



# Quagmire

The newsletter of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust  
Autumn 2018

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## News...

**It is with** great sadness, that I have to tell you that Alan Faulkner, the Trust's President, passed away on 12th August 2018, at a nursing home in Colchester. As many of you will recall, he was very ill over a year ago, but had returned home and continued to follow the Trust's progress, and edit the East Anglian Waterway's Association's magazine, *Easterling*. Alan was a stalwart of the waterway's scene, especially in East Anglia. He was one who worked on the restoration of the Upper Great Ouse to Bedford, and the Old West River. His involvement with the **North Walsham & Dilham Canal** goes back many decades, and he was instrumental in starting the present restoration from 1990, undertaking many early meetings with the North Walsham Canal Company during that decade, as well as liaising with all the statutory bodies commissioning the first civil engineering and ecological surveys of the Canal - which lead to the first work parties starting in 2000. Ten years ago, through the East Anglian Waterways Association, he helped and encouraged the inauguration of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust, becoming its Honorary President a few years later in recognition of his work on the Canal.

I shall miss him dearly.

*Ivan Cane - Trust Chair*

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Alan - Honing Lock 2004

**The long-awaited Heritage Centre** in North Walsham is open and the Canal has loaned some of the 'finds' discovered in and around the Canal during work-parties. When Trustees called in recently they were pleased to report that NW&DCT leaflets, boat timetables etc, were available just inside the door. The Centre is manned by volunteers (including our own Brian Wexler) usually between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday. It is very well organised with some fascinating exhibits and can be found in Vicarage St, North Walsham NR28 9DQ.

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## Photo Challenge



Alan Bertram is testing our powers of observation with this photo taken in August this year.

He asks if you know what is different about this scene compared with a few months before. It is nothing to do with the canal!

Watch for a clue elsewhere.

## Recent Events

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> July** - Graham kindly agreed to run an extra trip in Ella II for members of the **Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society**. Chris & Mary Black crewed and answered the group's questions and Graham generously made time to allow them to walk up to the lock. As the name of the group implies, they are delighted that the Trust is working to preserve this unique example of Norfolk's Industrial past and their interest was reflected in their generosity, overpaying the usual £5 trip-boat fare.

### **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> July - Norfolk Day Celebrations.**

Although the Trust is running regular Dilham Canal, we wanted to do



weekend trips on the North Walsham and something different for Norfolk Day, so we

arranged trips from Ebridge Millpond, with a tempting piece of "meat" in the sandwich.

From Ebridge to Spa Common our guests heard about the history of this unique Norfolk industrial archaeological gem, and the way that it was constructed by the engineers John Millington and Thomas Hughes - using 100 Bedfordshire Bankers (Navvies from the Fens who could move 10 tons a day) in 18 months. They also heard the story of the Trust's new trip boat, which started life on the tidal Trent in the 1980's and was recently reconstructed to resemble a Norfolk Wherry, and named *Ella II* by the daughter of Nat Bircham who was the last wherryman to trade on the Canal in the 1930's, on the *Ella*.

The "meat", was the chance to walk into the recently restored lock at Bacton Wood, standing in the bottom of the lock, where soon there will be six foot of water, moving the gates and learning how the lock will be operated for boats.

The return journey concentrated on the wildlife - with red kite, marsh harriers, kestrels, sandpipers and dragon flies all spotted.

The event was so over-subscribed, an extra evening trip was arranged. A great and different opportunity for the passengers, many who stated they had never realised there was a canal lock in Norfolk, and a successful day for the Trust as well, raising monies to help with further restoration of this fabulous secret canal in the heart of North Norfolk

*Ivan Cane - Trust Chair*



Some of the 60 happy trippers who enjoyed **Norfolk Day** trips. Our thanks to Laurie for allowing them to be taken into the top of the lock, which was the highlight – even for Ed Smith from BBC.

**Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> & Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> July** - the Trust was represented at the **Worstead Festival**. Unfortunately most Trustees were unable to commit to manning the stall owing to other engagements but Alex and Nigel volunteered at the last minute and 'held the fort'. The same problem presented itself on **11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> August** as we had been invited to run a stand for The Starting Handle Club. Trustees were all very keen not to miss this opportunity but again, there were no available volunteers for the Sunday.

Trustees all have many commitments purely to do with the running of the Trust, not forgetting working at work-parties every other Sunday and while everyone is willing and eager to 'spread the word' it is proving very difficult to find enough time to do everything. A bit like fitting the Panama Canal into the North Walsham & Dilham Canal you might say.

Rest assured that we will always make every effort to run stands, give talks, run boat trips etc. but if you can help out at any similar events - please let us know.

