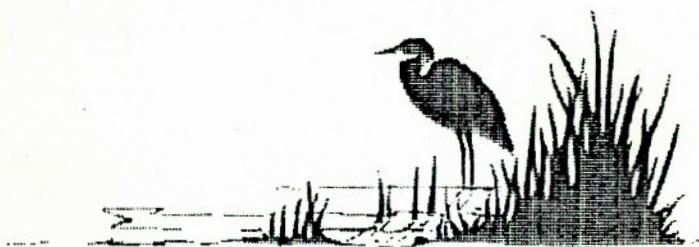


THE RIVER DEBEN

a guide



Published by:
The River Deben Association

THE DEBEN

This pamphlet has been produced by the River Deben Association with the aim of informing members and visitors about the river Deben and its hinterland, and also to provide a code of conduct for everyone to help preserve the river which we love.

General Description

The river Deben rises at the town of Debenham, and flows roughly north-south for 20 miles to its mouth at Felixstowe Ferry. The sand and shingle bar of the river's mouth is treacherous without local knowledge, but once inside, navigation is possible for some 10 miles up to Wilford Bridge. At high water, the river is navigable for small dinghies as far as Ufford Mill where it ceases to be tidal. The Deben has been described as the most beautiful of the east coast rivers, and nearby are the Anglo Saxon burial ground at Sutton Hoo, the famous Tide Mill and many other historical reminders.

Walks

On the west bank it is possible to walk from Woodbridge to Felixstowe Ferry on public footpaths (mainly on the ~~sea~~^{river} wall), but there are two breaches. The first is opposite Methersgate and to avoid this the walker has to come inland after Martlesham Creek and follow the road to Waldringfield beach. The second breach at Early Creek can be avoided by turning inland after Waldringfield beach and following the footpath past White Hall to Hemley, where the river wall is accessible and leads on to Felixstowe Ferry.

On the east bank, from Ferry Cliff (opposite Woodbridge) or from the Sutton Hoo car park, there are inland public footpaths to Methersgate, and it is then possible to walk along the side of the river to the Hams, the Tips, Stonner Point, the Rocks and Ramsholt. There is no public footpath along the river wall from Ramsholt to Bawdsey, but there is an inland route via Alderton with good views of the river.

There are numerous circular walks from and to points on the banks of the river. These are marked on the Ordnance Survey Pathfinder Map - Woodbridge Sheet 1031; Felixstowe Sheet 1054 and, for the upper reaches, Wickham Market Sheet 1008.

Conservation and Nature Reserves

The estuary and hinterland of the river Deben are recognised nationally for their landscape quality by the designation of the area as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The saltings, mudflats and cliffs have been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and also a proposed RAMSAR. There is one Nature Reserve at Newbourne Springs in the village of Newbourne, and another at Bromeswell.

Litter

The River Deben Association organises a very successful litter collection over the whole river every autumn and, with the aid of various public spirited people along the river, the problem of litter is less here than on many other east coast rivers. Long may this remain so, but it does require the cooperation of everyone. There are litter bins at most landing places which are cleared by Suffolk Coastal District Council regularly in the summer. Everyone is asked to help by not leaving litter on the foreshore, and not dropping it overboard when on the river.

Car Parks

There are public car parks at:-

Bawdsey (picnic site)

Felixstowe Ferry (on the cliffs west of the Golf Club)

Ramsholt

Sutton Heath (north or south) (picnic sites)

Melton Riverside (picnic site)

Woodbridge (several)

Broomhill (for pedestrian access to Kyson Point)

Waldringfield

Junction of Bawdsey/Hollesley Roads (for Sutton Hoo)

Newbourne (for Newbourne Springs)

Bromeswell (for Bromeswell Green)

Woodbridge

Many books have been written about Woodbridge - a historic town, a busy port and boat building centre, and an encampment for troops in the Napoleonic wars - all dominated by the Tide Mill, a famous wooden-clad building, much beloved by artists all over the world. Nearby is the Anglo-Saxon burial ground at Sutton Hoo. There is a marina which is accessible two hours either side of high water. Woodbridge has shops, restaurants, churches, a library, swimming pool, cinema, and a post office. There is a railway station on the east Suffolk line, and bus services to many local towns and villages.

