

# The Deben



55 Autumn 2017

# The River Deben Association

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October 2017

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Cover: Cyndi Speer 'Garnet and Gold'

## Editorial



## *Nostalgia*

The term was originally coined by Johannes Hoffer in 1688 to describe the homesickness felt by Swiss mercenaries who, fighting in the plains of Flanders, pined for their native mountain landscapes. Nowadays nostalgia refers to an emotion that is associated with a wistful yearning for the past, places or events, people situations. It can be triggered by memories, sights, touch and sounds such as music.

The emotion may evoke happiness or sadness. It may prompt a feeling of wanting to return to those times or situations; a feeling that those times were somehow better. Research suggests it can be a positive emotion leading to improved mood, self esteem and ability to cope with the present. However, nostalgia maybe open to criticism for being unduly sentimental and romantic and not rooted in reality. In this way it can be used to influence and persuade people in evoking a view of the past which is biased, or which cannot be achieved in the future; an example of this could be some of the votes for Brexit.

Nostalgia, however, may be an important part of our love of the Deben and a trigger for our reflections and a source of pleasure. At the same time personal and subjective memories can be balanced with an understanding and valuing of the social history of the river and an interest in the craft skills, which were associated with the river including trade, shipping, ship building and fishing.

The magazine aims to serve all these interests and above all to stimulate our enjoyment of the present and how the river is today, with its changing moods and features, be they, seals, saltmarshes, sunsets, or the characters we meet and the stories we tell.

In this edition there should be something for all these interests. We welcome Richard Verrill for his article on seals, which we hope will be the first of many contributions on the wildlife of the river. The Longshed project will link past and present; and in the construction of the Anglo Saxon ship will utilise the craftsmanship we associate with traditional boatbuilding skills, continued by Paul Constantine who will play a significant role in the work. We have pieces of 'reflection' from Linda Coulter and David Keeble. Robin and Gillie Whittle and Pete Clay continue their accounts of travels far and wide. You will already have noticed the autumn colours of our cover, by Cyndi Speer who is our 'Artist of the Deben'.





River Deben Association

## Chair's Report

I have very much enjoyed taking over the chair of the River Deben Association from the redoubtable Robin Whittle. I realise how much there is to learn about our beautiful river and have valued Robin's insights while I am getting to grips with my new role. While he and his wife Gillie intrepidly sail their Shrimper far and wide, in the UK and abroad, I am delighted if I get as far as Waldringfield on my Topper. Indeed, on my last three sails, the wind has died to such an extent that I have had to be rescued by various kind sailors (a big thank you to them) and towed round the fluky corner by the Tide Mill Yacht Haven. On the last, and most ignominious occasion, the rescue vehicle in question was an inflatable canoe!

### Membership

Our current membership now stands at about 800 people, which is a very significant number and adds real weight when we want to make the voice of Deben river-lovers heard. However, may I appeal to your competitive spirits – the Alde and Ore Association has around 2000 members, and I like to think that our river is no less beautiful or less loved! Please do persuade friends, family and neighbours to join. The benefits include having one of our magazines (thank-you to our editor, David Bucknell, for such an inspirational publication) in Spring and Autumn each year, an invitation to talks for members twice a year on subjects which are relevant to the river and knowing that you are contributing to a strong voice on many river-related issues.

### Committee

I am delighted to welcome Richard Verrill and Kate Laydon to the committee. Richard has recently retired as the senior partner in the Framfield House surgery in Woodbridge, and is now turning his attention from people to wildlife. You will see his first article on seals in this edition of The Deben. Kate, who has lived in Woodbridge since 2010, is a keen member of the Deben Rowing Club and has agreed to help with publicity for the Association.

I am sorry to report that both James Skellorn and Chris Woodard have resigned from the committee because of other commitments. We thank them both for their contributions to the RDA during their period of service and we also thank them for their kind offers of continuing to assist us in the future. They will continue to be regarded as "friends of the committee" and I hope that when they have more time, they will return.

You will notice from the list of officers and committee on the front page of this magazine that we are missing a Vice Chairman and Secretary. I would heartily welcome a chat with anyone who would like to fill one of those roles, or who would be interested in joining the

committee in a more general capacity. We meet every two months and are a genial bunch – the only qualification you need is to care about the river and be prepared to contribute to our activities, so please give me a ring.

## **Planning Applications**

Melton Hill: Along with more than 320 others, the River Deben Association objected to the proposed development of 100 residential units and other buildings on the site of the former council offices at Melton Hill. The site borders an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is opposite the Anglo-Saxon burial site at Sutton Hoo. In our view the application does not respond to such a special location as it is insensitive to the estuary topography, is very obtrusive and does not aesthetically, or in its scale sit, comfortably within the riverscape. The height of the development towers above other buildings in the neighbourhood, precludes any views of trees behind the buildings, and excessively dominates views from the river for sailors, rowers, canoeists and other river users, and the river path for walkers and joggers. We provided mocked-up photos which showed our estimate of the scale of the proposed new buildings compared to the current council offices. In addition, we pointed out the impact of the development on light pollution and on the parking problems of Woodbridge. I am very sorry to report that, despite a highly co-ordinated effort on the part of the objectors, the planning committee approved the application on 13th October, 2017 - a sad day indeed for our town and our river.

Candlest Road, Felixstowe: The Secretary of State ruled in favour of the developer, despite objections from the River Deben Association and others.

## **Deben Estuary Partnership and River Walls**

The Environment Agency has invested in the upgrading the flood defence wall at Woodbridge and strengthened the Felixstowe Ferry Cross wall. Works are planned to repair the defences along a section of the river bank west of Shottisham which is necessary to maintain the original height and keep the intended standard of protection of 1 in 75 years for the benefit of farm land, abstraction points and the low-lying meadows which stretch up as far as the village. The Environment Agency is currently in the final stages of awarding contracts to do the work.

The project for planning work at Bawdsey Marshes (known as Flood Cell 1) is still in the conception phase. There is unlikely to be any funding from the government because so few properties are in the floodplain, so funding will be required from landowners and other interested parties. Guidance from planners (together with the views and housing needs of local communities) is being considered to assess the level of funding possible from enabling development.

The DEP, in partnership with the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB unit, is supporting a study to map the levels of tranquillity across the estuary. It has also helped to find additional funding to support a winter timetable for the ferry boat between Bawdsey Quay and Felixstowe Ferry and a new "dial-a-ride" service is being trialled. The details of this can be found in the magazine.

## **Saltmarshes**

RDA Saltmarsh Research Group paper: The RDA Saltmarsh Research Group has prepared a paper which attempts to record the situation on the River Deben in relation to the condition of saltmarshes, an analysis of work undertaken to restore them, and suggestions for future

restoration projects. A copy of the full paper is on the website.

**Suffolk Saltmarsh Project Board:** The RDA is a member of this project board, which has been set up to oversee a bid to the Sustainable Development Fund and put together a clear project plan. In addition to educating the general public as to saltmarshes, the Board is developing a set of 'values' for the Deben marshes (as flood defence, carbon sink, habitat, fish nursery, landscape feature, etc) through a team of academic experts and exploring whether the beneficial use of dredgings could be a tool for restoration in the estuary.

