

# Quagmire

The newsletter of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust  
Summer 2016

Contact: [mdablack@btinternet.com](mailto:mdablack@btinternet.com)

## News...

**Members** will by now be aware that Sue, our lovely Membership Secretary, died suddenly in April. Trustees, Officers and members represented all the Trust's members at Sue's funeral which was held at Woodland Burial, Colney.

Sue would have been pleased to know that there was laughter as well as tears. She used to be irritated when driving behind slow moving funeral corteges and told Tom that she would want her own hearse to drive at 80 miles an hour. This wish was granted for a short stretch on the way to Colney and Sue would have been delighted!

## Julie Kelleher – ICT Administrator

email contact via [secretary@nwdct.org](mailto:secretary@nwdct.org)

First I must apologise if you did not get to hear from me of the sudden death of our Membership Secretary Mrs Sue Boulton. Our Quagmire Editor Mary Black created the following words that I issued in an email on the 27<sup>th</sup> April to the Trusts membership.

*"On behalf of the Trustees and Officers of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust, we are deeply saddened to report that Sue Boulton died unexpectedly on Wednesday 20th April 2016.*

*Sue was an efficient Membership Secretary for the Trust and combined her organisational skills with a cheerful willingness to treat members as friends. She was always ready to help the Trust, updating our Facebook page, making cakes, taking minutes, camping overnight as security on open weekends and much, much more. Sue had a mischievous sense of humour and often her emails to Trustees included a cheeky comment that made us laugh. We are going to miss her happy smile and companionship.*

*Sue's death came as a massive shock to her husband Tom, who was a great support to Sue and was always considerate of her interest in the canal. Tom regularly accompanied Sue on canal open weekends, helping in many practical ways - often behind the scenes.*

*As a small but lasting tribute to Sue the Trustees of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust have decided to name our pontoon 'The Sue B'"*



*Rest in peace our dear friend."*

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*Apologies if you did not receive this email and have been able to digest this information before it went public as I know Sue built up a great personal rapport with many of our membership, hand-delivering our newsletters so that she could have a chat. Unfortunately I received quite a few email 'Message Undeliverable' errors meaning that some email addresses were incorrectly recorded to our Membership database.*

But, you can now contact the membership secretary direct by email if you wish to:

- if you need to amend any of your contact details or
- make an enquiry or
- if you wish to share with the Trustees/Officers and/or the membership anything of interest

**The new email address is      [membership@nwdct.org](mailto:membership@nwdct.org)**

Realising that not everyone has a computer you may also write to me (as acting membership secretary) at:  
NWDCT Membership Secretary, Hermitage Lady Drove, DOWNHAM MARKET, PE38 0AQ

The NW&DC Trust is now unfortunately in the position of seeking a new Membership Secretary.

You can see our advert at [www.nwdct.org/membership.html](http://www.nwdct.org/membership.html) for role details  
Or you may wish to chat with Officers/Trustees at any work party.  
Visit [www.nwdct.org/workparties.html](http://www.nwdct.org/workparties.html) for work party dates and locations.

The Trust does intend to purchase and create a brass plaque in Sue's memory,

## Recent Events:

On 17<sup>th</sup> April 2016 the EAWA (East Anglian Waterways Association) held their AGM in our area. *The AGM's are held in different places each year and include visits to various sites of interest. This year David Revill organised the day which proved to be a great success and his report follows:*

Those who wished to take a trip on the steam launch, gathered at the Broads Museum for a half-hour trip on the Broads. The wind was a bit chilly but the coffee afterwards was hot and delicious!

After the museum visit we had lunch at the Sutton Staithe Hotel followed by the AGM. Of course the most important part of the day from our perspective was showing off our canal.

Six of the directors of the EAWA and two others who had had an enormous input to the canal a couple of decades ago, visited three sites along the canal. We visited Ebridge Mill Pond, Bacton Wood Lock and Swafield. And to be sure, all of the visitors were very well surprised by what they saw and were astounded at what had been achieved.

That is praise indeed for the very able work efforts of work-party members.

David Revill

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### **Visit to North Walsham & Dilham Canal by the North East Norfolk Bird Club.**

On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2016, together with Andy Clarke, the North East Norfolk Bird Club (NENBC) Outdoor Events Organiser, I led a birding group from the NENBC on a walk that took in Pigney's Wood and part of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal.

The walk started from the Pigney's Wood Car Park at 9am. The weather could have been a little kinder for this time of year, being mainly cloudy and quite cool with a rather stiff breeze at times.

