

Quagmire

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

Contact: mdablack@btinternet.com

News...

It is with great pleasure that the Trust welcomes Stephanie Trower, Louise Fuller, Charlotte Watlow and Malcolm Ducker, who have all volunteered to become **Assistant Wildlife Officers**.

I look forward to working with them to increase our knowledge of the wildlife along the canal, and to help improve the various habitats as the restoration work progresses.

Thank you all for joining us. The work of the Trust relies upon the support and help of our volunteers.

Perry Hampson - Wildlife Officer

Trustees are excited to welcome Mark Shopland, who has been appointed as **Grants Officer** to help boost the Trust's income from the various awards and funds that are available to voluntary groups. Mark has been a member of the 'Friends of the Rosary', a cemetery friends group based in Norwich, for the last twenty years, involved in all aspects of its running. Having sold his last boat about five years ago he has been experiencing withdrawal symptoms and felt like joining another group which has a more nautical air to it!



If you hear of a possible source of a grant, large or small, please let Mark know via secretary@nwdct.org

The Trust is also welcoming Nigel Lloyd, who joins us as our new **Trust Administrator**. Nigel lives in North Walsham within walking distance of the Swafeld section of the canal. He recently retired from work after a 16-year spell managing the gas interconnector pipeline which connects Belgium to the UK landing at Bacton. Nigel was elected as District Councillor for North Walsham North Ward in 2011 and re-elected in 2015. The current tenure runs until May 2019 when there will be another election.

Nigel has been a member of the NWDCT for several years and says that he is pleased to now play a more active role in the position of Trust Administrator. His first involvement with NWDCT took place in 2012 when he offered his political support to the Trust in a number of painful meetings with the Environment Agency in Norwich. Later, Nigel nominated NWDCT for an environment award promoted by NNDC which provided well deserved recognition for the good work of the Trust and all its volunteers. Most recently he has nominated the Trust for an award to the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership; we await the outcome as I write. Nigel is still finding his feet in the role as administrator and would appreciate support from other members as he picks up the reins. Nigel completed his boat training on the Sue B over the Easter weekend and hopes to be able to offer support as crew over the summer months. He reported that there were a total of 19 passengers that day, all of whom seemed to thoroughly enjoy the trip from Ebridge Mill to Bacton Mill Lock and back. As Nigel remarked - a lovely way to spend an afternoon.



Recent Events

In the previous edition of Quagmire it was reported that on **10th January 2018** volunteers and members attended the test re-watering which was filmed and shown on BBC's Look East programme. That edition of Quagmire was delayed in order to include the item and therefore the accompanying photos did not tell the whole story. Eventually there was enough water (shown in photo 1 taken by Alan Bertram during the 21st January work-party) for Chris Heath to **sail** through the tunnel in his coracle. Photo 2 shows the view downstream, including the quay heading below Royston Bridge. Take a moment to appreciate the volunteers who turned out in freezing conditions to begin cutting reeds of Purdy's Marsh and if you would like to volunteer to lend a hand next winter please let David Revill know!



Photo 3 is a reminder of the view upstream from Royston Bridge in 2011 when volunteers first arrived to begin clearing the trees and brash. Photo 4, taken by Julie Kelleher, shows the same view during test re-watering.

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Mystery Photo

This section of brick wall was uncovered during a work party. Maybe you were there, or can you guess where it was? All will be revealed later in this newsletter.

Work-party News

January and February.



The volunteers braved freezing temperatures and continued cutting the reeds on Purdy's Marsh, a back-breaking, arm-aching task.

For management purposes the marsh is divided into three areas. The northern and central areas are set at approx. 115 metres long with the southern area approx. 85



metres long as it is considerably wider. The task of cutting and raking up the reeds is really hard work but the job had to be finished before the nesting season. The second photo shows Alan Bertram taking a break from his camera, using the brush-cutter to finish off and tidy up the cut area.

February

While some volunteers finished the reed cutting, others assisted Laurie with the installation of sheet piling opposite the sluice above Royston Bridge.

