

THE EASTERLING

JOURNAL OF THE EAST ANGLIAN WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

Edited by Alan H. Faulkner
43 Oaks Drive, Colchester, Essex CO3 3PS
Phone 01206 767023

E-mail alan.faulkner22@btinternet.com

THE RIVER LITTLE OUSE

Articles from 'The Easterling' 1999-2014



The East Anglian Waterways Association is a believer in "Waterways for All" - promoting access to our navigations for the community - walkers, nature-lovers, anglers, canoeists, boaters and gongoozlers. We work with and support many local societies, trusts and other user bodies in the area.
The East Anglian Waterways Association Limited – www.eawa.co.uk - Reg. 895405 - Registered Charity No. 251382

October 1999

THE LITTLE OUSE RIVER

We last featured the Little Ouse, or as it was once known the Brandon River or Lesser Ouse, in our Spring 1979 issue so it is perhaps high time for us to recap and update on the position since then.

The Little Ouse rises between Diss and Thetford at South Lopham, close to the source of the river Waveney. Whilst the Waveney flows eastwards through Bungay and Beccles to join the river Yare at Breydon Water, the Little Ouse follows a generally westwards course through Thetford, where it is joined by the river Thet, and Brandon to join the Great Ouse at Brandon Creek.

The river had been navigable from Brandon Creek up to Thetford for centuries with the effect of the tide extending up to Hockwold but the construction of Denver Sluice in 1651 adversely affected its upper reaches. This led to an Act of Parliament in 1670 which empowered Thetford Corporation to restore the navigation from the White House at Hockwold, a short distance downstream from the present-day Wilton Bridge, some fourteen miles up to Thetford. The works consisted of straightening and deepening the channel and were carried out by the Earl of Arlington, who lived at Euston Hall near Thetford and to whom the rights were assigned. Following his death his daughter transferred the rights back to the Corporation in 1696.

In 1742 it was found necessary to erect a staunch just below Thetford to maintain a navigable level and under a second Act, passed in 1751, a further six staunches were built at Abbey Heath, Turfpool, Croxton, Santon, Brandon and Sheepwash. There was also a staunch at Crosswater, three-and-a-half miles downstream from Wilton Bridge, that was built by the South Level Drainage and Navigation Commissioners probably soon afterwards.

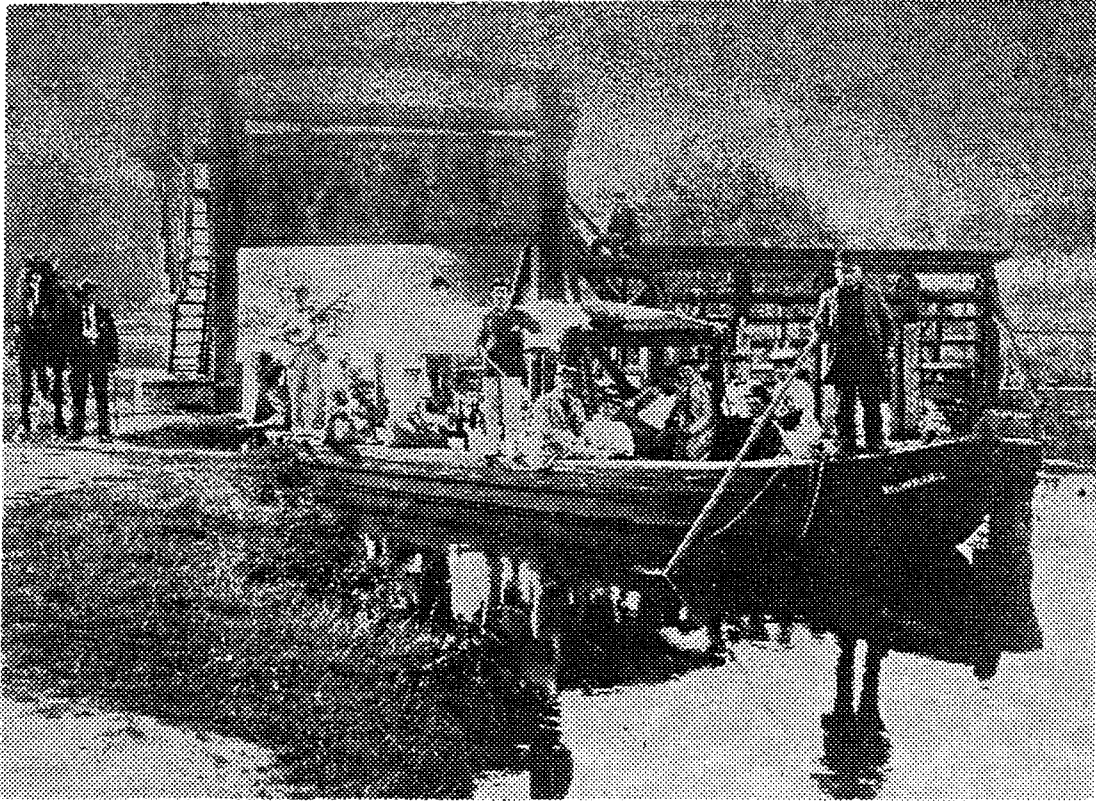
Despite the river being reasonably successful the works were neglected and all the staunches had to be rebuilt at considerable expense between 1827 and 1835 by local contractors acting for the Corporation.

