

# The Deben

A detailed oil painting of a coastal scene. In the foreground, there's a sandy beach with some reeds or grasses on the right. A body of water, likely a harbor or bay, occupies the middle ground. A small green boat with two masts is on the water. In the background, a line of buildings and a marina with many masts are visible. Behind that, a large, rugged mountain range with patches of snow or light-colored rock dominates the upper half of the image. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds.

**Issue 63**  
**Autumn 2021**

*Ann Roberts*

# Protecting wildlife when canoeing, kayaking and paddleboarding on the Deben



- We are very fortunate that the River Deben is designated as being of international importance for wintering birds and has national protection for both breeding and wintering birds. We have brent geese, redshanks, curlews, avocets and lapwings, to name but a few.
- In order to protect our wonderful estuarine environment and its wildlife, please look at the website: [riverdeben.org/news/wildlife/protecting-wildlife-when-canoeing-kayaking-and-paddleboarding-on-the-deben](http://riverdeben.org/news/wildlife/protecting-wildlife-when-canoeing-kayaking-and-paddleboarding-on-the-deben)
- Please keep away from key breeding, roosting and feeding areas all year round.
- Please launch and land from an official slipway - there are many on the river as part of boatyards and clubs. Do not 'seal' launch your canoe or SUP over mud or saltmarsh banks, it can cause wildlife disturbance and wear away natural banks.
- Keep an eye on wildlife when you are on the water and keep a respectful distance away to avoid disturbance. If you see birds moving to take flight or hauled-out seals rapidly moving to slip into the water, you are too close and causing them stress. This can affect their survival capability.
- You can report any sighting of poor conduct and disturbance by any river user to [ProtectedSites@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:ProtectedSites@naturalengland.org.uk)
- If you would like to know more about the importance of the Deben to wildlife conservation, you can check out the sites for:

Deben Estuary Ramsar  
Deben Estuary Special Protection Area  
Deben Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest  
The Redshank in the Coast and Heaths AONB



River Deben Association



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Georgie Altham

Cover: *Woodbridge from Kyson Point* by John Roberts.

Daisy Collingridge winning the 2021 UKLA - ILCA6 (Laser Radial) National Championships. Daisy, from Waldringfield, is a member of the British Sailing Team. She is currently competing in the ILCA Senior European Championships in Bulgaria.

# Editor's Introduction

Next month (November 2021) the UK will be hosting the UN Conference on Climate Change. Locally many organisations and individuals have been wondering what positive actions they can take. The Deben saltmarshes, I learn belatedly, are not only valuable wildlife habitats and protections for our river walls, they are also carbon 'sinks'. This means they function like rainforests or mangrove swamps to absorb large quantities of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Suddenly the work of people like Robin Whittle and Richard Steward (reported in the *RDA Journal* March 2021) seems even more relevant and the continued conservation of the Deben saltmarshes a matter of importance to us all. I'm especially pleased that this edition of *The Deben* contains an article by Robin's granddaughter Hazel Whittle, explaining how a childhood on the Deben (including helping her grandfather measure saltmarshes) has developed her own environmental awareness.

We're all aware of the danger of flooding if sea levels continue to rise or climate change triggers extreme weather. River walls are the subject of a Whittle *RDA Journal* report (September 2021). In this issue Professor Mark Bailey introduces his on-going research into the historical effects of storm activity on the development of intertidal zones; Brendan Joyce, director of Suffolk and Essex Rivers Trust, describes cooperation between environmental organisations; Robert Simper writes about commercial fishing and Sarah Zins tells a rueful tale of her efforts as a fish-counting volunteer.

The headline story of river activity this summer must be the continuing rise of paddlepower (including oars). Nick Cottam celebrates the joys of kayaking, Mark and Emma Barton at Waldringfield Boatyard have diversified into stand up paddleboards, there are dragon boats

at Robertsons, Venetian rowing sessions at Woodbridge boatyard, a Cornish gig at Felixstowe Ferry. Meanwhile Waldringfield Sailing Club celebrates 100 years of competitive sailing and family pleasure. This summer they won three national championships in three weeks.

People who sail, whether they're speedy or stately, may feel smugly that they're on the right side, climate-wise. Nevertheless when one thinks about the RYA (Royal Yachting Association)'s target for 50% carbon emission reductions by 2030 and zero by 2050 one realises how challenging this will be. The use of petrol or diesel engines has become deeply embedded into boating. I make no apology for bringing Josh Masters's 'Lightning Craft' initiative to the front of this magazine as we need business innovation to enable us to achieve the necessary change.

Meanwhile, back at the RDA AGM in the spring, we made it part of our official mission to celebrate our lovely river as well as to conserve and protect it. (Sounds like old-style marriage vows!) I hope you'll agree that the contributors to this issue have succeeded once again in drawing attention to the birdlife, the natural beauty, the creative inspiration, the people and the history of the river.

Elizabeth Swift, from *Papillon*, shares this through the Forest School movement. The organisers of the Deben Summer Festival in August showcased the events of others. My personal thank you goes to the 'missionaries' from Venice and Oxford who arrived on August Bank Holiday weekend to convert us backward East Angles to the joys of forward-facing rowing. *Grazie mille!*

*Editor Julia Jones is a writer and lifelong lover of the River Deben. You can email her at [magazine@riverdeben.org](mailto:magazine@riverdeben.org).*

Matt Lis

## She's Electric

This year there has been a noticeable new hum at the boatyard as we have noticed lots of mooring holders moving to electric outboards. The drivers for change are various; frustrations with the cost and reliability of petrol outboard parts, the quietness or the odour-free convenience of a charge-at-home battery versus a can of petrol in the back of the car. For most the environmental benefits, be they noise, pollution-risk, or emissions, are a bonus rather than the deciding factor and that marks an important transition for electric outboards: no longer a fringe option for the early-adopters willing to pay over the odds, but a genuine competitor to the small outboards used by so many. I am sure that this is a change that will only continue to accelerate next season.

And so, having used an electric outboard on your tender, what of the bigger boat that you are commuting out to? Here, naturally, there has been a lag. Increasing options have been available for several years, competition has driven improvements and pricing is coming down, but affordable options for smaller yachts and launches have remained few and far between, which is where Lightning Craft and Woodbridge Boatyard are stepping in.

Lightning Craft's Founder is Josh Masters. Josh's family have been intertwined with the Deben for north of a century; his great-grandfather was a founder of Waldringfield Sailing Club and commissioned *Clytie*, perhaps our yard's



Lightning Craft

Josh Masters entering the Deben on *Bolt*.

most famous creation locally, which is still in the family and still calls 'Eversons' home.

From a chat at The Tea Hut 18 months ago, to technical development, prototyping and testing, to product launch, all here on the banks of the Deben, Josh has put together an electric drive package which brings to small yachts and launches that same democratisation of electrification that the latest generation of electric outboards have brought to dinghies and tenders. The 5kW demonstrator launch, *Bolt*, is kept at Woodbridge Boatyard and can regularly be seen silently whizzing up and down the river, so wave them down or visit Woodbridge Boatyard if you would like to learn more about moving to electric.

*Matt Lis is Manager of Woodbridge Boatyard and an RDA committee member. When he has any spare time he sails a traditional 'Eversons' dinghy.*

*For more information about Lightning Craft, visit their website: [lightningcraft.co.uk](http://lightningcraft.co.uk).*

**LIGHTNING CRAFT**

Nick Cottam

## Paddle-friendly River

There's a scene in the film *Life on the Deben* which seems to epitomize the peaceful, unhurried upriver Deben. John McCarthy, novice paddler that he is, is in a beautifully streamlined green canoe with two companions, David Truzzi-Franconi and Steve Seinet-Martin. The musical backdrop to this evocative piece of cinema is gracefully picked classical guitar, and nature in the form of trees, overhanging branches and abundant bracken allows but the narrowest passage for the three paddlers.

With this kind of example it's perhaps no surprise that canoeing, and its now even more popular variants kayaking and paddleboarding, have caught on so rapidly. For a start there's no mooring to worry about or petrol to collect for the tender or running aground and having to wait for the next tide. Most reasonably fit adults—men and women—can lift their boat into the water and simply paddle away.

'There's nothing like it,' says Neil Boast, who lives close to the river at Woodbridge, and started a River Deben Paddlers (RDP) page on Facebook which now has over 1700 Friends. 'You get out on the water and you're there, close to nature and all the wildlife. It's a fantastic way

to experience the river.' The paddlers share all manner of information about the Deben and where to paddle safely and responsibly without disturbing its natural beauty or its wildlife. 'I don't want to see selfies,' says Neil, 'but practical information on the right kit and personal experiences of where to launch and what routes to take—up and downriver.'

Responsible paddling—whether it's giving a wide berth to nesting birds or as the paddlers do, picking up litter from time to time—is the order of the day. There are hand drawn maps on the RDP page with hints on what to see and what to avoid. There are also short films which help to choreograph both the beauty and, for the careful paddler, the accessibility of the river. Caveats from Neil include getting to know the channel at low tide and avoiding those sometimes hidden obstacles.

The joys of kayaking have quickly become apparent to this recent convert. Paddle off from the Robertsons hard or the Melton Boatyard and there's a feeling that you're almost in the water, semi-cocooned, as you cut through the channel and where possible try and ride the tide as it ebbs and flows. Upriver, west of Wilford Bridge, the world closes in as you snake your way along

Neil Boast



Kayakers.

Neil Boast



Stand up paddleboarders.

the non-tidal Deben. Here the water becomes brackish and you might see a kingfisher instead of an oystercatcher or an egret; even an otter to replace the downriver seal.

The semi-hidden upriver Deben was particularly evident to John McCarthy and his chums as they paddled up Brandeston way. One minute they were running aground and having to haul their canoes across to another stretch of navigable water and in the next clip, there they were again, bent almost double as they pulled and pushed the sleek craft through the last leg of a dark tunnel running under the A12 at Wickham Market. This was adventure in the raw; Saxon-style transport at its most fluid.

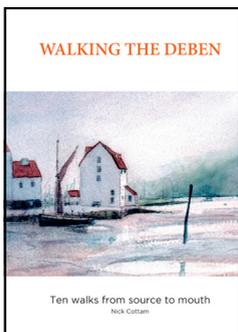
Tim Curtis, who directed the film *Life on the Deben*, is another kayaking convert, relishing a

new camera's eye view of the river. 'Being that close to water is the thing,' he says, 'particularly upriver where everything closes in.' While further downstream it can be fertile drone country for a filmmaker, Tim enjoys discovering those often forgotten stretches, where the next overhanging branch can signal the sudden end to your journey.

