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46th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM was held in the afternoon of Sunday 17 April, at the Sutton Staithe Hotel. Several members and their friends met in the morning at the nearby Museum of the Broads, at Stalham, to be shown round and to enjoy a trip on board the museum's Victorian steam launch *Falcon*.

There have been several changes since our Association's last official visit to the museum in 2011. For instance the rooms have all been renamed with the main reception area, the shop, the tea room and the wherry display being in the Barton Building. The story of life in the Broads, the wildfowling, and the windmills and wind pumps being found in the Surlingham Building, whilst the Wroxham Building traces the influence of man on the Broads and the Oulton Boatshed deals with the tradition of boats and boat building. Some of the larger exhibits are outside such as a Howard & Dennis weed cutting boat that was built at Bedford in 1960.

After the morning at the museum members moved to the Sutton Staithe Hotel for their lunch, which comprised a carvery followed by a choice of sweets before adjourning to a nearby room for the AGM itself. There the director's report and the





A party of members head off in the steam launch Falcon for a half-hour trip on a branch off the river Ant at Stalham. (Photo courtesy of Ivan Cane)

accounts were duly approved, Chris Black, David Revill and David Tomlinson were re-elected to serve as directors and John Cordran was re-appointed as accounts scrutineer. David Revill then gave a detailed report on the work on the North Walsham & Dilham Canal and Chairman Roger Sexton reported on the progress of Project Hereward, whilst stressing the total lack of support and the difficulties currently being caused by the Environment Agency.

We were delighted to welcome to the meeting our long standing member John Burrell. Visiting from the Midlands, John had been heavily involved in helping sort out the legal position on the NW&DC and he was keen to find out how things were progressing. We were also delighted to welcome Charlie Helliwell whose father had, like John, been very actively involved in the NW&DC and in the politics of the Broads generally. Charlie sadly had to report the recent death of her mother Marie, a long standing member of the association.

After the meeting members broke up into several groups and were taken off to examine the NW&DC from various vantage points such as Ebridge, Bacton Wood and Swafield. The progress made on the canal is truly impressive and reflects great credit on all those involved.

MIDDLE LEVEL COMMISSIONERS

The Commissioners have begun discussions with all those affected about updating and improving their current and somewhat outdated navigational powers. In particular, the Commissioners want to introduce the registration and charging of boats using the Middle Level waterways.

They also want to be able to enter into agreements with other navigation authorities over such matters as the mutual recognition of registrations and licences. They are also seeking powers to deal with sunken, stranded and abandoned boats and to recover the cost of so doing from the owner; to charge vessels overstaying time limits in force at a mooring place; to make more up to date byelaws for craft using the system and to require boats to have proper insurance.

We see this move as long overdue and whilst no one exactly welcomes the introduction of a new "tax", most will see the measures proposed as being fair. If the measure goes ahead it is certain there would be reciprocal licencing arrangements with other navigation authorities; probably similar to the arrangement between the Environment Agency and the River Cam Commissioners.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY TRANSFER

We welcome the news that a joint working party has been set up between the Canal & River Trust (C&RT) and the Environment Agency (EA) to explore the different options for the running of river navigations. This could possibly be the first step in transferring the navigational responsibilities for the EA's waterways to the C&RT; a step that is gaining growing support albeit not by some boaters on the river Thames. In practice the two authorities already work well together in controlling the C&RT's river navigations such as the Severn, the Trent, the Yorkshire Ouse and the Soar with the EA dealing with such crucial issues as flooding and the control of pollution.

Apart from the Thames the EA's main rivers are in East Anglia with the Great Ouse and its tributaries together with the Nene, the Welland and the Glen - being prominent but it also includes the river Ancholme, the Suffolk Stour, the river Medway, responsibility for work on the Cambridgeshire Lodes and a few others such as the Royal Military Canal.

The EA's main navigation funding comes from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) but this has been cut from £10.7m in 2012/13 to £3.5m in 2014/15 and is now being cut again and this can only lead to restrictions and closures. Its minimum annual funding requirement has been assessed at £4.25m but even at this level there would still see a gradual deterioration in the state of its assets.