These staunches were a distinctive feature of the navigation. At each site the river was divided into three channels by two islands; on one channel stood the staunch with a vertical lift gate supported by two tall uprights, whilst the other channels contained a series of sluices and a fixed weir. The foundations were of brick and the staunch uprights massive twelve inch square oak timbers braced at the top by an oak cross member giving 16-foot headroom above the top of the brickwork. This height was dictated by the need to raise the gate high enough to allow boats to pass underneath.

Also fixed at the top between the uprights was a winding drum and immediately below a small driving shaft that was geared to the drum and fitted with a large wooden wheel. The door of the staunch, nearly 14-feet across and 5½-feet in depth, was hung from the drum by chains and moved up and down in between the brickwork and the upstream side of the uprights. There were ladders up both sides of the staunch linked by a light footbridge to enable the river to be crossed and the boatmen stood on the ladder to operate the winding wheel to raise or lower the door.

The sluices alongside were of similar construction but not nearly so high as no headroom was needed for boats to pass beneath. They controlled the flow of the river, particularly in flood times, and were raised or lowered by

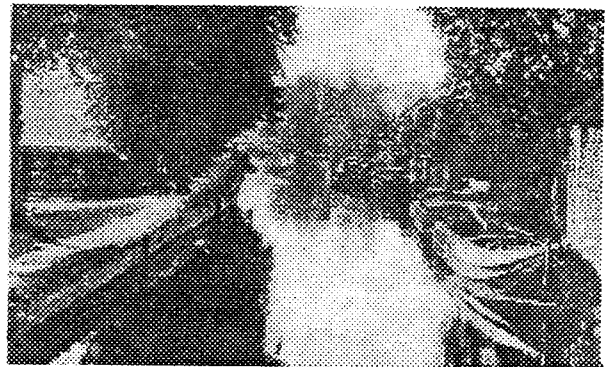
inserting a bar into a convenient hole in the winding drum to provide the necessary leverage. Then alongside the sluices was a weir set at such level as to allow excess water to spill over.



A private party aboard the "WILLIAM MURRELL" at Brandon Stauch probably in the late 1890s. The picture clearly shows the construction of the staunch.

The navigation gave valuable service to the area and to the towns of Brandon and Thetford in particular. Many of the large houses in Brandon's High Street were built of bricks brought up river by barge from Ely. The river also served local industries with a sawmill being established at Brandon which despatched large quantities of sawn timber grown in Thetford forest by river whilst whiting, a chalk obtained locally, was sent up to Thetford and downstream as far as St. Ives and Bedford on the Great Ouse. Barley from many fenland farms arrived at Brandon for malting whilst coal, shipped into King's Lynn, was delivered in large quantities to wharves at Thetford and Brandon.

Probably the most substantial river user at Thetford was James Fison & Sons which was established in 1808 when James Fison expanded his existing milling interests to the town almost certainly because of the navigable river. His sons James and Cornell joined him at Thetford and after their father's death they expanded into producing feeding stuffs and to dealing in timber. In 1853 James Fison & Sons Limited was established and a new super-phosphate fertiliser works was set up at Two Mile Bottom beside the river,



Fisons lighters at Thetford, 1903.

some three-and-a-half miles downstream from Thetford. The site was chosen partly because of the river and partly because it was remote so there would be no objections to the chemical manufacturing process.

Fisons had three gangs of lighters fetching coal, copper pyrites and fossils from King's Lynn to the new works and to the original Thetford works and delivering flour and artificial manure River much of the fens. Fisons experimented with the steam tug SPEEDWELL - an iron boat that could handle half a dozen lighters - on the run between King's Lynn and Thetford. She was somewhat exceptional as most of the lighters were handled by horses.



Fisons wharf at Two Mile Bottom with two lighters at the wharf and another three waiting to moor. (Fisons Studio, Felixstowe)

By the end of the 1890s the company was virtually the only river user up to Thetford but so important did it regard the navigation that it carried out most of the repair work to the staunches to maintain its traffic. For by this time the river was operating at a loss and the Corporation was not prepared to subsidise it. By the end of the First World War the Fisons traffic had finished and the staunches quickly fell into disrepair.

Another Thetford river user was Charles Burrell & Son Limited, the traction engine builders. In 1884, and owing to a drop in orders, the company started building several iron steam-driven barges which were launched diagonally into the water as the river in Thetford is comparatively narrow. One such boat is believed to have been the steam barge NANCY that first traded mainly up the river Lark to Bury St. Edmunds but later operated a regular service between King's Lynn and Cambridge.

One of the last general carriers on the Little Ouse was William John Murrell of Brandon, his grandfather having set up as a coal and coke dealer, a builder's merchant and a barge owner in 1839. The Murrells ran two gangs of

lighters carrying all kind of goods between Thetford, Brandon, King's Lynn, March, Ely, Cambridge, Wisbech and Peterborough. Their fleet was given up in the early 1900s.



Murrell lighters at Brandon Bridge in the early 1900s.

Lakenheath Lode was a branch off the river comprising a straight artificial cut which ran for three-and-a-quarter miles to wharves beside the Lakenheath to Feltwell road. The lode was fed by a stream and had one staunch near Lakenheath and was used mainly for the carriage of building materials, such as bricks, clay, chalk and timber to Lakenheath. It seems to have been maintained by those who used it; latterly by a company that despatched gravel from Lakenheath but the traffic finished in the 1910s. Since the Cut Off Channel was built by the Great Ouse River Board in 1964 much of the lode has been dry, its banks have largely been destroyed with the land incorporated into adjoining fields and the staunch site has been buried under a road.

