

The Deben



Issue 69
Autumn 2024

*Some of the places featured in
this issue of The Deben magazine:*

Aspall

Debenham



Easton

Wickham Market

RIVER DEBEN

Ufford

Melton

Wilford Bridge

Woodbridge

Martlesham

Methersgate

Sutton

Waldringfield

Stonner Point

Shottisham

The Rocks
Ramsholt

Felixstowe Ferry



The Deben, Autumn 2024

Claudia Myatt

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Cover art by Shelley Robinson.

Julia Jones



A dragon boat.



The 1900 Dutch barge *Trouwe Hulp* at an OGA rally.

Woodbridge Boatyard

Editor's Introduction

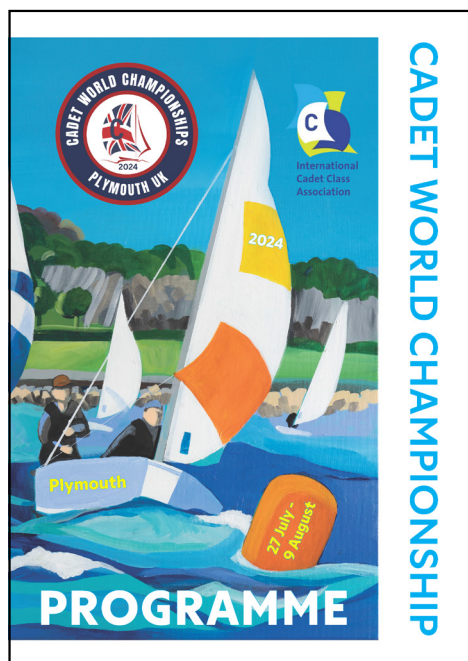
Is there a theme to this edition of *The Deben*? It might perhaps be river plants. Among the readers who responded to my plea for help towards identifying September flowers in Ramsholt churchyard a year ago were Peter Jones who produced a fascinating in-depth study of plants growing in the shingle on either side of the river mouth for the *RDA Journal* (19.4.2024) and Oriel O'Loughlin who, when asked to choose just two of the saltmarsh plants she observes when walking the river wall, chose sea lavender and shrubby sea-blite (plant names often bring a joy of their own). Bird expert Sally Westwood also took up the challenge and has written about marsh samphire, brown seaweed and seagrass as part of the wider ecosystem including birds, invertebrates, and people.

These articles leave me with a question: who among the readers of this magazine has eaten any of these plants from the river? We've never managed a cookery section, if you have river recipes, please send. Might these include fish? A reader points out that we've never published an angling article and promises to remedy this in a future issue. Do get in touch if you notice other gaps in our river coverage (magazine@riverdeben.org) Meanwhile Richard Verrill reports on the latest results from the on-going Deben fish-sampling project and we look forward to a full report in the *RDA Journal* later.

But back to plants: Sue Ryder Richardson's walks for this magazine always include beautifully expressed observations of the natural world around her: this time a newly planted 'Pliocene forest' 1 and the metallic music of reedbeds near The Rocks on a windy day. Jan Harber and Judy Jones walking from Sutton towards Methersgate and Stonner Point for an *RDA Journal* article (28.6.2024) are less enthused by the nettles they find in their path. Recipes for nettle soup, nettle

tea, anyone? Walkers, do remember that you can go to our website, type 'Walk' into the search bar, and be offered a steadily increasing choice from the *RDA Journal*. Perhaps one day we'll gather these into an RDA booklet. We are certainly thinking that Gareth Thomas's 4-part survey of the Deben Churches may merit this treatment.

You might consider that volunteering is a theme of this – and every – issue. It includes the expert activities of citizen scientists like Dr David Finley and Professor Bill Brammer, profiled here by Tristan McConnell, the environmental volunteers who work with Liz Hattan and Richard Verrill, and the many unpaid enthusiasts who keep our river clubs running. We hear from Lucy Read, a parent helper at Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club and Alan Krailing from WSC who recently led a team of volunteers to organise a 10-nation Cadet dinghy-sailing world championship in Plymouth. Thank you to those



readers who supported that event financially, helping (among other things) to make it possible for young people from Ukraine and India to participate. Roger Stollery, whose family were founding members of Waldringfield Sailing Club over 100 years ago, describes the BOTTLE boats which race annually at the Club.

Both Anna-Marie Sellon and Nathalie Sones write about the difference that being part of Neil Boast's River Deben Paddlers' group (not a club) has made to them. Both have volunteered in return. Natasha is part of the River Deben Paddlers admin team and Anna-Marie has joined the RDA Committee and is taking responsibility for our social media accounts. We hear a lot about the evils of social media but it's also true that Facebook, Instagram and even X (which people like me still call Twitter) can be useful in sharing local information and enabling people to make contact with others who share their interests. The RDA Instagram username is riverdebenassociation. Anna-Marie would welcome more photos from lovers of the river. She'll also be running the RDA members information newsletter Bits'n'Bobs. Her email will be media@riverdeben.org.

As magazine and Journal editor I'm profoundly grateful to all the (volunteer) contributors, particularly those who move out of their normal comfort zone: Matt Lis left his boatyard to write a film review for this issue, Claudia Myatt put aside her sketchpad to photograph sculptures and Peter Wain time-travelled forwards from his regular investigations in the medieval period to interview Robert Brinkley of the Felixstowe Ferry Foreshore Trust.

Most of all I am grateful to the artists who provide our wonderful covers. Do we thank them enough? Sarah Zins has written a personal appreciation of Shelley Robinson whose work I only discovered after the Old Gaffers event on May Bank Holiday. I looked at her paintings and

sailing out of them were not just the boats but the people I'd recently met. With the Chairman's permission each RDA Autumn talk of AGM will also include the opportunity to meet one of our Deben artists and see some of their work directly. So do come to the Autumn talk on Nov 5th and say hello to Shelley before settling down to listen to Jason Alexander, founder of the UK's first rubbish museum, at Jetty Lane, Woodbridge.

For myself inspiration comes constantly from the river, its boats and its people. A few weeks ago, on August 23rd, I was beating through the Rocks at high water in the wake of Storm Lilian. Suddenly I noticed that the Hemley marshes had disappeared: clear water stretched all the way across to Waldringfield. It was extraordinarily disconcerting and left me wondering whether we haven't let the dangers of rising water levels, changing weather patterns and tidal surge slip from our consciousness. I will watch the development of Simon Read and Helene Burningham's new project with interest. He and Helene Burningham will be exploring the evolution of the Deben Estuary shoreline with a focus upon two case study sites: the Waldringfield frontage from Dairy Farm Meadow to Hemley and Flood Cell 1 between Ramsholt and Bawdsey Quay (see p22 for more details).

And I have a new project of my own. When a much-loved boat leaves the Deben, either to sail different waters or to vanish forever into the oceans of memory, she leaves a gap in the riverscape. My son Bertie points out that we have neglected a previous editor's series 'Boats of the Deben' so we'll re-instate that – usually on the *RDA Journal* pages where there is room for articles in depth and plenty of photos. First will be the lovely *Nirvana*, whose former mooring I'm inhabiting as I write this. Peter Clay's death means she needs a new home. Perhaps it will be on the Deben, more likely not. A half-dozen

people with fond memories of sailing *Nirvana* are planning to work together to produce an article explaining what a very special yacht she is. Her new owner will be fortunate indeed. In our own family there will be no new owner for my brother Ned's Kestrel *Gingerbread Man*. Though much younger than *Nirvana*, she was much more lightly built and the wood from which she was made simply came to the end of its natural life. Kestrels are a Deben-inspired class and she was almost – but not quite – the last wooden Kestrel sailing on the river. They were designed in Waldringfield by our uncle Jack Jones so, self-indulgent or not, we think GBM may be given a memorial article. (Other Kestrel owners, please get in touch.)

The Deben is full of historic wooden boats, I hear you say. Yes. Look at our centennial Cherubs. Yes. So, can we work together during 2025 to record as many as possible of the boats still floating who are more than 75 years old? (They don't have to be wooden. They don't have to float full time.) Take a photo, add the boat's name, her age and any other details and send to me magazine@riverdeben.org with the subject line Boats Still Floating River Deben 2025.

The Deben also produces some inspirational people. Many of us followed the progress of Tracy's Edward's yacht *Maiden*, the UK entrant in the 2023-24 Ocean Globe with additional private pride, knowing that her all-female crew included former Waldringfield Cadet sailor, Willow Bland. They won the race – the first all-female crew ever

to win a global race and the UK's best result for many years.

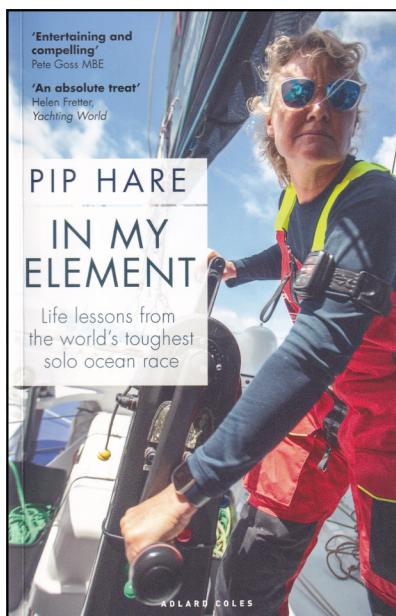
Now, we have another star to follow. On November 10th 2024 Pip Hare will be competing for the second time in the ultimately gruelling Vendée Globe race. This is a solo, non-stop, non-assisted round-the-world sailing race that takes place every four years. It begins and ends at Les Sables d'Olonne and it's possible that the winner will achieve their 'lap of the globe' in even less than Jules Verne's fictional 80 days. Britain has never won this race. Our best result was Ellen MacArthur in 2000/2001. But this is an ultimate test for solo sailors: to complete the race is a magnificent achievement and Pip has already succeeded in doing this in 2020-2021. Can she do it again?

Pip also learned to sail at Waldringfield and I know I won't be the only person in the Deben area tracking her progress as she tackles this challenge in her new ultra modern yacht, *Medallia*.

I've been reading Pip's new book, *In My Element*, which gives fascinating insight into the

psychology as well as the skill, determination and sheer toughness which helped her achieve her ambition in 2020/21. I happened to have it in my handbag when I met Pip at a reception to mark 30 years of National Coastwatch. I'll just share one detail of our conversation. Pip told me that her mother, who lives in Melton, has one personal ambition – and that's to see her daughter's book stocked and sold in the Woodbridge Bookshop.