Meanwhile since the C&RT was set up it has been able to increase the maintenance work it can carry out, notably dredging. And whilst its status as a charity must not be undermined, it should be able to manage the EA's navigations given a reasonable amount of financial support from a reluctant government.

PROJECT HEReward - WELCHES DAM to HORSEWAY

HORSEWAY WORK PARTIES: On Wednesday 6 January the IWA's Peterborough Branch carried out its first ever work party which set about clearing the dense brush and trees growing along the banks of the Forty Foot River from the B1098 Chatteris to Upwell road, south eastwards for some 1,100 yards towards Horseways Lock. This section of the Forty Foot is very much under used following the Environment Agency's closure of Welches Dam Lock with a coffer dam in 2006 and is unattractive for boats. The sessions have been made possible following an agreement with the Middle Level Commissioners, which has enabled that authority to bring in machinery to clear the first 190 yards of the river bed from the road bridge of any obstructions. Further sessions have been held every fortnight but they were suspended in April to avoid interfering with the bird nesting season and will resume in the autumn.

Sadly, it cannot be said that the negotiations, with the Environment Agency, for permission for our action group and its engineers to examine Welches Dam Lock have made much progress, despite the amount of time the request has been outstanding. The restoration of this lock is seen as an essential first step in restoring the through route and will need to be followed by work to cure the leaks in the Forty Foot channel.

A TRIP THROUGH WELCHES DAM LOCK: Way back in 1972 our member Andrew Green hired a Maid Line canal cruiser from Brinklow and headed down the Nene and into the Middle Level Navigations. Andrew, who now lives in Scotland, has sent us these interesting details from his cruising log book.

Wednesday 3 May 1972:

05.00 Depart March.

06.15 Passed Floods Ferry.

08.00 Lodes End, turned into Forty Foot River.

10.40 Horseways lock cut. Blocked by weed, cuttings and muck. Cleared this and bow hauled into lock.

12.00 Cleared Welches Dam Lock.

12.30 Halt at the Ship Inn for lunch.

13.15 Restarted.

13.30 Weed, old rope and fishing line round propeller. Cleared this, and bow hauled back to Welches Dam.

17.00 Cleared Welches Dam Lock.

19.30 Cleared Horseways Lock, much weed.

20.15 Night halt – Horseways bridge, engine problems, suspect blown head gasket.

Tally for the day – 4 locks, 28 miles

Andrew comments: "We were keen in those days, don't do 5am starts any more. I believe the Ship Inn still exists but is radically changed. In our days it looked like a private house and the landlady brought the beer up from the cellar in an enamel jug."

DE-SILTING THE OLD BEDFORD: On 19 February the Wisbech Standard showed pictures of two of Mervyn Lambert's excavators working on the Old Bedford River to remove accumulated silts and sediments upstream of the entrance sluice. They had already covered some 800 metres of this land drainage project and the work was expected to finish by the middle of March, by when it was hoped three kilometres would have been dealt with. Meanwhile some 20 metres of steel sheet piling has been installed in the crest of

the embankment near Lakes Farm Pumping Station to repair a leak in the bank. This desilting is a positive step forward and may help towards enabling boats to reach Welches Dam Lock again.

OLD BEDFORD EEL PASS: Land drainage improvement works costing some £287,000 are being carried out to the Old Bedford Sluice and at the same time a new channel is being constructed to enable eels to bypass the structure. Water from the Old Bedford will be pumped down a pipe and then pumped back up a return pipe and this flow of water will attract elvers to the new link. The return pipe is fitted with a chain of bristles and this will enable the elvers to climb the pipe, resting on the way if necessary. Eels are now considered to be an endangered species and the works, which are expected to cost £86,000, will complement the eel pass at St. Germans and the fish passes at Denver Sluice and Stoke Ferry. On 5 February the Environment Agency inserted a Public Notice in the Eastern Daily Press with details how to obtain information about the Environmental Action Plan for this project.

