prevent sale of houseboats, and the restrictions that would prevent the replacement of old boats for new, for example. Such clauses will effectively discourage owners from maintaining their boats she argues. But what concerns her most is what she sees as insidious implications behind non-compliance.

"If the conditions of the licence are not fulfilled in their every detail the licence entitles the council to tow away and

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impound people's homes and property" said Tudor-Craig.

An example of this is clause 7: "The houseboat... shall be properly maintained, repaired and painted or otherwise treated as often as maybe necessary to keep it sound, weatherproof, and watertight and in order to comply with relevant statutory requirements from time to time in force". Arguably, nebulous clauses such as this, combined with what houseboat owners see as the council's self-appointed right to evict them for the most minute transgression of loosely specified clauses, is at the root of the discord. Basically, it boils down to a lack of trust.

"The council's apparent intention is that the houseboats will have to be abandoned and that the present houseboat residents will gradually be completely prevented from continuing their intended and preferred lifestyle" she said.

This is an aspect that Mr Burrige will not deny. "New licences may not be awarded to newcomers. The committee will have to consider individual cases" he said.

"It is unwise to speculate on what might happen in particular circumstances" continued Mr Burrige, adding that he is aware that the houseboat dwellers feel suspicious of a hidden agenda that will affect their fate. It's an agenda that Mr Burrige denies:

"I don't think the council has such intentions" he said, pointing to the fact that it is as yet unclear how new council members will respond to the situation.

Commenting on the proposed licence Mr Burrige said: "What often happens is that measures are designed for the minority, those that cause a nuisance. Unfortunately, these same rules affect the majority who often cause no problem at all."

"It was the minority that originally brought the issue to the forefront" said Mr Burrige, who told us that he sees a parallel with the current dangerous dog furrore which, because of the irresponsibility

and dubious motives of the minority of dog owners, has led to the new proposed tough regulations for everyone.

FOOTNOTE

If Ms Tudor-Craig's worst fears become reality it will mean the end of Woodbridge's history of river dwelling, and without those same dwellers, the area will very likely become a tip. There will be no local custodians to watch over the area and collect the litter - as indeed they do - which the public so casually discards.

There is no doubt that Britain has one of the worst records for littering. There are some which say the river stretch in question is untidy. But the question such people must first ask themselves is: "how tidy would our streets be if the council stopped sending along a man regularly to pick up rubbish outside our own front doors?"

Nobody from the council picks up the rubbish along the stretch of the river path that the houseboat dwellers live along. They do it themselves, and the council collects from designated points.

As so often happens in issues like this, parties become entrenched, dig themselves in deeper, and become obstinate. It can only be hoped that this does not happen here, and that a responsible and conciliatory attitude prevails on both sides to find a balanced consensus. Woodbridge residents have a right to this.

The River Deben Association perceives the river dwelling community as part of the history and character of Woodbridge, as indeed it continues to be in many other historic British towns. It supports the lawful and peaceful rights of houseboat dwellers and encourages such an existence within a fair, lasting and environmentally sound framework.

Ed

Forthcoming events

FORTHCOMING events offers you the opportunity of a good walk, a good talk, and the chance to help in the worthwhile on-going pursuit of picking up river rubbish.

So, put the dates in your diaries now please.

DEBEN AND MILL RIVER WALK

Date: Sunday October 6

Co-ordinator: Anne Moore

Tel: Woodbridge 383359

If the weather ever does properly settle down this year the chances are it's going to be in the Autumn. The walk, which includes a pub lunch at The Fox at Newbourne will take in both the Deben and Mill river, distance: about six miles.

Please park neatly at the far end of the car park, and waterproof footwear is advised.

Further information from: Anne Moore on Woodbridge 383559.

