



Quagmire

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

Contact: mdablack@btinternet.com

News...

Did you notice our **new logo**? Trustees have been discussing the need to represent the iconic shape of the wherry sail more accurately whilst retaining the portrayal of a lock gate. Our canal is unique – no other locked canal in the UK was built specifically for use by wherries and therefore both of these elements had to be shown. Trustees were asked to submit ideas for the new logo and Tom Carr's was chosen. We hope you like it.

Didn't we do well! Our canal project was chosen as one of the three local **finalists** in the Tesco 'Bags of Help' scheme. The money had been raised by Tesco from the sale of previously free plastic bags and they decided to give the money to local causes. We must thank customers who used their tokens to vote for the canal and we can announce that we came second and have been awarded **£10,000** towards our project! Yet more evidence that folk in North Walsham are keen to see the canal restored. This money will be put towards building the bottom lock gates at Bacton Mill Lock.



Norfolk County Council has often supported the canal restoration verbally, but has seemed rather reluctant to commit to this support in writing. We are pleased to report that finally we have received a letter from The Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services at NCC expressing the Council's support. Relevant extracts from the letter are quoted here.

'I am pleased to set out in writing that in principle, the County Council supports the aims of the Trust, as agreed by Members on 19 January 2015 when the work of the Trust was presented to our Economic Development Committee.'

'Members agreed that whilst the County Council can support the aims of the Trust in principle, any further endorsement – such as for specific projects – would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis.'

This letter is most welcome, as members will realise that having the support of important bodies such as Councils is crucial to our on-going project

The aim of the Trust and the Old Canal Co. Ltd has always been to **open towpaths and banks** for permissive public access. Up to now, only 700 metres have been available on the west bank of the canal at Ebridge and other short disconnected sections. With the OCC Ltd having regained the canal land on the east bank there will soon be a walking route from Ebridge to Swafeld of some 3.6 kilometres.

At present, the walking route is still being developed owing to engineering works and there is no fixed route alongside the canal on either one bank or the other, but as works progress temporary signs will indicate the walking route. At present the section alongside Pigneys Wood is very muddy but work-party volunteers have begun sowing grass seed on the bank. If you do decide to try walking from Ebridge to Swafeld please be very careful when negotiating the spillway near Ebridge lock.

The route will connect with walks in Bacton Wood, Pigneys Wood Nature Reserve, Paston Way and footpaths into North Walsham.

Recent Events

On February 25th 2016



Jonno filming from the cherry-picker

John 'Jonno' Parker of 'Big Sky Productions' presented another of his popular **film evenings**. The seats were in position, photo and information boards set up, cakes laid out on tables and then the audience started to trickle in. The trickle became a flood and more chairs were hastily passed over heads and put anywhere a space could be found. Still people kept coming and the cake tables were pushed back to allow yet another row of seats. Professionally printed access maps were on sale at 50p each and these were being sold as fast as could be managed. What an atmosphere there was in such a packed hall, everyone eager to see the latest film! No-one was disappointed as Jonno had excelled himself filming the restoration of the stretch just below Bacton Lock. Work-parties were shown helping Laurie to cut down trees and chip the branches, but the main part of the film focused on Laurie and Jeremy's hard work in difficult circumstances clearing the canal to its original dimensions. At one point the pontoon was needed and Laurie pushed it from Ebridge using his weed-cutter. Manoeuvring the pontoon through Spa Bridge took many hours and demonstrated just how long each operation takes. Jonno had cleverly used the device of the cygnets growing up through the seasons which clearly illustrated the months needed for this small stretch alone. The addition of a narrator greatly enhanced the enjoyment of the film and for this we must thank Jacqueline, Jonno's wife.

After refreshments Jonno treated us to another short film showing the work just below Swafield Bridge. The trees growing in the canal bed were at least 90ft tall and their removal required the hire of a cherry picker. Jeremy showed us all 'how it's done', wielding his chain saws with professional ease and dropping the trees exactly where they were intended to drop. As he took well-earned breaks, the work-party volunteers moved in to haul the branches to the chipper and cut and stack the larger logs.