### **Suffolk Coast Forum**

The Suffolk Coast Forum brings together a partnership of statutory agencies, authorities, community groups and other key players involved in the management of the coast, estuaries and hinterland and meets on a regular basis. On 6th October, they convened their 6th annual conference, this year on the topic of valuing our coast. As ever, this event presented an excellent opportunity to meet experts in the fields which interest the Association, such as understanding the value of natural capital on our coast and estuaries and considering the role of agriculture.

### **England Coastal Path**

As part of their work on making a coastal path around England, Natural England has begun to investigate how to improve access between Felixstowe Ferry and Bawdsey. This new access is expected to be ready in 2020. It is holding discussions with national and local organisations, as well as owners and occupiers of land that might be affected, to assess the problems, opportunities and constraints for improving access along this stretch of land.

### **Website**

We have undertaken a re-vamp of our website, partly to update all the material on it, but also to make it more compatible for use with phones and tablets. We are hoping to put more news items on the website, and if you have any suggestions for further improvements or material, please do get in touch. My grateful thanks to Alan Comber, our website administrator, who has done a lot of work to make the website look and feel much more user-friendly.

### **Autumn Open Meeting**

I am delighted to welcome Karen Thomas from the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board to give our autumn talk on saltmarshes on Friday 8th December at 7.30 p.m. in the Woodbridge Community Hall. This is a topic of enormous importance to our river, and for that reason we will not just be inviting all the RDA members, but also representatives from local parishes and organisations who have an interest in the Deben and its well-being. Be there early to get the best seat!

Sarah Zins

# News From the Hards

## Dreams of a ship in the clouds? Not any more !

Imagine.... a ship, powered by 40 expert oarsmen, surging down our river, through the old meanders and past old settlements. Don't just imagine – see it, in real life; a 30-yard long Anglo-Saxon ship, the King's ship, will be built in the Longshed over three years, starting in 2018, before being launched on to the Deben for sea-trials.

Woodbridge Riverside Trust is not bound to undertake a prescribed set of activities and doesn't have high outgoings; it has energy and imagination to create adventurous and informative projects that bring maritime heritage to life for anyone who wants to take part. With willingness to take the risk of aiming high, that gives us freedom to do something special with the fantastic facilities that the Longshed offers.

The Ship is something of national importance and breath-taking excitement. It will dwarf every other vessel any of us have seen on this river – it is going to add so much to our knowledge of our maritime past, the lives of Anglo-Saxons and our understanding of our place in the world. The project is backed by experts - archaeologists from York and Southampton Universities and the National Trust, marine architects and shipbuilders.

We will be building on success and potential: The King's River production was performed to an audience of 1350 last July. 200 people took part as performers and volunteers. We have taken the project to build the 92-foot-long Sutton Hoo royal Ship beyond discussion to digital modelling and planning stages, and are already expanding understanding of the ship and the way it was constructed. A new documentary film 'Life on The Deben' is being launched at the Riverside Theatre on December 3 and 10; the material that Tim Curtis and John McCarthy have found is, in John's words, "magical". The film shows just how much there is to understand about the heritage of the Deben and how the landscape and the lives of the people around it have evolved.

With support from Suffolk Coastal District Council and the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights, the first ship-build project in the Longshed will create a series of four oar rowing skiffs and enable the setting up of a new Woodbridge Coastal



Rowing Club. For people who don't want to take to the water there will be opportunities to explore exhibitions and hands on activities linked to projects in the workshop.

We are a charity and we are solvent, but we do need more resources to make all our ideas happen. We have been awarded some considerable grants and awards

already – the latest towards a lift so that disabled volunteers and visitors can access the mezzanine. The more resources we raise the faster and better we will realise the potential of the facilities on offer in the Longshed.

You can find out how to support us at <https://www.woodbridgeriversidetrust.org>. Let us know what you think about projects already planned and suggest ideas for others. Some people may have once thought plans for community boatbuilding at Whisstocks was a pipe dream. It isn't castles in the air – or rather ships in the clouds – but reality. We have momentum!

Annie Leech

## The Longshed Maritime Heritage Centre

Work on the 5500 sq ft Longshed with its associated mezzanine floor is expected to be completed by the end of November and the lease signed shortly after. The overarching charity will be the Woodbridge Riverside Trust which will oversee the various projects. One of these will be 'The Ships Company', which will coordinate



*Above: Longshed October 2017.  
Photo: Annie Leech*



*Left: digital image showing the interior of the Longshed with boatbuilding projects in the workshop and maritime heritage activities in the gallery above.*

the research and building of the 92' replica of the Sutton Hoo Longship. Trustees of 'The Ships Company' are Andrew Fitzgerald, Martin Carver and Peter Clay.

## RDA Saltmarsh Research Group Report

The Group had its second meeting on 1st September 2017.

Measurements of the saltmarsh at both Loder's Cut Island and Waldringfield have continued.

There are still many aspects of the erosion of saltmarshes in the River Deben that are not understood but already there are some significant results from the current surveys which are indisputable:

- The surface level of the saltmarsh is essentially flat and rising at the same rate as the relative sea level rise (3.5mm/yr).
- The erosion of the saltmarsh cliff face, inland from the river channel, is significant (up to

20mm/yr in places).

- Creating a sill 200mm below the level of the saltmarsh to restrict the flow of water in the saltmarsh channels (inland from the main river channel) allows natural sediment to accrete upstream of the sill at a significant rate (up to 25mm/yr).

The rapid erosion of the saltmarsh cliff, inland from the river channel, is considered to be caused by the large number of tunnels which have been created at many levels of the saltmarsh cliff. These have reduced the integrity of the wall face and subsequently the remaining parts of the wall have collapsed or been washed away by the tide currents. It is understood that the tunnels are created by shore crabs.

Robert Simper and I have recently written a paper about Saltmarsh Restoration on the River Deben. The information in this paper has been gathered from many sources and provides a record of the restoration work carried out over the last decade. It considers the current state of the saltmarshes and gives some possible reasons for their deterioration, together with other observations. Proposals are made for a possible trial to help restore badly eroded areas. A copy of this paper can be found on the RDA Web Site - <http://www.riverdeben.org>.

Comments to me: [robin.whittle@btinternet.com](mailto:robin.whittle@btinternet.com) will be welcome.

Robin Whittle

## Across the River

This winter has seen the introduction of a 'dial a ride' service from Felixstowe Ferry - Bawdsey Quay. Financial support has been received from Suffolk Coasts and Heaths, SCDC, Bawdsey Parish Council, local councillors and Felixstowe Ferry residents and if the service is to continue, it must be well used.

Book your trip the day before you wish to travel by ringing Felixstowe Ferry Boatyard during business hours on 07709 411511



## Trips on the River

This winter John Barber (pictured above in the Ferry) will be running river trips in *Tracey Jane*. These will include bird and wildlife watching, fishing and just enjoying the river in general.

John is exceptionally experienced and knowledgeable about the river. So if you want to get afloat ring John on 07780735604.



## Archeological Excavations at Bawdsey

Scottish Power, responsible for East Anglia One, has identified key sites for archeological exploration along the route from the sea to Bramford, including two sites at Bawdsey.

'At the first site, the earliest evidence of activity comprises three large circular ring ditches dating to the Bronze Age period that probably represent the remnant of ploughed out burial mounds. The next phase of activity is in the late Iron Age/early Roman period with intensive agricultural activity in the form of enclosure and field boundary ditches.

A number of pits, along with vast amounts of pottery and animal bone, suggest people were living on the site during this time.

