



# THE EASTERLING

## JOURNAL OF THE EAST ANGLIAN WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

VOLUME EIGHT, NUMBER NINE

OCTOBER 2007

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### THE RAILWAY BLOCKAGE

In the early morning of Friday 22 June a fully-loaded English, Welsh & Scottish Railways/Lafarge self-discharging freight train was derailed shortly after branching off the main Cambridge to King's Lynn line at Ely Dock Junction in the direction of Soham and as it was crossing over the Great Ouse on Hawks Bridge. Eleven of the thirty-seven wagons were involved and several of these overturned on the bridge, as our dramatic picture shows. The train was carrying aggregates that had been loaded at Mountsorrel and was destined for Chelmsford and some of this material fell into the river albeit most landed onto the riverside land. The accident happened at a particularly difficult spot with very poor access and with some of the wagons in such a perilous position the Environment Agency had no option but to close the river immediately to navigation.



The nearest road was about half a mile away across very marshy ground and the only option was for Network Rail to construct a track to enable a heavy duty crane to be brought to lift the wagons off the bridge. It took two weeks to carry out site

investigations, obtain permissions, arrange contractors and bring in materials before the work could start and even then it was a slow process as the marshy ground was over six feet deep which meant that thousands of tons of hardcore were needed.

By 23 July a very large mobile crane had been brought in and it removed the derailed wagons. The railway bridge, which had been badly damaged, was then lifted out of the way, enabling the river to be re-opened to navigation at 10am on Friday 10 August. This was much to the relief of the organisers of the IWA's National Rally at St. Ives as arriving boats were having to use the tidal New Bedford River, which is not without hazards of its own.

The railway will remain closed until the bridge can be rebuilt and this work really got under way on 1 October. It will lead to short term delays for boats probably until the New Year – this included the closure of the river on 10 October to enable new concrete foundations to be poured. The new structure is likely to be able to accommodate a double line as this is on the container train route from Felixstowe to the Midlands and the North where rail traffic is scheduled to grow significantly.

## **THE IWA'S NATIONAL FESTIVAL & BOAT SHOW**

Billed as "*St Ives on Water*" this took place on Hemingford Meadow on the south bank of the Great Ouse opposite St. Ives between Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> and Monday 27<sup>th</sup> August. Conditions were not kind as on the opening day parts of the site became a virtual quagmire deterring many people from entering the ground with others demanding their gate money back. The hard pressed team of volunteers from the IWA and the Waterway Recovery Group worked like Trojans over Saturday night in putting down decking and creating walkways, matters not being helped by this being a Site of Special Scientific Interest and only specially treated straw could be used, so as not to upset the acid-alkali balance of the soil. Sunday saw a great improvement with a good number of visitors and by Monday most of the bad spots had dried out or were easily circumnavigated.

Owing to the absence of key officers, our Association was not able to have a stall at the Festival but many local organisations were represented such as the Cambridge and Ipswich branches of the IWA, the River Stour Trust, the Sleaford Navigation Trust and the Little Ouse Group. The Association of Inland Navigation Authorities had a marquee that involved the Environment Agency, British Waterways, the Broads Authority, the Cam Conservancy and the Middle Level Commissioners.

Over 350 boats attended the Festival, which was strongly supported by the Great Ouse Boating Association, whose stands was awarded the trophy for the Best Non-Commercial stand. There was strong backing for the event from the local press and people in St. Ives turned out in force and it is believed the target of 25,000 visitors will have been achieved.

All in all and despite the widespread flooding affecting waterways throughout the country, despite the closure of the river due to the railway accident, and despite the water-logged conditions on the site, it seems this was probably one of the most successful IWA festivals in recent years.

## FENS WATERWAYS LINK

There is excellent news here in that on 1 May Boston Town Council granted planning permission for the construction of the new entrance lock from the river Witham at Boston into the South Forty Foot River (also known as the Black Sluice Drainage and Navigation). This project, the first stage of the Fens Waterways Link, can now go ahead as the funding has already been agreed and is coming from Lincolnshire County Council £4m, the European Union (Objective 2) £2m, the East Midlands Development Association £1.2m and Lincolnshire Enterprise £800,000.

After much deliberation it has been decided that the new lock will be sited on the river side of the London Road and of the Black Sluice pumping station. This option was cheaper than the others and has the added advantage that the pumps will be unaffected by the scheme. Craft will also be able to use an existing archway to pass under London Road, thus giving further savings over having to build a new bridge. At normal retention levels there will be just under 11-feet headroom to the crown of the arch. The new lock, which will be 75-feet long and 19½-feet wide is being designed to act as a flood discharge structure but this will have minimal effect on navigation which would normally be restricted as such times for safety reasons.

Detailed plans are now being drawn up and work is expected to start in January 2008 with the erection of a cofferdam and it is hoped the basic construction will be finished by September, with the gates being installed in October, the mechanical and electrical equipment in November and final commissioning in December.

Once opened craft will have access to a lengthy stretch of new navigation as much of the South Forty Foot is already wide and deep as our pictures on the next page clearly show. It is only at the southern end that the channel is more restricted and it is currently obstructed by the Black Hole Drove pumping station (19½ miles from Boston). Plans are currently being drawn up to surmount this and also to provide the connection through to the river Glen at Guthram Gowt (21 miles).

Steps are also in hand to improve facilities en route with new visitor moorings being planned for Hubbert's Bridge (3¾ miles) where the Horncastle Road crosses over and at Swineshead Bridge (7 miles) where the A17 Sleaford road crosses.

