

# THE EASTERLING

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## THE 41<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Whether it was the long spell of fine weather that we had been having; whether it was the attraction of the visit to the Museum of the Broads at Stalham which included both a trip on the museum's historic steam launch *Falcon* and entrance to its annual Boat & Fishing jumble sale; whether it was the excellent carvery lunch served up at Sutton Staithe Hotel; or whether it was not having the usual Council Meeting as part of the proceedings we may never know. Whatever there was a record turnout with 31 sitting down to lunch and 33 attending the AGM.



The formal business passed off uneventfully with the Directors report and the annual accounts being accepted. Sadly Bob Kearney, a long-standing director, has had to stand down from the Council due to work and family pressures on him, but veteran John Mayhead was unanimously re-elected to serve. This was followed

by reports from work party organiser David Revill and from Chairman Roger Sexton.

The stage was now set for Ivan Cane, our hard-working secretary, to give an illustrated talk about the North Walsham and Dilham Canal outlining its history, and he was followed by Carole Bullinger, Secretary of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust who outlined the challenges that still lay ahead. And then everyone took to their cars for a conducted tour covering Honing Staithe, Briggate Lock and mill pond, Ebridge Lock and millpond and finally Bacton Wood Lock. The progress recorded at all four sites was most impressive.



Left: *Members at Honing Staithe with the former railway bridge in the background*



Right: *The de-silted millpond at Briggate. When the grass grows back this will be an attractive environmental site.*



Left: *The cleared out mill pond at Ebridge, showing the floating dredger (Weasel – ex British Waterways Board) on the right and the land-based dragline dredger on the right bank. The picture was taken standing on the new bank alongside the road. It represents a complete transformation of a previously overgrown and derelict looking site. A pair of wood sandpipers busy by the pond, were also being watched by a group of birders.*

Right: *Bacton Wood Lock showing the right hand wall that has been completely re-built whilst part of the left hand wall has been similarly re-built with scaffolding up for work to be completed on the remainder.*

*When the first work party took place here on 24 June 2001 the lock had trees growing in it and the structure was deteriorating. Who said miracles never happen?*



## HERE AND THERE

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

Roger Brown, Boxted, Colchester, Essex  
 Mr & Mrs Eric Clark, Burgh-next-Aylsham, Norfolk  
 Mr R. E. Green (no address held)  
 Ken Hardy, Norwich  
 Roger Loy, Norwich  
 David Senior, Dilham, Norfolk

**ENVIRONMENT AGENCY:** The Agency reported that at the end of January 5,964 boats were registered across the Anglian waterways that comprise the Ancholme, Black Sluice Navigation, Glen, Great Ouse system, Nene, Stour and Welland. These generated an income of £1,589,646 with a compliance rate of 97.6%. Fifteen boaters were prosecuted resulting in £5,260 in fines and costs of £1,730 and other cases are pending. Five formal cautions were issued, 51 warning letters were sent, 349 offence tickets were issued of which 74 were repeat offenders. From 1<sup>st</sup> April all powered boats must have valid third party insurance and a Boat Safety Scheme Certificate to be able to register.

**BEDFORD:** A Bedford River Partnership has been set up to develop activities on and around the river. Amongst projects being discussed is the re-establishment of boat hire on the upper river. This could include rowing boats, punts (chauffeured or otherwise) and Canadian canoes and there is a possibility at least one of these options could be up and running this summer. Years ago punts and rowing boats from Bryants Boats used to be a major attraction on the river whilst Silvery Ouse Pleasurecraft used to operate a small fleet of electrically-driven trip boats.

On similar lines the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust is planning to set up a trading company and build a 60-foot 50-seater accessible broad beam boat in time for this year's Bedford Festival which will celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original plan for the navigation. The cost of getting the new boat built and fitted out is estimated at £120,000 – grants are being applied for but these will have to be matched by monies raised by the Trust. Anyone interested should contact Don Allison, Community Boat Organiser [donallison@btinternet.com](mailto:donallison@btinternet.com) (01908 610564).

**OUSE LOCKS:** Cardington lock closed on 1<sup>st</sup> November last year for major work to the system that drives the guillotine gate and the downstream mitre doors. A new control panel was installed; paths have been provided down both sides of the lock chamber and the coping stones have been replaced. Cardington remains the narrowest lock on the river following the 1962 restoration work when the lock sides were coated with a steel mesh onto which several inches of concrete were sprayed.

Elsewhere Roxton lock was drained down and inspected and an alarming 17 tonnes of debris were removed from the chamber. Both gate cills were replaced together with all four breast seals, four new paddle gearboxes were installed together with two new plastic paddles to make operation much easier. Similar work was carried out at Willington despite heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures. Better moorings have

been provided at Hermitage Lock and the pump-out landing stage at Denver Lock was replaced and the moorings near the Jenyn's Arms have been rebuilt.

**RIVER WISSEY:** During May and June the restrictions on the Wissey at the British Sugar Company's factory at Wissington, some five miles upstream from its junction with the Great Ouse, have continued to allow contractors to complete the erection of a tubular gantry bridge and install a conveyor over the river. The factory at Wissington was established in 1925 and has undergone a series of improvements and extensions and now serves a wide area of the fens.

