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BEYOND NORMAL LIMITS

A trip to the Cambridge Backs, by Ivan Cane

“Reaching those bits that others (particularly guide books) don’t reach” has been one of my intentions with our Wilderness Beaver “NAV”. So for our autumn “boys’ trip”, as my wife calls it, we decided to venture onto the middle Cam, to Laundress Green, Cambridge. The guide books stop at Jesus Lock, but horses used to haul lighters, from a towpath in the middle of the river to Bishop’s and King’s Weirs.



Kevin, Ivan and Darren

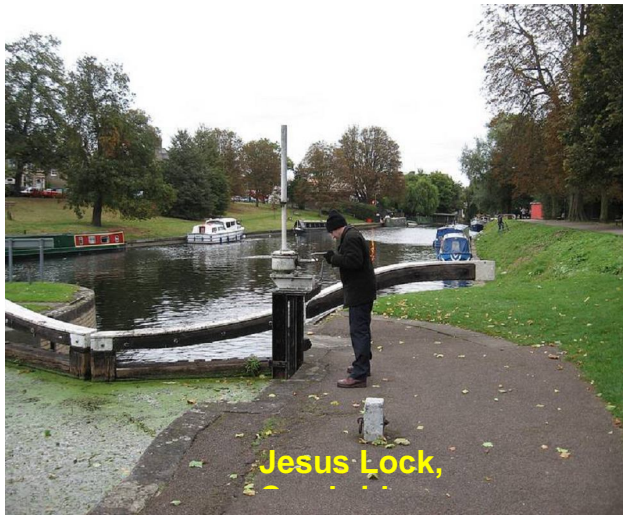
First stage was to quiz John, a fellow Wildernii owner for information and contacts – then to e-mail Dr. Philippa Noon, the river manager to the Conservators of the River Cam, for “authorisation”. John, as always was full of helpful advice, but surprisingly so were the Conservators, giving dates; advice on the headroom of each bridge; moorings and punt station locations. A couple of days before we spoke to an equally helpful river foreman, Colin Sparkes, to confirm our arrangements for the cruise. The only thing we could not arrange was the weather – which forecast strong winds and heavy rain for the weekend.

Darren and I left NAVI’s mooring at Whittington (River Wissey) after work on the Thursday evening (2 October), cruising by starlight to Hilgay, adjourning to the Rose and Crown after dinner. We awoke on Friday to the noise of three fishermen braving the winds and rain. Luckily the wind was behind us as we cruised up the Great Ouse to Littleport, where Kevin, the third “boy” was joining us after his morning shift at work. A break at Ely to visit the ironmongers, and then the cathedral (“wait another five minutes and we’ll be gone, so you can get in free” said the ticket purveyor). The cathedral is impressive at any time – but with the sounds of the choir rehearsing from

down a side passage, and the organist practicing modern music – it was pure magic. We moored overnight at the ‘Five Miles from Anywhere’ – but the noise of the live band dissuaded us from a visit.

Frost overnight, so a full English breakfast was called for. At Bottisham Lock, the pennywort was over a foot thick above the guillotine gate, and an attempt to glide through was thwarted by the thickness of weed, wind and the weir stream. We shared Bates Bite lock with a very competently handled Dutch Barge, and emerging from the top, tried to creep in its shadow through a multitude of skiffs of all types and sizes. We were hailed from the side and asked to pull in, as a timed race was about to start. At this moment the prop hit a rock and stuck fast, resulting in us being blown across river powerless. Luckily the skiffs understood our predicament and moved out of the way. Moored up, the engine was eventually freed. I went to talk to the race marshall, who explained that the skiffs were sent off every few minutes and their times recorded over a 2-km course. It would have helped if they had informed us of the race when we were locking up – as both boats were happy to moor and wait (and have lunch). Then came the call – “race stopped – horse in river”!

This turned out to be a very frightened, black and white travellers’ horse, and friends of the owners were attempting to get it to climb the steep bank. Next some angry young men came rushing along the towpath to find what had happened to the horse. After much discussion between them all they decided to call the fire brigade and walk the horse along the river bed towards the next access point from the road. Meanwhile some rowers were being covered by ‘space blankets’ on the towpath to keep warm, and others still uncertain of why they were still midstream after an hour.



We negotiated with the marshals to proceed through the course, with the promise of pulling over if the race started. For once we were faster than the racers – arriving at Jesus Green by mid afternoon. To start we tied in the only available space by the bridge, whilst we investigated the lock procedures. However, the amount of branches raining down on us from the willow trees above convinced us to move up to the lock mooring.