**On Saturday & Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> August** (Bank Holiday weekend) the Trust had a small stand within the EAWA tent at the Inland Waterways Association's National Campaign Rally at St Neots on the Great Ouse. The day the Chair went to represent the Trust was also the washout Sunday, where most stalls were closed and barricaded against the wind and rain. However, on the other two days, there was much interest in the Trust's display of photo files and "finds", and, as usual, the cry of "I never knew that there was a canal in Norfolk", was heard. Our thanks to the East Anglian Waterways Association for inviting us.

*Ivan Cane - Chair*

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September - Heritage Open Days 'Walk and Water'.**

*Ivan's follow-up letter to attendees is reproduced here as it contains information relevant to everyone interested in the Canal.*

Roger and I would like to thank you for joining us on the Heritage Open Days' Walk and Water guided tour to the Top and Upper Canal sections of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal. We hope that you enjoyed your visit, and that you may come back again in the future. Our Trip Boats, under Graham's capable captaincy will be running on Sunday afternoons throughout the year (water levels and weather permitting). They are also available for private hire. On the other hand you may wish to return to walk the Canal in the different seasons; to bring your kayak, sailing boat or paddle board; to enjoy some family fishing; to join the Model Boat Club or the intrepid wild swimmers!



As this was our first Walk and Water Event, and as we had over 120 requests for the 40 places, it looks as if there will be demand for some more – hence we would appreciate any feedback on how or what we could change or add. Plus we would like feedback, please, on the handbook that we sent out in advance, and which most of you brought with you.

We would also like to thank you for the donations you made to the Trust's work on the Canal. Some of you showed an interest in volunteering, a page towards the back of the handbook lists the four main areas in which the Trust operates: Work Party Volunteers – *the Muddy Ones*; Boat Crews – *the Wet Ones*; Wildlife, Fisheries and Rangers – *the Green Ones* and finally Support – *the Suited Ones*. As well as these grassroot areas, the Trust is also in need of people who are interested in organising. We need a new Work Party Organiser who has an overview of the various Work Parties and their Leaders, looking at the long as well as short term needs of maintaining and restoring the whole Canal. We need a similar person to oversee and promote events along the Canal – whether HODW&W as this last weekend; ensuring that there is a team to man the stalls at local events or developing something whacky such as a gig on the water! An Education Officer is required to work with Schools, U3A or cubs, bringing a greater awareness of the Canal and its community possibilities to a wider audience. To do any of these jobs, one doesn't need to know the detailed Canal history, construction methods or tying a boatman's knot – but just be willing to join with a group of like-minded people who can see the benefits of a restored Canal can bring to improve the well-being of the community. Please contact if you want to know more. On the other hand you may prefer to support us from the comfort of your armchair – by becoming a member – a membership form is to be found in your handbook, or on our website.

Following the requirements of Data Protection, all of your contact details will be deleted from our records, unless, of course you join up – when you will receive our Trust's magazine – Quagmire. I attach the most recent copy as a tempter!

I would also like to thank the Starling Family for allowing access to their locks and Canal – and all the work strimming the area so that we could have access, and to the Old Canal Company for permission to walk the banks, enter the lock and boat the Upper Canal – none of this would have been possible without the efforts of the Upper Canal owners over the past eight years and finally to Jonathan for mowing around the lock and ensuring that there was a clean towel in the toilets!

Again, many thanks for joining with us.

PS One person asked me if the earlier canal locks had wooden rather than the metal gate quoins I pointed out to you in the locks. It so happened that today I was in Deeping St James and looked at the excellent remains of the lock there (Welland Navigation/Stamford Canal). These locks were opened in 1670, and clearly the quoin was wooden - we're never too old to learn! *Ivan Cane - Chair*

## ELLA II - PART II

You may recall that in Part 1 of this narrative (see the Summer 2018 Quagmire), we left ELLA II at Spa Common having had her bits and pieces removed awaiting further decisions.

Graham, with the aid of an oxy-acetylene torch and welding gear produced some wonderful results! The two sides were lowered considerably to allow the seated passengers a better view of the passing countryside. New framework was built to take a newly made cover, by Mark, to match the new cushions on the long seats. But, I suppose the major change was the extension of the vessel at the stern. Graham added about 5' onto the transom, complete with steel shelves – but no floor. Clever! With the modified transom to take either a petrol or electric outboard motor, the shelves hold both batteries and/or petrol can for propulsion. Fuel cans and batteries are required to have ventilation to prevent fumes and gasses entering the inside of the vessel and this is readily achieved with the 'no floor' construction method. David installed the basic electric control with bilge pump etc and later Darren carried out the solar panel workings and finishing off the control panel. With solar panels, it permits the use of the vessel on electric propulsion without the concern of having to charge the batteries – after only a couple of runs from Spa Common to Ebridge – which is an onerous task for even a fit young person.

