

**THE EASTERLING**  
**JOURNAL OF THE EAST ANGLIAN**  
**WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION**  
**VOLUME EIGHT, NUMBER EIGHTEEN**

**OCTOBER 2010**

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

E-mail [alan.faulkner22@btinternet.com](mailto:alan.faulkner22@btinternet.com)

**GREAT PROGRESS AT SLEAFORD**

Saturday 3 July was a red-letter day at Sleaford for it marked the formal opening both of the new launching slipway and of the new lifting bridge across the river.



This picture, kindly supplied by David Carnell, shows the first boat to use the new slipway so as to explore the currently isolated stretch of the river Lea that runs down to the derelict Cogglesford Lock on the northern outskirts of the town. And just round the corner the new lifting bridge, that was completed several months ago replacing the former fixed footbridge, was put to good use.



Work on the slipway started in February and concentrated firstly on providing access to the site without damaging the roots of the various trees growing there with temporary matting being used to prevent soil compaction. The river bank by the slipway was then piled using re-cycled plastic piles strengthened with galvanised steel tubes and a temporary coffer dam using sheet steel piles was constructed across the slipway entrance.

Once the piling was complete the river could be dredged and widened producing over 100 tonnes of material. The slipway itself could then be excavated and concreted using reinforcing steel work and especially cast coping stones were then used to finish off the piling. A new path and reinforced grass access track have been created and where the path passes close to tree roots a cellular protection system has been laid under paviour blocks whilst a special modular block system has been used for the grass track way. Where necessary some grass areas have been re-seeded or had new turf laid.

Although the New Street Bridge with its hydraulic lifting system had been installed by the end of December 2009 the re-engineering of the machinery took several months and was largely completed by the end of March. The opening of the nearby slipway was probably this first time the bridge had really been put through its paces and it performed admirably as our picture shows.



Our final picture from Sleaford shows Chris Hayes, Chair of the Sleaford Navigation Trust, and County Councillor Eddie Poll cutting the tape to open the new slipway.

At its meeting on 22 July EAWA's Council voted to offer the Slea Navigation Trust two payments of £500 each – one to help fund a list of improvements to the river in Sleaford; the other to help fund a list of improvements to be carried out to the currently derelict Cogglesford Lock. Our offer has been communicated to Chris Hayes and we hope it will assist the SLT in getting both projects underway.

## HERE AND THERE

**NEW MEMBERS:** We extend a very warm welcome to several new members who have joined us in the last twelve months.

Alan Bertram – Kessingland, Lowestoft  
 John Clark – March, Cambridgeshire  
 Matt Cox – Sea Palling, Norfolk  
 Peter Ellis – Billericay, Essex  
 Caroline Falvey – Leeming, North Yorkshire  
 Tim Guyver – Gimmingham, Norfolk  
 Andrew Harries – Dunstable, Bedfordshire  
 Trevor Hipperson – Sprowston, Norwich  
 Brian Holt – Rushmere, Lowestoft  
 Michael Lyons – March, Cambridgeshire  
 (The) Museum of the Broads, Stalham, Norfolk  
 (The) North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust  
 Roger Warner – Whittington, King's Lynn  
 Beverley Wigg – East Ruston, Norfolk

**STOUR LIGHTER:** At the end of June the John Constable lighter was gently craned from its silted berth near Great Cornard Lock and taken to the Pioneer Sailing Trust that is based at Harker's Yard in Brightlingsea. After the boat has dried out its measurements will be taken to obtain as much information as possible from the timbers that remain and then restoration work will start. This is expected to take two years and cost £100,000 and has been commissioned by the River Stour Trust and the Managing a Masterpiece team. Moving the lighter was no easy task and involved a temporary road having to be laid with two large mobile cranes to lift the

vessel and a low loader to take it away thus completing the first part of the Millennium Lottery funded project.

**STOUR SHIPPING:** Mistley Quay still sees regular shipping movements and this was highlighted when early on the morning of Wednesday 25 August the foreign cargo ship “*SWAN DIANA*” ran aground in the channel off the quay. It appeared the 2,113 gross tonne vessel had been overloaded and tugs were sent from Harwich to try and refloat her. In the event a JCB digger, part of the ship's cargo, had to be lifted off the deck to lighten the vessel before she could be refloated.

