



# THE EASTERLING

JOURNAL OF THE EAST ANGLIAN  
WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

VOLUME NINE, NUMBER THIRTEEN

OCTOBER 2015

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## PROJECT HEReward

At the Council meeting on 17 September the directors were delighted to learn that a £10,000 donation has been received from an anonymous benefactor to go towards the cost of restoring Welches Dam Lock. At the same time the Association's accounts are to be amended to give much greater prominence to Project Hereward. As at 30 June 2015 – the end of our last financial year – the PH balance stood at just £1,908.80. This has been boosted by the above gift, by a £2,000 transfer from the Association's ordinary funds, by another £2,000 from several other recent donations, and by £526.20 from the Gift Aid claim to give the impressive figure of **£16,435**.

Meanwhile the steering group has continued to meet regularly and has been looking at other restoration schemes to try and determine the best way forward for dealing with the leaks from the Forty Foot River. It seems that puddled clay, the traditional way of lining the bed of a waterway, would be far too expensive, and might not even be practical. Instead the group, led by Andrew Storrar, has been looking at alternatives. On 7 February they visited the Wendover Branch of the Grand Union Canal where a team of volunteers has been working for several years to restore a stretch of canal that has a long history of leakage. It involves lining the canal with strips of a sealing material called "*Bentomat*" and the current phase involves 2,058 metres of waterway. Then on 5 June work on the Montgomery Canal was inspected – here a lighter but more expensive material called "*Sahara*" is being used which can be man handled, whereas *Bentomat* is heavy and needs machinery.

Using voluntary labour the work on the channel and the lock has been estimated at: -

3½ kilometres of waterway, preparation and lining using Bentomat or an equivalent membrane and re-watering	£1,750,000
Repairs to Welches Dam Lock	350,000
Contingencies at 10%	<u>210,000</u>
Total excluding VAT	<u>£2,310,000.</u>

## NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM WORKING PARTY PROGRESS



**EBRIDGE:** Sunday 23 August 2015.

Top: The weed cutting boat being used as a pusher tug to manoeuvre the pontoon loaded with tree cuttings across the canal to the bonfire site.

Middle: The two craft round the corner as they approach the unloading spot which was near to the bonfire.



Bottom: A more general view of Ebridge showing some of the volunteers clearing weed from the mouth of the lock.

Other work carried out on that day was to complete the clearance of the overflow weir

## THE BOSTON BARRAGE

There has been a great deal of debate about the proposed barrage across the river Witham at Boston which is designed to protect the town from flooding. Initially there were fears that, when closed, the barrage would increase the risk of flooding downstream but extensive studies by the Environment Agency have indicated that this will not be so. To go ahead and build the barrage the Agency needs to obtain a Transport & Works Act Order that covers large projects such as this and the current plan is to submit an application to the Secretary of State early next year. A formal public consultation will then take place.

At present the scheme provides solely for a barrier that would include gates that can be raised to block the channel when there are risks of very high tides. Obviously during such periods there would be no passage for craft through the blockage. Equally this barrier will not affect the proposed Water Level Management (WLM) scheme above the barrier that is designed to maintain a constant depth of water up to the Grand Sluice. This would enable the length in between to become a major asset for boating in the town whilst also giving improved access to and from the Fens Waterways Link. To achieve this, however, it would be necessary to have a lock capable of passing craft to overcome the difference between the artificially maintained level and the actual tidal level.

The current plans are solely for a barrage with no provision for the WLM scheme which would include the requirement for the lock. The hope had been that this requirement could be included in barrage scheme but the consultants seem to be advising against this, perhaps as development work on the WLM proposals are insufficiently far advanced. The combined operation would obviously cost far less than work on the barrage to be followed at some future date by work on the lock and it seems too good an opportunity to be overlooked. There is a parallel here with the situation over a planned tidal barrier on the river Parrett at Bridgwater in Somerset.

EAWA's main interest here has been the benefit of having improved access to the Fens Waterways Link and the prospect, admittedly a small one, of some funds being made available to extend the navigation to the Black Hole Drove pumping station. The channel is well maintained as the drain plays a major role in land drainage with a series of pumping stations along its banks (see next page).

Much of the South Forty Foot River is already navigable but the channel gets noticeably narrower and shallower the nearer one gets to the Black Hole blockage and winding becomes more and more of a problem. Rather than wholesale channel widening EAWA has always advocated creating passing places, as the route is straight with good visibility a long way ahead.

