

Quagmire

The newsletter of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust
Winter 2016/7

Contact: mdablack@btinternet.com

News...

I had arranged for a visit by both the WRG representatives and the IWA honorary Engineer to look at **proposed work at Ebridge**. This is to replace bricks in the lock chamber walls and to sort out the spillway. Engineering reports of each are now in my possession. The bricklaying will be done by members of the WRG teams who will visit us sometime in 2017. None of this can take place, as you will all know, without the say-so of the Environment Agency. Well, to this end I have been in touch with the relevant people and can say that I have been most impressed and pleased by their reaction. I shall be pursuing this in the coming weeks with a hopeful heart.

David Revill, Work Party Organiser & Press Officer

The editor of the TOWPATH newspaper was with the work-party at **Purdy's Marsh** for part of the morning in November. Following her visit, I took Janet and her husband to show off the skills which the volunteers have offered to the trust in work at Ebridge and Bacton Wood Lock. They were most impressed! So, well done to you all.

David Revill, Work Party Organiser & Press Officer

(An item on the *Towpath* article will appear in the next Quagmire.)

Members who have not been following our **Facebook** page will not be aware that **Perry Hampson**, Wildlife Officer, is suffering from problems relating to an old back injury. He has recently posted the following:

A little bit of news for those folks who have so kindly wished me well during my recent rather lengthy period of enforced inactivity. I saw an NHS Hospital Consultant today who, apart from being brilliant, has sorted out a program of treatment, which at least has a chance of restoring a bit more mobility to me. I now have to wait for an appointment for the first procedure to be carried out. Hopefully this won't be too far away. After that, I will need to work hard at some specialised physiotherapy for a while. There are, as always, no guarantees that the treatment will work, but my outlook is positive and I hope to be 'back in action' in the not too distant future, albeit with some restrictions on what I will physically be capable of doing.

In the meantime, may I wish you all a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

Perry Hampson, Wildlife Officer

We all hope Perry will be able to manage his condition sufficiently to enable him to resume walking the canal. Perry's expertise and photographic evidence of wildlife on the canal is invaluable to the Trust, but more importantly, Perry needs to be able to do what he loves doing, wandering the Canal banks, looking and listening for signs of wildlife.



A robin at the canal. (Perry Hampson)

We now have professionally printed **greetings cards** using Perry's wildlife photos. All the relevant canal information is given on the back and the inside is blank. They are A5 size and are complete with envelopes in individual clear pockets. The cards cost £1.50 each, plus £1.50 p&p for up to 12 cards. Orders may be sent to me at Mary Black, Charisma, Church Rd, Yelverton, Norwich NR14 7PB. Please enclose a cheque made payable to *The North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust* and remember to state the quantity and name of the picture/s required. Not only will the Trust make approximately 50p for each card sold, but of course it is a good way of spreading the word about our canal.



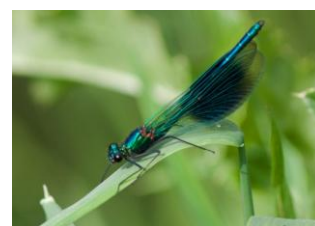
Mute Swan



Emperor Moth



Small Copper



Banded Demoiselle

Broads Authority Meeting. On 28th November 2016, trustees David Revill and Chris Black together with Ivan Cane (archivist) and Tom Carr (land issues), attended a meeting with **The Broads Authority**. Ivan gave a fully up-dated presentation, which was received enthusiastically. Everyone from the Broads Authority was most impressed and they remain supportive of the Trust and our ambition to see the Canal restored.

The Authority asked the Trust to make a submission to The Draft Broads Plan 2017 as it was felt that it is necessary to identify common ground between NW&DC Trust and The Broads Authority. The consultation period ended on 30th December 2016, which left very little time for us to respond. However, the deadline was met. During the consultation exercise it became very clear that many of the aspirations identified by the BA are virtually identical with the Trust's.

We hope that this will lead to a close partnership between the Trust and the BA, especially concerning the 4.4 km of Canal waterway which is within the Broad's boundary. This is especially important as this length of the Canal, crucially, is the entrance to the Canal from the Broads. With this section of the Canal having been allowed to become un-navigable, rightful access to the Canal in future by the owners of the upper Canal is seriously compromised.