**A NEW COLNE BRIDGE:** On Friday 27 August a new bridge for cyclists and pedestrians was craned into position to link Hawkins Wharf, a housing development on the east bank of the river Colne, to Hythe Quay and its all facilities on the west bank. The bridge was designed and manufactured over 20 weeks and brought to Colchester in pieces and assembled on site. It is some 32 metres in length, 3½ metres wide and was built in a Bow String Vierendeel Truss design. The lift took just 30 minutes, the project costing £250,000. The new bridge is sited a short distance upstream of Haven Bridge that was erected in 1996 and carries the busy Colne Causeway road.

**BEDFORD & MILTON KEYNES WATERWAY:** The new consortium reported on in our last issue has formally agreed to oversee the creation of this 16-mile waterway. Positive news is that the whole route is protected in local and regional plans and planning permission has been secured together with the stretch of the river from Kempston Mill through Bedford to Cardington Lock. Steering Groups have been set up to cover the Milton Keynes end and the Marston Vale to Bedford stretch. However eternal vigilance remains of paramount importance here as other development plans could affect the route adversely.

**CASTLE MILL LOCK:**

Problems have arisen here in that boats have been stuck in the chamber, the deepest on the river, as it has failed to fill with water. A diving team was called in to undertake repairs to try and cure the underwater problems but its efforts were only partially successful. Instead repair work that was planned for the coming winter has



been brought forward whereby the lock was closed on 14 June and was then drained down with comprehensive repairs carried out hopefully to cure the leaks for good.

**BEDFORD AREA WORKS:** Earlier this year Bedford Lock was drained down and inspected, involving a three week closure. An alarming four tons of debris was removed from the chamber which included silt and branches from nearby trees as

well as a considerable amount of litter. Part of the work included fitting new mechanisms to operate the paddles on the bottom gates. Meanwhile at Cardington part of the downstream landing stage was damaged by a boat fire at the end of August, necessitating restrictions for repair work and during September and October extensive repairs works were being carried out to the historic Great Barford Bridge.

**WEED HARVESTER:** This summer the Environment Agency brought in a floating combine harvester to clear weed from the Great Ouse, mainly between Brampton and Ely. The machine cuts the weed more deeply than the standard machine and it needs only two men to operate it, compared with five previously. Depending on how thick the weed is, it can clear up to a mile of river per day. Weed cutting is a never-ending job and takes place from June through to October and the weather this year with high temperatures and prolonged sunshine had led to a heavy growth.

**CAMBRIDGE:** Whilst Jesus Green Lock marks the normal head of navigation, during the winter months (1 October to 31 March) each year boaters can apply to the River Cam Conservancy for permission to navigate through the famous Backs up to the Mill Pond that is upstream of Silver Street Bridge. However there are no moorings and boaters are not allowed to land on College property.

**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.

**FENLANDS EEL CATCHER:** Peter Clark, who is aged 45 and lives at Outwell, carries on a 500-year old family tradition of catching eels in willow baskets but he may be the last to do so. At nights he goes out in a punt to lay his willow traps in secret locations and returns in the morning to check his catch. He has no male heir to take the profession on – his only child, a daughter, has expressed no interest albeit she is still only thirteen. It would be sad to see what could be the end of a tradition approaching. Peter was pictured in his punt in the 17 July issue of "*The Daily Telegraph*".

**THE WALBERSWICK FERRY:** Another report in *The Daily Telegraph* (27 September) dealt with the five generations of the same family who have been operating the Southwold to Walberswick ferry across the river Blyth since 1885. Currently the service is provided by 37-year old Miss Dani Church who took over when her father died of cancer and she can row up to eleven passengers in a 15-foot wooden boat. She charges 80p per adult for the four-minute journey across the river which varies from 75-feet to 120-feet wide depending on the tide. The ferry operates whenever anyone wants to go over, this is usually between 7am and 6pm and in summer can mean up to 100 crossings a day.