Deben readers, can we help?



Adlard Coles

My Deben

While I have recently returned from a memorable trip to Colorado during which I spent time beside, on – and inadvertently in – the mighty Arkansas River, the image that immediately snaps to mind for me when the word ‘river’ is mentioned is the Deben at Woodbridge. While it lacks the adrenaline-fuelled drama of whitewater tumbling over rocks seemingly eager to flip your craft over every few paddle strokes, ‘my’ Deben is a steady, reassuring presence in the landscape that buoys body and soul.

Until the editor asked me to write a piece for ‘My Deben,’ I hadn’t consciously realised the degree to which rivers – and specifically The Deben – had featured in my life. Everywhere I have lived has had a significant river nearby: the Thames; Canada’s mighty St Lawrence; the Thames (again). Arguably the others are far more impressive and significant in many ways, but my connection to them was comparatively fleeting – and my favourite has always been the Deben.

Growing up locally, it was the Deben to which my friends and I would cycle for summertime swims and picnics. Navigating our way between the tenders jostling for space along Waldringfield beach to swim along past the sailing club, we’d pop down for after-school dips or pack up a lunch and spend a weekend day enjoying the water before pedalling home at the previously agreed time ready for tea.

Having spent my young adult life in Oxford and Berkshire with only occasional paddleboard forays on the narrow, increasingly busy Thames nearby to satisfy my need for a ‘water fix,’ buying my little cottage in Woodbridge close to the river 15 years ago gave me a base from which to rediscover the river.



Anna-Marie Sellon

Like many of us lucky enough to live close to its banks, walking along the river path is the simplest of pleasures and one I still enjoy several times a week. Whether it is visiting friends who live aboard boats on the town quay, pounding out a 5km loop to get my steps in or striding with a friend in driving rain while volunteering as a charity dog walker, no two walks are ever the same. I cannot guess how many pictures I have on my phone of the Tide Mill looking gorgeous on a sunny day, striking on a cloudy one or bathed in projected pictures and patterns from the fish-friendly firework nights.

Just recently while walking home from the tennis club with friends we met people installing a temporary exhibition of sculptures along the river wall at Woodbridge Boatyard: in stopping to chat for a few minutes we learned we were meeting the sculptor and benefactor responsible for the thought-provoking additions to our usual river walk.

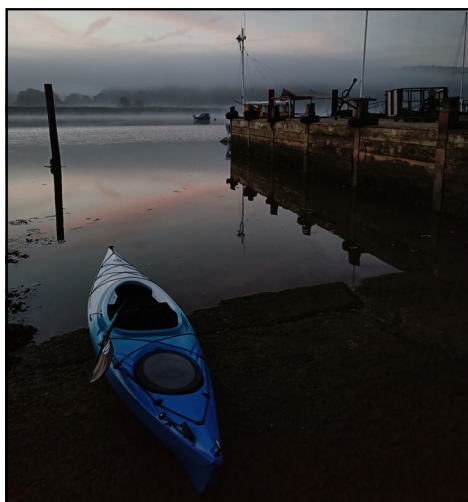
During the lockdowns, the river walk understandably became extremely popular with huge numbers of people choosing it as their designated hour of exercise: this prompted me to walk at 6 am and explore the paths upriver instead; both of which opened my eyes to the delight of a new take on the familiar.



Anna-Marie Sellon



Anna-Marie Sellon



A chance meeting early one morning several years ago introduced me to the joy of paddling on the Deben. While I'd loved canoeing on lakes and rivers while living in Canada, it was only during lockdown that I decided to launch my paddleboard here. Meeting Neil Boast in his kayak on the slip at the yard near our homes, we agreed to swap craft so we could each try out the other. Now Neil is an avid paddleboarder and I am a keen kayaker – and I have lost count of the number of friends I have made through paddling on the river. Neil's wife Sally's 'Ladies Who Launch' group offers all the women who store and launch their boats at the same yard friendly mentoring and a chance to meet with paddle buddies. Helping each other out is integral to our group, as with Neil's 'River Deben Paddlers' Facebook group.

Paddling a tidal estuary such as ours requires an understanding of the weather, tides, channel and other users: often we are the smallest craft on the water and as such it is important to be visible, equipped with safety kit and understand how the river works and how boats under sail will behave as well as being ready for the unexpected.

At the heart of 'Ladies Who Launch' and 'River Deben Paddlers' is a mentoring mentality, whereby more experienced paddlers can share their experience and insight to help newer paddlers enjoy the river safely and confidently. Several of us have introduced friends to paddling who have then gone on to get their own boats and take others on the river: the proliferation of kayaks at the boatyards & clubs along the river is testament to paddlesports' popularity and accessibility for so many.

In recent years, the Deben has seen two new coastal rowing clubs: I have spent many happy hours at Felixstowe rowing in the 6-person Cornish pilot gig-style boats that are slightly bigger than Woodbridge Coastal Rowing Club's 4-person boats and for a 'big' birthday last year I was lucky to have many friends convene for a picnic at The Rocks where friends rowed from Felixstowe, kayaked from Woodbridge and walked from Ramsholt: it was definitely a 'Deben' birthday! I'm lucky to have friends with sailing boats and for me, the best moment of the sail is when the motor goes off, you feel the wind fill the sails and can enjoy the beauty of the Deben in peace. Perfect.

Anna-Marie Sellon is a RDA Committee Member. She is a former English teacher who grew up here, spent holidays here and returned to live here full time a few years ago.



Tristan McConnell

Citizen Science

On a recent warm Thursday morning, Dr David Findley arrived at the Ufford Hole, a popular swimming spot close to his home, armed with a measuring jug attached to a telescopic pole, two clean sample pots, and an electronic water-testing device.

The 75-year-old retired chemist is one of the River Deben's leading citizen scientists, methodically testing the water for harmful *E. coli* as well as the phosphates and nitrates that trigger algal blooms.

"We started testing because of concerns about pollution from sewage works and farm and industrial sources [riverdeben.org/rda-journal/a-cleaner-future-for-the-river-deben]," says Findley. "People have swum here for years, and we were really worried about what was happening."

Findley is one of almost 40 volunteers – some scientists, many not, all "committed amateurs" as Findley puts it – who for the last two years have been testing monthly samples of river water, from the Deben's upper reaches at Debenham to its mouth at Bawdsey, as well from the nearby rivers Fynn and Lark.

This work provides reliable data and facts to inform river users, dispel myths and misinformation, and hold polluters to account, whether the regional water company or farmers, landowners, boat-owners, paddlers, sailors, dog-walkers, or anyone else.



David Findley sampling..

Results are published by the Deben Climate Centre, a local community interest group, and on social media, and shared with Anglian Water and the Environment Agency. "It's about putting pressure on the powers that can actually do something, and raising public awareness about what is actually happening here and what can be done about it," he says.

Findley's knowledge of the river as it flows through the village where he lives, is intimate. Approaching the two pools that make up the Ufford Hole just downriver from a small humpback bridge, he notes, "The water levels gone down since yesterday, and someone's been swimming this morning and stirred up the sediment."

The pools are connected when water levels are high, the water cascading from the large upper pool into the lower one. But when volumes fall the brick weir between them becomes a barrier leaving the lower pool to almost stagnate.



Bill Brammar testing.

Findley collected a sample from each pool and then walked 200 metres to the home of Professor Bill Brammar, his friend, neighbour, and fellow citizen scientist.

The 84-year-old retired molecular biologist studied bacterial genetics for his PhD and is responsible for testing the samples, carefully spreading a millilitre of the water onto a petri dish and leaving them overnight in a 40-degree incubator.

His experience and involvement “adds a bit of heft”, Brammar says, to the citizen science programme making the data they collect harder to ignore or dismiss. “I’m not doing anything complicated, but it’s very interesting,” he says. “The biology of *E. coli* is sophisticated, fascinating, and multifaceted, and it’s reminding me of the good old days when I was a 26-year-old post-doc.”

For the water to be considered safe it should contain fewer than nine *E. coli* bacteria per ml. Brammar and Findley also test for pH, which should be close to neutral, and dissolved solids, with a target of less than 1,000 parts per million.

The Deben’s citizen scientists have teamed up with researchers at the University of Suffolk to better understand the toxic bacteria in the river, and Brammar says their combined work is

having an effect: “We’ve certainly got the ear of Anglian Water. They are believing our data.”

E. coli is the primary focus because it can make people very unwell, but there are other ecological threats too. “All the weed growth, all the green gunk, that’s stimulated by phosphates and nitrates, which use up oxygen and starve the fish, and ammonia is really nasty, because if that gets in the river it kills everything,” says Findley.

Findley points out that while the large water treatment plants at Debenham,

Wickham Market, Melton, and Martlesham are closely monitored for spills and overflows, there are other “little, ageing sewage works that have never had any attention”. The aim of the citizen scientists is “to get as close to each of the sewage works so we can check them.”

This summer, testing by the Deben’s citizen scientists has found the water quality at Ufford to be “not bad” compared with previous years, says Findley, while the tidal section of the Deben, from Wilford Bridge to the sea, has also been pretty clean. But there are stark exceptions at Martlesham Creek and Easton, both close to sewage works, where *E. coli* levels are routinely 800–1,000 colonies per ml.

However, during Findley’s recent visit to the Ufford Hole, low water and reduced flow meant the samples contained bad news: while the upper pool recorded a safe level of seven *E. coli* colonies per ml, the lower one showed 19, so a danger sign was erected warning people it was not safe to swim.

Tristan McConnell is a writer and editor living in Woodbridge. For the report, see: woodbridgeclimateactioncentre.org/post/deben-climate-centre-report-details-high-pollution-levels-in-the-river-deben

Just Two Deben Plants

Oriel O'Loughlin



Shrubby Sea Blite.

There are countless plants that grow along the rivers, in the marsh, sand, mud and shingle, and it is hard to remember them from one summer to the next. If you don't fancy yourself as a Deben botanist, and get confused by all the sea-this and sea-that, you might be able to remember just two.

