



# THE EASTERLING

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## FURTHER PROGRESS ON THE NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM



*Volunteers working on clearing mud from Bacton Wood lock chamber, whilst Laurie Ashton conducts the operation from the top cill. (Pictures by Alan Bertram)*

The work party on Sunday 10 June saw further progress at Bacton Wood Lock with the chamber being pumped out revealing mounds of black mire and rubbish. A temporary dam had been erected below the site of the bottom gates creating a small pool and before removing the last of the water from the chamber small fish and water snails were collected and transferred to this pool. A couple of tons of mud were then laboriously pushed out of the lock revealing the "v" shaped bottom gate stops. This enabled careful measurements to be taken – data that will be needed when the manufacture of the bottom lock gates ultimately gets under way.

As shown in these pictures the replacement brickwork of the lock has now been completed and the scaffolding was removed by the volunteers on 27 May in preparation for the drain down. It represents a complete transformation from only a couple of years ago and reflects great credit on Mr & Mrs Ashton.



*Inside Bacton Wood Lock before the chamber was finally drained down. Already there is a steep drop down from the top sill as shown on the left, whilst on the right the volunteers clear small fish from the chamber. (Alan Bertram)*

At the same time a clear-up around the lock site has been made to remove plastic and other sand bags, brick wrappings and general debris resulting from the building works, so as to improve its general appearance.

And it has not stopped there for progress has been made at Royston Bridge in two important areas. Just downstream of the bridge where the Wherry Inn building still stands, there was need for quay heading to be installed, before there could be any thought of restoring water to this stretch of the canal. Part of the £1,000 grant made by the Association to the NW&DCT was earmarked to purchase the timber that would be needed for this purpose. On 29 July the work got under way as the picture below clearly shows. At the same time the former spillway a short distance downstream has been reconstructed in a major operation involving steel-piles, lines of brick and all topped off with a good layer of concrete. A party from London's Waterways Recovery Group had a major hand in the work at Royston Bridge. .



(Left) The start of the quay heading work alongside the site of the former Wherry Inn at Royston Bridge whilst (right) a short distance away work gets going on the complete rebuilding of the old spillway.



*Pictures by Alan Bertram and Ivan Cane*

More views of the work on re-creating the weir on the site of the original structure, which is situated a short distance downstream of the Wherry Inn and on the same southern side. After the steel piles had been driven, lines of bricks were laid which were then capped as barrow after barrow loads of concrete were wheeled in. Sadly the materials ran out with the work not quite completed.

All this is an important step towards ultimately restoring water to this dry section as making provision of an adequate weir to cater for any excess water is a priority requirement. Other necessary work will be raising the height of some of the canal banks on this section and making them watertight.



Stalwarts working on the quay heading at a subsequent session, and showing the work nearly finished.

## LAND DRAINAGE GRANT

In August 2010 our then director Graham Brown made an application, on behalf of the Association, to North Norfolk District Council for a Land Drainage Grant to carry out work to reduce flooding in North Walsham. The application was particularly centred on the mile-long canal pound from Ebridge up to Bacton Wood with the object of maintaining the integrity of the channel to accept flood flows, to maintain consistent water levels enabling the establishment of habitats and to ensure no degradation of existing built structures.

At the time virtually no level was maintained in the canal at Ebridge lock and the channel was densely overgrown in places. The application indicated that £4,600 of voluntary labour had been contributed in 2009/10 on the Ebridge pound alone with a further £850 in the first quarter of 2010/11 whilst £30,000 had been invested by the Old Canal Company Ltd. in 2009/10 and much more was planned for 2010/11.

As members will know major works were carried out on the canal transforming the overgrown mill pool and the entire reach up to Bacton Wood to a wide clear waterway and the water level was raised by keeping the sluice at Ebridge Lock closed. The transformation has been dramatic although this has attracted some criticism in some quarters for the temporary adverse effect on wildlife caused by the dredging work. It has to be said the wildlife has recovered and improved significantly since then and permissive public footpaths have been opened beside the canal.

In April this year we were delighted to be awarded a £2,000 Land Drainage Grant by the District Council and to whom we are very grateful.

All the points on the Action List have either been carried out or are in hand.

- 1 Dredging: maintain the channel profile through the removal of sediments
- 2 Maintain Ebridge Weir Structure to ensure it operates as built to make certain its ability to control water levels in pound 4
- 3 Maintain culverts with the support of the Internal Drainage Board and Norfolk County Council Highways to ensure they can accept flows from watercourses – these are the Ebridge lock culvert and a culvert under the canal running west-east from adjacent farm land into the back soke
- 4 Maintain water levels through the maintenance of existing water control structures.
- 5 Identify opportunities for habitat enhancement on or adjacent to the canal channel. Identify maintenance regimes that will enhance the naturalisation of works following the establishment of permanent water level management arrangements.
- 6 Identify opportunities for the creation of permissive public access along pound 4.
- 7 Identify opportunities for enabling of works that would mitigate flooding and increase the resilience of the canal channel to accept flood flows. It is accepted that such schemes where the creation of new water control structures are identified as mitigation should be undertaken with consideration given to planning and legislative requirements.