The last commercial traffics on the Little Ouse were sugar beet and fuel oil. The beet was carried in fen lighters and steel barges towed by tugs to the processing factories at Ely and Wissington, both of which opened in 1925. It was collected from as far upstream as Wilton Bridge, and possibly even up to the remains of Brandon staunch, with the barges being loaded direct from the fields down wooden chutes. The Wissington barges ceased operating in 1943 but the Ely fleet continued to use the Little Ouse until early in 1959.

The fuel oil was delivered by the small tanker SHELLFEN to at least two drainage pumping stations beside the river - Decoy, downstream of the junction with Lakenheath Lode, and Cross Water, or Botany Bay, just upstream of the junction. Cross Water was supplied into the early 1970s making this the last traffic apart from maintenance craft carrying clay for bank repairs.

Today the river is used solely for pleasure craft and with the opening of the new lock (OS 77848667) alongside the sluices at Brandon on 27 July 1995 the river is open to Brandon, with the official head of the navigation being just

upstream of the bridge (OS 78368693) where moorings have been created by the Environment Agency. Sadly the new lock only admits craft up to 45-feet (officially 12.4 metres) in length precluding 72-foot craft which could be increasingly seen on these waters with the progress of "Project Hereward".

An equally serious constraint is the headroom available under Hockwold Sluice, at the junction with the Cut Off Channel, which is only 7½-feet, although it is hoped that this autumn the height under the gate will be raised to just over 9½-feet.

The river is navigable for certain craft upstream from Brandon nearly another three miles almost up to Santon Downham bridge (OS 81738784) where the river becomes very shallow, although there never was a staunch at this site. The site of Santon staunch (OS 82528728) is half-a-mile upstream and all traces of the islands have been removed, no level is held but there are the remains of some brickwork on the south bank. A wooden footbridge serving the St. Helen's picnic site, crosses just downstream of the old staunch site.

It is a similar situation at the site of Croxton staunch (OS 84688701), which is crossed by another footbridge, and Turfpool (OS 85448565) where there are some remains of the old brickwork on both banks. Abbey Heath staunch (OS 85098435) was obliterated in 1961 by the erection of a gauging weir which incorporates a concrete footbridge and this holds up the water to the site of Thetford staunch (OS 86088320) where there are two steel sluice gates and a fish ladder on the south side and which controls the river level through Thetford. Downstream from Brandon lock the remains of Sheepwash staunch (OS 75808700) have been obliterated whilst Crosswater (OS 67708570) was demolished as early as 1917 and no traces now remain.

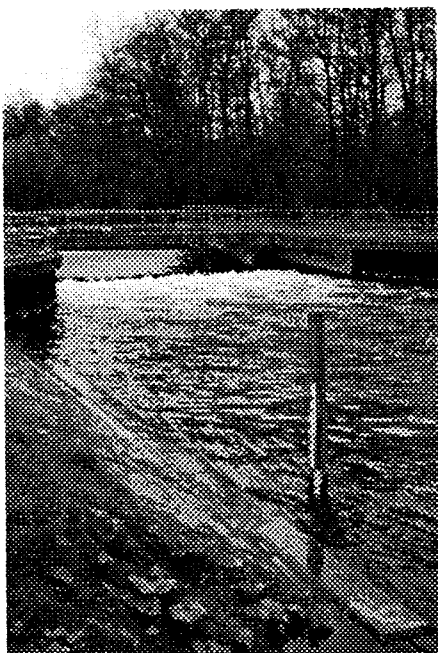
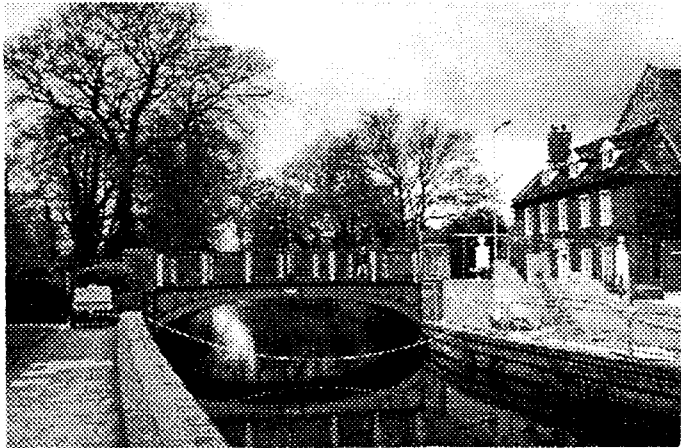
Today much of the "unnavigable" stretch above Brandon can be inspected by walking the Litte Ouse Path. This runs beside the river from a short distance above Brandon bridge to Santon Downham where the path detours away through part of Thetford Forest before rejoining the river at the site of Croxton staunch. The path then follows the north bank past the Two Mile Bottom industrial estate but then moves away from the river to run parallel to it almost up to the Abbey Heath weir. Thereafter the path follows the river into Thetford crossing to the south bank at the Blaydon footbridge on the outskirts of the town.

It is possible to walk beside the river from Santon Downham past the site of Santon staunch to the isolated St. Peter's Church at Santon where the grounds of a house prevent further progress. It is also possible to walk beside the river downstream from the Abbey Heath weir to the site of Turfpool staunch, albeit the path is overgrown and little used. It is also possible to walk further downstream from Turfpool but the through route is severed by a catchwater drain running into the river. This drain runs between the Little Ouse Path and the river for most of the way between Abbey Heath and Two Mile Bottom and presumably was responsible for the diversion of the path inland.