HERE AND THERE

WITHAM DREDGING: At the beginning of the year came the welcome news, from the Canal & River Trust, that between February and June parts of the Witham were to be dredged. The work was to include the one kilometre stretch from the Lincoln Rowing Club slipway downstream, the Bardney Cut including the approach to the lock and the moorings, the visitor mooring pontoon at Southrey, the confluence with the Catchwater Drain and the Black Horse Drain, the visitor mooring pontoon at Kirkstead Bridge, the pumping station inflows at Old Mill Cottages and at the Engine Drain, the visitor mooring pontoon at Tattershall Bridge, the confluence with the Bain and the Dogdyke visitor mooring pontoon, the junction with Kyme Eau at Chapel Hill, the visitor mooring pontoon at Langrick Road Bridge, the landing and the visitor mooring pontoon at Antons Gowt Lock and finally the visitor mooring pontoon at Boston Lock.

BLACK SLUICE PUMPING STATION: Whilst the pumping station at Boston covers a large area of agricultural land, it is thinly populated which makes it difficult to attract government funding for flood protection. This prompted a study that began in 2012 by the Environment Agency and the Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board to investigate ways of dealing with the situation. Added pressure then came following a tidal surge in 2013, when severe damage was caused to some of the pumps. Public consultation indicated the general feeling that the pumping station should be transferred to the Board for a two-year transitional period to allow it to put longer term funding in place. At the same time discussions are in train about the repair of the pumps and on other measures to manage flood risk in the area.

LOUTH NAVIGATION: Serious flooding in Louth in 2007 led to a Louth Coastal Catchment Flood Management Plan being produced; under this, two reservoirs were to be built west of the A16 Louth bypass to reduce the flooding risk. The contractors VBA Joint Venture Ltd have made good progress and a control tower has been erected beside the first new reservoir which is to be fitted with a "hydro-brake". In normal conditions this simply allows the water to flow unimpeded through a culvert below the A16 but if the flow increases a sluice gradually closes enabling the excess water to be retained in the reservoir – this

involves no manual intervention but will be monitored by telemetry at the Environment Agency's centre at Lincoln.

Meanwhile the Louth Navigation Trust, with local authority backing, is negotiating with Merton College, who own land at the tidal entrance to the navigation, with a view to creating some pontoon moorings there. Coupled with this are plans to remove a low-level oil pipeline that supplies the Tetney oil terminal for is scheduled for renewal at some point. Currently it prevents boats from reaching the navigation but once removed boats would be able to reach Tetney sea lock which had gates built by Louth joiners Thornton & Turner in the 1950s.

RIVER WELLAND: At Spalding the Environment Agency has instituted de-silting work at Fulney Lock, which has been out of use for several years. To prevent the silt building up again volunteers have been asked to flush the lock on a regular basis. A campaign cruise is being planned for the weekend of 20-22 May.

CLEY HARBOUR: Due to the efforts of a dedicated group of people, it will soon be possible for boats up to 20-feet long to moor again, at what used to be a working quay in Cley. The work has involved de-silting a 300-yard stretch of the river Glaven and hence restoring the ancient harbour. This was made possible after home owners and well-wishers raised £15,000 to finance the work and it is hoped the work can go on to cover stage two – dredging the upper section of the harbour. Funds will also be needed to maintaining the river and to repair collapsed banks below the harbour.

IPSWICH: On Wednesday 16 March, and as part of the Chancellor of the Exchequer latest budget statement, came the news that work is to go ahead in Ipswich on the proposed West Dock Crossing with the Government looking at a £81m contribution. This is a long mooted scheme to improve traffic conditions in the town and to create a new crossing of the river Gipping.

EEL CATCHING: The Daily Telegraph (20 January 2016) had an illustrated feature about Peter Carter who is believed to be the last eel catcher in the country. Peter is giving up, as stocks of the fish are falling and also because he cannot find a successor. He uses wicker hives to catch the eels and his family has been able to trace its fishing links back to 1475.

THE WISSEY WASHES: This major scheme is well under way and seeks to create 10,000 hectares of wetland to compensate for losses at the coast. Based mainly beside the river Wissey between Hilgay, the sugar beet factory at Wissington and Methwold, 60 hectares of reed bed have already been planted and more will follow together with areas of grassland and woodland. The scheme is a major project by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and other organisations.