The Sue B has now its full complement of safety railings, making it safer for work party use and for trip boating.

The chains have hooks at either end, to allow access and egress, and the uprights and chains can be removed, say along one side, when bushing or carrying out bank work.

Our Thanks to **Wards Timber and Hardware** of Fakenham, for providing the chains and linkages at a special price to the Trust, and to **Fakenham Fabrications** for the manufacture of the uprights – again at a special price for the Trust. We thank both of these companies for their continued support of the Canal's Restoration.

Ivan Cane 19 Dec 2016



Dog bins have been provided by the Trust and erected by volunteers. These are at Ebridge Mill pond and Spa Common, convenient for the many people who walk dogs along this beautiful stretch of canal. We thank Jane Gotts (Trustee) and John & Norma Albison of The Ebridge Model Boat Club for regularly emptying the bins.

Members will be pleased to hear that Julie Kelleher (ICT administrator) has managed to obtain **seven tables** for the Trust's use. These are secondhand and not in their first flush of youth, but covered with a cloth will be very welcome at open days and other events.

THIS NEWSLETTER FOCUSES ON THE WHERRY INN, ROYSTON BRIDGE AND PURDY'S MARSH



On the above map The Wherry Inn is alongside Royston Bridge, to the left of the canal.
Purdy's Marsh is immediately below Royston Bridge, to the right of the canal.

The Wherry Inn, Royston Bridge

The following list of **licensees** has been taken from www.norfolkpubs.co.uk

JOHN JAMES BUTTLE & coal and lime merchant	1836
JOSHUA HASTINGS age 67 in 1851 & coal dealer	1846 - 1858
GEORGE HAMMOND & waterman (& wherryman 1863)	1861 - 1871
JAMES DIXON & shoemaker 1881 & coal dealer 1883	1875 - 1892
J DIXON (James?)	1896 – 1916
WILLIAM DIXON	1922 - 1925
HERBERT KETT	by 02.1928
CHARLES EDWARD FALGATE	19.10.1936
GEORGE EDWARD HIPPERSON	30.09.1940
ELLEN VIRTUE HIPPERSON	06.02.1961
DUDLEY A GRIMBLE (S&P representative)	25.10.1965

The Inn closed in 1965 owing to lack of trade: only 29 barrels were sold in final year of trading.



Early 20th Century(N.W Community Archive)



Work party building Quay heading 2014



Wherry Inn sign being painted in 1960s (photo from EDP)



These photos show two different Inn signs
(from North Walsham Community Archive)



James Dixon, innkeeper at the Wherry Inn,
Royston Bridge, at turn of the 20th century



William Dixon on Royston Bridge,
early 20th century

(Photos taken from the North Walsham & Community Archive)



Note that the **bridge** shown in the second photo above is the original, which looks exactly as it should on the canal, unlike the existing culvert installed in 1970. (See Royston Bridge item below.)

Royston Bridge culvert (2009)

Unfortunately the only photos we have seen of licensees are those of James and William Dixon. Has anyone any photos of other licensees? Or any memories and anecdotes of visiting the Inn? We have seen a reference that the Inn was known as The Wherry & Waterman at one time but can anyone confirm this?

Royston Bridge

(sometimes known as Austin Bridge)

Royston Bridge – the story so far...

Walk down the east bank of the Canal from Royston Bridge for some twenty yards. Turn to look upstream and you will see the south side of the bridge, not as constructed in 1826 but instead a low concrete construction with metal railings and a low corrugated steel culvert beneath it. It has been in this state for 47 years and because of its design purely as a culvert it closed any potential navigation to the upper Canal terminus in Swafield, **so how did this come about?**

The story¹ begins in 1969 when, as part of a scheme to strengthen Norfolk's bridges, Royston Bridge was deemed too weak for the expected heavy traffic from the new Bacton Gas Site, so plans were put forward by the Norfolk County Council to make the bridge stronger, but not wider.