A new lock would be needed around the Black Hole pumping station, a route decided to take the waterway under the A.151 (Spalding to Bourne road) and a second lock to give access to the river Glen; this is already connected to the river Welland and, thus, to Spalding. This phase of the work would require substantial funding and at present there is little indication where such funds might come from.

### THE SOUTH FORTY FOOT RIVER showing its crucial role in land drainage

Location	O/S ref	M	Y
Black Sluice Lock, junction with the river Witham tideway	327428	0	0
London Road bridge (formerly the A.16)	327428	0	35
A.16 Spalding Road bridge (on site of former railway crossing)	325429	0	210
North Forty Foot Drain enters via Cooks Lock pumping station (P/S)	314432	0	1520
The Old & New Hammond Becks enter via the Chain Bridge P/S	307433	1	500
Wyberton Fen Bridge (A.52 Grantham road)	304434	1	815
Hubbert's Bridge (B.1192 Horncastle road)	269344	3	1145
Clay Dike enters from the north via Holland Fen P/S	249436	4	1595
Skerth Drain crosses (north & south) and Swineshead P/S	229432	6	335
Swineshead Bridge (A.17 Sleaford Road)	218429	6	1610
Great Hale Eau enters from the west via Great Hale P/S	207427	7	1060
The Beck drain enters from the west (opposite Ferry Farm)	193409	8	1745
Bicker Fen (access roads to both banks) with Mill Drain P/S on the east	187398	9	1415
Helpringham Eau enters from the west at Eau End Farm	180393	10	1455
Helpringham Engine Drain (west) via Helpringham Fen P/S	178375	11	525
North Ing Drove – access road from the east	178374	11	675
Railway Bridge – Sleaford to Spalding line	177371	11	975
Donnington North Ing P/S (east)	178371	11	985
An unnamed drain enters from the west	176368	11	1400
Twenty Foot Drain enters from the west via Swaton Fen P/S	175365	11	1680
Swaton Eau enters from the west just north of Donnington High Bridge	174357	12	830
Donnington High Bridge (A.52 Grantham road) Official limit of navigation	174356	12	900
Mallard Hurn P/S (east)	172351	12	1465
Horbling Fen Drain enters from the west via Horbling Fen P/S	171347	13	235
Ouse Mere Lode from Billingborough enters from the west	169340	13	1020
Billingborough Fen Drain enters from west via Billingborough P/S	167333	13	1720
Ten Foot Drain enters from the east via Quadring Fen P/S	168331	14	160
Billingborough Lode enters from the west just north of Neslam Bridge	166325	14	975
Neslam Bridge (Billingborough to Gosberton road)	166324	14	990
Semperingham Lode enters from the west via Semperingham P/S	164318	14	1665
Pointon Fen Drain enters from the west with Pointon Lode Drain from the east	162307	15	740
Aslackby Fen Drain enters from the west (Aslackby P/S is a mile to the west)	162303	16	195
Dowsby Fen Drain enters from the west via Dowsby Fen P/S and the Twenty and Ten Foot Drains enter from the east via Gosberton P/S	163293	16	865
Kingston's Bridge carrying the B.1397 Dowsby to Gosberton road	162294	16	885
Dowsby Drain enters from the west via Dowsby Lode P/S and Higher Lode Drain enters from the west	163284	17	145
Rippingale Drain enters from the west via Rippingale Fen P/S	165276	17	655
Casswells Toll Bridge (former Gosberton to Dunsby road – closed to traffic)	165275	17	1185
Dunsby Fen Drain enters from the west via Dunsby Fen P/S	166271	17	1635
Star Lode Drain enters from the west via Pinchbeck North P/S	166265	18	505
Farm accommodation Bailey bridge	166262	18	1315
Haconby Fen Drain enters from the west via Haconby Fen P/S	168258	18	1385
Black Hole Drove P/S. Lane Dike enters from the west.	167251	19	825
Morton Drain enters from the west	169238	19	1730
Farm accommodation bridge	169238	19	1730
New Dyke Fen Drain enters from the west via Dyke Fen P/S	170236	20	325
Engine Drain enters from the west via Twenty Corner P/S	171225	20	1305
Guthram Gowt Bridge (A.151 Spalding to Bourne road) River Glen nearby	1722229	20	1460

This table clearly shows the key role the South Forty Foot River plays in land drainage throughout its entire length. The Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board has 37 pumping stations under its control of which 21 pump directly into the river.