The main problem at Jesus Lock seemed to be access to the lock island to close the top gate. The swing bridge needs a special key, and the wind discouraged us from motoring into the weir stream to drop someone off onto the workboat. So Darren crossed the curved gate beams instead – but not to be recommended. Despite Dr Noon’s warning that we may have problems “equalising the levels...as leaky doors at the moment”, the lock did fill and we were able to pass through. We were on the Middle Cam at last – and ahead were, despite the appalling weather, a prolificacy of punts. As we approached the Quayside punting station, we had to be wary of punts trying to moor, and a well laden 12-seater pulled out in front of us, propelled by an excellent professional. This tended to persuade other lesser punts to pull to one

side, so we were able to follow her through Magdalene Bridge, with its 7-foot headroom, without too much problem. The narrow stretch above the bridge was as busy as ever, with one soaking wet punter cutting across our bows as we approached the Bridge of Sighs. We continued to carefully weave our way through,



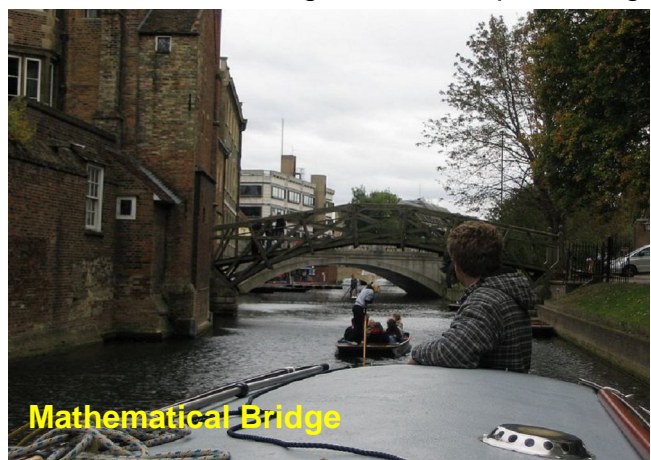
still following the 12-seater until we reached the Kitchen Bridge. This John had warned us was the most difficult, with only 6'9" headroom over a 6'9" span at the middle arch. The wind was making steerage difficult – but we allowed the punts to pull ahead, then when all was clear to aim against the wind and current for the middle arch. At the last moment a downstream punter aiming for the side arch decided to head for the centre – and a quick reverse was needed. Ten minutes later we managed another

clear shot – and got through. The next reach was full of punts, most calling hello and taking photos; one said we were the first motor boat he had seen in his three years of professional punting. Three large punts with a wedding party also safely passed us going downstream. At King's we tried to get the top-hatted porter watching us over the bridge to smile, but unsuccessfully. Coming up to the Mathematical Bridge we



had our only minor collision, and the punt hit us gently. At Silver Bridge the wind caught us again, and numerous punts were arriving back at the punting station as it was the end of the day. We needed to centre on the bridge, miss the protruding moored punts and battle the wind.

Afterwards we turned right and across to the Mill Pond by Bishop's Mill. As we attempted to come alongside Laundress Green – the wind turned us completely around. Darren and Kevin eventually got off with ropes and had to use much strength to pull us to the edge to moor. Forty minutes for half-a-mile – time to relax and explore the city.



A couple of hours later, our son, Sam, joined us after work to give us a guided tour back. Unfortunately, the rain had also joined us, but the punts had been put to bed, so our trip downstream only took 25 minutes. Jesus Lock hove into view, one top gate had blown closed, and it was too wet to attempt the lock gate crossing, so I steered for the open gap. Unfortunately the wind caught us at the wrong moment – and the top of the gate now gives me a repair job for the winter! Mooring below the lock in the pouring rain, we adjourned to the “Eagle” for repast.

The next day we awoke to find that the river was only two inches below the top of the bank, and the heavy rain continued. After a late breakfast we cruised downstream accompanied by wet Eights. Weed was again a problem with Bottisham Lock, and even prevented the bottom gates from being closed fully. A look at Bottisham Lode to whet our appetite for the future, then with the rain ceasing we headed for the Lazy Otter on the Old West. Monday was a glorious morning, and we made Littleport in time for Kevin to leave for his late shift, and Denver for an overnight mooring. Tuesday, safely back to Whittington.



Lazy Otter Moorings

HERE AND THERE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: Arrangements are being made to hold the AGM on Sunday 19 April in the Boston area. It is hoped we may be able to arrange for a boat trip, which has been a feature of our annual meetings for several years now, but this may not prove possible. It is also hoped members will be able to inspect the new lock at Boston, giving access onto the South Forty Foot Drain, also known as the Black Sluice Drainage & Navigation. Full details will be circulated nearer the time.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY: John Adams, who has served as the Anglian Region’s Waterway Development Manager for several years and has been involved with the waterways for 27 years, retired in July. To take his place Andy Wilkinson, previously employed by the British Waterways Board, was appointed early in September. Anglian Region craft registrations for 2007/2008 were 5,689, an increase of 635 (12½%) over the previous year. The increase was partly due to more enforcement action by the Agency, to about 100 newly registered craft on the tidal rivers and to the visitors to the IWA’s National Rally at St. Ives.