The films, entitled 'The Battle for Bacton Wood' and 'Swafield', showed just how much has been achieved over the last several months and the audience was clearly very enthusiastic about the project. Jonno will be preparing a new DVD shortly and these will be on sale at our open weekends in June and September, or via our website.

Several new members were enlisted at the film evening and five more volunteered to be part of the Work Party Team in the 'Green Gym'. If you would like further information on volunteering, please contact David Revill, Work Party Organiser on davgis@live.co.uk.



The Trust would also like to thank '**Tasty Tavern Meats**' butcher and farm shop for allowing work-parties to park in their car park. If ever you are walking along the canal and would like to buy something for a picnic you would be well advised to sample their home-made pies! The Tasty Tavern shop can be found alongside Swafield Bridge.

See the following page for photos of the work below Swafield Bridge.



These photos show Swafield Bridge looking north, a corner of the former Granary can be seen on the left.



The trees growing in the silt have been removed and the canal has been re-profiled to its original dimensions on the Granary side. Wherries used to be able to turn round in the winding area in front of the bridge. They would be unable to turn here at present, as part of the winding area is now under the car park on the right.

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March 24th 2016

The coffee morning held at St Nicholas Room, Vicarage Street, North Walsham had been in danger of being cancelled as our regular 'Trust Tarts' were unable to attend. However we are most grateful to Tony and Betty Wiles for volunteering to run the morning with proceeds going towards the Trust. Roger Hopkinson and Perry Hampson manned the display boards and Helen Gosling managed 'front of house' with her friend. Our thanks go to all of them, (not forgetting David Gosling who counted the money!)

From the Trustees and Officers:

Ivan Cane - East Anglian Waterways Association's Archivist for the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Records. iwlcfake@btinternet.com

The Talk Season

Well, another talk season on our canal has come to a close. This time around, the five venues were all within Norfolk - at Fakenham, Norwich (2), North Walsham and Pulham Market. However, each has given me a challenge in the way that the talk has been focused. For example, Norwich Engineering Society and the Norfolk Industrial Archaeological Societies are looking for differing slants on the same story. Audience sizes have also been larger this year - sometimes to the surprise of the organisers - but all showing that more and more Norfolk people are becoming interested in our historic canal. There were 79 at the NES, with standing room only at the North Walsham U3A, with 129 - my largest audience yet.

A particular feature this time around has been members of the audience bringing artefacts and canal related pictures to the meetings, including some good shots of Ebridge from the 1970's and an original 1907 Sales brochure. On the other hand, sales of books and maps have also increased and twice I ran out!

The next season already has seven talks booked, as far afield as Chelmsford. I look forward to updating them with the 2016 summer progress.

The Dry Section

Just when did the canal above Bacton Wood become dry? That, as archivist, has been my main question this year. This has led to articles in the local press and on social media. Responses have been fantastic - and included all the notes made by Geoff Basey and friends in the 1970's when they undertook a personal survey of the canal, and a gentleman from Swafeld searching me out at a work party to pass on information. We now know for certain that the lock gates at Bacton Wood were holding a head of water in 1956, and that the canal was dry in 1973. So the quest has narrowed down to a 17 year's window. Two lines of enquiry are still being followed up.

There are two main questions that I ask the Trust members to search out their photos, memories, and friend's ideas for:

- (1) When was the breach in the "east" bank, a couple of hundred yards **above** Royston Bridge made - leaving Royston (Austin) Bridge and the Wherry Inn bordering a dry canal bed?
- (2) When was the later culvert cut out across the canal, a couple of hundred yards **below** Royston Bridge, to allow the soke to freely flow across and below the canal bed towards the sewerage works, bypassing the old culvert?

Please contact me with any ideas or information.

Swafeld Staithe

The mystery of the rope marks on the corner of the stables (themselves not used for canal purposes) at Swafeld continue. The deep grooves in the brick corners were obviously made by the grit on ropes or cables, but why were the ropes taken around the corner? Was it to pull the wherry back into a side basin? Excavation of the end of the staithe wall has shown that it did turn round for about six feet. Perhaps there was a small basin here, but no map shows one. Mike Sparks, of the Norfolk Wherry Trust, has suggested that the wherryman may have used his winch to pull heavy objects, such as tree trunks, down to the canalside. All theories are possible - and any more will be most welcome.

