

# The Deben



Issue 64  
Spring 2022

*Places featured in this issue  
of The Deben magazine:*

# RIVER DEBEN



Wickham Market

Campsea Ashe

Melton  
Bromeswell  
Wilford Bridge

Woodbridge

RAF Woodbridge

Sutton Heath

Sutton

Shottisham  
Rockhall Wood  
Shottisham Creek

Ramsholt

Alderton  
East Lane

Bawdsey

King's Fleet  
Felixstowe Ferry

Deben Bar

Martlesham

Waldringfield

Newbourne

Kirton Creek



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Colin Nicholson			



Cover by Claudia Myatt.

Jane Haviland

# Editor's Introduction

Our reason for existence as an Association is the River Deben. For some it is also an individual reason for existence—and a means of existence. Julia Dansie brilliantly describes the unique combination of wide skies above and a small manageable space that is the special gift of a boat. It's an insight shared by several contributors to this issue including our new Vice-chair Colin Nicholson, our former chairman Robin Whittle, exploring far beyond the river in his *Bumble Chugger*, and the Masters family as they celebrate 100 years of *Clytie*. There's starting to be some talk of the Deben being designated a 'Heritage Harbour' but this needs to be a living heritage where skills and craftsmanship are in daily use. It's a matter of relief that people like Oliver Ballam who has grown up on the river and King Isenia who has come here from Saint-Martin can find work suitable for their talents. Sarah Zins 'News from the Hards' reassures us that Deben boatyards continue to thrive.

Julia Dansie makes an important point about ensuring that the river is accessible to all. She's a volunteer with the Woolverstone project on the River Orwell. The Suffolk and the Sea event planned as part of the Felixstowe book festival in June will have a strong emphasis on opportunities for people living with disability to experience sailing. The event takes place at Trimley, on the peninsula between the Deben and the Orwell—are we doing enough to make such opportunities available on our own river?

There are many ways to experience the beauty and joy of the Deben; through walking, as Sue Ryder Richardson advocates, or through appreciating its wildlife, not only the birds spotted by Sally Westwood but also the 'bugs' peered at by Stephanie Perks. We need to keep our river in good health. There are problems of silting and pollution. There are problems

with the relationship between the river and adjoining land as rising sea levels and more extreme weather events threaten the status quo. Robert Simper makes a passionate plea not to neglect our river walls and Peter Wain offers an historical example of dramatic river change, which lost many people their livelihoods.

Our artists, photographers, writers and musicians are active and creative. This issue of the magazine includes plenty of ideas for direct involvement as well as examples of celebration. The greatest quality we possess is the peace to develop our ideas and our work. It's impossible not to think of the people of Ukraine bitterly defending themselves against invasion and perhaps we should also remember those in the past who have defended us. When my father returned from six years' service in WW2, he wrote 'one thing never loses its fascination, magic if you like, and that is the Deben.' I wish people living by the Dneiper, Dneister and Desna could say the same.

*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).*



Julia Jones

While my father George Jones was serving in the RNVR, he knew he could rely on Jimmy Quantrill in Waldringfield to take care of his boat.

# **Therapeutic Aspects of the Deben, and Life Connected to the Outdoors**

I first sailed up the Deben to Woodbridge many years ago when the white egrets were just beginning to inhabit these water. We'd drop an anchor and wait for ages to see one appear from a gully or creep from behind a mud bank. It would silence my breath, and make my chest tighten with the pleasure it brought. Now they are everywhere and still they stop me in my tracks. Watching the wildlife slows my pulse and thoughts, and I can feel the release of endorphins bringing with it greater pleasure.

My parents loved sailing from the Walton Backwaters to the Tide Mill, and the subsequent peace it brought them. A few years before my mother died we came by road; stood by the mill and said how wonderful it would be to have a boat here...and now I do. She would have loved it as much as I.

I realised quite early that for many, being on boats was a world small enough to 'manage'; where the greater roof was the sky and one could literally and metaphorically breath more deeply. Often too, the anxieties and stresses contained within enclosed space such as flats and houses, could be dispersed differently.

People I have worked with have come paddling on the rivers with me rather than sit in an office for the planned meetings. We all parted with greater tangible connections, and for a while it was a regular offer.

For over 25 years my work as a therapist, latterly in palliative care working with people post a life threatening diagnosis, has reinforced for me that living in a manner that gives us the best connections to all that is around us, is vital.



Julia Dansie

The Ferry Quay.

Dame Cicely Saunders, a key contributor to the modern hospice movement discussed 'total pain'. She suggested that a person's physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and practical struggles, all contribute to pain. Paying attention to the greater picture can really help with alleviating distress.

I have witnessed the relieving of pain; the greater engagement with being 'well'; and the sounds of pleasure when people opened windows in their rooms letting in greater air, sunlight and the sounds of life outside their 'sick bed'. Such small changes.

Being able to visualise canoeing upstream to the reeds beyond Wilford Bridge or breakfasting on the bow of the boat watching the tide slowly flooding in helps me so much when it can't actually be done at that moment.

I have had huge pleasure as a volunteer with the local Woolverstone Project, where adults and children living with a great range of illnesses



Peaceful paddling.

and conditions come to sail, or be on the water. The evident benefits for all in stretching their physical and emotional horizons has kept the project going for 25 or more years.

I will never forget a sailor whose only movement was in her hand saying as she steered the boat, ‘this is the only place I get peace and control in my life as I am always surrounded by others helping me.’ I believe we had just sailed in our imagination to Spain where we had drunk Sangria and eaten tortilla.

I arrived here on the Deben at a time of losses and change in the immediate and greater world. Covid, uncertain life shaking changes and the realisation that there is less time ahead than behind. Living much of my time on a 50ft by 10ft canal boat with tides, mud, nature, new friends, amazing music and stretching my own horizons proves daily to me the richness of making connections.

*Julia Dansie is a palliative care therapist, a musician and a volunteer with the Woolverstone Project ([www.woolverstoneproject.org.uk](http://www.woolverstoneproject.org.uk)).*

Julia Dansie



The Woolverstone project.

Claudia Myatt



Julia (left) playing with Claudia Myatt (right).

# Jo and Maddy Masters

## Celebrating *Clytie*

*Clytie, who is 100 years old this year, may not be the oldest boat on the river but she is its longest resident and has spent almost all of her life in the care of a single family. We asked her current joint-owner, Jo Masters, what this meant to her:*

### Jo Masters

What does our boat mean to us? I shall start by summarizing it: Loads of work / a labour of love. Escapism. Heritage. Lucky to have her.

Our much-loved boat *Clytie* has literally shaped our lives. It's as simple as that. She has played 'cupid' to 4 generations.

Clifford Paterson and Daisy (née Ogden) commission her building by Eversons in 1922. In fact, as you read this, she was probably nearing completion 100 years ago. They had 3 children, and it was their daughter Joan who spent several summers being courted by Fred Brown whilst on their summer holidays. Fred crewed for their good friend John Prentice on his yawl *Jack Heron* which he kept on the river Blackwater. 'We have made great plans this year for a fortnight's cruise in company with *Jack Heron*'. This was in 1929, and Fred and Joan were married in 1931, 'the first member of *Clytie's* crew to go has left the old boat'. Clifford and Daisy continued holidaying on their beloved boat. In 1934, they wrote in the diary at the end of a summer, 'Goodbye *Clytie* for a while. You are a good boat and we have not yet seen one we would change for you! Certainly not the "ocean cruiser" now being fitted out at Eversons'. They sailed until the outbreak of war. On August 26th, 1939, Clifford writes, 'And now we must each one face again our own particular life and perplexities—probably under war conditions. But I am confident we shall do so all the better for



*Clytie.*

this 3 weeks of intimate and peaceful life cruising on *Clytie*. Whatever happens nothing can rob us of the memory of a perfect holiday together.'

Post war, their 3 children took turns to holiday on her with their own families. It was Fred and Joan who took up the helm of *Clytie* after the death of Clifford in 1948. With their two children, they also holidayed on the local rivers. Their daughter Jan, who had recently been widowed, was courted by Ian Lee-Smith who was sailing on his family's boat *Narrow Seas*. They married in 1964.

Then we jump to 1989 when, after the boat being out of the family for 15 years, Jo and Roger Lee-Smith bought her back.

We had always remembered wistfully our holidays on board when we were very young. We kept an eye on her if we happened to visit Woodbridge. After the purchase, I was working on her up at Melton and a young man (Paul Masters) walked past and stopped to admire the boat. We were married 10 months later! We have cruised every year with our 3 children and their love of sailing and passion for *Clytie* increases every year.

She means wonderful holidays, an identity that grounds us to this beautiful area and recently a means of escaping, when we could holiday on her and cruise in company with friends. At the

moment we are embarking on a thorough refit in honour of her 100th birthday.

I will leave the final words to two of my children.

Josh (then 16) and his dad had had a lively sail: ‘At no point was I scared or even a bit worried. It got me thinking and wondering why... in retrospect I shouldn’t be worried in a situation like that. I was a sailor, I had been on this boat for as long as my 1st memories. But I think the main factor is the boat, her design and her family connection to me and to me as a sailor. Thanks to the exceptional mind of the man who commissioned her 100 years ago—my great great grandfather. Perhaps though, all of this is why the boat is still being sailed by the 5th generation of Clifford [and Daisy’s family].’

## Maddy Masters

Having recently been shown a photo of me on my 1st birthday on board (21 years ago), I couldn’t help but notice the striking indications of the many possibilities of where the life of that one-year-old might lead. All the things we do in our lives leads us to different places, to meet different people. I often think about *Clytie* and how she has influenced and shaped our lives to such a large extent, not least that I wouldn’t be here if she had not been the catalyst for my parents meeting.

Julia Jones



*Clytie's* centenary refit.



Jo Masters

Paul's first view of Jo and *Clytie*.

Throughout my life I have been blessed to have spent countless holidays on board. That carefree fun you experience as a child is only magnified when holidaying on *Clytie*. I have treasured memories of swimming from the boat (jumping in, of course), before clambering out and being bundled in a scratchy towel and handed a cup of hot chocolate. Sailing anywhere and everywhere, Suffolk, Essex, Holland, no matter where we were there was nothing like the satisfyingly delicious first bite of a bacon sandwich after a passage, that sweet saltiness making your taste buds explode. Food just tastes so good on board, out in the open and moving along at the speed according to how the wind that day fills her sails. When I think of going on *Clytie*, I think of eating chocolate, big bowls of pasta salad, and biscuits which have taken a slight hint of flavour from the Tupperware in which they’re stored. I think of the fruit basket suspended on the hook, loyally swinging away, guarding the apple and banana cargo inside never once hitting the sides, a little like *Clytie*. Safe and sound, I never felt in danger on board.