Andy and I were joined in the car park by seven other people from the NENBC and set off down through the wood towards the canal, briefly diverting from our course to check out the view from the bird hide which now has a nice new roof! Birding was quite difficult, mainly due to the weather, as very few birds were singing or showing themselves, but we managed to log a few species along the way.

When we reached the canal, we turned left towards Royston Bridge and walked down to the sluice gate where I pointed out how the water was currently being temporarily diverted, before we crossed the canal and turned towards Swafield. A few dog walkers were about, but otherwise it was fairly quiet. We detoured off the canal bank a short distance to get a view over the Mike Thurston Watersports Centre lake but apart from a Mute Swan and a small group of Greylag Geese with their goslings, there was little of interest there. We returned the way we had come and rejoined the canal path. Four Swifts cruised effortlessly overhead, no doubt enjoying the brisk breeze.

We continued along the path until we came to the pair of bridges that would allow us back over the canal into Pigney's Wood. We had a look at the work that has been done digging out and re-profiling the back-soke and I pointed out the section of canal further down towards Swafield where the canal itself has already been returned to its correct width and profile. I explained to the group about the work that was going on and our hopes for the future, encouraging them to give some thought to supporting and joining the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust. The notice board by the bridge provided further information to many of the group.

Looping back up into Pigney's Wood past the fenced-off Nature Reserve area, we stopped to listen to Sedge Warblers and a singing Cetti's Warbler. Several Blackcaps were seen in this slightly more sheltered area. I think we were quite glad to get out of the breeze too. After wandering round past the 'orchard' area, we climbed the hill and turned left into the thick piece of woodland at the top. I wanted to show the group the huge ancient Oak tree that stands there, as well as the beautiful carpet of Bluebells.

We returned the way we had come out onto the top of the hill; often a good place from which to see soaring birds of prey. Unfortunately, conditions were not ideal, even though the sun tried to put in an appearance. No birds of prey could be seen, although we had logged a Buzzard earlier. The only butterfly seen on the walk was a single Speckled Wood. Again, the weather was not ideal for finding butterflies. No damselflies or dragonflies were seen either.

After about two hours, we arrived back at the car park. The feedback from all the visitors, especially those who were new to the canal, was very favourable, and Andy Clarke later informed me that the NENBC intends to make a visit to the North Walsham & Dilham Canal an annual event on the Club calendar.

Some of the visitors then departed before the rest of us moved on to Bacton Woods and Witton Heath, this section led by Andy Clarke. These locations were very busy with lots of dog walkers, families with children and off-road cyclists present. Unsurprisingly, we didn't log many more bird species, but a very pleasant wander round was had by all before returning to the car park and dispersing at about 1pm.

Perry Hampson  
Wildlife Officer

## **Water Vole Survey**

### **21<sup>st</sup> May 2016**

The morning of **Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016** was overcast and breezy following some light rain overnight, but it felt fairly comfortable so I decided that it was a good day to carry out the National Water Vole Monitoring Programme survey along part of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal near Ebridge Mill.

The website for this Programme can be found at: <https://ptes.org/get-involved/surveys/countryside-2/national-water-vole-monitoring-programme/>

I set out reasonably early and was on site by 08:30 hrs., having spent a little while checking my garden moth trap before leaving home.

The survey involved searching a 500 metre section of the canal of my choosing. I had previously set up a site, which was registered on the scheme and subsequently allocated as Site Number 950.

Upon arrival, I marked out five one-hundred metre sections with bamboo canes bearing numbered paper 'flags', so I knew where everything was in relation to everything else. A mobile phone 'app' was ready to provide accurate GPS Grid References. When all was ready, I set off on my walk, checking the edge of the canal and the vegetation as frequently and as closely as was physically possible without falling in!

I had chosen this section of the canal as it included the area where I was fortunate enough to photograph breeding Water Voles last year.

This year, however, the news was not so good.

Contrary to what might reasonably be imagined, the survey is not done by counting individual animals or burrows, as this can be very inaccurate. Instead, feeding signs and 'latrines' are recorded, both being quite distinctive and not too difficult to find.

However, on this particular day, along the entire 500 metre transect, I failed to find any signs of Water Voles.

Unfortunately, I did find signs of Otters! An Otter 'spraint', (Otter poo, not to put too fine a point on it!)