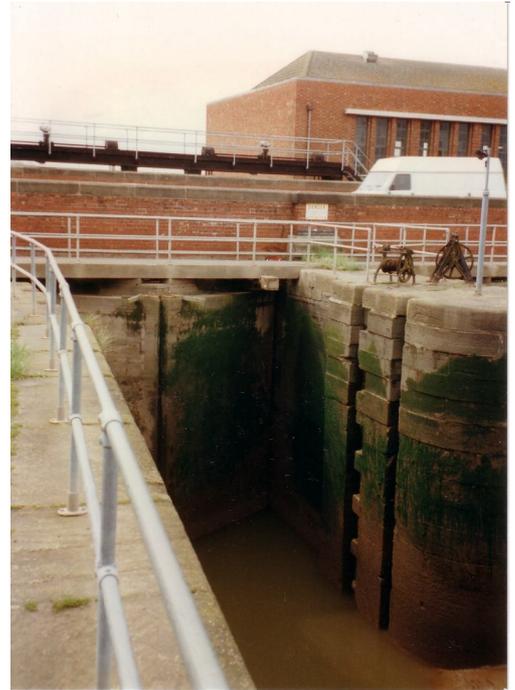
Our Association, together with the Lincolnshire Branch of the IWA, was in at the very inception of this new link and was responsible for getting the project adopted by the Fens Tourism Group in 1998. Subsequently the Environment Agency agreed to take the project forward and it is currently being managed on the Agency's behalf by Babtie Consultants with Jackson Civil Engineering also actively involved.

Connected with the project is another to erect a tidal barrier across the Witham a short way downstream of the junction with the new link. This will create a higher retention level in the river through the town and up to the Grand Sluice and will not only provide flood protection but will enable boats to pass through to the South Forty Foot at most stages of the tide. The Environment Agency is still hoping this scheme can go ahead perhaps for completion in 2011.

## FENLANDS WATERWAYS LINK



*The Black Sluice pumping station at Boston. The London Road runs behind the station and the new entrance lock is to be constructed on the far side of that road with boats entering the new navigation through the existing passage on the right, where the top of the arch carrying the road is just visible.*



*Middle Left: Swineshead Bridge, where the A.17 King's Lynn to Sleaford road crosses over the South Forty Foot, is almost seven miles along the South Forty Foot from Boston. The Barge Inn is on the left of the picture. Right: In a sensible and cost saving move, the original entrance to this former navigation that passes under London Road in Boston is to be reused for the restored navigation, the structure becoming part of the new lock which will be built in the foreground. Whilst this picture was taken at low tide there is still adequate headroom at high tide. Below Left: Donnington High Bridge carrying the A52 Grantham road is some 12¼ miles from Boston, but the channel, which serves as a main drainage route with a series of pumps discharging into it, is still wide and clear for navigation.*

## **ASSOCIATION MATTERS**

**ADVANCE NOTICE:** The 2008 Annual General Meeting is being arranged for Sunday 13 April and will be held at Spalding.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** The Treasurer would like to thank all those members who responded so promptly and so generously to the reminders that he sent out in August. Whilst the Association has kept the subscription at £5 for many years now, most members pay more, and sometimes considerably more, than the basic minimum. Coupled with the fact that many members have signed Gift Aid declarations our subscription income is healthy and is augmented by a useful boost from the Inland Revenue. We would also like to thank all those members who pay by Bankers Order as this obviates the need for annual reminders. Here again many members pay more than the basic £5 minimum. Being a small association we are particularly grateful for all this support.

**MEMBERSHIP LEAFLETS:** We strive to keep our membership forms up to date and are grateful to our hard-working Secretary Ivan Cane for his efforts in this direction. A copy of the latest leaflet is enclosed with this issue and we ask all members to put it to good effect in trying to build up our numbers.

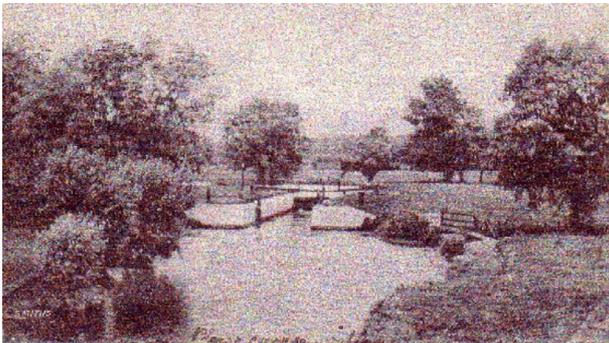
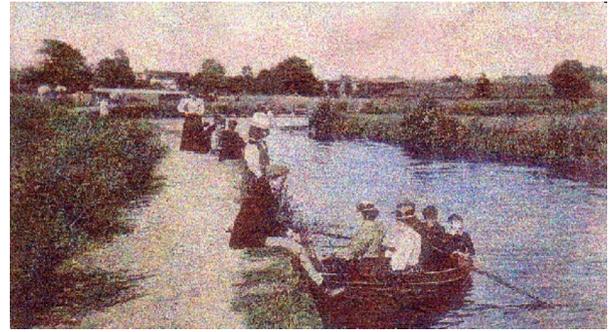
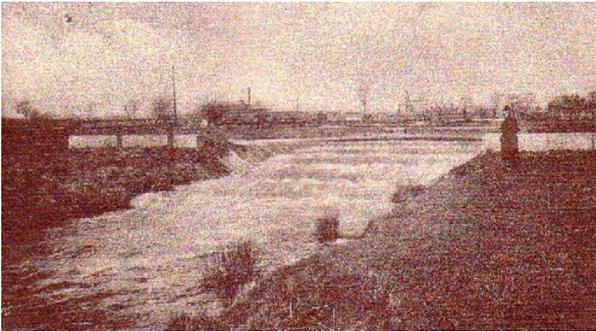
### **THE IPSWICH & STOWMARKET NAVIGATION**