**NORTHAMPTON MARINA:** Work on the new marina started at the end of February with the removal of dangerous and rotten trees from around the lake which forms the base of the new venture. This has opened up views of the river from Victoria

Promenade. The lake was then drained with the fish being relocated to the main river and silt and material from the two islands were dredged and transported a mile downstream by barge and used to strengthen river defences. The lake was then refilled and work started on creating the eighty long stay moorings which will be built on floating pontoons with each position having its own water, electricity and wifi from pedestals located on the walkways. Meanwhile the facilities building will use renewable energy sources and provide toilets, washrooms, laundry, Elsan disposal, waste disposal and recycling facilities. The work should be complete in March 2011.

**WISBECH CANAL:** In 1961 the line of this disused canal started being used for landfill but tipping stopped in the 1970s. It has now been discovered that the canal may have been contaminated and a full investigation is to be carried out. Meantime families along the line have been asked to wear gloves whilst gardening and to prevent children playing in the soil.

**CAMPAIGN CRUISES:** On Easter Saturday (3 April) the IWA's Peterborough Branch organised for a flotilla of 8 boats to assemble at Ramsay Forty Foot before setting off towards the Sixteen Foot, being joined en route by a ninth boat. They made a fine showing, finishing up at Three Holes and gaining valuable publicity for the Middle Level and particularly drawing attention to the long-running closure of Welches Dam Lock and the effective closure of the Old Bedford River.

The branch had hoped to stage a cruise on 18 & 19 September along the Old Bedford River to highlight the lack of progress at Welches Dam. To enable this to take place work costing some £20,000 was going to be required, such is the poor state of the channel, particularly at the southern end, and the Environment Agency had set aside funds to cover this. Meanwhile the Agency has experienced a significant reduction in its funding and in its capital budget. Whilst not back tracking in any way in its campaign to re-open this through route, the branch has decided the cost to be incurred for the cruise cannot be really justified for such a short term gain and the plans have sensibly been dropped. This by no means weakens the case for the full restoration of the Old Bedford, of Welches Dam and of the Forty Foot River from Horseway Lock up to Welches Dam.

**BOSTON:** During the summer British Waterways installed new moorings above the Grand Sluice in Boston with a combination of linear and finger moorings accessed by a ramp. This is an important development but it is hoped that when the Boston Barrier is eventually built it will be possible to provide further moorings downstream of the lock and hence nearer to the town centre.

**FENS WATERWAYS LINK:** It is disappointing to have to report that the Environment Agency has fallen well behind schedule in planning for the next phase of the link southwards from Donington, and as a result part of the grant funding made by the East Midlands Development Agency has been lost. Some progress in developing the strategy has been made with £85,000 of the grant being utilised.

## BOTTISHAM LODE



In our last issue we included four pictures purporting to show the Tuesday Night Club's visit to Swaffham Bulbeck Lode on Friday 11 June 2004. In fact one of those pictures was not of Swaffham Bulbeck Lode at all, as the club had been unable to gain access through the guillotine gate at the entrance.

The club had also visited Bottisham Lode on the same day and here they were more successful for these pictures illustrate the journey up the lode for over half a mile nearly to the site of the former staunch. This staunch no longer holds up a head of water so the lode southwards and on up to the National Trust's Lode Mill is narrow and shallow and only passable by canoe. Sadly very few boats venture onto the lode possibly being deterred by the entrance doors which guard the entrance to the lode from the river Cam and which can close automatically if the level of water in the river rises unexpectedly, thus trapping a boat on the lode.

## THE LODES WAY

On 4 February 2009 the scheme to connect Cambridge to Wicken Fen with a traffic-free path for cyclists and walkers moved a major step closer as Sustrans, the transport charity, and the National Trust signed an agreement to guide the development that is estimated to cost over £2million.

Prior to that a new footbridge had been officially opened by Councillor Loder Bevington, a former Chairman of Swaffham Bulbeck Parish Council, on 8 July 2008 crossing Swaffham Bulbeck Lode about half way along its three-mile long course. Together with a half mile stretch of new bridleway this new bridge cost some £300,000. It is made from sustainable timber with gentle access ramps and 6-foot high parapets to enable safe usage by horse riders and was designed by Mott MacDonald of Cambridge and constructed by Jackson Civil Engineering of Ipswich. As it crosses the lode at bank top level it gives 6-feet of headroom over the water level which is permanently maintained at a low level. This headroom is similar to that provided by two other footbridges and the former railway bridge over the lode.



