

Quagmire

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

Contact: mdablack@btinternet.com

News...

It was reported in the Autumn 2017 Quagmire that Chris Heath has taken on the role of Projects Officer for the Trust. Chris has recently also take over as **Work Party Organiser** from David Revill.

The Trust would like to say a huge thanks to David for all the years that he has kept us 'roped in' as WPO.

The amount of work and achievements that have taken place under his leadership cannot be easily quantified, not only have there been few work parties that David has missed over the past 12 years as WPO, there have also been the hours of answering phones, undertaking the risk assessments, meeting the four Canal owners to pave the way, liaising with the EA, Broads Authority, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, canalside owners and the various Councils, and it is in this latter role that **David has agreed to continue, by becoming Liaison Officer for the Trust**, and future Trust CIO.



The photo shows David hauling canal silt before the days of Laurie's machines!



And let's not forget to thank Gisella for all the support that she has given David over the years, and the number of times she has had to forsake David digging the garden because he's digging a Canal! Many Thanks David – we'll miss those "It's only another Hundred Yards" statements, when we were clearing the banks at Ebridge! Yes, this photo shows Ebridge in 2007 – and helps to emphasise just what David's role as WPO has achieved.

Ivan Cane - Trust Chairman

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Recent Events

On **10th June** Chris and I represented the Canal at the 'Celebration of Volunteering' held in the **Cathedral Cloisters**. The event had been very well organised with plenty of information for stall-holders and plenty of room to set up our stall. Several people took leaflets and boat trip timetables and a couple of visitors showed an interest in volunteering for us. We hope that we have spread the word to people who hadn't previously known there is a canal in Norfolk!

Mary Black - Newsletter Editor



Water, Water Everywhere at the Canal Open Weekend

On **Saturday, June 2nd**, pouring was the operative word during the first day of the Trust's open weekend.

Not only was a pint of Woodeforde's Wherry ale poured over the bow of the trust's new pleasure boat, Ella II, but it poured with rain for much of the day with flash flooding affecting the nearby town of North Walsham.

Happily the sun shone for the second day, drawing the crowds to picturesque Ebridge Mill pond to enjoy boat trips, canoeing, displays, food, drink and a chance to "gongoozle" - idly watch canal life.

Undaunted by the first day's deluge, trust members and supporters dashed out of the marquee during a lull in the downpour to ceremonially launch Ella II.

She has been named in honour of The Ella which, in 1934, was the last wherry to sail the Canal before it fell into disuse and became choked with vegetation.



Lilian Smith, daughter of The Ella's skipper, Nat Bircham, poured a pint of Woodeforde's Wherry ale over Ella II to christen her, watched by four of Nat's granddaughters. The family then took a short boat trip along the Canal. *Photo shows Lilian in blue and white striped top, Nat's four granddaughters, Ed Cubitt at the helm, Graham Pressman (boating Officer) and Ivan Cane (Chairman).*

Ivan Cane said: "It was fantastic to be able to welcome the descendants of Nat

Bircham to come and name Ella II in memory of that last wherry on this canal."

Alex Hurrell, Media Officer



Andrea (membership Sec.) in flooded tent



Gisela served hot drinks and cake...



...but Seb preferred Mark's bar!

During the evening members and ex-volunteers got together for a barbeque and Chris Black presented Jonathan with the 'Top Gate Trophy' for his sterling work restoring the old toilet at Spa Common – a welcome relief to those working all day in that area. The 'Bottom Gate Trophy' was presented to 'someone who has done something daft – or caused amusement'. Ivan won this because at a work-party he confused left with right and threw his prized saw into the fire instead of the pile of rubbish.

Ivan generously provided these trophies and has hinted that maybe next year another two unsuspecting volunteers may receive one.

Thanks to Julie Kelleher for the first two photos below:



Keeping warm and dry in the tent



Ivan, Chris, Jonathan



THE saw...

Boat Trips on the Canal

The **pontoon Sue B** has done a fine job for us as a passenger carrying boat while **Ella II** was being readied for the task. She will continue to be used as a pontoon carrying the work-party to otherwise inaccessible places, but will be called into use as a second trip boat on busy days. During the recent Open Weekend, both Ella II and Sue B ploughed up and down the Canal carrying happy passengers.