RIVER STOUR: Despite valiant efforts less was achieved at Stratford St. Mary lock last year than had originally been hoped in the fairly limited period that the Environment Agency allow work to be carried out. . Apart from the shortage of funds that was mentioned in our last issue, there was also a marked shortage of volunteers and some work parties had to be cancelled due to lack of manpower. And the bad weather did not help – so much so that it contributed to the failure of the top dam on 15 August flooding the site and necessitating its rebuilding before work on the channel could be resumed.

RIVER NENE: A new type of floating landing stage has been installed at Wansford which will rise up and down with the water level and provide a safe haven for boats during high river flows. A giant 80-tonne crane had to be brought in to lift the access ramp – nearly 30-feet long – into position. The new mooring was provided in conjunction with the nearby Nene Valley Railway.

Another development on the river has been to fit covers over the top horizontal shaft and gearing of fifteen guillotine gates to protect them from corrosion and prevent rain from washing off grease from the gears. It is also hoped this will help deter people jumping off the gate into the lock chamber.

Stoppages this winter have included Wollaston Lock No 12 and Perio Lock No 30 at the end of 2008 and Upper Barnwell Lock No 26 and Orton Lock No 37 in January and February 2009.

DENVER: The lock giving access to the Relief Channel at Denver has now been electrified making it both safer and easier for boats to use. At the same time a system has been installed whereby boaters can log on at the lock and receive up to date information about channel conditions. This is necessary as the prime function of the Relief Channel is to carry off flood waters and warnings can now be given to any boats so that they can moor up at the floating moorings and landing stages provided. It was concern about the possible danger to boats during flood conditions that previously led to the channel being closed to navigation during the winter months, whereas now it is open all the year round.

As members well know there has been a heavy silting in the river below Denver, this mainly being due to the fact that no water has been allowed to flow down through what are known as the “Little Eyes” in the sluice as most of the flow from the Ely Ouse is now sent back up the Cut-Off Channel en route to reservoirs in Essex and Suffolk. Last year the Environment Agency decided that the Little Eyes are to be reinstated. Each of the three eyes has a guillotine gate which is protected by tidal doors. These doors have been silted up by the incoming tides and are unable to open when water is let out through the guillotine. The problem was investigated in 2007 and work started last autumn with stop planks being installed on the tidal side of each eye, the doors being sheathed with marine ply and their hinges checked by divers who also installed aerators that are connected to a compressor. These should then agitate the silt so that it does not accumulate against the doors. The “Big Eye” that passed larger craft when the tide made a level, has not been used for many years and is now closed on the tidal side by a large concrete barrier.

GREAT OUSE: Stoppages this winter have included Denver Lock during some of November and December to refurbish the guillotine gates and Eaton Socon Lock No 8 for much of December to refurbish the guillotine with a further closure during February and March to complete the job. Cardington Lock No 2, Brampton Lock No 11 and Brownhill Lock No 16 and Upware Lock on Reach Lode will be closed for various periods from January through to March. On the river Lark Isleham Lock is to undergo repairs in March, whilst this river was closed at the beginning of February to enable Branch Bridge that crosses at the junction with the Great Ouse to be

demolished. Navigation will remain restricted here until the summer whilst the new bridge is being built. .

SLEAFORD NAVIGATION: Early in November new gates were installed at the Lower Kyme Lock, the bottom lock on the navigation, and the £105,000 refurbishment project was on schedule to be completed by the end of the year. Meanwhile in Sleaford itself the new lifting footbridge was eventually craned into place on 29 December across the isolated stretch of the navigation in the town replacing the previous narrow footbridge which gave inadequate headroom for boats. Work to complete the approach ramps and footpaths continued on in January.

THE WATER RAIL WAY: In the autumn the final two-mile section of the foot and cycle path was opened between Washingborough and Anton's Gowt hence completing the project that was started in 2004 to create a traffic free 33-mile route between Lincoln and Boston, mostly alongside the river Witham. The opening is to be formally celebrated on Saturday 25 April with people being invited to join in "Lincolnshire's Longest Party" along the Water Rail Way.

FENS WATERWAYS LINK: The contractors, Jackson Civil Engineering, continued to make good progress on the new lock with the 8½-ton steel sector gates being craned into position on 12 November with the mitre gates following at the beginning of December. Meanwhile building work on the lock house – two Environment Agency houses being linked together alongside the new lock – was completed on 7 November, allowing fitting out to go ahead. A grand opening ceremony for the new facilities is to be held on Friday 20 March. Included are pontoon moorings at the river entrance, moorings on the South Forty Foot just upstream of the new lock and at Swineshead Bridge and Hubberts Bridge.

At present passage between the Grand Sluice on the Witham and the new lock will only be possible at around high tide but future plans include the construction of a tidal barrage on the river which will extend transit times to most stages of the tide. These plans include widening the entrance lock into the Port of Boston to permit access of standard container ships, hence giving new opportunities for waterborne freight.