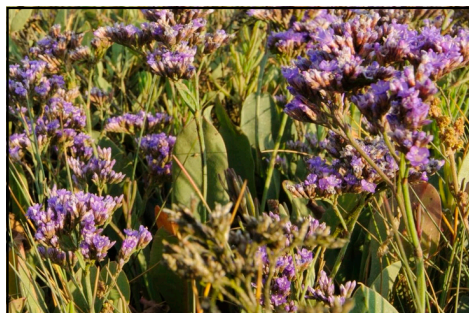
The first is Shrubby Sea Blite, not exactly a glamorous entrant, but so common on our coast that it deserves a mention. In the plant books, it comes under the category of nationally scarce, locally abundant. From Lincolnshire to Dorset, it is everywhere, but nowhere else. It is of the goosefoot family, Amaranthaceae, and its Latin name is *Sueda Vera*. Amaranthaceae are a large collection of plants with very similar uninspiring green flowers. *Sueda* grows in shingle, sand, and mud in the upper salt marsh, and it is a native, evergreen, woody and patch forming shrub usually around a metre high. The stems are stout and woody, and it has fleshy leaves. You can eat it in salads as a vegetable, much like the better known samphire. The leaves are shaped like tiny bananas, and the stems are described as being a "cool shade of glaucous green". These plants have evolved to survive in salt by developing thick outer coatings, and by storing water within their cells, giving the fleshy appearance to their leaves.

In autumn most types of sea blite go bright red, and in the distance it looks like a red carpet has

been laid over the mud. Look out for it where the shingle and salt marsh meet.

The second plant is sea lavender, also common in mudflats, creeks and saltmarsh. The first thing to note is that it is not a lavender at all, so please don't expect it to smell like one. Its Latin name is *Limonium Vulgare*, and it has many other names such as sea thrift, marsh rosemary or lavender thrift. It is actually a leadwort, of the family Plumbaginaceae. (Who thinks of these names??) It has clusters of pretty flowers from blue to lilac to pink to purple, with deep green leathery leaves growing directly from the base. It is a great source of nectar for bees, wasps, butterflies and moths. Like *Sueda*, it is a halophyte, namely a plant which tolerates salt. It likes full sun, with moist to wet ground, and has extensive taproots. It can cope impressively with drought or waterlogging, and pairs well with sea kale on the shore. Look out for a stunning purple carpet between July and October, and watch out for it in dried flower arrangements, where it keeps its colour for months on end.

Advancing years has made Oriel do less route marching and more looking at plants and trees along the river wall. Giving up after 35 years of dinghy racing in favour of cruising and teaching has made her look more closely at the birds.



Sea Lavender.

Marsh Samphire, Brown Seaweed and Seagrass

An Ecosystem that is Working for Birds, Invertebrates and People

totallywilduk.co.uk



Marsh Samphire.

The vegetation that grows on the River Deben salt marshes is a patchwork of maritime plants, that are food for birds. Raptors prey on these birds, and therefore indirectly benefit from the plants. The plants are also food for invertebrates, which in turn are eaten by some waders. Since many maritime plants inhabit our river, I will, for now, concentrate on three plants, Marsh Samphire, Brown Seaweed and Seagrass, and mention their benefits to birds, invertebrates and people.

Fleshy, yellow-green Marsh Samphire is beneficial for a wide range of birds around the Deben, that we might not automatically think of when we look at the birds on the river. This plant produces vast amounts of seeds as winter feed for Reed Buntings and finches, including



Common Buzzard.

Skylarks and Twites. These birds, in turn are food for Common Buzzards, Sparrowhawks, Short-eared Owls and Merlins. Marsh Samphire grows in abundance near Waldringfield. I have also seen this plant growing on mooring ropes, in a similar way to mussels when they are grown commercially. Hessian ropes are seeded with mussels in pure water away from any pollution near the shore. When Marsh Samphire first develops in estuarine mud, it spreads out like a lawn, completely covered at high tide. The lawns decrease with the constant sweeping of the tide. Another benefit of this plant is that it is a wild food that is eaten by people.

Brown Seaweed such as Wracks, live around the small pools found near Felixstowe Ferry. Wracks provide food for invertebrates, which is subsequently, eaten by particular waders. The algae that grows on the surface of olive brown Bladder Wrack for example, is eaten by a snail, the Flat Periwinkle, which is regular food for the Common Sandpiper and Oystercatcher. The Flat Periwinkle has a flattened whorled shell about 1cm across. It may be bright orange,

Sally Westwood

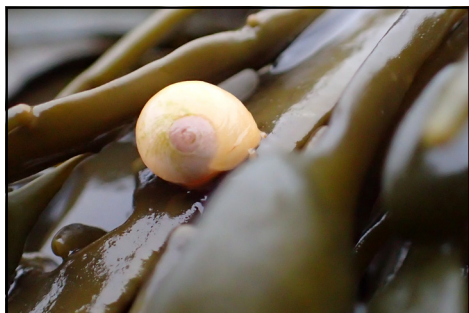


Bladder Wrack.

the Sand Hoppers beneath the seaweed. The name Bladder Wrack derives from the air filled bladder structure of the plant. This makes it easier for identification. Bladder Wrack is also occasionally eaten by people. This is not surprising since it contains potassium, iodine, calcium, magnesium, vitamins C and A, zinc and sodium. It also contains high levels of fibre, and phytochemical compounds that may reduce oxidative stress, which is an imbalance in the human body between antioxidant levels and free radicals.

Mute Swans, ducks, such as Wigeon and geese, like Canada Geese, eat Seagrass. This plant grows like a meadow over the seabed, rather than a lawn like the Marsh Samphire. Four species of seagrass grow in the UK, two are zostera, more commonly referred to as Eelgrass, and the other two are known as tasselweeds. Algae grows on

Seagrass which attracts the invertebrates, such as Sand Hoppers and Flat Periwinkles mentioned above, for food and shelter. Seagrass is thought to be the only flowering plant that has adapted to live in seawater and pollinate while submerged. At low tide, on the river, wildfowl can be seen foraging on the exposed seagrass along the shoreline. Seagrass harbours fertile eggs, that later develop into small fry, and larger fish, such as Gudgeon and Sea Bass. These larger fish are then eaten by birds, including Black-headed Gulls, Little Egrets, and Grey Herons.



Flat Periwinkle.

green or yellow. The Flat Periwinkle uses the Bladder Wrack for shelter. Sand Hoppers also eat the algae on the Bladder Wrack and scurry around the plant hunting for tiny creatures. They remain buried in the sand during the day, at a depth of about 10 to 30cms. They emerge at night and eat decaying seaweed. These small crustacea are eaten by many shore birds on the Deben, such as, Godwits, Oystercatchers and Common Sandpipers. They search for



Oystercatcher.

Seagrass is a large storage facility for carbon. This is possible because of the nature of the continuous cycle of growth of seagrass. The cycle starts when new leaves and shoots replace old seagrass plants. The dead material from the plant and carbon, organic matter from other dead organisms on the seafloor, increases to form thick layers of seagrass sediment. If this sediment is not disturbed, the plant can store carbon for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Seagrass is not only beneficial for wildfowl, it is also beneficial for us and the planet, since it is able to hold carbon. It is a natural way to help resolve the climate change crisis. There are several projects involving seeding seabeds with seagrass in order to ameliorate carbon emissions. One for example, has been carried out by Cornwall wildlife trust. They have planted seagrass plants

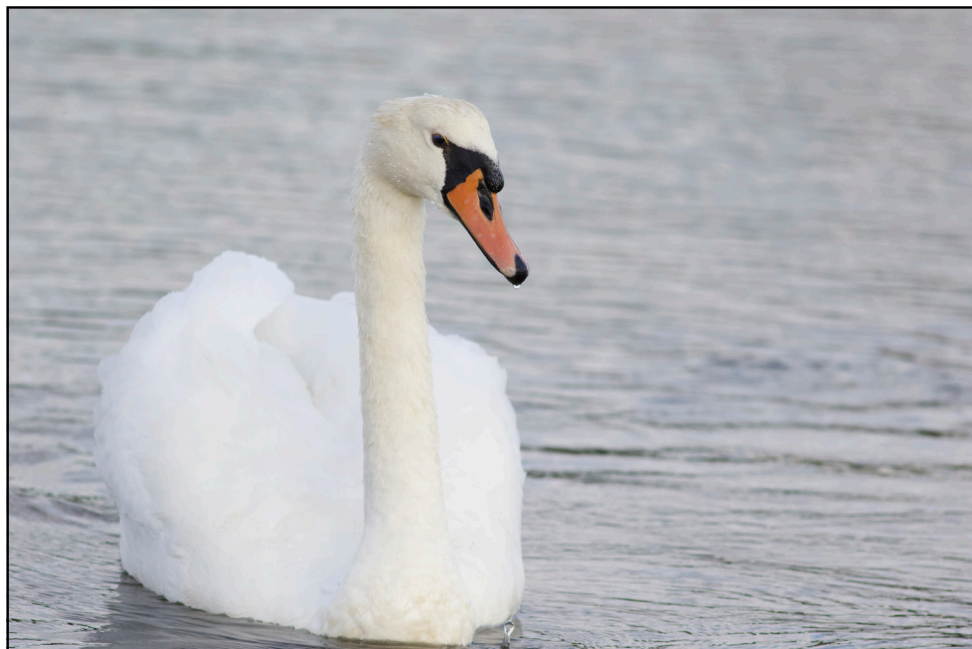


nwflong

Seagrass meadow.

as an initial trial. It will be interesting to see what the results are in due course. Seagrass, as well as Marsh Samphire, and Brown Seaweed are three maritime plants on the River Deben that form a vital ecosystem that benefits birds, invertebrates and people.

Sally Westwood is a Psychologist, works as a researcher and is a professional bird photographer. She lives on a boat on the Deben and loves its birds.



Sally Westwood

Mute Swan.

Sue Ryder Richardson

A Walk from Shottisham to Ramsholt (and Back)

Sue Ryder Richardson

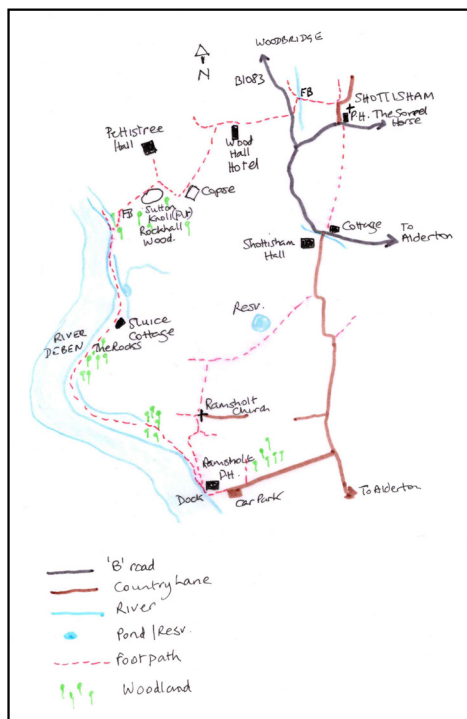


Sorrel House.