A question for the future is how kayak-crazy, how paddleboard-popular can the Deben become

without impacting on the river's natural beauty? For Neil Boast and others it's still about getting away from it all, sometimes at night, for a very peaceful, almost spiritual experience. Long may it last.

*Nick Cottam is the author of the best-selling Life on the Deben as well as Walking the Deben: Ten Walks from Source to Mouth.*



Nick Cottam

## Peter Willis

# Profile: Mark and Emma Barton

It was the otter tracks that did it. When your interviewee breaks off to point them out, crossing his own muddy foreshore, you know you're talking with someone who is happy with where they live and work. Some two, actually—for Mark and Emma Barton, running the Waldringfield Boatyard is 'an equal partnership'. They've been doing it since 2012, having taken over from Andrew Brown, who'd been there since 1976. I knew the Nunn brothers, Ernest and Harry, had started it, but when exactly? '1922,' says Emma. Significant glances all round, as we realise the centenary is in the offing—along with their own 10th anniversary here.

How they came to be here turns out to be a saga in itself. Going back to 2007, Emma was

a teacher, Mark had been running the family textile business—I hated it. But that year, 'We sold up everything and went sailing.' They planned to take three years and go round the world, 'but after we got to the Mediterranean we realised it was a big place and decided to explore the Med instead.' Eventually they cut the voyage short at 18 months—'We realised the boys, aged 9 and 12, needed proper schooling and the chance to form friendships'—sold up the boat in Turkey and headed home.

'Once you've done that, you can't really have a normal job again,' says Mark. They'd come home in the midst of the financial crash, so for a few years it was a matter of getting by. They moved to Woodbridge with Emma going back to teaching,

Mark working as a handyman and then setting up a small business with Paul Masters based on government tariffs for installing solar panels.

But the idea of owning a boatyard, a dream Mark had while they were sailing, was taking hold. 'Then Paul mentioned this yard was for sale, and had been for a while. The price was quite unrealistic, but I came to Andrew, and said this is what I've got, and we had a deal.'

The yard had been run down a bit as Andrew had been heading for retirement, so Mark and Emma have had the chance to build it up again. 'It's hard work but it's lovely.'

The river trips on the boat *Jahan* came with the yard. Emma, who gave up teaching, took over running them, and they both regard it as their favourite part of the business.

'The visitors get to appreciate what we appreciate every day—it reminds us of what we've got,' says Mark. 'I just like dealing with happy people, who come to enjoy themselves, and do,' adds Emma.

The boys, Tom and George, now grown-up, are out in Greece, helping to keep the boats of a large flotilla company running. 'I regard



Emma and Mark Barton

Emma and Mark Barton.

it as an apprenticeship,' laughs Mark. They come home for a few months in the winter and help out with the boat repair and maintenance jobs.

Last year Mark and Emma started selling stand up paddleboards, under the clever name 'Wotsup'. They don't rent them, but they do offer try-before-you-buy and run a Saturday-morning group paddle aimed at making their

customers a bit more river-savvy. 'Not paddling out into the middle of the fairway with boats rushing up and down, not setting off with the current so you'll struggle to get back. It's our responsibility to educate people about tides and the river and so on,' says Mark, who used to be a Sea-Scout leader, seriously.

It's all part of diversifying the business—'Bits and pieces, which in a way was what saved us last year. We couldn't work harder than we do—but we love it.'

*Peter Willis is President of the Nancy Blackett Trust and a former Deputy Editor of Classic Boat magazine.*

## Robert Deaves

# Waldringfield Sailing Club Centenary 1921–2021

There are many celebrations happening at Waldringfield during this summer as Waldringfield Sailing Club marks its centenary year with a series of events on and off the water.

The formation of what was originally called Waldringfield and Hemley Sailing Club came

after a period of heavy industry in the small riverside village. The cement factory had closed in 1907 and, following the end of the First World War, leisure pursuits, especially sailing and racing, became more popular. There was racing on the river before this time, and regattas organised at Waldringfield, but it wasn't until

1921 that like-minded sailors came together to create a sailing club.

Waldringfield and Hemley Sailing Club was formed following a meeting at Gorse Cabin on the Waldringfield foreshore. Sir Clifford Paterson was appointed the first President, with boatbuilder Harry Nunn as Secretary and Thomas Naunton Waller, son of the village rector Rev T. H. Waller, as the Treasurer. Alfred William Stollery of Gorse Cabin became Chairman and Arthur Quantrell, R. Button Jnr & C. Rix were on the Committee. Some of the early rules of the club stated that officers must be residents of Waldringfield or Hemley or persons that made Waldringfield or Hemley their Summer Residence. Others could be members but had no voting rights. Family members of many of these founders continue to live in the village and are members of the sailing club today.

Gorse Cabin was an army surplus Nissen hut, bought by A. W. Stollery in 1919. As the club grew, Waldringfield Sailing Club bought another one, and then building began on the site of the present clubhouse. The first clubhouse opened in 1932 after much fundraising and negotiations with the church that owned the land. Two slits, with a box at the back of each, were cut into the wall on each side of the entrance doors, one for donations to fund improvements and the other for Clubhouse funds.

In 1936 Cyril Stollery and Kenneth Palmer became the club's first National Champions after winning the first ever National 12 Burton Cup in *Itch* N 153. During the 85 years since, the club has produced four World Champions and some 42 National Champions. As I write, Waldringfield sailors have just become National Champions in the Laser Radial (ICLA 6), Cadet and National 12, a remarkable achievement.

In the early years the club racing was largely keelboat and various non-class dinghies, but the



The first purpose-built WSC Clubhouse, 1932.



Yacht race, 1946.



Cadet Week, 1957.



The Centenary Sail-past begins, 2021.

adoption of National 12s in 1936 introduced one-design racing. The club developed quickly and by 1937 had passed 100 members. After the Second World War, activities quickly resumed and membership numbers grew much faster. By 1959 membership was up to 600 and there was a waiting list to join. After various extensions to the old wooden clubhouse, a brand new brick clubhouse was built in 1981.

Throughout most of its history the club leased the land from the Waller family but, in 2002, past President Peter Fraser oversaw the successful negotiations of the purchase of the freehold of the sailing club land from the Church for £27,000. The sites of the beach huts were sold to a new organisation, the Hut Owners Association, as one lot. The club was now in charge of its own destiny.

After the Second World War, one-design class racing was becoming more common, with the Cadet and Dragonfly classes adopted in 1949. The Cadet fleet became the 35th Squadron with the first Cadet Week organised in 1956 by Dr and Mrs Nicholls Palmer. The event continues and is ever popular with the young people.

The Dragonfly is a classic 14' wooden clinker boat based on the Irish Dinghy Racing Association (IDRA) 14' dinghy, but with modified lines, and is a class unique to Waldringfield. Its popularity has waxed and waned since 1949, but some 45 boats have now been built and many sailing today have been renovated and restored. There have also been occasional international events together with their Irish counterparts.

Many other classes were adopted over the years including the Dragon, Enterprise, OK Dinghy, Wayfarer, RS 400, RS 200, Lark, Laser, Squib, Topper, Firefly and Fireball. Some have survived but many were popular for a few years before being replaced. While yacht racing remained

part of the club's activities until around 2000, the club has focussed on class racing, at least on Saturdays. Currently there is Saturday racing for Cadets, Larks, Lasers, Squibs, RS 200s, Toppers and Wayfarers. Evening racing has been held on Wednesdays since 1961.

Each year the club races for a series of prestigious trophies, some dating back to the 1930s. These also form a series of 7–8 races during the year which are used to determine the Club Championship, a trophy that reads like a who's who of the club's most successful sailors.

In its 100th year, Waldringfield Sailing Club is as thriving as ever. The Centenary Regatta held in June included traditional events such as crabbing, sandcastle and fancy-dress competitions, shore events and a large turnout of racing boats, including a magnificent sail-past of 100 boats, from Cadets to yachts, rescue boats and the RNLI.

A book showing the Waldringfield Sailing Club 100-year story in pictures and words is being put together now. Look out for it later this year.

*Robert Deaves is a yachting photographer, writer, publisher and sailing administrator, who first joined Waldringfield Sailing Club in 1981 with an Enterprise class dinghy, before moving onto an OK Dinghy, a class he still sails today, along with his Finn.*



Waldringfield Sailing Club

Around the Clubhouse at the Centenary Regatta, 2021.

## Alice Thorogood

# From the Dairy to the Deben

Growing up on a dairy farm, on the rugged south coast of Wales, sailing was not on the agenda, and I didn't really see myself as the type of person who would one day become a member of a sailing club. In my mind such places were the realm of the glamorous and the well-heeled, sporting a uniform of deck shoes and v-neck sweater and quaffing champagne whilst boasting about the length of their booms...

Skip forward some 15 years and it was with some trepidation that I agreed to look into membership of the Waldringfield Sailing Club. The idea was gently floated by my husband, Frank, who it turns out has the salty water of the Deben in his veins. Frank's passion for sailing was not something I had really taken on board until we spent a week sailing his mother's lovely old yacht *Peter Duck*. Accompanied by our eldest daughter, Gwen, who was just starting to sit up, and armed with a somewhat ropey carry cot and Frank's patchy knowledge of the workings of a boat, we zoomed up and down the river and I watched something click within Frank. I knew then a part of his heart belonged to another... the Deben.

We bought ourselves a Hawk 20 some years later, when our three small children were at that great stage of life when they thought their parents knew everything. Little did they know how green we were! We kept *Tiercel* at Woodbridge and a brilliant summer ensued; we explored, gained in confidence and our children developed a love for the river—always grateful that the Hawk had a centreboard which lifted when we found yet another patch of mud.

Mooring at Woodbridge has few downsides, but there was, of course, the tide. Anyone who has had children will tell you that leaving the house, on time, with all the kit you need, can be a long process. On more than one occasion the pressure of getting three little children clad in foulies and bright orange buoyancy aids and on to a boat in the middle of a fast-receding river became somewhat relationship-testing. Hence Frank's idea to move downriver and put *Tiercel* on a mooring at the end of Waldringfield Sailing Club's Squib trot.

So, the day arrived when Team Thorogood would find out if they were suitable candidates for membership to WSC. You might be pleased to know I didn't buy myself a twin set for the occasion, having decided on the 'take us as we are' approach, a decision I was grateful for when we were met in the car park by a beaming and waving membership secretary—jeans, shirt, and Deben mud. I knew then we were in the right place for us.

You see, Waldringfield doesn't have a Yacht club, the sort you saw on Howard's Way in the 80s. Waldringfield has a SAILING club. As I try to explain to my non-sailing friends (who always find it funny that I'm a member of one), Sailing clubs are the empire of the boatie, and not the



Alice's father leaves his Welsh dairy farm to visit WSC and meet *Tiercel*.

swaggering, pompous old buffers that I expected. It's a home to those with a passion for their sport, for their river and for their club that, in WSC's case, dates back 100 years.