## MICHAEL HENRY HELLIWELL

We very much regret to record that Michael was admitted to hospital in May with a lung infection and passed away on 16 June aged 92. Born in Halifax in the West Riding of Yorkshire he took part in annual family holidays on the Broads since the age of eight. After training as a solicitor, in 1957 he joined a firm that became Capron & Helliwell in Stalham and Hoveton. Michael joined EAWA in February 1961 when he was already involved in safeguarding navigation rights on the Broads.

From 1985 to 1988 he was particularly involved in the complex negotiations between the Norfolk & Suffolk Boating Association and those drawing up the Norfolk & Suffolk Broads Act which led to the establishment of the Broads Authority. In particular Michael, with others, succeeded in having a clause included in the Bill to protect navigation, thus making it different from National Parks which are subject to the "Sanford Principle" in that when there is an irreconcilable conflict, nature conservation issues will always prevail. Michael was also involved in the adaption of Byelaws that involved navigation, speed limits, beam restrictions and other issues. Subsequently he served for some time on the Broads Joint Consultative Committee.

Michael had a keen interest in the North Walsham & Dilham Canal and in the 1950s cruised up the Honing Lock on many occasions. Being a solicitor he recorded details of his trips in the form of an affidavit so that it could be used in evidence out the legality of his trips when, as it subsequently proved, the right was challenged. Initially his cruises were in a 20-foot motor sailor "*Cormorant*" which had an inboard engine and a draught of 2-feet.

In the 1960s Michael replaced "*Cormorant*" with the 22-foot motor cruiser "*Manto*" when it was still possible to reach Honing lock with an inboard engine and a draught of just under 2-feet. On 4 October 1975 he navigated "*Manto*" to within sight of the lock and on 12 March 1988 he reached 200 yards west of the East Ruston Arm before going aground. His last trip up the canal was in September 1991 when he only got to about 75 yards above Tonnage Bridge.

*Michael's widow Marie remains an EAWA member, and she and her daughter Charlotte have provided most of the information in this account – Ed.*

## CHARLES FOX

We also regret to record that Charlie Fox died on 28 February aged 74. He was probably the most active and greatest supporter of boating in the Middle Level and really pioneered the revival of Fens boating. After training as a boat builder in Ely he set up his own workshop in March in 1952 where he built dinghies and hired out rowing boats and canoes. Charlie built his first narrow boat in 1973 and this developed into a flourishing business that outgrew its premises and in 1980 he built a marina to the west of March, digging out the basin with his own dredger. It can now accommodate 200 boats and the Fox Boats hire fleet is based there. This includes the Urban Fox class (2/4 berth), the Fox Tail class (4/6 berth), the Leisurely Fox class (4/6 berth) and the Silver Fox class (5/7 berth). Charlie retired in 1997 and the business is being carried on by his daughters Paula and Tracey. Paula has been an EAWA life member since August 1993.

## HERE AND THERE

**CANAL AND RIVER TRUST:** On 2 July 2012 the newly created “Canal & River Trust” took over responsibility from British Waterways for the nationalised canals and rivers in England and Wales, the necessary legislation having passed through Parliament on 26 June. And the event was formally launched and widely celebrated on Thursday 12 July with a series of events across the country. This is a subject we have not referred to in our pages before. The river Witham is the only BW waterway that comes within our jurisdiction and whilst it is expected that the Environment Agency’s waterways may be taken over by the Trust in due course, until satisfactory funding arrangements were agreed by the government for the BW waterways the whole matter was somewhat academic anyway.

Tentative plans are that responsibility for the three main Fenland rivers – the Welland, Nene and Great Ouse and smaller waterways such as the Ancholme and Suffolk Stour, could be assumed by the Trust perhaps from 2015. Set up along the lines of the National Trust, the C&RT is a registered charity. It has created eleven local waterway partnerships to cover the system whilst the three waterways museums at Ellesmere Port, Gloucester and Stoke Bruerne now come within its auspices, with the Waterways Trust being disbanded along with the Inland Waterway Advisory Council. We shall watch the Trust’s progress with great interest particularly as there is still some scepticism in many quarters about the whole concept and about the way the structure of the new organisation.