HYDRO ELECTRICITY: We regularly receive copies of "*One Seven Four*", the journal of the Inland Waterways Protection Society, and the August issue has an article on this subject. Whilst it may not be appropriate for East Anglia, where the terrain is generally much flatter, an interesting venture has taken place at Torr Mill at the confluence of the rivers Goyt and Sett in New Mills, Derbyshire. The site is over shadowed by the 100-foot high Union Road viaduct carrying one of the main streets over the water. Last June an Archimedean screw was craned from the viaduct down to the mill and positioned in the river bed. The screw is 8½ feet in diameter, 33-feet long and works in a 10-foot head of water. With a speed of 29 revolutions per minute it has an output of 63 kilowatts – not a lot perhaps but sufficient to power 70 houses. The output is cabled to the nearby Cooperative Store who will buy the electricity to power the store, selling any surplus to the National Grid.

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.

GREAT OUSE BOATING ASSOCIATION: The Winter 2008 edition of “GOBA NEWS” has an interesting feature showing how the Association’s journal has developed over the years. The first issue of what was originally called “The Windmill” appeared in November 1959 – it was a six-page typed affair and distributed to the then 54 members, who were all listed in the journal. Then in September 1975 the first edition of the professionally produced “GOBA NEWS” appeared. By autumn 1987 it was given a new look with colour printing, glossy paper and black and white pictures and by the summer of 2003 it had become the present very professional 24-page offering in full colour with the final page featuring a map showing all GOBA’s and the Environment Agency’s moorings and all the locks.

Whilst GOBA celebrated its 50th Anniversary on 2 August 2008 no one seems to know exactly when GOBA was actually formed. Your Editor holds a letter dated 30 October 1958 from Stuart McCombie, an accountant of Hitchin who was one of the founders of the Association. The letter is headed up “Great Ouse Association” and says “...I am very pleased to note your interest in the proposed Association which will bear the above or similar title.” (My underlining – Ed)

FRED CARRINGTON: Fred was a leading member of our Association for many years and operated hire boats from his base at Earith. A recent entry on the GOBA Forum gives some details of his hire boat fleet in 1972. There were three centre cockpits 33s – PRINCESS RENIANA, PRINCESS JULIANA and PRINCESS PAULINE; three centre cockpit 29s – PRINCESS BEATRIX, PRINCESS IRENE and PRINCESS MARGARET; a forward drive 27 – KATRIANA and a centre (wooden) cockpit Elysian 27 – MARIANA.

ST OSYTH FERRY: The passenger ferry that plies from Easter to the end of October each year between Brightlingsea and Point Clear and across the river Colne to East Mersea has been described as a staggering success. The Brightlingsea Harbour Commissioners report that it carried 16,000 foot passengers last year and virtually broke even. A return ticket from Point Clear to Brightlingsea costs £1.50 and saves a very lengthy journey by road.

BEDFORD & MILTON KEYNES LINK: Following on from the report in our last issue about the creation of a navigable channel under the new A421 road bridge, Bedford Borough Council took a decision on Wednesday 8 October that could become a key factor in making this waterway a reality. The members approved a ground-breaking scheme that will allow the road contractors, Balfour Beatty, to excavate clay from the Council-owned Berry Wood, near Wootton, and use the material for the road’s embankments. In so doing they will create a channel alongside the road and up to the bridge that will become part of the waterway. By linking the developments the

Council will substantially reduce the carbon footprint by cutting down on the bulk movement of material, will regenerate an area of woodland and create a new country park and lake and open up public access and cycling routes.

RIVER GIPPING: The new River Gipping Trust was successfully launched at an Open Meeting held in Mid Suffolk District Council's chamber at Needham Market on Friday 26 September. Chairman County Councillor Jeremy Clover opened the meeting that was attended by over 80 people. This was followed by an enthusiastic talk by a local riparian owner and a power point presentation covering the history of the river, the restoration work already carried out and the proposals for the future.

Meanwhile the work on Baylham Lock continues with the rebuilding of the wall above the lock being completed by the London Waterway Recovery Group in October. Plans for 2009 include taking down one wall of the lock and rebuilding it and removing the present flat concrete base of the chamber and replacing it with a correctly profiled invert that will give adequate navigable depth.

BROADS NOTES AND NEWS

BROADS AUTHORITY: The Authority has a new Chairman and a new address. Doctor Stephen Johnson has taken over as Chairman from Professor Kerry Turner, who has stepped down after five years in the chair and eleven as a member of the Authority. Dr. Johnson lives in Norwich and was UK Director of Operations of the Heritage Lottery Fund from 1997 to 2007 and Head of the National Heritage Memorial Fund for part of that time.

And as from Monday 8 December the Authority moved from Colegate to Dragonfly House, 2 Gilders Way, Norwich, NR3 1UB whilst retaining the same telephone number – 01603 610834. The building, described as the greenest office in Norwich, is on the banks of the river Wensum and a mooring will eventually be built there so that visitors can arrive by boat. The Authority will share the building with the Environment Agency and Natural England.