But maybe it’s just that one appreciates such simple things so much more.

Holidaying on *Clytie* always meant long days of playing with Anna, Josh, Mum and Dad whether it be with Playmmobile, Wiki Sticks, or Barbie. I remember longingly staring at our giant word search spread out on the saloon table



Maddy's first birthday.

and watching my older siblings intelligently fill it out, never able to spot the words before them, I thought they were geniuses! As I grew older, dolls were replaced with card games, but the precious family time always remained.

Spending time on *Clytie* now symbolises a different kind of happiness, a sort of serenity in our non-stop constantly interconnected world of notifications and deadlines. I cherish the peacefulness of staying on board of an evening and hearing the river birds' calls and gentle lap of the water against the hull instead of the torrent of pings and bleeps to which we have become accustomed. It is on board that I can close my eyes and clear my head, pour water from a plastic can into the kettle and heat it on the stove for a cup of tea, where I can clean my teeth over the side and, if I'm lucky, see the fireworks of phosphorescence sparkling out from the toothpaste foam. It's on board where we sit around the large table all now grown adults and read books aloud and share a tot of rum. Around that same table where over the years we played countless games of cards, shared endless meals, welcomed guests, that same table to which my high chair was once clipped and I blu-tacked Playmobil people to it to stop them from sliding off on passage.

All the moments spent on *Clytie* have led me to where I am today, and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. I do believe she has helped shape

me as a person, shaped us all as individuals. Who would have thought the book I received whilst on *Clytie* for my first birthday with the Eiffel Tower pictured on the front would be where I spend a large amount of my time 21 years later? Seeing that photo made me realise how precious each moment is, how positively significant each seemingly tiny experience is, all of which accumulate to the present. It led me to reflect more on the time we have had as a family on board. How lucky I feel to have spent so many beautiful holidays on *Clytie*, to have unknowingly learnt so much from so many interesting people and to be able to enjoy this extremely special boat which five generations of my family have similarly enjoyed over the past 100 years. It's that interesting connection to our ancestors which enchant us on *Clytie*, and we are just here in the present, enjoying the cherished time we have on board. May *Clytie* see another one hundred years of family through so many joyous moments.

*Melton resident Jo has written and spoken about Clytie on numerous occasions—The Deben #58 (pp. 29–31). Waldringfield: A Suffolk Village beside the River Deben (Waldringfield History Group, 2020) has more information about Clifford and Daisy Patterson, Clytie's first owners.*

*Jo is a registered nurse and has been sailing all her life. She learnt her sailing on the river Blackwater and 15 years ago, with Paul, took their 3 children for a 3 month extended cruise in the Mediterranean, no doubt igniting their love of travel.*

*Paul is a horticulturalist and took up serious sailing when he met Jo. The family have lived in Woodbridge for nearly 30 years.*

*Maddy is 22 and in her final year at the University of Warwick reading linguistics with French and Arabic and in the process of applying for a Masters. She spent a year in France last year; a country she loves, and is interested in either forensic linguistics or speech and language therapy.*

Robert Simper

## River Deben Flood Defences

The river walls, earth banks, were all originally built by men using nothing more than shovels and barrows. For centuries landowners maintained them in the same way, but in the twentieth century the responsibility for river defences was taken over by Government agencies with machines.

The major problem is surge tides breaching the river walls which can cause death and destruction to the coastal community. The last time this happened on a grand scale were the 1953 Floods. There was a massive public outcry about the loss of life and the vast amount of very expensive and totally unnecessary damage that was done. There was still a national food shortage, the tail end of World War II, and all the river walls were repaired. The horrors of the 1953 floods stayed in the public mind for several decades but by the late 1970s most people had forgotten about it. The Government then started to scale down the amount invested in flood defence, except at Woodbridge where the Environment Agency, the organization responsible for flood defences, did excellent work constructing defences against flooding. As the polar ice-caps melt, this must not stop.

Records started 145 years ago show that up to now there has been a small rise in the sea level every year (about 3½ mm/yr). Basically, flood defences have to be heightened about 300mm every century. This is not an impossible or expensive task. The collapse of any wall will cause more water to flow into the estuary and create a greater risk of flooding everywhere.

In 2013 there was a mini-surge which showed up the weakness in Deben defences. However the wall at Kirton Creek was heightened, possibly to



Robert Simper

The 1953 flood water receding so that this Shottisham man could return to his cottage near the Ford Bridge.

prevent flooding of the Water Treatment Plant at Newbourne. At Hill Farm, the Martlesham marshes were also flooded when the wall was breached, but the Environment Agency put forward the idea that a sill should be created so that these marshes would flood on a surge tide and reduce the possibility of Woodbridge flooding. However, the little amount of water on the marsh would not have any effect on the tide height at Woodbridge. In practice that theory has already failed, as was proved in the 1953 floods when every river wall was breached, but Woodbridge still flooded. The same happened in the 2013 surge on the River Alde where the Hazlewood and Iken river walls breached, but this didn't stop the lower end of Snape village from being flooded again.

A surge tide is like a wild animal going past silently at high speed desperately trying to find a space to fill. The surge tides don't happen many times a century and are created by abnormal weather conditions. A prolonged fierce north gale piles up the water in the North Sea causing the surge. The first high tide can cause flooding, but when a second tide comes in on top of the



High water at the Ferry Quay in October 2021.

first real damage is caused. Once a surge tide hits the coast there is nothing anyone can do to stop it. The flood defences have to be kept in good repair well ahead of these very frightening surge tides and this is not happening.

After the surge in 2013 the Environment Agency heightened the river wall at the top of Kirton Creek, but left the weak flood defences on Flood Cell 1, Bawdsey Marshes, and Flood Cell 4, Shottisham Creek, both highly vulnerable areas. In the past nine years there have been countless committee meetings to try and solve these problems, but so far absolutely nothing has happened.

Rockhall Wood is at position about half way along Flood Cell 4 wall. The wall to the south of this is in reasonable condition, but the wall to north is in poor condition and parts of it are very low. If the northern section of wall is not repaired the strip of land between Rockhall Wood and the river wall needs to be raised to prevent water flooding from the Pedigree Hall marsh into the Shottisham Creek marsh. The width of land is quite small and could be heightened in 3 or 4 days work with readily available local clay. If this work is not carried out, the surge water from Pedigree Hall marsh will flow over this weak point and will eat out the back of the southern wall. The weakened



Flooded meadows at Ramsholt in December 2021.

wall will collapse leaving a gap and a huge wall of water will burst out on to the grass marshes and move up the valley at speed. When this wall of water reaches Shottisham about six cottages are likely to be flooded. In the 1953 floods the people in two of these houses had to leave by



March 1949 storm tide at Waldringfield causes flooding at the boatyard.

the bedroom window while the main road to Bawdsey was closed.

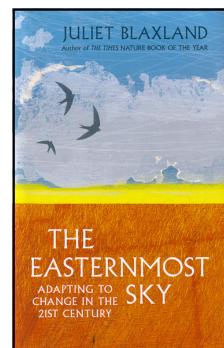
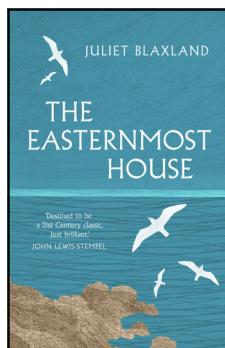
The river wall to Flood Cell 1, Bawdsey marshes, was breached in over 20 places in 1953 and the repair work has subsided much more than that for the Flood Cell 7, Falkenham marshes, and is in urgent need of repair. If maintenance of these walls is not continued the consequences would be very severe. It would mean about 3000 acres of land would be lost. Or to put it in more simplistic terms about 9000 tonnes of wheat per year would be removed from the national larder. It will also eventually lead to the river mouth widening and Bawdsey Ferry, Felixstowe Ferry and part of the golf course being added to a long list of Suffolk places under the sea.

For the last decade the Environment Agency representatives have stated that keeping these existing river walls was key to the flood protection on the Deben. However there are people trying to pretend that allowing these flood cells to flood is good. Improving bird

habitat is the most popular reason given but flooding simply replaces fresh water species with saltwater birds.

*Robert Simper, founding member and President of the RDA, has lived on the Deben all his life. He is a farmer, sailor, local historian and prolific author. In this article, he is writing in a personal capacity.*

*At the Suffolk and the Sea book festival (see page 31), Robert Simper will be in discussion with Juliet Blaxland, who lost her home to coastal erosion in 2020. The event will be chaired by Peter Wain.*



Juliet Blaxland

## Peter Wain

### Alderton and the River Deben

The village of Alderton is a sleepy village. It has a single shop, a population of about 400 but no longer a pub. Perhaps the last event of consequence that occurred was the murder of the Duke of Suffolk's Receiver General, John Squyer, in August 1450 (see 'Bawdsey Man Accused of Murder'. *The Deben* #49, 2014, p. 28) unless you count the collapse of the church tower in 1821 and the killing of a passing cow.

However, evidence has come to light that provides clues that once upon a time the village was a central and important part of the original medieval haven of Goseford, a major port on the

Suffolk coast, wealthy enough to provide ships for Edward III's navy.

Confirmation of this proposition comes from the record of coins found in the village. The significance of these coins is the quantity found, their dates and also where they were found.

A large number of the coins found are from the Medieval period (1100–1485) and of particular significance is the number of coins that date from the reigns of Henry III (1217–1272) and Edward I (1272–1307). This is a period when records show that ships from the Deben were involved in maritime trade around the coast

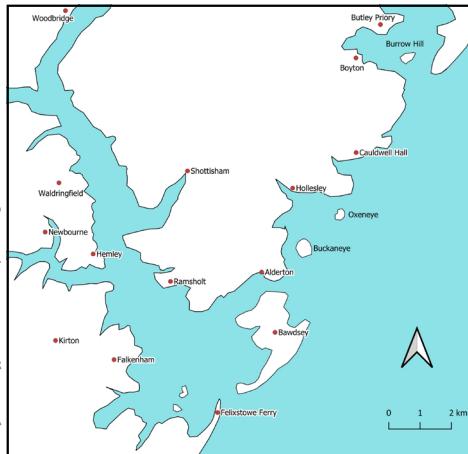


Fig 1. The Deben Estuary c. 1250.

from Newcastle to Bristol, and regularly made the long journey to and from Bordeaux to bring wine to England as well as elsewhere on the Continent.