OUSE LOCKS: February and March were busy times for the Environment Agency in that ten locks were due to be inspected and have work carried out. Most were involved in what was described as high level gate access improvements (Bottisham, Brownhill, Cardington, Godmanchester, Hemingford, Houghton, Isleham, St. Ives and St Neots) but Denver was to have the gate chains replaced and the chamber of Cardington was to be drained down for an inspection to take place. St Neots, in particular, continued to give major problems with an emergency closure in March, inconveniently interrupting an early season cruise by at least one of our members.

HARTFORD MARINA: Two residents of waterside homes at Hartford marina decided to contest the Environment Agency's demand for an annual licence fee despite facing heavy fines and a criminal record. Their case was that their homes were on permanently fixed floating pontoons; were connected to main services; could not be fitted with an engine and, with no means of propulsion, were incapable of navigation like a boat. By law a registration fee is due on all vessels using the river to help pay the cost of the locks and weirs that are needed for navigation. But the marina home owners use none of the river facilities; instead they pay local council tax.

In a case brought by the Environment Agency local magistrates initially convicted the two residents but in April 2015 the Peterborough Crown court quashed their decision on the grounds that the floating houses were homes on water rather than vessels capable of navigation. The Environment Agency appealed but on 15th April the Divisional Court of the Queen's Bench Division, sitting in London, affirmed the correctness of the judgement of the Peterborough Crown Court. The EA does not have a right to appeal against this decision, but has to request permission to do so. Given the strength of the judgement it is thought unlikely it would obtain such permission.

THE WIGGENHALL WAVE: Fifty years ago Paul Barnett surfed the Severn Bore – the country's best known surge wave and now, just ahead of his 70th birthday, he travelled to Norfolk to tackle our own version of the phenomenon – the lesser known, somewhat gentler but no less spectacular Wiggshall Wave on the Great Ouse. In his kayak he caught the wave as it passed through Wiggshall St. Mary Magdalen and surfed it for around 185 yards. On the way he was joined by a seal that is often seen on that part of the river. The surge occurs when the incoming tide pushes up the narrow channel and it is most prominent during spring tides.

RIVER STOUR: It is pleasing to be able to report that work on the restoration of Stratford St. Mary Lock has not only resumed, but has made good progress. Work first began in 2007 but after a while came to a protracted halt due to a dispute with the Environment Agency over work that had been performed beyond what had been agreed. The concrete lock was one of the four that were rebuilt in the 1930s. The chamber is still intact but was filled with over 50 years of mud and debris and whilst the lock gates remained they were rotten and need replacing.

Much of the clearance work was done in 2007/8 before the dispute arose. This work resumed in 2015 concentrating on what had been approved by the Environment Agency, such as dredging the channel to the correct depth and landscaping the lock island. Initially much of the clearance work had been performed manually by prisoners from Hollesley Bay and a squad of soldiers from Colchester Garrison, but as large quantities of soil still needed to be moved, a digger and a dumper were brought in to do the job. In turn this necessitated a new raft being needed to float the workers and the equipment across to the lock island.

Elsewhere the River Stour Trust continues to operate what is now a fleet of trip boats. At Sudbury the launches *Edwardian Lady*, *Francis J* and *Rosette* operate together with the restored Stour barge *John Constable*. Operated by volunteer crews, the trips brought in £19,850 in 2015. Meanwhile the electric launch *Trusty II* is based on the river at Flatford whilst *Kathleen* operates from Le Talbooth restaurant at Stratford with wedding parties and general cruises; between them they earned £17,725 in 2015.

RIVER BLYTH: The sponsored canoe trip from Halesworth to Southwold, which took place on May 27th, has so far raised the sum of £800. 'It's amazing', said Gerald Burns who made the trip in his one-man kayak, 'and the support, especially from local residents, has been fantastic. I couldn't have completed the journey on the day without them'. The trip revived the historic tradition of transporting malt by water from the town to Southwold quay by carrying a small bag of malt on the kayak. The malt was later delivered in person to the Adnams brewery in Southwold but was not needed for brewing! The money raised from the trip will go towards restoring a stretch of the Blyth Navigation canal in Halesworth: removing selected trees, restoring the benches, and maintaining the towpath. 'We hope one day,' said Gerald, 'to restore the two locks in the town and replace the ageing footbridge but that will take a lot more money.' 'I'd like to thank all those who have contributed so generously to the fund', he said, 'it just goes to show the strength of community spirit in the town.' To donate see info.newreach@gmail.com