Like the River Deben itself, this walk is one of two parts: from dry pastoral uplands to the salty, tidal marshes and mudflats. Start in the tiny village of Shottisham, a place where time has stood still; a cluster of cottages nestle around the picturesque Sorrel Horse pub, a path leads up to St Margaret's church, and a playground. There is a white weatherboarded watermill set Constable-like amongst trees, and all this is surrounded by cornfields and pastures. The village captures the essence of Ronald Blythe, as it settles in a landscape that recalls the horse-drawn plough of George Ewart Evans.

The history of Shottisham can be traced back before the Domesday Book. A Saxon church stood on the same knoll as the present grade two listed church, which was built in 1313 by monks from Butley Abbey however, it has been much altered over the intervening years. It is possible that the Sorrel Horse Inn predated this medieval church, housing those involved in its construction. There has been a watermill, fed by the springs of Church Lane, for centuries, and the current one was in use until the 1950s.

It almost feels an intrusion to drive into this peaceful village and park, but once parked, take Church Lane in front of The Sorrel Horse, stopping briefly to see the church on your right, before continuing ahead past cottages, and the delightful crenellations of Tower Cottage. Turn left onto the footpath by the village allotments and on through a gate into a large meadow. Cross the bridge over Shottisham Creek, a tiny tributary of the Deben, and then bear diagonally left towards a gate in the corner of the field. Over the road, walk up the driveway of Wood Hall Hotel. Once past this splendid Elizabethan manor, take the first footpath on the left between fences. At the end of this track there is a small newly planted copse



Sue Ryder Richardson

with a storyboard explaining that it replicates tree varieties found in a Pliocene Forest.

Keep ahead through another gate and follow the path alongside a field until it bears right to pass Sutton Knoll. Here is another storyboard explaining the various geological crag formations of the land. Keep right for a short distance along the track towards Pettistree Hall, then very shortly turn left along the signed path across a field towards the river. It is important to keep to this

path, as the more obvious one by the Knoll leads to private land. Here you will get your first glimpses over the River Deben to Waldringfield. At the end of the fields cross a marked footbridge and head diagonally left across a meadow, through a gate, into a copse. The trees open out onto the river wall where there are stunning riverscape views in both directions. Now turn left and follow the river wall.

It is here that you can appreciate just how big and remote the Deben can feel. The reed beds on the left shiver silver-fronded in today's strong wind, their rustling sounding as metallic as cymbals, there is the creak of wings from rising flocks, geese send up harsh cries, and riverside there is the sigh of pockmarked mudflats, the slap and lap of water, the constant pecking of a myriad of waders, whilst above gulls wheel and squabble. And then, as if completely unaware of the orchestration below, graceful egrets rise in silence to fly away, insouciant.

Just after Sluice Cottage the footpath rises to follow a field into a wood behind 'The Rocks'. Here, the dappled light from the pines above the beach provides a rest bite from the river



The Rocks.

Sue Ryder Richardson

path and offer vignettes of riverscape between branches. Descend again to the river wall and continue through further woodland until reaching a left-hand path across the marsh to Ramsholt Church, where the walk continues. But a short distance ahead is the lure of the Ramsholt Arms, where a welcome drink awaits. We enjoyed a quiet half hour watching yachts bob on the ruffled waters, and children play in the sand.

Return to the route and on reaching the hedge below the Church, take steep steps up to All Saints. Although this church is more recent, it is well worth visiting the spot where an ecclesiastical building has stood for over a thousand years. Take the path through the wildflower strewn churchyard, to find the gate on the north side, turn left back onto the footpath and then right to meet a 'T-junction'. Another right here takes you on a long, somewhat dusty bridleway, to the Ramsholt Lane. Turn left, and at the main Bawdsey Road, cross to the footpath opposite beside a cottage. This track leads you directly back into Shottisham opposite the Sorrel Horse.

We sat outside the Inn soaking up the August sun as we enjoyed a delicious lunch. The walk back from The Ramsholt Arms to the Sorrel Horse took under an hour, including quite a prolonged stop in the church, so whilst the latter part of the walk may not have all the visual charms of the first, the welcome at the Sorrel Horse, certainly made up for what had seemed a long, dusty track to the road.

Sue Ryder Richardson was born in Suffolk and has explored it on foot for as long as she can remember. This walk and its map will be in the Journal 4.10.2024.

Profile: Robert Brinkley

Ask most people and they will tell you that the land between the high and low water marks, the foreshore, is owned by the Crown. And, of course, they would be correct. However, it is not as simple as that. For reasons that are now lost there is an area of the foreshore at Felixstowe Ferry that is privately owned. (See map.) Until 1991 this land was owned by Connie Jenkins, “The Lady of the Manor”, a title purchased for her by her husband, John Clarke. When Connie died this stretch of foreshore was bought by a

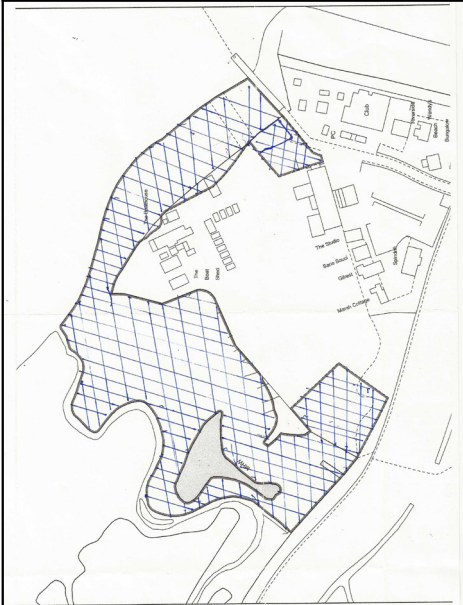
consortium called The Felixstowe Ferry Fore Shore Trust with the object of ensuring the Ferry remained as much as possible as it always had been and the river open for all.

The Trust has three trustees and, at the moment, a further forty one members, although the Trust can have a maximum of fifty. Most of the members are local individuals with the exception of one organization, the River Deben Association. All are committed to the objective of preserving the very special nature of the Ferry. The Trust is run by a Management Committee comprising the three trustees and up to seven members. It is a small, friendly and relatively informal organisation which draws its income from rents from houseboat owners and other foreshore users and much of the necessary business is conducted via WhatsApp.

Phil Cooper



Peter Wain



The privately-owned Felixstowe Ferry foreshore.



Peter Wain

Robert Brinkley.



Houseboats on the foreshore.

It is perhaps not surprising that one of the founder members of the Fore Shore Trust has a particularly close connection with the Ferry having been born and lived there for much of his life. Robert Brinkley's family has been associated with the Ferry since 1895 when Charlie ("Hookey") Brinkley became the ferryman for Sir Cuthbert Quilter of Bawdsey Manor. Charlie lived at 2 Quay Cottages, Bawdsey until his death in 1963. Charlie's son, also Charlie, succeeded his father as ferryman and on his retirement in 1980, Robert became the third generation of the Brinkley family to be ferryman at the mouth of the Deben.

I met Robert at his hut near the slipway on a sunny afternoon in July. The hut was what you would imagine of someone who for over seventy years had been connected with boats, the Deben and the sea. Filled with memorabilia, old oars hanging from the ceiling, pictures, model boats and photographs each of which had its own story.

Robert was born at Weatherside next to St Nicholas Church and was the last or last but one to be actually born at the Ferry. He attended the Ferry School and his first job was working at Whisstocks boat yard before beginning fishing. He met Penny, who was on holiday from London and in 1974 they married. Penny is ordained as

a priest in the Church of England and works as an Associate Priest at St John's Church and being proficient in British Sign Language, as Diocesan Chaplain with the Deaf Community. Robert and Penny lived at the Ferry for twenty five years after marrying but a growing family, a need for a bigger home and a desire for less "teenage taxi work" caused them to move into Felixstowe. This year they celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary.

Although Robert and Penny left the Ferry the family connection is not broken and Robert's daughter, Charley, continues to live there as does his sister Ann, who is married to John White, the Harbour Master.

Robert reflected on the changes he had seen over the years. Obviously there are more boats but most boat owners behave responsibly. Speed boats have been a problem but the main problem these days are large motor cruisers that exceed the speed limit causing a destructive wash. Bye laws had been made but there is nobody to enforce them.

Robert is very proud of his wooden clinker built boat, *Cariad*, built at Eversons in 1948. He continues to sail her whenever he can, summer and winter.

Having been a fisherman, ferryman, assistant harbour master, Trinity House Woodbridge Haven Lights and Buoys Keeper and currently Fisherman's representative on the Fairway's Committee and trustee and Secretary of the Fore Shore Trust, the River Deben Association is very fortunate that Robert is sharing his extensive local knowledge and wisdom as one of its committee members.

Historian Peter Wain's specialist subject is the lost mediaeval port of Goseford on the lower Deben. He is also a Trustee of Bawdsey Radar Museum.

Co-chair's Report

I hope you are having a good 2024 and thank you both for your continued membership of the River Deben Association and for taking the time to read our magazine. It is at this time of year that we often say "How the summer has flown by!" It seems especially true of 2024 as whilst there have been extended periods of sunshine these have been accompanied by blustery winds, probably an excellent year for sailors, especially racers. Also, it feels that there have been long periods of heavy rain, making it the greenest Suffolk I can remember for many years.

RDA progress is led by your Committee (now 13 members and contributors listed on page 38 of this magazine and which meets monthly), and I have laid out the RDA's main activities in my Co-Chair's Report below. Currently, the other half of the Co-Chair role remains unfilled, but there are plans afoot to fill this important vacancy.

Events

The 2024 RDA Annual General Meeting, back in April, was enlightened by three excellent presentations about the state of the River Deben's water quality, followed by Questions & Answers with a panel of experts. Dr Robin Price, Director of Quality and Environment at Anglian Water Services and David Findley & Professor William Brammar, citizen scientists from the Deben Climate Centre, led a frank discussion about river pollution during which facts about the often-poor quality of the Deben's waters were presented, and solutions offered. About 140 attended and the RDA's Tristan McConnell captured the detail of the meeting in a *Journal* article available on the RDA website (17.5.2024).