*Alice Thorogood is the UKNCCA Safeguarding Officer at WSC.*

## Sally Westwood

# Summer Birds

What a difference the time of year can make in the birding calendar. It was an overcast day in late May. Two Cuckoos flew across the River Deben from woodland, near Sutton Hoo. It was six o'clock, with the dawn chorus in full flow. I was alerted to the male's calls 'cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo'. The female called after the male's call, with a burbling, bubbling, watery sound. It was a surprising contrast to the call of the male, and not so far carrying as the male's call. Three Cuckoos have been in residence along the riverbank.

A pair of Swallows have been nesting underneath the eaves of a large wooden houseboat. It is a regular nesting site. The boat was moved a couple of years ago, to a different area of the marina, before the Swallows arrived. The Swallows located their nest, despite the move. It had only been a couple of weeks since the Swallows arrived at the Deben. One was seen at Martlesham Creek, in late April, and another at Ramsholt, in early May. Then about fifty Swallows were flying round and round, one evening, catching mosquitos over the sewage water-treatment plant. Then they disappeared, at dusk, to their nesting sites. The youngsters from the houseboat Swallows' nest fledged after two weeks in the nest and they were able to fly. They were perched on a rope of a moored boat, sometimes they slid downwards on the uneven rope, sitting watching everything flying, hopefully, ready to open their yellow lined beaks as soon as an adult swooped down with food for a lucky youngster. An adult perched on the top of a thin boat mast, making twittering, chattering, high pitched calls.



A Swallow landing.

The river was populated with scattered pairs of Shellducks, sifting the shallow water for food on the mudflats. Canada Geese made honking calls throughout the night recently, defending territories. In the distance, on the flooded field across the water, a pair of Canada Geese had five youngsters. The goslings were following the the female in a straight line and the male trailed behind, with neck upright, vigilant and aware of all birds and their activity nearby.

In early evening, bright sunshine had emerged, after an overcast day of rain showers. Heard the faint call of a Cuckoo from the window, across the other side of the river. Two were spotted on a branch this side of the river, just before dusk, sitting, close together, side by side, using their beaks, attending to each other's beak and face, canoodling. It was a slow activity, a Cuckoo's chest occasionally hitting the other's body. They edged apart and then moved back to closeness, and continued with the activity.

'Ha, haha' the call of a crow. Goldfinches called 'ticklicks, ticklicks' and did their scolding 'buzz' calls, from the top of a tree. The fluty call of a male Blackbird started up.



SallyWestwood

An Oystercatcher fledging was viewed on the mudflats with both parents feeding it lug worms. The adults were sticking their long beaks into holes in the mud, frequently pulling their head up, and backwards, extending their necks to drag the full length of the lug worm out of the hole. One Oystercatcher rushed along with a lug worm, making a straight line of arrow shaped foot prints in the mud, to the river edge and dipped the worm in the water, and ran back to feed it to the fledging, who had wandered

An Oystercatcher feeding.

underneath a pontoon. The mud was patterned with spirals of Oystercatcher prints. Figures of eight, cut into with straight lines.

On one particular section of the riverbank, on a recent riverside walk in August, several Common Blue Damselflies and a Brown Hawker were gliding round catching gnats. They are commonly seen in late August, early September. The Hawkers breed on vegetation in slow running water, similar to the Damselfly who prefers slower moving parts of the river, with vegetation.

The Swallows continued to fly along, low over the water catching flies. There was very little wind, and they were flying close to the water.

*Sally Westwood is a birdwatcher and photographer. She usually spends her winter travelling around Spain and Portugal, birdwatching. Follow her on Twitter @drbirdhead / @theladybirders. Facebook: Grand Iberian Birdwatching Tour.*

### Recent Sightings

Great Egret spotted Ramsholt Lodge Marsh; Raven seen at Woodbridge near Bredfield Road; Curlew Sandpiper seen at Kirton Creek and a Spoonbill at Ramsholt Lodge Marsh.

For more information about Spoonbills see my next article in the River Deben Association Journal on Friday 15th October.

Elizabeth Swift

## Living Aboard *Papillon*

*This is not about some luxury, a hobby, a bit of playtime in the garden. This is about the longest, deepest necessity of the human spirit to know itself in nature.*

Jay Griffiths

I'd always scoffed at those TV house makeover shows where they do the whole house and garden in a weekend, but when the shell of our wide beam canal barge, *Papillon*, arrived at Melton boatyard I had the words, 'And now, they have 2 weeks to turn this into a home' going through my head. With the spring tides looming, our friend's dad, Dave Rowlands, fitted out the interior and we painted and sawed and nailed and floored with friends and family so *Papillon* could reach her berth in October 2017.

This is now where you will find us: me, my wife, Sarah (both of us born in Suffolk), our dog, Leo—who lets us know when people are passing by!—and sometimes our children and grandchildren. Aboard a 60' by 12', 2 cabin, 6 berth barge (built for us by Collingwood in Liverpool), we are lifted from the mud at Ferry Quay only at the top of the tide to bob about a bit for a few hours until the ebb. When I return here after work trips away, and I turn onto the quay to see the boat homes of our friends, and the rising and falling of the tidal Deben, I am filled with a joy that never fails me: especially when the tide is high.

And my work does often take me away. When my friend and colleague, Carol, and I founded [huathe \(huathe.org\)](http://huathe.org) in 2011, we didn't expect that we would travel across the world. Rather, we were driven by an ideology to see people—children especially—reconnect to nature, themselves, and each other. We wanted to help



Elizabeth Swift

*Papillon's interior unlined, lined, and completed.*

children connect to an ancestral, developmental blueprint: a rigorous and thorough system that is activated at birth and drives them to move and learn through play. This blueprint is largely incompatible with a school system requiring

hours of sitting still and absorbing prescribed information and so lots of our work is remedial, enabling children to manage their school life more successfully. We do this through Forest School, an ethos where children go to local woodland as part of their school day for playful learning and nature connection.

For the first few years we worked directly with the children but soon found we could reach many more children by training teachers, early years staff, countryside rangers, and play therapists to be Forest School leaders themselves. We ran our first training courses in Essex and Suffolk (indeed we trained some of the Forest School leaders who work in Woodbridge,

Elizabeth Swift



Elizabeth (left) presenting a student with a Forest School certificate on the Great Wall of China.

Martlesham and Kesgrave). Then, as the only peripatetic Forest School training company in the UK, we found ourselves working in all sorts of places in the UK and beyond. As our reputation has grown, we have taken Forest School to 4 different rural and urban provinces of China and to the USA (Suffolk County, NY no less!). More recently, projects close to our hearts have included training leaders from across the religious divide in Co. Armagh as part of the Peace process, and a regeneration programme for an underrepresented local community in Derbyshire.

I never quite know where we will go next, but I do know that feeling of exhilaration and peace that being on the river brings. When I am far from Suffolk,

I take mental walks and kayak journeys towards Bromeswell and down to Waldringfield with the words of Coco Love Alcorn in my heart:

*Water, heal my body  
Water, heal my soul  
When I go down, down to the water,  
By the water, I feel whole.*

*Elizabeth Swift is a nature connection facilitator, Forest School trainer, natural voice singing leader and early years specialist. In 2011, she co-founded huathe and now works locally—on nature connection and outdoor singing days; nationally—leading training in the UK and Ireland; and trains Forest School leaders across the world.*

Elizabeth Swift



Elizabeth (right) with Sarah (left) and Leo (middle).

## Hazel Whittle

# Starting Points

Hazel Whittle



Hazel on *Mooi Maisga*.

My name is Hazel Whittle and I am 18 years old. For the first seven years of my life, I lived on a Dutch barge called *Mooi Maisga* at the end of Martlesham Creek. I have lovely memories of living on the boat and always being able to go out exploring the river whenever I wanted.

Ever since moving into our house I have continued to spend a lot of my time on the River Deben. After randomly turning up to a junior sailing event at Waldringfield Sailing Club in 2011, I soon became immersed in the world of Cadet dinghy racing. I always love the club racing at WSC, whatever boat I am sailing. It is always exciting racing while also trying to contend with all the different elements

Hazel Whittle



Hazel (right) cadet racing.

of the Deben: the mud, the many moored boats, the shifts and the strong tides. Crewing in my first Cadet *Wizard*, I learnt more and more about sailing. As I became more experienced it has opened up a huge variety of opportunities further afield than Waldringfield to enjoy sailing—whether this was competing in bigger sailing events or volunteering for British Blind sailing.

Growing up in such a beautiful place led me to become more and more involved with supporting our Suffolk environment. I have helped my granddad measure the expansion and shrinking of the saltmarshes at Loder's Cut, to help collect information to make informed decisions about how best to protect the saltmarshes on the Deben—given that they are such an important habitat.

An event at school was being promoted called 'Siren Springboard'. My friend Laura and I, having very little idea of what the event entailed, decided to go along for the day. Laura and I went away buzzing; I think what made it so special was having the opportunity to share our priorities and concerns about the environment with so many likeminded and equally enthusiastic people. I personally think it is so important to be having these conversations as this is a starting point for innovation, which can then be translated into actions to safeguard the environment.

In February 2020 Siren launched a digital festival which consisted of 12 hours of live streams held over a weekend. This was collation of short films, live music and discussions between a group of panellists about our local environment. I made 2 films with Laura which were included in the digital festival. The one I enjoyed making the most was about wild swimming in the



Deben, which we have done together as much as possible all through the year, whenever we could squeeze it into the school day and our other commitments. I thoroughly enjoyed this event and was so grateful to be involved as one of the 29 young presenters. Being able to present this knowledge about the environment in an accessible way to the 2456 people on Facebook who watched the live stream is really important to facilitate change needed to protect the environment. It is still available to watch at [sirencalling.org](http://sirencalling.org).

After the success of the last project Siren has launched a new digital outreach project called 'Natures of the Beast'. This project aim is to make the science of ecology more accessible to the young people of Suffolk. We are currently in the process of creating 5 short videos. These cover a diverse range of topics from seagulls to exploring the ecology on the River Stour. These videos will then be integrated into a live stream which will include discussions. This live stream will be shared to the public to educate them about the environment around them. In one of the videos we made we got to dress up as a seagull and interview people at Aldeburgh seafront about what they understood

Just a couple of gulls.

about seagulls. I enjoyed making this video the most as I learnt so much about seagulls. The best fact being that seagulls don't even exist as there are 13 different types of gull but not one of them is called a seagull (the one we are most familiar with is actually a herring gull).