**WIVENHOE FERRY:** Launched in 1992, 40 years after the original service stopped, the ferry between Wivenhoe, Rowhedge and Fingringhoe celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> year in service at the beginning of July when the Mayor of Wivenhoe was ferried across to Rowhedge to commemorate the anniversary.

**COLCHESTER FERRY:** The new ferry service from Colchester’s Hythe Quay to Wivenhoe, Rowhedge and Brightlingsea and back was christened on Tuesday 31 July when a group of councillors boarded the boat for her maiden voyage; it took 90 minutes to get to Brightlingsea with the two intermediate stops. A daily service is being provided but to an extent these are subject to the tides and will only operate if high tide is between 11am and 4pm. The Brightlingsea Harbour Commissioners are operating the service – details from the harbour office on 01206 302200.

**HYDRO-ELECTRIC BEDFORD:** On 18 June Dave Hodgson, Mayor of Bedford, cut the ribbon to open a new hydro-electric generating plant on the site of the old boat rollers off the Embankment. The new plant featuring an Archimedes Screw turbine will generate around 168,000 kilowatts of energy every year which could save taxpayers £32,000 and 70,000 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The scheme is not without its critics who are concerned with the effect on wildlife and on eels in particular, although the Environment Agency, when giving the scheme its consent, insisted on an elver pass being installed to allow young eels to travel upstream. There are concerns as to whether the limited volume of water available will be sufficient to produce the expected returns. Nevertheless we wish this new enterprise, which was foreshadowed in the recent Bedford Waterspace Study, well

**CARDINGTON:** The old timber landing stages at Cardington Lock have been replaced by the Environment Agency. The new ones that are designed to have a lifespan of over 50 years have galvanised frames and steel piles. And non-slip mesh decking has been installed, topped with reinforced glass-fibre plastic mesh impregnated with silicon.

**GREAT BARFORD BRIDGE:** Due to delays caused by the weather and the need for some extra work the restrictions at the bridge will probably now last unto the middle of October. Work started on the north navigation arch in September with the intention of finishing all the arches south of the navigation channel before switching operations to the north bank.

**GODMANCHESTER:** Starting in mid August contractors Drake Towage will be carrying out flood defence work, including piling, in the town leading to the width of channel being considerably reduced for the duration of the work.

**DENVER:** During August contractors were on site to carry out emergency work to de-silt the exit of the lock gates and the removal of the silt island deposited in the river below the lock. This has become a regular problem and we hope these efforts have a longer lasting effect than previously.

**ISLEHAM:** The Environment Agency has completely refurbished the slipway at Isleham and this will enable it to be used for its own weed boats and maintenance craft. It also provides an excellent facility to launch day boats. To prevent unlicensed boats from using the facility a security barrier has been installed but this can be opened using the EA's navigation key.

**RIVER WISSEY:** A new £400,000 syphon has been installed between the Wissey and the Cut Off Channel to enable eels and sea trout to travel to their spawning grounds more easily. As part of a research project 100 eels, trout and coarse fish have been tagged with tiny transponders as part of an Environment Agency research project and the pipeline is fitted with high-tech sensors to detect these tags. The siphon, which was designed and built in Holland, has been funded by efficiency savings within the EA. It was officially opened on 21 September.

Some time ago many trees on the south bank of the river between the sugar beet factory and the junction with the Great Ouse were removed. Having been queried, the EA has explained it was carried out simply to preserve the integrity of the flood banks. Many of the trees were self-set willows that have a large shallow root system which, if left, could remove a lot of the bank if they were blown over. Some were also affecting the piling along the river edge and if left could have caused damage or blocked passage of boats in the area.

**HOE MILL LOCK:** Essex Waterways has opened a new Camping and Caravanning Club certificated site at the lock where there is a flat mowed grass camping area adjacent to the car park. It can accept caravans, motor homes or trailer-tents as well as tents. There is a small toilet block with wash basin and drinking water but no showers or other facilities. The company also has a small camp site at Heybridge Lock, but for small tents only as there is no road access.

**CHELMER CANAL TRUST:** At a meeting held in Langford & Ulting Village Hall on 24 April members learned about the work on containing and combating invasive species threatening the navigation. One menace is Japanese Knotweed where there was an outbreak on the canal to the east of Wave Bridge, Heybridge. Contractors had to be brought in to deal with it – it is very strong and can grow through concrete. And it has to be very carefully disposed of as even small fragments can reproduce. Then Himalayan Balsam is making its presence felt along the navigation. It starts growing early in the spring and grows vigorously. With large attractive flower heads and exploding seed pods it can spread rapidly down rivers and streams and can shade out native plants. Giant Hogweed grows taller than head height and is another that requires expert removal as it causes burning and irritation to the skin and workers have to wear protective clothing.