The Deben Forum, took place once again during July, an opportunity for Fairways Committees, Harbourmasters, Boatyards, Businesses and

others to get together in a neutral space to discuss estuarine issues of common interest. Top-equal on the attendees' list were Water Quality/Environmental Pollution and Speeding (the latter linked with concerns about jet skis on the River Deben), closely followed by silt. There appeared to be consensus to focus on speed and wash, rather than in terms of pure speed limits. It is hoped that "Go Slow" buoys showing the international "No Wash" and the ESC logo (to indicate the authority) maybe in place in time for next season, with the support of East Suffolk Council who were in attendance alongside representatives of 25 other organisations. Details of the Deben Forum are also available as a *Journal* article on the RDA website (20.9.2024).

Woodbridge Regatta and Martlesham Village Fetes: There was an RDA stand at both of these events, and whilst relatively quiet, having a stand seems a good way to maintain the profile of the RDA across the year and up and down the catchment.

November Talk: This will take place 7 for 7:30, 5th November at The Quay Church, with speaker Jason Alexander (see p38).

RDA Partnerships

Recovering the Deben: The need to improve the water quality across the entire Deben Catchment area has been recognised by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Environment Agency, resulting in the creation of the 'Recovering the Deben – from Source to Sea' project, led by the East Suffolk Catchment Partnership. The RDA has now attended four project team meetings in recognition of the importance of working with the community to make lasting improvements to the catchment. (Further information is available online by searching Recovering the Deben).

Deben Estuary Partnership (DEP): Formed in 2008, with the RDA as a founding member and the support of the Environment Agency to bring together local interests on flood risk management and of other estuarine matters. The DEP under Chair Thomas Yeung (Commodore, Deben Yacht Club) and Vice Chair Colin Nicholson (Chair, RDA) is currently updating the Deben Estuary Plan, an integrated management plan that reflects the concerns and aspirations of the DEP diverse members (42 organisations at the last count). The RDA has attended multiple Executive and Steering Group meetings across the year.

Felixstowe Ferry Fore Shore Trust: The RDA is a shareholder in the FFFST and I attended their 2024 AGM in June at St Nicholas Church, Felixstowe Ferry. Their Secretary, Robert Brinkley, has kindly agreed to sit on the RDA Committee.

Planning

Planning is a standing item (along with the nature and conservation subcommittee which has a separate article on page 23) on the RDA Committee agenda and letters were sent with regards to an intended sizeable Pettistree Solar Farm between Wickham Market and Loudham Hall, redevelopment of the old council offices, Kings View, Melton Hill, Woodbridge and the new café at Woodbridge Quay. Active Travel Woodbridge's proposals seem well dealt with by the Woodbridge and Melton Society and, so far, do not impinge on the river. The go-ahead for the general route of the King Charles III Coastal Path was noted by the Committee with much interest for further detail when available.

Review of RDA objectives and structure

At its June meeting, the RDA Committee undertook a periodic review of its committee activities and roles. Widening representation was felt important, both of the youth and for the whole Deben catchment from Debenham to Felixstowe

Ferry. As stated above, Robert Brinkley from the Felixstowe Ferry Fore Shore Trust is taking a committee role, supporting this objective. Whilst existing roles are largely good order it was agreed to add Footpaths/Access to the Planning role. Also, in this Social Media age, a Social Media role has been created to manage Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram. Instagram is a great media outlet for sharing the many evocative photos of The Deben and contributions from budding (and professional) photographers across the membership are always welcome (just e-mail to media@riverdeben.org). The Committee's whole-hearted thanks to Sue Orme and Anna-Marie Sellon for taking on these roles and any photographic contributions.

It was decided to deprioritise the RDA's organisation of litter picks as these important activities are well managed by other organisations up and down the Deben, including the innovative Rubbish Walks, led by Jason Alexander who will be our speaker at the forthcoming Autumn Talk. We will continue to support and help publicise other people's litter picks and join in with them as individuals. If you



have a river-related event to publicise, please send details to Anna-Marie using media@riverdeben.org and we will include it in the Bits'n'Bobs information sheet or on social media as appropriate.

The committee has also decided that we should focus more attention on Events in general. It's obvious that members enjoy good talks on subjects of current interest and it also helps raise the profile of the RDA and the issues we stand for. We would like to recruit a Committee contributor to assist with the planning and organisation of such events. You would not have to attend every committee meeting – though you would always be welcome – but help with good ideas and practical implementation. If you might like to contribute to the RDA in this way, do please get in touch by emailing volunteer@riverdeben.org. We are also very interested in hearing from people who might represent younger RDA members or the interests of the upper Deben area.

Meanwhile I'm looking forward to our Autumn Talk from Jason Alexander on November 5th and to meeting our cover artist, Shelley Robinson.

So, thank you for catching up with the activities of your Committee and my gratitude in advance to any willing Events volunteer. If you would like to contribute to the success of the RDA by helping to make its events interesting and informative, do please make yourself known to the Committee by emailing volunteer@riverdeben.org.

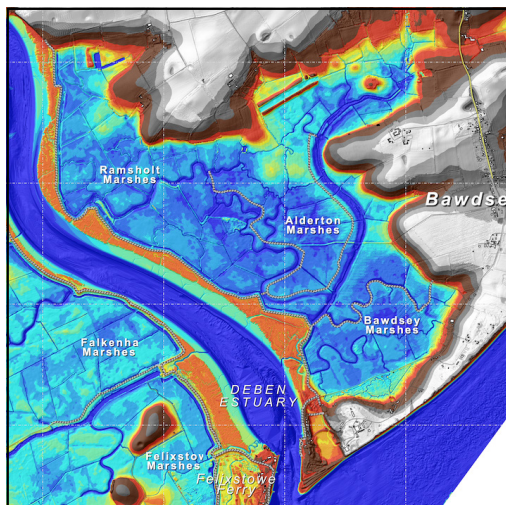
Colin Nicholson is Co-chair of the RDA and Vice-chair of the Deben Estuary Partnership. He had a varied career in the pharmaceutical industry, and was later Chief Executive of British Wrestling.

Right: Lidar map of the Alderton and Bawdsey flood cell and foreshore. LIDAR is an acronym for 'Light Detection And Ranging,' which in this case is an application of laser technology to

accurately scan the elevation, indicated by colour: The dark brown on the inland edge of the flood cell is at 3-6m above ordnance datum and the dark blue represents 0m and below.

Helene Burningham and Simon Read have received funding from the Environment Agency 3C's programme for a project to explore the evolution of the Deben Estuary shoreline with a focus upon two case study sites: the Waldringfield frontage from Dairy Farm Meadow to Hemley and Flood Cell 1 between Ramsholt and Bawdsey Quay. They aim to run a series of workshops in the landscape and to undertake research on agreed aspects of each site to investigate the evolution of the shoreline using a broad range of approach from scientific analysis to archival research and community memory. The emphasis will be upon an informal exchange of views and knowledge, driven by shared curiosity over the evolution of our estuary landscape, and the lessons we might take away for the future.

Starting this autumn, the project will run to March/April 2025 when they hope to exhibit and publish the results of the work. There will be an introductory evening to explain the project at the Hutchinson Room, Woodbridge Community Hall from 7pm, Friday 4th October. For more information: contact@simonread.info / h.burningham@ucl.ac.uk



Prof. Helene Burningham, UCL

Nature and Conservation Subcommittee Update

We have had an active and productive year on matters relating to nature and conservation. Highlights include the talk at the AGM on water quality (see the Co-Chair's Report on page 20), and the three projects below:

Otter Project

The Deben Otter Group is up and running with seven trail cameras out along the river from Debenham to the estuary. The volunteers running the cameras are doing a great job and collecting videos of otter activity. There have been several sightings of a mother with one cub which have been picked up on cameras from Wickham Market to Creetingham, demonstrating how these animals cover the ground. There are also several videos of single male otters along the river at different locations at the same time, indicating there is more than one male otter using the river. Unfortunately the camera at Ufford was stolen, which has been a lesson to us all. It was located in a place well used by the public and although not immediately visible was found and removed. In the autumn when the vegetation has died back we will find a more suitable site and replace the camera. For some footage from our cameras, see the RDA website.

Fish Survey (see update by Richard Verrill)

Riverfly Monitoring Project

We launched this project last summer, organising training for a group of RDA volunteers from an expert from the Riverfly Programme. The purpose of the project is to monitor and record the number and type of riverflies (like mayflies and caddis flies), since their presence in the

river is an indicator of water quality. Our group of enthusiastic volunteers have been donning their waders and carrying out monthly monitoring over the last year, although we have had to miss some of the winter months due to the flooded river. Our results have allowed us to begin to identify trends, and we are in liaison with the Environment Agency who take an active interest.

We are really grateful to, and would like to thank, Woodbridge Town Council who have funded us buying some equipment to carry out the monitoring, including nets, buckets and magnifying glasses. The new equipment means we are finally able to return the equipment to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust which they kindly loaned us when we launched the project.

We are always looking for volunteers, so if anyone is interested in getting involved in the project then please get in touch at volunteer@riverdeben.org.

Liz Hattan is an environmental lawyer at DEFRA and is a member of the RDA Committee. Any comments in this article are personal, and do not represent those of Defra.



Liz Hattan

Riverfly monitoring in action.

RDA Fish Survey 2024

The River Deben is well recognised for the extensive salt marshes that provide a very important nursery for juvenile fish. There have been some studies of fish numbers over the years but nothing regularly until the RDA started surveying at Bawdsey in August 2022. I have written reports of this study in the Deben Magazine. Since 2022 we have conducted fish surveys annually and our 3rd Annual survey was completed on 22nd and 23rd of July this year with instruction from Steve Colclough from the institute of Fisheries Management (IFM). Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) joined us last year as they have a new reserve at Martlesham Wilds. This year we combined with SWT to survey the area of salt marsh adjacent to Martlesham Wilds and then repeated the survey at Bawdsey.

We had a very good turnout with 2 fisheries scientists from IFM, a representative from Eastern Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority another representative from Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust together with many SWT employees and RDA volunteers.

The Martlesham Wilds marsh has a long creek and so at low tide we were able to set a winged Fyke net across the creek. We also used seine nets as we have previously used at Bawdsey. Juvenile fish are known to travel with the incoming tide to feed on salt marsh and we were able to see shoals of mullet moving up the creek in which we had placed the nets. Fyke nets are tubular structures with a taper where the fish are caught. The mouth of the net is angled upstream. Once the tide begins to ebb there is an exodus of juvenile fish down the creeks and they are then caught in the net. As the tide came in we also waded out into the river with seine nets walking in a circle to then pull the net in for our sample.