No village on the lower river has yielded coins in the quantity found in Alderton, especially from the period between 1217 and 1307. These finds indicate a wealthy village with thriving trading activity and the discovery of foreign coins points to a trade that was international.

What is also significant is the fact that these coins have been found predominantly in areas of the village, that although now are farmland, were once on the shoreline, evidence that the trade was maritime.

Today Alderton has virtually no direct access to the water but in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it was very different.

Figure 1 shows the area between Alderton and Bawdsey that until about 1280 was covered by the sea and gave shipping direct access to the village.

Figure 2 indicates the seven areas in the village where coins from the medieval period have been found, five of them on the former shoreline.

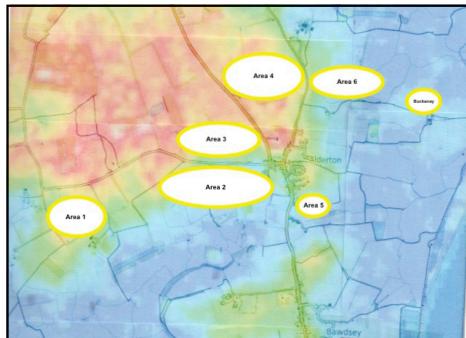


Fig 2. LiDAR map of Alderton.

It also shows the shallow piece of water separating Alderton from the then island of Bawdsey. It was this piece of water that during a period of silting up probably gave Goseford its name—‘the ford of geese’.

What happened to this bustling and important maritime village? Recent research has shown that that from the late thirteenth century there was a period of severe global climate change, characterized by increased storm frequency and severity. In particular storms in 1285, 1306 and 1307 caused major erosion and deposition events. As Dunwich was washed away so the Orford spit extended southwards and the sea between Alderton and Bawdsey silted up. Coins discovered that were dated after 1307 fell to insignificant number in comparison with earlier periods because ships no longer anchored on the village shoreline, trade ceased and the once busy village went to sleep hardly disturbed by the anguished screams of John Squyer or the dull thud as the church tower and the cow hit the ground.

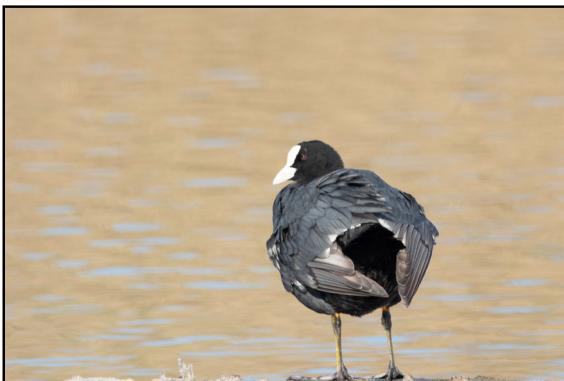
*Peter Wain is a retired lawyer and Felixstowe resident. He has a special interest in the mediaeval port of Goseford. His most recent research undertaken with Professor Mark Bailey and David Sear ‘The Transformation of the Suffolk Coast from Orford Ness to Goseford 1200-1600’ was published in the Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, volume 45 Part 1, 2021.*

# Review of Bird Sightings 2021

Bird sightings have been a new addition to the magazine. I thought it might be interesting for the reader to have an idea of the birds that visited, around the River Deben area. In January, seventeen Eurasian White-fronted Geese were seen along Martlesham Creek. A Black-necked Grebe and Greater Scaup visited the river. Both were viewed from Waldringfield. The Scaup stayed around for several days. Three Brent Geese, two pale-bellied and one dark-bellied were seen at Kirton. Later a Red-necked Grebe was seen at Kyson Point. Two Water Pipits were at the water's edge near Woodbridge Yacht Club. At Bawdsey a Common Crane, and two Purple Sandpipers were highlights.

Cold weather in February brought four Tundra Bean Geese to fields near Felixstowe Ferry. Eleven Eurasian White-fronted Geese were also seen there. A flooded meadow at Martlesham Creek was ideal for a Jack Snipe. An adult Black Brent Goose was on fields at Kirton Marshes, along with 1200 dark-bellied Brent Geese and two pale-bellied Brent Geese. The adult Black Brent stayed for a few days, along with the two pale-bellied Brent Geese. The 1200 Brent Geese gradually increased to 1500. A Great Egret was seen in the water meadow near the sluice at Kirton. An over-wintering Ruff was spotted along Martlesham Creek. Later, a Great Egret was seen at Ramsholt Lodge Marsh. A Red Kite flew over the river near Wilford Bridge from Sutton Hoo Woods. By the end of the month Dark-bellied Brent Geese increased to about 310 at Kirton Marshes. A Great Egret was also present.

In March, eleven Common Cranes were seen flying east over Branston, Woodbridge. A Great



A coot: widespread in ponds, lakes and rivers.

Egret was seen at Falkenham Creek. A White-tailed Eagle flew north over Melton, probably a recently reintroduced bird from the Isle of Wight. Later a Great Egret was spotted at the water's edge at Ramsholt. A female Hen Harrier was observed flying over Ramsholt. Another was seen from Falkenham, as was a Red-kneed Grebe. Bawdsey found rarities at East Lane, with a Woodchat Shrike and a Golden Oriole. Birders in Martlesham reported a Ring Ouzel. In early May a Spoonbill appeared at Ramsholt Lodge Marsh. A Glossy Ibis appeared at the water meadows in Ramsholt. A Black Redstart was spotted at Woodbridge in



A snipe: likely to be seen on wet grassland and marshes (amber list species).



A buzzard: increasingly common in most habitats including woodland, pasture, arable and marsh bog. woodland. A Hen Harrier flew over the Deben from Falkenham. In June, three Common Cranes were in marshland at Martlesham Creek. A Hoopoe was spotted at Woodbridge airbase. Bawdsey reported a Ring Ouzel. Another Spoonbill visited Ramsholt Lodge Marsh, in July. A Curlew Sandpiper visited Kirton Creek. Another Great Egret was at Ramsholt Lodge Marsh, clearly a preferred site for Great Egrets. At Bawdsey Quay a Wood Warbler was seen.

In September, the Great Egret at Ramsholt Lodge Marsh was joined by another and two Cattle Egrets. A Caspian Gull was seen flying along the river at Melton. Later a Booted Eagle was reported as flying over Martlesham. A Spotted Redshank and a Wood Sandpiper were seen at Ramsholt Lodge Marsh, a fruitful location for observing less regular species near the river. An Osprey was spotted at Kyson Point. Bawdsey reported a passing Sooty Shearwater. Later, a Dotterel was identified in a group of 400 Golden Plover between Kings Fleet and Falkenham. The following day, a Dotterel was with a Golden Plover near Ramsholt. In October, another Osprey flew along the river at Woodbridge and

Bawdsey reported a Richards Pipit and a Short-eared Owl. The Dotterel was still present between Kings Fleet and Falkenham in November. Three drake Eiders flew off from Bawdsey saltmarsh. A Lapland Bunting was feeding in fields between Kingsfleet and Felixstowe Ferry. A Whooper Swan and two Bewicks Swans were busy eating on Falkenham Marshes. Bawdsey reported four Snow Buntings. The three swans remained on the marshes, into December. Two more turned up, along with a Snow Bunting. A Shag was diving in the river mouth near Bawdsey Manor. A Hen Harrier flew over Falkenham Marshes, where five Shorelarks were foraging. Elsewhere, cracking birds were observed during the summer. An Albatross visited Bempton Cliffs again and a stunning Roller stayed awhile at Icklingham, Suffolk. Perhaps we will see one soon. Last minute report, 2000 Flamingoes over the River Deben ... perhaps next year! Thank you 'Suffolk Birding'

*Sally Westwood is a professional bird photographer who has written many articles for Bird Magazines and Journals. She lives on a boat on the Deben, though she often migrates to warmer climes in winter.*

*You can report your rare and scarce bird sighting to: [suffolkbirding.webs.com](http://suffolkbirding.webs.com).*

## Skating on Pure Tension

Sometimes, as you walk along the River Deben, take time to look at the very edges of the river, where the water meets the muddy banks, and amongst the reeds and grass you just might see a little scurrying creature that appears to be resting lightly on the very surface of the water, as in Image 1. It is in fact, most probably, a pleuston (a surface living) insect of the Hemiptera order, a member of the Gerridae family (over 350 species), a *Gerris lacustris*, Pond Skater.

These little creatures are fierce carnivores, that prey on larvae and other insects, with mouthparts adapted for piercing and sucking. They have many ripple-sensitive hairs on their legs, which trap air bubbles below the surface of the water and result in a strong force to support the insect, enabling it to move along the surface of the water. These legs are incredibly strong and are able to support up to 15 times the entire insect's weight, see Image 2. The sensitive hairs on the legs, can also detect vibrations on the surface of the water. In a manner similar to a spider, when a small piece of vegetation lands on the surface (in the spider's case—the web), and in the pond skater's case—the surface tension of the water—it can feel like possible food. (Interesting fact: the surface tension of water is 0.07275 joule per square metre

at 20°C.) The photograph below shows such an instance, where a piece of leaf has fallen onto the water's surface, and the skater has rushed out to investigate after feeling the vibrations of the leaf matter on the surface of the water.

The Pond Skater undergoes 5 different instar (nymph) stages, each one lasting up to ten days, and finishes with a final moulting of its skin to be followed by an adult stage, lasting for a further two months. The whole lifespan is up to one year in length. In the cold months, when there are few insects around for a food source, they fly away, to hibernate away from the water until the warmer weather arrives.

They lay their eggs on submerged vegetation or rocks, with the females carrying between 2–20 eggs, which are translucent or creamy white, becoming bright orange as the egg develops. The nymphs are similar to adults in diet and behaviour, but are initially only 1mm in length, without genital and tarsal segments.

*Gerris lacustris* use ripple signals by moving their legs on the surface of the water to communicate, see Image 3. 3Hz is taken to be a courtship signal; 10Hz signals threat; and 25Hz is a signal that indicates repulsion. The male gerrid initially sends

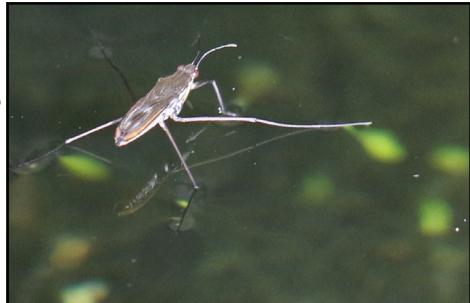


Image 1: Introducing... *Gerris lacustris*.