Following the construction works, she was completely repainted, checked over and put into service with magnificent results. It should be noted that only folk with the relevant license are permitted to be a skipper on ELLA II. An additional crewman is also required on all passenger carrying trips.

*David Revill - Liaison Officer*

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## *Tom Webster – Fisheries Officer*

The course fishing season has gone very well, I am especially pleased we have recorded the canals first roach/bream hybrid. The canal was one famous locally for its bream, some of my father's stories of them have generated great interest on social media and so I was delighted to have our first evidence of Bream via a hybrid pictured below...



***Bream/roach hybrid weighed 3lbs 3oz, caught at Ebridge Mill Pond by a local North Walsham angler***

I can also report lots of healthy roach, rudd, hybrids and perch being caught and some nice feedback from anglers on social media. The pictures below show some specimen sizes in excellent condition...



The prolonged dry and hot weather caused some concern that it may affect fish with low oxygen levels (this is the one of the main reasons we do not allow pike fishing until October) but this has passed without any reported fish in distress.

The PIKE FISHING season does not open until 1st October, something I have to remind Anglers about on my walks. Most anglers are happy to follow the rules without any issue, but we do have a small minority pike anglers who continue to ignore the rules. MY best efforts to engage with them along the lines of "you don't have to agree with the rules, we just ask you to respect them" but their attitude is they will fish how they like (still using trebles) and when they like (no care for closed season). Short of performing a "bouncer" routine with these few individuals, I am at a loss with what to do with them.

*Tom Webster - Fisheries Officer*

**Boating on the North Walsham and Dilham Canal.**

First, let me say that owners of small boats, such as canoes, sailboards and dinghies are very welcome on Laurie Ashton's section between Ebridge lock and Bacton Wood Lock to use the canal and small boats are often seen enjoying a day afloat.

The weed-cutter manages aquatic plant-life the full length of Ebridge pound, every week, usually on a Friday, during the summer. The operator gives people fishing a wide berth and is respectful of their needs during these sessions and is always open to requests to cut in particular areas as those fishing request. This operation keeps weed under control, but in no way destroys it. The method is designed to manage aquatic plant-life for the benefit of nature and people alike. It is hoped that, in next year's season, it will be possible to both cut and rake up the resulting bulk. That will be a massive improvement for all concerned. Till now, we have had Model Boater Operators and Trust volunteers doing this, for which fishermen and boaters alike are very grateful. This activity keeps the canal clear of both plant-life and mud, which gets trapped in the root mass, whilst leaving appropriate amounts on the canal bed to maintain an appropriate balance of oxygen and naturally produced nutrients. I would encourage walkers, fishers and all other users to join in small maintenance activities, as they feel able. For instance, litter picking and general tidying (see the odd empty drinks can or crisp packet- just pick it up, put it with your own and take it away to bin it), raking of cut weed etc. Every single, even small, item really helps! Please contact the appropriate Trust Officers to make arrangements.

Ella II, our passenger boat, is now fully solar-powered. There is no longer a need to carry batteries on and off the boat for every trip or wait 24hrs per pair between every 2 or 3 trips. It also increases range almost to 'all daylight hours'. Added to that, even after a full day's boating, it will be possible to do long evening trips on the (3 pairs of) storage batteries. There are frequent questions asking, "when will the boat trips pause for the winter?" The answer is that we won't pause or stop through winter. We will continue passenger trips all through, in the comfort of Ella II's white leatherette lined and clear side-panelled passenger area. Winter boating is a truly wondrous experience, only prevented during the short times when the canal is iced over. Because the water is slowly flowing, those times are rare and short-lived, most years.

I should like to take this opportunity to invite any club, organisation, school, association or group to hire Ella II for daytime or evening trips for up to 10 passengers. It's a lovely way to spend an hour or so on an outing. All ages seem to really enjoy these trips. Crew are remarkably attentive, patient and helpful. There is a talk available for those who want to hear about the history of the canal and how it benefitted the local economy and lifestyle during its period of commercial operation by sailing and motor, cargo and passenger wherries. Passengers are welcome to bring any kind of food and drink, which make the trips a real pleasure. The cost is £50 per trip and all funds go towards the restoration and maintenance of the canal by The Trust. All crew give of their time free of charge voluntarily.

*Graham Pressman – Boating Officer*



Ella II with solar panels (photo – Ivan Cane)

## Work-party News



As mentioned in the Summer Quagmire, on 1<sup>st</sup> July, work started on **Ebridge lock** and this photo shows the steel platforms being moved into position.