There have been important developments on this river. As we reported in our last issue, after painstaking negotiations conducted by Colin Turner, the IWA Ipswich branch work party leader, land drainage consent has been granted by the Environment Agency for restoration work to go ahead at Baylham Lock. This was secured in time for a planned WRG week-long work camp to take place between 11 & 18 August. Considerable progress has been made with a coffer dam being built upstream of the lock to divert the river into its main channel. Piles were then driven along the line of the replacement bank retaining wall, foundations were dug, concrete was poured and a good start made on building up the brick wall.

A second dam was built below the lock enabling the water to be pumped out of the chamber and Consulting Engineer Roy Sutton to make a full inspection. This revealed more work was needed than originally expected, but it is still well within the capabilities of the work parties, who have all the experience gained at Bosmere and Creting locks upstream. The old lock gates have been winched out, trees growing out of the brickwork have been cut down, and a photographic survey of the lock has been carried out, this being a requirement under listed building consent.

Another major event has been the establishment in July of the "River Gipping Trust". Such a trust was first suggested in the early 1990s by our members Bob Kearney and Michael Handford who held formal meetings with the local and county councils and undertook a great deal of investigation and planning work. At the time their initiative did not succeed and for some time since there were disagreements within Ipswich branch as to the way forward. These have now been resolved and the trust has been set up with an initial five trustees. A vision statement is being drawn up prior to calling a meeting of the local opinion formers such as riparian owners, fishermen, wildlife interests, local councils and the Environment Agency.

In the meantime we have had access to an interesting collection of old postcards of the navigation and have been allowed to reproduce some of them here.



Top Left: *An intriguing postcard postmarked November 1904 entitled "Ipswich, Gipping Basin" But where is it?. Top Right: A rowing boat north of Ipswich and showing the Norwich railway line in the background (postmarked August 1906). Bottom Left: Claydon Lock – the lock that was destroyed following the re-routing of the river as a result of major road works (postmarked July 1911). Bottom Right: Baylham Mill (postmarked April 1908). All four cards are from the collection of Kerstin Fletcher and we expect to feature further ones from her collection in our next issue.*

## HERE AND THERE

**LINCOLNSHIRE RIVERSIDE WALKS:** A second brochure featuring waterside walks has now been issued by the Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership (LWP). Pride of place goes to the "Water Rail Way", the scheme to create a new path beside the river Witham from Lincoln all the way to Boston. On 21 August a further stretch of this walk – from Southrey to Kirkstead Bridge – was opened and the brochure features three walks that take in parts – Southrey and Stixwould; Southrey and Topholme Abbey with the third based further north at Fiskerton. Other walks include one covering Crowland and the river Welland; Surfleet and the river Glen; Tattershall Coningsby and the Horncastle Canal; from the head of the Louth Navigation to Alvingham; and one based on Torksey lock and the river Trent.

The LWP also produces a lively and informative newsletter three times a year. Anyone wanting to be placed on the mailing list should apply to Lincolnshire County Council, Economic Regeneration, Beech House, Waterside South, Lincoln, LN5 7JH or ring 01522 550615.

**RIVER NENE:** The IWA's Festival at St. Ives has prompted moves to improve mooring facilities on the Nene. Projects either completed or under consideration include a floating mooring attached to an existing piled wall at Midsummer Meadow in Northampton; individual moorings on Wellingborough Embankment where a pump

out and rubbish disposal facility is planned as part of the River Nene Regional Park project; extending existing moorings adjacent to the Rushden Diamond's Football Ground at Irthlingborough; repairs of derelict moorings adjacent to the Middle Nene Sailing Club at Islip; and moorings adjoining the Nene Valley Railway's Wansford Station.

**WISBECH:** A new boat lift to crane boats into and out of the water was officially opened on 8 June at Wisbech's revamped yacht harbour by Tommy Walsh, of BBC's Television Ground Force fame. Standing more than 16-feet high the hoist, which cost £150,000, can cope with boats weighing up to 75 tons. This forms part of the large Nene Waterfront Regeneration Project, which is designed to boost the economy of Wisbech and the surrounding area. The yacht harbour has expanded from 70 to 128 berths and the hoist has already attracted new business for New Holland Steel Boats of Tydd St. Giles who build craft between 60 and 70-feet long.

**DENVER:** In 2006 there were 942 passages to and from Salters Lode and Denver, just 34 fewer than in 2005. Against this there were only 63 movements through Denver and the tidal river down to King's Lynn, against 260 in 1996. The significant drop is blamed on the increasingly poor state of the tidal river where bed levels continue to rise due to the lack of water being discharged into this section.

At present no record is kept of boats using the side lock at Denver into the Flood Relief Channel but numbers are to be noted in future. Meanwhile on 2 July work started on electrifying this lock and was expected to last for about ten weeks. In future the Flood Relief Channel is to remain open throughout the winter, except in high flow conditions when it will be closed for safety reasons.