## HERE AND THERE

**SURVEY OF WATERWAY RESTORATION SCHEMES:** In June the Association was approached by Doctor Geraint Coles, Senior Lecturer in Heritage Management at the Suffolk Business School in Ipswich, to say he had been commissioned to undertake a new survey of waterway restoration and development projects on behalf of the Canal & River Trust and the Inland Waterway Association. Effectively this will be a replacement for the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (IWAAC) whose last report was in December 2006 but the new approach will seek more detail on the scale of the task and how the resultant waterways might be made sustainable.

Our Association was actively involved with IWAAC and reported on ten cases in our widespread area and we have been asked, and have agreed, to assist with this new study. The waterways involved are several of the Cambridgeshire Lodes, the rivers Ivel, Lark and Little Ouse, and less well known cases such as the Blyth Navigation, the Stamford Canal and Bourne Eau.

### ENVIRONMENT AGENCY FIGURES:

Vessel Type	2012/13	Income	2013/14	Income	2014/15	Income
Unpowered	1,139	£39,913	1,211	£39,120	1,148	£42,785
Houseboat	27	£10,182	57	£16,115	76	£25,658
Powered	4,176	£1,659,785	4,280	£1,782,509	4,554	£1,929,441
Visitors	875	£67,247	1,122	£70,051	1,141	£86,850
Total	6,252	£1,777,390	6,685	£1,917,971	6,919	£2,084,734

*(Reproduced from an EA report – not all the columns add up correctly – Ed)*

**DEFINITIONS:** What could be an important detail in dealings with the Environment Agency has come to light over describing work as dredging or de-silting. Dredging covers “underwater excavation” or “works to deepen or widen a watercourse”, whilst de-silting is “works to remove accumulated silt from the bed of a watercourse without deepening or widening the natural or constructed channel profile”. This is an important difference and care needs to be taken not to label everything as dredging when it may be a case of going back to what was originally constructed. We are grateful to Chris Black, EAWA director and vice chairman of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust, for ferreting out this information.

**WINTER WORKS:** Work planned for the winter months includes the draining down, inspection and repair of Cardington, Denver and Upware locks on the Great Ouse system. Meanwhile the downstream landing stage of the Relief Channel Lock is being refurbished as are the 48-hour moorings to Stow Bridge and Wiggshall St. Mary. On the Nene Ditchford and Yarwell locks are to be drained down and repaired but planned work for Lower Ringstead Lock has been postponed until next year.

**GREAT OUSE TIDEWAY:** A strategy for the tidal stretch of the Great Ouse was finalised in 2010 following public consultation and one of the recommendations was to ensure Denver Sluice was managed to maximise the discharge from the Ely Ouse into the tideway to minimise siltation. It was envisaged that if there was an 18-month period of sustained high flows in the river, the bed levels could drop significantly and

it has been found that the high flows that occurred over 2012 and 2013 have caused this to happen. The Environment Agency takes quarterly bed level surveys of the tidal river from Earith to Kings Lynn and the test carried out in February 2014 showed significant erosion of bed levels downstream of both Welmore and Denver during the winter of 2012/13 and 2013/14. Consultants Black & Veatch were called in to undertake a quick assessment and their conclusions are that the bed levels downstream of Denver are the lowest since the mid 1980s and between Welmore and Stowbridge the levels are between 1.5m and 3.5m lower than the highest bed levels recorded in 1998 to 2000. Also the levels in the Hundred Foot River are generally 0.5m lower than they have been in the last 20 years.

One of the benefits of these low levels is that the Ouse Washes can now drain by gravity in time for the spring nesting season, greatly reducing the amount of pumping required. Coupled with this since the 2010 strategy was produced the EA's funding mechanisms have changed, climate change advice has been updated and the Tidal River Review Strategy needs reviewing.

**TEN MILE BANK:** The Environment Agency has been involved in necessary road repair and flood defence works along Engine Road at Ten Mile Bank on the Great Ouse. Due to a bank slippage in March the water level in the river had to be lowered to reduce further damage occurring and the road had to be closed by Norfolk County Council. Repairs started on 29 June and were expected to take 12 weeks to complete, with the road remaining closed and impassable throughout the period. The work was carried out by contractors Jackson Hyder and started with the removal of poplar trees along the section of failed embankment followed by over 300 yards of steel piling being installed to stabilise the river bank. These piles were vibrated into the ground using heavy machinery and on completion the embankment was repaired with unsuitable material being removed and replaced with imported clay. Finally the road was repaired with an improved road surface and drainage.