**RIVER NAR:** At the beginning of March river restoration work on the Nar began at three sites - Narborough, Castle Acre and West Lexham. Diggers have been brought in to restore natural features like pools, riffles (*a shallow part of the stream where the water flows brokenly*), meanders and shallow areas of gravel in the river channel and along the banks. Dilapidated weirs will also be removed to improve water flows and reduce the build-up of silt. This should benefit fish such as eels, brown and sea trout as well as water voles, rare dragonflies and otters which live in the river, most of which is designated as a Site of Scientific Interest. The River Nar Restoration Strategy comes from a partnership between the Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board, the Environment Agency, Natural England and local landowners. Navigation ceased in 1884 except on the then tidal stretch in King's Lynn.

**RIVER LARK:** A five-year programme of maintenance on the river Lark has now been completed. As reported in our last issue it has mainly involved de-silting work being carried out using long-reach excavators and excavators mounted on pontoons. The excavated material is being used to shore-up the base of existing embankments along the river. The stretch involved runs from Soham Tunnel Mills downstream to Isleham Wash – a distance of some 2½ miles.

**LITTLE OUSE RIVER:** During the winter months the Environment Agency has cleared trees and bushes from the flood bank over an eight-mile stretch of the Little Ouse. Meanwhile the Great Ouse Boating Association is hoping to take over the moorings at Hockwold if an agreement can be reached with the Environment Agency. Work is needed to reprofile the edge which will also need to be re-seeded.

**RIVER STOUR:** The National Trust together with the Dedham Conservation volunteers has been carrying out work on the dry dock at Flatford made famous by one of John Constable's paintings. The dock was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as part of a boatyard where Stour lighters or barges were built or repaired. Some of the timbers that supported the barges had rotted in places and new locally sourced oak supports, measuring over 12-feet in length were installed. The work was financed under the Managing a Masterpiece Landscape Partnership, a Dedham Vale AONB Stour Valley project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Work is now well in hand on the scheme to enlarge Abberton Reservoir near Colchester to enable it to supply more water to the South Essex area. The work involves raising the reservoir's banks by 10-feet, hence increasing its capacity by nearly 60%, and building a new cross-country pipeline to extract water from the Stour at Wormingford. In turn more water will be extracted from the Great Ouse at Denver under the "*Ely Ouse Essex Water Transfer Scheme*" that was built under the

powers of a 1968 Act of Parliament promoted by the Great Ouse and the Essex River Authorities. This allows water extracted at Denver to be pumped via a system of open channels, a tunnel and a pipeline to the headwaters of several East Anglian rivers including the river Stour at Wixoe. Whilst the scheme is worthy in itself, the existing extractions from Denver have led to considerable problems with silting downstream of Denver and one can only hope that sufficient safeguards will be put into place to prevent these getting any worse. The water will travel over 140 miles from Denver to Abberton.

**ST. GERMANS:** Work, which began in 2005 on a new £37m pumping station on the Middle Level Drain at St. Germans near King's Lynn, is now virtually complete and early in April diggers were clearing the last of the old concrete foundations from the river bed. The new station, which actually began pumping in April 2010, is the biggest in Britain; it has six pumps instead of the previous four and can prevent thousands of acres of land which are below sea level from flooding. Rising sea levels dictated the replacement of the old station.

**KING'S LYNN:** After the King's Lynn built fishing boat Baden Powell ended her career in the early 1990s she was pulled up onto the Boal Quay, where she suffered from vandalism and the elements. Built by Walter Worfolk in 1900 for a local fisherman, she has now been acquired by The Norfolk Boat Trust charity and is undergoing restoration. It is expected she will then serve as a reminder of a once thriving boat-building industry and sea-faring history of the town.

**RIVER NENE:** On 10 January work estimated at £477,000 began on refurbishing Dog-in-a-Doublet Lock. Both sets of lock gates are to be grit-blasted and re-painted whilst the redundant middle gate is to be removed; the work, which is due to be completed early in June, is to prolong the lifespan of the gates and make them easier to operate. Birse Civils, contractors are involved and its work also includes a parallel scheme to refurbish the sluice gates. During the spring piling repair work has taken place at Orton Lock with drain downs, inspections and repairs at Wellingborough Lower, Ditchford and Alwalton Locks

Over the May Day Bank Holiday a National Waterways Campaign Festival 2011 was held at Becket's Park to celebrate 250 years of navigation on the river from the Wash and up to Northampton. Work on 82 new moorings in the centre of the town has been completed and the new basin was opened at Easter. Work is now in hand on the facilities building which will include toilets, showers and laundry facilities and where the mooring manager will be based. This is all part of a £2.4million project by the Becket's Park Partnership that includes the Environment Agency, West Northampton Development Corporation, Northampton Borough Council, the river Nene Regional Park and Northamptonshire County Council.