Our results this year have shown broadly similar species to our previous studies including Goby, Sea Bass, Mullett, Sand Smelt, Sand Eel and an occasional Herring. All our catches are counted and a representative number are measured. The quantities of fish caught at Martlesham were very impressive with over 1000 fish sampled and returned to the river. A detailed report will be put on the RDA website once we have processed the data.

Estuaries are very dynamic environment and so fish numbers sampled can be very different. It is similar to when I go fishing. Some days I catch nothing while on other days plenty but the rivers health is broadly similar. A better indication of the good health of the Deben is the number of fish which have hatched in the river in the last 2 years, our studies show very good numbers of juvenile fish. Unhealthy rivers are particularly bad for fish in their first year so good numbers of juveniles is good news. Following on from our study I have been contacted by the Chief Scientific Officer of UK Bass who is very interested in our data and is currently discussing data sharing with The University of Plymouth.

In summary the Deben has healthy numbers of juvenile fish. We continue to make good relationships with other organisations that have similar objectives to the RDA. We will continue to monitor this situation.

Richard Verrill has sailed in Suffolk and Essex for the last 57 years, and on the Deben since 1985. He was a GP at Framfield House Surgery for 31 years, retiring in 2016.



Claudia Myatt

Andrew Baldwin's Sculptures on Show

There's always something to see at Woodbridge Boatyard – and sometimes it's not all about boats. Eric Reynolds, owner of Woodbridge and Waldringfield Boatyards, is a keen supporter of the arts, and most of us are now familiar with Andrew Baldwin's sculpture 'The Sisters', dressed by the tide each day in shades of mud and green weed. During the latter part of the summer the boatyard became exhibition space for six more bronze figurative pieces by Andrew Baldwin – striking and quirky, love them or hate them, they quickly became a talking point. Some, like 'The Ballerina' would make you smile, others told of loss, but all had the capacity to make people think. They have now returned to Trinity Buoy Wharf in London, which features a constantly changing, free and fully accessible display of Baldwin's quirky, imaginative work.

Artist Claudia Myatt lives and works on the Deben.



Claudia Myatt



Claudia Myatt



Claudia Myatt



Sarah Zins

Artist Profile: Shelley Robinson

As a sometime contributor to the RDA magazine, I am occasionally asked to write a piece on the chosen artist, which is always an interesting assignment. But I was particularly delighted to be invited to interview this edition's artist, Shelley Robinson, as we not only grew up sailing on the river Alde together, but she is a friend who now lives adjacent to the Deben, as I do. In fact, Shelley is a 3-Suffolk-rivers woman, of which more later.

Shelley was born in Suffolk and her father, John Robinson, was a keen sailor. He bought the gaff-rigged boat, *Klang II*, as something of a wreck in France and brought her to the Alde. It is rumoured that *Klang II* was one of the little ships that went over to France as part of the evacuation operation, but to St Malo rather than Dunkirk, and perhaps a marine historian reading this article can tell Shelley if that is indeed the case. I asked if, once in the UK, *Klang II* was restored to her former glory, but Shelley's recollections are that she remained something of a wreck! Despite that, the vessel was sailed to Holland and France, and it was on her decks that Shelley first learned to walk. John was a much-loved figure in Aldeburgh, teaching many people to sail after he retired, including the anxious, who found themselves taking the tiller



Shelley Robinson

under the guise of just going on a bit of a picnic! He was also a valued "rescuer" of boats and on several occasions sailed my parents' yacht home from Europe when adverse weather conditions had stopped her leaving harbour at the end of a scheduled holiday.

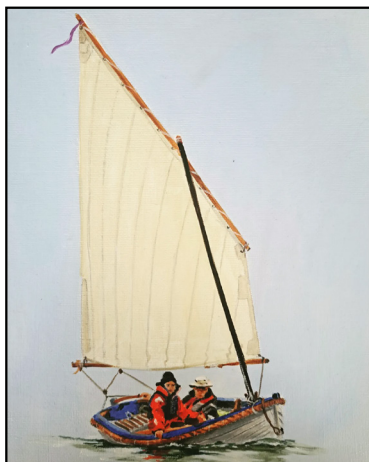
This early experience of boats was to be formative in Shelley's life. As a teenager she sailed Lapwings on the River Alde, then at 18 she "ran away to sea" in the time-honoured tradition of many young. After hitch-hiking round Europe, she took a job crewing a yacht bound for the Caribbean and there she stayed for the next 10 years. From her base in Antigua, she took on various roles – sometimes a deck-hand, sometimes a

stewardess – and as well as voyaging throughout the Caribbean, she crossed the Atlantic 9 times. I asked her if she has any regrets about that period of her life, and she wishes that she had had an opportunity to go through the Panama Canal and sail the Pacific.

Pregnancy brought her back to the UK and Jake, also an accomplished sailor and now 35, was born in Suffolk. Shelley took up crewing Dragons on the Alde, sometimes with her father, and she competed in the Opens in Holland, France and Ireland, the boat twice winning second place in the Edinburgh Cup.

It is perhaps thanks to Jake that Shelley took up art. He was a keen builder of Warhammer models and commissioned his mother to paint them, which she did with great accuracy and flair. She turned that eye for detail into painting small cards, which sold well, and friends encouraged her to turn her hand to larger pieces. By this time, she had moved to Melton and was sufficiently smitten with art to build a studio in her garden. Here she is able to paint large canvases of whatever takes her fancy, and her fancy has been taken to many places inspired by her far-flung travels. One major series of works was based on a safari, producing detailed depictions of lions, tigers and other jungle creatures. Her ability to capture the essence of an animal has led to

Shelley Robinson



a number of commissions to paint beloved dogs and other pets.

I asked Shelley what the catalyst was for her current series of boat paintings, some of which you can see in this magazine. She says that she saw photos of old smacks taken by the photographer Seamus Masters, and he generously shares his photos with her. Because of her love of sailing, her paintings of boats are always accurate (the wind is coming from the right direction for the set of the sails etc) and so sailors appreciate the veracity of her works. She was spotted for the magazine when she exhibited her work in the Woodbridge Boatyard as part of the Woodbridge Regatta, and she also painted some of the boats in the 2024 Old Gaffers' regatta.

I mentioned 3 Suffolk rivers at the beginning of this piece, and that is because Shelley has worked at the

Levington chandlery for the last 20 years, so is more than familiar with the Orwell and its craft. But appropriately for this magazine, the Deben is where Shelley now lives, paints and relaxes, finding her peaceful moments in a daily walk from Melton to Woodbridge along the river path.

For more of Shelley's work, look on Instagram at [cshell.artist](https://www.instagram.com/cshell.artist), email her at c-shell@hotmail.co.uk or come to the RDA Autumn talk! (See p38 for details.)

Sarah Zins is a former chairman of the RDA.

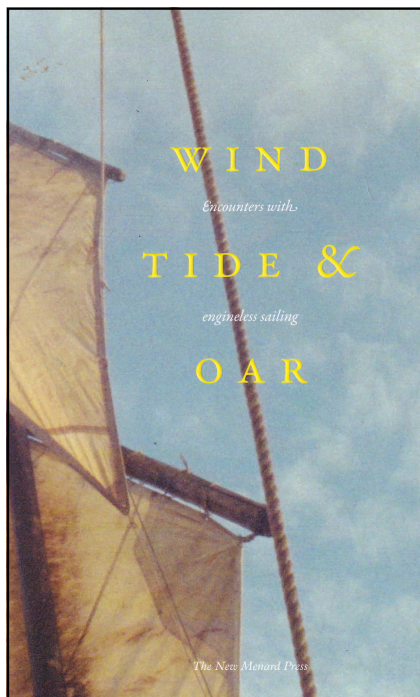
Matt Lis

Film Review: *Wind, Tide and Oar*

Wind, Tide and Oar's message is simple yet thought-provoking; that without the crutch of having an engine onboard, boating can become more freeing than without this apparent aid. It is a message that practitioners of any craft, art or skill will relate to, be that painting, sailing, writing or driving a car; for everything that technology adds in terms of accessibility, it also takes something away for those who derive pleasure from the purity found in pursuing a challenge. It is a mentality that we come across often at the boatyard, customers who know perfectly well that their lives would be easier and their sailing seasons longer if they had a plastic boat but for whom part of the joy is in the Sisyphean task of wooden boat ownership and the often intangible rewards. This warm, gentle film conveys this joy cleverly through the tales of diverse proponents and the parallel of analogue filmmaking. Whether watched at home or inside the hold of the Thames barge 'Blue Mermaid' on the film's engineless tour by sea, this is a very pleasant way to spend a couple of hours and will leave you thinking for days to come about your own equivalent pursuits afloat or otherwise.

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

There will be various preview screenings of the film around the UK in the coming months, before a theatrical release in cinemas and other venues from early Spring 2025. Screening locations will be listed on this webpage: windtideandoar.com/land-tour



The New Menard Press

Book Review: *Wind, Tide and Oar*

The book of the film is a slim volume edited by Dutch author and publisher Elte Rauch presenting insights from several of the sailors featured in the film together with a fascinating essay by film director Huw Wahl. He makes a convincing case for analogue film-making demanding similar qualities of intuition, responsiveness and situational awareness as sailing without an engine. Others speak of the closeness to nature developed by working solely with the wind and tide. Richard Titchener of the Sea Change Trust describes this as 'rewilding the soul'.

£14.99, The New Menard Press

Matt Lis

Apprentices on *Blue Mermaid*

Following her visit to Woodbridge for the town Regatta, the Thames Sailing Barge *Blue Mermaid* left with two types of cargo; Tidemill flour for the Bread and Roses project at St. Osyth and a pair of Woodbridge Boatyard apprentices bound for Gravesend, Kent.

In early 2024 National Historic Ships UK launched a new training scheme aimed at introducing and progressing young people in the sailing of traditionally-rigged sailing vessels. The scheme follows a similar principle to the RYA's qualifications for yacht sailing but with skills specific to traditionally-rigged boats and an added focus on the history of vessels and the men and women who have worked them. *Blue Mermaid* is one of several vessels around the country accredited to deliver the training.

Having slipped lines at the Tide Mill Quay, *Blue Mermaid*, which has no engine, was towed by Tam Grundy's tug *Joanna G* downriver to Ramsholt where she spent the night before a 4am start to catch the morning tide out over the bar.