Graham (Boating Officer) reports that we are doing quite well with crew numbers, but could still do with some more. David Revill has arranged for more to be trained as soon as we have sufficient numbers willing to pay the reduced fee of £100 to obtain their training and certification. Graham has had a couple of thousand leaflets printed advertising the trips for distribution at the Tourist Information Centres and other venues where tourists and locals will be looking for things to do locally.

For more information on the boat trips ring 07585 160 772 or check the website at www.nwdct.org



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The journeys we are taking at the moment are between Ebridge and Spa Common, return. When Bacton Wood lock is open and the canal above re-filled, permanently, we hope to take passengers from Ebridge to Royston Bridge and back through the lock. That will be about a 2hr trip and will cost around £10 per person.

Sue B will be able to work some weekends for the Work Parties and other weekends as a trip boat, as demand arises. She is truly a multi-purpose boat now. No doubt, when we are doing longer journeys on Ella II, Sue B will be working the Ebridge pound. Ella II is less versatile but somewhat more comfortable for passengers. New side panels will enable us to keep dry during trips on rainy days.

We do need to keep extending our passenger boat crew. I will welcome new would-be crew members at any time. Just call me to volunteer or to book a trip on 07585 160 772 at any time between 10am and 10pm. If I don't answer, it will only be because the mobile phone has not rung because I am out of range (usually afloat) or engaged. I will call back if I can.

Graham Pressman - Boating Officer

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A picture perfect way to support the Canal



Talented artist Chris Black, who is vice chairman of the North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust, has painted Ebridge lock before restoration, which is for sale at £80. Proceeds will go towards restoration of the lock, which has just begun. Anyone interested in buying the oil painting should contact the trust via its website: www.nwdct.org or Facebook page.



Photo: Julie Kelleher

Alex Hurrell - Media Officer

22nd April

The inside of the hull of Ella II was painted during the work-party while other volunteers continued repairing the minor leaks in the east bank which had been sealed with puddle clay. The pontoon SueB was employed to take clay and soil/small rubble upstream to the sites of the repaired leaks. By using the pontoon no heavy machinery is required to traverse the bank.

Soil/rubble was placed in some of the tracks and into areas where water had formed voids through the bank. More clay was placed on parts of the bank then covered.

6th May

Ella II was lifted off her trailer to enable access to the bow end where there was a remaining unpainted area of the underside of the hull, It was painted and left to dry.

Meanwhile the team installing the pump control box set about their task, which took most of the morning. Later the stern end of the underside was made accessible and this was painted and left to dry.

20th May

The team set about the grass cutting and strimming at Ebridge lock. The areas directly adjacent to the lock were cleared of weed growth so the lock edges were plainly visible and the trip boat landing area was also cleared of weed growth making ingress and egress from the trip boat unhindered.

The edges of the millpond/canal were not cut back too far leaving a good margin for the water vole.

The bulk of the grassed areas surrounding the lock were close cut ready for the forthcoming Open Weekend.

The heap of puddle clay near the edge of the canal was moved to the back edge of the 'tent' area.

One of the cap stones on the lock wall, which had been broken a long while back, had slipped and dropped down creating a serious trip hazard. It was decided to put the cap stone back into place and it was levered out and the area beneath it built up with bricks. Some serious effort was required to get it in place again but it now sits level with the other stones. The grass bank beside it was built up with soil and turf placed on it.

3rd June

During The Open Weekend, members of the public were able to watch a typical work-party in action, creating an access to the lower end of the lock prior to repair work. Any Himalayan Balsam found in the area was pulled.

The condition of the exit of culvert under the bridge was recorded and an evaluation of the level of water and silt was made within the lock. Alan Bertram visited Purdy's Marsh and surveyed the extent of the balsam there in preparation for the balsam bash of 17th.

The steps to the access bridge across the lock were repaired on the Saturday by a work party volunteer. Work party volunteers were heavily involved in setting up the marquee, tents, etc on Saturday morning for the Open Weekend and their removal on Sunday afternoon.