The site then falls out of use for the next 800-1000 years and is re-occupied in the medieval period, where a number of enclosure ditches and pits are dug, relating to commercial activity close to the River Deben.



At the second site, there are the partial remains of four enclosures, all of which date to the medieval period. Currently, occupation looks to have started in the 12th century and continued into the late 15th century. One enclosure appears to be domestic in nature, while the other three all look more industrial. There is very little evidence to indicate what processes were taking place, although as with the first site, these processes likely related to commercial activity along the river.

There are also a number of small curvilinear structures between two of the enclosures which are thought to relate to animal husbandry and crop processing. Excavations will continue until the investigations are complete and signed off by Suffolk County Council Archeologists.' - *Nikki Berry, Scottish Power.*

Work on the 'haul roads' of East Anglia One is under-way and a large swathe of top-soil has been removed across the marshes towards the river.



## Richard Verrill

### Seals on the River Deben

I first sailed on the River Deben 30 years ago and was fascinated when a seal appeared to join the start of a dinghy race at Waldringfield. This was not the only time I experienced seals on the start. They appeared to be as curious of the sailors as we were about them. Ever since I have delighted at seeing seals on our river and decided I needed to know more about them.

#### Seals in Britain

There are different seal types that can be seen in Britain but the only seals that breed in UK waters are the Grey Seal and the Common or Harbour Seal. In the Deben the predominant species is the Common Seal. Despite the name it is estimated that nationally numbers of Grey Seals are greater than the Common Seal. The Zoological Society in London (ZSL) have been surveying seal numbers in the Thames Estuary since 2004 and have found a decline in the proportion of Common Seals and an increase in Grey Seals. In their 2016 survey 964 Common Seals and 1552 Grey Seals were counted.

#### How to tell a Grey from a Common Seal



Common Seal at Hemley August 2017



Grey Seal note flat head and parallel nostrils

	Grey Seal	Common or Harbour Seal
Size		
Adult length	1.8 - 2.1 m.	1.3 -1.9 m
Adult weight	105-310 kg.	60-150 kg.
Pup Length at birth	90-105 cm.	65-100 cm.
Pup weight at birth	11-20 kg.	8-12 kg.

#### Coat Pelage

Despite the name Grey Seals are not necessarily grey and can vary from reddish brown to black. Overlying their background colour are darker patches and spots which are seen more on their upper side. Common Seals are usually light or dark grey or brown but may take on a red colour when exposed to iron oxides in mud. Overlying their background colour they tend to have finer spots than the Grey Seal.



## Head Shape

Grey Seals have a convex or flat head shape with a long muzzle and eyes, approximately mid way between the tip of the muzzle and the back of the head. The nostrils are classically parallel like the number 11. Common Seals have a concave head shape with a shorter muzzle and eyes placed more forward on the head, giving them a 'cat like' appearance. The nostrils are arranged in a 'V' shape



## Behaviour

As many will have noticed seals are innately curious and will often appear close to a boat, hanging upright in the water, to get a better view. This habit is appropriately named 'bottling'. There are some reports of seals being so curious that they have climbed onto boats as they were passing. Grey Seals often haul out in large numbers and are relatively tolerant of human approach. Common Seals haul out in smaller groups and are more timid, they will usually take to the water when approached. Both species of seal have favoured haul out spots. These spots are usually placed away from any land predators, close to deep water, near food sources and offering some protection from weather and seas. Zoological Society London has tagged seals in the Thames Estuary and found that most will stay within 20-30 miles of their favoured haul out sites, but others will have a much larger range. Seals tend to use the same haul out spots throughout the year. They have variable habits about their grazing depths, anywhere between 10 and 60 metres.

## Diet

Grey and Common Seals have similar diets and are opportunistic feeders, changing their diet with what is available. The majority of their intake is fish and they feed heavily on sand eel, herring and flat fish. They will also feed on crabs, lobsters and squid. Grey Seals have also been reported eating an occasional sea bird.

## Lifecycle

Grey seals pup between September and December and the pup will not take to the water for 3-4 weeks. Common Seals pup usually in June or July. They are born with an adult coat and are able to take to the water almost immediately. Seals are



born on land and are suckled by their mother for 3-4 weeks in Grey Seals, and for Common Seals up to six weeks. Observations of seals in labour suggest that from the first sign of contraction to the delivery of the pup is usually only five minutes. Seal milk contains 60% fat and the pup will rapidly gain weight, doubling or trebling their birth weight at one month old. Once weaned, both species seal become independent. The mother usually mates again after weaning to give birth the following year. Seals become sexually mature once they have attained an adult weight; cows tend to do this earlier than bulls but most will be mature between three and seven years.

Having seen a heavily pregnant Common Seal at Hemley, one week later I saw her with a new born pup. Unfortunately, I did not have a long lens camera with me and I did not want to disturb her by getting too close. In August she was in the same spot with a youngster, which I assumed was her pup.

### **Threats**

Culling seals was made illegal in 1970 (Conservation of Seals Act) but it is still legal to kill seals with a high powered rifle if they are damaging fishing nets or tackle.

### **Food stocks**

Fish numbers and sizes have declined rapidly in the last 20 years, and many



Common seal cow with youngster at Hemley 2017

fish historically found in the Deben have been under threat. Bass stocks have been in decline for some years, and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) recommended in June last year that there should be a complete ban on Bass fishing. Eel numbers are estimated to have declined by 95% internationally.

### **Disease**

Harbour Seals are susceptible to Phocine distemper virus and epidemics in 1988 and in 2002 were blamed for the deaths of approximately half of the Common Seal population on each occasion.

### **Deben Seal Numbers**

Anecdotally, the numbers of seals seen in the Deben appears to be in decline. At the end of July, on the RDA



website, we asked for public help to spot seals during August and September and the response has been very low. Surveying the river in these months I have only been able to identify four different seals. There may well be a problem with under reporting, but I suspect our numbers have declined. The population of seals in the Walton Backwaters is increasing and on a recent trip I was able to count over 100. This disparity, considering the proximity and similar habitat, is unexplained. The RDA will continue to monitor our seal population and hope that they will remain as a fascinating part of our wildlife.

## Sharing and Caring Seal

We were on a mooring by Wrabness. It was 2.30 am. My partner, Dorthe heard some noises outside the boat. 'There's something happening outside. I think someone's in the dinghy. You have a look.' For some reason, perhaps because she is a Dane and feels she may have to leave, in her dreams she thought it might be an asylum seeker. She began to think how she could help.

I went out and saw these sleepy eyes looking mournfully at me from the 'inflateable' moored on the side of the boat. After taking in the fact that a seal was lounging in the 'inflateable', I was a bit concerned because I thought he might capsize it. He seemed huge and was draped over one side. I tried to engage him and suggested he might leave. This did not go down well and he showed no signs of moving. In the end I got the boathook and gave him a gentle prod. This incensed him and he rose up on his flippers snarling and baring his teeth. 'What right have you got with your big yacht to throw me off. Get a life!' Eventually, I managed to shake the dinghy to the point where he reluctantly left with a resounding splash. After all this drama we eventually went back to sleep.



No sooner had we nodded off when Dorthe said 'I think he's back!' And there he was back on the side of the flabby. Having got him off once more, we raised the dinghy, much to his chagrin.