15<sup>th</sup> July 2018 was a very hot, dry day but twelve volunteers braved heat-stroke, dehydration and wasp stings to continue clearing the Himalayan Balsam at **Purdy's Marsh**. Lunch was taken at Ebridge before going to **Honing Staithe**, clearing the canal path and removing the reeds blocking the entrance to the cut.

During the morning some unplanned work was done by volunteers

on the task to get an electricity supply to the mooring point of the trip boat to facilitate battery charging.

19<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Vegetation that had been cut earlier was removed from **Ebridge lock** chamber.

It was confirmed that the more recent facing brickwork (circa 1900?) along the west wall had little or no tie-in to the original canal wall brickwork other than the visible series of iron ties at the higher levels.

Within the areas of most damage it was apparent that timbers had been used within the original construction.

This was significantly damaged where it could be observed and in some places rotted away completely.

There was also evidence of repair work to the original brickwork using lime mortar.

A long lasting repair will involve more than simply replacing the facing bricks and a little local patching.



*Photo shows rough mortar in centre of hole applied over where timber eroded but still some solid wood.*

26<sup>th</sup> July 2018

The area around **Bacton Wood lock** and within dry canal bed was cut and cleared. The landing gang plank area and the embarkation area at **Ebridge** were cut and cleared. Old and new cut reed/weed was removed from embarkation area and the path to the spillway was cut and cleared. The sight line at exit to car park cleared as much as possible to east of exit.

29<sup>th</sup> July 2018

More balsam bashing!

12<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Bank-raising at **Ebridge**.



The area for trial was strimmed to ground level and the vegetation removed.

Approximately 40 sand bags were filled from the heap of granular material opposite the mill building. The material was mixed with OPC at a ratio of 15:1.

An electric sack barrow was used to move the sand bags to the 'quay side' (above the lock). The mill pond at its west end was deemed too shallow for the Sue B to come in close. The Sue B was used to transport the sand bags and clay back fill to the trial area. The bags were placed at the top of the bank (approximately a 100mm rise per layer of bags). Several additional bags were required where the damage had cut into the bank. Clay was used behind the bags at this point to create a cohesive barrier of low

permeability – this may require puddling at a later date.

Reed and weed was removed from the canal above the lock. The reed/weed removed earlier was taken to the east hedge line. Subsequently the vegetation cut from the lock walls at a previous work party was removed from the lock chamber. Some reed and weed was also removed from the southern end of the spillway.

26<sup>th</sup> August 2018 consisted of more of the same as above!

*Continued on next page...*

9<sup>th</sup> September 2018

The canal walk at **Honing Staithe** was made accessible from the end of the cut by removing part of a fallen tree and there is now a good view along the cut.

The re-growth on areas previously cleared was cut back.

A narrow access to the west of the lock at **Briggate** was created through the chestnut paling. As this was the first return for a working party to Briggate for some time a review was undertaken on the risks associated with working on this site - primarily working adjacent to the lock and in particular to the known hole adjacent to the east lock wall. Other considerations were working adjacent to the mill pond and road (which was surprisingly busy) and the 'debris' within the overgrowth (telegraph poles, steel pins, wire, concrete posts etc).

A little trimming was undertaken to the south of the road to facilitate future parking.

An access was cut along the line of the road but on the other side of the fence and adjacent to the edge of the mill pond.

Access was made to the west side of the lock.

Access was also created to the east side of the lock and the hole located. The safety fencing put there in earlier years was resurrected and supplemented. The overgrowth within the hole was left. (Nb the hole is not as large as that at Ebridge but the lock wall appears to be in a worse condition.)

On completion of work the chestnut paling was replaced to make the site secure. There were several visitors to the site, who all commented positively on the Trust's return to Briggate. Apart from the aesthetics some local residents commented in particular that the diversity of the wildlife was significantly reduced as things had become overgrown. There was also positive comment from those doing conservation work at the adjacent Honing Station (but we did point out they caused all the trouble in the first place circa 19<sup>th</sup> century.)

Apart from the main party, Jonathan was able to service and start the large Honda mower donated to the Trust earlier in the year and Darren undertook further work on the solar power for Ella 2 before joining efforts at Briggate.

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> & Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September (extra work-party days)



A brush cutter was used on the bund at **Ebridge** spillway above water level and vegetation removed to the canal bank. The reeds were pulled from the southern end of the bund and similarly removed to the bank. The exiting channels in the north end of the bund were dug out (hopefully returning the capacity of the spillway to that of last winter). The majority of the bund was reduced to below water level (i.e. the level of the top of the spillway.) Unfortunately, being a little short of manpower meant that a small part of the bund remains. The capacity of the spillway should not be too adversely



affected by the 'island' but it would be good to reduce all of the bund to below water level at some time in the near future, for aesthetic reasons.