BROADS TOLLS: Following representations by boating groups, proposals by the Broads Authority last October for an increase in boat licence fees of up to 9% have been scaled back. This followed fears that with the increase in fuel duties and the general economic turmoil, many boats would be forced off the Broads. Also it was contended the increase breached a five-year agreement made in 2005. Instead the increase is to be restricted to 6% and a concession is to be brought in for a reduction for the smallest sailing craft, such as those used by children. This will mean trimming the navigation budget but it is hoped that the claimed savings from taking dredging under its direct control, will help offset some of this loss of income.

BROADS BILL: On Monday 19 January the Broads Bill took a long awaited step forward when it started being considered by a House of Lord Committee. This followed on from the Norfolk Broads Yacht Club withdrawing its petition against the Bill after reaching agreement over the licensing and registration of boats. The club is in a unique position as it leases the privately owned Wroxham Broad from the Trafford Estate and, as such, the broad does not form part of the Authority's navigation area. As a result the club was concerned about how some of the key

safety provisions in the Bill would impact on its activities on Wroxham Broad and particularly on small sailing dinghies.

Its passage in Parliament has taken much longer than originally envisaged – it was first deposited in November 2006 and had its first reading in the House of Commons in January 2007. It passed the other stages in the Commons by May 2008 and had its second reading in the House of Lords on 8 October 2008. As there is now no opposition from boating organisations the Authority is hoping the Bill will receive the Royal Assent by the end of March enabling one of its key provisions, the licensing of hired craft by the Authority, to commence in April 2010.

WHOLE VALLEY APPROACH TO MANAGING THE BROADS: The Broads Authority is proposing a new way of organising and delivering work to help the Broads. This will focus work at a valley scale, balancing needs within each valley (recreation, conservation, tourism), considering influences throughout the catchment and planning projects for appropriate locations within them. The Ant has been chosen for a pilot study and an initial meeting is planned for 11 February albeit it is not clear just who will be involved at this stage, although widespread consultation is promised after that first meeting.

Taking the view that it is best to be in at the start of such ventures, rather than hoping to shape things later on, EAWA sent a detailed letter of Lucy Harris, the Head of Valley Management welcoming the new concept and particularly the river Ant pilot study and pointing out the pioneering work done by the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust. We suggest that it should be involved from day one as its work would seem to dovetail naturally with the whole valley approach, particularly northwards from Wayford Bridge. For its part the Trust is equally keen to get involved.

CANTLEY SUGAR BEET FACTORY: In October the British Sugar Corporation announced plans for a £35million expansion to its riverside sugar beet factory at Cantley to allow it to process imported cane sugar from the Third World outside the normal sugar beet processing season. The cane would be brought in large ships into the new Outer Harbour at Great Yarmouth and taken by lorry to the factory. The plan would create an extra 25 long-term jobs, involve another 250 during the construction period, and help secure the long-term future of the factory, which employs 400 people directly or indirectly and supports a further 3,000 such as farm workers dependent on the sugar beet industry. On the face of it this seems an exciting plan until one learns that there will be a large increase in lorry traffic to the factory, which is a matter of particular concern in the area. An extraordinary factor here is that the use of water transport has been completely ruled out, if indeed it was ever seriously considered in the first place. So much for the supposed green credentials of the company.

Cantley is the oldest sugar beet factory in the country – it opened in 1912 but shut down soon after, re-opening in 1920 and being run by an Anglo-Dutch concern. It was built beside the river Yare because of the availability of water transport and until about 1964 much of the beet was still being delivered by motor wherry from all around Broadland. Then the crane used to unload the boats broke down and the factory decided not have it repaired, apparently finding it easier to have all the beet

coming in by road. One of our Association's earliest campaigns, initiated by Teddy Edwards, was to try and get the decision reversed and despite support from the IWA, the Great Yarmouth Port & Haven Commissioners and others, it failed.

One reason put forward for not using water transport from the new Outer Harbour to the factory is that it is said a new £5m quay would need to be constructed but there is already a perfectly good quay available which was used until recently to import fuel oil from tankers. Another is that there could be rough weather in navigating round from the Outer Harbour into the Yare, which makes one wonder how Thames barges and other craft used to navigate in perfect safety for all those years up and down the East Coast. Our Secretary, Ivan Cane, contributed a fighting letter on the subject to the Eastern Daily Press on 9 December.

FLOATING PENNYWORT: This insidious weed, which has bedevilled the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation and others for several years, is taking a hold in Rockland Broad on the Yare and near Diss on the river Waveney. If left unchecked that plant, which emanates from North America, can grow at a prodigious rate and can completely clog up a river. To try and tackle the problem in the middle of November a £17,000 fight-back was launched with excavators ripping out chunks of the weed from both sites, followed by volunteers then removing any remaining plants and any tiny fragments, as these can still root and re-grow. The scheme is being funded by Defra, the Environment Agency and the Broads Authority and follows on from similar work on the Beccles Marshes in 2005.