I am also especially looking forward to making the next video where we hope to explore small actions in our daily lives that we could all do to coexist with the environment more harmoniously. This knowledge that we can gain through starting environmental conversations means that all decisions we make will be more informed and balanced which ultimately means that everyone can help safeguard our environment. Growing up on the River Deben has given me a connection not only to our river but the importance of wider environmental action.

*Hazel Whittle is in her first year studying medicine at Newcastle University.*

*Siren Calling is workshops, events and media, by young people, for young people, about us, nature and the way we live: [sirencalling.org](http://sirencalling.org).*

Mark Bailey

# The Making of the Marshes

## Learning from History

Anyone with a passion for the Suffolk coast in general, and the River Deben in particular, needs no reminding of the major threat posed by rising sea levels and the increased frequency and severity of storms. Multiple studies show that East Anglia is more at risk of erosion and flooding than any other part of the UK coastline. Around one third of all land in the Suffolk coastal zone is below sea level, protected by 200km+ of estuarine banks. How and when were these banks first created? Would an understanding of how past coastal communities responded to erosion and inundation help inform our management of the same threats in the future?

Unfortunately, we simply do not know when most of Suffolk's river banks were first created, and the tidal marshes behind them reclaimed for arable or pasture. Of course, dating a bank is difficult, but it is astounding that we know so little about when our forebearers intervened and changed the estuaries that dominate the Suffolk coast. The modern coastline is the result of a dynamic and complex interplay between physical coastal processes, climate, and human responses over centuries: we know a great deal about the science and modern processes, little about the history.

In 2016 Peter Wain, a retired judge turned local historian, published a fascinating article (available for free online at



Professor Mark Bailey.

[suffolkinstitute.org.uk](http://suffolkinstitute.org.uk)) documenting the medieval history of the port of Goseford, which contributed more ships to Edward III's navy in the 1330s than almost any other port in England. Goseford was the name given to a collection of maritime communities and anchorages inside the mouth of the Deben, from Bawdsey as far as the lost Guston and Newbourne on Kirton creek. Clearly, a major seafaring port, but—equally clearly—home to sizeable boats moored on mudflats or rudimentary wharves in places like Falkenham and Ramsholt. So in the 1330s the mouth of the Deben was unquestionably wider, and there were far fewer banks and marsh reclamations in the lower river.

In 1845 a Royal Navy ship named HMS *Blazer* surveyed the River Deben, and the surviving map is instantly recognizable to the modern eye: the familiar embankments are all there, as are Bawdsey, Falkenham, Kirton and Ramsholt marshes. So when did they emerge? This question

is the subject of an on-going research project, the first phase of which will be published in the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* later this year. English historians are fortunate that local documentary sources extend back to the mid-13th century, and these provide topographical evidence, descriptions of marshes, and information about storm activity that can be pieced together to reconstruct the chronology and scale of reclamation.

The evidence unearthed so far is fascinating. It points to the sixteenth century as the key period when large scale embankments and reclamations occurred along the rivers Ore and Deben. Around 1600 Kirton Creek was drained and Falkenham marshes were created. At the same time, maritime officials reported that the mouth of the Deben had become shallower and more difficult to navigate. It is likely that major climate change—the period of global cooling leading to the Little Ice Age of the 17th century—had greatly increased erosion events along the Suffolk coast (think of Dunwich), which had

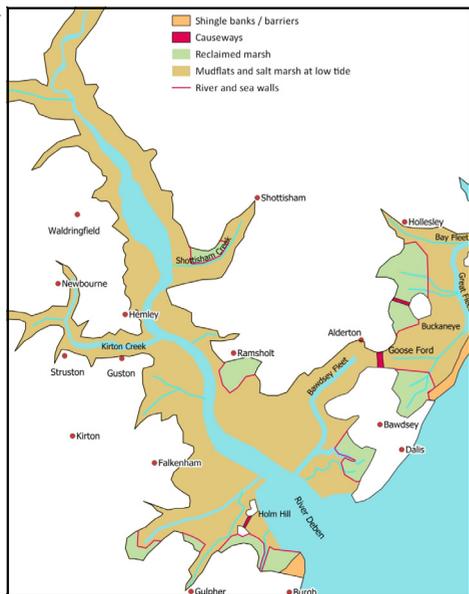
also resulted in greater sedimentation along other parts of the coast. Consequently, over the course of the Middle Ages the Deben's intertidal marshes had raised elevation, their utility as havens had diminished, and the physical and operational barriers to reclamation had reduced substantially.

So the rich historical record for the Deben can be used to reconstruct how it has evolved over the centuries, and, in so doing, provide invaluable information to inform those who steward our coastline in the future.

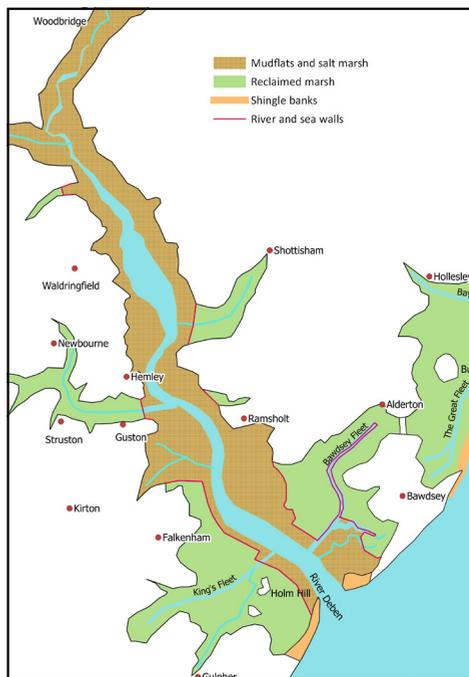
*Mark Bailey is a professor of Late Medieval History at the University of East Anglia, and the president of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History. You can email him using the address [mark.bailey@uea.ac.uk](mailto:mark.bailey@uea.ac.uk).*

*We hope to offer a link via the RDA Journal when Professor Bailey's research is published.*

Mark Bailey



A conjectural map of the Deben in 1250.



A conjectural map of the Deben in 1600.

Mark Bailey

## Jane Haviland and Sarah Zins

### Co-chairs' Report

On 28th April this year, we held our second Annual General Meeting by Zoom and were delighted that we had some 55 people logged in. The draft minutes of the AGM are on the website, and you will see from those that we asked the membership various questions about how we take the RDA forward. We explained that we are proposing to table an updated constitution at the 2022 AGM and asked if, amongst other things, you would be happy if we added the concept of 'celebration' into the Aim, so that it reads: 'To protect, conserve *and celebrate* the character, beauty and environment of the River Deben.' This suggestion was carried by a large majority, and we hope that you will agree that this edition of *The Deben* magazine, as the ones that have preceded it have, truly celebrates the beauty, diversity and fascinating people, boats, wildlife and general goings-on of our river.

We then asked the members if they would like to be more involved in RDA activities, such as volunteering opportunities, organised walks and boat trips and there was support for more involvement. Volunteers are encouraged to email [volunteer@riverdeben.org](mailto:volunteer@riverdeben.org) to put their names down to either join in with activities or, even better, to organise them. The article on the fish survey in this magazine demonstrates that some members have already got their hands dirty, quite literally! We are aware of some emerging projects that the Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust are developing and which we hope will be of interest to prospective volunteers.

We also co-ordinated the Deben Summer Festival—about which there is more in this magazine—and we hope that you enjoyed

The River Deben Association Co-chairs:  
Sarah Zins (left) and Jane Haviland (right).



Jane Haviland

participating in the events which were arranged as part of that. We then asked if you would make use of discounts that we might negotiate with Deben-based businesses including pubs along the river and, again, there was a large majority in favour. Building on excellent contacts made by the previous Chair and Treasurer, the committee sprang into action, issued all fully-paid up members with a membership card on recycled paper, and finalised discount arrangements with several local businesses—details are in the membership section of the website.

The formal part of the meeting was followed by a lively and entertaining presentation on ‘Sketching the Deben’ given by the Woodbridge artists Mary-Anne Bartlett, of Art Safari, and Claudia Myatt, painter and illustrator, which had even those of us who consider ourselves without artistic ability reaching for our watercolours. Although Mary-Anne and Claudia made remarkable use of Zoom, there is a definite hunger for ‘real’ gatherings, so we very much hope that our autumn meeting will be able to take place in person.

**Book the date in your diaries—26 November at 6:00pm at the Woodbridge Community Centre.** We are fortunate that James Mallinder, the district councillor for the Deben district and Cabinet Member for the Environment will talk to us about Suffolk’s approach to the climate emergency with particular emphasis on the East Suffolk plan and to its impact on the Deben. The parishes in the Deben district are Alderton, Bawdsey, Bromeswell, Ramsholt, Shottisham, Sutton and Sutton Heath, most of which abut the River Deben, so we welcome the opportunity for our members to get to know James better.

Wildlife continues to be an important focus for the Association, and now that lockdown has eased, we have renewed our conversations with other local conservation entities. We have become members of the East Suffolk

Catchment Partnership which covers the catchments of the rivers Gipping, Deben, Alde, Thorpeness Hundreds, Yox, Blyth and Lothingland Hundred and have attended the latest meeting of the Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust. While the public’s engagement with the river on kayaks and stand up paddleboards is to be applauded, some of our members expressed concern about the impact on wildlife from those who are new to the river’s protocols, so we worked with the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the RSPB to come up with a joint notice about how to use the river thoughtfully. This was disseminated to the various clubs and hubs up and down the river. A copy of this is presented in this edition of *The Deben*. The RDA has recently been looking at various planning matters which affect the Deben and commented to East Suffolk Council.

There have been some changes to the committee since the last magazine—we have bowed to reality and agreed to be co-chairs, rather than joint vice-chairs, Moray MacPhail has nobly added the role of treasurer to his existing role as membership secretary and we have been lucky enough to recruit an ex-Times journalist, Martin Waller, as our publicity committee member. With renewed focus, we are preparing to recruit new members to the committee who would be prepared to take the role of Vice-Chair in due course, so if you are interested in joining us, do please contact either one of us and we would be happy to hear your thoughts.

In addition to this magazine we publish more detailed articles on the website every fortnight under the heading *RDA Journal*. If you would like these to arrive automatically by email there is an option to subscribe (no cost). Visit [riverdeben.org/rda-journal](http://riverdeben.org/rda-journal).

We look forward to the coming months’ activity and to seeing as many of you as possible at the autumn meeting.