Further bad news is that the series of "Little Eye" sluices at Denver are now inoperable and the only discharge now possible here is via the lock or into the Flood Relief Channel. We have been concerned that the "Big Eye" sluice has been inoperable now for many years and a great bank of silt has built up on its downstream side. Whilst a programme of "ploughing" has helped ease the silting problem below Denver this is only a temporary expedient and there will soon be demands by Essex & Suffolk Water to increase abstractions via the Ely Ouse Essex Water Transfer Scheme to feed into the Stour at Kirtling Green and thence via a new pipeline at Wormingford into the enlarged Abberton Reservoir near Colchester, to supply drinking water to parts of south Essex.

**KING'S LYNN:** On 11 July West Norfolk Council published its plans for the proposed new £13m marina in what is now known as the Nar Ouse Regeneration Area in King's Lynn. Some 250 berths are planned in the former "U" bend of the Nar at Boal Quay, with access to the Great Ouse through a sea lock. The scheme includes a large number of flats, family homes, with cafes, bars, restaurant and a hotel. The Nar itself would be diverted from its present exit sluice back to its original course to flow through the marina.

The original plan to restore navigation on the Nar up to a new link across to the Flood Relief Channel has had to be abandoned. At one time this was seen as an essential part of the new marina, which might not otherwise be viable, but it seems the river is not wide enough, is too shallow and has inadequate headroom under some bridges. It is a strange decision as these restrictions have been well known

since the scheme was first mooted and were not previously considered insurmountable. Instead the plan for a new exit lock from the Flood Relief Channel back into the main river is being explored. The success of the Nene Waterfront Project at Wisbech, where the pontoon mooring facility was opened in May 2000, has undoubtedly influenced King's Lynn to try and go ahead.

**GREAT OUSE:** With the closure of the river just south of Ely (see page 1) early boats wanting to reach the IWA Festival site at St. Ives had to use the New Bedford River, which is tidal from Denver to Earith, a distance of nearly 21-miles. The route is not usually recommended for visitors, so at the end of July the Festival Committee arranged for two boats to test the section.

They locked out from Well Creek at Salters Lode at 10.15am, just before the tide started to push up the river, made the turn and forged smoothly through the deeper water with surprisingly little wash. The trip afforded fine views of the surrounding countryside and good progress was made, the tide staying with the boats for about two hours before they had to start pushing through the fresh water coming down but still averaging between 4½ to 5 miles per hour. Higher up the route there are five bridges and a railway bridge but all provide adequate headroom. They arrived above Hermitage Lock at Earith after a trip lasting some five hours. The river remains tidal for nearly another two miles to Brownhill Lock.

**ST IVES RAILWAY BRIDGE:** Contractors Edmund Nuttall Ltd are now well advanced on converting the old railway line from St. Ives into Cambridge into a guided busway. As part of this the old railway bridge that crosses the river at St. Ives was removed by a crane during the morning of 2 August with the replacement span being put into place in the afternoon, the river being closed to traffic briefly to permit the two operations to take place.

**LITTLE OUSE:** The Little Ouse Group has obtained the blessing of Forest Enterprises (The Forestry Commission) and Santon Downham Parish Council for the construction of a 24-hour green mooring on the north bank at Santon Downham, which is over two miles upstream of the official head of navigation at Brandon Bridge. To safeguard existing properties there is to be no road access and no infrastructure, but a £5m public liability insurance policy is required, which has been obtained via the IWA. It is possible planning permission may have to be sought and to allow boats to moor some dredging may need to be carried out. The LOG would like to have the 24-hour restriction eased to 48 hours, in line with many other moorings on the Great Ouse system.

To encourage usage of the river the LOG has issued a Tourist Guide giving a potted history of the river with a note about its wildlife, navigation information, details of a circular walk, and useful people to contact.

Meanwhile efforts by ourselves, GOBA and the LOG to generate more interest at Thetford in the overall restoration project and to set up a locally-based campaigning organisation continue. A very useful move in this direction was on 2 September when a dragon boat race was organised on the river at Thetford with 22 teams participating. The event was organised by Town Manager Susan Glossop and teams came from as faraway as Hertfordshire.

**THE WISSEY:** Climate change and new coastal management methods at Cley Marshes in North Norfolk are threatening the survival of the bittern, one of Britain's rarest birds which are protected under European nature conservation laws. To try and combat the position, nearly 150 acres of farmland beside the river Wissey near the Wissington sugar beet factory have been purchased by the Environment Agency as the site for a new wetland area of open water, reed bed and grassland. The land will be managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and it is hoped the bittern, and other creatures such as water voles, otters and marsh harriers will be able to re-establish themselves here. This is obviously a long term project and its success is dependent on luring the bittern and other creatures to the new site. Ultimately the site will not be open to the public,

**THE LODS:** Having seen off several threats in the past, the Cambridgeshire Lodes could again be under threat. Consultants have reported on how the Environment Agency could manage the lodes in future, the options ranging from maintaining the status quo to allowing the banks of the lodes to collapse.

It is known that the National Trust, which owns the unique nature reserve at Wicken Fen, has ambitious plans to extend its land holdings at a prelude to a major enlargement of the wetland area. This could involve flooding existing low-lying agricultural land and converting the lodes into drainage ditches. Wicken Fen is, of course, served by the navigable Wicken Lode, which branches off Reach Lode near Upware. These, along with Burwell Lode, are historic navigations. However the Trust has stated publicly that it is not advocating that the maintenance of the lodes be abandoned or that they be removed.