Chris Heath and Jonathan using the temporary access bridge to prepare for work on Ebridge lock.

1st July

The initial work at Honing Staithe had been completed on a special work party on 27th May 2018 so no further work there was needed. Access along the Staithe was cleared as far as the canal as was the Canal Walk (and both in immediate use!).

In the morning five volunteers worked on clearing balsam at the north end of Purdy's Marsh. The large grass cutter was used to create better access. Two work party volunteers continued working on the scaffold in preparation for its use at Ebridge. One volunteer helped with repairs to an OCC excavator.

In the afternoon the steel scaffolding and some boards were transported down to Ebridge and placed in the lock chamber to allow access from the south end of the lock against the west wall. The boards nearest the south end were pulled back to restrict access to others when no work in progress. The pontoon remains the main working platform within the lock and it is still envisaged that materials will be lowered in and lifted out of the lock for the repair work.

Some reed/weed was removed from the canal and some of the drier weed/reed removed from the side of the canal. This will be an ongoing maintenance task during the reed/weed cutting season, both at the lock and at the spillway. This work is to run in parallel with the lock repair.

Two additional tasks were undertaken. The obstruction in the canal was a small tree that had fallen over.

This was removed using the Sue B. A rotary Honda grass cutter that has been donated to the Trust was collected – in need of a little tlc but when repaired will fill a niche between the two current grass cutters in terms of its size.

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October 2009 'before'...



...and 'after' May 2018

Items of interest to members:

Cheffins Auction.

Earlier in the year we received a contact from Jeremy Curzon of Cheffins Auctions, an email stating that a group of letters and other papers concerning the Canal, that had come from the estate of the late Michael R Lane, a well-known Norfolk based author of many volumes mainly on steam vehicles, were due to be auctioned later in the year.

I had not been aware of Cheffin's Auctions, but Cliffy and Laurie both were and gave me the lowdown, and permission to use their registered names. What attracted us to bid for the lot was that it was stated to be "a good group with invitations to buy shares, detailed quotes, discussions, etc", but more importantly, covering the period 1812 to 1826: the period between the passing of the Act and the actual opening of the Canal, a period during which little is known. The East Anglian Waterways Association agreed, as owners of the present NW&DC Archives that I hold, to pledge £200, towards their purchase. The NW&DCT Trustees agreed to do similar, but, to my surprise and delight, many other EAWA and NW&DCT members similarly offered pledges. Hence I was able to go to the April Vintage Auction with over £1000 of pledges up my sleeve.

I attended the previous day's viewing at Witchford, Cambs. The auction is huge, with 5 sales taking place, hundreds of tractor bits and pieces, vintage motor cycles, traction engines and steam lorries covering several acres. In one room the memorabilia was being sold. I couldn't find the lot to start with, but after enquiry I was directed to an old open topped cardboard box on a shelf. Lying inside were some sixty or so documents, from orders for timber for Cubitts Lock, letters from the engineer, Mr Youard, estimates for building a lock (£1066:4:9) and bridge (£505:15:9), letters of complaint as to whether the contractor should do as the engineer says or follow the contradictory specification, (nothing changes there!), discussions over loans, where the bricks are to be burnt, not enough cement for Royston Bridge, contractor's labour waiting around for work and materials and even a letter from Millington himself convening a meeting. What gems!

After breakfast in the B&B with two guys from N.Ireland, that had come over on the night ferry especially for the sale, I arrived at the sale ground at 8 a.m. soon to be joined by Roger Sexton, Chair EAWA, who was there for moral support. The room was full for the 9 a.m. start and lot 11 came around quickly. There were three of us bidding, but the others pulled out, and we were the proud owners for £156, of a priceless set of papers. One of the opposing bidders came over to us and asked if we were involved with the Canal, for he was from the North Walsham area and had bid with the idea of, if successful, passing them onto us but then realised that we were looking keen. Kind man.

The EAWA agreed to fund the purchase and fees, and the NW&DCT is to document and scan the papers for the archives. It is hoped to produce a "book" for sale as well and offer the chance for members to see them before they are placed on loan with the Norfolk Records Office for safe keeping.