Kyson Point

A simple and beautiful point. Kyson Hill, which is owned by the National Trust, gives a fine view of the river and Tide Mill. The quay was another loading point where passengers for London embarked. Opposite Kyson is Loder's Cut, a channel dug in 1879 by Mr Loder for the people of Woodbridge, to save large barges having to go through Troublesome Reach and round Kyson Point.

Martlesham Creek

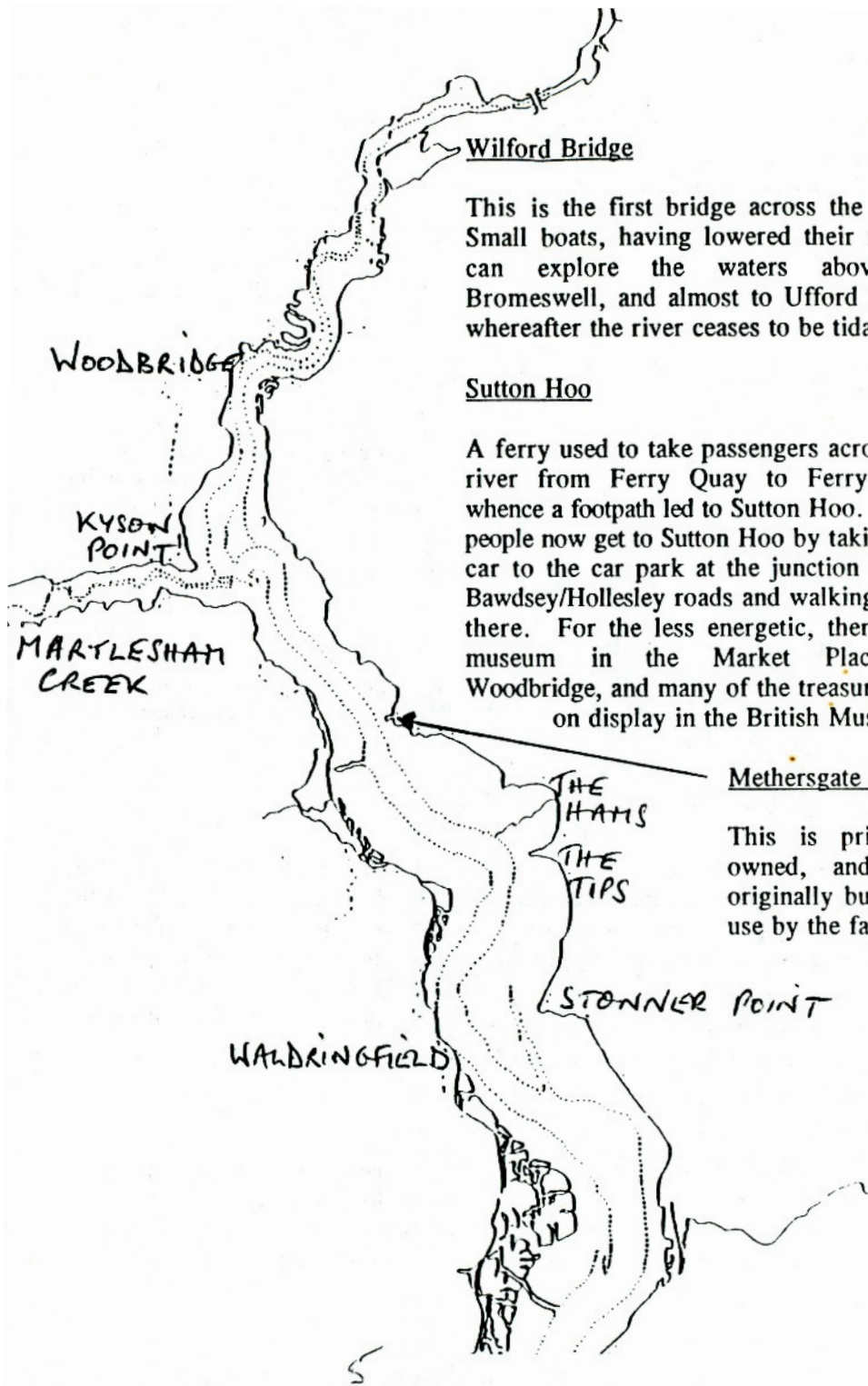
Fed by the river Fynn, this dries out at low tide, but was used as an important loading point for ships bound for London. It now has a small boatyard and is a valuable feeding ground for waders.