A lode that was thought to be particularly at risk is Swaffham Bulbeck Lode, which is entered through a lock off the river Cam south of Upware but which sees hardly any use. This is because it is fenced off with the surrounding ground overgrown making access difficult. A further deterrent is a notice saying official boats only. Above the lock the water level is kept low but craft are known to have navigated about half way towards Swaffham Bulbeck, but headroom obstructions could deter further progress.

**BEDFORD & MILTON KEYNES LINK:** Outline planning consent for the first section of the link from the Grand Union Canal at Campbell Park in Milton Keynes for over four miles to a marina close to the M1 motorway has been granted by Milton Keynes Council bringing this exciting project a step nearer. The plans have also been approved by the planning committee of Milton Keynes Partnership. At the same time the B&MK Trust has submitted its application for £25m for the final stage of the Big Lottery Bid and a decision is expected in November. Meanwhile in a letter dated 7 August to British Waterways the Highways Agency has agreed that scheduled motorway improvement works at Junction 13 (Ridgmont) where the Redfield Farm under bridge is to be extended will not preclude its future use for the proposed canal.

**RIVER STOUR:** The great news here is that the Environment Agency has granted Land Drainage Consent which will enable Stage Two of the restoration work on Stratford St Mary Lock now to go ahead. For the last twelve months volunteers for the River Stour Trust, working under Stage One, have been removing vegetation from the site and clearing out the lock chamber.

Stage Two involves restoring the channel below the lock and down to the footbridge to a navigable condition. Over many years of disuse this channel has become badly silted with very little water flow and temporary dams are to be built at either end of it. Crushed concrete now has to be loaded into wheelbarrows to be ferried across to the lock island on a temporary raft. There the concrete and rocks rescued from the channel – in all some 140 tons – will be put into gabions (wire baskets) and used to create a low reinforcing wall along most of the eastern bank of the channel. The channel itself, nearly 200 yards in length, will then be re-profiled with the spoil being spread on the bank between the wall and the existing high level channel. The work started in earnest on Saturday 21 July, the event attracting considerable publicity. It will cost some £10,000 and is due to be completed by the end of September. Funds are still needed for this phase of the work and donations should be sent to the Trust at The Granary, Quay Lane, Sudbury, CO10 2AN and earmarked for Stratford Lock.

**CHELMER & BLACKWATER NAVIGATION:** Essex Waterways are continuing to catch up on the backlog of repairs and maintenance work, despite operating on a limited budget. Recently major work costing some £55,000 has been carried out at Cuton Lock (No 4) aided by a £25,000 grant from Essex County Council, and with help from Chelmsford Borough Council, from the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and other sources. The work involved new bottom gates, brickwork repairs and bank protection below the lock to stop erosion. The sluices at Little Baddow Mill have been repaired, the footbridge at Barnes Mill has been re-decked, and Essex County Council has carried out bridge repairs at Little Baddow and Paper Mill. At Heybridge a new Elsan disposal point and pump-out facility has been provided and major repairs have been undertaken to the outer sliding caisson gate to the Sea Lock, which enables the lock to be lengthened to accommodate more boats at a locking. Meanwhile the pennywort campaign continues unabated.

Behind the scenes the waterway users records have been brought up to date, a new mooring contract has been introduced with owners being encouraged to pay by direct debit which reduces overheads and ensure a regular income. Another important source of income is from the cricket-bat willows and 500 new willow sets were planted last winter. And on the weekend of 21/22 July the Chelmer Canal Trust held a Boat Rally & Exhibition at Springfield Basin, bringing this normally quiet area very much to life.

**ORWELL BRIDGE:** This impressive bridge, which carries the A.14 trunk road from the Midlands to Felixstowe high over the river east of Ipswich, celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday on 29 June. The bridge is over 1,400 yards in length, is 26-feet wide, took 400 people over three years to build and carries 60,000 vehicles per day.

## NORTH WALSHAM AND DILHAM CANAL

On 24 June seven members returned to Honing and as this had not been visited for some months they found significant growth of grass and weeds particularly on the west side of the lock. This was dealt with mainly by the strimmer whilst the copings and the lock walls were cleared, giving a much smarter and cared-for appearance. An addition to the group's equipment was a small boat provided by Marc Lines and this was invaluable in recovering several floating tree trunks from the river, and in enabling us to access inside the lock chamber to remove rubbish. Further work went into improving the turning bay below the lock and during the session several canoes visited the site. One portaged round the lock in an attempt to paddle further upstream but sadly the intrepid pair soon returned, being unable to get through the overhanging trees and other growth that now blocks the channel up to Honing Bridge. We are hoping to be allowed to clear this stretch.



*24 June: The canoeists portaging round Honing Lock and setting off upstream in their unsuccessful attempt to navigate further north. They had some difficulty above the lock as there was a hidden underwater stake (since removed) embedded in the river bed at the only practical re-launching place and their canoe was trapped on this for a short while.*

On 29 July a small group visited Bacton Wood. The footpath from the girder bridge to the lock was cleared, some of the growth reaching 4-feet in places. The downstream mouth of the lock was cleared of weeds and saplings, the latter threatening to develop into sizeable trees, and the upstream mouth that was prepared for rebuilding last year was re-cleared. During the session the party were able to inspect the breach in the canal bed that is about a quarter of a mile upstream of the lock.