The now defunct Smallburgh R.D.C. criticised the plan and requested Norfolk County Council to think again using the opportunity to lower the narrow humped bridge and make it two-way. Thus local politics played their part in deciding the fate of the original Canal bridge - despite being told that the money for strengthening hundreds of Norfolk's bridges had to be rationed - so what's new!

The fate of the old Canal bridge was further sealed when it was revealed by a Smallburgh R.D.C. Councillor that ***the North Walsham Canal Co. Ltd. had given the County Council 'permission' to fill in the canal under the bridge.*** This would have been a flagrant disregard by the Canal Co., of the 1866 Act of Parliament which specifically forbade closure of the canal. Fortunately this 'permission' was not acted upon for reasons explained below. The Canal wasn't filled in under the bridge; instead a new culvert was laid on the existing bed of the Canal. However the culvert was so low in height it was to leave only 18" of navigable headroom should the water be returned to the dry section of the Canal at some future date, thus effectively blocking navigation to Swafield.

Well the future has arrived! The banks of the dry section of the Canal have been raised and a test re-watering of the dry section has been granted by the EA, hopefully soon leading to permanent re-watering of the section. **So how is navigable headroom to be restored to the bridge?**

In 1950 the Norfolk County Council assumed responsibility for six of the Canal road bridges and fortunately it is recorded² that a proviso was attached which stated that the North Walsham Canal Co. ***'should not be prejudiced by any alteration to the Bridges in future.'*** Clearly the proviso was attached as the Canal Co. would have wanted to protect the future navigability of the Canal and we assume that in 1950 they were mindful of the 1866 Act forbidding the closure of the Canal. However little maintenance was carried out by the Canal Co. after the last commercial sailing in 1934, and in 1956 the Canal's locks were documented³ 'as being in a state of disrepair – but still holding water, except in the Honing reach', ***so there would have been water beneath the old Royston Bridge in 1956.*** So when did the Swafield section of the Canal become de-watered? There are two possibilities. Either the Canal feed-water was diverted into the east back soke to permanently feed the new Nth. Walsham sewage works, which was on the point of starting up in 1956⁴ or it was diverted in 1969 to allow the construction of the new bridge. I favour the 1956 diversion because it neatly ties in with the new sewage works – ***but if you know the answer to this...let us know!***

The various authoritative bodies involved were unable, or unwilling, to do the necessary research and found it convenient to believe that the Canal had been abandoned, in spite of the fact that a North Walsham Canal Co.'s director had alerted the County Council of the need to maintain navigable headroom when replacing Ebridge road-bridge in 1968.

Continued/

Tom Carr, who advises the Trust on land issues, has copied correspondence and records from the microfiche kept by the County Highways department and reports as follows:

- *In a letter to the County Surveyor of 27th September 1968 the Managing Director of Cubitt and Walker at Ebridge wrote.... "Ebridge Bridge. The headroom for navigation through this bridge should not be less than the headroom at Wayford Bridge. We think this is 8ft. Today the headroom at Ebridge is 9ft 3ins with the water fairly high"*
- *In the same letter there is a paragraph regarding Royston Bridge as follows: ... "As far as this company (The North Walsham Canal Co.) is concerned we have no objection to this bridge being filled in. We would point out however that the Canal extends as far as Swafield Bridge and there is a **statutory obligation to maintain navigation** we think that it would first be necessary for you to obtain a de-canalisation order in respect of this reach of the Canal i.e. Royston Bridge."*
- *A month before on the 20th August 1968 the same director of Cubitt and Walker wrote to Peter Deavin the County Surveyor... "As far as this company (The North Walsham Canal Co.) is concerned with the possible reopening of Navigation on this waterway we should be grateful if you would be good enough to let us have details of the proposed headroom of the reconstructed Ebridge Mill Bridge. As there could be no Navigation above Royston Bridge the headroom there does not matter."*
- *Mr Harrison of the county surveyor's office wrote to Mr Pollitt of Cubitt and Walker on the 16th October 1968... "I now feel that the following course of action concerning the bridges (North Walsham and Dilham Canal: Royston Bridge and Ebridge Mill Bridge was in the heading of this letter) is most acceptable to all parties... ...Royston Bridge: To satisfy the River Authority by putting a culvert through and demolishing the bridge" To which Mr Pollitt, writing on behalf of the North Walsham Canal Co. Ltd. replied... "Thank you for your letter of the 16th October which is agreeable to us"*
- *The Trust holds a copy of the Agreement between the County Council and the North Walsham Canal Co. Ltd. dated 26th August 1950 whereby the Canal Company requested the Council to take responsibility for the bridges including Royston Bridge, Bacton Wood Bridge and Ebridge Mill Bridge. The County Council agreed to this on certain conditions which would include maintaining a navigable height.*