The two apprentices were involved in passage planning (particularly important for an engineless vessel), raising and lowering the sails and anchor, sailing the barge, helming her and the day-to-day tasks of being part of a crew. In the evenings, time was dedicated to learning about the history of local working boats and practicing skills such as ropework.



Euan Laird

Roger Stollery

The BOTTLE Boat

The Deben's Smallest Racing Fleet

Roger Stollery



BOTTLE boats racing at Waldringfield.

For more than 20 years a fleet of radio-controlled miniature sailing vessels has raced on the Deben one day in August. They are almost entirely made of recycled materials and offcuts. These are the award-winning BOTTLE boats.

The idea for a bottle boat was conceived in Waldringfield in 1992 when Roger was washing up the dishes. His sister, Annie, used Ecover washing-up liquid, which came in a rather large bottle, as you needed to use a lot of it to get any bubbles! At this time the highly competitive Marblehead model yacht that Roger was racing then had semicircular cross-sections to minimise the friction drag, with the stability achieved by a deep keel with a ballast bulb. So why not make the hull with a couple of these circular bottles?

Roger did a quick sketch but then did nothing further until the mid-1990s when the cost of a starter boat for new radio racing competitors was getting expensive – in the order of £2000! The idea was to use two-litre fizzy drink bottles, joined by a carbon fibre moulding to include the keel and structure for supporting the



Celia Mason presenting the prize for this year's BOTTLE boat championship to winner Bernard Kufluk. The Junior Championship was won by Elliot Mason.

cantilevered swing rig and the radio gear etc. As well as recycling the bottles, an upturned plastic coffee cup was used as the bow, the spars were seconds carbon arrow shaft and the sails were recycled shopping bags etc.

The first boat was produced in 1998 and worked very well with a standard inexpensive servo to pull in the sails instead of an expensive winch.



A BOTTLE boat showing their amazing speed and seaworthiness in strong winds.

Roger Stollery

Roger Stollery



(A servo is a cheap mass-produced rotary motors which transfers radio signals into action.) As the swing rig is balanced, which reduces the sheeting forces, this was achieved using an innovative power lever. Several moulds and jigs for making the stainless steel fittings were produced with the intention that the boat could be made by DIY builders using these moulds and jigs. (Jigs are a series of pins round which to bend wire.) Other model yacht suppliers made ballast bulbs and some of the detailed fittings on a one-design basis.

The performance was amazing for such a small boat made of recycled parts with a ready-to-sail price of under £200. The other important feature was that all of the parts fitted into a briefcase so that transport would be easy: by bike, bus, bus, train etc. Model yachts always require small sails when the wind is blowing too hard for the big rig and in this case, the mast was split into 2 halves, with a small topmast for the smaller sails. All of these features allowed the design to achieve a Millennium Product award by the Design Centre.

2024 BOTTLE boat championship participants.

The first big event for the class was sailed on the River Deben at Waldringfield in October 2002 in the most amazing gale, which dragged one of the moored yachts onto the mud. However, 3 of the dozen BOTTLE boats entered, managed to survive and finished the racing in their small rigs. Every year since then, the BOTTLE boat championship has provided a great spectacle in front of the WSC clubhouse with up to 20 entries and provides exciting racing for both competitors and spectators alike, with children able to compete on an equal footing against some of the best dinghy sailors in the club.

Currently in 2024 Roger is refurbishing BOTTLE boats that owners no longer want or where parts are missing or the radio gear needs replacing. Recently all the refurbished boats have found new young owners who delight in sailing them and by doing so learning to sail.

Roger Stollery is an award winning architect whose achievements include the Millennium Building at Wimbledon. He can be contacted at stollery117@gmail.com.



Natasha Sones

Getting Involved: Stand-Up Paddleboarding on the River Deben

I feel so lucky to live near to the beautiful River Deben and be able to do stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) here. Here's what I love about it.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19 (SUP) has become increasingly popular with lots more people buying SUP boards. I bought a paddleboard during the pandemic, having had a lesson before, and the Deben was where I decided to practice on it, living nearby. This peaceful river is sheltered and is ideal for a leisurely paddle and practising self-rescues. When I first started out I would regularly see Neil Boast kayaking up and down the river, offering encouragement and smiles to all crafts. I joined the Facebook group River Deben Paddlers (facebook.com/groups/364827000812168) to

get helpful advice about launch spots and tide times. I have since become one of the awesome admin team who give friendly advice to the nearly 3,000 members of the group.

I love having access to such a lovely river filled with wildlife. The fact it is tidal makes it a little more challenging to time my paddles – I have only once nearly had to do the “muddy walk of shame!” However there is also Waldringfield as a perfect paddle spot if the tides aren't right at Woodbridge.

For me, the pleasures of paddleboarding are numerous. It is great exercise as it is a safe, low-impact sport which is excellent for cardiovascular health, improving balance and boosting endurance. The sport welcomes

participants of all ages and skill levels. Plus being outside in nature is ideal for wellbeing. As a busy wife and mother, I SUP for mental health and find being on the water brings me peace. I often paddle with friends as a social activity.

If you have never tried paddleboarding then why not have a go? My advice is to have a lesson or two to begin with, to learn about standing up and safety. East Coast Adventures (ecadventures.co.uk/sup) offer local SUP lessons, as well as others.

You will need a paddleboard (obviously!), a buoyancy aid, leash and paddle. Depending on the weather you may want to wear a wetsuit. Another option is a dry suit which will keep you warmer than a wetsuit and is easier to paddle in, but more costly to buy. Alternatively you can just wear leggings, a base layer, a top and a waterproof jacket. If it is really cold you could add in a fleece or thermal base layer. Bear in mind though you may fall in when first starting out so wear appropriate clothing; avoid heavy woollen garments for example which would get very heavy in the water if you fell in. The water is usually cold and if you fall in, you may suffer cold water shock. Make sure you have warm, comfy clothing to put on afterwards.

Your board will probably come with an ankle leash. It is important to always keep this on when you are paddling so the board doesn't float away. Paddle UK advises wearing a quick release waist leash instead of an ankle one in most instances (see paddleuk.org.uk for more information). This is because if you become snagged on an obstacle and the current is strong, you will easily be able to detach yourself from the board.

As with any craft on water, think safety first. Always do your research and take sensible precautions. Before going out, check the weather conditions and tide times. A good website to use is www.tidetimes.org.uk and a helpful app is Windy. The app What3Words lets you share your exact

location – even if you're in the middle of the sea or on a remote river. Try not to paddle alone, go with a friend or a group if you can to stay safe. Always carry a mobile phone in a waterproof case too.

After paddling for a few years locally I felt confident enough to complete a multi-day solo paddleboarding trip in Finland last summer. Starting in Helsinki I explored the Eastern archipelago around the city which comprises 330 islands. I absolutely loved it and it has given me a lot more confidence in paddleboarding. This January I also took part in the GlaGla Race, an amazing race which saw 700 people paddle on Lake Annecy in the French Alps in the freezing cold depths of winter. This sport can encourage you to try new places and meet new people.

Have fun and happy paddling!

Natasha Sones is an outdoors adventures blogger. She is also a This Girl Can Suffolk Ambassador. Follow her at www.instagram.com/natashastarseeker or www.natashasoneseditorial.com/blog.



Natasha Sones

Alan Krailing

Getting Involved: Report from the Cadet World Championships

The International Cadet World Championship in Plymouth saw the event return to the UK after a break of 10 years and what a fantastic regatta it was!

The Cadet dinghy will be a familiar sight to many on the River Deben with a history stretching back over nearly 70 years at Waldringfield Sailing Club. The tremendous success of this event, drawing in excess of 200 children between 7-17 years old, from 10 counties across 4 continents, underlines the enduring appeal of this wonderful little boat.

Measuring in at just 10' in length, the Cadet Class was founded in the post war years with the bold ambition of fostering international friendship and co-operation. It is an environment where lifelong friendships and enduring bonds are made. This was typified by the desire of 1957 National Champion Barry Steele to travel some 400 miles from home, to return to the event nearly 7 decades on, meeting old friends and sharing some brilliantly entertaining anecdotes from his cadet journey with the current charges. The class also has a proud history of developing some of the county's top sailing talent and we were delighted to welcome Sail GP trimer and Ex-Cadet Nick Hutton to the event, providing inspiration as to where your first trip in a cadet might take you.

Ultimately it was our international visitors who dominated the top places (perhaps we took the ideals of international friendship a little too far!), with the Australian team and a small but hugely impressive contingent from the Ukraine locking out the first 5 places. Having said that, there were some really strong performances from the Waldringfield fleet with several hoping to return to next year's event where the experience from this year will no doubt prove to be a huge benefit.



Paul Gibbins Photography

As a class we are indebted to the generous support of a small army of volunteers, drawn not just from the parents and relations of the competitors but also members from our fabulous hosts Plymouth Youth Sailing and the wider sailing community. We were blessed by the support of several brilliant sponsors including Associated British Ports, Zhik, Minerva Virtual Academy, Pure Storage, Stubborn Mule, Royal Hospital School and many individual supporters without whom the event simply wouldn't have been possible.

Having paused for breath briefly after the World Championships, the summer was rounded off back on the Deben with Waldringfield Cadet Week over the August Bank Holiday. In its 65th year, the event was stronger than ever with a record number of competitors. Over 90 children, many of them from the village, enjoyed a fantastic, fun-filled holiday, on, in and around the river.

Waldringfield Sailing Club (WSC) runs a comprehensive programme of events for budding young sailors to come and have a go. If you or anyone you know would like to find out more please visit the website at waldringfieldsc.com/junior-sailing-club.

Alan Krailing is a WSC member and was the organiser of the 2024 Cadet World Championship.

Lucy Read

Getting Involved: Youth Sailing @ Felixstowe Ferry

Youth Sailing @ Felixstowe Ferry has been running for more than 30 years with many generations of families being involved. Some started as inexperienced young sailors progressing through the sailing scheme, then working their way to become instructors, often leaving Suffolk for university then returning to lend a hand, some even progressed to find jobs within the marine industry.

Youth Sailing @ Felixstowe Ferry is a registered charity, run by volunteer instructors and parent helpers, giving young people between the age of 10-18 Royal Yachting Association (RYA) training to sail dinghies in an enjoyable, challenging, yet safe environment, out at sea or on the River Deben.

The sailing season runs from April through November, with no sailing in August.