Miles Cowdry

## Obituary

Denzil Cowdry, 2 March 1928–9 August 2021

Brigadier Denzil Cowdry served as the third Chairman of the Association from 1996–98 and again from 2002–04. As the son of a merchant seaman and, later, professional yacht skipper, and grandson of a founder member of the Colne Yacht Club in Brightlingsea it is no surprise that he was a keen sailor. His teenage years were spent in Wales during the war and he developed an interest in the countryside and became a decent shot supplementing rations with the occasional rabbit. As a Southampton-born boy whose father was well known in local yachting circles (one of his employers was the 2nd Duke of Westminster for whom he was first officer on the Duke's 282-foot schooner, *Flying Cloud*), Denzil was very familiar with the Solent and Chichester harbour. But when the time came to put down roots he was drawn to the wilder charms of the Suffolk coast.

In 1964 the family bought a bungalow overlooking Kingston Field, just a short walk from the Deben Yacht Club. This served as a base for the family as Denzil pursued his successful military career and also as something of an anchor for the continuing sailing education of his two sons, Quentin and Miles, many of whose subsequent holidays were spent racing Cadets and Mirrors on the Deben.

A natural conservative and conservationist Denzil was by no means adverse to change and was the first to bring a fibreglass Enterprise dinghy to the Deben, enjoying some success in Deben Week. These qualities and his passion for the river combined with a keen intellect and a fair-mindedness were the attributes he brought to the Association as it has sought to balance competing interests, resist silting and the 'managed retreat' of sea defences. The defining issues of his tenures as

Chairman were the Bentwaters and Whisstock's enquiries, the outcomes of which were consistent with his over-arching aim which was to guard against unsympathetic and irreversible change.

Not a notably religious man, Denzil had a spiritual side to his personality which was clearly evidenced by his love of the great outdoors and, in particular, sailing. In his last Chairman's note he wrote: 'The environment of the Deben has the capacity to refresh spirits and to challenge minds and bodies as readily today as for the last hundred years.'

Denzil is survived by Fay, his wife of 68 years, sons Quentin and Miles, seven grandchildren and five granddaughters to whom he was affectionately known as Granzil.



Miles Cowdry

Denzil and Fay at Felixstowe Ferry. Denzil 'cross the bar' on 9th August 2021.

## Water, Water, Everywhere...

...but not always in the right place at the right time or, to put it another way, not enough or too much.

The Deben and other river catchments in East Suffolk flow through one of the driest parts of the UK, an area that at times can experience flash floods and at others, severe shortages of water. Demand from all sectors is predicted to grow whilst availability and reliability of supply is likely to become far less predictable and more difficult to manage due to climate change. Many scientists and experts in the water resources industry believe we are already experiencing a crisis. The impacts of climate change and increasing global temperatures have been predicted for some time, but there is mounting evidence that some of those impacts are happening now and things are likely to get worse, with potentially alarming consequences, if we do not do more to both mitigate and adapt.

Whilst the general trend and predictions about climate change on a global scale are now more generally known and the human-made causes increasingly accepted, the detail in terms of impact and our responses is far less known and understood at a local level. Nobody claims to fully understand it all or to have all the answers and solutions, some of which may prove to be unpalatable in the short term if they require swift and radical changes to the socio-economic status quo.

There is hope, of course! There are many committed individuals and organisations in the region who recognise and collectively understand the complex challenges we face regionally and locally and are actively responding with innovative initiatives to explore and implement solutions.

Water Resources East is at the vanguard of this effort with their highly inclusive co-development of a Regional Water Resources Management Plan, working with all sectors to provide sustainable solutions to the challenges of water resource management for the benefit of people and the environment in a changing climate.

Meanwhile, Suffolk County Council is working with Norfolk County Council, with the support of DEFRA and the Environment Agency, to explore and deliver a range of innovative local solutions to tackle the dual problems of flooding and water shortages in otherwise unprotected rural areas. In its development phase the Holistic Water Management project is already engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to identify local areas as test cases where a real and sustainable difference can be made and the models and lessons learnt rolled out more widely.

And now there is a new partnership between the Rivers Trust, Environment Agency and Water Resources East, supported by the EU Interreg Channel programme, also involving two partners in France, to develop and test innovative water management tools and decision-making support systems. This will enable more responsive short-term management of drought events, and better long-term planning, as well as investment in water management at a local scale.

The East Suffolk Catchment Partnership, led by Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, will have a key role to play in this latest project as one of the three England case study areas along with the Broadland and CamEO catchment partnerships. This will involve the engagement of key stakeholders within the East Suffolk Catchment to collectively examine in detail the data and what

we know about water resource management issues in the catchment. The aim is to develop real and sustainable local strategies and solutions to tackling the problems. We will also be seeking to engage more widely with residents and local communities in East Suffolk, to raise awareness of the water resource issues and challenges we face in this catchment and to encourage individual and community action. The details are being worked out and will include open days, traditional and social media campaigns and communications through existing community networks. The aim will be to encourage more take-up of measures to conserve and use water more wisely. We will update members of the

RDA in due course with more information on this and how you can get involved.

There is a lot of work to do on all three of these major initiatives, but they will complement each other and, we hope and expect, lead to real and sustainable solutions to the huge water resource management challenges we all face here in East Suffolk.

*Brendan Joyce is the Director of Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust.*

*The trust is keen to hear from potential volunteers. For more information and contact visit their website: [essexsuffolkriverstrust.org](http://essexsuffolkriverstrust.org).*

**Sarah Zins**

## How Not to Participate in a Fish Survey A Victim's Guide

I'm afraid that to me, the best way to see a fish is grilled with a little butter and lemon, so when members of the River Deben Association were invited to join a fish survey on the Hazlewood marshes in Aldeburgh, my hand did not shoot up. The survey was organised by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, who own this magnificent piece of marsh, which turned from fresh water to saltwater pretty much overnight when the sea wall was breached in the 2013 tidal surge. The RDA is interested to do a similar fish survey on the Deben, and hence our invitation to see how it is done by the professionals. Despite my initial resistance, I was persuaded that it was educational and fun to take part by Stephen Thompson, the indefatigable Marine Science Officer at the Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority and I could indeed see that the presence of small fishes was essential to the arrival of their larger relations on my plate!

Together with our trusty wildlife writer, Richard Verrill, and three volunteers who had replied to an article in a previous edition of this magazine, we went to Aldeburgh to be briefed in the business of fish surveys before being launched onto the unsuspecting fish population as the tide came in. A warning note was struck by our instructor, Stephen Colclough from the Institute of Fisheries Management, who recommended donning large socks if wearing too-large waders. I blithely thought that some hiking socks would do the trick, little realising until too late the



Richard Verrill

Gobies.

import of failing to abide by this advice to the letter. For those of you who have not tried to wade through mud in over-sized waders, I can report that the shoe gets stuck in the mud, the foot comes out of the shoe causing substantial instability, and the result is both mud and egg on the face! Tumbling forward onto my knees, I then got stuck in deep mud and had to be ignominiously hauled out by two strong chaps, and the badge of dishonour remained on my face for the duration of the survey.

Richard Verrill



Before the survey.

Richard Verrill



After 'the incident'.

But to the good bit—with the judicious use of a large net and other equipment supplied by the SWT, small fish can readily be found on the marshes. They were carefully picked out of the haul and measured in special measuring devices before being returned to their families. The predominant species were gobies, present in abundance, but also found were flounder, herring and thin-lipped mullet. (I like to think that they pucker their mouths in disapproval at the disturbance!) So, to put this muddy outing into its official context with a bit of technical jargon, we can report a successful piece of juvenile fish sampling demonstrating the contribution that small-scale citizen science

surveys can make to the bigger picture.

Onwards to next steps! The RDA has agreed to fund a fish survey on the Deben and those volunteers with proper footwear are working out where to do this safely and effectively. Attendees of the course were awarded a certificate by the Institute of Fisheries Management, although in my case it was an exercise in considerable generosity to say that I had demonstrated safe use and competence in this field. EIFCA have kindly agreed to look into having a 'loan-kit'

of essential equipment that can be borrowed by those conducting citizen science surveys, and discussions are being held about which government agency or charity is best placed to document and make available the study results which surveys such as this one report. With a critical mass of such data, it should be possible for the agencies to flag up key sites that support vital early life stages for fish species, improving chances for statutory protection. One of the very positive things we took from the day was the spirit of co-operation between the three organisations that took part, and the evident passion of their people for wildlife and conservation.

Richard Verrill



Dragging a net.

I will not be taking part in a fish survey on the Deben, but I heartily endorse the protection of the fish nurseries on the Deben to the eventual delight of all those looking for a hearty chowder!

*Sarah Zins is many things, but not a fish surveyor.*

Robert Simper

## Commercial Fishing on the Deben

In 2011 my grandson Harry Simper was about to leave school and decided he was going to 'work on the river.' He went up the river at dead low tide and located all the places where shell fish were thriving. We rented Hemley Creek and began the Deben Oyster project. Marketing was really hard work and my son Jonathan, with the chef Steve David, started the Woodbridge Shuck Festival to promote local food. The project was beginning to get going when Harry announced he didn't find oysters enough of a challenge so he switched to sea trawling from Aldeburgh, Southwold, Rye and now Brixham. Our boats *Buster Boy* and *Diana May* remain based at Ramsholt but are moved around looking for fish.

Just after World War II there was still a food shortage and many pleasure motor boats at Ramsholt and Felixstowe Ferry carried a trawl. I remember seeing five Ramsholt boats all trawling one Sunday morning in about 1950. All these would have caught enough fish for several meals. Certainly in 1956 it was still possible to land a bucket full of sole from an evening trawling just below Waldringfield. Pleasure trawling dropped out of favour as catches got smaller, but the Felixstowe Ferry fishing boats would still regularly trawl in the river if they couldn't go to sea for several days, but the poor returns saw this practice decline.

Before about 1985 there was commercial shrimp fishing in the summer above Metersgate Quay. It appears that grey mullet always came into the Deben in the summer. This fish was not liked by English people although some people speared them when they came to feed around the boats. It appears West Indians moving into Britain found the taste of mullet similar to a fish they had had at home. This created a market in London and by the 1980s there was commercial netting for mullet in the summer in the upper shallow Deben reaches. Again after about two decades the mullet declined. Possibly because the water was slightly warmer, more bass moved in and Felixstowe Ferry fishermen began to work them. To do this meant putting a surface net across the river and fishermen usually did this in the early morning because of the yacht traffic. Even this fishery has declined and in the summer of 2021 I have not seen any boats commercially fishing in the Deben.

While commercial fishing has declined the seal population has risen so there must still be fish in the river. From memory the occasional seal was always seen in the Deben, but there was no large population on this part of the coast. In the early 1960s no one used the public footpath on the river wall and a seal came to Shottisham Creek and had her pups. After this the seals moved to the quieter Hemley Creek.