Getting navigable headroom back...

It is perhaps fortunate from the Trust's point of view, that the County Council failed to take any steps to obtain the de-canalisation order in the 1960's and that the present owner of the top section of the Canal to Swafield Bridge is able to require the replacement of the existing culvert Royston Bridge with a bridge crossing the canal of sufficient height to allow full navigation with the navigable depth of water re-established.

The County Council has recently responded very positively with regard to a replacement bridge with the acceptance that they have a responsibility to restore the navigability of Royston Bridge. The Old Canal Company Ltd. and the Trust are seeking an on-site meeting with the Council's bridge department early in the New Year.

¹ Eastern Daily Press newspaper article 6th March 1969

² Arthur Walker's (NW Canal Co.) document on history of the Canal. February 1956

³ Arthur Walker's (NW Canal Co.) document on history of the Canal. February 1956

⁴ Arthur Walker's (NW Canal Co.) document on history of the Canal. February 1956

Chris Black and Tom Carr

Purdy's Marsh



This photo was taken from the quay heading at the Wherry Inn looking across to Royston Bridge Staithe 1908 – 1912 (photo taken from North Walsham Archive). Behind the old Staithe and extending south beside the canal is the area known as **Purdy's Marsh**.



Alan's photo from the same place in November 2016. The farmhouse cannot be seen behind the trees. A red car, framed by the digger arm, is on the road almost in front of the farmhouse.



Purdy's Marsh from the road, September 2016



Alan, our official work-party photographer working at Purdy's Marsh

Purdy's Marsh – high hopes for the future.

Purdy's Marsh has lain virtually undisturbed for many years.

Work has recently started to clear the scrub and wetland trees that have encroached upon it. An area has also become infested with Himalayan Balsa, a highly invasive non-Native species. This will be removed in due course.

Once the area has been cleared of unwanted vegetation, the reed-bed itself will undergo restoration.

A colony of Red-tipped Clearwing moths, a Nationally Scarce species, has already been discovered on the marsh.

Many other reed-bed specialist species will hopefully move in as time progresses.

If the area is wet enough, and has suitable areas of open water, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that we could see a Bittern visiting, as well as Little Egrets and Grey Herons. Reed and Sedge Warblers should breed. Cetti's Warbler and Reed Bunting should also feature on the bird list.

I have logged a sighting of a Bittern at East Ruston in the past, and this was in a very small reedbed, so hopes are high.

The real jewel in the crown would be to entice Swallowtail butterflies to breed, but there are so many difficult obstacles to overcome with regard to their food plant, Milk Parsley. This is notoriously difficult, in fact almost impossible, to grow or transplant, and the butterflies are very fussy when it comes to the stage to which the plant is grown before they will even consider egg-laying. A reintroduction scheme at Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire, has sadly not succeeded. Having said that, I have logged a Swallowtail in my garden, which is a few minutes walk from the canal, so it's not impossible that one could appear along there. Never say never!

There are quite a large number of moth species which breed in reed-beds, and the provision of more and better habitat can only improve their prospects.

It will be an exciting time to see how Purdy's Marsh develops and what wildlife it attracts. I have high hopes for the future.

Perry Hampson, Wildlife Officer

This is a story quite similar, in parts, to many others. A local man, whom I have known for decades, suddenly became interested in what I was doing on the local canal. 'A canal! What canal? There's no canal in Norfolk?'