And on 30 September it was back to Honing where Chris & Mary Black, Carole Bullinger, Ivan Cane, Darren Cooke, Alan Faulkner, John & Gillian Kent, Marc Lines and David Revill removed three overhanging trees below the lock, made a start on constructing a landing stage there, and made a major clearance particularly on the east side of the lock. A surprise treat for the workers was a delicious sponge cake brought along by new member Carole, a generous gesture that was greatly enjoyed by all those attending.

Future work parties are scheduled on 28 October at Ebridge, 25 November at Briggate and provisionally 16 December at Honing Bridge. Up to date details can be obtained from our work party leader David Revill – 01603 738648.

Meanwhile efforts are continuing towards trying to promote the long term future of the canal through the establishment of a locally-based charitable trust. This owes much to the work of our work parties and to local support from such people as Councillor Roy Haynes and the locally-based Griffon Partnership. An EAWA sub committee, chaired by our member Roger Hopkinson, has been set up and a meeting is to be held on Tuesday 20 November in North Walsham to give a presentation about the canal and to explore about possible ways forward.

## **BROADS NOTES AND NEWS**

**REEDHAM BRIDGE:** In May there were problems at this railway swing bridge as Network Rail had locked it into the closed (for river traffic) position owing to fears about its safety. Trains were still passing over it, at slow speed, and most boats were able to pass underneath, but tall boats were trapped until inspection work could be completed. There are now restrictions on the times it will open for boats.

**DREDGING:** The name of the contractors May Gurney has been synonymous with dredging and maintenance work on the Broads for many years. But things are about to change as it seems dredging no longer fits into the company's future plans. The loss of its main contractor would leave the Broads Authority in a very difficult position and it has agreed that, aided by a commercial mortgage, it will buy five cranes and eight barges, together with the dockyard at Thorpe, from May Gurney and bring the dredging work in house. This is expected to lead to a 50% increase in the amount of dredging – from 40,000 to 60,000 cubic metres – for the same outlay by operating all year round, rather than just concentrating on the winter.

**SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS:** A £100,000 programme to install chains, ladders, lifebuoys and throwing lines at Broads Authority moorings over a five-year period made a good start in 2006/7 with 19 ladders being installed at ten existing moorings including five at Mutford Lock, with chains at five sites. In all 80 ladders and over 4,000 yards of chains are to be put in. Another move has seen 14 new metal gauge boards, marked both in metric and imperial, to inform boaters of water height, installed replacing old wooden boards. The new boards are easier to read and maintain, are vandal proof and more hard wearing.

**POWER LINES:** Last year over half a mile of overhead power lines were taken down by EDF Energy Networks and run underground on the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds reserve at Buckenham Marshes. The work cost almost £123,000 with a new transformer replacing the existing overhead equipment. This is part of a £2.9m scheme for Eastern England over a five year period from 2005-2010. Funding has been secured to ground 11KV and 33KV cables that cross St. Benet's Marsh and the work, estimated at £360,000 should take place next year.

**NORWICH'S FORGOTTEN ASSET:** Under a proposal put forward by the Norwich Society, the river Wensum that flows through Norwich could be transformed under an ambitious project to turn it into a recreational parkway all the way from New Mills, the river's highest tidal point, to Whitlingham. The plan includes creating a series of footpaths and cycleways to link into wider green spaces and places to meet. This would make the area much more attractive to investors, businesses and tourists by opening up the river as a public resource.

**THURNE MILL:** Under the training scheme for millwrights set up by the Broads Authority, the five trainees who are aged between 19 and 52 and who started their three-year course last December, completed a week's rope access training on a 70-foot high tower in Great Yarmouth in September. Traditionally millwrights worked from a bosun's chair but more recently ladders, scaffolding and access platforms have been used. This has enabled them to turn their attention to repainting the picturesque Thurne mill by abseiling from ropes. The 200-year mill's tower and cap have been repainted creating a glistening white landmark at the end of Thurne Dyke. Meanwhile the mill's turbine has been repaired so that it can once again become a working mill.

**SPEEDING BOATS:** The Broads Authority has been cracking down on speeding boats to protect other boaters, the wildlife and the fragile Broadland environment. Written warnings have been handed out to those who are speeding and creating excess wash and also to those who overstay on free 24-hour moorings. By the end of September 163 written warnings had been issued, compared to just 70 in 2006. Persistent offenders are taken to court and can face heavy fines for speeding increases bank erosion, leading to sediment being deposited and resulting in increased costs of dredging.

The Authority is about to launch a new DVD "*Better Boating on the Broads*" setting out how to navigate safely, sustainably and courteously and navigation rangers have been handing out a leaflet "*Slow Down, Don't make waves*" explaining the need to drive within the limits, which vary from 3mph to 6mph and are shown on a map.

**BREYDON MARINA:** A multi-million plan is being drawn up to transform a rundown riverside area at Cobholm, at the eastern end of Breydon Water, with the building of hundreds of houses, shops, leisure facilities and including a new marina. Some 22 acres of derelict land are involved lying to the south of Breydon Bridge.

**COLTISHALL:** Ambitious redevelopment plans for the former 750-acre site of RAF Coltishall could include the creation of a completely new broad. It is envisaged the old runway would become a long tranquil island with luxury waterside homes set amid a lake which also contains a windfarm, a wetlands centre, nature boardwalks and a boatyard.