American floating pennywort has spread throughout the country's waterways and the Trust has been in the vanguard of removal efforts on the Chelmer and the Blackwater rivers. Crassula (New Zealand stonecrop) takes over any water space like a green carpet to the detriment of everything else; one removal method is to spread black plastic over the water surface, shutting out the light. And American Signal Cray fish introduced by the restaurant trade and which also come in the ballast water discharged from visiting ships, is wiping out native crayfish but trapping is not allowed because of the danger of catching otters instead. And mink, released by animal rights supporters, have caused environmental havoc with the population of water birds, voles and fish being decimated in place. A comprehensive recapturing programme is currently under way and is meeting with some success.

**ESSEX WATERWAYS:** Graham Brown, formerly a senior Ranger with Essex & Suffolk Water based at Hanningfield Reservoir, has been appointed the new Waterways Manager for the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation. He took up his new duties on 10 September and is based at Paper Mill Lock. Meanwhile his predecessor, Colin Edmunds, will be working on a part-time basis from the end of September until he retires at the end of November.

**LOUTH NAVIGATION:** Following the damage by flood waters as reported in our last issue the Grade 2 listed Alvingham Lock No 6 has been inspected by IWA Engineer Roy Sutton and EA Engineer Andy Charlesworth and a full engineering report has been prepared. As the lock is in the Coastal Action Zone funding may be available for the repairs needed.

**LINCOLNSHIRE:** As the centre of Lincoln being on flood alert a number of boaters planning to attend the South Kyme Festival & Boaters Gathering over the first weekend in May were unable to do so. Locally based boats were less badly affected and supported the land-based activities in and around Kyme Tower and village.

**FENS WATERWAYS LINK:** Paul Separovic is taking over from Erin Witcomb-Vos as the Environment Agency's Partnership Manager for the Donington to Surfleet Link and the Waterspace Study implementation for Spalding whilst Erin will continue to lead the Boston Barrier project.



Bank protection work is being carried out at Hubberts Bridge and this is likely to be on-going until next April. At present stone is loaded onto a barge there for taking to the work site. Meanwhile the Environment Agency is about to start design work on the planned new slipway and the extension to the moorings there.

Our picture shows Nuttall's barge about to enter Black Sluice Lock and is reproduced courtesy of "Aegre", the journal of the IWA's East Midlands

Region.

**STOUR LIGHTER:** It is good to be able to report that the restoration work on the "*John Constable*", one of the surviving river Stour lighters, is making good progress at the Pioneer Sailing Trust's workshop at Brightlingsea and it is hoped she will be able to operate on the river between Sudbury, Great Cornard and Great Henny from next summer. The boat is being reconstructed in oak – she was originally built in the dry dock at Flatford about 200 years ago – but was sunk in Ballingdon Creek in 1914 along with all the other lighters to prevent them being used in a German invasion. Dug out in 1972 and restored over the next few years she fell into disrepair again. Under the re-building it is intended passengers will be in the fore hold with batteries to power two electric motors in the rear hold. The deck layout will be identical to the original with a bridge steering position between the two holds.

**NORTHAMPTON:** A new pedestrian and cycle bridge has been installed over the Nene and the Grand Union Canal at Northampton to improve access as part of Northampton Borough Council's commitment to enhancing its river frontage.

**PIPPS FORD:** With the work originally planned for this bridge virtually finished the landowner has asked the River Gipping Trust volunteers to explore re-opening the old by-wash. As well as clearing out the channel this would entail rebuilding the original brick abutments and building a new timber footbridge, removing the present causeway across the channel and creating a weir. Talks are taking place with the Environment Agency about all this which would secure the historic layout at Pipp's Ford and facilitate any future proposal to put gates back on the lock.

**MICHAEL HANDFORD:** This long-standing EAWA member has produced a new book – "*The Cotswold Canals Towpath Guide*". Complete with 100 black and white illustrations the book is in paperback and costs £12.99. 978-1-84868-843-8. Available from bookshops or from Amberley Publishing [www.amberley-books.com](http://www.amberley-books.com)

**THE EASTERLING:** Thanks to all those members who have elected to receive "*The Easterling*" by e-mail. A significant number have already agreed to this representing a useful saving to the Association. It is recognised that not everyone is in a position to receive e-mails and we shall continue to provide printed copies, although we are exploring ways to reduce the size of the journal so as to cut down on postage costs.

## **BROADS NOTES AND NEWS**

**BREYDON WATER:** Following its “takeover” of Breydon Water from 1 June the Broads Authority has initiated steps to make the crossing between the northern and the southern Broads safer, particularly for novice boaters, with £100,000 being earmarked in this year’s budget to begin the work. Measures planned include installing electronic signs at the entrances to Breydon Water warning boaters of hazardous conditions, such as gales or fog. The technology will be trialed first in partnership with Network Rail on the swing bridges at Reedham and Somerleyton, Gauge boards are also being considered at the Berney Arms making it easier for boaters to see whether the tide was low enough for them to cross over and go under Vauxhall Bridge into Great Yarmouth.