The sessions are held Saturday mornings from 9 to 12:30. All who drop off the students are welcome to stay at the club and watch, where you can purchase a cuppa, then you can order lunch at the galley on their return. Boats range from Wayfarers, Picos, 2000s and Fevas to more performance Lasers, Buzzes and Dart 16 catamarans. Whether you have no sailing experience or you are an accomplished sailor we welcome all. Safety is a priority on the water and most sessions have 4-6 Powerboats keeping a watchful eye on the dinghies, with crews having extensive knowledge of the river and local sea area.

FFSC



Each week's session varies depending upon the weather, following the RYA syllabus. Twice a year an all day cruise is organised to the Rocks, where we stop for a picnic lunch and a mess about in and on the water. Other sessions include fun sailing games, learning to start racing and even when the weather is not on our side the first hour may consist of theory and land drills but everyone will still get on the water even

if it's a lesson on a powerboat. Older students are able to take a course, through Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club (FFSC), to achieve an internationally recognised powerboat licence and progressing to become part of our safety crew volunteers once they reach 18. At the end of the season, the last session in November, we have an awards lunch where we hand out trophies, prizes and every student receives a certificate of their achievement. This usually coincides with the club's fireworks night making a good social event for all family and friends.

If you would like to find out more about Youth Sailing @ Felixstowe Ferry pop down on a Saturday morning for a chat, contact the membership secretary 07855955521 or email youthsailing@ffsc.co.uk.

Lucy Read is a parent helper/volunteer and sits on the committee as fundraiser. Her son passed through the RYA sailing scheme and also achieved his powerboat license along with her husband who are both volunteers as part of the safety crew.

News from the Hards

All businesses along the estuary continued to be busy across the summer. Some short excerpts of activities are below. Also, in July, the Deben Forum met to discuss issues of common interest and proceedings are summarised in a Journal Article on the RDA website.

Tidemill Yacht Harbour:

A good season overall – although a slow start and varying numbers of visitors week to week due to the changing weather, July and August were very busy. Local pubs, restaurants and visitor attractions such as Sutton Hoo benefited from the Yacht Harbour's own "mini-Holland" (lots of visiting Dutch sailors!)

Woodbridge and Waldringfield Boatyards

continue to see an interesting and varied flow of work through their workshops; from repairs of GRP dinghies through to the making of several wooden masts and the arrival of *Somerset*, a 90ft classic motor yacht requiring a new fore and aft deck and a new interior. With the assistance of Tam Grundy's tugs *Ben Michael* and *Fury*, *Somerset* has joined the historic fire float *Beta III* and *Fenguide* along the quay wall at Waldringfield Boatyard for work to be carried out, whilst inside the workshop there the restoration of the Saxon Class yacht *Aelfwyn* is also in full flow. Alongside the busy workshop, boats afloat and ashore in Woodbridge, there were also celebrations when, in April, *Peter Duck* came second in the Restoration of the Year (Under 40ft) category of the *Classic Boat* awards (with great thanks to all those RDA members who voted for her!). More



Woodbridge Boatyard's recent work on *Peter Duck* was Highly Commended in the 2024 *Classic Boat* Awards. (Many thanks to those who voted!)

celebrations followed in May when Waldringfield Boatyard hosted a flotilla of local and visiting boats from the East Coast OGA, the Association for Gaff Rig Sailing, for a long weekend. Racing, cruising, BBQs and bunting ensued with a special focus on the Deben Cherub boats built at Everson's (now Woodbridge) Boatyard as 2024 is the 100th anniversary of the design and launch of the first Cherub. A temporary exhibition of sculptures from artist Andrew

Baldwin also joined the river frontage from mid-July through August. Deben Cruises is enjoying its busiest season since the pandemic, welcoming over 4,000 passengers aboard the *MV Jahan* to enjoy the Deben from onboard.

The Longshed: In August there was a productive workshop attended by boatbuilders, teachers, professional youth workers, representatives from local government and other local charities, an apprentice shipwright and a number of young people from local high schools and youth councils. This has worked up the elements for an exciting programme for young people which it is planned to pilot next year in readiness for when space is available.



Somerset being towed from the rocks.

Progress with the Sutton Hoo Ship (The Ship's Company) included one half of the full-sized "midship model" first being transported to Glemham Hall for educational display at FolkEast, a busy annual music, heritage and craft festival. The model was subsequently returned to Woodbridge and lowered into the dock near the Tidemill. After being attached to the dock wall and safely ballasted, the internal floors and thwart (seats) were refitted, ready to conduct a series of rowing tests.

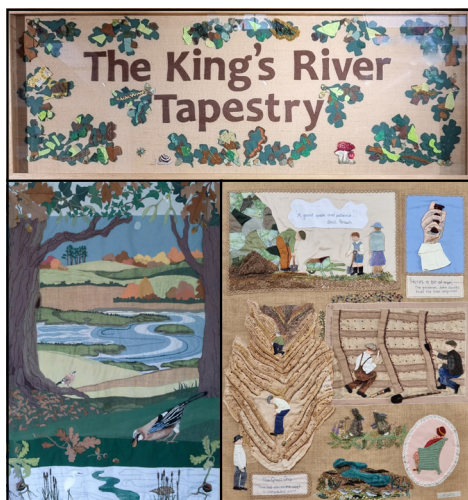
Another feature of The Longshed is the stunning "The King's River" tapestry, much enjoyed by visitors, and a tremendous credit to the people who have produced such amazing textile art. Those skills can be built on too, so that we don't lose sight of how important textiles and other materials are to maritime activity, both historically and in modern usage.

Woodbridge Quay: Gradual progress is being made to tidy the beach area alongside the quay, removing the mess of tenders that are unused and deteriorating. The new café is proving popular.

Martlesham Creek Boatyard: 2024 has brought an uptick in the number of enquiries for Liveaboard berths for which Martlesham Creek Boatyard currently has no vacancies although this is subject to change. The enquiries may be related to rises in the cost of living but it should be noted that liveaboard costs are not negligible. Liveaboards are likely to need insurance and are due to pay Band A Council Tax (unless, interestingly, a swinging mooring in middle of river).

Waldringfield: The new scrubbing posts are a success, having been used ten times this season (as of August). The beach has been consistently busy with much swimming by local children and other wild water swimmers.

Ramsholt Moorings: A new ladder has been fixed to the side of the quay, improving safety



should any young crabbers fall in. There is currently no waiting list for moorings. It should be noted by mooring holders that they are now responsible for organising the servicing of their mooring following the sad passing of Harbour Master 'Young' George Collins in 2023. Annual servicing of a mooring is often a requirement of insurance. There is now a bench near the quay with brass plaques commemorating George (1902–1983) and 'Young' George (1930–2023) for who there was an obituary in the Spring 2024 *The Deben* magazine.

Felixstowe Ferry: The new Suffolk Jetski Ltd business (featured in a July issue of East Anglian Daily Times) has started running out of Felixstowe Ferry and seems to be running in an orderly manner. Two Suffolk Jetski Ltd Directors attended the Deben Forum where concerns were able to be aired. There has been quite a movement of shingle at the mouth of The Deben. Where the entrance was a few years ago, you can now walk onto the knoll which has now joined to the beach – even at high tide. The shapes seem very strange especially at low tide but the tops flattened out somewhat during early-August high winds and seas. Quite a few Dutch boats have entered successfully as well as some German and Belgian.

The River Deben Association

Autumn Meeting: 5th November 2024

Talk: 'Rubbish Walks' by founder Jason Alexander

We are looking forward to hearing from Jason Alexander, founder of The Vintage Litter Museum and the Rubbish Walks website. With years of experience designing wildlife camera systems under his belt, Jason began regular beach cleans, river cleans and street cleans and regularly engaged in litter picking on walks.

This morphed into his Rubbish Walks organisation and later led to the opening of the world's first Vintage Litter Museum, located here in Woodbridge on Jetty Lane.

Jason Alexander



Join us on 5th November at 7pm for 7.30pm at The Quay Church, Quay Street, Woodbridge IP12 1BX. Entry is free to members, £5 to non-members. Welcome refreshments will be provided. For more information email chair@riverdeben.org.

Deben magazine cover artist Shelley Robinson will also be present with some examples of her work.

Committee

Colin Nicholson	Co-chair
(vacant)	Co-chair
Liz Hattan	Vice-chair
	Nature/Conservation
Caroline Peeke	Secretary
Moray MacPhail	Treasurer
	Membership Secretary
Matt Lis	River Businesses
Sue Orme	Planning
	Footpaths/Access
Anne Marie Sellon	Social Media
Ben Grundy	Estuary Matters
(vacant)	Upper Deben Rep
(vacant)	Youth Rep

Co-opted, for election at RDA 2025 AGM:

Robert Brinkley Felixstowe Ferry Rep

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Tristan McConnell	Publicity
Jane Haviland	Nature/Conservation
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Social Media/Photos/Communications	media@riverdeben.org
All other matters	chair@riverdeben.org



The 'easily missed' Church of St Nicholas at Felixstowe Ferry, the last in Gareth's series of 44 'Churches of the Deben,' starting with the Church of St Mary of Grace in Aspoll.

The *RDA Journal*

The *RDA Journal* is published fortnightly on our website: 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:

08/03/2024

**River Deben
Swimming and
the Elephant
in the Room**

Ruth Leach

22/03/2024

**Liz Kennedy
1929-2023 -
A Tribute**

Gareth Thomas

05/04/2024

**Walking the
Deben Way:
Part 1 – Mickfield
to Kettleburgh**

Nick Cottam

19/04/2024

**Dicotyledonous
Plants of the Local
Shingle Seashore**

Peter Jones

03/05/2024

**The Importance
of the River
Deben for Birds**
Sally Westwood

17/05/2024

**A Cleaner Future
for the River Deben**
Tristan McConnell

31/05/2024

**Churches of the
Deben: Part 3A**
Gareth Thomas

14/06/2024

**A TruIt Eclectic Mix:
The OGA on the
Deben, May 2024**
Beverly Yates

28/06/2024

**Delightful
Deben Walk**
Jan Harber

12/07/2024

**Churches of the
Deben: Part 3B**
Gareth Thomas

06/09/2024

**'Zines in the
'Teens, Part I**
Bertie Wheen

20/09/2024

**Deben Forum
Report July 2024**
Colin Nicholson



Jamie Clay

Nirvana, previously of the late Peter Clay, will be the first of hopefully many 'Boats of the Deben' to feature in the *RDA Journal* (see Editor's Introduction, p5).



Claudia Myatt



Sue Ryder Richardson



Liz Hattan



Sue RR



Anne-Marie Sellen



Natasha Sones

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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BettaPrint Woodbridge
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