**SUTTON BRIDGE:** Plans are being drawn up for a new marina at Sutton Bridge that will be operated by the Port of Wisbech. Fenland District Council will also be involved with the installation of the pilings, the mooring pontoons and the marina facilities whilst Lincolnshire County Council will manage the access, car parking and the building of a promenade. It is hoped contractors can be appointed before the end of the summer and for the marina to open in time for the 2012 boating season.

**BILLINGHAY SKIRTH:** This is a natural river that was once navigable but now serves basically as a drain. It enters the Witham just north of Tattershall Bridge and then runs westward almost 2¾miles to Billingham and a further mile to North Kyme. A restoration society was formed three years ago and has already carried out some improvements – its long term aim is to restore the Skirth to full navigation. In the short term the plan is to create a riverside path from Billingham to North Kyme and to create a canoe launching and portage areas.

**BLACK SLUICE NAVIGATION:** Over the May 13-15 the Environment Agency offered organised groups a concessionary rate of £5 per boat to use the navigation. The offer was not exactly helped by vandals in Boston who released two boats from their moorings, one of which then sank in the entrance to the navigation effectively blocking it. It was possible to move the boat slightly but it remained a hazard to craft entering and exiting the Black Sluice. Meanwhile a new café has been opened in the Black Sluice Centre that serves teas and coffee.

The Wheatsheaf public house at Hubberts Bridge, some 3½-miles along the navigation, had a major achievement last year in that it was recognised by CAMRA and has now been included in "*The Good Beer Guide*". It also has live bands playing regularly and it expects to become even more popular with the installation of the new boat moorings.

**SPALDING:** A Spalding Waterspace Study has been published by South Holland District Council covering the river Welland from its junction with the river Glen southwards through Spalding, on to Crowland and eventually to Stamford. The latter part of this would involve making the Maxey Drainage Cut navigable as too much of the original route of the Stamford Canal has been lost. The Maxey Cut runs westwards, leaving the Welland at Peakirk and reuniting with the natural course of the river near Tallington, a few miles east of Stamford.

At Crowland a new marina is proposed and the Fens Waterways Link through to the river Nene at Peterborough is expected to leave from this area. Nearer Spalding, due to flood defence works, the Welland is already straight and wide making it ideal for rowing and other water based activities. And in Spalding itself one plan is to move Fulney Lock a short distance north (downstream), so that it also serves the 1953 Coronation Channel which could then become a southern bypass around the town and provide a new circular lock-free route. A similar scheme to the north could see Vernatt's Drain being made navigable from its junction in the north with the Welland at Surfleet Seas End up to Pode Hole, west of Spalding, where it could reconnect with the Welland via the South Drove Drain, thus creating a northern bypass.

Meanwhile the water taxi service that is owned by South Holland District Council and Broadgate Homes and run by Spalding Water Taxis has had to move its base due as its boats were being vandalised on a regular basis. Both the disabled lift and the moorings have been damaged and some £25,000 has been used to provide new moorings on the Welland. These will be more secure with new electrical connections and a CCTV camera connected to a control room.

## BROADS NOTES AND NEWS

**BROADS WEBSITE:** On Friday 18 March James Beresford, chief executive of Visit England, officially launched the new Broads website [www.enjoythebroads.com](http://www.enjoythebroads.com) from Norfolk Broads Direct in Wroxham. He then cruised aboard the *Vintage Broadsman* to Wroxham Broad meeting representatives of local businesses on the way.

**BROADS AUTHORITY:** Broads boaters have expressed major concern at the authority's decision that an extra £200,000 of the navigation toll income should now be used to meet general overheads and some even threatened to withhold their tolls. This is a difficult position as £1.1million of the national park grant will be lost between 2010 and 2014 over the four year period. The authority is reducing its staff from 168 to 136 positions resulting in a greater proportion of staff effort in future being spent on navigation. After a heated debate the authority's navigation committee reluctantly agreed to support the proposal at its meeting on 24 February.

**ST. BENETS ABBEY:** The Norwich Archaeological Trust has applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant towards a major project to improve conservation of the ruins of this historic abbey, together with its access and interpretation. The abbey stands beside the river Bure south of Ludham on a 36-acre site. Currently it can be reached by a track from Ludham that is mainly used by anglers and there is a small car park for 10 cars with two disabled spaces and a cycle rack. One plan is to try and create a walk from Ludham Bridge initially alongside the river Ant down to the abbey.

**SOUTH WALSHAM:** The slip way has been opened up for a trial period following an agreement between the Broads Authority and South Walsham Parish Council. It was previously out of use for safety reasons but has now been repaired and the staithe was re-piled in March. Whilst it is already widely used by canoes and other small craft, trailer traffic was previously restricted to twelve village residents who held keys to the locked safety barriers. This was due to poor access, no toilets and no increase in parking facilities. Additional keys are now available for the parish council to allocate and three-day keys for wider public use will be available at £5 per key.

**FLEET DYKE:** Boaters have protested at the Environment Agency's plan to remove popular moorings from the dyke at South Walsham. They claim the moorings offered a quiet spot away from the Broads Authority's moorings and were popular with both private and hire craft. The Agency claimed that during its 20-year flood defence project, piling no longer needed was removed when it was found to be in a very bad condition and dangerous to boats. A retrospective planning application has been made and a short stretch still remains for mooring.