**HUNTER'S YARD:** The four-berth cruiser LUCENT, the 14<sup>th</sup> in the line of Hunter's cruisers, was finally completed in September. Started as a Millennium project the boat was launched last October to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the trust that now operates the famous fleet, but this left the internal fittings to be completed. LUCENT will be the last cruiser since as there is now no more room for the boats in the shed in the winter. She has a hull of mahogany planks on an oak frame and is a sister to LUNA, LUSTRE and LULLABY that were built by Percy Hunter and his sons in the 1930s. Prior to this the only new craft to join the fleet were WOOD ANEMONE in 1947 and WOOD AVEN in 1949.

**GREAT YARMOUTH:** Work is now well under way on the Great Yarmouth Port Authority's £50 million scheme to create an outer harbour. This is due to be completed in April 2009 and it is hoped it will lead to a major boost to the whole area and in particular will boost continental trade.

## BOOK REVIEW

**The Thames Barge in Suffolk**, by Richard W. Smith. ISBN 0-9552489-0-6. 90 pages, 52 photographs including 16 in colour, 6 maps and barge lists. Published 2006 by the Society for Sprintsail Barge Research. Price about £10.

This book, written by a long-standing member of the Association, is a detailed study of the workings of the ubiquitous Thames sailing barges on the river Orwell and other Suffolk waterways. It is based on the records of the former Ipswich Dock Commission that are held at the Suffolk Record Office in Ipswich.

The book mentions most, if not all, of the barges that traded on the county's waterways, giving details of their traffics and is well illustrated with many of the pictures taken by the author, or deriving from his personal collection.

Whilst most of the barge trade was on the tidal stretches of the rivers there is some coverage of boats using the Gipping Navigation. For instance in May 1893 MURIEL navigated through the bridges at Ipswich to Handford Lock bringing a load of timber and several similar cargoes followed. Other Gipping barges, including the steamer ORWELL, brought loads of shingle to the lock, possibly to be used in rebuilding the structure.

Some barges penetrated all the way up to Stowmarket, such as IRONSIDES and GIPPING, both built at Ipswich of iron. In August 1894 IOTA loaded gun cotton at Stowmarket destined for Harwich and several similar trips followed including one in Edward Packard & Company's Gipping barge AVON.

There was considerable traffic to Bramford where both Packards and Fisons had their fertiliser works. Packard's STOUR brought a cargo of ammonia from Harwich April 1905 whilst in March 1907 its WAVENEY brought potash and its THAMES brought salt.

In 1926 the sugar beet factory opened at Sproughton beside the river and in October the steamer TRENT RIVER arrived from Great Oakley on the Hamford Backwaters and barges DEBEN II and YARE made similar deliveries. Thereafter it seems most of the beet cargoes tended to be transferred to railway trucks in Ipswich Docks to continue their journey to the factory by rail.

Whilst the book focuses on the Orwell, traffic on the tidal reaches of the Stour, Deben, Ore, Alde and rivers further north are mentioned. There are also separate sections dealing with such subjects as specialised cargoes, for instance the stack trade to London, events in the Second World War and in the final days of the barge trade.

The book is based on original research and whilst its appeal may be more for the specialist, there is much of general interest. It would have benefited from more stringent proof reading for whilst it is generally well produced the text is rather spoiled by a series of irritating missing spaces, or additional spaces.

## A TRIP UP THE NORTH WALSHAM AND DILHAM CANAL

From "*Notes on the Broads And Rivers of Norfolk & Suffolk*" by Harry Brittain, 2nd Edition, 1888.

Chapter 17: Stalham to Antingham Ponds. In my 14th chapter I described a trip to Barton Broad. Through this lake the river Ant runs, and those bent on further exploration will find the continuation of its channel at the north-east corner. About three-quarters of a mile from the Broad two waterways will be found diverging; the right of these, Stalham Dyke, goes up to the town of that name, and the one on the left quite up to Antingham Bone Mills, ten miles away.

For the purpose of a trip up this river we arranged to hire a sailing boat at Stalham, and on the day selected were fairly under weigh by half-past seven, after doing ample justice to a capital breakfast provided for us at the Maid's Head. The run down the dyke and past Stalham Broad (rapidly growing up) was quickly performed, although we were close-hauled.

"Oh! this is better," said Jack, as we turned into the river and ran before the wind. Soon we reached Wayford Bridge (Wayfur' the natives call it) and as we lower our mast and pull through, we make enquiries of some idlers on the river bank as to how long it will take us to go up to the Bone Mills and back. "Shouldn't like to say, master, but if you get up there today you'll do well."

Now, we had quite made up our minds to get the whole thing over in one day if possible, and, after making an outside time-allowance for the six locks, had calculated we should be at the head of the navigation by noon.

Presently we came to a spot where another large (and evidently navigable dyke) branched off to the left. We kept straight ahead, of course, but as we sailed we discussed the wonderful series of waterways, which are such a distinct physical feature of East Norfolk and Suffolk. It seems to me they are not unlike a great tree, of which the Yare would represent the main trunk, with large and small branches shooting out in all directions. Where the particular offshoot, which give rise to these speculations, goes to I must leave, but living in the heart of the district as I do, I really begin to think I never shall see the system in its entirety.

The first lock is at Dilham and we had been instructed by the proprietor of the navigation to make enquiries at a little house off to the left for a crank. The keeper proved to be a jolly old sort, and gave us our first lesson in lock-working most intelligently, although we got rather mixed as to what a diamond was and where the slaker (I hope I spell the words correctly) came in. The prediction of the natives at Wayford Bridge had hung heavily about us, and almost in fear and trembling we asked the attendant what time we should occupy in getting up to Antingham.