From Cambridge the Lodes Way is intended to follow the western bank of the Cam northwards, crossing over the river at Bottisham Lock and running in a south-easterly direction beside Bottisham Lode to cross over the lode into Bottisham Fen at an existing accommodation bridge before heading north-east over White Fen to the new bridge over Swaffham Bulbeck Lode. Most of this part still needs to be properly laid out and improved and there are plans for an access to the route from Waterbeach railway station and for improvements to the crossing the Cam at Bottisham Lock.

From the new bridge it continues if a north-easterly direction towards Reach Lode where, early in March 2010, construction of a new bridge began with the new wooden structure being craned into position on 27 May. It has a span of just over 60-feet giving minimum navigational headroom of over 9½-feet. The contract for the design and construction of the bridge was awarded to civil engineering contractors BAM Nuttall and it was officially opened on Sunday 12 September.



Meanwhile plans are being drawn up for a similar bridge to be erected over the somewhat wider Burwell Lode and it is hoped this will open in 2012. At Wicken there already is a low level bridge over the entrance to Monks Lode and this is already well used as part of the National Cycle Route.

The new route is all part of the Wicken Fen Vision which was launched in 1999 to mark the centenary of the reserve and to expand its area.

*Neither bridge was easy to photograph due to the dense growth on the banks of both lodes - Ed.*



## BROADS NOTES AND NEWS

**BROADS FORUM:** When the Forum was set up a few years ago our member Barry Green was chosen to represent us, the Inland Waterways Association, the Yare Users Association and the Oulton Broad Users Association. Following Barry's death we had not been able to find anyone who might be willing to take over until Brian Holt, who lives near Lowestoft and is a long standing member of the IWA's Ipswich branch, joined us at our Annual General Meeting. When sending a formal letter to Brian on 20 April welcoming him we broached the subject of him becoming our representative on the Forum and sent brief details. Subsequently Roger Squires, Chairman of the IWA's Navigation Committee got involved and we are pleased to report that Brian has now been appointed to represent us, the IWA, the Yare Users Association and what has become the Oulton Broads Users Community Enterprise. We wish him well in this new role.

The Forum, which involves 25 representatives, is intended to offer advice and comment on the aims and objectives of the Broads Authority covering conservation, navigation, recreation and planning policies. It meets four times a year at the Authority's headquarters at Dragonfly House, 2 Gilders Way, Norwich and these meetings being open to the general public. Details of the dates of the meetings, the agendas and the minutes can be found on the Authorities web site: [www.broads-authority.gov.uk/authority/meetings/broads-forum.html](http://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/authority/meetings/broads-forum.html)

**BROADS SAVINGS:** Defra has cut the Broads Authority's National Park Grant by 5% (£212,000) to £4,229,502 for the current financial year; this is in line with the other nine national parks. To achieve this reduction a series of measures are being adopted. General Reserves will be reduced - £50,000; Lake Restoration Strategy expenditure will be cut - £30,000; certain other practical projects will be delayed - £30,000; work at Ranworth and Toad Hole cottage visitor centres will be delayed - £15,000; an unfilled staff position will not be filled - £20,000; with the balance coming from savings in publications and photography, from managing of fens and grazing marches, from maintaining the trip boat "Ra" which needs new solar panels, and from a small reduction in dredging.

**DREDGING:** There has been an improvement in the overall situation as regards to complying with the waterways specifications for recreational craft.

Compliance Category	Length (m) 2008	% river length 2008	Length (m) 2009	% river length 2009	Difference
0	32,145	13%	19,937	8%	-12,208
1 – 20	37,451	15%	27,045	11%	-10,406
21 – 49	30,700	13%	42,130	18%	+11,430
50 – 74	35,933	15%	29,575	13%	- 6358
75 – 90	57,353	23%	62,939	27%	+ 5586
91 – 100	36,079	15%	41,344	18%	+ 5265
No data	14,847	6%	13,254	5%	-1,593
Total	244,508	100%	236,226	100%	

The reduced 2009 river length is due to certain non navigation area dykes and channels not being included.