Breckland District Council, in whom the navigation rights are vested as successors to the old Thetford Corporation, has spent a large amount improving the riverside in Thetford and making it an important feature of the town. We believe that the initiative taken with the new lock at Brandon should be followed by building further locks to restore the Little Ouse back

to its former riverhead. The river runs through attractive woods and countryside, much of the land being owned by the Forestry Commission, and apart from the two footbridges there are no lowered bridges to contend with.

Hence this project was one of those we submitted to the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council but in support of the Great Ouse Boating Association to whom we have offered our whole-hearted support.



Top left: *Thetford Town Bridge (showing the riverside improvement works in progress)*. Top right: *Thetford Sluices*. Middle left: *Santon Downham Bridge*. Middle right: *Brandon Bridge*. Bottom left: *Abbey Heath Gauging Weir (site of second staunch)*. Bottom right: *The Little Ouse Path crosses over the remains of the brickwork of Croxton staunch*. (Pictures taken on 6th or 22nd of April 1998)

February 2000

HOCKWOLD SLUICE, LITTLE OUSE: It did not prove possible to raise the height of the sluice in the autumn as had been hoped and thus allow far more boats to reach Brandon. The work had originally been costed at £33,000 but to comply with Health and Safety legislation is now likely to cost over £100,000 which is beyond the Environment Agency's capital budget for the year. The Agency hope to include the scheme some time in the future.

October 2001

6: The Little Ouse from Brandon up to Thetford. Following studies by this Association and the Great Ouse Boating Association, Breckland District Council which owns the navigation rights, is hoping that a full review can be carried out. Meanwhile small craft can already navigate nearly three miles upstream from Brandon and it seems unlikely that new locks will be needed at all five of the former staunch sites.

PROGRESS ON THE LITTLE OUSE

On 27 November we had a meeting in Thetford with Henk van Aswegen who is the Project Development Officer of the Keystone Community Partnership. Keystone, which covers Thetford, Brandon and the surrounding area, is working to create jobs, develop communities, tackle safety issues and improve health, learning and the environment. The restoration of the Little Ouse from Brandon Bridge upstream to Thetford fits in with several of these criteria and is one of several projects that Henk is working on.

He has already carried out a considerable amount of preliminary work and has obtained the backing in principal from the County Councils (the river from Brandon to Two Mile Bottom forms the boundary between Norfolk and Suffolk), from local authorities such as the Breckland and the Forest Heath District Councils, from Forest Enterprises which owns much of the riverside land, from English Nature as most of the area is covered by triple SSI ratings, and from other interested parties.

In view of the important environmental considerations here, the immediate intention is to commission an Environmental Study to assess the impact the restoration would have. For instance any large scale dredging work would be viewed with particular concern. It would include advising on the best location for the new locks that will be necessary to bring boats back to Thetford so as to have the least adverse effect. EAWA has agreed to contribute to the cost of the survey as has the Great Ouse Boating Association.

Members will know that the Little Ouse is navigable from the Great Ouse for some 13¾ miles upstream to Brandon. There is a headroom restriction under the Cut Off Channel sluice at Hockwold, which the Great Ouse Boating Association is campaigning to have lifted, and restrictions on the length and width of craft that can pass through Brandon Lock, built by the National Rivers Authority without consulting boating interests.

Small craft can already navigate a further 2¾ miles upstream from Brandon almost to Santon Downham bridge, where for a short stretch the river becomes very shallow. Upstream from here the river flows freely through three of the former staunch sites, whilst the Abbey Heath gauging weir occupies the site of the fourth staunch and at the fifth in Thetford sluices have been erected. There are just two footpath bridges that may need raising somewhat.

Without prejudging the findings of the survey the current thinking seems to be that a new lock would be required just downstream of Santon Downham to overcome the shallows there but this could possibly make for headroom difficulties at Santon Downham bridge. It is thought two other locks would be needed, one possibly on the site of the former Turfpool staunch which lies some three miles upriver from Santon Downham and is served by a Forest Enterprises road. The final lock would be on the site of the Thetford sluices and would possibly take over the measuring role performed at the Abbey Heath weir that could then be demolished. We hope to report further progress in future issues.

February 2003

LITTLE OUSE RIVER: In January the Environment Agency issued a public notice stating its intention to carry out improvement works to sluice at Hockwold cum Wilton where the river crosses the Cut Off Channel. The plan is to raise the height of one of

the two vertical sluice gate superstructures and its respective access bridge from just under 7-feet (2.1 metres) to almost 10-feet (3.0m) which will allow larger boats to reach Brandon. This improvement is overdue, the Great Ouse Boating Association in particular having campaigned for it for some considerable time.

Meanwhile a steering group has been formed to work for the restoration of the river from Brandon up to Thetford and it is hoped a Feasibility Study can be commissioned shortly. The Forestry Commission, which is the main landowner on the stretch of river involved and would be the one most affected by any changes in water levels, is actively backing the scheme.

June 2003

LITTLE OUSE RIVER: Consultants Babbie Brown & Root, based in Edinburgh but with an office in Cambridge, have been appointed by the Environment Agency to carry out a Pre-Feasibility Study into the possibility of restoring the river from Brandon up to Thetford. We have contributed £1,000 towards this project being joined by the Great Ouse Boating Association, IWA Cambridge Branch, the Royal Yachting Association, Forest Enterprises, local authorities and the Keystone Community Partnership. EAWA is now represented on a steering group that meets in Keystone's offices in Thetford.