CHELMER & BLACKWATER NAVIGATION: The campaign to connect this navigation to the river Chelmer at Springfield in the centre of Chelmsford has been a long-term aim of the Chelmer Canal Trust. In April last year the *Essex Chronicle* published a mock-up of how Chelmsford would benefit by allowing pleasure boats to reach the city centre; the plan involves creating a 165 yard long canal beside the Essex Record Office. An action group was formed comprising the Chelmer Canal Trust, the Chelmsford Civic Society, the Inland Waterways Association and Essex Waterways Ltd. and a meeting was held to publicise the scheme. Against a generally supportive background the leader of Chelmsford City Council, Roy Whitehead, indicated he had no intention whatsoever in allowing the plans to go forward. This unexpected opposition may mean the whole idea will have to be looked at again.

RIVER NENE: Work started towards the end of last November on preparations for a new pedestrian and cycle bridge, linking the town centre with Northampton University's evolving Waterside Campus. The Environment Agency specified the new bridge had to have a minimum 3-metre clearance on both sections of the river it crosses. And to avoid any repeat of the antisocial problems this area has suffered in the past, the path will be cantilevered off the Lock Island and pass over the water between the island and the marina just below the top lock.

At the Anglian Waterways Group meeting on 11 May at Brampton the Environment Agency made the surprise announcement that effective from 3 June, it is to stop the practice of reversing locks on the Nene; a practice previously used to regulate flood water discharging along the river. The decision seems to have been made without any consultation with river users in contrast to the Great Ouse where a consultation will be held with the Great Ouse Boating Association and other river users. EAWA has joined with the Association of Nene River Clubs in expressing our concerns here. For with the complete lack of technical data, river users and riparian interests are unable to make an assessment of either the rationale behind the proposal or the risk of serious flooding and this is not acceptable.

BROADS NOTES AND NEWS

LOWESTOFT RIVER CROSSING: On Tuesday 15 March, the day before the details of the Government's annual budget were announced, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, took the opportunity of a visit to East Anglia to announce that the long-awaited third river crossing in Lowestoft is finally to go ahead. The government is committed to provide £70million towards the anticipated cost of £90million but it is not clear when work will start or how long it will take. The new crossing will be sited roughly halfway between the present bascule bridge at the harbour mouth and the crossing at the lock into Lake Lothing. Apart from relieving the town of the hold-ups the main bridge can cause, it will also enable underused land on either side of the river to be redeveloped for housing or for industry. The new crossing will incorporate a lifting span and so headroom will not be restricted.

In the meantime, a new taxi service has been introduced offering an alternative to get from one end of the town to the other. It takes 30 minutes from Bridge Road in Oulton Broad and the Royal Plain in Lowestoft stopping at half hour intervals. Starting early in April initially it will run from Thursdays to Mondays and cost £3.50 per fare.

HERBERT WOODS: At the beginning of March the Herbert Woods company based at Bridge Road, Potter Heigham launched its first new picnic boat for 25 years. The boat "*Starlight 1*" can trace its design back to the original *Starlight* 85 years ago, and is the forerunner of another nine day-hire picnic boats that are to be launched in the coming months. They can be hired out to groups of up to ten people and have a very modern stylish design with facilities not usually expected from a modern day holiday cruiser such as a sink, toilet, fridge, hot and cold water and hot air heating.

On Sunday 10 July a regatta is being held from 10am to 5pm at the Herbert Woods company's base to mark the 90th anniversary of the founding of this well-known Broads concern. Mr Herbert Woods built his first cruiser, *Speed of Light*, in 1926 and went on to develop the so-called "light" cruisers which are still used in the name of today's Herbert Woods boats. In March 1949 Mr Woods led an invasion of Black Horse Broad - also known as Hoveton Little Broad - in a public campaign to re-open it. A barrier across the broad was dismantled leading to the owner agreeing to open it to the public from Easter to September. Today it is open for a week at Easter and from Whitsun (May 15) to October.