The task of piling required the big JCB digger. Jonathan and Chris Heath managed to get to the far bank to assist in placing the sheet piles in the correct place. The first one could not be pressed in even with the full weight of the digger on it. The pile was taken out and moved sideways and this time it went into the bed of the back-soke. It could be heard descending through a 2ft gravel layer – the cause of the difficulty in driving it in at the first attempt. 10 sheets were successfully driven in forming a 12ft barrier to water scouring the bank opposite the sluice. The scoured area of bank behind the piling will be filled with soil at a later date.



March

The first planned work party was cancelled thanks to 'The Beast from the East'. However plenty of work was achieved during March by various volunteers including working on the new balance-beams for Bacton Wood Lock's bottom gates. (See photo below.)

The replacement bottom lock gates have been in place for a while now and you will have seen from past photographs that they are missing their balance-beams (gate arms). The old beams have long disappeared and originally might have been similar to the cast iron beams still in place at Briggate Lock.

Cast iron is a brittle metal and although perfect in compression it breaks easily in tension, especially if the design is poor. This seems to have been the case hence the repairs on the original cast iron gate beams at Briggate and one of the top gate beams at Bacton Wood.



To cast such long beams is very expensive so it was decided by the Old Canal Co. to have reproduction beams made from steel which has great strength in tension. The beams would be manufactured to resemble closely the style of the original cast iron beams manufactured in North Walsham in 1825.

It is fitting therefore that the new balance-beams have been expertly manufactured nearly 100 years later by a North Walsham company, Lake and Nicholls Engineering. The beams are in the process of being primed and painted prior to being fitted to the lock gates. However the gates need further work to make them watertight and able to swing freely, so it may be a while before we see them in place.

The new balance-beams were made by **Lake and Nicholls** at a discount and paid for through a grant from the **Geoffrey Watling Charity**. The Trust would like to thank both for their generosity.

Graham Pressman – Boating Officer

Could you join our Trip Boat Crew?

Trips on our 'temporary' trip boat, Sue B have proved very successful and the new trip boat EllaII will be ready to launch very soon.

The trips have already brought in significant funds for The Trust, not to mention increasing the awareness of what The Trust is doing on the Canal.

Come summer, I am hoping that we can run 4 trips every Saturday and Sunday. I would also welcome groups of up to 10 passengers during the week, if we can crew it. This represents up to £50 per trip, with very few outgoings and sometimes results in new members and volunteers joining us.

Will you consider becoming a crew member? You only need common sense and a 1 hour course with me. Steerers need to be qualified boat handlers, for which we can arrange basic training. We currently have 3 qualified steerers and 1 or 2 crew (availability varies). I must aim to at least double that by the summer. If you would like a chat about what is involved you can either phone me on 07585 160 772 or send me an email on pressman167@btinternet.com

Graham Pressman – Boating Officer

Graham & Mark Pressman, with the help of volunteers, have been working hard on Ella II. As Graham mentioned above, It is hoped that the Trust trip-boat will be launched fairly soon so look out for news either via the website, or certainly in the next Quagmire.

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Thank You

You may recall that we asked members to let us know if they possessed skills or experience which may be of use to the Trust. We were surprised to receive several responses, many of which comprised various skills. Trustees are heartened to know that so many people are keen to help with the restoration and have already been in contact with one or two of the respondents.

Some of those who replied to this request pointed out that they are not yet retired and so have not much time available to help. It has to be said that most of the work-party volunteers and the Trustees and Officers are past retirement age and some of us are feeling it too!

There is still an enormous amount of work to be done, so with an eye to the future we really do need to encourage younger people to join us (we consider anyone under 60 to be a youngster).

The Mystery Photo Revealed

Ebridge Mill pond – ten years ago.



THE IWA ANNUAL RAFFLE

A large number of you will recall being asked to purchase tickets in this raffle in the autumn time. The IWA (Inland Waterways Association) campaigns for our waterways in all parts of the land and are tireless in their reasoning and discussions with all authorities, including the government, when major changes are planned.