Meanwhile restrictions were imposed on the river at Hockwold Sluice from 10 March and will continue until the end of August to allow work to be undertaken to raise the headroom under one of the two sluice channel superstructures. This is a very welcome, if somewhat belated, improvement and will remove a restriction, which currently prevents many boats being able to reach Brandon.

October 2003

LITTLE OUSE: The first draft of consultants Babbie Brown & Root's report into restoring the navigation between Brandon and Thetford was issued for consultation towards the end of August. Whilst more detailed investigations are needed, it is considered four new locks would overcome the change in level of just over 17 feet and provide the optimum water levels to benefit the environment and particularly the Forest Enterprise plantations. They would be just upstream of Santon Downham Bridge, at Two Mile Bottom, at the Abbey Heath Gauging Weir and at Thetford No 1 Sluice and if they were built to the Environment Agency standard size (72 feet long - 14 feet wide) they would cost an estimated £3,990,000, which includes new weirs and sluices at Santon Downham and Two Mile Bottom.

A minimum depth of nearly 4½ feet is suggested and two footbridges would need to be raised to provide the minimum headroom of almost 9 feet, but all the road bridges already provide this headroom. Modest dredging and bank raising would be required, together a new boat turning and mooring basin at Thetford, and sundry minor works bringing the total up to almost £5,000,000. This still leaves the problem of Brandon Lock, which was built to non-standard dimensions and work to enlarge this to the current EA standard is estimated to cost the alarming sum of a further £900,000.

Meanwhile the work of raising the headroom under one of the sluices across the river at Hockwold has been completed enabling larger craft to reach Brandon.

October 2004

LITTLE OUSE: We had hoped to be able to report some progress here, following the preliminary report into the restoration by Babties and towards which we contributed £1,000. The Environment Agency has indicated that whilst it supports the restoration in principle it cannot take the lead at present in view of its commitments to the Nar-Ouse and the Fens Waterway Links. In any case if there is to be any progress here, there has got to be strong support from Brandon and Thetford, and particularly from the local authorities. It could well be that an organisation needs setting up in the area specifically to promote the restoration and we shall continue to work towards securing some progress here. We certainly did not invest our money, simply to see the scheme disappear into a proverbial black hole.

LITTLE OUSE NAVIGATION

After badgering from ourselves and GOBA, the long-awaited Stage 2 Report was finally issued in October 2005 from what has become Jacobs Bابتie. Much is similar to the Stage 1 Report but goes into some aspects in much wider detail whilst introducing important new topics such as economic benefits. At the request of the Environment Agency, an addendum has been added to identify intermediate targets, which could provide a staged approach to the Brandon to Thetford restoration proposals.

This addendum reports the recent adoption of the standard lock size for the Great Ouse catchment at 26m (85ft) long x 4.3m (14ft) wide with a 1.2m (4ft) minimum draft. This involves a reduction in the previous minimum lock draft of 1.7m (5½ft) but as the Stage 2 report was based on a 1.35m (4½ft) draft, the cost savings are deemed only marginal with just a small reduction in the amount of dredging.

The first phase could be to extend the navigation some 2½ miles from Brandon to Santon Downham. It could be achieved without the construction of a lock, but would require dredging of the riverbed and new moorings at Santon Downham. With the reduced dredging requirements this phase could be achieved for as little as £500,000. This assumes Brandon lock, which is only 14m (46ft) long, remains unaltered. Phase Two would involve the construction of a lock at Santon Downham to extend the navigation two miles up to Two Mile Bottom. This would also require some bank raising works and the raising or replacement of Santon Country Park footbridge, the cost for this phase being estimated at £1,400,000.

The third phase would involve a new lock at Two Mile Bottom to extend 1¾ miles to Abbey Heath. Considerable dredging would be required as well as bank raising works, the cost estimated at £1,500,000. The construction of a lock at Abbey Heath in phase four would enable the navigation to reach Thetford albeit only to the outskirts of the town, over 12½ miles from Brandon. Since there is only a fairly short walk along St. Edmunds Way footpath to reach the town centre, there is a case to terminate the navigation here rather than at the town centre. The present Abbey Heath Gauging Weir maintains a good depth up to Thetford Town Sluice and, apart from the new lock, little other work would be needed, the cost being estimated at £1,300,000.

To reach the town centre a fifth phase would just involve a new lock at Thetford No 1 Sluice, this stretch being currently navigable. The estimated cost is £1,900,000.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Section Length (km)	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.0	1.0
Cumulative Length (km)	4.0	7.5	10.5	12.5	13.5
Number of new locks	0	1	1	1	1
Cumulative new locks	0	1	2	3	4
Section Costs	£500k	£1.4m	£1.5m	£1.3m	£1.9m
Cumulative Costs	£500k	£1.9m	£3.4m	£4.7m	£6.6m

These costs do not allow for any additional mooring facilities between Brandon and Thetford, other than a nominal £100,0000 at Santon Downham. The enlargement of Brandon Lock to the new standard dimensions would cost £1,200,000. A welcome development, not linked to the report, has been the establishment of a floating restaurant – *Steel River Blues* – just upstream of the Bridge Street in the town centre.

June 2007

LITTLE OUSE

: On 1 March Alan Faulkner, representing the Association, met up with Bob Wells of the Great Ouse Boating Association and Derek Bradley, the IWA's Eastern Region Chairman, to discuss tactics for the way forward for the floundering campaign to restore the navigation from Brandon up to Thetford. This was a prelude before going on to attend a meeting at Thetford Town Hall with Susan Glossop, the Town Manager, several other representatives from the local authority, and Carol and Mark Stamp from the Little Ouse Group.