**AYLSHAM NAVIGATION:** A community project has been launched to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012 of the closure of the navigation. Part of this will be collaboration between the Aylsham Local History Society and several others to uncover the history behind the navigation; they will form the Aylsham Navigation Research Group which already has secured a £5,500 grant to help with the project. It is hoped that this will lead to the publication of a book on the history of the navigation, to the erection of interpretation boards and to an exhibition in

Aylsham Town Hall in September 2012. One possibility is for the wherry *Albion* to take a token cargo up to Coltishall, the present limit of the navigation, and then use canoes to transport the cargo from Coltishall up to Aylsham.

**LUDHAM:** A seven-ton amphibious digger that can both plough through mud on its wide metal rollers or float on water on specially developed pontoons is started work in March on a 450-acre reserve at Ludham to dig out overgrown dykes beyond the reach of conventional equipment. The £200,000-plus machine has been hired from Land & Water and when it is transported its undercarriage is retractable, reducing its width from just over 14-feet to just under 11½-feet. A major objective of the scheme is to improve the habitat for bitterns by creating more areas of shallow open water in the wet reedbed. Three dykes and a pond are being excavated in this project.

**TIDAL GENERATORS:** The Lowestoft research and development company 4NRG has built a 23-foot long harvester prototype that began trials on Lake Lothing in February before being moved to a site of the river Yare. The four-ton device was manufactured at Small & Co's shipyard at Lowestoft and works when the tide passes through the harvester, pushing blades that generate power. The intention is to use tidal energy generators for use at the site of wind farms to help bring down the cost of producing wind energy but they could also be used at flood barriers, such as the possible one for the Yare at Great Yarmouth. The project has been aided by a £92,000 grant from the East of England Development Agency. The Broads Authority had a presentation about the device at its meeting on 10 February.

**THE WHERRY BASE:** On Tuesday 19 April Mrs Frances Clark formally opened a new permanent home for three of the Broads' historic wherries – *Hathor*, *Norada* and *Olive*. Under a £1.5million project a new building, owned by the Wherry Yacht Charter Charitable Trust, now provides a base for the undercover, all year-round restoration and maintenance of the wherries. It includes a workshop, storage areas, offices, mess and archive room whilst a new slipway enables work on the hulls to be undertaken on site. The Heritage Lottery Fund provided a third of the cost which covers includes the cost of restoring the wherries. The opening was in honour of Mrs Clark's husband Aitken who died last year. He was a former chief executive of the Broads Authority and chairman of the WYCCT. Currently *Norada* is being restored and will be re-launched this summer and the work will then go on to restore *Olive* and *Hathor* in successive years.

**ALBION:** Last October the first of a planned programme of bi-annual slippings took place at Lake Lothing to monitor the wherry's condition, remedy any operational damage, draw the keel bolts for inspection, re-finish the hull and undertake a general survey. Whilst out of the water the ceiling was repainted, the hull was re-tarred and the steel girder was re-painted with epoxy. Everything went according to plan and *Albion* was given a clean bill of health. Of course there are timbers that will need attention – after all she is a wooden boat – but nothing that was urgent was found. The Norfolk Wherry Trust believes its policy of a bi-annual inspection along with a four-yearly plan of more major work, will keep the boat in good heart without the major works carried out in the last eleven years.

**DUCK BROAD:** Work is due to start on increasing the depth of water in Heigham Sound following the successful dredging of Candle Dyke near Martham last year and



the re-creation of a trial island at Duck Broad, which is to be used for the dredged material. The narrow section of waterway between Duck Broad and Meadow Dyke has the highest priority in the Broads Authority's Sediment Management Plan as it has silted up to a depth of under 3-feet in places and boaters have been lobbying for it to be dredged for several years. Anglers have been concerned that the work may trigger a *prymnesium parvum* algal bloom, which can be toxic for fish. During last year's trial the Broads Authority took regular water samples to check the position and this will be repeated this year at four locations on a weekly basis and a fish rescue plan is in place should the need arise. The anglers concern, which has been accompanied by threats to blockade the river, is understandable as in 1969 an outbreak of the deadly *prymnesium parva* algae decimated fish stocks on the whole river Thurne system.

### **THE CHELMER AND BLACKWATER - April 2011.**

Some fifty or so years ago, I persuaded my parents to take a picnic to the banks of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation. This gave me the chance to walk the towpath to Hoe Mill, Rushes and Paper Mill locks. Sadly I did not see the new motorised barge, which I had read about in the local paper, carrying timber from Heybridge up to Chelmsford. Except for a brief trip with the EAWA's AGM party at Heybridge in 2007, I had never had the chance to return. However, an invitation to talk to a group in Chelmsford gave me the excuse to trail our Wilderness Beaver "NAVI" down for a few days earlier this year.