And to help prevent boats running aground on mud, which was a particular problem last year, signage is to be improved and a number of posts marking the navigation channel will be replaced. There is also a possibility the ranger patrol that currently operates from Easter to October, may be extended to become all year round. Improvements are also planned to revamp Yarmouth yacht station.

**BROADS AUTHORITY SURVEY:** Boat owners have generally shown their approval of the Authority’s management of the waterways and the value for money given. Some 65% felt the Authority did a good job in 2009 against 55% in 2005. And 83% felt the Authority gave value for money, the same as 2009. Boaters priorities for future spending were shown to be the availability of free moorings, more dredging and better water quality.

**BROADS AUTHORITY HEAD OFFICE:** At the end of November the Authority will be vacating its premises at Dragonfly House in the St. James Business Quarter and moving to smaller offices at Yare House in Thorpe Road. These are reasonably close to the railway station, to Norwich Yacht Station and to the Authority’s dockyard at Griffin Lane. Government cuts to the National Park Grant has resulted in a reduction in the number of staff employed from 170 to 140, meaning less space is required and the move will save somewhere in the region of £2 million over the next 10 years whilst a rent free period will help cover some of the relocation costs..

**PRISMA PROJECT** (Promoting Integrated Sediment Management) This involves a partnership between the Broads Authority and Belgian, Dutch and French waterway authorities and is designed to develop projects such as improved dredging techniques, new treatment methods of the dredged material and trials of beneficial reuse opportunities. It is funded by the European Interreg initiative and a E3,204,226 grant application across all the partners was made on 20 January 2011 and approved on 10 May 2011. As part of this the Broads Authority has been awarded £800,000 towards £1,600,000 estimates covering a variety of schemes.

The work on Duck Broad estimated at £294,000 is one of the prime objectives. Here the perimeter of the new island has been completed using 250 gabion baskets and the dredging of Heigham Sound is due to start this coming winter with the dredged material being used to create the island. Another major project, estimated at £240,000 involves spit restoration at Salhouse Broad. Design and planning has been completed and dredging is due to start in September. Other major projects include

£130,000 for land-based habitat creation, £410,000 for the purchase of equipment and materials, dockyard developments £326,000 and general costs £200,000. As part of this an order has been placed for a new low wash wherry that is due to be delivered in October whilst building a new workshop for the dockyard is out to tender.

Last year the Broads Authority dredged 47,000 cubic metres of mud from the rivers and the broads. The locations included Upton Little Broad which had silted up, Thorpe River Green and the main river Yare so as to improve depths on the approach to bridges, and on the lower Bure where the sediment has been placed where it can dewater naturally and then contribute to stabilise the banks as part of flood defence works.

**MOORINGS:** Some 255 yards of new free mooring were created by the Broads Authority in its last financial year and 33 existing moorings were refurbished or upgraded. This brings the number of free moorings to 64 throughout the system. One of the new locations is 150 yards at Womack Dyke. At Reedham swing bridge the downstream moorings have been doubled in length to 50 yards and another pontoon has been installed upstream of the bridge providing 75 yards of mooring for boats waiting for the bridge to open or for de-masting. The mooring upstream of the Somerleyton swing bridge has also been extended to 75 yards. Meanwhile safety chains and ladders have been added to all moorings that did not already have them.

**NEW WENSUM BRIDGE:** On 30 May the new Jarrold Bridge over the river Wensum was celebrated by the playing of a specially-composed four-minute fanfare by composer David Stowell. The bridge links the St. James business development to the car park beside the Adam & Eve public house and its opening was blessed by, The Rt. Rev Graham James, the Bishop of Norwich. The plan for the bridge was conceived more than 20 years ago by Peter Jarrold, former chairman of Jarrolds, and has been in public use since last December.

Meanwhile a campaign has been launched to try and make the Wensum an attraction for tourists to the city. The Wensum River Parkway Project and the Norwich Society are pressing for action to encourage pedestrian and cycle access to the river and to prevent private developments from blocking access routes.

**BIG DOG FERRY:** Beccles Lido has taken over the responsibility for running this ferry which operates between Beccles and the historic Locks Inn at Geldeston. It can carry up to 12 passengers for the 40-minute picturesque trip to the pub. The ferry was started in 2006 but after three years was stopped for two seasons before being reinstated last year by Paul Aldis of Worlingham. Health problems are preventing him from carrying on but with help from the Broads Authority and from Graham Elliott, a Waveney district councillor for Beccles, the service will now continue; it runs five times a day in the season.