Image 2: False Alarm.

out the 25Hz signal to indicate his presence in the area, which if not reciprocated, is taken to mean that the other is a female, and therefore he switches to the 3Hz signal. If the female is receptive, she will lower her abdomen, permitting the male to mate her, but a non-receptive female will raise her abdomen and send out the 25Hz signal.

As to predators, the *Gerris lucustris* is eaten by fish, frogs and birds, with cannibalism interestingly being common in the mating season. It is obviously very important to be aware of what vibrations you are sending out at that time of year, as ignoring your neighbour could have disastrous results indicating that you are available food. Tricky stuff.

This aids in the population control, and restricts territories. However, they are successful and have been on earth for as long as 55 million years, so I guess you really ought to take the time to try to spot a few and see if you can observe what they are up to...and how and what they are communicating to each other. Take time to pause on your walk and look down at the edge of the Deben, so find them in the still waters amongst the reeds, but don't bother in the winter, as they will be snoozing away from the water, safe in cracks and crevices, awaiting the arrival of warmer weather. Happy bug hunting.

*Stephanie Perks lives on her boat and has swum in, walked by, sailed on and generally admired the Deben for nearly three decades. She is fascinated by any creepy crawlies— insects, arachnids, gastropods, and other such delightful inhabitants of our planet.*

Stephanie Perks

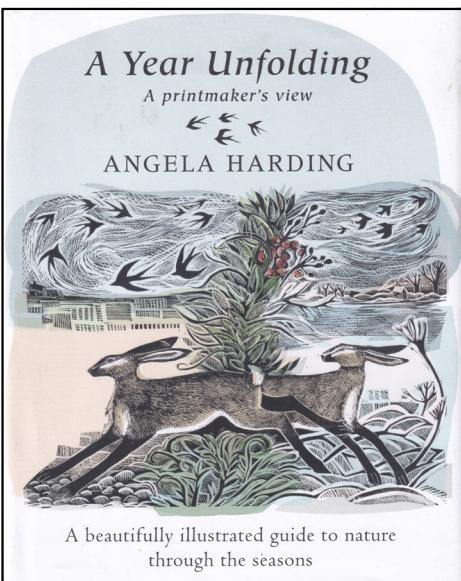


Image 3: Feeling the River Deben Vibes.

## A Year Unfolding: A Printmaker's View Angela Harding

Many people will recognise Angela Harding's distinctive images celebrating the British countryside—but who knew of her links with the River Deben? We're indebted to Woodbridge journalist and book lover Catherine Larner for her *Classic Boat* article highlighting the fact that Harding's husband, Mark, has a small wooden sailing boat, *Windsong*, which is based on the Deben. And as Harding herself says: 'There is no better way to observe birds and other wildlife than from the back of a small sailing boat.'

£20, Little Brown Publishers



Angela Harding

# Walking the Upper Deben at Wickham Market and Campsea Ashe

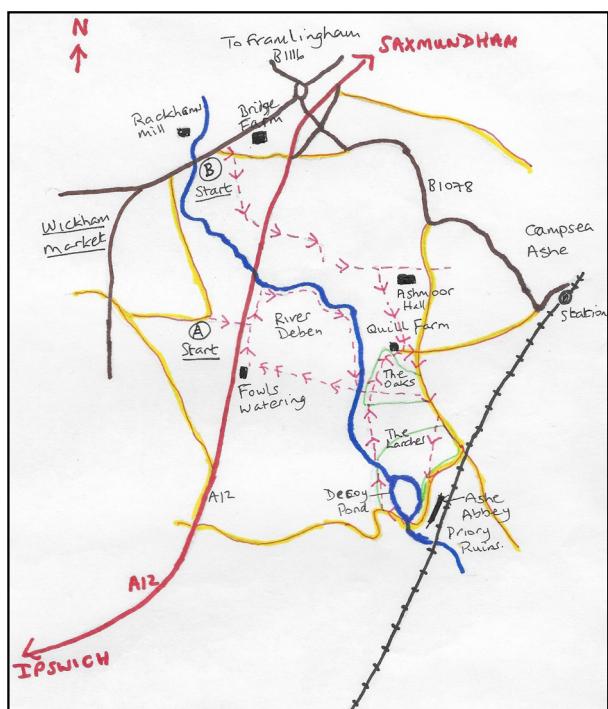
Rivers. The lifeblood of communities for generations, the Deben, from source to mouth, is one such. The river and its tributaries nurtured villages, gave grist to many mills, and fed and watered the all-important abbeys. Explorations around Wickham Market have revealed Paleolithic, Bronze Age, Roman, Anglo Saxon, and medieval relics. Both the tidal flood of this river and its inland arteries have supported this lineage of settlements.

A ramble around Wickham Market and Campsea Ashe offers an insight into the generations that have lived and worked alongside the Deben, from the C18th Rackham's Mill, through the ancient, coppiced woodland 'The Oaks', alongside medieval fishponds, beside 'Ashe Abbey' which stands on the ground of the C12th Augustinian Priory of St Mary's, but mostly walking over water-meadows that have brimmed and supported life for centuries.

The walk starts to the east of Wickham Market on the track from Mill Lane that leads to waterworks, and a tunnel beneath the A12. (OS Ref 309557, map sketch right.) Pass under the road, turn left at the fence, then right to follow the banks of the Deben as it meanders through water-meadows. These, as many will notice from the A12, are often flooded and consequently the banks can be quite muddy. Nonetheless, wildlife abounds, herons settle in the reedbeds, egrets



Ashe Abbey.



Sketch of the walk.



Wickham Market watermeadows.

peck at the earth, buttercups, marsh marigolds and cows' parsley in turn glaze the sward, cows graze. The river idles, fish swim, anglers sit along the banks catching little, enjoying the sun.

There is a rush of water as the river divides, part of the stream tumbles over Whitebridge weir, where the diverted water dashes into a relief channel for the water mill downstream. From the wooden bridge, turn left to cross the Deben onto a wooded track. Very shortly reach a cross paths, turn left into woodland called 'The Oaks', an ancient, coppiced area recorded in the Doomsday book, it is still carefully tended and re-planted. As the trees thin, take the steps up behind Quill Farm, so named as it was here quills were used to drain the water when the Deben was diverted in 1204.

From the steps follow the field edge as it curves right to meet the road at a three-ways. Turn right (signed Rendlesham), and take the second right-hand path, across a field towards the delightful evergreen glade, The Larches. Through the trees descent to reach a stile and keep right on

the road to skirt the edge of Decoy Pond, one of two fishponds that supplied St Mary's Priory founded in 1195. Little is left of the original building, as it was confiscated and then largely dismantled in 1536, you can however, see a thatched barn, part of a chapel, and behind the very fine medieval long house, is the Campsea Ashe watermill, the one which necessitated the diverting of the Deben.

Past the house, it is well worth stopping on the bridge to take in the vista over the Decoy Pond. We saw herons, then three cormorants duck and dive for their dinner. Sometimes, an electric blue flash catches the eye — a kingfisher darts. Continue along the lane and very shortly turn right onto a path through a young poplar glade, the delicate light and shade here reminiscent of an impressionist painting.

Continue ahead through a gate into a grassy meadow, before reaching the four ways paths encountered earlier. Turn left here and over the bridge bearing slightly left rather than returning along the riverbank. Follow the path to Fowls Watering cottages, turn right along the track back to the tunnel under the A12. The beauty of these meadows only slightly marred by the incessant rumble of the traffic.

This walk can be extended from B (OS ref 308567) on Ash Lane, to take in Rackham's Mill and Wickham Market. From Ash Lane take the footpath to meet the above walk at Quill Farm. Follows the same route until passing beneath the A12, turn right and follow Spring Lane into Wickham Market. Turn right at the main road, then cross the bridge at Rackham's Mill to reach Ash Lane.

*Sue Ryder Richardson was born in Suffolk, and has explored the county on foot for as long as she can remember.*

*A fuller version of this walk will appear in the RDA Journal on 11th March.*

# Jane Haviland and Sarah Zins

## Co-chairs' Report

We are delighted that most of us are now able to resume some sort of 'normal' life and start to enjoy the river in all its forms again. At the time of writing in early February, the weather has been fairly dry and it has been a joy to re-walk the footpaths. We plan to put up small plaques displaying the QR code for the River Deben Association along the riverbank, at discreet locations. Just tap your phone on the code and it will take you to our website, complete with a map of the whole river, links to wildlife and other useful information about the river. If there is more that you would like to see on the website to help you enjoy the river to the full, do please get in touch.

As you will see in 'News from the Hards' (pp. 36–37), the boatyards are busy preparing boats to launch in the Spring, and no doubt many of you are busy with varnish or making some adjustments to your own craft. While on the subject of boats, we should be proud that *Falcon*, the International One Design recently restored by Woodbridge Boatyard, has been

shortlisted for *Classic Boat Magazine's* 2022 'Restoration of the Year (under 40ft) Award'! Whoever the winner, we celebrate this year being the third consecutive year that a Deben Boatyard has been shortlisted, following on from Deben Cherub *Ariel* in 2020 and Sam Doman's *Longshore* in 2021. This is a major achievement and well done to all involved for their dedication and hard work!

Approximately 40 people came to hear the RDA talk in November given by James Mallinder, the district councillor for the Deben district and Cabinet Member for the Environment. He spoke about Suffolk's approach to the climate emergency with particular emphasis on the East Suffolk plan and its impact on the Deben. It provided a great opportunity for our members who live in Alderton, Bawdsey, Bromeswell, Ramsholt, Shottisham, Sutton and Sutton Heath to meet their councillor. Our committee member, Liz Hattan, also gave a brief talk about the objectives of COP26 and some of the key issues that may affect the environs of the River Deben.

Still on the subject of climate change, we are excited to announce that Lord Deben has agreed to address our talk in the autumn (scheduled for Thursday 24th November 2022) on the next steps from COP26, which he is particularly well-placed to do as Chairman of the Climate Change Committee.

Not entirely unrelated to climate change but bringing the focus to a pressing issue for our river, pollution, our speaker at our Spring AGM meeting on



Liz Hattan, James Mallinder and Jane Haviland in November.