**OUSE LOCKS:** Whilst the Environment Agency tries to restrict work on the locks to the winter months (November to Easter) to minimise disruption to boaters a series of mechanical faults on the guillotine drive mechanisms caused four emergency lock closures in June and July. At St. Ives a failed drive shaft coupling closed the lock on 3 June. Repairs were completed by 8 July; in the meantime EA staff operated the lock for restricted hours. Similarly at Denver defective lifting chains caused the closure of the lock on 18 June but it was reopened on the following day and the chains are being monitored until they can be replaced in the autumn or winter.

At Brownhill a component failure on the actuator of the guillotine caused the lock to be closed on 30 June. The component was replaced and the lock reopened on 2 July. Problems with the guillotine at St. Neots caused the lock to close on 30 June and they were still being investigated in August; in the meantime the lock had been reopened on a restricted basis for six hours a day from 2 July. To try and counteract these problems the EA is hoping to complete the standardisation of the mechanisms across all its waterways and to build up a stock of spare parts.

**OLD BEDFORD ATTACK:** Early in September Roy & Lois Parker in their cruiser MARIE II were successful in passing through the Old Bedford sluice and guillotine gate and cruising for about a mile southwards before being stopped by an impassable mass of cot weed. They then returned safely back to the Great Ouse. This is a great achievement as it must have been the first time that a boat has used this stretch for several years owing to the heavy silting of the channel. John Revell with Alistair & Jonathan Chambers on the narrow boat OLIVE EMILY were also involved but unfortunately were not able to negotiate the sluice.



**RIVER IVEL:** The Association has been alerted by Adrian Stock to plans by the Environment Agency to remove the weir across the river at Sandy. This is because under the so-called Ivel Restoration Plan the weir is now considered obsolete – in turn this follows on from the European Union Water Framework Directive whereby it is claimed all artificial structures affecting a river are seen to have a negative effect on the environment. All this only became known because of a report in “*Biggleswade Today*” whereby it was stated EA’s closing date for representations was 10 April. Nothing had been heard from the EA direct and immediate action was taken to seek to be represented before any decisions were taken. The case is not straight forward but the weir does hold up an attractive stretch of the water for part of the way up to Biggleswade. The position on the Ivel varies considerably – Tempsford lock remains but Blunham is ruinous whilst South Mills has been demolished and replaced by a sluice, Sandy – the location in question - is a spillway whilst Biggleswade North lock has been demolished. Long term plans could see a case to restore the river up to Biggleswade or even up to Jordan’s Mill which is now a tourist location with a working water mill.

**RIVER WELLAND:** As mentioned briefly in our last issue, Fulney Lock on the Welland at Spalding has been closed due to a build up of silt in the lock gate recesses preventing the operation of the lock. This only came to light when the Lincolnshire Branch of the IWA was planning a campaign cruise from Boston, across the Wash and then up the Welland to Spalding in May to publicise the benefits that the Fens Waterways Link will bring to the town when it is completed. Eight boats were to have been involved and help was being given by Fosdyke Yacht Haven at the mouth of the river. A particularly disturbing feature here is that the lock may have been effectively closed for several years as a similar protest cruise in 2012 had to be cancelled for the same reason. Sadly there seems to be no indication the Environment Agency intends to do anything to correct the situation.

**CHELMSFORD:** Earlier in the year the Chelmer Canal Trust arranged a display in the lobby to the Chelmsford Library to highlight their plans for the proposed new Chelmsford Cut and this produced a lot of interest. The scheme involves building a short new canal in the centre of Chelmsford to run from Springfield Basin past the County Record Office to provide a new link to the river Chelmer. No lock would be required as both waterways would be on the same level but provision would have to be made for two new bridges and for stop gates at the river junction. This would allow canal and pleasure craft to access the city centre rather than being hidden away in Springfield Basin which is not ideally placed. In turn the link could provide a significant boost to tourism, could stimulate regeneration of the area and create employment. It is important to safeguard the route that effectively already exists and prevent any inappropriate development that could hinder the scheme.

Meanwhile a new lock-keeper has been appointed at Heybridge Sea Lock - he is Grant Everiss who was already very familiar with the lock having been brought up and lived at nearby Goldhanger. He also worked for fifteen years on the Thames sailing barges including *Xylonite* and *Gladys*, the latter in particular being a regular visitor to Heybridge.