RIVER WAVENEY: The River Waveney Association was formed on 29 March 2012 at a meeting at the Swan Hotel in Harleston. In August of that year the River Waveney Trust Association name was adopted, as part of an application for an *Awards for All* grant but the RWA name remained and since then the two organisations have existed, side by side. After considerable discussion it has now been agreed that the RWTA closes and this was approved at an Extraordinary General Meeting on 28 April.

ALBION: Earlier this year the 118-year old tradition Norfolk wherry Albion was fitted with a new mast. Midway through the 2010 season rot was discovered in the heel of the old mast and two large steel plates were fitted to add strength, pending the mast being replaced. Meanwhile a suitable log was located from a timber yard in Lincolnshire and put into store at Upton being checked at regular intervals for moisture content whilst plans for its fabrication were laid. These began in August 2015 and on 30 March the mast was craned aboard the vessel for the final details to be completed.

BROADS PUBLIC CONSULTATION: The Broads Authority has been seeking views on two important plans that set out the strategic priorities and spatial planning policies for the future management of the Broads. For the record the area consists of seven rivers and 63 broads with 125 miles of navigable routes. The 2011 Census showed 6,271 people live there with an average age of 49. The Broads drew 7.7million visitors in 2014 contributing £594m to the local economy. In that year there were 12,325 boats – 10,818 private and 1,507 hired. There are 270 listed buildings and 25 conservation areas. Overall the Broads are home to 11,607 wildlife species, 19 per cent of the total species in the UK. (*Eastern Daily Press*, 21 March 2016)

NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM WORK PARTES: These continue to be held once or twice a month normally on Sundays.

10 January: 16 volunteers attended at the Paston pound length of the canal. Small trees were removed from the winding area and wharf, useful timber was cut up and stacked and the brash and leaf litter was burned. 24 January: 15 volunteers continued the work begun by first party.

Wednesday & Thursday 3 & 4 February: 9 volunteers attended on Wednesday & 10 on Thursday. Efforts were concentrated on a high-reach “cherry picker” dealing with two large trees growing in the canal. Useful timber was stacked, the rest was chipped.

7 February: 16 volunteers worked at Ebridge to clear a large area of land on the north-east side of the canal.

21 February: 18 volunteers cleared a wide area on the south-west bank of the canal of a mass of brambles, ivy and dead wood that was hard to penetrate.

6 March: 13 volunteers turned out to work either at Swafield or at Pigneys Wood to clear the remaining brash and burn all the detritus at both sites.

20 March: 16 volunteers turned out at Spa Common and began clearance work on the north-east bank of the canal to allow machine access.

3 April: 13 volunteers worked either at Pigneys Wood or at Swafield and cleared the south-west bank of the canal of remaining brash to allow machine access. Grass seed was shown on the south-west bank between Staithe Cottage and Paston Way.