RIVER RUBBISH COLLECTION

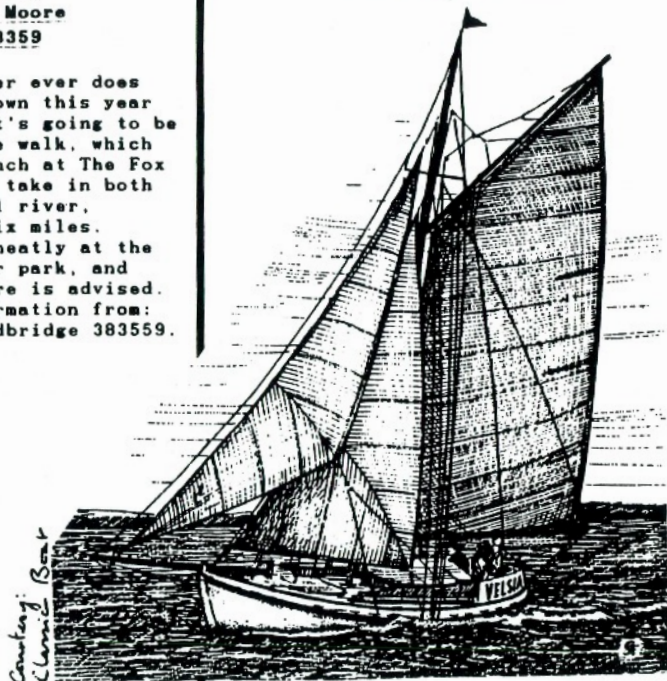
Date: Sunday October 13

Project co-ordinator: Tim

Midwinter

Tel: 0473 623020 (0473 623020, evenings)

Following hard on the heels of the successful river rubbish collection in February comes



AUTUMN MEETING

Date: Thursday October 10

Venue: Woodbridge Community Hall

The venue for the Autumn meeting is the Woodbridge Community Hall and the time is 7.30pm. The speaker is yet to be announced but there will be an open discussion session and coffee will be available.

Deben Litter Clearance II.

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the water... think; broken glass, jagged tins, ripe to maim the unwary. And then there's the plastic sheeting, just right for fouling propellers; the plastic beer can holders, excellent at crippling birds; not to mention unsightly polystyrene, plastic bottles, car batteries, upholstered furniture.

Yes folks, the summer revellers will have had a lovely

time during the summer, and left their marks as well. Clinging to the absurd and childish notion that "the sea will deal with it in its own natural way" these intellectually immature clots will doubtlessly leave us with plenty of work to be getting on with.

Those of us with fractionally more IQ will have noticed the results of the sterling efforts of Tim Midwinter and his team when, last spring, they braved some of the most awful weather to make the Deben a river to be proud of again.

They witnessed not only the destruction caused by us, humans, but that caused by nature as well. Numerous birds, huddled together to stave off the drastically sub zero temperatures, suffered severe losses due to hyperthermia.

We can't do anything to prevent nature's ravages, but we can certainly tackle the former. One grim reaper is quite enough.

As before, the aim will be to clean from Felixstowe to Ufford along both banks of the river, with some areas being selected for extra attention.

During February the stretch from Waldringfield to Woodbridge was particularly well covered; so effort here will be reduced this time round to provide more attention to the Felixstowe/Waldringfield stretch.

But this section is particularly difficult due to the lack of access.

Consequently, both road and river transport will be needed to make delivery to either Felixstowe Ferry, Waldringfield or Foxhall dump. So, will anyone with a boat - large dinghies are ideal - who is willing to offer it please get in touch. A warning though - they are likely to get very muddy.

Manpower, cars and boats will all be necessary. This event needs to be even larger than before to be successful, but the weather ought to be a lot better. At least we shouldn't have to re-schedule it to avoid the snow this time.

You never know though...

For more details contact
Tim Midwinter.

Feature

In praise of the present

According to Tom Ellaway the Deben has never been cleaner. This feature carries an NRA health warning - don't read after dinner. It could damage your health.

IN OUR campaign to save our river from becoming polluted, overcommercialised and overcrowded let us above all retain a measure of reality in our thinking. If we do not, we provide those who wish to overcommercialise it with the best possible ammunition against us that they could possibly find.