27th April will be Andy Went, Project and Conservation Officer for the Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust (ESRT). He will be discussing the recent publication of the ESRT, entitled 'The State of our Rivers' which is a very interesting report focusing on the health of our regional rivers, including the River Deben, addressing sewage amongst other issues. The report also includes interactive mapping, which we hope he will be able to demonstrate.

Enclosed with the magazine is the formal notice of the AGM and the report and accounts for the year ended 31st December 2021. One of the agenda items is the proposed new constitution, which was discussed at our 2021 Zoom AGM, and the draft for approval can be found on the website. The enclosure also has a reminder about the current subscriptions and how to pay, as well as the discounts available to members at local businesses. You will see from the agenda that some changes are planned to the committee. The role of Chair can be fairly onerous, with many external meetings to attend, and so the current practice of having co-chairs has worked well to spread the load. So, when Sarah steps down as Co-chair at the AGM, it is proposed that Jane Haviland is joined as Co-chair by Colin Nicholson. Colin has well established family links with Woodbridge and the surrounding area and has written about his relationship with the Deben, and growing fascination with the area.

On behalf of the Committee I (Jane speaking) thank Sarah for her unstinting commitment to the RDA, the River Deben itself and her ongoing support. Sarah has been a member of the RDA Committee for around 6 years, of which 3 have been Chair, and 2 as a Co/Vice-chair. With her professional approach, objectivity and insightfulness, energy and timely chairing of meetings, we will miss her enormously but thank her most sincerely for her dedication

and wish her many happy hours walking and watching the Deben in the years to come.

Martin Waller has resigned from the committee due to other commitments but has kindly agreed to continue to assist the Association with publicity. Liz Hattan has agreed to take the role of Vice-chair. Sadly, our redoubtable Secretary, Caroline Matthews, has decided that the time has come to relinquish the role of Secretary to enable her to fulfil her role as Vice-chair and secretary of the Woodbridge Museum, but thankfully, she is happy to stay on the committee. We thank her for her commitment and hard work in ensuring that the proceedings of the committee are properly documented and disseminated. We would like to propose Caroline Peeke for the role of Secretary and we hope that you will all give her your support.

We mentioned in the last magazine that we had worked with statutory and charitable bodies to come up with a joint notice about how kayakers, stand-up paddle boarders and others could use the river thoughtfully. We have now drafted a similar notice for wild swimmers, this time in conjunction with the harbour masters, and we plan for it to be disseminated to the various clubs and hubs up and down the river. This will be on our website shortly.

We look forward to the coming months' activity and to seeing as many of you as possible at the AGM on 27th April 2022 in the Woodbridge Community Hall at 6 pm for a chat and refreshments before the formal meeting begins at 6.30 pm.

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

*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.*

## Colin Nicholson

# My Deben

My family has lived within 600m of the Deben for over 10 years and yet we are still just getting to know it. What varied and ever-changing beauty it has.

Further ties to the Deben come through my wife's family, as her grandmother was one of those who successfully campaigned to save the East Suffolk rail line from extinction in the 1960s, and her grandfather was deeply involved in restoration of the Woodbridge Tide Mill during the 1970s.

Sailing and rowing are part and parcel of Deben life and I was fortunate to be brought up on the Dorset coast and River Thames where I was introduced to both of these pastimes. For ten years previous to moving to the Deben permanently, my wife and I set about introducing our four young children to Suffolk, especially Woodbridge, during most summer holidays. The hugely kind and helpful management at the Deben Yacht Club would enable us to become

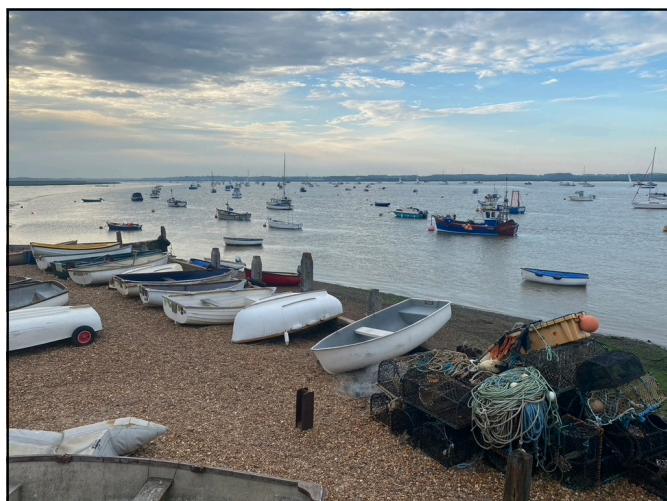
temporary members of the club and we were given use of their 10ft club dinghy, *The Custard*, (owing to its bright yellow colour!). Outings on the Deben were the perfect introduction to sailing, the eldest going on to achieve his RYA Dinghy Instructor certificate and subsequently sailing across the Atlantic twice.

One particularly memorable outing was when our holiday coincided with the Deben Yacht Club's annual voyage to the Ramsholt Arms, departing on the outgoing tide, a leisurely sun-kissed lunch whilst the tide turned, followed by a tidal assisted return; *The Custard* needing all the help she could get. My wife still recalls wondering what had happened to her family, as she eagerly awaited their appearance from the shores of the pub, whilst most club members were already enjoying their lunch—until slowly but surely *The Custard* appeared round the point opposite the Hemley Saltmarsh, with me at the helm and two of our children (aged 8 and 6yrs) all squashed into that 10ft hull. Given

that I am 6ft, I might have organised for a slightly bigger craft, had I known how long it would take for me and my young crew!

A constant feature of my life has been faithful family dogs, who require walking at least twice a day. Walking the various paths along the Deben, gives constant delight. Even on today's unique early morning (as I write), the first full 'Wolf' moon of 2022 looked so bright over the meadow to be

Colin Nicholson



Up river from Felixstowe Ferry.

scarcely believable—The Wolf Moon is said to ‘bring full emotional release’.

One interesting walk is round the point at Bawdsey Quay. Sometimes, but only with the right tide, it is possible to walk out on the shingle towards the ever shifting Knolls—every expedition is different. For the children, the excitement of an ice-cream, just a ferryboat ride away, is always a good draw.

And more recently, I have been enjoying the walks on the Felixstowe Ferry side, starting perhaps at The Ferry Boat Inn, past the boatyard and various weathered moorings and back round the golf course. This takes one past, sustainability in action, the Felixstowe Hydrocycle ([link for further information: felixstowehydrocycle.com](http://felixstowehydrocycle.com)) which aims to save sustainably sourced fresh water currently pumped to sea, to assist irrigation for farmers and recharge the Felixstowe Peninsular aquifers. The project brings into focus how the Deben remains vital for all of our livelihoods, in the past for shipping and transport and now for our way of life, areas of natural beauty and agriculture.

A couple of years ago, the acquisition of a 19ft Shetland motor boat from Andy Seedhouse brought positive change to my family, cruising Covid-free in short expeditions from a Ramsholt Fairway Committee mooring—a

truly bewitching location on a quiet summer’s evening as the sun sets... The boat overwinters under the careful supervision of the team at the Woodbridge Boatyard and the more we take the boat out, the more we are transfixed by the beauty of the River, the inlets, the salt marshes, the way the river winds itself round from Woodbridge to Waldringfield, coupled with the sometimes haze of a morning mist. It may seem rather poetic, but that’s exactly what The River Deben evokes.

*Colin Nicholson has been a member of the River Deben Association for a number of years. He had a varied career in the international pharmaceutical industry with jobs ranging from strategy and information management to sales and marketing. More recently, Colin worked in sport, as Chief Executive of an Olympic National Governing Body, organising participation in the London Olympics and three Commonwealth Games.*

Colin Nicholson



Colin Nicholson



One of Colin's family's dogs.

Colin Nicholson.

Nick Cottam

## Profile: Claudia Myatt

Art and music have flourished up and down the Deben for centuries and the illustrator Claudia Myatt is living up to that tradition. Her sketches and artwork, reproduced across multiple media, can seem as fluid, as vibrant as the river itself, while her music is an unhurried recreation, a timeless riverside pastime and an antidote to the modern world.

'The Deben is my garden,' says Claudia. 'I live on a small boat but when you've got the river flowing past your window, you've got the world at your feet.' While the Deben has been a constant in her life for the past 10 years, the wider world has presented itself in various guises, from teaching art on cruise ships to travelling to the bottom of the world as she did recently as Artist in Residence (no less) on the Royal Navy's only ice breaker HMS *Protector*. In between there have been numerous adventures—the Falklands, the Galapagos Islands, kayaking on the Deben and in various parts of the UK—and always her local river to come back to.

'The river is incredibly inspiring for sketching, especially in winter,' says Claudia, who lives aboard *Else*, a 45-ft, 100-year-old tugboat in Woodbridge and has a studio in Old Martlesham, itself just a scenic walk away from

the river. 'The light on the river changes all the time and there is always something going past my boat at high tide.'

As a nautical, river-inspired artist Claudia Myatt is prolific by any standards. Her output includes books, mugs, cards and coasters, to name but a few. There are also the blogs, the teaching and her ever-changing online presence. Her work is colourful, fresh and vibrant, a rivery, fluid world portrayed through her art.

Her output with its emphasis on accessibility and her passion for treating a sketchbook as a travel journal, she suggests, as well as her experience of boats, contributed to her being chosen for a life-changing trip to Antarctica. 'In previous years the Artist in Residence has tended to be a painter with an exhibition at a London gallery to follow. What I offered was perhaps more to do with communication. It's about reminding people why Antarctica matters and using art to stimulate their imagination.'

Her 8-week trip, starting on the 15th November and covering 4,335 miles aboard *Protector* took in the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, all British Protectorates and part of the Royal Navy's mission to fly the flag

Claudia Myatt





and undertake important scientific studies into the marine environment and the local wildlife. This is reflected in Claudia's sketchbooks of the trip and her posts which overflow with different aspects of the journey. Breaking ice floes, towering mountains of rock and ice, penguins and sketches of *Protector*'s crew all feature. There are choppy seas and glaciers on the move. Our climate may be changing, but here is a very personal portrayal of those cold frozen wastes.

'It's somewhere I've always wanted to go,' she says, 'a place where the past, the present and the future seem to meet.' The past for South Georgia includes the killing of 175,000 whales between 1904 and 1960, a gruesome slice of history which is recorded in the island's museum and evidenced by the ruins of Grytviken, its former Norwegian-named whaling station. Claudia's visit to the island also coincided with the centenary of the death of Ernest Shackleton who is buried there after dying of a heart attack just offshore, aged 47.