Robert Simper



*Buster Boy* on Simon Skeet's yard for anti-fouling.

Robert Simper



River Deben oysters, mussels, cockles and winkles.



Harry Simper and Olly Hind landing Deben oysters.

On the North Norfolk coast regular seal shoots kept the number down, but once this stopped the population steadily increased along the coast. By the 1980s a colony of seals had established themselves in the Walton Backwaters. Red mud stuck to some seals must show there is regular movement between the Walton Backwater seals and other local rivers. Some of the coastal fishermen claim they have given up commercial fishing because so many fish are taken by seals from their nets. Seal are regularly seen working along the surface nets and fish in trawls are often bitten.

The other wild life fish eater is the otter. In 1960 I found the last otter on Shottisham Creek laying dead, probably shot by a gamekeeper. After this there were reports of an otter seen in Kirton Creek then for decades no otters on the tidal Deben. It appears that otters were reintroduced into the fresh water Deben and steadily moved down. In about 2002 I was regularly seeing otters and hearing reports of them moving about the river. Even now with a healthy, but largely unseen, population of otters in the Deben it is doubtful if they make a serious impact on the fish stocks.

*Robert Simper, founding member and President of the RDA, has lived on the Deben all his life. He started work in 1953 on the family farms where horses were still working alongside tractors, crewed on some of the last barges still trading under sail, and describes himself as an 'accidental writer' but is a prolific author and notable local historian.*

*The full version of this abridged article is available on the RDA Journal: [riverdeben.org/rda-journal/deben-commercial-fishing](http://riverdeben.org/rda-journal/deben-commercial-fishing).*

Robert Simper



Harry Simper drift netting for herring in *Our Boys*.

# Profile: John Roberts

John Roberts



*The Edge.* The power of nature, particularly weather.

John Roberts is a Suffolk artist painting mostly in oils and specialising in local subjects, particularly Woodbridge Town and the Deben.

He arrived from London 60 years ago to buy a 30ft yacht (parked on the hard at Whisstock's boatyard for the winter) with a view to fitting her out for voyages across the oceans of the world, with notions of Gauguin the painter and the south Pacific firmly in mind.

The experience of the Woodbridge waterfront and the lively mixed community he met from all walks of life during that first over-wintering in the adjacent dock had a profound effect leading to a change of mind. The realisation dawned swiftly that he had arrived in a unique place with a breath-taking river landscape on his doorstep.

He knew it was an artist's dream. What a life! Nearly always fun going on in the dock, often with musical evenings and sailing the Deben whenever time and tide would allow.

*Tidal Edge.* The net left hanging as the tide recedes.



John Roberts

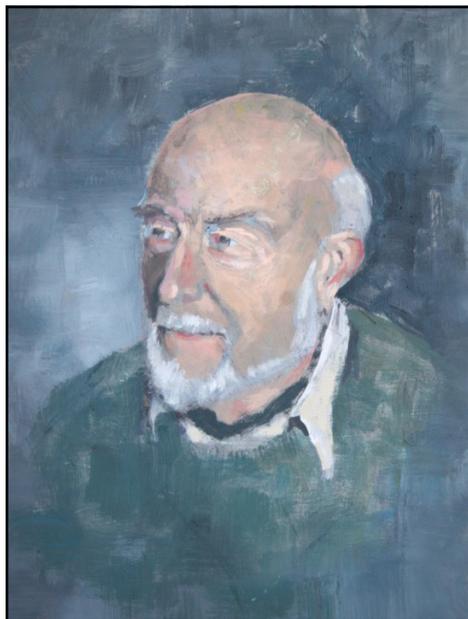
The kindness and welcome of local people led to offers of various kinds of work. Together with the continuing painting it was possible to create a commercial studio near the waterfront that still exists today and is now run by his daughter and her partner.

Although working from home now, Roberts always has plenty to do with continuing commissions and new paintings to exhibit twice yearly in August and January at the Artspace in Woodbridge Thoroughfare. The paintings are mostly the mood of the moment. All the thrill of total freedom. No pass codes, no constraints or restrictions. The wonder of painting.

He also knows that the reasons for his decision to stay in Woodbridge all those years ago remain in place to this day. Indeed, many others identify similar feelings: the vibrancy of the town, the waterfront and of course, the never ending flow of affection for the Deben.

A self portrait.

The work of John Roberts can be viewed at [tfsphotowoodbridge.co.uk](http://tfsphotowoodbridge.co.uk), and he will be exhibiting at Artspace in January. For this and other exhibitions, see [artw.co.uk/new-events](http://artw.co.uk/new-events).



John Roberts

## Martin Waller

# The Deben Summer Festival



RDA President Robert Simper in his barge boat, *Atlas*, being tailed by Sam Doman in his fibreglass replica, *Longshore* (see *The Deben* #62, page 36), during the festival.

Sometimes change comes imperceptibly, at so slow a pace that one does not recognise when we have shifted into a different world. Sometimes one event epitomises change, marking out where we moved from one place to another.

The Deben Summer Festival, which took place from Saturday August 7 to Sunday August 15, falls into the second category, it seems to me. It was held under the auspices of the River Deben Association and seemed to mark the time when we emerged from months of dreary lockdown and angst-inducing social distancing measures into what the rest of our lives might eventually look like.

As I type, at the start of September, with schools going back and Covid-19 still running through the population at a frightening rate, no one is claiming we are out of the woods yet. But the fact that such an event could take place at all, bringing together dozens of events and organisations up and down the Deben, seems a reason for cautious optimism.

Nothing like it had taken place since the start of the first lockdown, on March 23 last year, an event that itself marked an abrupt disruption and unwelcome change to all our lives. It was accompanied by and followed by other local events, focussed on music, the arts and other leisure activities, that also indicated a gradual unlocking of the bonds that had held us, on and off, for more than a year.

It opened out the river to all those who attended, contributed or took part, showing us again how lucky we are to live up and down it. There is not room to list all the events the Festival brought together. But it is fair to say that the Deben has not before been host to a Chinese Dragon Boat, a display of Venetian rowing, a replica Cornish Pilot gig or an Art Safari at which sketchers and painters could drift up and down the river while being taught by two local artists.

And I am under strict instructions to mention the sea shanties. (Apparently sea shanties are very fashionable these days. Something to do with a film. How did this happen?)

It was important that the Festival took place all along the Deben rather than being too Woodbridge-focussed. The non-appearance this year of the Woodbridge Regatta and Maritime Woodbridge, though disappointing to those who would have taken part, meant that there was little clash with other events on the river.

The Festival attracted interest from a far wider range of organisations than I think the organisers at the RDA had expected. It raises the obvious



Moray MacPhail

The Deben Summer Festival at Robertsons.

question. Should it, or something like it, take place again? I think it should, if kept separate from the Regatta and Maritime Woodbridge. It seems to me that while it might not be replicated entirely, there is the scope for a branded event to attract a wide range of collaborators. The enthusiasm among those taking part was undeniable. Most, I suspect, would be happy to repeat their contributions.

There is plenty of scope for bringing in others—I would not say that preparations for the event were rushed but there was plainly a constraint, given the social distancing requirements during the summer, on the organisers. Did it raise the profile of the RDA? Hard to measure, but because we were the umbrella body under which it took part, there must be more people aware of the existence of our organisation than beforehand.

Will it build membership? Again, too soon to say, but the indications are that it did not bring too many members into the Association. That wasn't necessarily the point. The event itself was enough.

*Martin Waller was an award-winning journalist and columnist on The Times for 30 years, writing for the business pages. Most recently he wrote a daily column on investment and finance. He retired in May 2018.*

*For further details about the festival, see the website: [debenfestival.org](http://debenfestival.org).*

Brian Knibbs

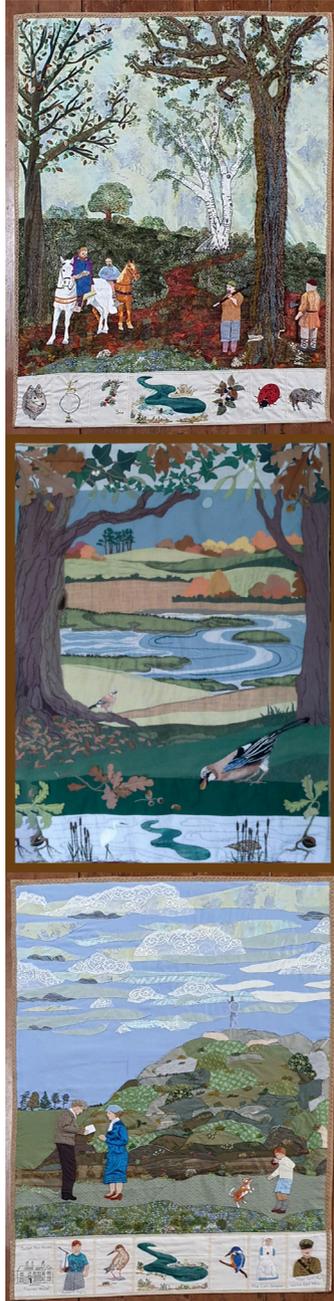
## Tapestrical Tales

Early in 2019 a suggestion was made that it would be wonderful to create a Tapestry to tell the story of the Ghost Longship that was discovered in the grounds of Sutton Hoo in 1939, and also the story of the local environs.

The results of what was found at Sutton Hoo changed the world's perspective of how we thought of the Anglo-Saxon era from being the Dark Ages to an age of skilled craft and ability to produce wonderful artefacts.

The find included the famous 'Helmet', jewellery, silverware etc., with 263 items in all excavated from the ground. To some people it is the Tutankhamun of The British Isles. It was possible, with a great deal of research, to determine that this was a Royal ship, and it is now widely regarded as the burial ship of Raedwald, King of the Eastern Angles from 595 AD till his death in or around 624/625 AD. From 616 AD he was high King of all of the Angle-Lands of this country—and Angle-Lands morphed over time to become the name we now use for this country, 'England'.

The idea for the Tapestry quickly took flight and through



Woodbridge Riverside Trust

assorted venues and meetings we managed to recruit some 35 people. It is projected that the tapestry will, when complete, consist of thirty 3 feet by 4 feet panels which tell the story, not only of the burial ship but of what happened to and around it over the centuries also taking in elements of the history of Woodbridge and the River Deben. The final panels will tell the story of the construction, launch and sea trials of the replica ship currently being built in the Longshed in Woodbridge by our sister charity 'The Sutton Hoo Ship's Company'. It should be stressed that neither the Ship's Company nor Woodbridge Riverside Trust are part of the National Trust Sutton Hoo.