In my 1950's picture, Paper Mill lock is isolated amongst trees and it is also the site of the slipway for the navigation. However, we also discovered that it is now a popular café; a centre for trip boats; a linear mooring and large car park for the numerous walkers and cyclists to use as a starting point for their leisure activities. The slipway is also surrounded by busy café tables, dogs, children et al, and so we had a large audience as we reversed through the outdoor eating area – and then had to straighten up by aiming at the tables themselves. Eventually all was sorted and we locked through Paper Mill and entered a quiet straight stretch with cattle watching us from the bank. At Rushes lock a small group of youngsters were camping overnight by the weir, some bathing, others chatting and also pleasantly helping with the gates.

Next we passed the tiny Ulting Church, nestling on the waterside – with moorings for passing churchgoers. At Hoe Mill we were welcomed by the lock-keepers, who found us a place to moor overnight – and where we also found what must be the best kept boaters' toilets in the country. We also had another rarity that evening – a rain storm. The next morning we dropped down Hoe Mill lock, enabling me to take a similar photograph to that of 50 years previous, little had changed. A work boat was also passing through and asked us to leave the locks empty (one usually leaves them full, with top gates open and a leg is dropped from the beam to the ground to stop it closing). Meanwhile they left the top paddle up at Rickets and Beeleigh lock so that it was full for our arrival.

After the latter the Chelmer disappears over a weir as the Blackwater flows in from the left and we now entered the artificial cut, punctuated by stop gates – present and



Left: Hoe Mill Lock in the 1950s and (Right) showing “Navi” in the lock in April 2011.

past – as the canal was routed to avoid Maldon, where its presence was not wanted by the 18<sup>th</sup> century merchants! Today’s merchants kindly provided moorings so that you are able to access the 24-hour Tesco, garage and McDonalds, and a surprisingly quiet mooring for lunch, used by ourselves, another boat and a family in their canoes. Following a straight stretch the tall masts of the seagoing yachts moored in the basin hove into view. The very helpful and pleasant lock keeper found us a mooring – and also took me around their new and old workboats. “NAVI” was moored between a yacht just arrived from the Caribbean, whilst the couple on the yacht behind were preparing to set off for the Kiel Canal and Baltic, “We’re bound for Chelmsford” we said.

Heybridge offered two pubs and the jam makers “Wilkins of Tiptree’s” café. Also from the boaters’ view, good shower and toilet facilities. Beside the basin is a large lake, with the Blackwater estuary on one side, the canal on the second and the third by a new housing estate, cashing in on the views. Obviously the area is a bird reserve, this plus the Blackwater estuary make the area a birder’s paradise – and for those with more of a boating mind there are several Thames Barges moored up nearby. A great overnight mooring – with so much to see that we dawdled until lunchtime the next day before returning upstream to Little Baddow lock where we moored closed to the pretty millpond. Heading upstream locks become more frequent – although all fairly rural, however the sound of the A12 grows as you approach Cuton lock.

Sandford lock is a busy boating scene, once the base for hire boats, it still has trip boats for hire, and the former Proprietors’ barge Susan in moored above the mill. There is a water point – and an old hand painted notice on the bridge announces “No Bathing”. At Barnes lock, work was in progress, piling and the building of landing stages for the lock – however, I am not convinced that “decking” is the most suitable material – it can still get slippery – as I found to my cost at an earlier lock. We almost missed the entrance to the arm for the basin, and the lock required flushing as it was half full of rubbish – few boats seem to venture this far in April. We attracted the attention of residents of the overlooking flats as well as of children and dads.

The final stretch to the basin was a mixture of overgrown banks and modern housing, but quite pleasantly designed – and the wood yard was still busy, although

with its back now onto the canal. It has to be the quietest town centre mooring I have ever used – but as close to the City’s shops as one – who wanted to shop – could wish. There was also the basin side restaurant and several well looked after “liveaboards” who gave us a friendly welcome. Showers, toilets, elsan disposal and toilets were all available for the boater.



Just outside the basin is the Essex Record Office – in front of which a gravelled road stretches from the canal to the river – the hoped for route for the link between the two – just awaiting money to remove the gas pipes to the gasometers that lurk underneath. Several branches of the river wend through the town, with low arches, and so one wonders what will be gained by the link, without extensive changes to the town centre rivers themselves.

A pleasant waterway, that has little changed over 50 years, one reason being that it lies on a flood plain and so most housing and development is to be found on the valley sides. Locks have a variety of gear, and a very long windlass. Also one stands on small platforms on the lock gate itself to operate (see picture alongside) – similar to those I remember on the Barrow Navigation. The new owners are working hard to regenerate the river, the weed problem is being overcome, and a keen and reasonably sized volunteer force support the few paid enthusiastic staff – who were most welcoming and helpful to us as visiting boaters. I was surprised at the number of actual craft on the navigation – although we saw only a few moving during the week. We had five days on the navigation, and it was not enough for us to have the chance to explore Maldon; Beeleigh Abbey; the Museum of Power; the villages or to do justice to Chelmsford itself.



I was pleased to return, and hope that it’s not another 50 years before my next visit.