The plastic ruler in the photograph of the spraint is a reference requirement of the scheme so that the 'poo' report can be verified by folk with knowledge and experience far superior to mine. It's just as well I photographed it when I did, because shortly afterwards it was eaten by a Labrador dog – the poo – not the ruler!

The evidence of Otters being present may indicate that the Water Voles have hopefully simply moved on, as they don't get on well with Otters, even less so with Mink. I believe that Water Voles are still to be found along other stretches of the canal, so all is not lost. It will be interesting to carry out a similar survey over the same transect next year.

With a few anecdotal reports of Mink also being received, I fear for the survival of our Water Voles, one of Britain's most threatened species, along the canal. The habitat is excellent. The water quality is excellent. The main problems are the natural – and unnatural – predators.

Perry Hampson  
Wildlife Officer



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### **National Moth Night**

**11<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

on behalf of

North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust

and

**North Norfolk Community Woodland Trust**

**Pigney's Wood**

**I ran this event for the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust in conjunction with Pigney's Wood Community Woodland Trust. We are grateful for their help and co-operation in allowing us to use this site for the night. It was chosen partly due to safety reasons; there isn't much space on the canal paths and we didn't want anyone ending up in the water, but also because there is a really good mixture of habitats at the site which provided a good selection of moths.**

First, a little bit of the history of National Moth Night, (NMN).

NMN is jointly organised every year by a publication called *Atropos*, and [Butterfly Conservation](#).

NMN is the annual celebration of moth recording throughout Britain and Ireland by enthusiasts, with local events aimed at raising awareness of moths among the general public.

The first UK National Moth Night was held in 1999 and was indeed just a single night. Since then, the event has expanded to take in three consecutive nights each year, leaving 'wobble room' for the weather and other commitments. The keener moth'ers tend to do all three nights. I trap almost every night of the year in my garden, and indeed recorded all three nights again this year.

NMN takes place at varying dates each year, to allow for the fact that different species of moth are on the wing at different times.

Every year National Moth Night has a theme, although recorders are always welcome and indeed encouraged to do their own thing. The main theme for NMN 2016 was **Hawk-moths, some of our largest and most spectacular species.**

**In 2017, NMN will take place from 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> October, and the theme will be 'Ivy and Sugaring', two methods of finding moths that perhaps don't respond as well as others to light traps.**

I was hoping to be able to show visitors some of the more spectacular moths that are on the wing at this time of year.

There are just over 2,500 species of moths in the UK.

800 of these are 'Macros'; the big 'uns!

The remainder are 'Micros', the little 'uns', plus a few others that fit into other special categories, such as the Pyralids.

These are very artificial divisions and some micros are in fact bigger than some macros.

There are only 59 species of butterflies in the UK.

I have personally recorded almost 800 species of moths in total.

Over 650 of these have been recorded in my back garden which is not far from the canal.

I have submitted just over 25,000 records to the County Recorders. These can subsequently be used by various conservation bodies and similar organisations.

Prior to the chosen date, I gathered all the equipment I thought I would need; trap, lamp, generator, pots, reference books, log sheets, security tape, stakes, etc., etc. It was quite a car load by the time it was all assembled.

David Gosling, our Trust Treasurer, had very kindly volunteered to supervise the car parking at Pigney's Wood. Parking is rather limited, and we didn't know how many people would turn up.

At about 6 p.m. I arrived on site and let myself in through the barrier. There was a lot of kit to move, and the closer I could get my car the better! It was pouring with rain when I got there, but I hoped it would clear, and not wanting to disappoint anyone, I decided to press ahead with the event. I got pretty wet from the head down with the rain, and from the feet up from the long grass. I've always found that the water never goes deeper than my skin though, so I wasn't too bothered!

I had previously reconnoitred a likely trap site, so I loaded all the kit onto my angler's tackle barrow - just the job for this task as it fold away nicely into the car - and trudged through the rain to the trap site where I off-loaded. Then I worked my way back towards the car park, putting in supporting poles and hazard tape to keep visitors out of the sometimes hidden water-filled dykes and ditches. A few home-made signs were put up showing the way to the trap site and also back to the car park. It's easy to get lost in woodland in the dark. How do I know this? Don't ask!

When the signs were all secured in place, I returned to the trap site just in time for the rain to stop!

I left the trap covered until switch-on time, not wanting a trap full of rainwater before I even started.

A little while later, I saw David Gosling walking down the path towards me. We chatted until dusk started to set in and he returned to the car park to direct operations there.