Our tapers have been very busy, especially during lockdown, on the making of a panel or panels. To date we have seven waiting to be framed, others that are having the last little bit of work completed, and some that are not so near the end result yet. At the beginning of the project, we made no suggestion of an end date as there can be no end date until we know how long the replica will take to build and trial.

This is an amazing project that will help bring to life the story of Sutton Hoo, Woodbridge, and the river at the heart of the story 'The Deben.' If you feel that you would like to join the team by doing an individual panel, or by joining forces with one or two of your friends then please let us know.

We are seeking funding for the framing of the panels which cost £162.00 each frame. The Arts

Society of Woodbridge have generously donated funds for the first 6 frames, the remainder we have to seek out and raise ourselves.

*Brian Knibbs is Chair of the Woodbridge Riverside Trust ([woodbridgeriversidetrust.org](http://woodbridgeriversidetrust.org)), the group who have been organising the tapestries.*

*For any further information, please email: [collyjay1947@gmail.com](mailto:collyjay1947@gmail.com).*

## Jan Pulsford

# Celebrating the Spirit of Place

In March 2020 most live music events were cancelled because of COVID-19 restrictions. Stages and the future looked dark with 38% of music freelancers having no income at all! It was a very bleak time for the arts.

The disappointment of having to call off the 2020 Beowulf Festival inspired composer/producer Jan Pulsford to create a post-lockdown series of small events. Something to lift the spirits of musicians and community from the gloomy pandemic winter. Something to celebrate the spirit of the beautiful place we live.

It was a challenge but after many changes of dates, venues, and line-ups 'Spirit of Place' played five sold-out events at the Angel, Theatre St. from June 27th to September 5th, 2021.

Seven spirits of the area provided seven moods for



the popular series. They were joyous occasions and the sun shone through the beautiful Indian yellow backdrops as local musicians performed live on stage, many for the first time in 18 months.

Claudia Myatt provided the logo which captured the Spirit of Place perfectly. Clare Perkins decorated the stage and along with Jan transformed the outside area of the Angel into a socially distanced mini festival, complete with fresh herbs and mandalas. Chris and Sarah Mapey provided pizzas and hospitality whilst Merlyn Bruce did an excellent job mixing sound and stage management.

Our spirits were lifted by first class performances from everyone including Aartwork's sea folk electronic gigs and reels, Elly Tree's thought-provoking song stories and Clare's Ghostly Boat Poetry with Jan's piano.

The second event celebrated the spirit of the



Clare Perkins's book *A Ghostly Boat* is being sold to raise money for a Son et Lumière event at the Tide Mill this Christmas. The cost is £5. Contact Clare on 07812 997467, or email [WoodbridgeChristmasLightsFund@gmail.com](mailto:WoodbridgeChristmasLightsFund@gmail.com) (with the subject line 'Ghostly Boat').

river and showcased singer-songwriters Tori Ramsay, Peter Hepworth, Stephen William Hodd and Petra Garrard with violinist Mark Jolley. Julia Jones's reading from *Ghosting Home* with Claudia's gentle harp enthralled the audience.

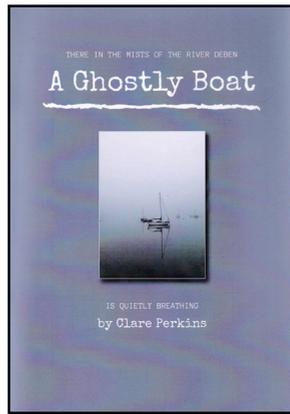
A spell-binding piano performance by Tom Rogerson brought a hush to the Angel as the third event paid homage to the Father of Ambient Music, Woodbridge's very own Brian Eno and the spirit of calm. Girl in a Gale introduced the afternoon with two hours of electronica, and local painter/musician Nick Nicholson and Merl's Pearls finished a beautiful inspiring afternoon.

The entertaining spoken word and songs of EADT columnist and musical raconteur Martin Newell, provided the third afternoon with music and stories from East Anglia and beyond. Singer songwriter Polly Haynes and magician Oliver Catford helped celebrate the spirit of the wind.

Songwriters sang off the fifth and final poignant summer event at the Angel on September 5th. Oktoba, Phil Jackson, Charlie Law and Martin Wilks celebrated the spirit of the moon.



Jan Pulsford at one of the socially-distanced soirées.



Clare Perkins We thank all who made this possible especially the Arts Council, local businesses and 'behind the scenes' sponsors and volunteers.

Spirit of Place moves to the historic Bull inn for two remaining events featuring the spirit of *Beowulf* and *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* on October 3rd and November 7th.

*Jan Pulsford is a long time electronic Composer, Virtual Performance Artist, Songwriter / Producer. Listen to her ambient music world most evenings on [RadioMothership.com](http://RadioMothership.com) and [JanPulsford.com](http://JanPulsford.com).*

*For the latest information, check social media or the website: [spiritofwoodbridge.com](http://spiritofwoodbridge.com).*



Aartwork performing live.

Lyn Gameson

## Felixstowe Rowing Club

Many good ideas are voiced when a few friends share drinks during an evening—only to be forgotten by the next morning. However, in our case, someone saying ‘Wouldn’t it be great to have a gig rowing club in Felixstowe?’ started the expensive gamble of commissioning a new Pilot gig, towing it from St Austell to Felixstowe Ferry, and sourcing oars, trailers and gig cushions from around the country.

Felixstowe Rowing Club



a ‘pilot’ (someone with good knowledge of the local waters and hazards) out to a ship to help guide it safely into harbour. As only one pilot was required, competition between gigs was fierce, as each tried to be the first to row their pilot out to the ship.

The Felixstowe Rowing Club (FXRC) officially launched on 10th April 2021 when we pushed our new Pilot gig (*St Felix*) into the Deben off the Felixstowe Ferry shore for our first row.

Our gig is a fibreglass replica of a Cornish Pilot gig, which makes it less expensive and easier to maintain than traditional wooden gigs, which are built to an exacting standard. Pilot gigs have a Coxswain plus 6 rowers. In addition, there is a Pilot seat, which traditionally was used to take

Although Cornish Pilot Gig clubs are associated with the West Country (particularly Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly), we see the FXRC not so much as introducing Pilot gig rowing to Suffolk, as resurrecting a tradition: the old eighteenth and nineteenth century ‘Beach Companies’ of the Suffolk and Norfolk Coast (whose activities included salvage and life-saving) also used Pilot gigs and they were almost identical to the West Country boats. There are records of these boats, their names and even the gig racing competitions in the nineteenth century that drew crowds to Great Yarmouth.

The rowing technique (fixed seat, with feet braced against wooden struts called ‘stretchers’, and a rocking body motion that hauls the oar through the water) gives a full body workout, with particular emphasis on the core. To some extent, it is up to the individual how much effort he or she puts in. Whether one chooses to exercise lightly or to exhaust themselves, either way there are the compensations of the camaraderie in the boat, and the exhilaration of exercising on the water.

We are in the early phase of developing the club, and while the FXRC may (in the future) acquire a traditional wooden Cornish Pilot Gig that will allow entry into formal races, at the moment our priority is getting people on the water for

Lyn Gameson



*St Felix*—FXRC rowing club’s first purchase.

recreational purposes. The club is open to men and women of 18 years and over, and no prior experience is necessary.

We are supremely lucky in having not just the River Deben, but also the waters around Felixstowe in which to row, and the scenery—be it Ramsholt Church, Bawdsey Manor, or the Felixstowe beach huts—forms the tapestry behind our exertions. We are also lucky to have a good relationship with the Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club, and we encourage our members to join the sailing club and to make use of their excellent facilities—especially the catering at The Crows Nest café. Some crews finish a good rowing session with breakfast or lunch.

There is no doubt that gig rowing provides benefits beyond physical exercise. Apart from the satisfaction of sharing our experience of rowing with others, we have been very gratified to hear club members comment on the improvement to their emotional well-being, in part arising from new friendships and a new water-based focus. Indeed, a couple who had joined the club 3 months ago had a little gig with oars on top of their wedding cake.

**Jane Haviland**

## The Grand Expedition

You will by now have read about the new rowing club established at Felixstowe Ferry. If not I refer you to the previous article to get a flavour of Cornish Pilot gig rowing.

The club has been active for roughly 4 months and a remarkable set of people have joined. To acknowledge this and join the celebrations of the Deben Summer Festival we decided to take a 26km voyage. With two crews gathered and tides assessed, we hatched the plan to row to Woodbridge and back to Felixstowe Ferry, both



Lyn Gameson

Members of FXRC on *St Felix*.

As for the future, we have a few challenges ahead to ensure that the FXRC can expand to meet demand, not least of which is fundraising for a second gig to accommodate the growing number of people who would like to join. If you are interested, please message us via Facebook: [facebook.com/groups/felixstowerowingclub](https://facebook.com/groups/felixstowerowingclub).

*The Felixstowe Rowing Club was started by Terry Davey, Lyn Gameson, and Joel Early, who met at the Deben Rowing Club in Woodbridge. They enjoy all oar-sports on the River Deben, including sculling, coastal sculling and Pilot gig rowing.*

ways with the tide. We were ably coordinated by both Terry Davey (Chair of the FXRC) and Lyn Gameson (Rowing Captain).



Jane Haviland

On the water, on the way!

There was a little trepidation about how we would fare. The crews had never rowed beyond Ramsholt and were naturally nervous of the extensive row of over 2 hours. We were fortunate to have Terry with his support vessel *The Mermaid* to run alongside us.



In Woodbridge.

The sun was shining on 14 August and the team spirit was overflowing with enthusiasm. Some of the crew had kindly made snacks including sausage rolls and scotch eggs to keep us going.

Crew 1 boarded *St Felix* and Crew 2 boarded *The Mermaid* fully equipped with prosecco and snacks.

We set off to Ramsholt and passed the Rocks. Feeling peckish and waiting for the tide to rise, we moored up at Waldringfield for a 10 minute break. Suitably refreshed, we rowed the last 4km to Woodbridge. It was a great feeling—the first time a gig of this type had been to Woodbridge and we pulled our way to the mooring. Jo Ferris and Terry were our terrific ferry people taking

us to shore in the tenders. On landing we were treated to an array of homemade cakes courtesy of Angie Sellon (the generous mother of one of our rowers), which were delicious and did the trick in terms of replenishing energy levels.

Suitably nourished we were ferried back to the boats where crews 1 and 2 swapped places; Lyn rowed on this leg and Jane H coxed the team home. The evening sun was beautiful. A seal bobbed up from a distance, accompanied by egrets, herons, godwits and other waders which were feeding on the river banks.

The wind picked up from the East. So with wind against tide and the waters getting choppy we pulled through the waves, and with the sun setting, hooked up to our mooring at Felixstowe Ferry. We had a fantastic day!