**BURGH ST. PETER FERRY:** Another ferry service has been restored this year across the Waveney. On Saturday 26 May a bell rang out as the well known botanist David Bellamy re-opened the link between Burgh St. Peter in Norfolk and the Carlton Marshes in Suffolk. The bell was last used in the 1950s as a way of attracting the ferryman who helped walkers cross the river thus saving a 30-minute road journey. The owners of the Waveney River Centre, James & Ruth Knight, have joined with

the Suffolk Wildlife Trust to reinstate the service which has been out of use for several years. The ferry will be available from dawn until dusk; it can take 12 people, the fare is £2 one way, £3 return or £10 for a family.

**RIVER WAVENEY:** Ten new wooden angling platforms have been installed at Worlingham to improve facilities for anglers. Access to an existing 160-yard stretch of reed bed has been created via a boardwalk and the new platforms will compensate for restrictions on fishing from the nearby small but busy 24-hour mooring. Two of the angling platforms are close to the car park and have a granite path enabling them to take wheel chairs and the other eight provide access over the reeds. The platforms should help to prevent the pond from eroding while providing a safe and dry place for the anglers to sit free from the disturbance of boats.

The Broads Authority and the Environment Agency worked in partnership with the Broads Angling Strategy Group to plan the platforms which have been installed at a cost of £50,000. The Broads Authority provided the materials and the Environment Agency paid for the construction work.

**ALBION:** On Wednesday 8 August the wherry *Albion* passed under Foundry Bridge to moor at the Norwich Yacht Station on Riverside Road for a public open day. Volunteers were on hand all day to welcome members of the public to inspect the craft, to learn how she was managed by a man and a boy, why the ceiling is on the floor, and where Jenny Morgan lives.

**NORADA:** On Sunday 8 July the Wherry Yacht Charter Charitable Trust welcomed back the wherry yacht *Norada* after she had undergone a lengthy period of repairs that had started in 2005. The event was celebrated at Salhouse by well wishers that included friends of the trust, invited guests and members of the public. The extensive restoration works included major repairs to her hull and decks and a new sail giving her a stunning new look.

The Trust also owns the wherry yacht *Olive* that is about to undergo similar restoration work and for which a £60,000 grant has been awarded under the Rural Development Programme for England, and the wherry yacht *Hathor* which is to be given an overhaul and where a fundraising campaign is due to be launched. Other wherries on the Broads are the two surviving trading craft – *Albion* and *Maud* – and three privately-owned pleasure wherries *Ardea*, *Solace* and *White Moth*.

**KILLER SHRIMP:** A voracious predator - *dikerogammarus villosus* - is spreading rapidly through the Broads and is killing a range of native shrimps, damsel flies, young fish and insect larvae. It is smaller than a 20p coin making it difficult to spot and experts have been called in to advise on the best way to control its spreading.

The shrimp was first discovered in Barton Broad and then in the Ant and Bure rivers and is continuing to spread. Emanating from Eastern Europe it will be virtually impossible to eliminate and the focus is on trying to control its spread. To step up the battle a new wetlands biosecurity officer, funded by Defra, the Environment Agency and the Broads Authority has been appointed.

## THE “ELLA”

The last edition of the *Easterling* commented on the sailing of six wherries to mark the centenary of the building of the last wherry, the *Ella*, who was built at Allen’s yard at Coltishall in 1912. Without a keel, for the canal was too shallow, she drew 3’4”, was 12’ wide and carried 23 ton. (The slipping keels were detached at Wayford Bridge and left moored against the bank until the wherries returned).

She was one of the few wherries that traded on the North Walsham & Dilham Canal, but unlike many, she was motorised with an 8HP Thorneycroft “Handy-Billy” engine. Her mast was used purely as a derrick, as can be seen in the picture at How Hill.



Records show that in 1923 six wherries traded on the canal, carrying 2,300 tons of corn, animal feed, fertilisers and oak bullet for treating kippers at Great Yarmouth. But by 1931, only the *Ella* was left, carrying 1,600 tons in 83 trips. Then in 1934 she sailed from

Bacton Wood Staithe, with a load of barley, for the last time. However, her links with the canal did not end there, for she was then laid up in the Ebridge Millpond. Her steerer had been Nathaniel (Nat) Bircham, and he decided to buy her in 1936 for £150, from Press & Pallett of Bacton Wood Mills.