Eventually he returned – alone.

By then it was turning rather misty, although the rain had abated. We decided to carry on and I fired up the generator and switched the lamp on.

As usual, particularly at this time of year when dusk is so late, very little arrived at the trap for the first hour or so. After that, the Caddisflies started to appear, followed shortly afterwards by the smaller, lighter moths. These 'warm up' for flight much quicker than the heavier, larger species, and so generally arrive earlier.

As the evening wore on, it became apparent that no visitors were going to turn up. The earlier rain that threatened to return, plus the fact that a football match involving the England team was being played that evening, had all conspired to keep people away.

I was pleased that David Gosling chose to stay for the duration of the session. I think he was quite impressed when the larger moths began to arrive later in the night.

We managed to record two of the target Hawk-moth species; Eyed Hawk-moth and Poplar Hawk-moth, as well as a couple of fairly impressive Drinker Moths.

The final tally was 42 species. I won't list them here, because a lot of them only have Latin names and probably wouldn't mean much to you, but if anyone wants a full list, I would be happy to email one to you.

A little after midnight, the rain started again. I had planned on staying longer into the night, but the kit was already very wet from the mist and earlier rain, so I decided to call a halt. 240 volt electrics and rain do not mix well!

David very kindly helped me to pack up and remove all the tapes, signs and stakes, before taking it all back to my car.

I got home about 1a.m., having had a really enjoyable evening. It would have been nice to see a few visitors, but moths obviously can't compete with inclement weather and football combined!

Maybe next year?



Elephant Hawk Moth



Eyed Hawk Moth



Drinker

Perry Hampson  
Wildlife Officer



17<sup>th</sup> June visit from Canals and River Trust:

## LIVING WATERWAYS AWARDS 2016

The canal restoration is not all about paddling about in cold mud in mid winter – there is another less visible side to the Trust's activities.

Our Trust needs to keep the restoration of Norfolk's only true locked canal in the public's eye and publicity is as crucial to the success of our project as is the more physical aspect of the restoration. Gaining a CRT Living Waterways Award would give us some really excellent publicity so when I received an email on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016, from the Canal & River Trust, telling me that I had only two weeks to enter their Living Waterways Award for 2016 I thought – not possible in such a short time!

But having given it some more thought I decided to try to meet their entry deadline. The prestigious Award is given to any canal based project so I decided to enter the section of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal from Ebridge to Swafield, owned by the Old Canal Co. Ltd. and Mickey Starling, as it is a really good example of the ongoing restoration work.

The entry form was only 5 A4 pages long but I ended up having to write nearly 6000 words on 9 pages of A4, however the deadline was met - with one day to spare!

On the 11<sup>th</sup> April I received an email from the CRT stating that our project had passed the first sort stage and we would receive a visit from two assessors to look at our project and meet the people involved. Great news! The assessors arrived at the Bluebell Pub in North Walsham on the 17<sup>th</sup> June, as arranged. Laurie, David Revill, other Trustees and work-party members and I discussed the project with them over coffee and answered their questions about various aspects of the canal restoration.

We then took them on a tour of the canal section, starting at Royston Bridge then travelling up the canal banks in Laurie's truck as far as the Paston Way. We drove to Swafield to see the work at Swafield Bridge and upstream to lock 5. From there we proceeded to Ebridge to view the restored canal and the transformation of the mill into dwellings.

Last of all we took them to Spa Common and Bacton Wood Lock. They admired the work done by Laurie to restore the lock and were given information about his project to get the water-mill working again.

They were most impressed by the amount of restoration work carried out in such a short time and told us that we would receive a decision made by the panel of judges sometime in July.

True to their word an email was received on 8<sup>th</sup> July:-

**“The Living Waterways Awards assessment panel met on Wednesday to discuss the findings from their respective visits and I'm delighted to tell you that Restoration of North Walsham and Dilham Canal has been selected as a finalist, many congratulations!”**

Winners will be announced at the gala dinner on 14 September 2016.

Chris Black, Vice Chairman NW&DC Trust

On 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> June the Trust held another open weekend. Report not available.



Naming the SueB at the open weekend

## *From the Trustees and Officers:*

*Roy Medcalf – Chairman*

### Fishing on North Walsham & Dilham Canal

Accessible fishing is allowed from Ebridge Lock upstream by the kind permission of the owner, Laurie Ashton. The close season applies, 15<sup>th</sup> March to 15<sup>th</sup> June inclusive, (see E.A. Anglia Region Bylaws).