Claudia Myatt



Above: HMS *Protector*.

Left: A spread from Claudia's sketchbook.

An Anglo-Saxon-inspired work.



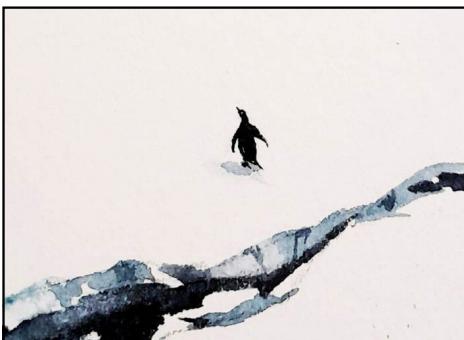
Claudia with one of her harps.

Back home Claudia's projects include a sketchbook charting her Antarctic adventure and a book of Anglo-Saxon designs about Sutton Hoo which readers of all ages will be able to colour and create for themselves. She has also returned to her beloved harp, a gentle and melodic accompaniment to her life on the Deben.

*Nick Cottam, author of Life on the Deben, interviewed Claudia about her Antarctic experience for the March issue of The Suffolk Magazine.*

Claudia Myatt

Claudia Myatt



A penguin in the frozen wasteland.

Claudia Myatt

# Jan Pulsford

## Duet for Piano and Tidemill

*Duet for Piano and Tidemill* by Jan Pulsford is a musical tone poem which was inspired by a conversation she had with Dan the Miller when working on the music and projections for the Beowulf Festival in 2018. He told her he milled using the vibrations of the Tidemill.

Claudia Myatt



Dan the Miller.

Intrigued, Jan set out with a spectrum analyser to see if she could measure what the vibrations actually were and then became fascinated with the sounds of the 800-year-old building and the possibility of turning it into a kinetic instrument.

'You can hear and feel the history of the iconic place in every squeak and nook and cranny. It comes alive with the sound of the mill wheel turning.'

Jan recorded and captured video of early morning milling sessions, feeding and editing the sounds into her computer. Running it through various digital effects she discovered the key of the Tidemill and started playing the piano as a duet to the sounds and rhythm of the Tidemill, capturing the notes into the computer (the modern-day version of 'composing'). She then scored strings to accompany the piece, which starts with the sound of the millers getting the mill ready.



Projections on the Tidemill.

The Tone poem was played as part of the stunning Christmas Son et Lumiere, projected onto the Tidemill after the Carol Concert on December 22nd, with amazing graphics rendered by Christian Nicholls.

In 2022 *Duet for Piano and Tidemill* will have the first live performance with string quartet at the Tidemill as part of the Ambient Music World Festival on the Autumnal equinox weekend, 23rd-25th Sept 2022. Watch the video ([youtu.be/RL823IPAr14](https://youtu.be/RL823IPAr14)) and get more info at [ambientmusicworld.com](http://ambientmusicworld.com).

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

Charmian S Berry

# Books

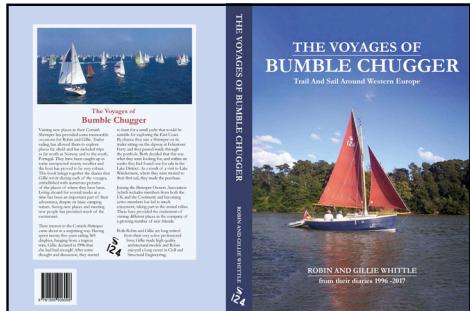
Julia Jones

## The Voyages of Bumble Chugger

Robin and Gillie Whittle

The name *Bumble Chugger* doesn't exactly conjure visions of adventure yet this is an adventurous book. Robin and Gillie Whittle bought their Cornish Shrimper when they were both still working and living in Surbiton. Initial excursions were small scale—Thames Ditton to Teddington Lock but it was not long before they set off for the first of many rallies organised by the Shrimper Association. This was in Chichester harbour in gusty conditions. An injury to Gillie's hand forced them to withdraw yet they were undeterred. Similarly Robin kept his nerve after a frightening December sail on his own in choppy conditions in the dark from Itchenor to Cowes. The following year he and Gillie, undaunted, returned to the Isle of Wight, entered the famous Round the Island race with two of their children, then crossed the Channel to Normandy.

From then they never looked back. Every summer included not just family holidays at Felixstowe Ferry, where they were members of the sailing club but also excursions to more distant cruising areas: France, the Baltic, Portugal. This is the beauty of a trailer-sailor. You can tow the little boat to a convenient starting point—even using it as an overnight caravan on the way—then launch directly into the area to be explored. If necessary, the boat and its trailer can be taken on a ferry. In this way Robin and Gillie were able to make the most of brief holiday weeks to sail round the Isle of Mull, visiting Iona, then the following year to join a Shrimper Week in Brest, sailing to Douarnenez.



Robin Whittle

When Robin retired from the engineering firm Arup in 2002, not only did they move to live in Woodbridge, but also set out on a month-long exploration of Sweden. The Queen's Golden Jubilee was celebrated, patriotically, in the Hammarbyslussen to the west of Stockholm.

Cynics mutter that cruising in foreign waters is merely finding more exotic places to fix your boat. There's no doubt that Robin's practicality has been a key factor in the success of these trips—not just fixing things but improving and adapting the initially rather basic systems on *Bumble Chugger*. Gillie's contribution can be guessed at by the quality of her writing as she tells the tales of their adventures. Positive, appreciative, insightful are words that come to mind. If you are going to be sharing a tiny space for several weeks, often with uncertain weather, these qualities are as important as remembering to bring a spare cotter pin to reattach the prop. This is an unpretentious but lavishly illustrated, home-produced book (with watercolours as well as photos) that may inspire other small-scale adventurers to set out beyond the Deben Bar.

£24, Wop-wops Publishing

Available directly from

[gillie.whittle@btinternet.com](mailto:gillie.whittle@btinternet.com)

Also bookshops and [golden-duck.co.uk](http://golden-duck.co.uk)

# Suffolk and the Sea: A Jubilee Event

A Book Festival with a difference is taking place on Saturday 25th June at the Two Sisters Arts Centre in Trimley with involvement from several RDA members. It explores the relationship between Suffolk and the sea and, appropriately, is the first book festival you can get to by boat. There's a footpath to the Suffolk Yacht Harbour at Levington, where there will be yachts open to visit and music in the evening.

Juliet Blaxland, author of *The Easternmost House* and *The Easternmost Sky*, will be in discussion with Robert Simper (chaired by Peter Wain).

Claudia Myatt, presenting her new book *Anglo-Saxon Inspirations*, will be joined by Jane Russell, senior editor at chart makers Imray, to discuss the sea as means of connection between Suffolk and the wider world.

Story teller Glenys Newton will speak of 'The Sea as Healer' and describe the effect of wild swimming on her mental well-being.

Captain Richard Woodman, Elder Brother of Trinity House, who has spent a lifetime travelling the trade routes of the world and writing an astonishing number of history books and novels, will share the platform with Claudia as she describes her recent trip to Antarctica.

Julia Jones will discuss her new book *Uncommon Courage* with other sons and daughters of RNVSR members, including some who served at HMS *Beehive* in Felixstowe.



24-26 June 2022

Peter Willis

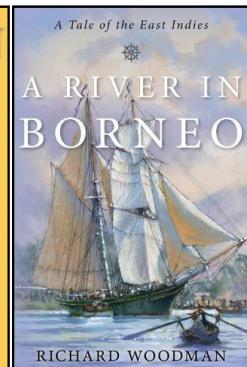
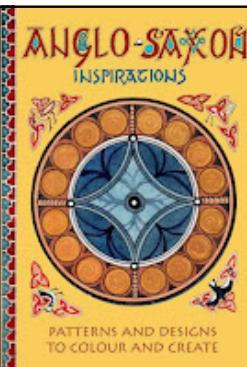
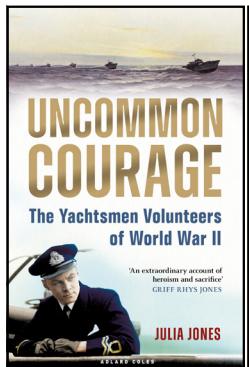
**Uncommon Courage:  
The Yachtsmen Volunteers  
of World War Two**

Julia Jones

*Reproduced with permission from Yachting Monthly:*

It took the Royal Navy a while to get used to the assistance of the yachtsmen who made up the Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve at the start of World War II. The likes of Maurice Griffiths, Peter Scott, Robert Hichens, Nevil Shute Norway and Adrian Seligman brought an inventiveness to situations that sometimes challenged the 'Navy way' but got results. They also wrote letters, journals and memoirs, and it is these that Julia Jones has sifted to make up this remarkable mosaic of frank, front-line accounts of the war at sea. For those of us who were the children of the men involved in these events but who often chose not to talk about them, it is a deeply fascinating, and moving document.

£20, Adlard Coles



# Getting Involved: You Too Can Go to Sea

The Family of Augustine Courtauld



Duet at Cowes, 1936.

The key event of the Suffolk and the Sea event (June 25th), however, may be the session entitled 'You Too Can Go to Sea.'

Arthur Ransome's masterpiece, *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea* was written when he lived at Broke House Levington. RDA member Peter Willis, President of the Nancy Blackett Trust and author of *Good Little Ship*, will lead a session which focusses on the work of sailing trusts and sailing charities who enable people, young or old, to make their dreams reality, to discover the wide world of the sea. Ransome's former yacht *Nancy Blackett* will be in the Suffolk Yacht Harbour and open to visitors over the festival weekend.

More recently Broke House Levington was the home of Rev Christopher Courtauld who believed passionately that sailing should not be confined to the rich and the confident. *Duet*, the yacht formerly owned by Christopher's father, polar explorer Augustine Courtauld, will also be coming to the Festival and will be open to visitors in the Suffolk Yacht Harbour. She is the longest serving sail training vessel in the UK and is managed by the Cirdan Sailing Trust. Their

Simon Daws



VI sailor Simon Daws will be there.



Duet will be at Suffolk and the Sea, 2022.

CEO Leonie Black, will explain why Going to Sea might be a life changing—and affordable—experience for young and old.

The Suffolk Yacht Harbour is the base for the East Anglian Sailing Trust which offers people who are physically disabled opportunities to sail regularly. Simon Daws, a visually impaired (VI) former customs officer (and his lovely guide dog) will be at the Trimley event to explain how modern technology and peer support keeps sailing accessible even to those who can no longer see.