David Bucknell

## Exploring the Irish Inland Waterways in a Cornish Shrimper

The long winter evenings provided planning time, and we purchased Ordnance Survey maps and contacted Waterways Ireland for the necessary Registration and Licence, that we needed in order to sail on the Irish waterways.



We arrived at Rosslare on the ferry from Fishguard at 6.30am on 10th May, with the sun rising on a beautiful morning with wisps of mist floating over the fields. It was quite a long drive to Killaloe-Ballina just north of Limerick, through beautiful lush green countryside. We were impressed by how tidy and well kept the roadside and houses and farms were; everywhere looked prosperous and the fields were full of well fed cows and sheep with their lambs.

At Ballina we found a very good slipway, and the surrounding trees were full of birds singing, so it was a pleasant place

to rig and launch in the sunshine. We left the car and trailer across the bridge in a Killaloe parking area by the river and then visited St.Flannan's Cathedral, simple and attractive inside, fairly dark with narrow slit windows, and with a couple of fine Romanesque doorways.

Once launched into the Shannon we had a short sail down river to Parteen Villa Weir – not much wind but lovely in the sunshine, returning to the pontoon by Killaloe bridge for the night – a popular place for school children, chattering and splashing, in competition with the very noisy rooks

Killaloe Bridge





in the trees across the river! All went quiet as the cool of the evening arrived and we visited the nearby Flannigan's Guinness Bar to get into the Irish mood!

The next morning our first of many mast-lowering exercises was to get under Killaloe bridge, and we started off northwards on our trip up the Shannon into the huge Lough Derg (26 miles by 3-4 miles); not with the prevailing south westerly wind we had hoped for, but with a chilly wind from the north. A very pleasant gentle sail, tacking through the brown peaty water, with hills either side, patchworked with vivid green fields and woods, with swathes of yellow gorse, steeper blue/grey hills rose behind in the distance.

We saw many ducks with fluffy baby ducklings and heard our first cuckoo (of many). Our first stop was at Holy Island – a calm, peaceful place with a lot of history in its ruined stone buildings and its graveyard. Lovely clumps of narcissi growing wild amongst the grass and buttercups, swallows swooping everywhere.



We sailed half way up the Lough to Dromineer, the home of the Shannon One Design dinghies. This was a significant stop as it was here that we met 'Blue' a very fine basset hound, and taking him for his walk was Tom Bailey, Vice-Commodore of Lough Erne Yacht Club. We invited him on board for a drink and quickly became friends. The significance was that two days later our engine, which had been troublesome since we started our trip, finally gave up as we limped into Athlone Marina. On hearing of our plight, Tom travelled down from his home town of Enniskillen, a two and a half hour drive away, to bring us his engine which was the same make as ours. The generous loan of this engine enabled us to continue with the rest of our three week trip in Ireland.

From Lough Derg we continued up the Shannon, with reeds lining the flat green water meadows around. The weather was amazingly fickle – one minute blue sky, puffy white clouds; the next dark black clouds and torrential rain: green sunny views changing to grey and wet and back again. We had come prepared for wet weather, but had not expected it to be so cold. At many places along the whole trip we came across the remains of ancient holy sites. Chlonmacnoise Monastery, situated almost in the middle of Ireland, was one of the largest. Its influence spread far across Europe. It became the first international university where the lowercase alphabet was created.

We moved steadily on negotiating low bridges and through locks. The lockkeepers, all very pleasant and cheery, have a good system of collecting the boat's ropes, using a long pole with a hook on the end which avoids the tiresome and often

unsuccessful job of throwing the ropes up. The towns and villages we stopped at, all had well maintained pontoons and good loos and showers. These were operated by Smart Cards which could be purchased from Waterways Ireland and local shops.

Our next large lough was Lough Ree where we had an unpleasant sail in a Force 6/7, with very violent 7+ squalls coming through. After four hours we had reached the top of the lough and were very relieved to get into the calm of Lanesborough Harbour. A couple of days later we left the River Shannon and entered the 40 mile long Shannon-Erne Navigation at Leitrim. Here we had to de-rig the boat, getting the mast down onto the crutch, and the spars and sails strapped onto it in order to negotiate the 12 very low bridges. There were 16 locks which we had to operate ourselves using an efficient console and our Smart Card. The countryside became less flat: green hillocks with many trees, populated by inquisitive cows in the buttercup filled meadows, and horses. The bushes, grasses and yellow flags crowded down to the water's edge and we saw the flashing blue of six or seven kingfishers.



The Navigation led us on to the River Erne in Northern Ireland near Belturbet. Here we rigged the boat again and sailed towards Enniskillen through the Upper Erne Lough, peppered with islands big and small: some covered with trees, some pastureland grazed by cattle and sheep. The channel marks were interesting, painted red and white (keep to this side) with an identification number printed on the white side. Each mark was shown on the chart.

Tom Bailey came to greet us at Enniskillen, giving us local information and lending us charts which were invaluable for finding our way through the islands of the Lower Lough Erne. On our arrival at Lough Erne Yacht Club, Tom was there to welcome us and settle us onto a pontoon, and show us around the clubhouse. The site had been a Second World War base for Catalina flying boats. One of these located the Bismark in 1941. The original hangar is now used for storing dinghies with their masts up, and home to two dilapidated but beautiful Fairy Yachts. The RNLI have a base there which Tom helps to organise.

We spent the next few days exploring Lower Lough Erne with its 154 islands! We reached Belleek, the westernmost point of the Lough and 240 miles from our

starting point at Killaloe. Landing on White Island we discovered an interesting set of sculptures set in an ancient wall. We motored up a wooded river which took us up to Kesh, a little village at the top of the navigation channel. On returning to LEYC we revised our plans for the remaining four days of our Irish trip. We had to return the engine to Tom before leaving Lough Erne which meant that we had to collect the car and trailer from Killaloe. This took a whole day. We still intended to visit the River Barrow, which runs out at Waterford. Again Tom was very helpful getting us started on our trip at Enniskillen, which allowed us time to explore the Castle and visit Waterways Ireland in their impressive Head Office. This held a fascinating archive room of technical drawings, showing the early days of the planning and setting up of the waterways.



Our journey south was not without incident, as the torsion bar of the trailer started to fail, causing the boat to list to one side. When it had reached an angle of 30 degrees we had to stop. We were in a tiny village miles from anywhere (in the pouring rain!), but our luck held, and a passing tractor directed us to a local welder, in a ramshackle, dilapidated shed, who did an amazing job repairing the trailer. His name was Jerry, so the Tom and Jerry duo has a special significance for us! An added bonus was that we had to spend the night at a local hotel while he did the job – a welcome break from living on board for four weeks.

The following day we reached Graiguemanagh on the very beautiful River Barrow and found a clear parking area with a magnificent view out over the river and the countryside for miles around. Just the right spot for us to settle for the night. Heavy dark clouds cleared away and the sun came out, bathing our amazing view in golden light. In the morning we managed to hire bicycles and set off to explore the river along the tow path to St.Mullins monastery, another very holy place.

After two days exploring this beautiful river we set off on our return journey, crossing from Rosslare. Our visit to Ireland had been a truly remarkable experience, and has left us with memories of incredibly friendly and helpful people, living in a beautiful, green country.



# Artist of the Deben

Cyndi Speer

I have been a full time professional artist for approximately eight years now, and part time during the time my children were small.



'Steampunk Pig'. One of the pigs that I designed and painted for the St Elizabeth Hospice campaign, 'Pigs Gone Wild'.

painted and drawn, therefore upon finishing school Art College was not really in question, it was the next very natural step to take in my life.