Malthouse Broad and Ranworth Dam were dredged for the first time since 1963. The Ant has been covered between Ludham Bridge and How Hills, shoals were

removed from Thurne Mouth whilst work at Chet Mouth started in January and was completed on the Haddiscoe Cut in July.

Meanwhile the Broads Authority continues to update its dredging fleet and has recently acquired a 38-foot steel Thames tug "*Cannonbrook*" from the Environment Agency. Although the vessel is 50 years old she was in good condition and will be used to pull the crane that is used to carry out the dredging. The authority has also bought a 26-year old Smith crane that had only 5,000 hours on the clock – this equates to about one year's work. The crane replaces a Newton Chambers crane what helped to build the Channel Tunnel.

**RAILWAY SWING BRIDGES:** The *Eastern Daily Press* of 14 November 2009 featured an idyllic picture of a train comprising ten carriages, topped and tailed by diesel locomotives, on their way to Lowestoft having just crossed the swing bridge over the river Yare at Reedham. In practice, however, the railway swing bridges in the Broads area have been giving cause for major concern.

On the same line some 4½ miles south-east of Reedham there is a swing bridge at Somerleyton and this failed on 6 May being unable to open for river traffic as a vital bearing had failed. The replacement had to be specially manufactured and the bridge was not back in action again until 4 July, an unacceptably long closure period that caused larger vessels significant inconveniences as they were unable to pass under the bridge and thus could not visit points to the south or access the sea via Mutford Lock.

Rightly or wrongly the impression given by Network Rail was not one of any urgency and one imagines that if the bridge had been closed to rail traffic a solution would have been forthcoming much more speedily.

Meanwhile on 28 June Reedham bridge was closed to both rail and river traffic, apparently due to the very hot weather affecting the length of the rails and could not be reopened until the rails had cooled down. Likewise Somerleyton was out of action again on 10 July due to the heat and then again on 14 July due to the catastrophic failure of the new bearing. This was replaced by 20 July with a temporary winch system that jacked the bridge up, and just two short openings per day to guard against the second bearing failing until the reason for the failures could be properly investigated. This is likely to last nearly until the end of October when it is hoped normal service can be resumed.

Network Rail claims it has been struggling to maintain the bridges as they are both over 150 years old. In fact whilst the line from Reedham to Lowestoft was built in 1847 it was single track and was converted to double track with new bridges after 1900, so the two are not much more than 100 years old.

There has also been trouble with Trowse Bridge carrying the electrified main line over the river Yare into Norwich station. It has not been possible to operate this bridge mechanically since the computer-controlled lifting system suffered a catastrophic failure in June 2008 following a power surge. Currently the bridge can only be opened manually at night between 1.30am and 4am during a gap in the rail traffic, after a week's notice as it takes two hours to operate with a full crew.

**BROOM BOATS:** Founded in 1898 by Charles Broom, the boat building business of C. J. Broom & Sons Ltd at Brundall remained in the family for 112 years until Martin and Jennifer Broom finally sold out to two Norfolk based entrepreneurs this July. Initially the yard built individual sailing craft for locally-based clients but it started hiring out its craft in 1912 and in the early 1920s was one of the first companies to fit engines to its craft. During the Second World War hundreds of harbour launches and lifeboats were built for the Royal Navy and in the 1960s it moved into glass fibre construction. Whilst the business has been through a couple of tough trading years the new owners had hoped to sell more boats and bring in a new range of craft. Sadly, however, at the end of August, most of the staff were made redundant but it is hoped work may be able to resume in the future. Broom Boats Ltd, which operates the marina and the moorings, will continue in business.

**AYLSHAM NAVIGATION:** This navigation, part of the river Bure, closed on 26 August 1912 and Stuart Wilson is now leading efforts to commemorate this centenary. The plan is to call a meeting in Aylsham Town Hall and there has already been a lot of positive feedback including from Aylsham Town Council. The navigation ran from Aylsham Bridge and staithe through five locks down to Coltishall, a distance of some 9½ miles. Wherries were using the river in 1912 until a great flood resulted in several of the locks being damaged. The cost of the repairs could not be met by the commissioners and eventually the Minister of Transport issued an abandonment order in September 1926 and the closure warrant was dated 24 February 1927. This is one of EAWA's long term Broads restoration projects.