The Hams, The Tips, Stonner Point

The sandy beaches here are only accessible at certain states of the tide - at other times they are guarded by thick mud. At Stonner, there are still remnants of the old quay used for shipping coprolite and farm produce - for which a channel was dug on the east side of the island. The Hams and The Tips were originally built out in a plan to drain the land between, but this idea was abandoned later. At some stage, it is possible that The Tips acquired their name from the fact that they were used for tipping farm produce into waiting barges.

Waldringfield

The main industry in the village was in shipping coprolite and making cement with clay from the river. Relics of this are visible in the quay, the cement cottages, and at the kiln. There is a pub, the Maybush, a boatyard, from which trips on the river can be booked, and an excellent provision shop. The beach can be used for landing and bathing.



Wilford Bridge

This is the first bridge across the river. Small boats, having lowered their masts, can explore the waters above at Bromeswell, and almost to Ufford Mill - whereafter the river ceases to be tidal.

Sutton Hoo

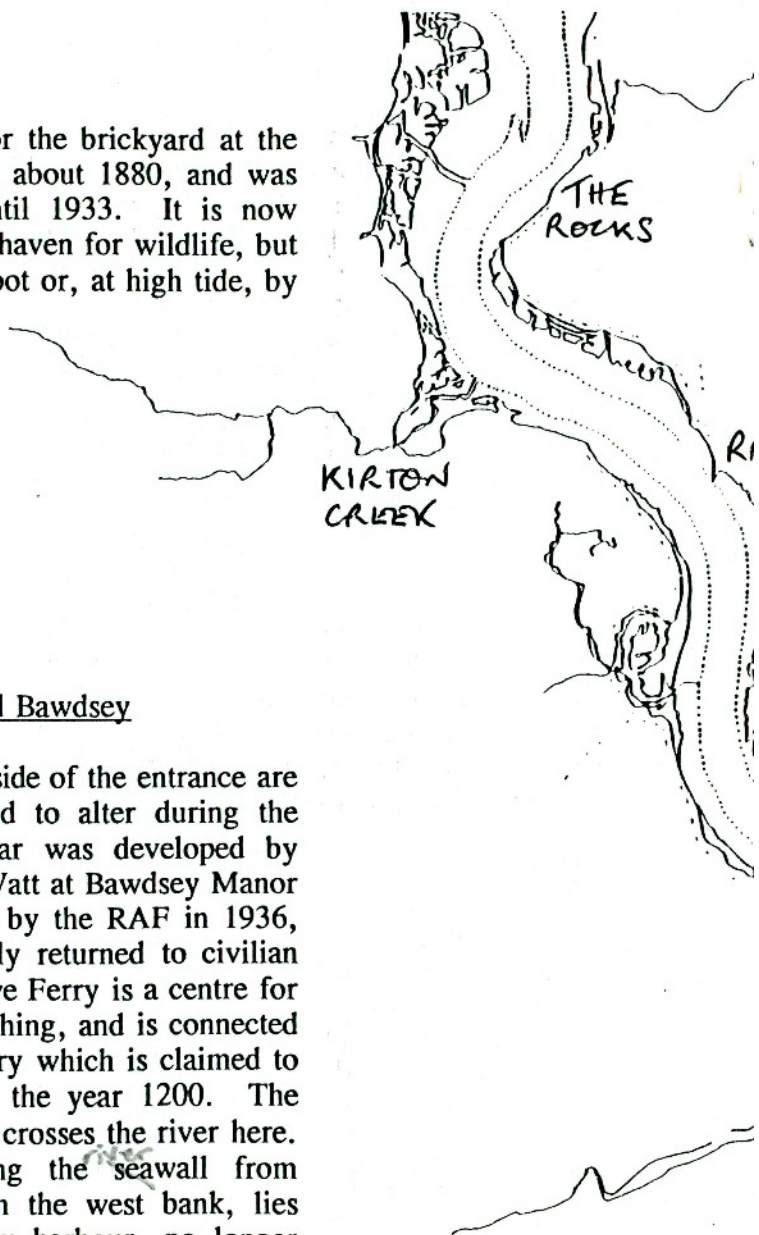
A ferry used to take passengers across the river from Ferry Quay to Ferry Cliff whence a footpath led to Sutton Hoo. Most people now get to Sutton Hoo by taking the car to the car park at the junction of the Bawdsey/Hollesley roads and walking from there. For the less energetic, there is a museum in the Market Place in Woodbridge, and many of the treasures are on display in the British Museum.