MUSEUM OF THE BROADS: Following a successful appeal, the museum now has a permanent home as it has been able to pay the £25,000 deposit to acquire its present site with the aid of a mortgage. And despite the indifferent weather during the summer last year, there were even more visitors to the museum. This is a great tribute to the efforts of many volunteers who work so hard for this worthwhile project.

RAILWAY SWING BRIDGES: On 15 January during BBC's "Look East" Regional News programme the Reedham Swing Bridge was featured. This was built in 1905 and carries a double railway line from Norwich to Great Yarmouth. From the programme it appeared all seemed to be in good order but the Broads Authority is still far from happy with Network Rail's management of this and the other two swing bridges in the area and is planning to take action to improve matters.

SOUTHERN BELLE: A feature on the Broads has been the painstaking restoration of historic 100-seat capacity trip boat SOUTHERN BELLE by Steve "Tug" Wilson of Oulton Broad at a cost of over £150,000. She re-entered service in July 2006 and normally offers cruises from her base on the Yare outside Haven Bridge House around Breydon Water. Starting in July a new 3½-hour trip is planned to Oulton Broad via Reedham, the New Cut and Somerleyton with the passengers returning in a vintage 73-seater double-decker bus that Mr Wilson is restoring for the service. Another innovation is that some of the Breydon Water trips will include a conducted tour round the Berney Windmill in conjunction with English Heritage. This will be the first time the mill has been open for seven or eight years.

THE NORTH WALSHAM AND DILHAM CANAL

By Carole Bullinger

One very rainy day in July 2007, I was invited by a friend to see what he did as a work party volunteer for The East Anglian Waterways Association. My lasting image will always be listening to him at the end of his day in the torrential rain but also the feeling of enthusiasm as I saw first-hand the overwhelming amount of work which had been achieved. The venue was Honing Staithe Cut.

Having canoed the canal on virtually every previous holiday visit to Norfolk, I knew the meandering route very well but it wasn't until the house move to Dilham occurred and a meeting of minds coincided on that day, that I realised this was a monumental project which needed incredible donations of time. I was hooked!

My friend has a lot to answer for; not only am I now addicted to canal work parties but I am secretary of The North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust - a very privileged position in a totally voluntary organisation I am honoured to represent. The trust was formed in order that funds could be raised in order to continue to make a difference to this unique canal.

Everyone who attends the work parties under the guidance and leadership of our organiser David Revill, has a sincere belief in the preservation and continuing maintenance of this historical feature and a passion to try to halt the deterioration of such a wonderful asset that we are all so fortunate to have in this part of Norfolk. Sometimes, there are as few as five or six volunteers, sometimes quite a few more, but whoever comes along to give their time and effort - they will always be welcomed.

So many circumstances in all our lives these days contribute to us tending to choose not to volunteer for various activities; it could be our own ill-health, having to care for family members or literally having no more time to give. But if you are interested in the slightest way, please do join The North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust as a member. There are always more ways than the physical in which you may be able to assist.

A woodland walk at Honing Staithe Cut has been opened as a circular path from and back to The Weavers Way. It is the first major project of the trust and for which it secured a match-funded grant from The Broads and Rivers Leader + Programme and the European Union. Please help us to achieve more projects and help us to open our canal for the community.

If you would like to join The North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust, please contact me - Carole on 01692 535111 or 07885 501914.

For future information on work parties, please contact David on 01603 738648.

Thank you.

NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL



This historic bridge plate was discovered by our member Tom Carr during his travels round the county. Although it is not visible from the public highway he saw it in a garden wall in a village outside Norwich. Apparently it was pulled out of a ditch or bank, close to Briggate Mill, and is thought to have been attached to a building which had been demolished. What was discovered as scrap was subsequently restored. The owner has no plans to sell the plate but it seems to be in safe hands.

The responsibility for maintaining the bridge at Briggate, together with those at Swafeld, Royston, Bacton Wood, Ebridge and Honing passed from the North Walsham Canal Company to Norfolk County Council in 1950.

WORK PARTIES: Since our last issue five sessions have been held; at Briggate on 12 October last year and 25 January this year, at Ebridge Lock on 26 October, at Bacton Wood Lock on 30 November and at Honing Staithe Cut on 28 December.

At Briggate work has continued on the clearance around the mill pond, and it is now possible to see the full extent of most of the site. It includes a privately-owned island in the middle which formerly featured a boat house. The work has attracted much favourable comment from local residents and accounts of people who worked at the mill and who had fished and canoed on the pond when it was in water. Meanwhile the newly acquired mowing machine cut back the growth on the lock island and on the area towards the pond with resounding results.