**CANTLEY SUGAR FACTORY:** Whilst planning permission to extend the factory to enable it to cope with processing raw cane was granted in June 2009 it was hoped it might be feasible to use rail or river transport to deliver the imported cane from Great Yarmouth's Outer Harbour. A working group was set up to examine this possibility and this reported in June that transport by water was likely to be viable.

Rail is handicapped as there is no link between the harbour and Great Yarmouth station and reinstating it would be prohibitively expensive whilst work would also be needed to recreate sidings at the factory. Lorries would cause noise, pollution and congestion in Great Yarmouth and in the villages of Beighton and Cantley. To use the river some difficulties foreseen were the provision of craft – whether self propelled or pushed barge systems, constraints due to the tides, any limit on night navigation and technical factors such as bridge openings but no work is needed at Cantley wharf.

**CANTLEY STAITHE:** On Saturday 18 September a new staithe was opened at Cantley as part of Broadland Environmental Services Ltd's flood defence works along the river Yare. Costing some £300,000 the former derelict staithe has been transformed with riverside piling fitted with safety ladders and chains, a new slipway whilst a floating pontoon provides seven permanent and two visitor moorings. The road to the staithe has been resurfaced and the surrounding village green has been planted up with a mixture of native trees and provided with picnic tables and seating. The new facility will be managed by the recently formed Cantley Staithe Charitable Association.

**THREE RIVERS RACE:** The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this long and gruelling inland sailing race took place on Saturday 5 June. Run by the Horning Sailing Club it attracted 177 entries with some of the original competitors from 1961 taking part. The 50-mile course involves four turning points – Ludham Bridge, South Walsham, Hickling Broad and a buoy on the Lower Bure – and shooting the three bridges, two at Potter Heigham and one at Acle. Competitors had to choose in which order they completed the course using the tide and wind to maximum effect.

Meanwhile an army of 100 volunteers was involved in running the race and for many this meant a 6am start on the Saturday and only ended on Sunday afternoon when the last competitor finished. Thirteen guard ships stationed around the course monitored the race each with their own rescue boat and they radioed competitor's position back to the Horning clubhouse where they were recorded on a computer.

**DUCK BROAD:** Whilst the scheme to use land at the entrance to Duck Broad near Hickling for dredged material has made considerable progress it is not meeting with universal approval. A trial area has been enclosed with a gabion wall and the intention is to fill the enclosed space with dredgings from Heigham Sound, where the depth is such that sailing cruisers are likely to go aground. Anglers, however, are concerned that disturbing the sediment could trigger an outbreak of a deadly algae *prymnesium parva* which decimated fish stocks in the Thurne area in 1969. Following a conference attended by some 300 anglers in Norwich towards the end of August the authority was informed of their major fears. To try and counter their concerns the authority is testing water quality at three sites on a daily basis and the results have so far indicated no increase in the level of *prymnesium*. If everything remains satisfactory the plan is to start enlarging the dumping area in 2012.

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY:** Workmen carrying out flood defence work at Ludham on the river Ant between Horning Hall and Browns Hill with a mechanical digger have unearthed a three-metre wooden vessel that could be Anglo Saxon or even date back to the Iron Age. The oak boat, which was in two pieces, could carry three people and was found in silt clay in July, is now being tested to ascertain its precise age. Also found beside it were five animal skulls suggesting that the vessel was used in a ritualistic ceremony. As the boat is well preserved there are hopes it could be the centrepiece of an exhibition in Norwich Castle Museum.

**WROXHAM:** The Broads Authority is promoting plans to establish a large conservation area based on Wroxham and the surrounding countryside. Wroxham is a Broadlands gem and a magnet for tourists and whilst there have been some fears from homeowners about new planning regulations Broadland Council voted on 20 July to adopt the plan for land that falls within its boundaries.

**THE ELECTRIC EEL:** In September the Broads Authority's first electric trip boat, the *Electric Eel*, carried its 100,000<sup>th</sup> visitor since the service was established 23 years ago. The boat is based on the Toad Hole Cottage Information Centre at How Hill on the river Ant and runs from April until the end of October. Bookings can be made on 01603 756096. Since its launch the authority has added another three sustainable trip boats including the country's first solar powered passenger boat and became the first English National Park to gain the European Charter for sustainable tourism.