*Précis of Chris Heath's reports*

*Many other jobs are always being undertaken; re-organising the container, clearing backsokes, weed cutting – the list goes on. Very often mid-week 'extra' work-parties are planned - we can't keep some of the volunteers away!*

## The Glorious June 16<sup>th</sup>

Roy Webster

For The Boy Roy, June 16<sup>th</sup> 1949 could not have arrived too soon.

After a statutory 90-day lay-off, it was the opening day of the new coarse fishing season and now, after what seemed an age he could connect again with Isaac Walton's gentle art.

The fishing close season came into force by the Mundella Act of Parliament in 1878 and was enshrined in the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act in 1923.

But, apart from game fisheries of salmon and trout, there was little or no enforcement of the law protecting coarse fish such as roach, bream, perch, pike and tench, more especially during the war years of 1939-1945 and beyond when working classes depended on catching substantial numbers of these species to supplement the ration books that limited supplies of staple foodstuffs until the early 1950s.

In 1948, a wind of change swept across the waters. The Rivers Board Act divided the nation into separate administrative areas, in our case the East Suffolk and Norfolk River Board.

Suddenly, uniformed fishery bailiffs appeared on the scene, checking fishing licences and seeking prosecutions for those offences and any violations of the close season.

The Boy, badgered by a mother who had spent the previous three months lamenting the absence of the usual weekly fish supply, did not need her encouragement "to get out there fishing again".

His angling equipment consisting of a pre-war antiquated cane rod strapped together with binder twine, an ancient centre-pin reel and goose quill floats, were crowded into a frayed, wicker creel and awaited on the doorstep, along with a bait can containing garden lob worms and muckheap brandlings.

So it was now the burning question - where would he visit tomorrow, the glorious 16<sup>th</sup>? Would it be the North Walsham, Dilham Canal down the Green Lane or Taylor's Cut that meandered past the bottom of the Dilham family's garden?

Since it was a Thursday, there was a second question. Should he fish early morning, before school, later in the afternoon following a six-mile bike dash home or should he bunk off school completely, feigning sickness like some of the men in the village who called off from work?

His mother wasn't having the latter. "Either you can get out of bed at dawn and fish 'til eight before school or I'll pack you some grub and you can make off straight from North Walsham," she instructed loftily.

The Boy decided on the second option. His preparation for the impending school certificate exams at The Paston would have to wait. He planned to be at the waterside of the Canal by 5pm, fishing for bream from a swim opposite the grazing land at East Ruston Common.

Arriving at the ancient Tonnage Bridge, where navigation tolls were once paid, he surveyed the scene. Two men were already trying their luck in a clear channel between the lily pads, where angry-looking dark green/brown dragonflies and more delicate blue damsels flitted beside the marginal reeds above the deep yellow lily flowers and king cups.

"Caught anything?" he asked the men.

"No bites yet, we've only been here 20 minutes," one responded hopefully.

The Boy smiled. Those fellows wouldn't catch much using hefty tackle more suitable for sea fishing.

Peddalling and pushing his bike over almost a mile of rough ground, much of it the legacy of 1940 Army deepening the canal to act as a tank trap against a possible German invasion, The Boy duly arrived at his chosen spot.

He slashed through a jungle of overgrown brambles and nettles with a sharp long handled sickle, locally known as a reap hook.

Within minutes he had hacked his way to the water's edge. The only sign of life was a motherly mallard protecting her hatch of ducklings and the twitter of reed warblers nesting in the bankside thicket.

*Continued on next page...*

Gazing into the distance he spotted a Suffolk mare with a sturdy foal trotting towards the opposite bank. Now, suddenly brimming with enthusiasm he prised open a can of worms and a hook was baited and ready when mother and son their tails swishing up spray to deter bloodsucking flying insects, entered the shallows.

Suddenly, the bream appeared on the turbid surface, their black dorsal fins resembling mini sharks as they scythed among eight hooves, feasting on edible morsels disturbed by the sudden activity.

The Boy cast his bait skilfully downstream and instantly the float dipped beneath the surface and a bream of about 2lb was played into the landing net. After carthorse and son had clambered ashore The Boy reeled in another 11 fish up to 4lb.

Making for home as the skies darkened he met up with the two men again.

"What have you caught?" one asked.

The Boy opened his carrier bag and displayed two sizeable fish which he had retained for the family pot.

"I had a dozen like these," he told the men, who sheepishly admitted they had caught nothing.

"Can I buy your fish?" wondered the younger man.