The North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust is an associate member of the IWA and through this connection is able to purchase insurances for our protection, such as work parties and marine cover for our boats, all at advantageous prices. It is through our working with the IWA that we were able to obtain the attentions of the two WRG (Waterways Recovery Group – part of the IWA) working parties at Ebridge last year and years ago at Royston spillway.

The IWA Raffle is a little unusual in that each ticket sold bears a relationship to where the profits are allocated. **The NW&DC Trust has received several hundred pounds donated to us as a raffle result!** So next time you buy such a ticket, please ensure that you write NW&DCT in the appropriate space! Thank you.

All nationwide raffles (which this is) are won by someone living somewhere else? WRONG! A major prize in the 2017 raffle was **won by our very own Chris and Mary Black** and they will be taking their canal holiday on a narrow-boat in summer this year. Let's hope that the sun shines on their voyage.

So, later this year in the autumn when you are approached to purchase an

IWA RAFFLE TICKET

consider the positive advantages to the Trusts' funds and YOU TOO could be a personal WINNER!

David Revill – IWA – EAWA – Trustee

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Julie Kelleher – ICT Administrator

Data Protection

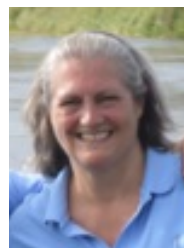
New EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) come into force on 25th May 2018. You can find out more information by visiting the "Information Commissioner's Office" by visiting their website <https://ico.org.uk>

The North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust is currently working on a policy which conforms to the regulations, BUT, we can guarantee that any personal data held by the NWDC Trust is NOT shared or passed to any third party. (This statement already appears on the 'Membership Application' form.)

A consent form will be sent to members with the Summer edition of Quagmire.

The North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust is also very busy on Social Media. These applications allow you to share your photos of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal and are constantly being updated with photos old and new, along with information about Trust events plus bookings for the Canal boat trips.

Website =



www.nwdct.org - [www.Facebook.com/NWDCT](https://www.facebook.com/NWDCT) - [www.Facebook.com/groups/www.nwdct.org](https://www.facebook.com/groups/www.nwdct.org) - [www.Twitter.com/NWDCTrust](https://www.twitter.com/NWDCTrust) - [www.Instagram.com/NWDCanalTrust](https://www.instagram.com/NWDCanalTrust)

Julie Kelleher – ICT Administrator

A DREAM BREAM FROM THE CANAL BY ROY WEBSTER

Young Boy Roy sat motionless on the bank of the canal, staring intently and unblinking into the crystal clear water streaming through the lush, green aquatic plant life.

Above him, a scorching summer sun blazed down from an azure sky, flecked by the contrasting whiteness of a cotton wool-textured spiral of spent condensation trails drifting over the south west horizon as a stark reminder of the fierce aerial battles being fought above the nation's capital city.

In the adjacent cornfields, muscular Shire horses, yoked and harnessed to four-wheeled wagons, snorted and sweated under the strain of hauling towering loads of upstanding twine bound oat sheaves to the stack yard

Half a dozen men, stripped to the waist and brown as berries, and two sun burnt cockney land army girls, less scantily clad in khaki, toiled unflinchingly in the searing, arid climate of one of the hottest summers of the 20th century. They were efficiently gathering the vital animal and human food harvest to be threshed by antiquated steam-driven machinery when the days shortened.

It was the memorable year of 1940 and one of the most important periods of our Island's history, when the Battle of Britain in the skies would be won by the Allies' valiant fighter plane pilots against almost overwhelming odds to relieve the cities and towns of the ruthless and devastating bombardment by the pitiless German Luftwaffe.

Yet The Boy was utterly oblivious to it all and, even when a Nazi Dornier bomber that had strayed off course was engaged overhead in a dogfight by an RAF Coltishall Spitfire, the staccato sound of machine guns that sent the muttering moorhens scattering for cover, his waterside vigil by the ancient Tonnage Bridge that shadowed the tapering army Ack Ack gun, never wavered.