Ivan Cane



Chris Black – Vice Chairman

01508 492025

I recently received an email stating that we could enter the Canal & River Trust '**Living Waterways Awards 2016**'. However, there were only 16 days left before the deadline so it was agreed that I would submit an entry on behalf of the Trust. The award consists of seven categories and we ticked all the boxes! This, of course, meant a lot of thought and typing as each category required supporting evidence. I am seeking an award for the top third of the canal and have submitted the entry from the Trust and The Old Canal Co. Ltd. jointly. Entries will be assessed by a panel and those that make it through to the visit stage will be contacted during April. Finalists will be notified in July and we will keep members informed. This would be a high profile award for our canal restoration.

I am currently working with Ivan Cane on a re-vamp of the Trust **leaflet** which will include the new logo, revised text and new photos.

Chris Black.

David Revill – Work Party Organiser & Press Officer

01603 738648

The EAWA AGM will be on Sunday 17th April and this year it will be held in our region and incorporate a visit to our canal.

Those attending the AGM might wish to consider visiting the Broads Museum on Stalham Staithe in the morning - £4 entry to the museum plus £3.00 for a trip on the steam powered launch from 10.00 onwards. The launch will carry 10 folk at a time and there is already one boat full. The museum itself is well worth the visit and is just a few minutes by car from the Sutton Staithe Hotel where we shall be gathering for lunch at 13.00 (carvery £7.95 and sweet, if required, £4.95). The AGM starts at 14.00 and afterwards members are invited to take part in an organised visit to parts of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal to see the work that has been carried out. Payments to be made individually but please advise David Revill of what you intend to do so that he can make the appropriate booking at the museum for the steam launch, at the hotel for lunch, for the AGM seating and for the afternoon trip (David Revill, 43, Kings Road, Coltishall, Norfolk, NR12 7DX, davgis@live.co.uk.)

David Revill.

Mary Black – Quagmire Editor

Recently Chris and I had great fun ordering **new tools** for work parties at Builders Equipment Ltd where they generously gave us a discount. We felt like we were in the famous Two Ronnies sketch '*two wheelbarrows, four loppers...*' We were offered hard-hats in various colours but I was overruled when I suggested getting pink for all the men and a green one for me. The intention was to take a photo of the work party members proudly displaying their shiny new tools but they were all so keen to start work that I didn't get a chance!

The money spent was part of a grant from EAWA (East Anglian Waterways Association), which has also been used to pay for Chris's chainsaw qualification renewal and will pay for Barry Mobbs' chainsaw course.

Mary Black

Perry Hampson – Wildlife Officer

National Moth Night 2016
A Date for Your Diary?

This year the event will take place over the **9th, 10th and 11th June 2016**. The theme for 2016 is **Hawk-moths**. For those of you that are unaware, the Hawk-moths are some of our largest and most colourful moths. Some are absolutely spectacular. Being large, comparatively heavy moths, they are not too skittish and are easily handled. I have been at several moth evenings where children have walked proudly around with hawk-moths sitting on their fingers like tame budgies, or wearing them on the front of their jackets like brooches! The moths do eventually depart when they've had enough of being the centre of attention though.

All being well, and providing a safe location that can accommodate sufficient numbers of people can be found close to the canal, I intend to run a Moth Night event on Saturday 11th June.

There is no need for you to let me know if you are attending - just turn up on the night. I will provide details of times, etc., on the Facebook page and Website nearer the date. We just need the weather to be kind to us. I wouldn't run the electrical stuff out of doors on a wet night as it would not be safe.

The area surrounding the canal is very interesting from a wildlife point of view because it is made up of so many different habitats. For example, we have reed bed, marsh, woodland, open grassland and the margins of the canal itself, so there will be a good variety of moths living there at different times of the year.