Methersgate Dock

This is privately owned, and was originally built for use by the farm.

Kirton Creek

A dock was built for the brickyard at the head of the creek in about 1880, and was used by farmers until 1933. It is now heavily silted, and a haven for wildlife, but only accessible by foot or, at high tide, by dinghy.



Felixstowe Ferry and Bawdsey

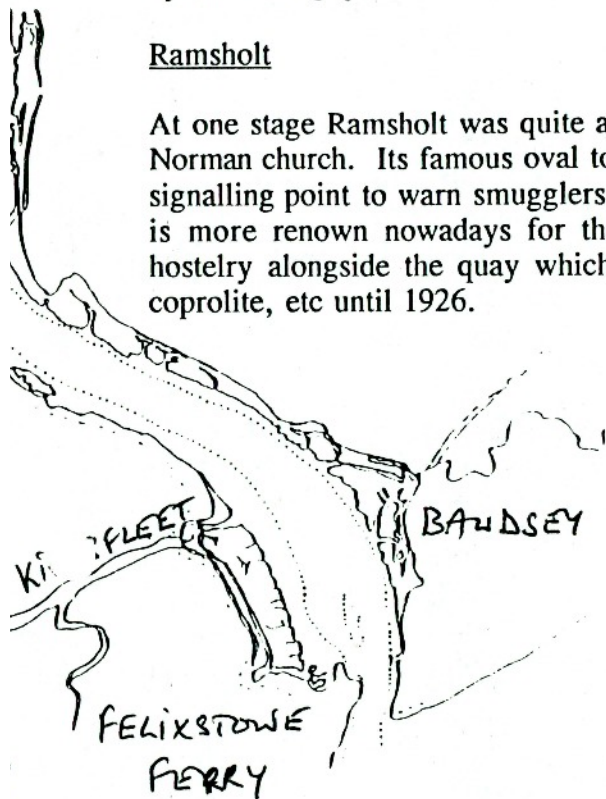
The shores on either side of the entrance are shingle, and do tend to alter during the winter gales. Radar was developed by Sir Robert Watson-Watt at Bawdsey Manor which was acquired by the RAF in 1936, and has only recently returned to civilian ownership. Felixstowe Ferry is a centre for boat building and fishing, and is connected to Bawdsey by a ferry which is claimed to have operated since the year 1200. The Suffolk Coastal Path crosses the river here. About a mile along the seawall from Felixstowe Ferry on the west bank, lies Kingsfleet, a shallow harbour, no longer accessible by water, where King Edward III's fleet once lay.

The Rocks

A pleasant sandy beach, only accessible to boats and to walkers along the sea wall. A popular anchorage and bathing place. It was once known as "The Cliffs", but more recently has been called "The Rocks" possibly because of the septaria, just visible at low tide, the only local stone in Suffolk. The beach is backed by cliffs which have suffered erosion both from the elements and also the public. Visitors are asked to do everything possible to preserve the cliffs and the trees growing on them. On the opposite shore, the sea wall was breached in 1945 and Early Creek is a valuable feeding ground for wading birds. It is accessible only by foot or by small dinghy.

Ramsholt

At one stage Ramsholt was quite a large village with a prominent Norman church. Its famous oval tower was used as a lookout and signalling point to warn smugglers if excise men were around. It is more renowned nowadays for the Ramsholt Arms - a pleasant hostelry alongside the quay which was used to ship sugar beet, coprolite, etc until 1926.



Channel

The mouth of the river changes almost yearly, and those planning to cross the bar should seek advice. The Deben Pilot, Mr R Brinsley can be contacted on (01394) 270853 or 283463, or on VHF Ch 8 at certain times. The moorings at Felixstowe Ferry surround the Horse Sands which dry out at low water. The end of the Horse Sands is marked by the Horse Buoy which has to be kept to port when going up river. Thereafter there are no buoys until the Rocks Reach whence port and starboard buoys lead the visitor to Woodbridge and beyond. More details are available from the latest edition of 'East Coast Rivers'.