He was waiting for The Fish – that very special specimen he had spotted idling among the streamer weeds and lilies, coming to rest in the clearing beneath his feet, before it was disturbed by the racket overhead. The fish was a monster bream, bigger than any he had ever seen caught from the Dilham, North Walsham canal by his father, or anyone else for that matter. For an hour, which seemed more like a day, the seven-year-old waited patiently, encouraged by the moorhens that were breaking cover again and the arrival of a solitary heron fishing for its dinner on the far bank

Suddenly, the lily pads by him quivered almost imperceptibly, or did he just imagine it? But surely the pair of mottled brown dragonflies, resting on the yellow lily flower head, had been disturbed by something? Indeed they had, for 10 seconds later the giant scaled bronze brown flanks of the fish of his boyhood dreams nosed into the clearing, accompanied by two of its smaller more silver coloured cousins.

Hastily, the fattest, juiciest garden lob worm was selected from the bait can and pinned on the sturdy black eel hook. And, supported by a bright red-tipped swan quill float, the bait was lowered gently on stout woven thread in front of the prey. This great fish swam the full circle, eyeing the wriggling morsel of food then moved in swiftly to gulp down the wriggler before the two smaller fish could attack it.

With a mighty heave on the ancient cane fishing rod, the hooked fish flew over the exited Boy's right shoulder for a soft landing in the bankside undergrowth. Gently, the thrilled youngster managed to control his shaking hands that were now targeted by relentless stinging nettles, to remove the hook from the rubbery lips. Transfixed, he gazed on his dream fish with a heady euphoria of delight and sheer disbelief. Some of the workers strolled over to admire the massive fish. "Is it a plaice? One of the London land girls wondered. "No, it's the biggest bream I ever saw from here, it must be a five pounder," cried the farm foreman Bob, rushing to his nearby home for the kitchen scales.

The pointer rested on 5 lbs 12oz, a truly marvellous specimen of Canal bream, even in those halcyon days of pure streams before toxic sewerage effluent began to exact its heavy toll on the aquatic flora and fauna. As for the proud young angler, he gazed lovingly with tearful emotion at his piscatorial prize while he pondered his next move. Should he take the fish home for his Mum to pickle in vinegar and spice, a culinary process she called "sousing"? No, not this one, it was very special. And very carefully he lowered his prize specimen, which would remain engraved in his memory for ever, into the water where it swam off

to rejoin the small shoal, none the worse for its experience.

Roy Webster

Tom Webster – Fisheries Officer

The Boy returned to the scene of his triumph on several occasions and, sure enough, the giant bream, he had hooked on crude tackle by Isaak Walton's gentle art standards, was still in residence, now in deeper water following the army drag line dredger adapting the Canal into an enemy tank trap.

But, even so, this Boy now 85, never fished for the monster again because he realised he would never meet with the same excitement, catching it a second time.

Now, with plans going ahead to restore the dilapidated North Walsham Canal to its former glory, will those fabulous fishing facilities ever be revived for fresh generations of young anglers?

Only time will tell but already promising vivid red finned rudd and roach have been spotted rising for insect life on the sparkling sun drenched surface. And some of them along with spikey perch and hefty pike have actually been caught this season by keen investigative rodmen.

Thus, supported by the unstinting effort of redoubtable members of the Canal Trust and keen adjacent landowners, the battle is steadily being won against the many years of careless disinterest and neglect, with Mother Nature re-establishing an abundance of flora and fauna to the waterway.

Happily, this ancient, historic man-made commercial waterway appears in the process of being born again, not only as an angling hotspot but as one of Norfolk's most popular, high value, multi-cultural, recreational nature spots of magnificent biodiversity, appealing to bird watchers, ramblers, family dog walkers, canoeists and wild life lovers in general.

Tom Webster – Fisheries Officer

Fishing Rules on the North Walsham and Dilham Canal between Ebridge Millpond & Swafield Bridge.

Permission to fish is granted from the canal owner. This is a privilege and not a right.

Please respect the rules and requirements at all times.