Ivan Cane

## DILHAM DIKE

*Alan Faulkner has been delving into the past and much of the early part of this account comes from the copy of the deeds of the dike when it was in the Association's ownership.*

Dilham Dyke, or Tyler's Cut as it is sometimes known, is a man-made half-mile long canal that runs in a northerly direction from its junction with the Smallburgh River at the south-east corner of Dilham village up to a staithe and on under a road bridge in the village to a former brickyard. Documentation about the dike can be extremely confusing with some sources suggesting that the part of the Smallburgh River that extends almost to Wayford Bridge is part of the dike and others implying the dike is part of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal. In so far as EAWA can determine the dike has always been a separate independent waterway in its own right.

Whilst we have not delved too far back into history we do know that on 20 July 1923 Charles Alfred Brown and Evelyn Kempton Brown sold the freehold of the private canal up to the bridge in Dilham together with the towing path to George Walker, a merchant of North Walsham; it comprised an area of 3 acres, 3 roods and 24 perches. On the same day Walker also acquired the freehold of the staithe at Dilham from the personal representatives of Henry Morse Taylor deceased.

Neither remained in his possession for long as on 9 May 1929 Walker sold the staithe, which also comprised the site of a coal store, together with the canal to Miss Elsie Read of Dilham. It remained in her ownership until she sold both properties to her relative George Read on 12 October 1940.

On 18 February 1963 J. Read & Sons, carpenters and wheelwrights, sold land alongside the northern end of the canal adjoining the staithe to the Dilham Properties Limited for £2,000. On the same day George Read sold his interest in the staithe and the canal to the company which also bought further land in the village from other members of the Read family.

Prior to the last set of transactions the East Anglian Waterways Association, through its energetic secretary Teddy Edwards, had become involved with the canal which he had navigated in a small motor cruiser a few years before but which he had now found to be un-navigable. In June 1959 he called for a meeting which was held at the Cross Keys Inn in Dilham to discuss re-opening the waterway.

Dilham Properties Ltd went on to build a row of bungalows backing onto the dike but it had no wish to become the long term owners of the canal. Its directors, Brian and Janet Faulks, were sympathetic to EAWA and agreed to pass over the freehold of the canal to the Association for a nominal consideration of £1. On 11 February 1966 the transfer was agreed in principle but soon foundered as, at that time, EAWA was an unincorporated body and legally not able to own property. To overcome this, the East Anglian Waterways Association Limited was incorporated on 5 February 1967 and on 13 February it became the owner of both the canal and staithe. At the time much of the dike was still un-navigable.

In 1962 Gordon Fitzgerald, a developer based at Hadleigh in Essex, who had been hoping to create a yachting basin at North Walsham, turned his attention instead to

Dilham Dike due to the lack of progress in restoring the locks on the North Walsham and Dilham Canal. He went on to acquire land beside the dike a short distance downstream of the staithe and behind the Stores in Dilham and in the summer of 1968 established moorings there which were offered for sale at £650 each; today this is the Dilham Boat Club's home.

After acquiring the canal EAWA entered into lengthy discussions with Gordon Fitzgerald; with Dilham Parish Council, and with the Dilham Village Waterways Society that had been formed in September 1968, about the state of the dike and the staithe and about the need to ensure the long-term upkeep of both. Some dredging had been carried out, paid for by Dilham Properties but in April 1970, at the instigation of EAWA, the Great Yarmouth Port & Haven Commissioners began restoration works. Some tree clearance had to be carried out to enable the dredgings to be spread and part of the staithe was quay-headed. On the completion of this work the dike was effectively fully open and in 1971 EAWA declared it to be a public navigable and the dike became part of the Broads system of waterways.

As no agreement could be reached with the parish council or village waterways society the staithe was then leased to the commissioners on 1 June 1972 for 21 years at a nominal rent of 5p per annum. The lease was renewed with what had become the Broads Authority on 1 June 1973 for a further 21 years with the rent increased to £10 per annum.

This sufficed until the beginning of 2003 when the piling on the north side of the basin opposite the staithe and which had been in poor condition for some time was now in a state of collapse. As a result Staithe Lane running along the top of the bank, had had to be closed. The cost of repairs was estimated at £70,000 and possibly far more, depending on the methods employed, sums that were far beyond EAWA's resources and the Broads Authority and Norfolk County Council would not be able to help as it was on private property. After negotiations members at EAWA's Annual General Meeting on 13 April 2003 gave their approval to transferring the dike and the staithe to the Broads Authority provided assurances were given that the dike would remain open as a public navigable highway.

Norfolk County Council decided to use a "willow-engineering" technique whereby the old sheet piles were cut off under water and three rows of willow stakes were installed. This was completed in March 2004 although the lane remained closed for a while longer to allow the stakes to develop a root system.

Being a registered charity, the transfer was not straightforward and to ensure EAWA did not contravene any of its responsibilities Norfolk County Council insisted valuers and solicitors were to be employed which incurred extra expense. Eventually on 14 February 2005 Dilham Dike and Dilham Staithe were transferred to the Broads Authority for the nominal sum of £1 with Norfolk County Council kindly assisting with the Association's legal costs. The repairs themselves had cost £62,817 which was divided equally between the Broads Authority and the County Council.