They do not know it yet - they're too ignorant - but it will not take them long to find out that the river is cleaner today than it ever has been, possibly since the late middle ages. So to argue that we want it to be the way it used to be is plain daft.

The more honest of the old folks will tell you that, in their youth, the raw sewage from all that part of Woodbridge that did not have earth privies was dumped straight into the river, an arrangement considered an advance on the earth privies and their attendant "honey bucket men".

The arrangements in the centuries before do not even bear thinking about. So, when people tell me that a few hundred "Grotty Yachties" pumping their sea loo's into the Deben on the rare week-ends they come anywhere near their boats are upsetting the balance of nature, I laugh. It is the very presence of the boats in such numbers that is the pollution not their effluent output. They remain on their moorings whether their owners are on board or not.

The boats, in themselves, are for the most part not unattractive. As for their cleanliness, they bear no comparison with the commercial



shipping of yesteryear. Those graceful sailing barges in their heyday often had owners and skippers that were ship proud and kept them in good condition, but many more were not. To them the barge was a money making tool and the less spent the better. A goodly proportion of the crews lived in pig sties ashore and carried their rudimentary concepts of cleanliness afloat with them. The combination could be unlovely to a high degree. A Victorian sailing barge was probably much better admired from afar.

Canon Waller, of Waldringfield, (Not the present rector John Waller but his father Trevor, the Wallers have been rectors of Waldringfield, father to son since soon after God first set up shop down there) once told me a tale that will bear this out. It dates from

Trevor was a child and that was a long, long time ago.

Victorian and Edwardian London required vast quantities of hay to feed its thousands of cab horses and draft horses. Much of it came from round here and it was taken to London by barge. On their return trip the barges brought back the hay after it had been, shall we say "processed" by the horses.

The point of the story is that Trevor Waller's father, the then rector of Waldringfield, was called out to one of these barges on which a baby had just been born to the wife of the skipper. He took Trevor with him.

Trevor was just a little boy but he remembers, after the christening, the skipper offering the rector a tot of rum to "Wet the baby's head".

He took some cups from the dresser built into the cabin bulkhead and before pouring out the rum he carefully wiped each cup to remove from it what Trevor described as "The brown deposit" that lay over all the china in that dresser.

This was in a vessel in which a woman had just given birth. No wonder they christened their babies immediately. The road from the cradle to the grave must often have been a short one and having children in such conditions must have put the women in mortal peril as well.

Such stories show that there are some things that we certainly do not want back. That was how the support systems for 100% organic farming really worked. So let us fight not on a slogan of "Oh for the snows of yesteryear" but rathermore the concept of "What we have we hold". Things are better now than they were then. Let us keep them that way.

ARE YOU INTERESTED?

We would like to know what areas of our activities that you are particularly interested in - those which you are prepared to become ACTIVELY involved. Armed with this information we will be able to put you in contact with others of similar interest.

Planning.....
River walks. (maintenance).
Chemical pollution.....
Litter clearance.....
Others

Please tick appropriately and supply your:

Name.....
Address.....
.....
Tel.....

Upbeat outlook for saltwater Deben

Following his article in our previous newsletter on the character and quality of the fresh water Deben, NRA environmental officer Bill Borley reports on the tidal stretch.

THE tidal Deben is unpolluted throughout most of its length and as a consequence it supports a small commercial fishery. A diverse fauna and flora can be found throughout the majority of the estuary, which forms an important part of the Heritage Coast area.

The upper reaches of the tidal river extend as far as Ufford Bridge on spring tides, although for the majority of the time this area is brackish. Below Wilford Bridge the urban areas influence water quality, with treated sewage effluent inputs from the large Anglian Water treatment plants at Melton and Woodbridge.

At Woodbridge sewage works the discharge into Martlesham Creek will improve considerably in 1992 when reconstruction of the treatment units is completed. At present both discharges conform to their relaxed legal discharge standards but more restrictive standards are to be implemented in 1992. NRA staff sample these effluents on a minimum of once a fortnight and legal action would be taken if a gross exceedance occurred.

