

# Press release from the North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust

## June Open Days

An important but little-known part of Norfolk's heritage will take centre stage during a weekend aimed at encouraging people to enjoy a restored attraction.

Everyone is invited to Ebridge Mill Pond (NR28 9NG for satnav users), part of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal, on Saturday June 3 (11am-5pm) and Sunday June 4 (10am-4pm) to take part in a range of activities and to find out more about successful restoration work on the waterway.

Organisers the North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust also hope visitors will sign a petition supporting future improvement work on the Canal.

Open days highlights will include:

- Model boats in action on the pond
- Walks beside the restored Canal from the mill pond to Swafield Bridge
- Photos and information on restoration work and the huge variety of wildlife recorded on the Canal
- Displays of objects found during restoration work, including coins, bottles and clay pipes
- Vintage tractors
- Continuous showing of new DVDs which will be on sale, together with other Canal merchandise
- Chance to peruse the Canal Trust's archives
- Refreshments

The waterway, nearly nine miles long, is Norfolk's only sailing canal with locks and was opened in 1826. It runs from Antingham, north west of North Walsham, to Wayford Bridge, north west of Stalham.

Wherries would sail its length transporting cargo to and from the mills and communities along its route.

Ivan Cane, interim chairman of the Canal Trust, said: "The restoration of a canal is not just for boaters. A restored canal corridor, as seen on the Ebridge reach, becomes a community asset, and a tourist attraction. The permissive paths, running alongside this stretch of water, are giving people the chance to relax, walk, picnic, pond dip, watch wildlife, fish or gongoozle at the passing canoeists or sail boats. Here, at Ebridge, Norfolk's industrial archaeological gem is coming back to life, and open to all to enjoy".

The Canal's decline began with the arrival of the railway. It was last sailed by a wherry in 1934 and over the following decades became choked with vegetation.

Many stretches were completely dry and its infrastructure of locks and bridges was crumbling by 2001 when volunteers from the East Anglian Waterways Association (EAWA) launched what have become regular working parties to rescue the Canal. The EAWA's success led to the formation of the Canal Trust in 2008. Work carried out by supporters means that a two-and-a-half mile stretch of the Canal, from Ebridge Mill Pond to Swafeld Bridge, is in use once more and it is proving popular for activities including walking, cycling, canoeing, sailing, fishing, and bird watching. Laurie Ashton, whose Old Canal Company owns the section, has almost finished restoring the lock at his Bacton Wood Mill and the Environment Agency has given the go-ahead for a dry section of the Canal above the lock to be re-watered for a trial period later this year.

The work of Mr Ashton and volunteers earned the Trust a national award last year. A copy of a petition supporting continued restoration of the Canal, already signed by more than 3,000 people, will be available at the open days.

For more information visit the trust's website at: [www.nwdct.org](http://www.nwdct.org) and the North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust Facebook page.

### **Notes for editors:**

Attached are 3 photos taken on the canal at Ebridge by Julie Kelleher

Please also feel free to use these 2 great videos on your websites:

[Kevin Smith's microlight flight over part of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal](#)

[Sailing \(and canoeing\) at Ebridge](#)

### **Background information:**

- The North Walsham and Dilham Canal was originally nearly nine miles long. The North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust, formed in 2008, is hoping to restore about 7.5 miles and four of the original six locks.
- The Canal stretches from Antingham ponds, north west of North Walsham, to Wayford Bridge, north west of Stalham.
- The waterway is Norfolk's only sailing Canal with locks.
- 100 navvies from Bedfordshire started building work on the Canal in 1825 and it opened the following year, 1826.
- It was used by wherries to transport cargo to and from mills and communities along its route.
- The last wherry, Ella, sailed the Canal in 1934.
- Today, one family and three companies own different sections of the Canal.

***Any queries, please contact Alex Hurrell, North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust media officer, on 0750 1927 059. Email: [hurrell.alexandra@gmail.com](mailto:hurrell.alexandra@gmail.com)***