## NORTH WALSHAM AND DILHAM CANAL

There has been important progress at several locations, not least from the volunteers' viewpoint. At Briggate further work has been carried out in clearing the mill pool, as reported in our last issue, reconnecting it with the river upstream of the lock. The actual break through was on 30<sup>th</sup> January attracting "breakthrough" accounts with pictures in both the *Eastern Daily Press* and the *North Norfolk News* on 10<sup>th</sup> February. Going on from this two diggers were hard at work over the weekend of 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> March, one concentrating on the main pond area and the other on the north side of the pond and improving the entrance from the canal. Much of the spoil has been deposited between the pond and the lock building up low lying ground and at the same time creating an access. Work has also been carried out on the mill race where it is hoped to unblock the channel from the pool and under the road and open up the exit channel back to the river. As a result of all this the village of Briggate now has an environmental asset of which it can be proud and which should bring great benefits to the community.



Elsewhere sessions have been held on 13 February, 3 April and 22 May at Honing Staithe Cut which have concentrated partly on keeping the area tidy, such as regularly mowing the grass, partly on improving the riverside walk which is still boggy in places, installing two new sign posts, removing a fallen tree at Dee Bridge with two improvised seats then

being created from the trunk, and generally keeping the site attractive. Meanwhile rubbish was cleared from the river including a motor-bike frame and growing reeds were removed from the channel to improve the flow of water. The lock a few hundred yards downstream also received attention with the grass being mown and the site generally tidied up.

Sessions at Bacton Wood on 27 February, 27 March, 9 & 17 April concentrated on assisting the Old Canal Company with the major work of re-building the lock, clearing the dry channel up to and including the "breach" and some work on the further dry section of the canal up to Royston Bridge.

At Ebridge there has been major progress in clearing out the overgrown mill pond and two dredgers, one land-based and the other floating, have been involved with the compacted dredgings being spread to create a wide bank alongside the road opposite the mill buildings. The dredgers have then starting to work upstream from

the mill pond towards Bacton Wood. In all a major transformation has been achieved.

The volunteer's work programme for July to December is: -

10 July – Bacton Wood; 24 July – Honing; 7 August – Briggate; 21 August – Ebridge; 4 September – Bacton Wood; 18 September – Honing; 2 October – Briggate; 16 October – Ebridge; 30 October – Honing; 13 November – Bacton Wood; 27 November – Bacton Wood; 11 December – Briggate; 25 December – Day Off, *Happy Christmas*.

Meanwhile our long-established member Roy Sutton, BA, MSc, CEng, MICE, has re-visited Honing Lock so as to prepare a report on the cost of the work that would be needed before the restoration of the lock can begin. The task has, perhaps, been made slightly easier by the closure of the Environment Agency's water-measuring station, which included a special concrete weir in the bed of the river immediately upstream of the lock. It is thought that a new ultrasonic gauging station could be sited at Dee Bridge.

Roy's report covers such varied measures as the design of the upstream weir, the enlargement of the soke dyke downstream of the weir, the provision of a stilling basin, the need for a draw down sluice and a fish pass, and an access bridge capable to carrying heavy plant and machinery. It is a comprehensive list, Roy's report being supported by detailed designs and measurements. This, of course, is just a start, as his report does not cover the work the volunteers would have to carry out on the lock structure itself and, of course, the provision of the top and bottom lock gates and sluices.

## **ASSOCIATION CONCERNS**

**TELEPHONE NUMBERS:** There was an error in our last issue in that Ivan Cane's telephone number was shown incorrectly in the list of directors. The number should have been **01328 862435**. Ivan, and the Fakenham Laundry, would be grateful if members could use this number in future. Chris Black's is **01508 492025**.

**EASTERLING ARTICLES:** Last year, in the Membership Survey, nine members responded to say they would be willing to contribute articles to "*The Easterling*". This was excellent news to the Editor as they offered to cover a wide variety of subjects relevant to our area. We would like to remind those members of that stated intention as it would ease the load on the Editor, who currently has to research and write much of the content himself.

Articles can be on any topic either in, or outside, our area. There is no specification as to length, or how they are produced – hand-written, typed, or e-mailed direct to the Editor. Likewise pictures are equally welcome although if being sent electronically it helps if they are not embedded in the article but sent as separate attachments which can then be reduced in size or whatever to prevent the file size becoming too large for transmission.

How about it, you budding authors?

## BARGE ON THE NENE

An unusual visitor to the higher reaches of the tidal river Nene over the last couple of months has been the Environment Agency's barge "CAWOOD". Skippered by Alan Cox with the aid of two crew, she is usually based on the river Welland at Fosdyke. Her moorings here were rebuilt during the autumn 2009 equinox by Land & Water, who taking advantage of the low tides, removed the birdcage scaffolding from around the pre-driven case piles. Next silt had to be dredged and a steel mooring platform for the barge constructed. "CAWOOD" is usually to be seen either on the Welland, out in the Wash, or at Boston Haven placing rock. Some 26m by 5m and weighing 104 tonnes unladen, she is able to carry a load of 70 tonnes.