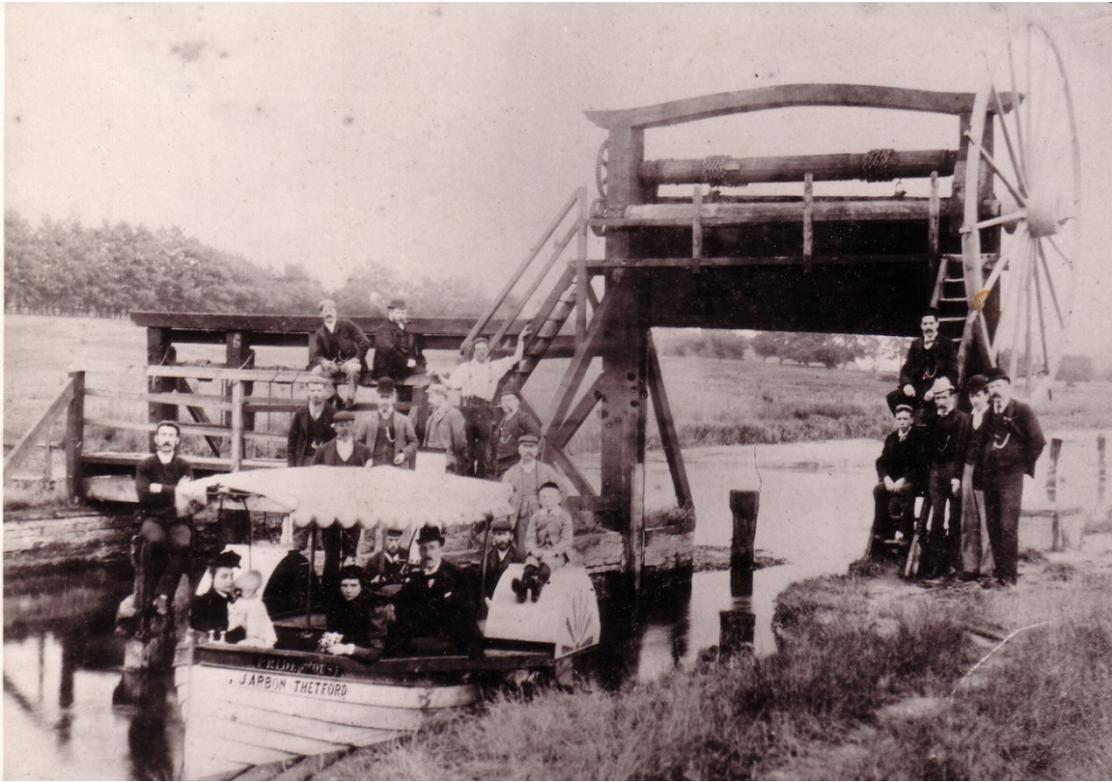
17 April: Only 8 volunteers owing to EAWA’s Annual General Meeting being held at Sutton Staithe. The canal bank between Ebridge and Bacton Wood was sown with grass seed and the lock island at Ebridge was improved.

1 May: 14 volunteers, some of whom seeded the bank on Mickey Starling’s section of the canal above Swafield road bridge, whilst others repaired the ruts in the grass caused by the cherry picker.

15 May: 11 volunteers helped with the trial of the outboard motor on the Trust’s pontoon which then went down river to remove overhanging brash. The large grassy area on the east side of Ebridge Lock was mowed.

THE LITTLE OUSE STAUNCHES (Part 2)

By Alan Faulkner and Ivan Cane



Two pictures of Brandon Stauch with the top one showing a party aboard a small steam-driven boat from Thetford, passing through the staunch and attracting considerable interest. The bottom picture was taken in the late 1890s and shows an outing on one of the Murrell family Brandon-based lighters with William John Murrell in charge of the horse and his father standing in the bows of the lighter.



Another view of the staunch at Brandon showing the navigation gate closed so as to allow the water level to build up to Brandon. In 1957 Mr P.C. Dewhurst wrote "in 1937 there was an effective pound lock at Brandon." He made an expedition up the Little Ouse and used the lock in each direction. The gate was operated rather primitively by geared pulleys and blocks and was evidently a unique feature in the whole career of the

navigation. Does anyone else recall this?

Although labelled 'First Stauch Brandon', there are few similarities with the picture above, with this postcard



more closely resembling the one showing the "intriguing fishing party" published in the February 2016 *Easterling*. The gearing does not reflect those staunches with wheels, which would indicate it is either Croxton or Crosswater. However, there are no coping stones, which rules out the latter staunch. But then Croxton is 6 miles from Brandon – the plot thickens. The editor would appreciate other thoughts.

ANOTHER LOOK AT RESTORING THE LITTLE OUSE

Early in 2016 Richard Glen Associates were appointed by Thetford Town Council and its local authority partners to prepare a Waterspace Study for the river from Brandon up to Thetford. This is to help redefine Thetford as a waterway destination and develop water and land based activities along the Little Ouse river.

This is not the first such investigation that has carried out on the river. In 2003 consultants Babbie Brown & Root were appointed by the Environment Agency to investigate the possibility of restoring the river up from Brandon Lock up to Thetford. Their report worked on the basis of a minimum 1.35 metres depth of water, a minimum headroom of 2.7 metres and the EA's standard lock size - length 26 metres, width 4.3 metres and draft 1.2 metres. After looking at various options the report recommended Option 1B which would have involved expenditure as set out in the following table.