**BLACKWATER BOATS:** An article in the "Colchester" Gazette on 25 August focussed on Ron and Judith Abbott's contribution to boating on the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation. On retirement from the NHS they purchased a narrow boat hire business based at Sandford Lock which they ran for several years contending with the regular flooding on the river and with unexpected and extended navigation closures. And in 2001 they introduced a narrow boat doing charter and skippered trips. The Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation company was placed into administration in 2004 and with no one interested in buying the business the Abbotts stopped hiring, sold the hire boats but retained the trip boat. Matters improved in 2005 when the Inland Waterways Association took on the Chelmer & Blackwater. In 2013 the Abbotts replacing the narrow trip boat *Blackwater Rose* with the wide beam *Blackwater Dawn* which caters for up to 12 people.

**ABBERTON RESERVOIR:** On 3 June wildlife broadcaster Sir David Attenborough officially opened Abberton Reservoir, near Colchester, following its £150 million extension. Over the last five years the reservoir has been extended by 58% allowing it to hold 41 billion litres of water. This has been achieved by increasing its top water level by 3.2 metres. With Essex being the driest county in the country most of its water has to be imported from the Great Ouse at Denver by the means of the Ely Ouse Essex Water Transfer Scheme. This involves using the Cut Off Channel, a 20-kilometre tunnel, three pipelines and some river channels to a new pumping station on the banks of the river Stour near Wormingford from where another pipeline takes the water to the reservoir. In the past this abstraction has been the subject of great controversy owing to the major reduction in the flow on the Great Ouse tideway, but the volume of pumping is now very strictly controlled.

## LITTLE OUSE RIVER

On 24 June a meeting was held in Thetford Town Council's offices in Thetford to consider possible plans to restore the Little Ouse up to the town. Our Honorary Secretary, David Mercer, represented the Association. It proved to be a useful meeting and full credit should be given to the Council for trying to revive the project. The Environment Agency has proposed another comprehensive (and expensive) feasibility study but strangely there was no mention of the Babbie reports into the restoration of the navigation which are largely still relevant. These have now been placed on the EAWA website so that they are available for everyone to study.

The Babbie reports were issued in 2003 and 2004 and recommended restoring the river from Brandon up to Thetford with the provision of new locks at Santon Downham just upstream of the road bridge, at Two Mile Bottom, at the Abbey Heath gauging weir and at Thetford Sluice. New weirs would be needed at Santon Downham and Two Mile Bottom, two footbridges would need to be raised but the road bridges all gave navigable headroom. Some dredging would be needed and the all in cost was just below £4 million. The only problem not covered was the restrictive dimensions of Brandon Lock which can only pass boats up to 45-feet in length.

EAWA has always supported this restoration but strongly recommends it should be carried out in small steps rather than wait until the whole project has been designed, costed and approved. Such a course would generate much more local interest and involvement. For instance overcoming the shallows at Santon Downham by a new lock would be a major advance. We have been able to clarify the position over the navigation rights – these were transferred from the Borough of Thetford to the River Great Ouse Catchment Board on 8 October 1935 under Section 40 of the Land Drainage Act 1930 and now rest with the Environment Agency.

Originally there was a series of eight stanchions on the river up to Thetford – they were situated at Crosswater (O/S 67708570), Sheepwater (75808700) Brandon (77848667), Santon (82528728), Croxton (84688702), Turfpool (85448565), Abbey Heath (85098435) and Thetford (86088320).

They were distinctive structures comprising a vertical lift gate at the upstream end of the lock supported on a structure that incorporated a bridge and a large winding wheel from which the guillotine was suspended. Ladders at both sides enabled the boatmen to climb up to operate the wheel. None of the stanchions survive today and there are few remains to be seen.

At Brandon, however, the National Rivers Authority replaced the staunch with a new lock that was opened on 27 July 1995. Financial constraints dictated its size and sadly it can only accommodate boats up to about 41-feet in length and 13¼-feet wide. The lock was also constructed with coping stones overhanging the chamber which constituted a major navigational hazard and wooden timbering had to be installed along both lock walls to counteract this.

## **BROADS NOTES AND NEWS**

**BROADS NATIONAL PARK:** On 8 July Rory Stewart, the DEFRA minister in charge of National Parks, confirmed he and his officials were happy with the move to call the Broads a National Park. The minister was responding to questions raised by Broadland MP Keith Simpson who tabled a half hour debate at Westminster Hall focusing on the proposed branding and on direct elections of Broads Authority members. He confirmed the Broads would not be controlled by National Park legislation because of the Authority's additional navigation responsibility and the fact that the Broads are not subject to the Sandford Principle like other members of the National Park family. (The principle requires greater weight has to be given to conservation rather than recreation if there is an irreconcilable conflict between the two). On the elections issue the minister confirmed the government does not intend to bring forward any legislation governing direct elections.