Pike Fishing

- Close Season - 1st March to 31st September.
- Hooks - Single barbless, all methods.
- Baits - Sea fish dead baits only, live baits not permitted.
- Traces – Stainless steel traces 10 inches minimum.
- Rods – Maximum of 2, always attended.
- Line - 15lbs Monofilament and 30lbs Braid minimum.
- Equipment - Large knotless landing net with a minimum of 36in. long arms, Large unhooking mat, 12in long artery forceps, Side cutters.
- Catch and release, NO keepnets.
- Avoid dangerous gorging, strike early!

Course Fishing

- Close Season – 15th March to 15th June.
- Hooks - Single barbless, all methods.
- Baits - No cereal groundbait or boilies. Surplus bait must not be dumped in the canal.
- Rods – Maximum of 2, always attended.
- Equipment - Disgorger/forceps/unhooking mats/landing nets.
- Catch and release, NO keepnets.
- Avoid dangerous gorging, strike early!

General Rules

- Movement/removal of any fish caught is prohibited.
- Fish to be rapidly weighed in nets and returned to the canal with care.
- Respect other canal users; keep pathways clear of tackle and vehicles.
- Carry your rod fishing licence. Children under 12 don't need a licence and licences for children aged between 12 and 16 are free.
- Treat the environment and wildlife with respect at all times.

Please remember that this is a Canal under restoration. At times this means that water levels may be variable and banks closed so that further restoration and maintenance work can be undertaken.

Diana Velhagen NW&DCT Researcher

Our “claim to fame” in the Norwich Castle Museum!

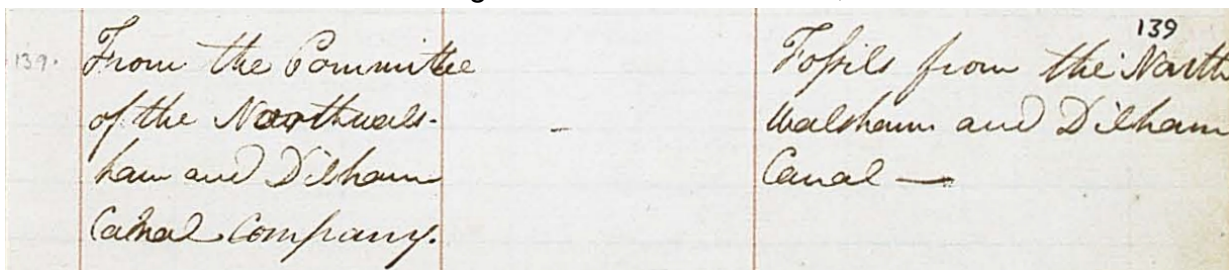
Following on from its brief mention in the Summer 2017 edition of Quagmire I have further researched the Aurochs skull discovered during the excavation of the canal in 1825.

The find was reported in the Norwich Mercury on Saturday 29th October, 1825 *“In excavating the North Walsham and Dilham Canal, the workmen have found a pair of horns which, from their magnitude, must have belonged to an animal, the race of which is now extinct in this country; they are considered by some Naturalists as antediluvian. The dimensions are as follows: from the tip of one horn to the tip of the other, measuring round the curve, 6ft. 2 inches; opening between the points of the two horns, 1 ft. 8 ½ inches.”*

A year earlier, in 1824, the Norfolk and Norwich Literary Institution had established the Norwich Museum, and members provided objects and collections for display. James Edward Smith, the foremost botanist in England, was the first President of the Museum. All the eminent naturalists in the county joined the Museum and its collections grew rapidly.

The Norfolk Chronicle, published on Saturday 2nd September, 1826, devoted much space to the grand opening of the Canal to trade on the previous Tuesday, and the dining afterwards of “60 or 70 gentlemen” at the Kings Arms in North Walsham. At this meeting, the newspaper reported: *“Lord Suffield observed that he had received from the Secretary of the Norwich Museum, requesting that the fossil remains which had been dug up might be presented to the Institution, to be preserved amongst its curiosities. Mr Becket having, on the part of the London Committee, acquiesced in this request, Lord Suffield moved that it should be granted, and it was unanimously carried.”*

The remains were identified as a skull of the wild ox, Aurochs (*Bos Primigenius*) and were entered into the Museum’s Accession Register in 1826 as item 139, as follows:



It was the first item presented to the Museum by a company rather than by a private individual. The skull is still on display in the Early Days Cabinet in the Natural History Gallery at Norwich Castle Museum (reference *North Walsham & Dilham Canal Co., 1826.139.FC11*) where it forms a direct link to the early enthusiasts and their fascination with the natural world.