I studied at Suffolk College, where I decided to study graphic design with a main focus on illustration. I had always loved reading

Some of my earliest memories are of sitting on the floor with paper scattered around me, losing many hours being totally absorbed in what I was working on. I have always



Sunflowers in the Wind



Freedom of the Skies

and storytelling and illustration seemed the perfect choice to tie these influences together.

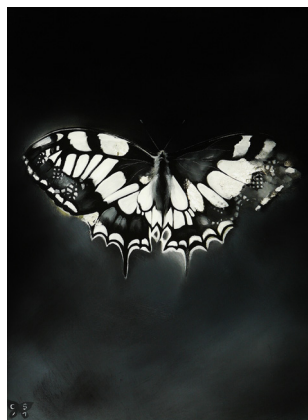
Having moved over into fine art I now work predominantly in oils. The fluid consistency of the paint seems to suit my style of working very well. Wide brushstrokes are overlain with finer, delicate detail

on many of my canvasses. My style also incorporates the use of quite bold colour together with the use of patterns that are found within



the natural landscape. The overall effect has been described as being 'dreamlike' and 'surreal'.

It would be impossible not to be inspired by the beauty of our Suffolk countryside, and the nature that is held within it. I like to take my camera with me wherever I go, and just snap away. My work does not necessarily portray one particular viewpoint, but incorporates many features that are brought together to form a composition. In particular, a vital part of bringing a painting to life is to paint with music playing. A more melancholic piece of music leads to my paint palette being more restricted in tone, whilst music that 'lifts the spirits', influences warm and vibrant colours. Therefore music around me is vital for me as an artist, although my singing voice is fit only for the dogs to hear.



Papillion III

My work is always evolving and I now search for raw materials to add in with my oils. Currently, I am incorporating the use of metal leaf in conjunction with the use of traditional oil paints and I am exploring how the refined pigments of oils are complimented by metallic hues.



Unforgotten Fields

Sutton Hoo has been a favourite place for me to draw inspiration from. The River Deben and its very close proximity to this ancient site has been a very great influence on my work over the years. The site is very

beautiful, and tied with the mystery and wonderful craftsmanship of the treasure that was uncovered there, has been an on-going fascination that is always with me.

Of course all of the seasons hold their own beauty in Suffolk, but the early part of summer has for me to be the defining moment of the year. The long warm days and exuberant colours! I have long wished to be able to 'bottle' and keep forever the smell of our hay fields, freshly cut, so that over the darker winter months I may be reminded of what we have to come, the glory of summer.

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## 'Boats of the Deben'

### *Starship, Moonbeams and Paul Constantine*

Paul Constantine is a key player in the Anglo Saxon ship project. While he is researching the design details of the ship, he will play a key role in the construction. When you talk to Paul about his career it is easy to see why he is the right person to play a leading role in the project.

Paul studied technical engineering at Loughborough College and for many years taught technical studies in a Woodbridge school. At the same time he was heavily involved teaching sailing skills at the Deben Water Sports Centre where he was the Chief Sailing Instructor, becoming an RYA Coach and RYA Yachtmaster and later teaching the skills of cruising.

Paul says he can't remember dates but he remembers everything about boats. He keeps a meticulous record of the boats and projects he is involved with.

After cruising extensively in a Wayfarer dinghy and a 23' trimaran, Paul decided to build *Starship* a 35' X 22' trimaran in his garden, while his children were young, in anticipation that the family would need a larger boat. Paul learned boatbuilding skills from his own experience of building canoes and dinghies and on placement during his holidays with Frank Knights and Derek Kelsall. He



*Starship*

learned the 'vacuum foam sandwich' technique from Kelsall and this formed the basis for *Starship*; although he had to find his own way without a full set of plans. At one point in Paul's career he worked as the technical advisor to a firm making sheds and garages. He says he learned how a building could be made in sections and this helped him in designing and building *Starship*. He also knew how, if necessary, each part of the boat, if it got damaged, could be replaced.

In the mid '80s Paul was a member of MOCRA, the Multihull Offshore Cruising Association. He learned all about multihulls from the more experienced and renowned members. He began writing for the Multihull International magazine and gradually his writing interests have developed.

Paul could not afford to stop work and got the idea of an extended cruise round

Britain, during his holidays, which would form the basis for articles submitted to the magazine. He encouraged his students to build on their theoretical experience by accompanying him on different parts of the journey. He wrote up the journey in such a way as to encourage readers to join up and be part of the 'story' they were reading about.

The journey took four years and Paul's account was published in 86 episodes, which have been assembled in the book 'Serial Starship' published in 2014. Paul is an excellent writer who communicates the emotions, challenges and logistics of undertaking such a trip, as well as the gales and mishaps he endured. The book is a must read for anyone interested in off-shore cruising.

*Starship* was sold in 1995 and after a series of modifications, including removing the bow buoyancy compartment, was wrecked off Portland Harbour in 2013. Paul has watched the video of the sinking and knows how *Starship* could have been rescued, and even refloated after the sinking. It must have been a massive loss to take, having known and constructed every inch of the boat.

Before *Starship* was sold Paul was already constructing a smaller trimaran, *Moonbeams*.

Paul was aware of how cruising could be extended by being able to trail a boat to distant parts without having the anxiety and a difficulty of sailing the boat back.

Working with him was

Paul Brown, who went on to build *Wakey Wakey* (See The Deben 47 for an account.) Watching Paul 'deconstruct' *Moonbeams* in Mel Skeet's boatyard you realise how all his skills have been utilised in the design and build of *Moonbeams* which is now moored off Robertson's.

'The most unusual feature is the swing rig. 'The whole boat is a collection of experimental ideas some of which needed much evolving to make them work. Experienced sailors, new to the boat, find the rig the most innovative and useful feature.' In the picture is the reaching sail that '..doubles our speed off wind in light conditions. The lifting bowsprit is seen in the picture of *Moonbeams* motoring.'



*Moonbeams* on its trailer.  
Paul on left of picture



Paul's knowledge, experience and interest in all types of boat and boatbuilding techniques, together with his ability to organise, teach, write and communicate make him an ideal person to play a major role in the construction of the Sutton Hoo ship replica.

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## Lost and Found No 18 Seve(r)n Trent Water

Some of you will have seen this 16' Troutfisher washed up on the beach between Bawdsey and East Lane. I assumed from the visible markings that it had originated from 'Seven' Trent Water, probably located in Bristol. Maybe like me you wondered, 'Could it really have drifted all the way from



Bristol?' Also like me you may have contacted *Severn* Trent Water. The story is probably less romantic. The helpful staff of *Severn* (not *Seven*) Trent Water looked into the history of the boat. Apparently this was a fishing boat, used as part of a fishing business on Carsington Reservoir which



is in Derbyshire. When the business was sold the boats were sold with the business. It is known that the boat was first sold in the area, but where it has been since then is not known. Do you know how it got to Bawdsey beach?

**David Bucknell**

(Ed. More research, less imagination next time.)