"No, you'll have to catch your own," responded The Boy sharply, knowing full well his mother was waiting to prepare his catch for tomorrow's dinner.

Thus, it was bream from the Canal on an action packed opening day and next time out the target would be pike from The Cut.

Back then, two fish per day of any species above lawful minimum size limits could be retained for the pot.

Strangely, the opposite is now the case on free tidal rivers where the limit on pike just one fish per day not exceeding 65cm, or 15 of small fish species up to 20cm. While on private fisheries such as the North Walsham canal, alive or dead, no fish may be retained.

Wonder what Isaac Walton would have made of that?

Roy Webster

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### A Genuine Mystery Photo!



The IWA Lincs branch has passed over this framed photo labelled the NW&DC, which had come into their possession, and thought we should have it. Ivan says he doesn't recognise it as anywhere on the Canal and is hoping that someone may have a suggestion?

--oOo--

### **Photo Challenge**

This photo, taken in May 2018 shows the answer to Alan's challenge- the area is shown from a different angle.

The solution will be given elsewhere.



--oOo--

## **Items of interest to members:**

### **Dumping into the Canal: berms and other hazards.**

Tom Carr

At the Open Weekend this year members and visitors were able to see on the rebuilt spillway at Ebridge how much the water management of the Canal needs a hands-on approach. The downpour on Saturday gave the catchment area on the east side of North Walsham a 'full load' and the importance of the spillway was soon all too clear.

During the downpour I got into conversation with Eric Seward who is the County Councilor for North Walsham East and he told me of the improvements being made to the capacity of the Town Drain. After a brief correspondence with the County Engineers dept. at Eric's suggestion the Trust has been able to establish that there are three surface water pipes running from the town into the Canal.

The one Councilor Seward had in mind and which is being improved comes from Drury's land on the Industrial Estate and runs via Lydgate Road into part of the abandoned Canal above Swafield Locks. With the development of the estate and the progressive extension of impermeable surfaces - roofs, car parks and plant yards etc. – the existing capacity of the surface water drains was a cause of growing concern.

The next outfall downstream taking the town's surface water run-off appears to discharge just below the old railway bridge at Swafield. As can be seen the run-off is from a large sewer from and the sandbank in the picture is the silt which has come into the Canal since the Open Weekend downpour.



The third outfall is rather better disguised. The Old Canal Company has had to deal with berm in the canal next to where the Trust's boats are moored when not in use. So far this discharge into the Canal is the only one referred to in a contract: "The Indenture of Conveyance made on the 5<sup>th</sup> June 1926" between George Walker the seller of the land and the Urban District Council of North Walsham of which I have obtained a copy from Anglian Water's agents in Peterborough.

This contract was for the sale of the land where the Sewage Treatment works were subsequently built. The contract allowed the District Council to discharge into a ditch which ran down to the Canal the overflows from a storm sewer. It also granted in perpetuity for the Council to lay a 12 inch sewer from the treatment works and to construct two inspection pits and a storm overflow discharging into the same stream which is marked on plan "This ditch connects to backsoke of ditch outfall ditch".

So The Old Canal Company or the Trust on its behalf may have to assert the rights of a Canal proprietor and oblige Anglian Water and, if necessary, the internal Drainage Board who are draining water into the canal to meet the cost of removal of the berms. The provisions in the Act dealing with both the discharge of materials into the Canal and the 'drawing off' of water are set out in Clause CIII on page 1434 of the 1812 enabling Act.

Unfortunately ignorance of the Act or a failure to understand its provisions and, at times, the proprietors' lack of vigilance in asserting some of their rights have led to the deterioration of the Canal over several decades, which the Trust is now working to reverse.

In other respects proprietors have been careful to ensure that overhead cable clearance has taken account of the right to sail on the canal and the air draft (clearance) under the new bridge at Ebridge lock was not compromised.

## What's That Doing There?!

Suki Pryce

This August I volunteered to survey the plants along accessible parts of the NW&D Canal, and began in early September with the Royston Bridge to Swafield section. I anticipated finding a fairly limited number of species, but instead have been astonished at the quantity and variety occurring along this limited stretch. Many of these were noted by Jo Parmenter in her 1996/7 survey of the entire canal site for the Trust, before it began restoration work. She recorded a total of 236 plant species from the river corridor as a whole, with individual sections scoring between 35 and 100 species. My first section alone has over 200 species, many of which aren't mentioned in Jo's report and are evidently new to the site, so this is both encouraging and exciting.