Houseboats in the Melton area have some localised effect on sewage discharges. These outlets are legal under present legislation but we are seeking to reduce the number of boats in this area. Desilting from the marina areas can also cause water quality problems, although improved settling ponds should now reduce this nuisance.

NRA sampling of the tidal river is undertaken on at least a monthly frequency from land points equally spaced down the river. Any problems found from that analysis are then followed up by our scientists based in

Ipswich. More comprehensive surveys of the river by boat are undertaken on three occasions in the year.

On these surveys we would additionally analyse the sediments at selected points for metals and TBT. Analysis from all the points on the Deben are available from our register at NRA regional headquarters at Peterborough (0733 371811). More specific queries relating to water quality problems can be passed direct to our staff at the Ipswich office (0473 727712).



Water quality in the middle and lower reaches of the river is excellent, in part due to the absence of any direct discharges. A number of small inputs from unpolluted creeks at Kirton, Shottisham and Falkenham do not affect the river. The national survey of UK estuaries has designated the river as being of good chemical quality, although Martlesham Creek is the only marginal area with respect to quality. The Deben has no untreated sewage inputs and this is reflected in the quality which is excellent compared with other local rivers such as the Orwell.

At the lower end we have the disused RAF Bawdsey establishment and the NRA will tightly control any development at this site. The NRA will continue to improve the water quality of the Deben in future by use of computer modelling techniques and much progress should be made in the next few years.

SUB~

Feature

SURFACE ~ RIVER

DEBEN

Tim Pryke, himself an angler, takes us sub-surface and outlines some of the inner-Deben life forms.

IN ITS upper reaches the river rarely attains a depth of more than a few inches, nor a width greater than 6ft. With the emergence of youth the crystal clear water gurgles and splutters its way over a predominantly gravel river bed. These reaches are mainly populated by Minnow and Sticklebacks with the occasional intrusion of a larger fish such as Roach and Dace.

These latter species come into their own when the river increases in both width and depth in the area around the village of Easton. Rather like a person experiencing middle age spread the river settles down into a much slower steadier course. The depth increases and the bottom is predominantly mud and silt. It is a rich habitat for various species of aquatic plant, particularly the lily. In summer some stretches of the river around Wickham Market are so heavily populated with lilies that they form an aquatic pontoon from one bank of the river to the other.

The abundant plant life is an important factor in the overall health of the river. It supports various species of fresh water insect which themselves form the staple diet for the large stock of coarse fish.

As with most East Anglian rivers the predominant species in the Deben is the Roach. It is capable of adapting to almost any condition. In the summer months Roach can be seen lazily sunning themselves among the lily pads whereas in the winter they are just as much at home searching for food in the faster and stronger currents associated with that time of year. The Roach is a handsome fish with a largely silver flank

and bright red fins. It can attain a weight of 4lbs although a fish of 2lbs or more is considered by anglers to be a catch of a life time. Fish of this size do exist in the Deben although usually they range between 2ozs and 1lb.

The river holds shoals of Dace, Perch and Bream. The former is a relatively small fish which tends to populate the faster flowing stretches. It will readily accept an anglers bait which sometimes makes it a nuisance when the angler is seeking larger quarry. In appearance the Dace is silvery in colour and has a long streamlined shape which is why it adapts so well to the faster flowing water.

Dace contrasts with Perch and Bream, both of which prefer the deeper slow moving stretches and, in particular, the various holes that can be found in the river bed and which provide perfect traps for any passing morsels of food.

Of all the fish, the Perch is probably the most eye catching. It will feed on the usual fresh water insects, worms etc. but it is also a predator and will viciously attack the fry of other coarse fish. It is not uncommon in the summer for the surface of the river to suddenly erupt with a spray of small fish leaping out of the water to try and avoid a shoal of marauding Perch. Although the under belly is a rather unglamorous off white colour, the upper flanks of the Perch consist of alternate stripes of dark and light green topped off with red fins and a large spiny dorsal fin which can easily cut the hand of the unwary angler.