For the latest session (25 January) ten volunteers (Jackie Ames, Chris Black, Carol Bullinger, Ivan Cane, Darren Cooke, Alan Faulkner, Roger Hopkinson, Mark Lines, David Revill and David Tomlinson (all the way from Stafford a round trip of 404 miles) braved the wet weather to measure and mark out the extremities of the site with white painted posts as a prelude to the next session which should see Tom Moore's mini-dredger at work. Further areas were cleared of trees but the rain prevented bonfires being lit to get rid of all the brash. Meanwhile the copings on the west side of the lock were cleared again but it was not possible to deal with the east side as the undermining of the lock wall has increased dramatically making it too dangerous to work there as it could collapse at any time.

During the Ebridge session (26 October) the mowing machine again showed its colours around the lock and then went on to open up a path along the top of the bank on the north-eastern side. Brambles were removed from the lock's coping stones and fallen trees were hauled out of the canal. As the paddle at the top gate seems now to be kept permanently open, the lowered water level here has encouraged prolific reed growth and the canal is barely to be seen in places.

The Bacton Wood session (30 November) concentrated on improving access to the footpath on the western side of the lock by levelling the overgrown and very uneven land from the road bridge to the girder bridge. During the day parts of the canal near Royston Bridge and where the breach occurred many years ago, were inspected in connection with plans to complete a canal side footpath.

One of the main tasks during the Honing Staithe Cut session (28 December) was to improve the permissive path through the wood, as it was very wet in places but parts have now been raised.

Future Sunday work party dates are: 8 February Briggate Lock & Mill Pond; 22 February & 8 March Ebridge Lock; 29 March Honing Lock; 5 April Bacton Wood Lock; 26 April Honing Lock; 10 May Honing Staithe Cut; 31 May & 14 June Briggate Lock & Mill Pond; 28 June Ebridge Lock.

BOOK REVIEW

THE RIVER CAM, by Andrew Hunter Blair, published by Sutton Publishing Limited, Phoenix Mill, Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 2BU in 2007 @ £12.99. ISBN 978-0-7509-4455-7; 142 pages, 62 black & white illustrations and a map.

The author is well versed in the fenland waterways having worked for the Great Ouse River Board, Anglian Water and the National Rivers Authority and having published several works featuring the Ouse and the Middle Level. In this account he traces the several sources of the Cam and follows the combined stream down to Pope's Corner where it joins the Old West River. He makes no attempt to settle the arguments as to whether it should be called the Cam, the Rhee or the Granta – call it as you please – the Ordnance Survey also playing for safe by giving a choice of names

He starts following the course of the southern branch of the Cam (or the Granta) from its Essex source near Henham down through Newport, Audley End, Great Chesterford and Duxford to Great Shelford where it joins the Granta, describing the places and features that are encountered on the way. Next comes the eastern branch – the Granta which has two sources – the first is near Castle Camps in Cambridgeshire, the other is near Ashdon in Essex and is called the river Bourn. They meet at Bartlow and then flow down past Linton, the Abingtons and Babraham to meet the Cam (or Granta) at Great Shelford.

From the west comes the river Rhee (or Cam) which rises near Ashwell in Hertfordshire and passes near Wimpole Hall, Barrington and Haslingfield to meet the Granta just before the united stream pass under the M11 motorway to reach the famous Byron's Pool south of Grantchester where the Bourn Brook also flows in. United now as a single river the Cam reaches Cambridge where the author outlines the history of those colleges alongside the Backs and of the various bridges over the river. And finally we follow the navigation down through the three Cam locks with a brief look at Bottisham, Swaffham Bulbeck, Reach, Burwell and Wicken lodes before meeting up with the Ouse. .

Richard Smith's Log of a sail around the Great Ouse and Tributaries in July 1976

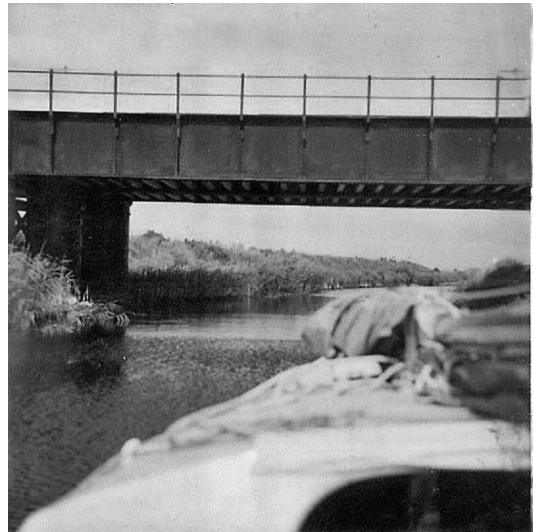
Monday 12th July 1976.

Trailed to Ely

- 1.00 Motored South from Ely to Newmarket Railway Bridge. Then made sail and beat to Popes Corner.
 2.30 Popes Corner and first bridge on the Old West. Wind abeam on most reaches, though fluky in trees and high banks.