The main aim was to try and underline that if Thetford wanted its navigation restored it would have to start actively campaigning, as indeed the late James Forsythe was urging them to do as far back as March 1976 in an article in the Eastern Daily Press. Up to now there had been thoughts that the Environment Agency would lead the campaign but John Adams has made it clear that the Agency has other priorities at present.

The Little Ouse Group are important players here and are actively campaigning to establish a mooring at Santon Downham, up to which point the river is effectively navigable and only requires minor work. The landowner involved, the Forestry Commission, is generally in favour but wants the moorings to be on the north bank where there is established public access. This is more than 2½ miles above Brandon Bridge and would be a major, but inexpensive, step towards full restoration. To show our support for the Little Ouse Group we have agreed to inter-affiliate and we will offer them all the help we can.

October 2007

LITTLE OUSE

: The Little Ouse Group has obtained the blessing of Forest Enterprises (The Forestry Commission) and Santon Downham Parish Council for the construction of a 24-hour green mooring on the north bank at Santon Downham, which is over two miles upstream of the official head of navigation at Brandon Bridge. To safeguard existing properties there is to be no road access and no infrastructure, but a £5m public liability insurance policy is required, which has been obtained via the IWA. It is possible planning permission may have to be sought and to allow boats to moor some dredging may need to be carried out. The LOG would like to have the 24-hour restriction eased to 48 hours, in line with many other moorings on the Great Ouse system.

June 2008

LITTLE OUSE

: The Little Ouse Group has been negotiating to install soft moorings at Santon Downham for over a year now and it has finally obtained the approval of Natural England. It just now needs assent from the Environment Agency, which is not expected to be a problem. The group, who are working closely with Santon Downham Parish Council, will manage the moorings jointly with the Great Ouse Boating Association who will encourage their members to use the new facilities once they are available. This will be an important step towards the ultimate re-opening of the river through to Thetford.

February 2009

LITTLE OUSE

: The great news here is that after somewhat protracted negotiations with the Forestry Commission, the new moorings at Santon Downham became fully operational in October. This reflects great credit on Mark & Carol Stamp and Peter Barrett, leading members of the Little Ouse Group. The new 48-hour soft moorings will be managed by the Great Ouse Boating Association. Currently the river is open from Brandon Creek 22.42 kilometres (13.93 miles) to Brandon Bridge that carries the A 1065 Mildenhall to Swaffham road and there is an official Environment Agency mooring just upstream of the bridge. For some time boats have been able to navigate almost up to Santon Downham Bridge (26.69km-16.58 miles) and the opening of this new mooring, which is just downstream of the bridge, should encourage more to attempt the passage.

June 2009

LITTLE OUSE

: The Association has responded to the Thetford Growth Point Team's proposed development proposals for the town by welcoming the plans for the Thetford Loop, a cycle/pedestrian route around the town, as part of this will be beside the river from the Abbey Heath Weir upstream. We also welcomed the plans to transform the central riverside part of the town into an attractive and accessible leisure area, thus building on the good work that has already been done here. Where we were less happy was that there was no mention of improving the river itself. Sadly there seems to be little interest in the town in pursuing the restoration of the navigation and the 2003 consultants report that indicated the scheme was both practical and relatively straightforward lies gathering dust on the shelf. Meanwhile our Honorary Secretary, Ivan Cane, contributed a fighting letter to the Eastern Daily Press on 12 March calling for boats to be brought back to the town. After its success in establishing the new moorings at Santon Downham last year, the Little Ouse Group is now working to improve the riverside walk between Brandon and Hockwold. Any moves to make parts of this river more accessible can only be welcomed.

October 2009

LITTLE OUSE RIVER

An important event that has attracted remarkably little attention was the effective opening last year of the 2½ mile stretch of this river from Brandon upstream to Santon Downham. For it represents a major step forward in our campaign to restore the former navigation up to the growing town of Thetford.

Last year the Little Ouse Group, mainly through the efforts of its members Peter Barrett and Mark Stamp, dug out a new mooring on the river a short distance downstream of Santon Downham Bridge. The moorings are now being managed by the Great Ouse Boating Association and boats are making regular use of this new facility. For instance over the late May Bank Holiday a contingent of at least six boats from the Upware Boat Club visited Santon Downham.

Prior to the creation of the new moorings there was little incentive to tempt boats to

use the stretch beyond the official head of navigation just upstream of Brandon Bridge. For whilst passage was possible with care, few craft attempted the journey as there was really nowhere convenient to moor. But now there is.

The summer issue of "GOBA News" reminded its members that as the new moorings are in the heart of the Thetford Forest there should be no barbeques, because of the fire risk. Boaters are also warned not to attempt to go further upstream and under the road bridge as there are large stones in the river, apparently put there by canoeists to assist with the flow of water. Rather strangely the same issue implies the new moorings are "a mile or so up river from Brandon Town Bridge". In fact, as the following table for the relevant stretch of the river shows, it is well over 2½ miles from Brandon Bridge to Santon Downham Bridge.