## NORTH WALSHAM AND DILHAM CANAL

Since our last issue working parties have been held on 6 June at Briggate, 20 June & 4 July at Ebridge, 18 July & 19 September at Honing Staithe Cut; 8 August at Honing Lock and on 22 August & 5 September in the Bacton Wood Lock area.

Apart from the usual mowing and strimming at Briggate and burning three piles of brash, the main work involved clearing the water wheel chamber of many years growth of ivy, brambles and saplings – the chamber is 24ft 2in long by 7ft 6in wide. At the same time the pond wall was measured and found to be 113ft long – this was for costing purposes for a wooden fence at its western end.

At Ebridge the results of the dredging are very apparent with a good area of clear water now available and the work is continuing. Meanwhile the volunteers strimmed and mowed alongside the millpond's retaining wall and then cleared the weir which had numerous nettles growing in the cracks on the concrete capping. A fortnight later and with the much smaller number of helpers who were expected, the work concentrated on clearing the lockside and a few yards upstream.

Strimming and mowing at Honing soon restored a tidy appearance to the site where rain had led to a great leap in plant growth – in places up to 4 feet – and a sizeable clump of Himalayan Balsam was cleared from the head of the cut. On the canal itself several small trees that had succumbed to recent high winds and fallen were retrieved from the water, not without some difficulty.



The most notable event took place in the afternoon a canoe entered the cut, the entrance to which was largely been obstructed by reeds. Our picture shows EAWA directors Graham Brown and Chris Black aboard the canoe prior to returning to Honing Lock. This welcome arrival prompted a volunteer to don his waders and clear the mouth of the cut and some of the canal down to the bridge and hopefully this will encourage other canoes to venture in. The session finished with clearing

the rest of the cut walk making it look cared for.

The Honing Lock session concentrated on clearing the lock sides and on providing an access for portaging canoes from the eastern tail of the lock to the launch site north of the footbridge. At the same time the public path of the west side was widened by cutting back overgrowth. No less than five southbound canoes used the portage route in the afternoon and a large quantity of bricks, flints &c were pulled out of the water above the lock hence removing a hazard to launched canoes.

At Bacton Wood a very large fallen tree was removed from the west side of the canal some 200 yards north of the breach with timber being cut up and the brash piled up

ready for disposal at the next session. Later the party walked up beside the west side (Footpath 19) to see what other work needs to be done and by chance they discovered the "lost" weir that used to serve Bacton Wood Lock. This was cleared and measured and found to measure about 53½ feet by 13½ feet – the spill wall was in fairly good condition but the lower wall is poor. The session also saw the building of two wooden access bridges across two of the back dykes.

A full report by Work Party Leader Davis Revill about the restoration work on the canal appeared in the August issue of "*Navvies Notebook*" which is widely circulated in restoration circles.

Future sessions in 2010 are scheduled for: -

10 October – Briggate  
 24 October – Briggate  
 7 November – Bacton Wood area  
 21 November – Honing Lock  
 5 December – Honing Staithe Cut  
 19 December – Ebridge

### **"THE EASTERLING"**

The *Easterling* is published three times a year – in February, June and October – and the closing date for contributions is the last day in January, May and September.

In practice the compiling of each edition starts almost immediately after the previous edition has been published and it greatly assists the editor if contributions are not left to the last minute, as by then there may not be much free space, particularly for any major articles.

All contributions should be sent direct to the editor, Alan Faulkner, at 43 Oaks Drive, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3PS or by e-mail to [alan.faulkner22@btinternet.com](mailto:alan.faulkner22@btinternet.com)

Contributions are always welcome and the editor would be delighted to receive more unsolicited items. The recent Membership Survey produced several offers to produce articles and he hopes these will be forthcoming. The account that follows on pages 15 & 16 from Steve Machin about exploration on the long closed Stamford Canal is a fine example as were two major articles from David Mercer in recent issues. News items in local papers can be another source of great interest and members are asked to look out for such and to send in cuttings to the editor.