There have been confirmed reports of quality Rudd, Roach and Pike caught from this stretch of the canal.

It is requested that all litter be removed and fishing line not discarded due the wildlife now inhabiting the area.

If you have any questions you may contact me on [r.b.medcalf@btinternet.com](mailto:r.b.medcalf@btinternet.com)

## *~~~Waterways Elsewhere~~~*

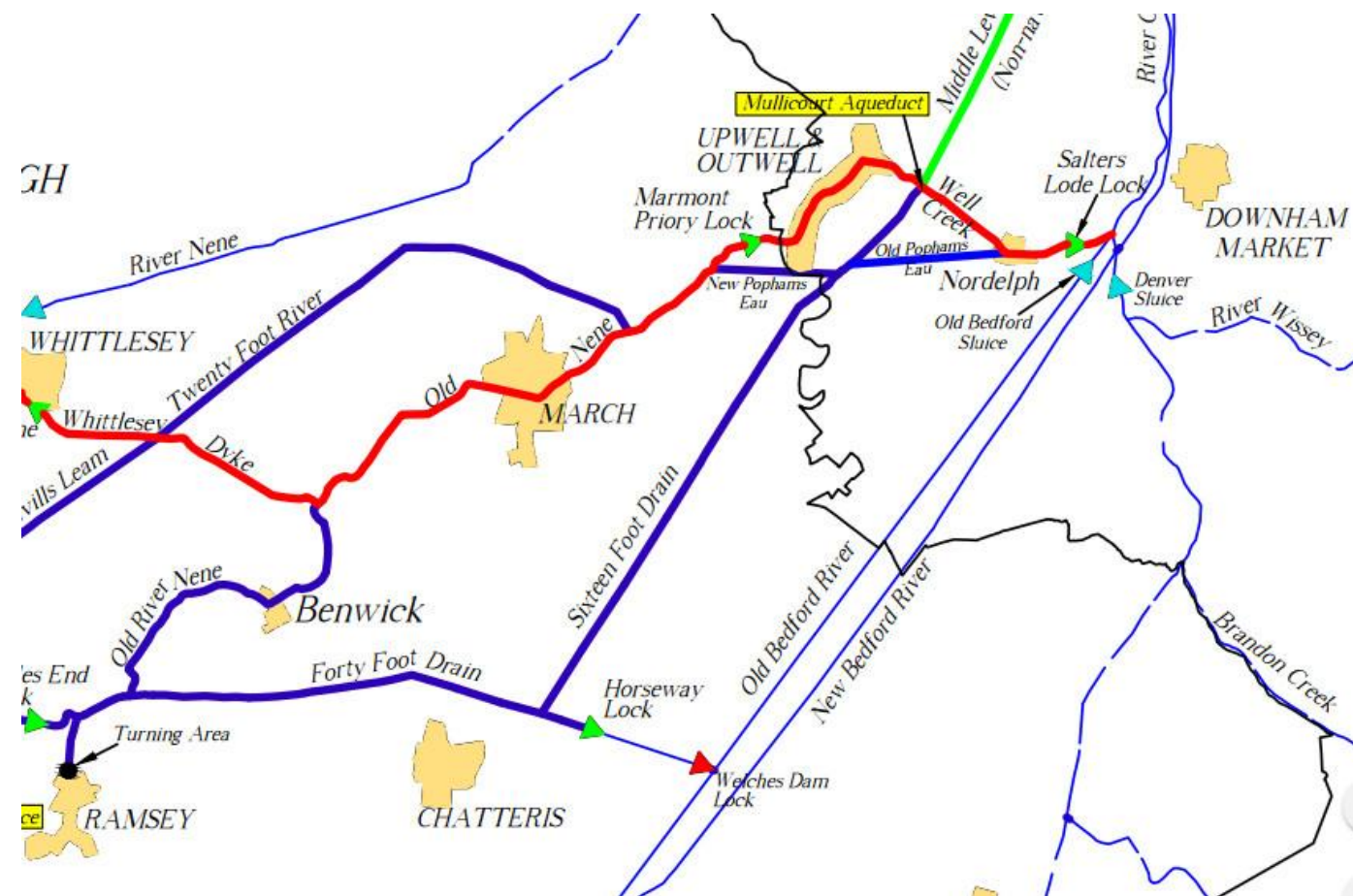
### **PROJECT HEReward**

There are, or should be, two main routes through the Middle Level Navigations connecting the river Nene at Peterborough to the river Great Ouse at Denver. But in 1973, when the Inland Waterways Association held its National Rally at Ely, boats were only able to make the transit by using the Old River Nene via Benwick, the Forty Foot River through Horseway and Welches Dam locks to reach the Old Bedford River and hence the Great Ouse. At the time the alternative route via March and Well Creek was closed.