After I had explained a few things to him, I was interrogated on each occasion on which we met each other. Following several years of interest – but not having visited this "mysterious canal" – he came to our Ebridge event in 2016. It was at this time, with Gisela offering him beverages, that he asked for our



membership form – and signed it! Thus it was that our friend Raymond Crisp became involved and asked if I would like some old, useful tools, which he had inherited from his farm. He had realised that, upon his eventual demise. The told would all be thrown into the end-of-story skip! What a waste.

Raymond cleaned and sharpened them before delivering them to me on the day before our second visit to **Purdy's Marsh**, where they proved to be exceptionally efficient at reducing all sorts of vegetation to ground level. The photo was taken before their first use. Those tools are already about 100 years old – about half as old as the canal and, right now, twice as useful!

Welcome, Raymond and thank you!

David Revill, Work Party Organiser & Press Officer



Mulled wine & mince pies at Purdy's Marsh, December 2016 - Our largest work party yet!

Recent Events

Since the last edition, several **talks and presentations** have been given to a variety of groups by Trustees. It is usually the case that the majority of those present have no idea that we have a canal in Norfolk but once they do know, most are keen to buy a map to take walks beside the canal. These talks are a good way of telling people of our existence, drumming up support with signatures on the petition, selling our booklets, maps and cards, and adding to our funds by accepting donations from the groups.



Ivan Cane recently gave a talk to Bacton Local History Group and he was impressed by the cake depicting a canal lock. In fact, at the following work party one of the group came along to lend a hand. He is only 22 years old (most of the rest of us could be his grandparents!) and it is a pity we haven't got more youngsters like him!

Ivan has produced a superb power-point presentation but unfortunately the Trust does not own a projector. For a recent talk, David Revill went to the trouble of hiring one. (Trustees are nothing if not dedicated to the cause!)

Queries and Questions!

Is it true that part of the Canal is in the Broads Authority area and does that mean that the Authority will give support to the Trust's aim of restoring the navigation to give Canal users easy access to the Broads system?

This question has been answered in the above **news item** about the Trust's meeting with the Broads Authority.

Items of interest to members:

Saturday 12th August - 19th August 2017 and Saturday 19th August – 26th August 2017.
The **Waterways Recovery Group** will be spending two weeks working on the Ebridge spillway.

This is WRG's first venture to Norfolk in several years and we are looking forward to supporting this new project! Over two weeks volunteers will start to restore the recently uncovered Ebridge weir. The weir is in a poor condition with damaged brickwork and a badly cracked concrete slab so there is lots to be done!

Click here secretary@nwdct.org for further information and to book a place if you wish to join them.

Ten years ago...

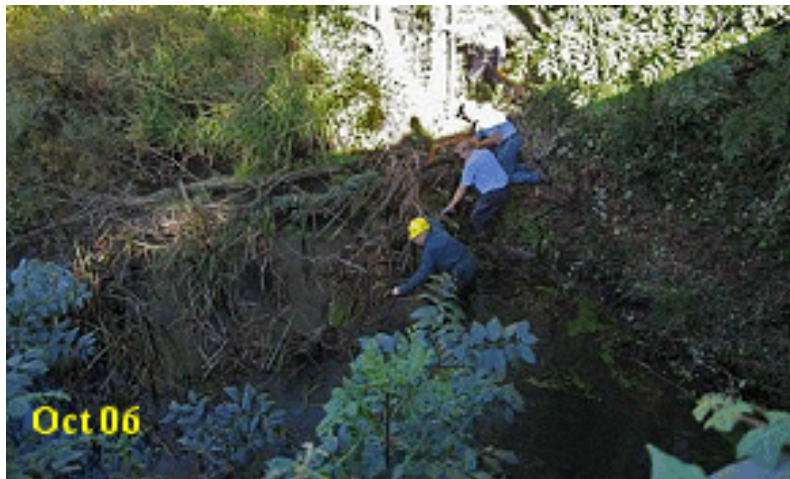


Honing Staithe (from road bridge) 2006...



... and 2014.

Unfortunately the scene now resembles the first picture as the owner of this stretch has stopped all work.



Roger Hopkinson, David Revill and Alan Faulkner, Honing Staithe

We are hoping that **2017** will be our best year yet! Aims include the lifting of the Stop Notice, fitting the lower lock gates at Bacton Lock, re-watering all the way to the top of the pound where a winding hole would be located and repairing Ebridge spillway.