This was welcomed by Professor Jackie Burgess, Chairman of the Authority. On the accountability issue nine out of 21 Authority members are elected councillors from all the constituent local authorities and one third of the members are toll payers.

**BREYDON WATER JETTY:** July saw the completion of a major £338,000 scheme to restore the "turn-tide" jetty where the Yare and the Waveney join at the western end of Breydon Water. Built in 1860 part of the Victorian 30-metre long structure had collapsed and fallen into the river and was becoming a hazard. Without the jetty, which is believed to be where wherries could wait until the tide changed, the area would silt up and become un-navigable. This is one of the biggest projects the Broads Authority has undertaken for more than ten years.

**LOWESTOFT:** On 12 June Lowestoft's new water taxi service was officially opened with passengers being taken on trips on Lake Lothing. This has followed on from the restoration of a former Scottish work boat built in 1954 by a team at the International Boatbuilding Training College on Oulton Broad after the project was given a £631,060 government grant. Following a "tip-test" the boat was cleared to carry up to 12 passengers and it operates an hourly service from Bridge Road in Oulton Broad to Royal Plain in Lowestoft.

**RIVER WAVENEY:** Four locations on this river – Wainford, Bungay, Earsham and Mendham - have been chosen by the Environment Agency for eel passes to be installed at a cost of some £28,000. This sum is to be released in stage payment to the River Waveney Trust. At Wainford the pass will be alongside the weir in two sections, with an underground chamber in between, and has been designed and constructed by Aquatic Control Engineering and Bungay will be similar.

**NEW FERRY SERVICE:** Mark Wakelin, once the Broads Authority's chief navigation officer but now harbourmaster at Burnham on Crouch, has set up The Great Yare Ferry Company to operate a new service across the Yare between River Green, Thorpe St. Andrew and Whitlingham Country Park. The first voyage was on Good Friday (3 April) and initially it operated at weekends and Bank Holidays but hopes to expand if the demand is there. The journey takes about 10 minutes and the former Cornish fishing boat *Morlugh* is being used (the name means "sea spray in Cornish").

**HOVETON GREAT BROAD:** In February it was announced that a section of the Broads closed for decades could possibly be opened to the public. For plans put together to create a two-mile canoe trail along existing dykes through Pound End and Hoveton Marshes to the broad have been approved by the Broads Authority's planning committee. This is a project by Natural England together with the Hoveton Estate. However the plan is not without detractors particularly as £1.93m of Heritage Lottery Funds are being used for what many view as a commercial venture and which does not really open up the broad that is privately owned and has been closed to the public for over a hundred years. The owners of the broad and Natural England are urging caution in that a balance needs to be found between conservation and recreation to maintain the special qualities of the broad. As part of the scheme free boat trips on the broad would be introduced by Natural England and guided nature tours will also be expanded. The work also includes the removal of sediment from the dyke systems, the creation of temporary fish barriers and the reinstatement and strengthening of Wroxham Island.

**RIVER WENSUM:** A consultation has been held to collect ideas from people across Norwich on how they would like to see the river developed. For years there have been calls to make the river from Hellesdon Mill through the city to the Whitlingham Country Park more attractive and perhaps more like the river Cam through Cambridge. Parts of the river through the middle of Norwich are already very attractive but others leave considerable room for improvement.

**HICKLING BROAD:** The Broads Authority is looking at the enhancement of Hickling Broad and to develop a long term strategy for the management of the broad building on scientific evidence from a recent review. In the short term a number of smaller projects are being considered to meet immediate concerns and the navigation committee will work on a master plan to be put to the main authority. Initial works are expected to be completing an erosion project at Hill Common and to undertake some dredging at the north end of the navigation channel. These are scheduled for October 2015 and at the same time a trial of the "Nicospan" technique to provide bankside protection and stabilisation will be carried out. To a great extent Hickling cannot be considered in isolation as it is involved in the management and agricultural usage of the whole of the Horsey Mere catchment.

**MUTFORD LOCK:** Some 800 boats pass through Mutford Lock each year mostly in the summer months but it is in poor condition due to the 2013 tidal surge and poor maintenance. So much so that the Broads Authority is proposing to spend £66,000 on this southern gateway into the Broads and to increase the annual maintenance budget to £18,000.

**THE CANOEMAN:** Earlier this year Mark Wilkinson, who established his business ten years ago, invested in improving his web site and on-line booking facilities. This has led to a significant increase in his business. As well as canoe hire he offers a range of canoe trails and bushcraft activities and has bases at Buxton Lamas, Coltishall, Wroxham, Horning and South Walsham on the Bure and at Beccles on the Waveney.