Bream is a bottom feeding fish which in the Deben rarely

Feature

exceed a weight of more than 11lb. It prefers the company of its own kind and will usually roam the river in tight-knit shoals. The colour of young Bream is not unlike that of the Dace, but as the fish grow older, so their colour darkens and their flanks take on an olive coloured hue which in old age can be so dark as to be almost black.

The Bream shares the muddy depths of the river with the Eel, a greedy species that will eat almost anything and, as a consequence, often snatches a bait intended by the angler for some other fish. Its long snake-like shape can make it a difficult fish to land as it will wrap itself around weed, tree roots and lily pads in an effort to escape. Even when out of the water it will writhe into a slithering knot of flesh to prevent the angler from getting a proper hold of it.

The largest species of fish to populate the Deben is the Pike. It is the principal predator and it feeds on all of the other species with the exception of the Perch which is given some protection from attack by its own spiny dorsal fin.

Pike is an efficient killing machine, with a long streamlined body and powerful fins, which enable it to move with speed and agility through the water in order to ambush its prey. Certain stretches of the river hold Pike in excess of 20lbs. The fact that they are able to grow to such a size is proof itself that there is a large population of other species upon which the Pike can feed.

Yet the Pike does not limit itself to feeding upon fish and it is not unknown for them to take water rats and voles and there are numerous documented incidents of Pike snatching moor hens and duckling from the surface and dragging them down to a bloody and violent death.

Club commitment

All in all the Deben must rank as one of the best stocked

ivers in East Anglia. It offers excellent facilities to the coarse angler, although the fishing on the principal stretches is carefully controlled by the Woodbridge and District Angling Club, from whom a membership or day ticket is required before commencing to fish.

The club takes a pride in its waters and is careful to maintain them in tip-top condition without spoiling the natural beauty of the river bank and its vegetation. Just recently the club has set up a programme of re-stocking. It has spent in excess of £3,000 on fresh stocks of Roach and Bream. It is hoped that two other lesser known species, Tench and Gudgeon, will be introduced to the river later this year.

The club's aim is not only to improve the quality of fishing but also to improve the fish population in general. Once they have been released into the river the fish are free to colonise whatever area suits them best and so the club cannot guarantee that the fish it introduces will remain within the stretches it controls. Despite this, the club's membership are happy to invest funds in what it regards as the long term future of the river

Do you know and one who may be interested in joining the River Deben Association? If so, please cut out this box and ask them to fill it in and send it to the membership secretary (see 'Who's who').

Name.....
Address.....
.....
Tel.....

Safe skiing

Basil Algar of the East Suffolk Waterski Club & Association explains the history of waterskiing on the Deben and appeals for a united front for cleaner water.

BEFORE 1976, water skiing was widely practised on the Deben and it was particularly popular at The Rocks where the conditions are ideal.

But as the area became more crowded, Suffolk Coastal District Council decided to introduce speed limit bye-laws which curtailed the activities of water skiers. The water ski club was formed and joint talks took place with the council.

The need for control was recognised and the necessity for a public enquiry was avoided. The stretch of the river between the Horse buoy and Ramsholt moorings was left free of a speed limit and planning permission was given for a jetty, jump ramp and slalom course to be installed.

During the subsequent 15 years, this arrangement has proved successful and the club worked hard to keep it that way.

Safety has been the first consideration and the recommendations of the British Water Ski Federation, to which the club is affiliated, have been adopted. The number of boats have been limited, training has been given, and there is on-going co-operation with the Fairways Committee, Trinity House and other authorities.

The club endeavours to ensure compliance with the law although it does not have jurisdiction over river users who are not club members.

Apart from annual competitions, charity days and demonstrations on the water, the club has had a busy social calendar, and in recent years, has joined together with Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club.