[east-anglian-sailing-trust.org.uk](http://east-anglian-sailing-trust.org.uk).

Jane and David Russell's *Tinfish II* and Julia Jones and Francis Wheen's *Peter Duck* will also be in Suffolk Yacht harbour for the Festival weekend. We thank the yacht harbour for their support.

More information about all the events of the Suffolk and the Sea day and the wider festival will soon be available on the Felixstowe Book Festival website: [felixstowebbookfestival.co.uk](http://felixstowebbookfestival.co.uk).

# Getting Involved: Art and Photography

## Planet Suffolk

Photographer Gill Moon is looking for community involvement in her Planet Suffolk Project. She describes this as 'Planet Suffolk—love letters from a changing world'. It is about all the things that are affecting the world right now, but told from a local viewpoint through the eyes of local people. It aims to promote a deeper connection with, and care for, the Suffolk landscape. It will be delivered through a series of visual storytelling workshops, a website and a printed book. Gill's inspiration came from the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow when she was wondering about the local take on the issues facing the planet. Visit her website to learn more: [gillmoon.com/planet-suffolk](http://gillmoon.com/planet-suffolk).

Gill Moon



## Suffolk Sketchfest

Mary Anne Bartlett's Suffolk Sketchfest weekend will take place 5–7th September. It's a 3-day celebration of sketching the maritime heritage & wildlife of the River Deben area of outstanding natural beauty at Woodbridge with over 40 sketching events to join including artist-led walks, demonstrations, and workshops. Partially funded by the East Suffolk AONB: [artsafari.co.uk/uk-workshop/suffolk-sketchfest-2021](http://artsafari.co.uk/uk-workshop/suffolk-sketchfest-2021).

## Citizen Science: Photo Posts

These are located at Bawdsey and at Melton with one at Felixstowe coming soon. They are used to help record stretches of our coast and river. Photo-posts are posts permanently positioned at predetermined locations. On the top is a metal bracket that is orientated for a specific view, into which one can place a smartphone. Anyone visiting the site can take part—you just take a photograph from the post and upload it to a website with a few details of when you took the photo. The photos provide us all with a record of change, but can also be analysed and used to support and influence future decisions about coastal management.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? Contact Richard Tricker (01394 410112, 07771 890016 or [rjtricker@gmail.com](mailto:rjtricker@gmail.com)) to find out more and become part of the PhotoPost Team managing this exciting project and help the future of our area.



Taken from the Melton photo post.



Melton PhotoPost

Claudia Myatt

## Swimmers in the River Deben

The River Deben is a strongly tidal estuary and although it may look wide at high tide, the deep area called the channel is fairly narrow for much of its course. That means that most vessels need to keep to the marked channel (between the red and green buoys) and often cannot see swimmers there. It is therefore strongly recommended that swimmers keep out of the channel, which is marked on the map.

Before you start swimming make sure that:

- you know what the tide is doing (it can be difficult to swim against it, so it is sensible to start your swim against the tide so that you can be carried back with it when you are tired);
- you know where the channel is so that you can avoid swimming there;
- you take into account the water temperature and if necessary wear a wetsuit;
- you have assessed the risks of waterborne illnesses;

- you are preferably swimming with at least one other, but otherwise someone knows where you are in case you get into trouble; and
- you comply with any requests made by the harbour masters at Waldringfield, Ramsholt or Felixstowe Ferry

Ideally, please use a brightly coloured swimming hat and a tow float so that you can be seen by vessels on the river. Put a copy of your ICE details with your belongings on the shore and in your tow float. There is other useful advice on open water swimming on the RNLI's website at [rnli.org/safety/choose-your-activity/open-water-swimming](http://rnli.org/safety/choose-your-activity/open-water-swimming) and on the [swimming.org](http://swimming.org) website.

If you see anyone in difficulty on the river, ring 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

The River Deben has national protection for both breeding and wintering birds, making it an important area for wildlife all year round.

Please keep away from key breeding, roosting and feeding areas all year round (these are marked on the map). If you see signs of disturbance such as individual birds or groups of birds moving to take flight or hauled-out seals rapidly moving to slip into the water, you are too close and are causing them stress. This can affect their survival capability.

Roger Stollery



Waldringfield swimmers ensuring they are visible at night.

## Getting Involved: Woodbridge Cruising Club



We are a friendly and active cruising club on the east coast. Our primary objectives are to promote and facilitate the sport of boating and to offer an active social programme for members.

We have a proud history of being a self-supporting club and feel this is why new members and visitors from far and wide find us such a friendly bunch. Whatever gets you afloat, whatever the size of your boat, whatever the means of propulsion, whatever your skills or ambitions, you are most welcome here.

Located in the Valley of the Anglo-Saxon Kings on the banks of the Deben at Woodbridge, our clubhouse is in a stunning setting close to the iconic Tide Mill. It is from here that we organise Club cruises that run throughout the season to destinations that cater for all abilities and aspirations, both locally and abroad.

If you need help learning the ropes or to tick the boxes that give your skills formal recognition, we are an accredited RYA Training Centre. We offer shore-based classes for Yachtmaster, Day Skipper, VHF and the all-important International Certificate of Competence should you be planning to go to Europe and beyond.

We are a very sociable club. Our bar is open throughout the year on Saturday and Sunday lunchtimes and in the summer there are often BBQs on Wednesday evenings. We welcome

visiting yachtsmen. Also, by prior arrangement, visiting Clubs are welcome to use our BBQ facilities and enjoy the use of our clubhouse and bar.

During winter months we have all the traditional yacht club events such as formal dinners, suppers, rambles and talks. We run a Monday afternoon social group, a ukulele group and a maintenance party that ensures our clubhouse is kept to the highest standards.

The Club is affiliated to the RYA ([rya.org.uk](http://rya.org.uk)). Members are represented on several local and national organisations, such as the Harwich Area Sailing Association ([hasa-ryaeast.co.uk](http://hasa-ryaeast.co.uk)), the Cruising Association ([theca.org.uk](http://theca.org.uk)) and the River Deben Association ([riverdeben.org](http://riverdeben.org)).

The Club has been operating and will continue to do so within Government guidelines during the Covid-19 pandemic. The members' safety is our priority. We have recently upgraded our heating and ventilation system to meet the latest Government standards.

Whatever the time of year, there is never a shortage of activities at the Woodbridge Cruising Club.

For more information, please see our website: [woodbridgecruisingclub.org](http://woodbridgecruisingclub.org).

*Sue Sutherland is a member of the WCC and currently its webmaster.*

## Getting Involved: Sea Cadets

Yachtsmen lining up for access to the Deben Bar will be well acquainted with a host of Quest dinghies and their attendant rescue boats tacking off Felixstowe Ferry and upstream. There is a very good chance that these boats, with their boisterous crews, will be elements of TS *Landguard*, the Felixstowe Sea Cadet Unit.

TS *Landguard*, based in the Drill Hall, Garrison Lane, Felixstowe is the stone frigate headquarters of Felixstowe's Sea Cadet Corps. The unit offers its young people adventure-based training in a disciplined environment, with a maritime theme. The Sea Cadet Corps, through TS *Landguard*, offers young people a wide range of maritime and social activities including sailing, power boating, paddle boarding, wind surfing and canoeing, together with active engagement in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Water-born activities are conducted in accordance with Royal Yachting Association (RYA) standards and British Canoeing; many of the Unit's volunteer instructors are RYA and BCU-certified in the roles they are conducting. While the Unit's name TS *Landguard* suggests the River Orwell as our centre of activity, in point of fact everyday boating activity is conducted on the River Deben, so we are truly 'Debenites'.

Like many organisations, TS *Landguard* has had to face up to the challenges posed by the Covid

pandemic. The Unit has managed to sustain afloat training throughout the pandemic, albeit on a guarded scale to reflect the safety of our cadets and was one of the first units fully afloat once the restrictions were eased. Indicative of the Unit's forward thinking, it is spearheading an area initiative to become a Host Unit Boat Station (HUBS) whereby our resources—boats, maintenance and instructors—work in partnerships with other units in the District to ensure best use of available resources.

Projects looking to the future include the acquisition of a new rescue boat and re-development of the Unit's Garrison Lane headquarters. Unlike our two sister organisations, the Army and Air Force Cadets, who are integral parts of their host service, the Sea Cadets are not directly 'owned' by the Royal Navy; each individual unit is a trust in its own right. The RN provides some financial and operational governance input but by and large each unit has to raise its own operating and capital funds.

TS *Landguard* is proud of the vital role it plays in developing local youth and the opportunities which the Unit presents for young people to enter adult life strengthened by a disciplined foundation.

*Captain Peter H King has a lifetime of experience in the merchant shipping industry, and is the author of The Aberdeen Line and a member of the WCC.*



Some of the cadets sailing one of the unit's Quests.



Aboard an off-shore power training vessel.

## Oliver Ballam and King Isenia

# Getting Involved: Working on the River

### Oliver Ballam

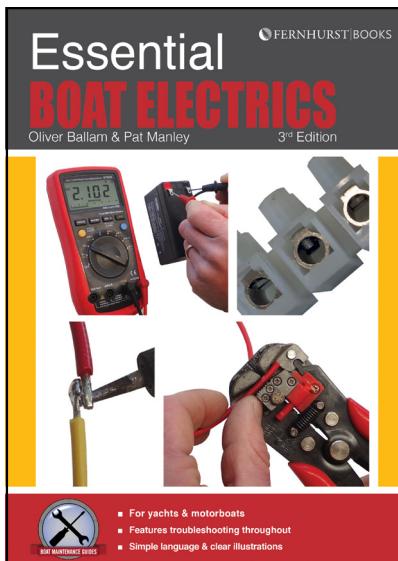
I was brought up in Suffolk on the banks of the River Deben and the river was my natural playground on the various family boats. As a child I was always keen on taking things apart to find out how they worked, and occasionally, managed to reassemble them without too many leftover bits. My earliest electrical install was the 12V system in my wendy house, from leftover bits of Morris Minor and Westerly Konsort. I went on to study electronics and radio alongside school, and this natural mix of boating and electrons eventually led to my career, and gaining the experience to rewrite the book. Along the way I taught sailing in the Med, which also involved considerable boat maintenance with minimal tools or equipment. And in those days, without any help from the Internet.

On my return to the UK, I helped a local friend build and campaign a Mini Transat yacht in the UK and France.