## **OUSE FEST – DENVER SLUICE**

This Denver Sluice event was organised by the Ouse Washes Landscape Partnership and the Environment Agency as just one of the events in the Ouse Festival which celebrated the local communities and the landscape. A series of events were held locally between Monday 20 July and Sunday 2 August.

At Denver there were a variety of stands covering the Environment Agency's ongoing maintenance of the rivers and its work with wild life and you were able to handle a crayfish and to see eels and fish in tanks. The Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds were also present and there were two of the Agency's weed cutters with their crews on show.

On the water the West Norfolk Rowing Club offered taster sessions and the EA's river patrol boat *Ouse II Know* with their inflatable *The Linnet* were in constant use providing free trips up river turning at the junction with the river Wissey. They were very popular – there was still a queue waiting their trip at 4pm when the event closed but river inspector Mervyn Day ensured everyone got a trip.

Over 300 people attended at Denver on 28 July and next year it is hoped the event will be both bigger and better.

## **PROJECT HEReward BACKGROUND**

On the front page we report on the exciting developments concerning our long-running Project Hereward campaign. Members may remember that the project was first set up at Peterborough on 28 August 1993 to work for the lengthening of the locks through the Middle Level Navigations. This was to avoid full length narrow boats having to navigate out into the somewhat hazardous waters of the Wash when they wanted to pass between the rivers Nene and Great Ouse. The projects initial objectives were achieved with the formal opening of the lengthened Ashline Lock on 9 September 1999.

But there were some funds left over and these were earmarked for any work on the projected route of Fens Waterways Link. Whilst the Project Hereward name has not appeared as such in the Association's annual accounts the money is held under the Restricted Funds headline.

With the need to restore Welches Dam Lock and deal with the leaks in the Forty Foot River, both of which are likely to form part of the Fens Waterways Link, the directors felt it is vital to give more prominence to Project Hereward and effectively to re-launch the appeal for contributions. This is on the basis that the more funds that can be accumulated the more likely that something will be done to deal with the situation. Hence in future the Project Hereward balance will be shown separately in the accounts and reported on regularly with members being encouraged to support it wherever possible. We understand our partners – the Peterborough Branch of the Inland Waterways Association – are likely to be taking similar steps.

## RIVER BLYTH NAVIGATION

One of the waterways the Association has been asked to report on as part of the latest review of restoration schemes throughout the country (see page 5) has been the river Blyth in Suffolk. Sadly this never seems to have been visited by H. R. De Salis and therefore does not feature in his comprehensive survey – *Bradshaw's Canals and Navigable Rivers of England & Wales, 1904*. Hence obtaining facts about the river is not easy to come by.

The navigation ran from Halesworth in an east-south-easterly direction down to Blythburgh where it is crossed by the busy A.12 Lowestoft road before running out to sea via Southwold Harbour. The bottom stretch is tidal but four locks were needed to lift the waterway up to Halesworth – at Blyford, Wenhaston, Mells and Halesworth Town. Later Maltings New Lock was built in Halesworth to extend the navigation to a new maltings and wharf. The locked section is 4½ miles from Halesworth down to Blythburgh followed by a 5½ tidal stretch to Southwold Harbour and the sea. In addition there was a tidal sluice at Bulchamp and our picture purports to show this.



Authorised by Act of Parliament in 1751 the navigation opened in 1757. Initially it seems it was quite successful but traffic declined over the years and particularly after the opening of the narrow gauge Southwold Railway in 1879. The last vessel to use the river up to Halesworth was the wherry *Star* that was owned by a trader called Fred Lambert and who used it to carry cargoes of coal that were loaded in Southwold Harbour and taken up to Halesworth until 1911.

We are attempting to produce a Distance Table for the river and to include the precise location of the locks and other structures. A draft of this is shown on the following page and if any members have information on the subject the Editor would be delighted to hear from them. This is just one of the former navigations the Association has been asked to report on as a possible long term restoration.