The specimens I found include many water-related species, as one would expect - ranging from vigorous bankside plants like Black Mustard *Brassica nigra* and competitive emergent and marginal species like Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Greater Reedmace *Typha latifolia*, Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*, and Reed Sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, to finer species indicative of fair water quality (notable among these are the exceptionally large quantities of Water Chickweed *Myosoton aquatica*, and plentiful Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*). However, there are also a whole range of unexpected finds – some of which have presumably come in with imported fill/soil, plus some which perhaps have been planted by 'gardening guerrillas'?

**A** = alien/non-native- both recent (neophytes) and ancient (archaeophytes)

**Species indicating fair water quality** Water-plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, Water Star-wort *Callitriche*, Frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*, Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides*, Celery-leaved Buttercup *Ranunculus sceleratus*, Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*

**Species indicating good water quality** Whorl-grass *Catabrosa aquatica* (rare in Norfolk: 'a good find')

**Probable agricultural/countryside imports** Fool's Parsley *Aethusa cynapium*, Fiddleneck *Amsinckia micrantha* **A**, Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, Wild Oat *Avena fatua* **A**, Canadian Fleabane *Conyza canadensis* **A**, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*, Cockspur *Echinocloa crus-galli* **A**, Wild Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum*, Alsike Clover *Trifolium hybridum*, Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus*

**Rarish in Norfolk** Bifid Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis bifida*

**Normally on poor, dry, sandy soils** Hoary Cinquefoil *Potentilla argentea* (rare), Sticky Groundsel *Senecio viscosus* **A**, Heath Groundsel *Senecio sylvaticus*

**Normally on dunes, sea cliffs etc!** Sea Milkwort *Glaux maritima*

**Likely 'garden escapes'** Red Garden Orache *Atriplex hortensis* var *rubra* **A**, Galingale *Cyperus longus*, California Poppy *Escholtzia californica* **A**, Caper Spurge *Euphorbia lathyrus*, Lobelia *Lobelia erinus* **A**, Opium Poppy *Papaver somniferum*, Evening Primrose *Oenothera glazoviana* **A**, Argentinian Vervain *Verbena bonariensis* **A**

**Maybe planted (but by whom?); mostly single plants** Double Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica flore pleno* **A**, Michaelmas Daisy *Aster cv* **A**, Buddleia *Buddleia davidii* **A**, Shasta Daisy *Leucanthemum x superbum* **A**, Soapwort *Saponaria officinalis*

**Urban /waste ground imports** Greater Celandine *Chelidonium majus*, Jersey Fleabane *Conyza sumatrensis* **A**, Water Bent *Polypogon viridis* **A**, Narrow-leaved Ragwort *Senecio inaequidens* **A**

**Rare/unusual alien** Common Ragweed *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* **A**

**Invasive, needs controlling/removing** Indian Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* **A**



← A precious section of clean-water, species-rich ditch, with Water-plantain, Frogbit, Whorl-grass etc.

We think it's Sea Milkwort, but this tiny plant baffled our experts for a while. →



*Continued on next page...*

## Conclusion, Recommendations, and Next Steps

Some of this section of canal is dominated by coarse vegetation – Nettles, Bramble, Creeping Thistle, Bindweed and so on - with room for little else. And the tops of the banks are of cut grass with little species richness there either. But some parts of the bank sides and flanking ditches provide enough room, or suitable soil or water quality, for the range of less usual or less competitive species noted above. This may be accidental, but nevertheless my main recommendation would be to cherish these habitats, and try to protect, enhance or extend them. I realise this may not be possible in the face of further bank-raising works etc, but I'd encourage all concerned to try to at least protect the ditch and canal areas that are home to the rarer good-water-quality species. Also, attractive as Indian Balsam is, it does need exterminating I'm afraid – Balsam-pulling parties are called for.

Meanwhile – it's onwards (south) to the next section for me while the weather holds, and here's hoping it's as exciting as this first one!

*Anyone who'd like a copy of the complete plant list, please contact Suki at [sukipryce@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sukipryce@hotmail.co.uk)*

**Editor's note:** *The Trust's mitigation plan recognises the importance of the soke ditches and banks for biodiversity, at the same time accepting the need for walkers to have easy access to walk along the canal banks themselves. It's a difficult balancing act, but one that our work party leaders take very seriously. Meanwhile - make a note in your diaries to join in with the Balsam bashing parties next year!*

--oOo--

## Queries and Questions!

On 12 Sep 2018 an email was received via our website:

*Could you please email me further details regarding making a donation to the restoration and recovery of the NW&D Canal*

Julie Kelleher – ICT officer replied:-

Thank you for your interest in the restoration of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal; and thank you for your very kind email offering a donation.

The Trust is currently in the process of applying for "Charity" status and once we have a new Charity number our website will include this along with more information on 'how to make a donation' and 'how to leave a legacy in your will'.