LITTLE OUSE DISTANCE TABLE

Location	O/S Ref	Kms	Miles
Junction with the Great Ouse River at Brandon Creek	608919	00.00	00.00
Railway Bridge – Norwich to Ely line	767871	20.50	12.73
Brandon Lock and weir	778867	21.82	13.56
Brandon Bridge – B.1106 Swaffham Road	784869	22.42	13.93
Santon Downham Bridge – road to West Tofts	817878	26.69	16.58
Possible approximate site for proposed new Santon Downham Lock		26.80	16.65
Santon Downham Country Park footbridge	825873	27.70	17.21
Former site of Santon Downham Staunch No 5	825873	27.71	17.22
Two Mile Bottom footbridge	847870	29.98	18.63
Former site of Croxton Staunch No 4	847870	29.99	18.64
Possible approximate site for proposed new Two Mile Bottom Lock		30.10	18.70
Former site of Turfpool Staunch No 3	854856	31.78	19.75
Abbey Heath weir & footbridge (site of Abbey Heath Staunch No 2)	850843	33.17	20.61
Thetford Bypass Bridge (A.11 Norwich Road)	853834	34.28	21.30
Canterbury Way Bridge, Thetford	860833	34.99	21.74
Thetford Sluice (site of Thetford Staunch No 1)	861832	35.08	21.80
Blaydon Footbridge, Thetford (turnover)	863832	35.35	21.97
Thetford New Bridge (original A.11 road)	867833	35.74	22.21
Thetford Town Bridge (old Norwich road)	868831	35.95	22.34

The proposed head of navigation is at Thetford Town Bridge due to the minimum headroom of just 2 metres under its arch. Craft not exceeding this height could proceed some 200 metres further upstream to the junction with the river Thet. The table shows that the distance from Brandon Bridge up to Thetford Town Bridge is 13.53km (8.41 miles). Of this distance some 4.17km (2.59 miles) is now open albeit needing care at times and another 0.87km (0.54 miles) is navigable from Thetford Sluice into the town. This leaves 8.49km (5.28 miles) needing restoration which could involve the provision of new locks at Thetford, Abbey Heath, Two Mile Bottom and Santon Downham, although it is possible only three might be needed. The several public road bridges that cross the river all provide adequate navigable headroom but a couple of footbridges will need raising and there will be the need for dredging in some places, depending on the eventual location of the new locks. In other words a relatively simple and straightforward restoration compared to many now taking place elsewhere in the country. All these distances have been taken from the official chainage figures for the river that were contained in the report into the restoration that was prepared by consultants Babtie Brown & Root of Cambridge in 2003. EAWA, along with others such as the IWA, GOBA and the Forestry Commission, contributed to the costs of this survey which was organised through the Keystone Community Partnership Development Trust Ltd of Thetford. Whilst the consultants

reported positively, sadly little action has so far resulted but hopefully the events at Santon Downham will inject new drive into the campaign – and our thanks are due to the Little Ouse Group.

October 2010

LITTLE OUSE

: In partnership with the local canoe club and as part of the Brandon Regatta the Little Ouse Group organised a series of Bell-boat races on Sunday 1 August with the eventual winners being from the Ram Hotel. And on 26 September a riverbank walk was organised from Brandon to Hockwold – this involved clearing part of the bridleway to make the route easier and safer. Meanwhile boats continue to visit Santon Downham where there is a Great Ouse Boating Association mooring but cuts to the Environment Agency's budget have so far prevented some new moorings being created at Hockwold, downstream from Brandon.

February 2013

LITTLE OUSE

: 2012 proved to be a difficult year on the river as there was a drought at the beginning of the year leading to low water levels and a hosepipe ban, but then the rain came, leading to floods and heavy weed growth. Both factors had a major effect on weed clearing operations that the Environment Agency started at Thetford with two new machines - one cutting the weed, the other removing it from the water. Less satisfactory news is that used engine oil is being dumped into a drain near Nuns Bridges Road in Thetford which then seeps into the river where it contaminated several swans. This is not a new problem and the Environment Agency and Anglian Water have been working together for over a year to try and find the source of the oil and stop it getting into the river. Fortunately the swans recovered after being caught and cared for by the RSPCA.

London and Midland Insurance Company Limited.
 London Machinery Auctions Limited.
 Longman & Phillips Limited.
 Lyptol Limited.

M. Cleminson Limited.
 Madame Lewis Limited.
 Madame Ophide Limited.
 Madeleine Howard Limited.
 Majestic (Castleford) Limited.
 Mammoth Revue Company Limited.
 Marford Wallpaper Co. Limited.
 Mark Lee & Company Limited.
 Meryl Limited.
 Midland Press Exchange Limited.
 Mitre Woodworks Limited.
 Money Hicks and Mills Limited.
 Morris Jacobs (General Transport) Limited.
 Morris's Gem Picture Enterprises Limited.

N.K. (Bradford) Limited.
 Near East Development Syndicate Limited.
 Newport Amusements Limited.
 Normans (Leeds) Limited.

Osborne (Import) Limited.
 Ovalé Limited.

Page Bros. Limited.
 Permanent Reproductions Limited.
 Phillips (Furnishers) Limited.
 Phos Development Limited.
 Pop's Club Limited.
 Preston Steam Navigation Company (1922) Limited.
 Private and Industrial Banking Company Limited.
 Prospect Boot Company Limited.
 Provincial Dirt Tracks (Sheffield) Limited.

R. W. J. Sutherland & Sons Limited.
 Ridge Hill Barytes Mines Limited.
 Ridge Mills (Marple) Limited.
 Rubber and Mercantile Corporation Limited.

Sabulite (Great Britain) Limited.
 St. Aubins Development Trust Limited.
 Sarton Limited.
 Shardlow Chemical Company Limited.
 Smethwick Central Club Limited.
 Sound Stores Limited.
 Southern Construction Company Limited.
 South Fleetwood Fishing Company Limited.
 Splendide Gramophones Limited.
 Standard Building Company Limited (Registered 11.8.1926).
 Stanwood Limited.
 Steed's Services Limited.
 Steelace Manufacturing Company Limited.
 Storeys Limited.
 Sydney Jousiffe Limited.