Location	O/S Map Ref	Miles/Yards
Halesworth, head of the navigation, basin & wharf	385776	
Saxons Way Bridge (A.144 – road to Bungay)	388776	
Maltings New Lock (No 1 – although this was a later addition)	388776	
Railway Bridge (Ipswich to Lowestoft line)	39207717	
Junction between “Old” River and the New Reach	39257715	
Halesworth Town Lock No 2	395771	
Junction with the “Heveningham” River	39607685	
Mells Lock No 3 (Bullhorn Lock)	40557687	
Mells Bridge (Holton to Mells road)	40777687	
Site of Southwold Railway Bridge	41377698	
Wenhaston Lock No 4	415770	
Accommodation bridge	415770	
Accommodation Bridge (Track from Blyford Hall)	42137660	
Blyford Lock No 5	42457645	
Blyford Lane Bridge (Blyford to Wenhaston Road)	42477645	
Bulcamp Lock No 6 (tidal sluice)	43467647	
Bulcamp Bridge (Path from Bulcamp to Wenhaston)	43467645	7 1575
Accommodation Bridge (Union Farm)	43877572	6 1660
Blythburgh Bridge (A.12 Lowestoft road)	45227556	5 720
Junction with Wolsey’s Creek	48027649	2 440
Reydon Quay	48507632	1 1350
Junction with Buss Creek	49427587	1 105
Footbridge on the site of Southwold Railway	49457580	1 60
Passenger Ferry to Walberswick	50057505	0 730
Harbour Entrance, Southwold	50575470	0 0

## NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL

Whilst the North Walsham Canal Company, which owns the canal from just below Honing Lock to just below Ebridge Lock, has welcomed much of the work that has been carried out by the volunteers over the years to halt the deterioration in the structures and to clear some of the encroaching vegetation it is not reconciled to all that it is hoped can be achieved. For instance it is opposed to canoes using the canal upstream of Honing Lock, despite the legal right that still exists for them to do so. The company’s main interest is in conservation and it would like to see more wildlife and fish in the canal. To this end it would like to see the locks preserved and would allow top gates to be fitted, which would enable the water level to be controlled, but not bottom gates that would be needed for navigation.

We are in complete sympathy with the company’s conservation interests. Our main difference is that we believe the use of the canal by boats would make a major positive contribution to the issue. As matters stand there is no way the canal could become as popular for boating as, say, Wroxham. Many Broads boats are simply too large for the canal and it is questionable if hire boaters would be allowed to use it anyway. But the passage of boats would help to maintain an open channel and to control reed growth that is such a problem on parts of the canal today. One has only to look at the positive effect on wild life following the clearance work above Ebridge Lock. Against this background the volunteers have clearly had to adjust their plans and measures, such as starting to deal with the collapsing brickwork at the head of Briggate Lock have been put on hold. Work to maintain what has been achieved will be continued but the main effort will be concentrated on the stretch above

Ebridge where the programme of work parties under the auspices of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust will be more than maintained.



The first two pictures were taken at Bacton Wood on 2 August. The top one looks downstream and shows the former British Waterways dredger which has done such sterling work to get here.

The second looks the other way up towards Bacton Wood Lock where recent work parties have made a great clearance on both sides of the canal.



The third picture was taken on 30 August at Pigneys Wood and shows work in hand on moving a small footbridge over the soke dyke to allow machinery to access the canal there. It shows the large digger making light work of lifting the heavy bridge and re-positioning it.



All three pictures were taken by Alan Bertram who has supplied many of the work party pictures that have appeared in our pages for several years now.

### ADVANCE NOTICE

**The Association's 46<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting is going to be held at 2.30pm on Sunday 17 April 2016 at the Sutton Staithe Hotel near Stalham in Norfolk when it is hoped members will be able to visit parts of the canal to see the progress that has been made.**

## A DAY TO REMEMBER

Some members may remember the formal opening of the new lock off the river Witham at Boston on 20 March 2009 – it was the first major step towards the creation of the Fens Waterways Link. Two boats and a dinghy are being locked down from the Witham into the South Forty Foot River whilst the lock sides were jammed with spectators and well wishers. The automated lock was built to the highest engineering standards to ensure no unwanted tidal water could enter the South Forty Foot which drains a very extensive area of high grade agricultural land. This opened up the first 12½ miles of the route to Donnington High Bridge where the main road to Grantham passes over the navigation and where it is possible for boats to turn. **But how long will it be before we can see further progress on this route?**

On 5 August the Deputy Mayor of Boston opened the Boston Barrier Community Hub in Marsh Lane on the Riverside Industrial Estate. It will be open every Wednesday between 10am and 4pm and will enable people to find out the latest information about the tidal barrier and about Environment Agency projects in the area. Meanwhile there has been a public consultation about the South Forty Foot River and the Black Sluice Pumping Station - the latter was built in 1946 and fitted with five pumps which are at the end of their working life. The Environment Agency is looking at options for the station including its refurbishment, its decommissioning or its transfer to the Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board.