Dredging and clearance work enabled the Well Creek route to be reopened on 1 June 1975, and as it is the shortest of the two routes it quickly became the most popular way to get to the Great Ouse. The Welches Dam route is less direct in any case and falling traffic soon led to a decline in the state of the navigation and to the effective closure of Horseway Lock, which is controlled by the Middle Level Commissioners. Following legal action by the IWA, Horseway lock was repaired and reopened on 23 June 1985 and this was followed on 6 April 1991 with Welches Dam lock being fitted with new gates.

(Map source – Middle Level Commissioners -

<http://www.middlelevel.gov.uk/docs/Navigation/NavMap2013.pdf>)





Despite this re-opening, during the 1990s navigation through the alternative route was getting increasingly difficult, and even more so when it was found that the section of the Forty Foot River connecting the two locks leaked. This resulted in the navigation level being reduced, except on specific weekends when boats were allowed to pass, but it led to the channel becoming increasingly overgrown. Eventually in 2006 the Environment Agency installed a steel piled dam across the head of Welches Dam lock effectively closing this statutory navigation.



Welches Dam Lock (Photo Ivan Cane – note piling does not reach right hand side)

This remains the position today. Horseway Lock is maintained in workable condition by the Middle Level Commissioners but leads nowhere as the channel below the lock is now heavily overgrown. Welches Dam Lock remains closed and is deteriorating and the Environment Agency has taken no steps to restore this statutory navigation.

To try and break the dead lock the Peterborough Branch of the Inland Waterways Association has joined forces with the East Anglian Waterways Association, adopting the campaigning name of *Project Hereward* after the famous Fenlands figure Hereward the Wake. This name was originally used by the EAWA in the 1970s for its campaign to lengthen the locks through the Middle Level, to enable full length narrow boats to pass between the Nene and the Great Ouse, without having to venture out onto the tidal waters of the Wash. This was achieved on 9 September 1999, when the lengthened Ashline Lock was formally opened.

Since then the *Project Hereward* name has been linked with the EAWA's involvement with the Fens Waterways Link, which is promoting an inland route from the river Witham at Boston, to the river Welland at Spalding, thence to the Nene at Peterborough and then through the Middle Level to the Great Ouse to reach the river Cam and Cambridge. The Horseway route could well feature in this plan and the *Project Hereward* name has been adopted for this purpose.

Using voluntary labour, it has been estimated that the main expense would be in relining the channel between the two locks using Bentomat or an equivalent membrane; this would cost £1,750,000 for the 2.17 miles involved. Welches Dam Lock needs repairing which might cost up to £350,000 and with a 10% contingency the overall cost could be £2,310,000. At present everything hinges on a detailed inspection of Welches Dam Lock being carried out - to date the

Environment Agency has refused to allow access to enable this to be done. It seems this delay centres round doubts about the condition of the steel piling across the head of the lock. The group has been waiting for a decision now for over a year and the whole matter reflects little credit on the Agency.

AlanHFaulkner, 11 May 2016.

### **Dates for your diary**

**Saturday & Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016** The second **open weekend** for 2016, to coincide with Norfolk Heritage Open Days. Mark the date now!

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016** Yet another of our popular coffee mornings at St Nicholas Room, Vicarage Street, North Walsham. 9.00-12.30. The Trust Tart's legendary home-made cakes & scones, photos and information, plus NW&DC Trust items for sale in time for Christmas!

**Ivan Cane's** forthcoming programme, all entitled 'The North Walsham & Dilham Canal 1826 – 2016'.

Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2016	Briston Wives Group
Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> November 2016	Chelmsford IWA
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2016 am	Chet Staithe Probus
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2016 pm	Martham Local History Society
Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> January 2017	Wherry Stalham Probus

*The Quagmire is a newsletter for all members of NW&DCT and members are encouraged to make suggestions for future items.*

*The deadline for items for inclusion in the Autumn Quagmire (at the Trustees' discretion) is the first week of October. Contact [mdablack@btinternet.com](mailto:mdablack@btinternet.com)*



Pontoon 'SueB' in use on the canal