Pictures are also welcome but sometimes have to be downsized to prevent the file becoming too large and hence taking a long time to transmit, even by high speed broadband. It is helpful if pictures are not embedded in an article but are sent separately as attachments; this enables them to be downsized if need be.

Finally the facility now exists whereby members can receive "*The Easterling*" by e-mail if they so wish. This means they get the pictures in colour. Please let the editor know if you are interested in this option.

## A STAMFORD CANAL WALK

By Steve Machin

A walk from Tallington to West Deeping along the route of the Stamford Canal or as the locals call it 'The Boaty River' with Ken Otter turned out to be an interesting day.

The first big surprise for me was a winding hole in Tallington. Once Ken pointed out its position, its shape can clearly be seen in the grass alongside the canal bed. The path runs along the canal bed, and the bench is situated just about in the middle of the winding hole.



Left: The remains of Tallington Village lock structure, now kept tidy as a nice garden. Right: The outline of the winding hole at Tallington.

The next feature is the railway crossing. Today very little of the canal can be seen at the crossing. Ken told me that the rails on the eastern side crossed the canal just below the Tallington Horse Holmes lock. They had to curve the track bed round the end of the lock to avoid the need of embankment to cross the canal at the higher level above the lock. Later more tracks were laid on the western side over the top of the lock. It is likely the lock structure still remains buried under the track bed and the tunnel is still under the eastern rails, though filled in.

East of the railway the canal bed progresses to West Deeping with a mysterious curve through the field. We couldn't see any obvious reason for the curve. Possibly it was to avoid marshy ground, or to follow the contour to avoid embankments. More study is needed here. In West Deeping we found the canal watered before it disappears into private gardens.

Most of the structure of the St Andrews lock remains, though part of the stonework has been rearranged far from how it was originally. The bottom gate structure is pretty much complete

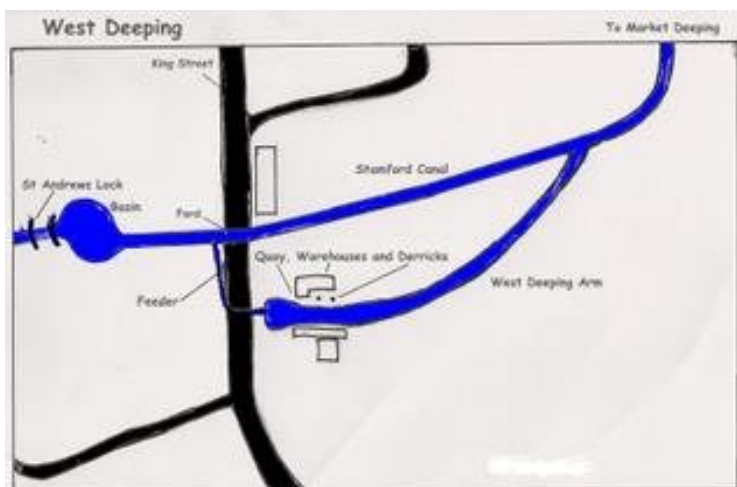
Below this lock was a basin but tennis courts have been built over what locals call a 'Winding Basin'. The tail of the opening into the lock has odd sides, possibly to allow boats easier entry from this basin.



### ST. ANDREWS LOCK, WEST DEEPING

Top left: The head of the lock showing the rearranged stonework on the left. Top right: The bottom gate structure is largely complete. Bottom left: The odd sides to the tail of the lock. Bottom right: Ken examining the ironwork.

The road in West Deeping was crossed by ford with a footbridge over the canal. Here there is evidence of a feeder that supplied an arm. This is clearly visible cutting across the field to the east of the road terminating at the building, which is at the side of what looks to be two derricks. The derricks' poles don't look very original but they look to be positioned where the arm ends, exactly where loading and unloading would have taken place.



It is thought that lighters came up in threes with one being dropping off in West Deeping, another in Tallington and the last one proceeding up into Stamford. Once unloaded and then reloaded with outbound goods it would head back collecting the ready and reloaded lighters in each village.

I am grateful to Ken for taking the time to show me the remaining features, and for sharing his knowledge about the canal.