Speed Limit and Water Skiing

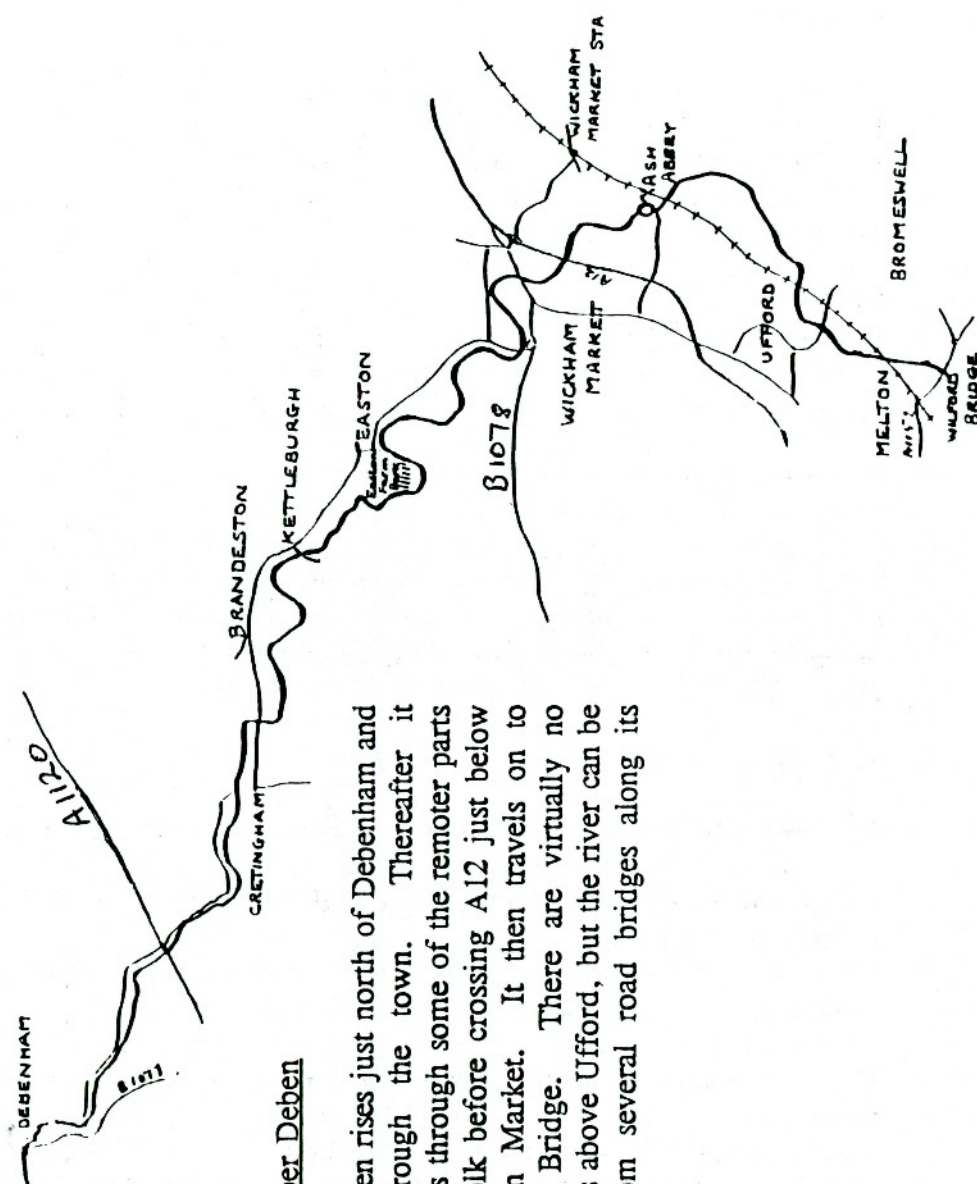
A speed limit of 8 mph applies throughout the river, except on the reach available for water skiing between Kingsfleet and Green Point. Those wishing to water ski are advised to enquire of the East Suffolk Water Ski Club at Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club.

Anchoring

The restrictions are where there are moorings, and by the underwater cable at Bawdsey/Felixstowe Ferry. The tides in the river can be strong, and great care is needed - particularly at the mouth and at certain times.

Erosion

Many of the sandy cliffs bordering the river are subject to inevitable erosion through winter gales and high tides. Further serious damage is done to them by children (and parents) playing on these cliffs. The problems at The Rocks are particularly obvious. It is difficult to see how this can be avoided, but it would help if visitors realised how much irreparable damage is being done. Barbecue users are particularly asked to refrain from using the wood from the trees.



The Upper Deben

The Deben rises just north of Debenham and runs through the town. Thereafter it meanders through some of the remoter parts of Suffolk before crossing A12 just below Wickham Market. It then travels on to Wilford Bridge. There are virtually no footpaths above Ufford, but the river can be seen from several road bridges along its route.