By this time the canal was in a poor state of repair, and the *Ella* had to be brought down to the Ant. His son, John, recounts watching her passing through the lock. He was about eight at the time, and stood on the bridge watching as they patched the gates to be able to raise the water level, despite this they still had to heave on the beams to open the top gates. At last they got *Ella* into the lock and closed the gates and emptied the water, then as the boat started to float out under the bridge, John thought that the bridge was going over his father and his wherry, and was swallowing them up – so he screamed and screamed!

Nat obviously brought *Ella* back into a working condition for she was entered into the Wroxham Broad Regatta in 1938, however her main use was carrying sugar beet to Cantley. When that trade finished she was used for carrying soil and then as a dump barge, by which time she was badly maintained. *Ella* eventually ended up on the bank of Decoy Broad in 1962.

*My thanks to John Bircham for his recollections and to Trevor Hipperson & Roger Watts of the Norfolk Wherry Trust for help with the technical details and Arthur Walker’s notes of 1956. Picture of “Ella” courtesy of Ludham Archive/Boardman family archive.*

Ivan Cane

## AYLSHAM NAVIGATION CENTENARY

### COMMEMORATION OF A GREAT FLOOD

On the morning of August 26<sup>th</sup> 2012, it was raining heavily as some 39 1<sup>st</sup> Buxton & Lamas Sea Scouts and friends left Aylsham in a variety of canoes and kayaks, by lunchtime the rains had ceased. However, exactly a century earlier, the rain had not stopped - in fact more than three month's average rainfall of 12½ inches fell in just 29 hours. In the ensuing floods, 52 Norfolk bridges were blown and all five of the Aylsham Navigation's locks were destroyed. The wherry *Zulu* ended up on the road and had to be manhandled back into the navigation at Buxton, and then again around the remains of Horstead Lock. Over on the North Walsham & Dilham Canal, a breach occurred at Bacton Wood, but the locks and bridges remained intact, and the owners were able to undertake repairs. Rebuilding the structures on the Aylsham Navigation was put at £4000, but the proprietors there were unable to raise the funds, and the navigation was closed. One wonders if, had the offer to buy the Aylsham Navigation by the owners of the North Walsham Canal in February 1912, been accepted, whether the funding to repair the navigation would have been raised.

The convoy of craft from Aylsham was to commemorate, with a sack of Norfolk-grown barley, the last load carried along the navigation, with many of the canoeists also carrying bags of potatoes. Meanwhile, the Bure Navigation Conservation Trust had organised a traditional fête on Coltishall Common to mark the anniversary. Here, heritage, transport and water-related charity stalls, folk musicians, a display of the Bure Navigation Embroidery created by members of the Aylsham Women's Institute, sales of a new book on the history of the Navigation and of a DVD by John Parker entitled *Wherry for Aylsham* were centred around the wherry *Albion*. At 2 p.m. the flotilla arrived and the "cargoes" were handed across to members of the Wherry Trust, for onward carriage down the Bure the following day.



The Bure Navigation Conservation Trust had been formed, under the guidance of Chairman Stuart Wilson, to commemorate the centenary and to spearhead legacy projects, such as the history of the navigation, *Sail and Storm - The Aylsham Navigation*, written by the Aylsham Local History Society in conjunction with the UEA. Another scheme is to complete a footpath along

the full 9½ miles of the navigation from Coltishall to Aylsham, with interpretive notice boards and records of the river's flora and fauna. Further information about the BNCT and its objectives can be found at [www.aylsham-navigation.norfolkparishes.gov.uk/](http://www.aylsham-navigation.norfolkparishes.gov.uk/), or on their Facebook page.

*Ivan Cane*

## THE RIVER NENE LOCKS

Under the Nene Catchment Board's modernisation scheme in the 1930s all the locks were rebuilt and fitted with mitre gates at the upstream end and vertical guillotine gates at the downstream end. These guillotines were heavy to operate and acted as a deterrent to pleasure traffic and in recent years most have been electrified or have been replaced by mitre gates.