Taken from a Book...

The Land of the Broads by Ernest R Suffling. (1887)

The book describes a holiday on the Broads and includes comprehensive advice about hiring a pleasure Wherry or other craft:

...ladies on small yachts I consider out of place...

Dress:

For gentlemen's dress, there is nothing like white flannel, with polo or straw hats. For ladies' dress...nothing can compare with navy serge made up in a very plain manner...a little bright colour in the trimming, if you please, ladies! (No comment! Editor)

Advice is given about provisions to carry:

...tinned meats are always handy...curried rabbit, ox-cheek, tongue...hare-soup, lobster, salmon etc are all nice...cheese, but remember that Norfolk is noted for bad cheese so beware!...Beer, of the peculiar sweet flavour in vogue in Norfolk....may be had anywhere.

The trip was on the 'Lily', starting in Yarmouth and eventually making its way to the Ant:

Before coming to Dilham our course is arrested by a lock, but by the payment of a small fee this difficulty is easily overcome. This lock is more commonly known as Honing Lock today.

A night was spent at Ebridge mill and in the morning it was discovered that the propeller shaft had broken. *...our man expresses his willingness and competency to repair the damage if we let him have the help of an engineer from North Walsham. ...Messrs _____ send an experienced man back... What a shame that we don't have the name of the Company who sent the engineer! The travelers catch a train to Cromer for the day and upon their return ...our man returns from 'somewhere' in such a hilarious state that we carefully put him to bed... later they hear a heavy plunge in the water and see the man's head bobbing about. 'Is that you, Sam?' 'Yes master; don't yow pay no regard tu me. I'm haven a kuler, jest ter set me ter rights agin.' So we left him bobbing about in 4ft of water...*



No 'mystery photo' this time, but why not have a go at a caption for this photo of Laurie, Chris and David. Send to me at mdablack@btinternet.com

Your prize will be
a mention in the next Quagmire!
How could you resist?

Dates for your diary

Thursday March 30th 2017.

Film night. 7pm for 7.30, The Atrium, Spenser Avenue, North Walsham NR28 9HZ.

Jonno has been following the progress of work on the canal and is busy editing the many hours of film. He will show **two films** of approximately **30 minutes** each, either side of an interval. One film will be on **restoration work** and the other will show **maintenance of restored sections**.



Our **film nights** have proved so popular that we have had to move them to a bigger, better venue! The Atrium is a fantastic venue which was designed to provide excellent sight lines with air conditioning, multiple lighting options and cushioned seats.

As usual, members will benefit from **free admission**, but for others there will be a **very reasonable charge of £3**.

Refreshments, including **home-made cakes** will be available, and you will have a chance to boost Trust funds by buying previous canal **films**, the new **greetings cards** and **maps**. Every penny you spend (minus expenses) will go towards the restoration.

Prizes for a raffle will be gratefully received, on the night, at a work parties or at Trust meetings.

Saturday & Sunday 3rd & 4th June Open weekend at Ebridge. Put in your diary now! Volunteers to help erect tents early Saturday will be very warmly welcomed!

Saturday & Sunday 29th & 30th July We will have a stall at the Worstead Festival.

Saturday 12th August - 19th August 2017 and Saturday 19th August – 26th August 2017 As mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, the **Waterways Recovery Group** will be spending two weeks working on the Ebridge spillway. Click here secretary@nwdct.org for further information and to book a place if you wish to join them.

Tuesday 29th August Trust AGM

Saturday & Sunday 9&10th September Open weekend with Heritage Open Days.

Talks & Presentations 2017

11th January.	Wherry Stalham Probus.	Ivan Cane.
18th October.	Park Farm Probus.	Chris and Mary Black.
2nd November.	Wissey U3A.	Ivan Cane.
14th November.	Trunch Friends.	Ivan Cane.
24th November.	Broadland and Coastal Cruising Club	Ivan Cane.

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 Spring 2017 Quagmire (at the Trustees' discretion) is the first week of April. Contact mdablack@btinternet.com