The subject of sewage disposal has raised its ugly head and letters to Anglian water, the NRA and our MP have fallen on stony ground. The club will be very interested to work closely with any other organisation or association to improve matters and, indeed, to deal with any other problems which may arise from time to time.

NOTE: If you are interested in contacting the ski club with a view to joint environmental efforts, or for skiing even, write to Basil Algar, East Suffolk Water Ski Club and Assoc., 24 Salehurst Rd, Ipswich, IP3 8RY. Ed.

Walking hints

Anne Moore, a member of the Rambler's Association, offers some advice to those who enjoy discovering the Deben valley by foot.

NOTHING upsets a landowner more than a determined walker on the wrong path. But there are ways of taking unnecessary stress and worry out of rambling:

-Use only reliable published maps. Best of all is the 1:25000 scale Ordnance Survey pathfinder series. There is insufficient detail on other maps. It is essential to be able to recognise a public right of way as opposed to a track or a path, which may be private.

-Leaflets of walks are obtainable but it is best to transpose these onto your main map before you set off.

-Check bearings of buildings, roads, path junctions before you set off to avoid marching off down the wrong track. Rights of way are not always defined on the ground due to lack of use.

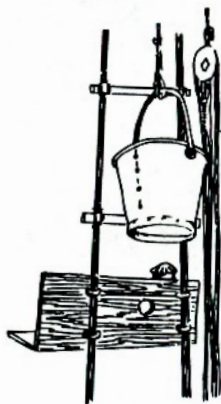
-White roads, shown by two parallel unbroken black lines, should not be confused with two parallel dotted lines. the former is a permitted path, the latter, private.

-A greeting of the time of the day or a request for reassurance works wonders to ensure a helpful response from landowners who, in my experience, are usually courteous and pleasant. Those who are not have probably had some bad experiences.

-Unpleasant encounters are more often than not with people who live close to the land over which the path passes, and wish it didn't.

-Definitive maps are those kept in the Rights of Way Dept. at County Hall, and they can be used to update published OS maps. District council's records tend not to be up to date.

-There are more finger posts around today but in many cases they are not put up by county officials. I am told that they are frequently handed out to 'not quite all and sundry' to save on labour. So, if in doubt - stick to your map (to avoid getting lost if nothing else) and then check with County Hall Rights of Way (Ipswich 230000) afterwards.



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Planning report

UPDATE

Planning representative and association chairperson Anni Healey discusses the latest planning applications in the valley.

SINCE the last newsletter there has been a reduction in the number of planning applications associated with the river Deben area.

Bawdsey Manor

The sale of Bawdsey Manor remains the most important development in the local area. Luckily, there is a strong local group in Bawdsey which is fighting to keep public access to the quay and the footpath around the cliffs. (see news section).

Sluice Farm, Martlesham

A revised application was made to change the use of Sluice Farm piggery into an industrial estate with general warehousing, oil and chemical storage, and office buildings. Car parking for 246 would create significant traffic problems in Martlesham village and destroy the recently won peace and tranquillity that it now enjoys since the by-pass opened.

Even though the plan included the widening and closure of Sandy Lane the volume of traffic in this small area would be excessive.

The developers offered a

derisory amount of land as a wildlife area but the loss of landscape amenity to modern industrial buildings - however carefully designed - was too great.

Surprisingly, this development was supported by Suffolk Coastal District Council Planning Department despite the fact that, if allowed to go ahead, it would complete the jigsaw of development between Ipswich and Woodbridge. If allowed to go ahead a potentially attractive greener site on Martlesham Creek will be lost forever.

After careful deliberation and the receipt of letters from the RDA, Martlesham and Woodbridge Town Councils, district councillors reappraised the situation.

After a site visit, and the recognition that the acceptance of the application ran counter to the newly acclaimed Local Structure Plan, the application was refused.

Kyson Point

The fence continues to dominate the landscape around the point and the footpath to Martlesham is often unpassable. The fence remains a sad monument to modern attitudes, and fears, intruding into the mutual tolerance so typical of rural communities in the past.