- 3.00 Stretham Engine
 4.00 Stretham Oak (New bridge building)
 4.30 Twenty Pence Bridge
 7.00 Moored within mile of Earith
 Fine & Hot. Wind 4 S.E.



Tuesday 13th July 1976

- 8.45 Sailed from mooring to Earith Lock.
 9.15-9.30 Locking through and under bridge
 9.30 Set sail for a run to Denver, just over 20 miles distant (*New Bedford*). Flood tide strong through Mepal Bridge
 12.45 Rail Bridge
 1.45 Welney Suspension Bridge
 2.10 New bridge to Wildfowl Trust. Sailed under jib to near Denver whilst enjoying sandwiches and tea. Tide ebbing strongly so set main (reefed) and rounded clear of shoal below Denver Sluice and beat into landing stage to lower gear.
 2.30-3.30 Locking through and mooring by sluice
 3.30 Beat up river to entrance of R. Wissey and ran up under jib, resetting main after railway bridge and ran up to mooring within sight of Hilgay (4.30) Cloudy Wind S.W 4



Wednesday 14th July 1976

- 8.30 Left overnight mooring under sail up R. Wissey
 9.00 -9.45 Moored at Hilgay for stores.
 Sailed on up to Wissington. Started engine and lowered mast past Wissington Factory. Raising mast again had a clear run to Cut Off Syphons near Stoke Ferry. Weed very thick near siphons. Forced through under jib and oars.
 1.00 Passed Stoke Ferry. Lowered main and ran on up river under jib to beyond Oxborough Ferry, before running out of water. Mr Wilson of Ferry Farm greeted us before we made

our return. (1.45-2.30). Bow hauled and oars to Stoke Ferry siphons (4.30), then with mast lowered used engine back through Hilgay (6.00) to mooring (6.30). Wind moderate S.W. Sunny periods, warm

Thursday 15th July 1976

9.15 Motored from mooring out into Great Ouse and under Ouse Bridge to Ten Mile Bank
 9.45-10.45 Moored at Ten Mile Bank for stores
 10.45 Sailed up river. Wind freshening. Turning due S.W. at Southery unable to make progress with wind gusting severely and gear slamming
 12.30 Stowed sails and motored past Brandon Creek 'til engine ran out of fuel.
 1.15-2.00 Dinner and refuel. Lowered mast.
 2.45 Under power at Littleport, moored above Sandhill Bridge and went into town.
 4.00-4.03 Motored to G.O.R.A. moorings near entrance to River Lark. Wind fresh. S.W. Bright dry.



Friday 16th July 1976

10.15-11.15 Motored to Ely and moored at Banhams for weekend.

Monday 19th July 1976

10.45 Motored down river from Ely. Raised mast and set jib below Adelaide Bridge.
 11.30 Entrance to River Lark. Shot bridge at entrance and sailed up to Prickwillow Railway Bridge.
 12.15 Lowered mast and motored to Isleham Lock
 1.30-3.45 Moored below Isleham Lock
 3.45 Sailed with assistance from engine on bends. Winds heading and gusting. Then sailed with jib and later main, back to Prickwillow. Lowered gear 5.15
 5.30-6.10 Moored at Prickwillow
 6.30 Moored 1 mile from entrance to river. Cloudy, mild, dry. Wind S.W. strong.



Voyage Summary

Total 131 miles, 75 miles sail, 56 miles power etc. 70 bridges and obstructions, 21 bridges shot under sail. 2 locks. 4 gallon

Richard is a long standing (37 years) member of EAWA with a wide ranging interest in the waterways of Eastern England. Likewise the Mr (John) Wilson of Ferry Farm on the Wissey has been an EAWA member since 1976. We are delighted to publish this account, and are grateful to Richard and to Ivan Cane for making this possible. We would be equally delighted to print other historic accounts of voyages in our area - Ed.

BRIGGATE LOCK



The very first working party that EAWA organised was at Briggate Lock on Sunday 17 December 2000. Both sides of the lock completely covered by dense growth and several large trees with one even growing in the lock chamber itself. Six workers under Graham Brown's leadership made a dramatic clearance that revealed the structure in all its glory. Shortly after the outbreak of Foot & Mouth Disease led to sessions

being suspended after that held on 4 February 2001.

It was not until 5 April 2002 that our Chairman Roger Sexton and Council Member Les Heaton brought a professional woodman over from March and he cut down all the large trees. Shortly after Kevin Baker, who had taken over organising the work parties, managed to remove the tree that was growing in the lock by using his van as a tractor. Since those days regular sessions have kept the site tidy and further clearances have been made upstream of the lock.

More recently under David Revill's management the work has moved over to the mill pond that lies to the west of the lock.



We are grateful to Ivan Cane for these pictures. That at the top was taken on 30 January 2005 shows the scene during one of the regular tidy up sessions, as nature keeps fighting back.



The other two were both taken on 25 January 2009 and show the view from the lock over towards the mill pond and the mill pond itself that has effectively been hidden under trees and other heavy growth for many years.