

## **A short history of the North Walsham and Dilham canal**

Today the Old Canal Co. Ltd. owns the top 2¼ miles of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal. The rest remains in the hands of The North Walsham Canal Co. Ltd, except for a short length at the top of the canal owned by Mr M Starling and the bottom tidally influenced section below Honing Lock owned by Paterson Estates.

This is Norfolk's only artificial, locked sailing canal and was opened in 1826. 8¾ miles in length, it ran from Antingham Bone Mills, 1½ miles NW of North Walsham, to Wayford Bridge where it joined the navigable River Ant. It used 6 large locks along its length to enable the 20 ton wherries to ascend the 58ft rise to Antingham.

Although built for the carriage of coal, it remained cheaper to transport this overland from the coast. As a result the main cargoes were to and from the mills – including a local cabbage wherry to Gt. Yarmouth. In the late 19th century some of the first pleasure wherries, converted from commercial craft, were based on the canal. However trade was low and the canal from Swafeld Locks to Antingham was closed in 1893 and officially abandoned in 1927. The section above Bacton Wood Lock was breached in the flood of August 1912 and the following repairs were poor.