# *Deben Reflections*

Linda Coulter (nee Wilde)

## **Memories of Waldringfield in the '40s and '50s**

When I think back to childhood and those hot summer days in Waldringfield, yes, it was always hot. Smells and sounds come tumbling back. Voices from the river, laughter, boat engines, the starter gun, green seaweed, strange muddy whiffs, the sour smell of beer from the pub and in their backyard the horrid lavatories, the crank of the water pump, our only source of water; it had to be primed from the top to make the water come through. Dark yellow sticky sand that stained knees and clothes. Innocent days of no fear of danger, freedom, adventure and the natural eventual mess of mud and sand; getting into everything from, toes, sandals, and pants, our hair stiff with salty air. Kids with backs burnt by the sun, skin peeling off like rice paper.

My parents, Eric and Dulcie (Dinky or Dink) Wilde, had a caravan on 'the top', which is now the car park. In the '40s & '50s people could keep caravans there, just a few parked around the edge of the field. Giles the cartoonist had a caravan with a drop down window out the side, very futuristic for the time, but I can't remember ever seeing it occupied. There was a pretty gypsy caravan in a prime spot near the cliff, no one ever used that either as far as I can recall. Families came every year to Waldringfield, we all knew each other. Most had boats and were sailing families. Names I can remember are: Wells, Adams, Spear, Hawks, Porter, Nunn, Emuss, Mossman, Palmer, Waller, Turner, Philips, Sudell, Tricker and Richardson. There were many more but after 69 odd years it is hard to remember.



Father was in the timber trade so our caravan was made of wood. He designed it and had it made at the firm William Browns of Ipswich. It was built with oiled cedar timbers running horizontally on the outside, the inside was lined with varnished pine and had lattice windows, it was warm and comfortable. People liked to be rude about it and joked it was a chicken hut. We didn't care. One day, a little boy who had been dared by his family, knocked on the door and asked if we had any eggs. My mother, tongue in cheek said "Yes, dear" and she fetched him an egg and gave it to him. When he had gone we roared with laughter.

Grace and Albert Hill ran the 'Maybush'. Grace wore thick red lipstick, and always managed to work with a cigarette in her mouth, which bobbed up and down as she talked. I thought that very sophisticated. As children we knew Albert, he stood no nonsense from anyone. He seemed to growl about the place and glare about him, as if looking to discover trouble. If children saw Albert coming they scattered or froze like rabbits caught in the head lights. He wore a trilby hat down over his eyes, had a walking stick or quite often a shot gun and liver and white spaniel at his heels. One year he had a patch over his eye which made him look even more terrifying. When Grace died he kept her ashes in the wardrobe and every night before he climbed into bed, he would bang, bang, heavily on the wardrobe door and say "Are you a'right in there old dear?"



Running free as we did, I suppose danger was there in all it's guises but avoided us somehow. The river wall with the marshes covered in Sea Lavender was a playground of sorts, where I was dared to jump into the muddy mire, but didn't. Another escapade we liked, was to play around a tree at the top of the steps. A vast ancient oak with roots like fat ropes exposed way above the ground. The sandy cliff had eroded nicely, making a slide down the cliff to the beach. We threw ourselves down under and over the roots. An acrobatic obstacle course - wonderful, we would get filthy. This would keep us occupied for hours on end. I believe the health and safety bandits have blocked this off now. In fact it looks as if the path down the cliff has been altered more than four times since then.

Father had a yacht called *Sixpence* he kept on the river, he would take part in races for days on end to Ostend, Harwich to the Hook of Holland and further afield. One time he and his



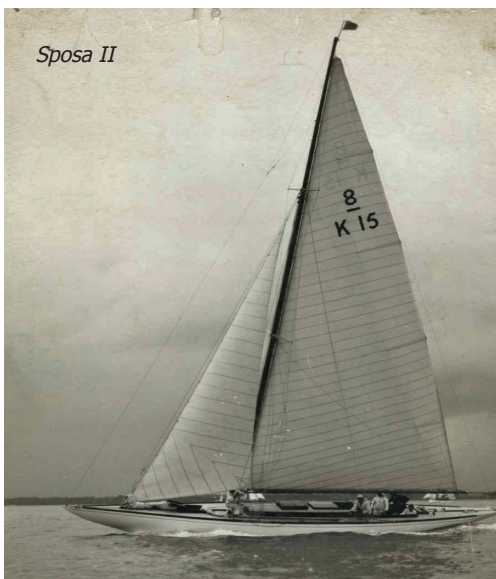
crew, Harry Warner, John Warner and Wilfred Underwood, had to ride out a storm for two days at sea. Other times Dr Roy Webb and Tommy Thompson were on board. Father always brought back a little basket weave box of chocolates, nestling in straw in the shapes of fish, shrimps and shells. It was the 1940s and sweets did not feature very often. *Sixpence* had been built by Kings Boat Yard in Pin Mill. On watching it being built and admiring the curves, my father marvelled at how on earth they did it, getting the even sides. King raised his eyes to Father and tapped his nose, "By eye, I do it all by eye." he said.



I had a small dinghy of my own when I was about seven years old and loved rowing it up and down. It was a great source of fun for our little gang of horrors.

I remember one day Waldringfield was inundated with a swarm of Ladybirds. The water was covered in thousands of them. The children of course thought it was wonderful and we waded into the water with arms outstretched to rescue them. Loaded with beetles we carried them up to the grass bank by the Club House and brushed them off - load after load. A small girl sat on the bank, slowly and solemnly she was picking them up and putting them in her mouth, she was eating them. Her mouth was a mash of black, red and yellow. When exhausted with this game of rescue we scrambled up the steps to 'the top' and met the girls mother on the way down. "Your little girl is eating Ladybirds" we said. "Nonsense," was her reply and she swept down to the beach in a huff. I would have loved to have seen her face when she found her beastly child.

Regatta week was the highlight of the summer - days of races. I expect life is much the same now. The starting



gun seemed to go on all day. There was a 'sculling' race which George Turner always won. Greasy pole, running races, sandcastle competitions for the children. Felix Porter was very good at chalking up notices of events on the blackboard; he couldn't resist doing little cartoons to illustrate the event. Later when Felix retired the whole family moved to Aberystwyth to set up a new business running a holiday camp. My cousin David didn't want to go at all and I believe he left one or two broken hearts behind.

The clubhouse looks very different now, but way back in about the early 50s the first extension was built. Club members helped mix the cement foundations. Men clumped over planks of wood with wheelbarrows smoking pipes. I think John Palmer's father is among them somewhere in a cine film. The new clubhouse has swallowed up all that now, and looks very splendid.

In 1953 Father had bought a bigger yacht and built a bigger caravan. Our old 'hen house' caravan ended up at Andy Mayhew's 'Sheep Drift Farm' for the men to make tea in. The new boat was a slippery racer called *Sposa II* he won many races with her. If my father saw a boat on the horizon he would just have to overtake her, he was fiercely competitive. We decamped to Pin Mill. *Sposa*



*II*'s keel was quite deep for the Deben- coming over the bar at Felixstowe Ferry was difficult. I remember being put in charge of reading the depth meter and shouting out the depth. My young head filled with tales of being stuck on the sand banks, tipping sideways, filling with water, the boat would be salvaged and lost or cost a fortune to get back, people drowned, sucked under, swept back out to sea. With all this buzzing in my head, I counted the depth, feeling very green and legs turning to jelly with the worry. I expect it was just a big tease, but frightening over that dreaded bar.

My parents retired to Waldringfield in 1971, to 'Whitegates' on the corner of Church Road and Cliff Road. Father bought a one man sailing yacht called '*Jack*.' and built yet another caravan, his pride and joy. This, he accidentally set fire to a few years later, in the garden. Three fire engines came to the rescue, black smoke could be seen for miles..... Happy days!