References: The British Newspaper Archive in partnership with the British Library, The Natural History Gallery, Norwich Castle Museum and Dr David M Waterhouse, Senior Curator of Natural History, Norfolk Museums Service . *Diana Velhagen, Researcher*

Items of interest to members:



INLAND
WATERWAYS
ASSOCIATION

Silver Propeller Challenge

Take a look at the article in 'Waterways' magazine Spring 2018 or visit the website at www.waterways.org.uk

Exploring the far-flung reaches of the network just got even more rewarding

Your challenge, should you choose to accept, is to visit as many of the nation's underused waterways as you can. Why? You'll not only get to visit some stunning, yet quieter, parts of the network, but you'll also be in with a chance of receiving IWA's new Silver Propeller Challenge plaque.

Taking part

Visit 20 different places on the list, take a date stamped photograph of you and your mode of transport (any type of boat, canoe or paddleboard) at each location and save all your photos to submit once you're done. Just ensure your pictures make the location easy to identify.

Everyone who completes the challenge will receive a Silver Propeller Challenge plaque to attach to their vessel. The challenge opened on 1st January 2018 and covers all visits from that date onwards.

Ebridge Mill is listed as one of the 'places only accessible by local, portable and trailable craft'.

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Planning Permission has been granted for Glamping Pods to appear close to the Canal, near Tonnage Bridge

An artist's impression of the new glamping pods. Image: Courtesy Luke Paterson

Meanwhile the Canal Camping site at Dilham continues to attract campers to the Canalside site below Dee Bridge, they offer:-

pitches for tents and three bell tents but no caravans or campers.

Pet-friendly, we welcome dogs provided they are kept on a lead within the campsite

Toilets and showers, free to use, with hot water and no annoying push-button taps

Braziers, for your campfire and cooking, with plenty of wood available to purchase.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to walk along the canal from the campsite to Ebridge, Bacton Wood Lock and beyond.

Dates for your diary

Tuesday 24th April **Films at The Atrium**, Spenser Avenue, North Walsham, NR28 9HZ. Doors will open at 6.30 and the film show will begin at 7pm. There will be no interval between the films. Refreshments, including home-made cakes will be available to enjoy after the show while browsing the stalls and maybe chatting to Trustees and Officers?

Film no 1 "The Spillway at Ebridge" a record of the restoration of the spillway. Filmed over fourteen weeks. Running time 29 minutes.

Film no 2 "The Water Gates" A film record, (shot over eight months), of the construction and fitting of the lock gates at Bacton Wood. Running time 30 minutes.

Plus an extra 10 minute film which includes the recent test re-watering.

Saturday & Sunday 2nd & 3rd June NWDCT Information Weekend Event at Ebridge Mill Pond, North Walsham. NR28 9NG. Watch the website for more information.

Friday July 27th Tying in with the launch of 'Norfolk Day' Graham has arranged to launch Sue B for extra trips on the day. Call 07585 160772 to book a place.



Trust members will be on hand to point out the various industrial archeological features, the wildlife, tell the history - or just let people sit back and enjoy the peace and quiet - waving to the walkers on the canal paths. There will also be a chance to disembark at Bacton Wood Lock, to look at the restoration of the lock - which we hope will be in water and working later in the year.



Thanks to Tom Webster for this lovely photo – 3 generations on the Sue B!

Tuesday 16th October The Trust Annual General Meeting at Honing Village Hall.

Talks & Presentations 2018

18th April

Dereham U3A History Group

Ivan Cane

7th September

Stalham Good Fellowship Over 55's

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 Summer 2018 Quagmire (at the Trustees' discretion) is 7th July.

Contact mdablack@btinternet.com