<b>No</b>	<b>Lock</b>	<b>O/S Ref</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Status</b>
1	Northampton Becketts Park	758600	0. 4	Mitre gates spring 1981
2	Rush Mills	777593	1. 6	Mitre gates spring 1981
3	Abingdon	780597	2. 0	New lock & mitre gates 1979
4	Weston Favell	792605	2... 9	Electrified 1990
5	Clifford Hill	805607	3. 7	Electrified 1990
6	Billing	813610	4. 3	Electrified 1990
7	Cogenhoe	831613	5. 4	Electrified February 2001
8	Whiston	847617	6. 5	Electrified June 2002
9	White Mills	857621	7. 2	Electrified April 2003
10	Earls Barton	867628	8. 1	Electrified April 2003
11	Doddington	876636	8. 8	Electrified June 2002 **
12	Wollaston	888645	9. 9	Electrified February 2001
13	Upper Wellingborough	900662	11. 2	Mitre gates March 2002
14	Lower Wellingborough	909671	12. 1	Mitre gates March 2003
15	Ditchford	933682	13. 9	Electrified radial gate
16	Higham Ferrers	955701	15. 9	Mitre gates March 2002
17	Irthlingborough	960714	16. 8	Electrified April 2006
18	Upper Ringstead	967745	19. 1	Winding wheel
19	Lower Ringstead	973571	19. 7	Electrified 2001
20	Woodford	977770	21. 9	Winding wheel
21	Denford	993769	22. 8	Winding wheel
22	Islip	992791	24. 2	Electrified June 2002
23	Titchmarsh	015810	26. 3	Electrified 2004 **
24	Wadenhoe	011833	28. 7	Electrified April 2006 **
25	Lilford	026838	29. 7	Electrified June 2002
26	Upper Barnwell	038870	31. 9	Electrified 2000 **
27	Lower Barnwell	042874	32. 3	Electrified 1990
28	Ashton	053877	34. 1	Winding wheel
29	Cotterstock	046902	36. 2	Electrified 2005 **
30	Perio	044923	38. 0	Winding wheel
31	Warmington	072921	40. 4	Winding wheel **
32	Elton	083940	42. 0	Electrified 2004 **
33	Yarwell	075972	45. 0	Electrified July 2007 **
34	Wansford	075983	46. 2	Electrified April 2002
35	Water Newton	110974	49. 9	Electrified June 2001
36	Alwalton	131963	51. 7	Electrified 2004
37	Orton	166972	55. 4	Electrified 2003
38	Dog in a Doublet Sluice	273993	62. 5	All gates electrified 1937

All the locks, except Dog in a Doublet, have mitre gates at the upstream end. Locks marked \*\* are reversible in times of high river flow when the top gates can be secured open and the guillotine raised to discharge flood water.

Thanks are due to the Environment Agency's Sue Cant for her assistance with the dates in this list which replaces the list that appeared in an earlier issue.

## NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL

At the end of September the Association launched its new Position Statement and Acknowledgement of the purpose for the North Walsham & Dilham Canal.

The comprehensive document dated May 2012 has been put together by Graham Brown, then an EAWA director, and his colleague Richard Powell but with major input from several members of the Association and of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust. It covers diverse topics such as Heritage, Environment, Landscape, Community and Recreation and features the Association's re-designed logo. Roger Sexton, our Chairman, has provided a foreword.

The document is based on over twelve years of experience in promoting, coordinating and delivering voluntary work on Norfolk's only locked canal. It opens with a general description of the canal and explains how the Association became involved. It then describes the main features of the canal travelling northwards with details of the key work achievements to date at each site, the proposed next steps and all with appropriate illustrations, often on a before and after basis.

From Honing Lock, which has been cleared of damaging tree growth, we visit Honing Staithe that has been turned into a local amenity with a new circular footpath to and from Weaver's Way. Next is Briggate Lock, which was the scene of the very first working party in December 2000 and has been largely cleared of damaging growth whilst Briggate Mill Pond and Staithe alongside have been transformed to provide an asset for the community. Then it is on to Ebridge Lock where a head of water is now maintained and the canal above has been transformed from an overgrown and lifeless stretch into a wide open channel where wildlife has made a welcome return.

Likewise at Bacton Wood where the lock has been completely rebuilt by the Old Canal Company Ltd and new top lock gates have been fitted albeit the reach above is still dry. Considerable clearance work has been achieved at Royston Bridge and on up to Swafield Bridge, beyond which point the canal was been officially abandoned.

Sections follow dealing with current recreational use, the features of the canal, the environment and including a vision for the future. This covers maintaining, restoring and improving the canal's infrastructure and channel to ensure the retention of unique local, regional, and national industrial heritage; to enable the canal to fulfil its land drainage and flood management function; to enable people to enjoy quiet recreation and public access to the waterway and its environs; and to enhance, connect and re-establish habitats for the improvement of local biodiversity. And the document ends up with sections on delivery, funding, and practical work with site information, land ownership and a table of distances. We see it as a blue print for the way forward.

The document is being circulated widely by our member Tom Carr and if any member wishes to see a copy they are available for £3 (post free) from Tom at 18 Old Library Mews, Norwich, NR1 1ET ([tomcarr44@gmail.com](mailto:tomcarr44@gmail.com)), from David Revill at 43 Kings Road, Coltishall, NR12 7DS ([davgis@live.co.uk](mailto:davgis@live.co.uk)) or from Alan Faulkner, 43 Oaks Drive, Colchester, CO3 3PS ([alan.faulkner22@btinternet.com](mailto:alan.faulkner22@btinternet.com)).