T. & E. Williamson & Co. Limited.

Universal Cabinets Limited.

Vale of Mowbray Purveying Company (1928) Limited.
 Victor Bernfeld Limited.

W. S. Bowden Limited.
 Waxed Bags Limited.
 Whatley, Bonniwell & Robyns Limited.
 Woods (Bristol) Limited.

Wright & Sterrey Limited.
 Wysil Limited.

Zenith Motors Limited.

F. Greenwood,
 Registrar of Companies.

Companies Registration Office,
 South West Wing,
 Bush House,
 London, W.C.2.

15th October, 1935.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF HALIFAX.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACT, 1930, SECTIONS 101 & 102.

NOTICE is hereby given, in pursuance of Section 102, Sub-section (1) of the Road Traffic Act, 1930, that the Council of the County Borough of Halifax have made application to the Traffic Commissioners for the Yorkshire Traffic Area for their consent to the running of public service vehicles on the following routes, that is to say:—

1. In the Urban District of Sowerby, commencing in Gratrix Lane at its junction with Bolton Brow, to Park Road, thence along Tuel Lane from Beech Road to Burnley Road, Albert Road, Beechwood Avenue, Whiteley Avenue, Richmond Avenue, St. Peter's Avenue, and round the Beechwood Estate to Fore Lane Avenue at its junction with Sowerby New Road.

2. Commencing in the Parish of Norland in the Rural District of Halifax at the Moorcock Inn, Norland, thence along Butterworth End Lane to its junction with Rochdale Road at Cross Royd, in the Urban District of Barkisland.

And notice is hereby further given that any objection to the giving of such consent may be sent in writing to the Traffic Commissioners, Yorkshire Area, 44, The Headrow, Leeds 1, on or before the 6th day of November, 1935, by any Local Authority, by the Council of the County, or by any persons who are already providing transport facilities on or in the neighbourhood of any part of any routes to which the applications relate. A copy of such objection should, at the same time, be sent by the objector to the Town Clerk, Town Hall, Halifax.

Dated this 12th day of October, 1935.

PERCY SAUNDERS,
 Town Clerk.

Town Hall,
 Halifax.

(096)

RIVER GREAT OUSE CATCHMENT BOARD.

RIVER LITTLE OUSE NAVIGATION.

LAND DRAINAGE ACT, 1930—SECTION 40.

LAND DRAINAGE (GENERAL) REGULATIONS, 1932.

NOTICE is hereby given that the River Great Ouse Catchment Board and the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of Thetford acting by the Council of

the said Borough have with a view to improving the drainage of the Catchment Area and with the approval of the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and of the Minister of Transport entered into an Arrangement under Section 40 of the Land Drainage Act, 1930, dated the 18th day of September, 1935, whereby all and singular such of the rights, powers, and property of the undertakers arising conferred or created by virtue of the Acts of 22 Carolus 2nd and 50 George 3rd as may be necessary to enable the Board to control effectually and manage the said River Little Ouse between the White House near Brandon Ferry and Thetford in the Counties of Norfolk and Suffolk together with the right to take all tolls and other the rights in the before recited Acts have been transferred to the said River Great Ouse Catchment Board by the said Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the said Borough of Thetford and a copy of this Arrangement may be inspected at all reasonable times at these offices for the period of one month from the date hereof.

Dated this eighth day of October, 1935.

E. T. L. BAKER,

Clerk of the River Great Ouse
Catchment Board.

"Elmhurst,"

Brooklands Avenue,
Cambridge.

(007)

URBAN DISTRICT OF GOSFORTH IN THE COUNTY OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT, 1932.

GOSFORTH URBAN DISTRICT PLANNING SCHEME
No. 2.

NOTICE is hereby given that:—(1) On the 9th day of October, 1935, the Minister of Health notified his approval of the resolution of the Urban District Council of Gosforth, dated the 10th day of July, 1935, deciding to prepare the above planning scheme with reference to areas situate wholly within

the Urban District of Gosforth. (2) A Map defining the areas to which the resolution applies has been deposited at the Council Chambers, Gosforth, and will be open for inspection by all persons interested without charge between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Mondays to Fridays, and 10 a.m. and 12 noon Saturdays. (3) Any person who is or claims to be, an owner of any property in the areas and any association representing owners of property within the said Urban District and any local association representing business or industry may by notice in writing, specifying in the case of an owner the property of which he claims to be the owner, require the said Council to register without charge his or their name and address for the service of subsequent notices relating to the schemes.

Under the Town and Country Planning (General Interim Development) Order, 1933,* the development of land in the areas during the preparation of the schemes is permitted to the extent specified in the Order and in addition the Council of the said Council are empowered to permit other development in the areas during this period, with a view in either case to protecting the development from the risk of removal or alteration without compensation under the schemes when approved and in operation. A print of the Order has been deposited together with the aforesaid map.

The said Council intend to proceed as soon as may be with the preparation of a Draft Scheme and any suggestions as to the proposals to be included in the Draft Scheme should be sent in writing to the Clerk to the Council, Council Chambers, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 3.

Dated this 10th day of October, 1935.

FRANK KIRBY,

Clerk to the Council.

Council Chambers,
Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 3.

* On Sale—obtainable (price 2d.) from His Majesty's Stationery Office, Adastral House, Kingsway, W.C.2, or through any bookseller. (212)