My company Seapower Marine Electronics is now one of the East Coast's leading marine electronics and electrical companies, based at Suffolk Yacht Harbour in Levington and providing sales installation and repair services to yacht owners and crew.

I've been a keen follower of the RDA for many

Oliver Ballam



Oliver has recently produced the updated edition of this essential manual. (His publishers Fernhurst have close links with the RDA and offer a members discount across their range of titles.)



Oliver Ballam

Oliver and his wife.

years from my home in Waldringfield, now a newly completed self-build Passive house. Using mechanics and construction techniques I have designed and adapted, this has shown a reliable and economical way to build an energy-positive family home, with minimal maintenance and ongoing costs. Fortunately, for this project I did have the help of the web!

*Reviewing Oliver's book Essential Boat Electrics for Yachting Monthly, Julia Jones praised the clear explanations and said she felt inspired 'to go round my boat with this manual in hand making notes on exactly what I have where... this volume focuses on the here and now and will therefore be immediately useful, even to the least confident.'*



## King Isenia

I am 23. I came to Suffolk from Saint-Martin in the Caribbean with a scholarship to study at the International Boatbuilding College in Lowestoft. When I'd completed my 1 year course I went to

King working on *Peter Duck*.

work for Spirit Yachts in Ipswich, where I began in hull construction and ended in finishing. I became particularly interested in the techniques necessary to create a beautiful finish for a newly-built or restored yacht.

Currently I'm working at the Woodbridge Boatyard where my most recent project has been taking responsibility for painting and varnishing the upper works on *Peter Duck*. My ambition is to get as much knowledge and experience as I can working in the UK—including business management—and then return to my home island and put my skills into action there.

Since I have started, my motivational affirmation has always been 'living to work and not working to live' with an optimistic mindset towards life. I'd like to inspire other young people to feel enthusiasm for the hands-on craftsmanship of shipwrighting and finishing.

Matt Lis



King Isenia.

Sarah Zins

## News from the Hards

**John White, Harbour Master at Felixstowe**, reports that the West Knoll buoyage went walkabout a while ago and although it has been replaced, the new buoy is way out of position. A survey is being scheduled, probably for March, but if you are leaving or entering the river in the Spring, give John a call to check the situation. His contact details are: mobile 07803 476621; landline 01394 270106; VHF radio 'Odd Times' on VHF CH8; email [johnawwhite@talktalk.net](mailto:johnawwhite@talktalk.net). The recent high tides have caused more erosion on Bawdsey cliffs so it is only possible to get along the beach at low water.

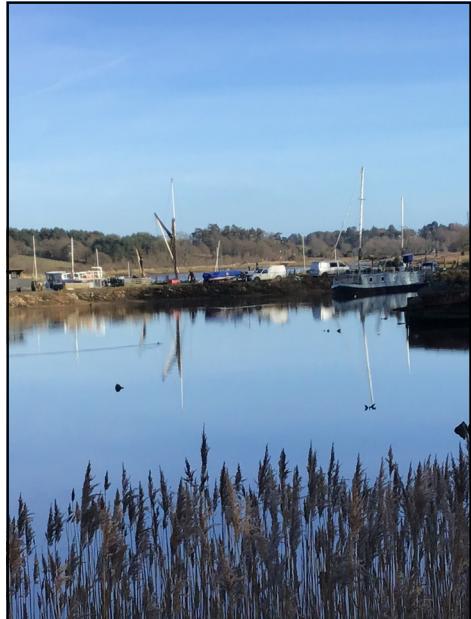
On New Year's Day John ran a ferry across the river to raise money for St Elizabeth Hospice and raised a splendid £615—anyone wishing to donate can still do so online.

**Felixstowe Ferry Boatyard** has around 40 boats laid up but waiting to launch in the Spring. The ferry between Bawdsey and Felixstowe Ferry will start up again for the Easter weekend, operating at weekends only until the daily service starts up again from 1st May.

The **Waldringfield Harbour Master** has been undertaking maintenance for what he predicts will be another busy season, as Waldringfield has become increasingly popular with river users and beach-goers since the start of the pandemic. Some hardy souls have continued swimming from Waldringfield throughout the winter.

At the **Woodbridge Boatyard**, 2022 has got off to a busy start with both main workshops brimming with interesting and varied projects. In the Pheonix Works shed an 11ft clinker dinghy, a replica of a 75+ year old Everson boat, has begun and *Maid of Veryan*, a 1949 Deben Four Tonner built at Whisstocks, is beginning a major restoration. An as-yet unnamed 19ft cold-moulded wooden speedboat is under construction, styled after the iconic barrel-backed Chris Crafts of the late 1930s and early 40s and it will be the first new yacht built at the yard since the 1960s. In the newer shed away from the river, major works to *Peter Duck* are reaching completion as well as varnishing and other works. The yard is full of wintering yachts and the covered storage space, added in 2020, has proved a popular option for owners looking to keep their boats in a more sheltered environment and those looking to carry out winter work without the impediment of a tarpaulin to crawl about under. The yard's partnership with local electric inboard propulsion manufacturer Lightning Craft has

Sarah Zins



Martlesham Creek Boatyard.



*Falcon's* post-restoration sail-away from Woodbridge to Waldringfield.

been generating lots of interest and the first several installations seem imminent.

As reported in the Co-chairs' Report, *Falcon*, the International One Design recently restored by Woodbridge Boatyard, has been shortlisted for *Classic Boat Magazine's* 2022 'Restoration of the Year (under 40ft)' Award. Voting is done online at [awards.classicboat.co.uk/restoration-of-the-year-under-40ft](http://awards.classicboat.co.uk/restoration-of-the-year-under-40ft) and closes at 9am on the 15th of March.

**Martlesham Creek Boatyard** can take a maximum of 10 live-aboard houseboats, but demand for houseboat living means that they deal with at least one new enquiry for a mooring a week. You can see why, when you look at their idyllic setting pictured here on a sunny January Sunday. During the high spring tides of January,

the river over-topped the wall, but with flood warnings given efficiently by the Environment Agency, any cars and other items which could be damaged were moved in good time.

At **Larkmans**, fitting out is just starting to gather pace, ahead of launching around 140 boats in the Spring. We reported on their major restoration of *Gweneth* in the last issue, and at present she is being painted out ready for work on the internal structures, which will continue throughout the year. *Ceres* has had new decking and a new engine fitted so the next step is for ancillary woodwork to be made and fitted.

The **Melton Boatyard** has about 80 boats laid up at the moment and is working hard to get them ready for Spring. Deben Vale, their café, will open in time for the February half term, and now boasts a fully-licensed bar on the upper deck, an internal bar-room, and more protection from the elements for winter customers.

# The River Deben Association



## RDA AGM: 27th April 2022

Our speaker is Andy Went of the Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust who will be talking about their State of our Rivers report. He has over 20 years' experience in the environmental and ecological sectors, and has held senior positions at the EA, AECOM, and the IFM.

The AGM is the moment at which formal changes will be made to the committee, as outlined in the Co-chairs' Report. As this goes to press the current membership is as listed below.



Liz Hattan

Pollution of the river may be a cause for concern.

## Committee

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

## Contributors

Julia Jones	Publications Editor
Alan Comber	Website Manager

## Contacts

Membership	<a href="mailto:membership@riverdeben.org">membership@riverdeben.org</a>
	Moray MacPhail, Riverside, Fayrefield Road
	Melton, Woodbridge, IP12 1NX
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>

Moray MacPhail will continue sending his useful Bits & Bobs emails keeping RDA members up to date with forthcoming events, and has established a page on the website to share news of river happenings.



The River Deben Association will be fully involved in the forthcoming platinum jubilee celebrations.

# Are You Missing Something?

The RDA Journal is published fortnightly on our website: [riverdeben.org/rda-journal](http://riverdeben.org/rda-journal). It offers space for RDA members with particular interests and knowledge to write at length about subjects which interest them. This is building up a significant archive of expertise. Recent contributions have included:

**3.9.2021**

## Maintenance of the River Wall to Flood Cell One

Robin Whittle brings his engineering knowledge to this ongoing problem.

**17.9.2021**

## Lightning Craft

Josh Masters shares his vision for electric power as a climate friendly alternative for petrol and diesel boat engines.

**1.10.2021**

## Deben Commercial Fishing

Robert Simper takes a historical as well as an up to date view of fishing as a Deben livelihood.

**15.10.2021**

## Spoonbills in Suffolk

There was excitement among birders when a Eurasian Spoonbill was seen on Ramsholt marshes. Sally Westwood tells us more about the species.

**29.10.21**

## The Electric *Mist*

Russell Read describes fitting an electric drive system to the classic yawl *Mist*.

**12.11.21**

## UK Heritage Harbour Initiative

Brian Corbett introduces an initiative to encourage us to treasure our maritime heritage.

**25.11.21**

## How Can We Do Our Bit to Help the Climate Crisis?

Off grid specialist Gary Rogers, who lives on *Tijdstroom*, compares energy sources and offers practical suggestions based on experience.

**10.12.2021**

## Some Suffolk Books from 2021

A Christmas round up by Julia Jones.

**14.01.22**

## Once Upon a Time...

Bertie Wheen began the New Year by listing the contents of the first decade of *The Deben*—or the *RDA Newsletter* as it was then. Here he comments on when he learned.

**28.2.2022**

## From Sea to Source

Christine Redington takes a poetic journey up the Deben.

**11.02.2022**

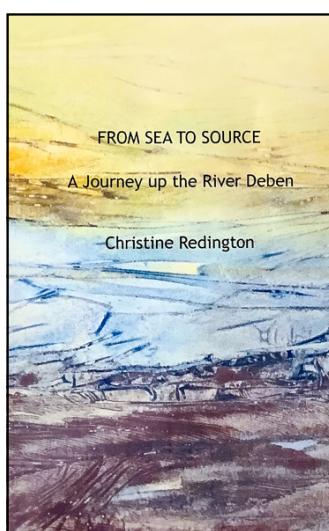
## International One Design

The Woodbridge Boatyard manager Matt Lis describes the careful process of restoring *Falcon*, an International One Design currently short-listed in the *Classic Boat* awards.

**25.02.2022**

## Our birds on the Deben—what can we do to help them? Focus on the redshank

Sally Westwood explains how the government's nature recovery plan led to the adoption of the Redshank by Suffolk AONB.



Christine Redington



Jane Haviland



Alasdair Nicolson



Jane Haviland



Jane Russell



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.

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