Richard Keeble

## Swimming in the Deben

I was given a copy of The Deben (No. 53 Autumn 2015 edition) recently, and the content of the opening paragraph of the Editorial, reflecting on the emotions stirred by childhood and teenage memories, brought back my own recollections of many school summer holidays spent lazing and larking about around the bandstand and yacht pond area and swimming in the Deben from the jetty opposite the bandstand.



This was of course before the swimming pool was in use and my recollections were of endless hot summer days (which they probably were not!) and many of the local lads, I don't recall many girls, spending a considerable amount of time enjoying the river and I suspect generally being a nuisance. Before I mastered the art of swimming I, along with several others, used to play in the yacht pond until we felt confident enough to venture into the river off the jetty along with the 'big' boys. I do recall that the area was very popular with local people and my memory tells me it was always quite busy. The Sunday afternoon concerts by the Woodbridge Excelsior band were also a popular event as was the nine hole putting green alongside the old Tea Hut.

Before I was old enough to venture forth on my own I was often taken down to the so-called beach area, by my parents. This was the sandy shore-line to the dock area opposite Frank Knight's accommodation; sadly now it seems it is not maintained as a beach but has become a storage area for dinghies. I can also recall being taken by



my parents across the river on the ferry (rowed at low tide and by the small motorised open boat at high tide). We would then walk to an area below the pine trees where there was a beach of sorts, not sand but mostly red crag, which was approximately opposite the entrance to the marina. Although there was



an outdoor swimming pool at the bottom of Lime Kiln Quay near Robertson's Boatyard before the 2nd World War, serviced by the tide, swimming in the river was common place for many local people and the attached photograph shows my Grandmother, Uncle and Great Aunt et al, swimming in the Deben in around 1930.

I have continued to enjoy the river over the years in various ways, from canoeing with the old Youth Club and then a group of us, several from the Youth Club, were interested in scuba diving and set up a Club; subsequently becoming a British Sub Aqua Club Branch, and enlisting the help and support of Sergeant Rocky Stone, (USAF), who was attached to the 67th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS) based at RAF Woodbridge at that time. We used to hold practise sessions off the jetty opposite the bandstand, as well as diving at the rocks, as this was a relatively deep area at high tide. It provided good training for learning not to panic as most of the time the visibility was at best 12 inches and generally nil. I have also sailed and am currently a member of Deben Rowing Club and of course have never lost my interest in the fantastic birdwatching and animal life that the Deben provides.

As your Editorial states, memories are invariably subjective and those from my childhood days reflect my own perceptions of the time, but being a Woodbridge person, born and bred here I, like others, have had many hours of enjoyment from the Deben over the years and am grateful for that. I hope that it will continue to accommodate everyone whatever their chosen interest, as there is no doubt that the increasing pressures from developers and users could very easily have a hugely negative impact on what is basically a very unspoilt environment.

Pete Clay

## ***Nirvana's* 91st Year**

For many reasons 2016 turned out to be a very special year for our Deben based 91-year old yawl *Nirvana*. We started the season in the Danish port of Roskilde in Seeland where we had been made so welcome on previous occasions. From there,



in stages, we sailed up the Swedish coast and crossed to Norway. I was eager to explore new waters, and hungry for more information about how the Norwegians built their replica Viking ships. Our project in Woodbridge, to build a reconstruction of the Anglo-Saxon burial ship, was slowly making progress and we were well ahead with research; but I was keen to meet more Scandinavians who had been through the actual building process. It's a passion they are eager to share and during the total of 63 days I spent in Scandinavia in the summer of 2016 I was able to gather much useful information.

We made Sandefjord, a former whaling port, our Norwegian base and we joined a club there which is dedicated to preserving historical boats. Like-minds bridge all barriers and we enjoyed a marvellous and warm welcome there, as in Roskilde.

During the spring and summer *Nirvana* had four different crew aboard. We spent some wonderful weeks enjoying the spectacular scenery of Norway's East coast, made visits to the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo, visited the famous Oseberg and Gokstad ships and the Fram Museum. So far as I know this is the furthest north that *Nirvana* has reached in her 91 years.

I had another ambition that summer, however, to explore the 19th century Telemark canal and, as a result, I discovered one of Norway's least told stories.

The very first job to be done before contemplating this adventure was to hoist the end of a tape measure to the masthead on the flag halyard and measure down to the water level. The result was 12 metres - known as "air draught". This is of vital importance because there is a fixed bridge with 12.8 metres clearance in the canal! In "old money" this means a clearance of 30 inches. Very few modern sailing boats our size are able to sail up the Telemark canal.

The fjord west of Larvik is Langesund and at the north end is Porsgrunn a large industrial town with all the "charm" associated with cement production and limestone dust. Our journey properly starts in the canalised channel just south of Porsgrunn and Friday 19th August found us plodding up this channel under power, passing old wharfs to starboard and scruffy yachts to port. Many of these appeared to be abandoned projects - some finished and then abandoned - but all no doubt with a story to tell. "Such stuff as dreams are made of" - but sadly no more than dreams. Sights such as these can be found on any coastline, in creeks

and harbours; I was glad once again that my dream, of *Nirvana's* restoration, had come true.

Above Porsgrunn lies Skien and the first set of locks, cut out of solid granite in the 19th century, with a rise of five metres. I should say here, that this amazing feat of engineering consists of 18 locks in all with a total rise of 72 metres (236 ft) and penetrates 65 miles into Norway's countryside. The canals connect a series of lakes enabling transport of farm produce and timber down to the coast.

There's a dramatic sculpture in Skien (and many historic photographs) of men with long pike poles trying to free up the log-jams in the natural flowing stretches of river - hazardous work indeed!



There was no sign of life at the locks and we soon learned that the "season" had ended the day before. However, a phone call summoned a very cheerful lock-keeper and soon hundreds of tons of water were spewing out past *Nirvana*, lowering the level in order to let us in. After a brief moment of tuition from the lock-keeper, two ropes were dropped from above us and the gates shut behind us. As expected and feared, the hundreds of tons of water that had just been emptied out of the back of the lock, were about to be replaced from the other end. The maelstrom began, and like a toy duck in a Jacuzzi *Nirvana* was buffeted to and fro while my wife Nancy and I pushed and pulled - one second too close to the granite wall and the next sheering away from it. Surprisingly quickly and to our immense relief we'd risen the five metres and the cheerful lock-keeper was presenting us with a set of charts, a brochure and a bill for NOK.1600 (c.£160) which, quoting my log written at the time, "Seemed a fair price - just to get out of gaol."

Out in open water we were greeted with views of wooded shores and summer-houses, with lawns down to the water and little boat jetties everywhere. This long broad river is well marked and now and again there's evidence of rusting mooring posts and small docks, from the





time when it was used more commercially. The summer residences diminished progressively in number until, rounding a corner, we reached Løveid. We had already phoned ahead and received a “no problem” response from the lock keeper which, this far north in Europe, meant exactly it said. What we didn’t expect, however, when we arrived, was the 1882 pleasure steamer *Victoria*, towering above us in the lowest of the four Løveid locks. She was on her last trip south for the season, making her way through this flight of four locks, a 10.3 metres drop; the product, in the late 1850s, of gunpowder detonation and fine engineering. Following the torrent of water disgorged by the lock came the magnificent *Victoria* in all her splendour.