During February and March, this year, Alan brought "CAWOOD" across the Wash into the River Nene, through Wisbech, to assist with the building of stone defences at Nettle Bank, two miles below Guyhirn Bridge. Here, 200 metres of the bank had been affected by erosion, the stoning/dewarping work requiring some 2,000 tonnes of stone defence to be laid. A small amount had been delivered by road direct to the site, but most of the pitching stone has been delivered to the Bevis Hall Quay on the other side of the river – some  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile downstream of the works. "CAWOOD" was then used to transfer around 70 tonnes at a time upstream to the work site. The tidal Nene here has a strong current, being tightly contained between the flood banks, which also meant that the barge was unable to turn, and so returns to the Bevis Hall Quay stern first.



*Contributed by Ivan Cane. This article should have appeared in our February 2011 issue but due to a late amendment it had to be omitted – my apologies: Ed*



**THE EASTERLING**  
 Colour Supplement 2011  
 Celebrating Restoration in the  
 East

[www.eawa.co.uk](http://www.eawa.co.uk)



Bedford School Pupils  
 Aug 74



June 74

Great Barford Lock, Great Ouse 1974



Middle Level "Fenatic" 1970's



Upwell Oct 72



Outwell  
 Basin  
 March 75



Marmount Priory March 74

Photos - 1970's - Alan  
 Faulkner



2010- Ivan Cane, Robert  
 Felton, Kevin Moore.

**North Walsham & Dilham Canal - Restoration started December 2000.  
Work now in partnership with the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust**

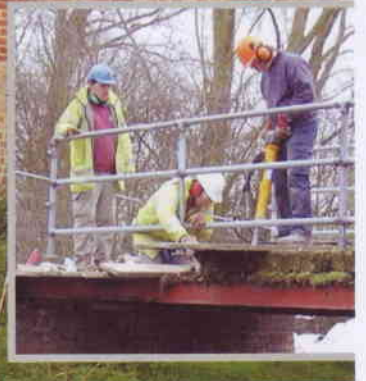
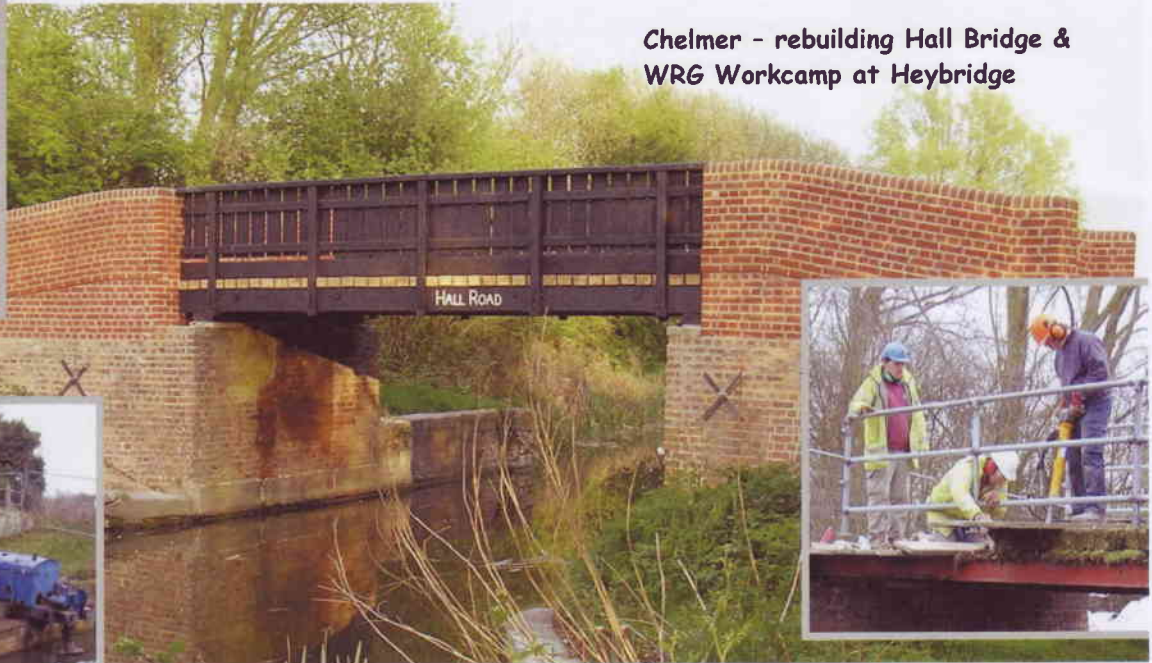


Photos - Alan Bertram, Graham Brown, Ivan Cane, Darren Cooke.



## Recently Around

Chelmer - rebuilding Hall Bridge & WRG Workcamp at Heybridge



Photos – Roy Chandler - Essex Waterways Ltd



Billingham Skirth Channel Clearance



Photos –  
Reg  
Johnson -  
BSRS

Gipping - Baylham Lock Landing Stage



Photos – Spencer Greystrom – River Gipping Trust