"Well," said he, with a comical little twinkle of his eye, "that depends on whether you are going straight up or not. For aught I know you may be going to meet a couple of ladies on the way, in which case I don't guarantee...." Here he stopped short, and laughed outright. We hastened to assure him that nothing was further from our thoughts, but we really wanted to get up as quickly as possible. "Well, sir, I should think you ought to manage it in three hours, but you mustn't stay here talking to me."

Off to the left of the lock are Dilham Mills, and at the back of these is Dilham Lake – this can be plainly seen from the river, and although now fast growing up, must have originally been a very fine sheet of water. Lowering our mast for Dee Bridge, we shot ahead without losing "way." The scenery now became very pretty, and was essentially different in its character to that of a few miles lower down stream. Marsh was exchanged for meadowland, and altogether the change was most pleasant.

Brigg Gate is the next lock, and, as at Dilham, the mills are very fine. A few hundred yards further the Eastern and Midlands Railway crosses the river, and off to the right Honing Station can be seen. To the left of Ebridge (the third) Lock are splendid mills, where the most modern machinery is employed in making flour – the intelligent foreman informed us "there wasn't a single stone in the building – everything was done with patent rolls." On the return journey I confided to this gentleman the object of our trip, and he asked us if we knew the yacht LOTUS, which he said had been up to the mill pool several times. On our replying in the affirmative, he launched into a panegyric on the author of "*A Month on the Norfolk Broads*," which would certainly have made that gentleman blush to hear. By the way I strongly recommend this work for reading, on a trip in these parts; I guarantee it will excite ones visible faculties, anyway.

The very prompt civility of some boys at Bacton Wood Lock calls for comment; thanks to their help we were "through" in six minutes. Starting again, we could not help observing a very curious effect in the fact that we appeared to be sailing on a hill. On our left, the meadow must have been quite sixteen feet below us in parts; a very slight stoop in the boat sufficed to make us entirely lose sight of some horses, which had been turned out to grass there.

The last two locks we had to negotiate (at Swafield) are very close to each other, but, fortunately, we had the good luck to come up just at the right time, as two strong young fellows not only worked us through, but offered to wait our return. Immediately above the upper lock a good-sized sheet of water opens out, which we learnt was called The Broad – it is quite a quarter of a mile long, but contracts at the upper end, where Bradfield Bridge crosses it.

At twelve to a minute we sailed into the Basin at Antingham, and the first half of the journey was over. Ten minutes later we stood by the side of Antingham Ponds, which are the most northerly of all the Broads. The view one gets of these lakes from Bradfield furze-hill is really very pretty and almost compensated us for all the trouble we had taken.

"Well, skipper, this is all brandy; but we must be starting back," said Jack. I did not attempt to fathom the meaning of the expression, but took the hint. Before embarking again, however, we replenished our beer-bottle at the Barge Inn. The landlord proved to be an old wherry man, and gave us his opinion that "we hadn't lost much time incoming from Stalham in four hours and a half." Although in such an out-of-the-way place, this inn is beautifully clean, and as we walk back to the Mills, Jack and I come to the conclusion that the quality which an old adage declares to be "next to Godliness" is the especial characteristic of the Norfolk inn; "there may be exceptions, but I'll be hanged if cleanliness isn't the rule," said Jack.

We had left our craft in the charge of a youth of about sixteen, and as we prepared for a start, he informed us "he was hoping to better his position." Of course we made enquiries as to what particular profession or trade his inclinations led him to, and were somewhat amused to hear that "he thought trades were altogether worked up," and for his part he should like an appointment on a railway "as a porter, or something of that kind."

To our utter disgust, when we reached the Swafield Locks on our return journey we found that a "Mr Page" had taken our crank – this we had left in the charge of the two natives who had promised to wait our return. It seemed they had left it on the opposite side of the water, and, "before they knew what he was up to," the gentleman referred to had taken possession of it. Now it happened we had undertaken this excursion with the full consent of the sole proprietor of the navigation (which, I may say, is called the North Walsham and Dilham Canal), and I naturally felt very much annoyed at such a cool proceeding. On hearing we had "leave", one of our friends started off, and in about five minutes returned with the crank, but without any apology, however, which omission excited Johnnie's ire especially.

Just above Bacton Lock, and in a wide branching to the left (looking downstream) a large pleasure wherry was lying. I don't know if this was one of the fleet owned by Messrs. Press Bros., of North Walsham, but I would call attention to the fact that the firm named send out craft which are quite capable of exploring the most remote parts, and that the men employed from long experience, know exactly the requirements of visitors.

The journey back was not broken by any incident, although we had a lot of towing (tacking being out of the question) to do. Of course we delivered up the crank to the keeper at Dilham, and whilst the last of the locks was being negotiated Jack and I strolled across to a spot where a series of tiny waterfalls carried off the superfluous water of Dilham Lake. Very musical the rush sounded, but, unfortunately, our time was limited, so we made haste to resume our journey home. Eventually we arrived at our starting point at 6.40pm, the double journey having thus taken eleven hours and ten minutes, which, considering the number of locks, we thought a very fair record. I ought not to leave Mr. Teasel (of whom we hired our craft) without saying that he has quite a stock of boats, sailing and otherwise, which are adapted for the district, and that we found him most obliging.