Our “ascension” to the next level was, as before, turbulent and scary, and when we had slowly emerged from between the last lock gates and crept down the narrow rock-faced gully into open water, we were not relishing the thought of a further 14 locks - all to be operated by hand.

It was a beautiful, quiet afternoon as we motored north up this huge lake and that evening, found a quiet anchorage behind a little island called Kjeøya. We anchored in four fathoms of crystal clear water and when the engine came to a stop there was total silence. Only twice have I had this experience - once in the Tunisian desert and once off-season on the Danish island of Anholt. Profound silence is a wonderful thing- very rare and quite moving. The season was definitely over. We saw a mere three or four boats in our whole time on the canal.

Next day - Saturday 20th August - we set off at 11 a.m., surrounded by glorious views and not

a soul in sight. Progress was a little slow with a south going current against us, as we passed Ulefoss and headed for the next canalised or dredged stretch of river, leading to the next lake. At



times, this river was very narrow and the depth varied wildly between 50 or 100 feet down to as little as nine feet. The banks were sometimes shrouded in trees and other times reedy and shallow. The river slowly widened into a lake and at last we could detect Notodden in the distance.

Next day was Sunday 21st August, and after a very wet night we got up to grey skies. We set off to find the museum, but after dithering at the roadside a girl in a car, who had just dropped off a friend tried to explain the way to us. After trying for a few moments she gave up and told us to jump in the car and she would drive us there. She drove us all the way to the old Hydro plant and museum. (This

would have been quite a hike on foot!)

So here is a question: what does Notodden have in common with the Acropolis, the Egyptian Pyramids, the Great Wall of China and the Statue of Liberty? Answer: it is, together with its neighbouring Rjukan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In 1903 Norway was going hungry and there was a worldwide need for increased food production. The process of producing fertiliser from air, known as 'nitrogen fixation', was already understood but its achievement on an industrial scale was still elusive. The solution to this impasse was to split the nitrogen molecule at 3000

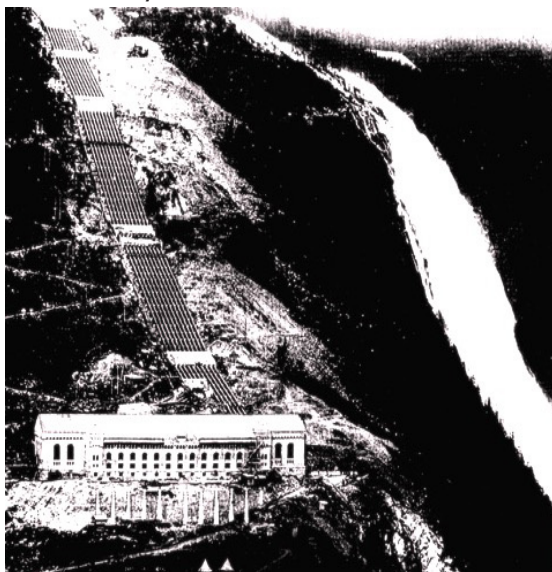
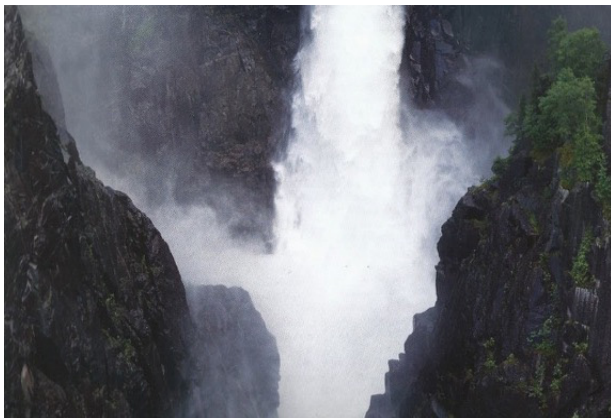
degrees celsius. Whatever industrial and financial resources Norway lacked in the early 1900s compared with other European countries, the one thing she had in superabundance was the potential for electrical power. So it was, that three ambitious men with an extraordinary dream ,came together to meet the Norwegian Minister of Finance. Sam Eyde, engineer and entrepreneur, Kristian Birkeland, physicist

and inventor, and Marcus Wallenberg, capitalist and businessman, proposed the purchase of licences to develop the waterfalls to the northwest of Notodden, and to harness the power for the production of industrial fertiliser on a vast scale. The plan was accepted and vast amounts of money borrowed.

At Rjukan, the hydro-electric falls location, a small farming community turned into a city of 10,000 people with schools, hospitals, churches, housing etc. Likewise Notodden, home of the arc-furnaces, became a huge industrial complex, complete with accommodation.

Development of the arc-furnace production of fertiliser was rapid and the demand was huge and worldwide. It is estimated the total output reached 30 million tonnes!

One of the lasting outcomes of the project was the establishment of a Union protecting workers from



the worst of the vicissitudes and gruelling hours of such a rapid and hard-driven project.

One can imagine the concentration involved, taking this exciting story on board so the tea, coffee and waffles offered at the museum afterwards were a life-saver! After a brief moment of relaxation we called a taxi to take us to the second and last major attraction at Heddal, a 'stave' church near Notodden. Entirely built of wood it boasts three spires and countless gables at differing heights and a roof covered in wooden shingles. It was built in the early 13th century and is the largest 'stave' church in Norway.

We motored south for about an hour in the evening sun and anchored in the glassy waters of a silent anchorage on the west side of Heddalsvatn.

On Monday 22nd August we got up at 06.10 in order to beat the predicted rain at 11.00. It was, however, already raining so we went back to bed for two hours! It was still very damp at 08.15 but we made good progress with the south running current in our favour.

A phone call to the lock keeper confirmed a booking for the next morning. On Tuesday as we approached the granite walled channel to the Løveid locks, a traffic-light we'd not noticed previously, obligingly turned green and the footbridge lifted to let us pass. There was no need to slow down as unseen hands facilitated our progress.

After the lock gates shut behind us I measured 75 seconds for the water to drop the seven metres to the next level. Two locks later we were on our way to Skien, where the cheery lock-keeper from last time, gave us a Telemark flag and bade us farewell till our next visit. Our fascinating canal trip was over and we were back in the waters of the fjord.

Some weeks later we laid the boat up for the winter in Sandefjord, in the care of our friendly Norwegians, confident that they would keep a close eye on her until our return. Despite memories full of spectacular views, relatively simple tide-less sailing, we shall be sailing *Nirvana* back in early summer to our mooring on the beautiful river Deben.



"Oystercatcher calls my name  
Oystercatcher calls me home"  
(Kyson Primary School)

"Sailing in waters without a tide is just as exciting as kissing your sister"



River Deben Association

**Autumn Meeting**  
Woodbridge Community Hall  
Friday 8th December 7.30 pm

**Saltmarshes – the quiet miracle of the Deben**  
**How do we value this rarest of habitats?**

A talk on saltmarshes on the Deben

**by Karen Thomas**

Water Management Alliance, East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board

Karen has been working on the East Anglian coast since 1999 and has experience of delivering a range of saltmarsh projects, including restoring marshes with dredgings and traditional techniques. She will explore the vital role of saltmarshes today, how we can value them and what their future could look like, including the important role local people can play in helping to save this special habitat for future generations.