Boatyards

Felixstowe Ferry Boatyard	(01394) 282173
Waldringfield Boatyard	(01473) 736260
Everson & Sons at Woodbridge	(01394) 384358
Frank Knights at Woodbridge	(01394) 382318
Tidemill Yacht Harbour	(01394) 380285
Robertsons of Woodbridge	(01394) 382305
Melton Boatyard	(01394) 386327
Larkmans at Melton	(01394) 382843

Launching Slipways

There are no public slipways on the Deben. Access (for small boats only) can be arranged at:-

Felixstowe Ferry	(available to the public - tickets for motor boats at the café)
Waldringfield	(from the Maybush slipway)
Woodbridge	(Whisstocks yard - refer to the owner).

Fairway Committees

Moorings are controlled by the following Fairway Committees:-

- Felixstowe Ferry Fairway Committee (from the mouth to Green Point)
- Ramsholt Fairway Committee (from Green Point to Early Creek)
- Waldringfield Fairway Committee (from Early Creek to Metersgate)
- Kyson Fairway Committee (from Metersgate to Everson's Jetty)
- Knoll Fairway Committee (from Everson's Jetty to Sun Wharf)
- Suffolk Coastal District Council (from Sun Wharf to Wilford Bridge)

	Felixstowe Ferry	Bawdsey	Ramsholt	Waldringfield	Woodbridge
Public telephones	✓		✓	✓	✓
Public toilets	✓	✓		✓	✓
Litter bins	✓	✓		✓	✓
Fresh water	✓			✓	✓
Diesel and petrol	✓			✓	✓
Gas	✓			✓	✓
Provisions				✓	✓
Chandlers	✓			✓	✓
Crane or hoist	✓			✓	✓
Refreshments	✓		✓	✓	✓
Marinas					✓

Water Sports Clubs

Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club

(also a Rowing Club)

(01394) 238785

Waldringfield Sailing Club

(01473) 736633

Deben Yacht Club

(01393) 385400

Woodbridge Cruising Club

(also a Rowing Club)

(01394) 386737

Deben Water Sports Centre

Contact

(01473) 624672

East Suffolk Water Ski Club

(01394) 238785

Woodbridge and District Anglian Club

Contact

(01394) 624672

Anglian Wildfowlers Association

Contact

(01394) 383661

Public Transport

There are occasional buses from Bawdsey, Felixstowe Ferry and Waldringfield. A full service operates from Woodbridge.

Code of Conduct

Visitors are requested to respect the river Deben and its wild life, and to keep to the following guidelines:-

- 1 Avoid walking on, or allowing dogs onto, the saltmarshes, especially during the nesting season.
- 2 Keep to public footpaths.
- 3 Use the recognised car parks.
- 4 Put all litter in litter bins, and when afloat bring it ashore.
- 5 Remember there are strong currents in the river. Be safety conscious whether swimming or boating.
- 6 Noise travels easily over water. Boat engines and radios can be a nuisance.
- 7 When afloat, be conscious of the disturbance that your wash may be causing.
- 8 Guard against all risk of fire.

The River Deben Association

The Association was formed in 1990. Its aim is to represent and reconcile the interests of all concerned with the future of the river Deben and its environs.

Its objectives are:-

- 1 To encourage any proposal which would safeguard the river and to support appropriate future developments.*
- 2 To resist any proposals which have a detrimental affect on the river and its environs.*
- 3 To help reconcile conflicting interests and avoid confrontation.*
- 4 To establish a working relationship between the Association, River and Local Authorities.*
- 5 To maintain liaison with other groups.*

The Association, on an annual basis, holds both an AGM and an Open meeting at which issues can be raised and discussed; it also publishes two newsletters.

Further information is available from The Secretary ~

*Harry Norris, Deben Vale, Ipswich Road, Woodbridge
☎ (01394) 384442*

Jill and Michael Atkins
Rudds Barn
Waldringfield Road
Martlesham
Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 4PJ
Telephone 01473 736668

21st November 2000

Here is a complete set of RDA

Newsletters: There are a few duplicates -
no matter.

Also I have included

"The River Deben - a guide"

which the RDA published many years ago,
and failed to date. My memory is that
Anthony Mason had a lot to do with it.

I would like these back at
some stage

Richard Allen

1992 - 2000