But if you wish to make a donation you can make an online payment to:

The North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust

Sort Code: 60-15-54

Adding your surname and your postcode as YOUR REFERENCE

If you wish to make a cheque payment, please contact the Trust treasurer, on [stalhamwoodturner@btinternet.com](mailto:stalhamwoodturner@btinternet.com)

Our Membership website page has a couple of different forms one of which details the bank account details supplied above - [www.nwdct.org/membership.html](http://www.nwdct.org/membership.html)

*On behalf of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust, we thank you very much.*

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### **Pocklington Canal**

Many members know that David Tomlinson, a long-term supporter of our canal, is also involved with the restoration of the Pocklington Canal. The restoration of Walbut Lock on Pocklington Canal is now complete, meaning this summer a further two miles of the waterway will become navigable for the first time in nearly a century.



One of Pocklington canal's distinctive six-spoked paddle wheels and Walbut Lock

--oOo--



**River Stour Trust**  
1968-2018

**PRESERVING THE STOUR FOR YOU**

You will probably have already heard that there was a major fire at the Trust's Visitor Education Centre (VEC) alongside Cornard Lock, on Saturday 8th September.



The fire occurred in the early hours of Saturday morning, so fortunately no-one was hurt, but the building has been badly damaged and is unlikely to be useable for 9-12 months. The precise cause has yet to be determined, but it is not thought to have been suspicious or arson.

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The office has been temporarily relocated in our Granary building in Sudbury. The computer files were backed up, and the hard-drives have been recovered. Some of the paper records and historic documents in our archive have been damaged by fire and water, but our many historic photographs had previously been scanned and digitised, so we have all these on disc.

However, whilst this situation is a major blow, the Trust has already recovered well, and our activities going forward will not be affected. This has been achieved thanks to the efforts of a number of Trust members and our administration team (Administrator, Catherine, and her part-time assistant, Sandra).

River trips will continue from Sudbury and Flatford till the end of October as usual, while our weddings, functions and Tea Room at the Granary will also be unaffected. The boat trips and our Tea Room will then re-start at Easter 2019.

We'd like to thank all our Trust members and members of the public for their many messages and offers of support.

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## Halesworth New Reach Working Group

Representatives from the Environment Agency recently paid a visit to Halesworth New Reach. They were joined by members of Halesworth Town Council together with an official from Suffolk County Council. We had invited the Agency to come down and see the current state of the waterway and in particular the amount of silt that has built up at the Town Park end which has resulted in the drying out of the canal. Our photo shows the group inspecting the silt bank from the towpath.

The meeting was very constructive. At one time the Agency regularly de-silted the canal but this has now fallen by the wayside. Preservation of wildlife (particularly water voles), difficulties of access, and a policy shift on flood prevention have all meant that de-silting the New Reach is no longer a top priority.

But there is good news. The Agency plan to re-consider clearance of the silt bank together with efforts to reduce the amount of silt run-off from farmland upstream. This could mean that water levels will be restored at the top of the canal. We very much welcome this new development and hope to see progress soon.

Meanwhile, the Agency have no objection to our strimming and maintaining the brickwork and concrete base of Patrick Stead lock. We hope to do this work over the winter months which will mean that the historic lock will be cleaned up and visible. And before too long we hope to have water back in the lock itself. Watch this space!

If you would like to support the work of the New Reach Restoration Group, please contact them at [info.newreach@gmail.com](mailto:info.newreach@gmail.com).

--oOo--

### Photo Challenge



This close-up of part of the previous photo shows that the answer is that the electric poles are now upright.

Alan sent this to us and it drove us up the *pole* but we *leant over backwards* to find the answer. Chris *sloped* off to make a cuppa as my *energy* was subsiding, but we were *inclined* to carry on trying.

Thank you Alan, an *electrifying* challenge, what a bright *spark* you are!  
Mary Black – Quagmire Editor

### Dates for your diary

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018** The Trust Annual General Meeting at Honing Village Hall, NR28 9AB. (A map can be found on the Trust website.) 7pm for 7.30 . After Trust business, a talk will be given by Ivor Stemp from the Norfolk Wherry Trust, talking about the Northern River Wherries. Members are warmly invited to meet Trustees, Officers, work-party volunteers and enjoy the information, photos, refreshments etc. **The AGM agenda will be sent to members in due course.**

### Talks & Presentations 2018

Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> October

Probus Great Yarmouth

Chris & Mary Black

### 2019

Tuesday, 27th February

Probus North Walsham

Ivan Cane

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April

Hickling Ladies Group

David Revill

*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 Winter 2018/19 Quagmire (at the Trustees' discretion) is the first week of January 2019. Contact [mdablack@btinternet.com](mailto:mdablack@btinternet.com)*