My thanks to all who pledged towards the purchase.

Ivan Cane

EAWA Archivist for the NW&DC records



Picture by courtesy of Cheffins Auctions

On 8th May Ivan Cane and Tom Carr went to London to visit **The National Archives at Kew**

Tom Carr writes:-

We were to do a bit of research in the government/public records to see if we could find the names of those who sold land to the original Canal Co required for the construction of the navigation and all the associated works such as the re-routing of the water that was in the River Ant via the remaining mills that were still operating. We also wanted to see the area of each parcel required and to try and deduce the extent of individual owners' frontages.

Members will recall that the site of the corn mill at Swafield shown on the 1928 edition of the O.S. sheet @ 1/2500 which is now part of Mill House was not to be on the line of the canal. It is now by-passed via Swafield top and bottom locks. They will also recognize that by routing all water in the valley via the Canal itself the river lost its identity above Honing Lock and, below it, no longer flowed by East Ruston.

The visit was prompted by Laurie Ashton who had started to do the same research on line and found the examination by PC ponderous and the cost per page when downloading expensive for the effort required.

So after collecting Ivan from Fakenham we were crossing Kew Bridge by about 10.45 and had settled in at the National Archives office at Kew to devote several hours to examining the Tithe Maps for the various parishes where the land was to be taken for building the Canal: Knapton, Swafield, Edingthorpe, Bacton and North Walsham.

The Tithe Acts of 1839 and 1840 required boundaries for holdings to be established to resolve disputes between landowners. They were usually accompanied by plans including schedules of owners and occupiers. From the point of view of trying to establish land ownership in 1812 the Tithe Survey was not compelling as it only took place in 1836. Fortunately in those days land did not change hands very often so the records may still be useful and the area of each holding if not the proprietor is likely not to have changed.

Although Ivan and I now have full I.D. cards for future visits a very helpful member of staff at the National Archives who showed us how to gain best access to the records recommended that the Trust subscribe to The Genealogist which has the same records and can be examined at leisure and without charge via the web.

For those who might follow us we can recommend the Archive buildings at Kew for their design and staff helpfulness and the catering facilities for light refreshment. Parking capacity is generous and free... Try not to notice the same level of security as operates in the county courts (plus ID cards with mug shots) such is the importance given to countering document theft and only pencils are allowed for notes. Cameras on the other hand seem to be used freely as long as they are 'declared' to the door keepers on each floor.

Tom Carr - Land Issues

Water Frolics and Liquid Refreshments!

On 5th April, 1825, work on the North Walsham & Dilham canal had commenced. About a hundred Bedfordshire navvies or “bankers” as they were called, had marched in procession with a band before them, and a thousand spectators had assembled to see them get to work. “God save the King” (for King George IV) was played and a great quantity of beer was consumed..... The canal was opened to trade on Tuesday 29th August, 1826 and the *Norfolk Chronicle* newspaper, published on Saturday 2nd September, devoted much space to the grand opening of the Canal.

“At an early hour the bells of North Walsham were ringing a merry peal, and flags and colours were displayed from the Market Cross and the principal inns in the town. About 11 o'clock the procession started from Wayford Bridge. The day was most favourable and the wind fair, which soon brought the fleet through the first three locks to that beautiful piece of water above Mr Partridge's Mill. At this place the procession laid to, and the company partook of refreshments which had been provided for the occasion, the band, a most excellent one, played national airs, &c.”

“At this time upwards of a thousand persons were afloat: and the road from North Walsham and Witton, and the banks of the Canal were thronged with thousands of spectators, amongst them was all the fashion and beauty of the neighbourhood, all highly delighted with the novelty of the scene.”

“After remaining at this place an hour and a half, the vessels again got under way and proceeded to Mr Cubitt's bridge which was decorated with festoons and garlands of shrubs and flowers. They then proceeded to Antingham and at about 4 o'clock the company returned to North Walsham.” Between 60 and 70 gentlemen afterwards dined together at the King's Arms, including William Youard (who had first introduced the practicality of the scheme) and Lord Suffield. The Hon. Col. Wodehouse chaired the meeting. Members of the London Committee (“the money”) were also present, including William a Becket (Principal Clerk) and James Abbott. There was much cheering on the giving of toasts to the King, the Dukes of York and Clarence, the rest of the Royal Family etc.