*Jane Haviland is Co-chair of the RDA. She's a solicitor specialising in environmental law and has a keen interest in photography.*

## Sarah Zins

# News from the Hards

**Robertsons** are restoring all the upper woodwork on *Bluebell*, a fishing boat which has recently changed hands for the princely sum of £1.00, but the photo will show you that this will not be the end of the expenditure required! When completed, it will be used by the new owner for events. The hull is made from double diagonal planking. As the final piece of their hard extension, they are putting in a new jetty which will be 2 ½ feet higher than the old one to allow for increasingly high tides. The Sprat Shed is available for hire, as well as a new office space—contact them for details. There are now

two Dragon boats on the Deben and they will be out weekly training for two charity events on the Thames next year—they will be kept and launched from Robertsons boatyard. More to come on Dragon boats in the next edition.

At **Martlesham Creek Boatyard**, one of the houseboats has changed hands, there have been several visiting boats and around 8 new yachts and motorboats are now moored there, so they have had an active summer after a quiet lockdown in which the proprietors kept their eye on boats which owners could not visit.

**Larkmans** are working on two large wooden boats, each a gaff yawl and each around 30 feet long, together leaving little free space in their workshop. *Fife* (previously *Glee* and then *Ceres*) was built at Eversons in 1959 and was recently bought from the Humber by her new owner, who has moved to Suffolk from Orkney. She is having a new deck and new engines, but her mahogany hull is in a reasonable state of repair. Her much older neighbour *Gweneth* was built in 1911 by Robert Balderston of Dixon Brother and Hutchinson Limited in Woolston and needs significant re-building—currently only the unfitted hull can be seen.

The **Waldringfield Harbour Master** reports (on the phone in a near-gybe on a Cornish Shrimper!) that the season has gone well, with much activity on the river and visiting yacht rallies from Benfleet, Bradwell and Greenwich. As there are no visitor moorings at Waldringfield, special thanks must go to those considerate sailors who alert him to their plans to be away and permit their moorings to be used for the enjoyment of visitors. The Deben Luggers held their rally at Waldringfield

Robertsons



Robertsons pontoon work underway.

Robertsons



*Bluebell* at Robertsons.

Larkmans



*Fife* at Larkmans.

Larkmans



*Gweneth* at Larkmans.

too. While many swimmers, including the Waldringfield wild swimmers, are aware of the dangers of swimming in the main channel, a few people have not considered that large motorboats are unable to see the water under their bows and have had to be shepherd to safety.

In a similar vein, the **Felixstowe Ferry Harbour Master** says that the wash created by thoughtless power boat and jet-ski drivers has been a danger to swimmers and other river users. The entrance to the mouth has not changed over the course of the summer, so the channel marker buoys have not needed to be moved since the Spring.

The **Ramsholt Harbour Master** has had a relatively quiet season, with few foreign boats, and a number of unused or untaken moorings. The quay at Ramsholt is in the middle of a repair programme which started last year, continued this year and is scheduled to complete in 2022.

*Sarah Zins is Co-chair of the RDA. She has been coming to Suffolk since she was a baby, but only finally saw the light and moved here permanently some 18 years ago. She enjoys the Deben at every stage of the tide.*

# The River Deben Association

## Autumn Meeting

26 November at 6:00pm at the Woodbridge Community Centre. James Mallinder, the district councillor for the Deben district and Cabinet Member for the Environment will talk to us about Suffolk's approach to the climate emergency with particular emphasis on the East Suffolk plan and to its impact on the Deben.

## Committee

Robert Simper	President
Jane Haviland	Co-chair
Sarah Zins	Co-chair
(Vacant)	Vice-chairs
Caroline Matthews	Secretary
Moray MacPhail	Treasurer
	Membership Secretary
Liza Hattan	Conservation
Matt Lis	River Businesses Social Media
Sue Orme	Planning
Martin Waller	Publicity

## Contributors

Julia Jones	Publications Editor
Alan Comber	Website Manager

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Magazine	<a href="mailto:magazine@riverdeben.org">magazine@riverdeben.org</a>
Volunteering	<a href="mailto:volunteer@riverdeben.org">volunteer@riverdeben.org</a>
All other matters	<a href="mailto:chair@riverdeben.org">chair@riverdeben.org</a>

## Journal

[riverdeben.org/rda-journal](http://riverdeben.org/rda-journal)

14/5/2021

*Who's that Boat? Or,  
Venice Comes to Town*  
Nan McElroy

28/05/2021

*A Virtual Beachcomb  
on Bawdsey Beach*  
Kate Osborne

11/06/21

*Of Diaries and the  
Perennial Diarist  
of Waldringfield*  
Gareth Thomas

25/06/21

*Oystercatchers  
on the Deben*  
Sally Westwood

9/7/21

*An Accidental Writer*  
Robert Simper

5/08/21

*River Deben Festivities  
2021 and Before*

Julia Jones and  
Archie White

3/09/21

*Maintenance of  
the River Wall to  
Flood Cell 1 on  
the River Deben*

Robin Whittle

17/09/21

*Lightning Craft*  
Josh Masters

1/10/2021

*Deben Commercial  
Fishing*  
Robert Simper

15/10/2021

*Spoonbills in Suffolk*  
Sally Westwood

29/10/2021

*The (Red) Lion of  
Sole Bay: Historical  
Artefact or Hallowe'en  
Adventure?*

Julia Jones

The August Bank Holiday weekend saw an experimental collaboration between wooden boat rowing enthusiasts in Venice and Woodbridge, brilliantly organised by Maxine Webster. Speakers included Richard Robinson from Oxford City Barge and Nan McIlvoy from Row Venice. More photos can be seen on the Woodbridge boatyard site [woodbridgeboatyard.com/events](http://woodbridgeboatyard.com/events) and we plan a fuller account in the RDA Journal.

# River Deben Events

There are many ways to enjoy the beauty and history of the Deben and support its unique environment. The RDA is glad to hear from other river organisations who share its aims and values. Events are often shared via the Facebook page or get in touch with the magazine editor.



Waldringfield History Group

On September 5th Ipswich metal detectorists held their first meeting after lockdown at Dairy Farm Marsh, Waldringfield. Among their finds were musket balls and (possibly) a small medieval coin.

Caroline Matthews



Martin Waller welcomes Woodbridge Museum's 10,000th visitor. From the beginning of November the museum will open on Saturdays and Sundays only from 10:30 to 3:30.



Moray MacPhail

Dragon boats were in the Deben Summer Festival and visited Ipswich to fundraise for the charity Fresh Start. They're available to hire for charity and teambuilding events: [info@dragontheden.com](mailto:info@dragontheden.com).

Maxine Webster



Anna travelled from Venice to be part of the event!

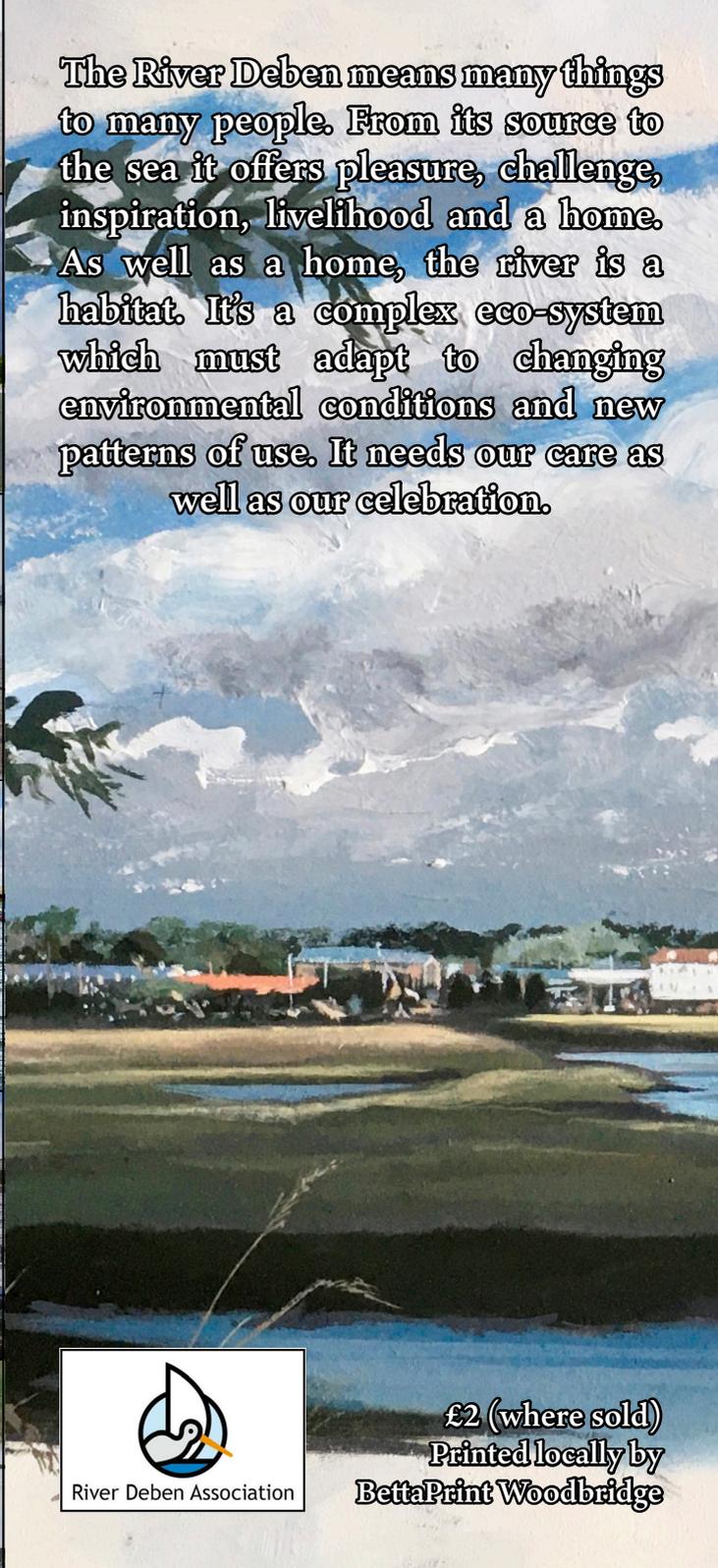


Maxine Webster

Venetian Rowing in Woodbridge.



The River Deben means many things to many people. From its source to the sea it offers pleasure, challenge, inspiration, livelihood and a home. As well as a home, the river is a habitat. It's a complex eco-system which must adapt to changing environmental conditions and new patterns of use. It needs our care as well as our celebration.



River Deben Association

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