Raising head gate at Brandon Lock	30,000
New lock at Santon Downham – 22m long, 4.3m wide, 3m deep	700,000
New 10m wide weir & sluice at Santon Downham	200,000
Raising existing Santon Country Park footbridge	40,000
New lock at Two Mile Bottom – 22m long, 4.3m wide, 3m deep	700,000
New 10m wide weir & sluice at Two Mile Bottom	200,000
New 80m long, 8m wide & 1.5m deep bypass channel around Abbey Heath Weir	150,000
New lock at Abbey Heath - 22m long, 4.3m wide, 3m deep	700,000
Modify existing outfall headwall to incorporate energy dissipation	10,000
New 80m long, 8m wide & 1.5m deep bypass channel around Thetford Lock	150,000
New lock at Thetford - 22m long, 4.3m wide, 3m deep	700,000
Raising existing footbridge at Thetford	40,000
Construction of boat turning and mooring facility at Thetford	600,000
Dredging of the river (11,600 cubic metres)	200,000
Raising 1,600m of river banks by approximately 0.5m – 1.0m	100,000
Total	4,520,000

Further optional works included the enlargement of Brandon Lock [£900,000], the raising or renewing of the footbridge at Two Mile Bottom [£40,000] and work in Thetford to extend the navigation from Bridge Street up to the confluence with the river Thet [£80,000].

We fully support this new initiative but hope that this time it will lead to some positive action being taken.

For instance, some boats can already reach Santon Downham where new moorings have been established by the Great Ouse Boating Association. In 2003 the main requirement for dredging was in this stretch, up to the first new lock that was planned to be just downstream of the road bridge.

There is little doubt this stretch still needs considerable attention so as to encourage more boats to venture up to Santon.

GREAT OUSE RESTORATION SOCIETY TOKENS



A couple of months ago a member spotted that a token was being offered for sale on e-bay commemorating the re-opening of the river Great Ouse back to Bedford in 1976 and he asked your editor what he knew about it.

For the record the token was one of three issued by the Great Ouse Restoration Society to commemorate the opening of the final four new locks on the river. The first was issued when Roxton Lock was opened by the Duke of Bedford on 12 August 1972 and it was followed by the second that was issued when both Great Barford and Willington Locks were opened on the same day – 8 May 1976 – a truly memorable day on the river. The third and final token came with the opening of Castle Mills Lock on 28 April 1978.

No tokens were issued for the restoration of the first two locks on the Great Ouse - Bedford lock was restored and opened much earlier on 24 September 1955 with Cardington following on 17 May 1963. The member put in a bid and was successful in acquiring the 1976 token for the princely sum of £10.

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE



Looking downstream from Swafield Bridge that carries the B1145 road from Norwich to Mundesley. The OCC's work pontoon lies across the channel just beyond the buildings.



Looking upstream towards the first of the two Swafield Locks. Both pictures were taken on 13 April. The bridge marks the division of the Old Canal Company's and Starling's property, the latter is also being cleared up to the Lower Lock - the start of the abandoned section of the canal up to Antingham.

NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL TRUST

The NW&DCT staged a very successful film night in St Benet's Hall, behind North Walsham Parish Church on the evening of Thursday 25 February. It attracted a good audience and gained useful publicity for the trust.

On Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th June the trust is holding its fourth annual Open Day at Ebridge Mill Pond. The Canoe-man of Wroxham will be attending to tempt people to take to the water and paddle up as far as Spa Common and the Trust's new Wildlife Officer will make a presentation of his many finds showing how the restoration has had a major and undeniably beneficial effect on our natural environment on the land, in the water and in the air.

What is truly remarkable is that a permissive path has now been created from Ebridge northwards and westwards beside the canal all the way up to Swafield Bridge, the limit of the Old Canal Company's property. From Ebridge it takes the east bank but has to cross over at Spa Common to bypass the entrance to the water mill. All those concerned including the landowners deserve the warmest congratulations for this.



With the progress made in clearing the canal up to Swafield the Trust's pontoon was launched back into the water a short distance below Spa Common Lock. Subsequently an outboard motor was fitted to one end of the vessel and she performed ideally under power, much to every ones delight and enjoyment. She has been named "SUE B" in honour of the Trust's late membership secretary Sue Bolton.