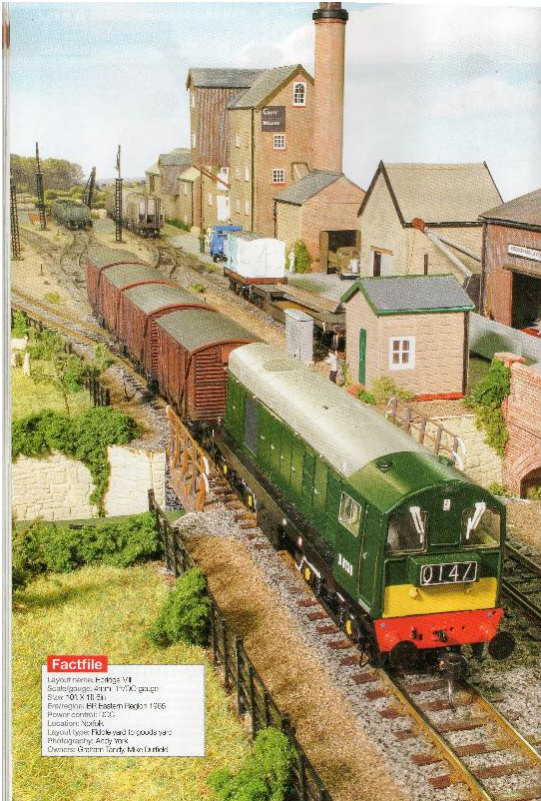
During an increasingly riotous evening, the Hon. Chairman toasted the prosperity of the Canal (*Cheers*) and declared, “It was very evident that both agriculture and commerce would reap increasing advantage from every succeeding year.” He toasted Lord Suffield for his “zealous exertions in promoting the canal” (*Great applause.*) In return, Lord Suffield rose and proposed a toast to Col. Wodehouse (*Great cheering.*)

“The dinner, consisting of excellent viands and superior wines, was served up in a style that did great credit to Mr Sharpe, the landlord of the King's Arms. The conviviality of the meeting was prolonged to a late hour.....”

References: The British Newspaper Archive in partnership with the British Library

Diana Velhagen - Researcher

Model Railway 'Ebridge Mill'



No, work-party volunteers have not built a railway line in front of Ebridge Mill! This wonderfully detailed model railway layout is for sale as a complete package comprising:

Stock

Bachmann Class 37 with Legoman Biffa sound.

Bachmann Class 25 Sound by Bachmann.

Bachmann class 20 Bachmann Sound

Hornby Class 08 with Howes Sound.

All the 12 trucks.

All the electrics and controller

Buildings, working narrow boats

Vehicles

Figures, some of which were professionally painted

The cover for the front of the layout.

'Ebridge Mill' was made for exhibitions and has been to The NEC Warley 2017, Doncaster 2017, East of England Show 2017, Southwold 2016 and other one day events.

The Layout has still two bookings for 2019 if should the new purchaser wish to exhibit.

The Layout is being sold as a complete package at £2,000 and can be viewed by appointment if so required.
Contact Graham Tandy: ollandsend@gmail.com < ollandsend@gmail.com >

There is a YouTube video on [Stowmarket Model Railway Exhibition 2017](#)

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Lunch in Ebridge millpond 2007
Chris, Mary, Darren, David, Roger



Ella II in the millpond 2018
(arrows denote edge of millpond)

Dates for your diary

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.



Tuesday 16th October

The Trust Annual General Meeting at Honing Village Hall. **Details and agenda will appear in the next edition of Quagmire.**

Talks & Presentations 2018

Saturday 14th July

Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society
Canal walk & boat trip

Chris & Mary Black

Wednesday 31st October

Probus GreatT. Yarmouth

Chris & Mary Black

Friday 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 Autumn 2018 Quagmire (at the Trustees' discretion) is the first week of October. Contact mdablack@btinternet.com



Ebridge spillway during torrential rain at the Open Weekend