If you have been to a moth night event before, I'm sure you will want to go to another one. If you haven't, then I hope you will take the opportunity to attend to see some of the wonderful species of moths that we have in this area. Just one warning though; it can become expensive! Try it once and you'll want your own moth trap, field guide books and all the other paraphernalia that goes with it. You'll then find yourself sitting alone out in the middle of a field or piece of woodland for more than half the night..... Don't say you haven't been warned. It can become highly addictive. Of course, you can always run a trap in your garden. That way you get to stay indoors and even go to bed before checking the trap in the morning! For more information, please visit the following links:

www.mothnight.info

www.atropos.info

www.butterfly-conservation.org

Perry Hampson.

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Members may enjoy two more of Perry's photos taken on the canal.



Gold Spot



Knot Grass Larva

Queries and Questions!

Why has work stopped below Ebridge?

This question has been asked many times, especially by people who enjoyed watching the progress made by work parties at Honing Staithe Cut, Honing Lock and Briggate over many years. Many hundreds of hours of work have been undertaken at these sites, with the co-operation of the owners, but unfortunately these areas are now slowly reverting back to an overgrown state. David Revill has sent the following item in order to keep Trust members informed:

It should be stated that the NW&D Canal Trust does NOT actually own any part or parts of the canal. The whole of the canal is, unusually, in private ownership.

The work parties work on various parts of the canal with the express permission of the owner of that particular stretch. For nearly two years now we have been denied access, even just to make notes on existing features, to some stretches along the banks. In the case of Briggate Mill pond, earlier work was carried out to clear the pond area including the roadside trees, saving Norfolk County Council the major problems of expense and road closures should those trees have succumbed to storms or other natural causes. The Mill Pond was cleared sufficiently so that water returned from the canal and this permitted the return of many aquatic creatures including fish, birds and thousands of frogs and toads.

When the Cut at Honing Staithe was first seen, there was no sign of water in it and the adjacent land was totally covered in trees, bushes and other vegetation such that access was, at first, not possible. As this site was cleared, grass began to grow once more and a walk was created along the side of the Cut. This walk continued along the canal bank, over a constructed wooden bridge and returned through the woods to Weavers Way. You may recall that this Walk was opened by our local MP Norman Lamb and has been in constant use by many, many walkers of all ages.

The actual canal between the Cut and Honing Lock was also cleared of debris, trees etc. thus permitting access for canoes between the two locations.

Clearing this pond resulted in the water level there falling by several inches, as predicted, thus assisting in alleviating possible flooding upstream. An even greater clearance was made by de-silting at Ebridge Mill Pond (before the Environment Agency issued a Stop Notice) and since then no further flooding has been seen in North Walsham.

In the near future there will be access to a walk along the eastern bank of the canal all the way through from Ebridge Mill Pond upstream to Pigney's Wood and Swafeld Bridge. This has been made possible by the hard work of the owner of this stretch, Laurie Ashton. It should be noted that there is NO permitted access to the canal banks between Honing Lock and Ebridge Lock (except at Honing Staithe Cut). This section is owned by The North Walsham Canal Company (see item 1. below).

The section below Honing Lock to Wayford Bridge is owned by Bindwell Ltd (see item 2. Below).

In connection with the canal below Ebridge Lock and for further information on access to those parts of the canal by foot or canoe; what work is planned to be done in compliance with and required by, the two relevant Acts of Parliament (1812 & 1866), please contact the owners:-

1. North Walsham Canal Company Ltd, Company Secretary Mr R P Cubitt, 32 Bridgford Road, WEST BRIDGFORD, Nottingham, NG2 6AB
2. Bindwell Ltd, Company Secretary Mr A J Paterson, Dilham Hall, Honing Road, DILHAM, North Walsham, Norfolk, NR28 9PN
3. Or the Environment Agency

David Revill.

The photos on the following page give an idea of the transformation that had been achieved by work-parties at Honing and Briggate, before The North Walsham Canal Co stopped restoration of this part of the canal.



Honing Bridge from the overgrown Staithe...



...and being kept mown for picnickers...



...anglers...



...and walkers.



Briggate Millpond



An egret fishing in the once dry millpond at Briggate.

Items of interest to members:



Second World War Defence Lines

During the Second World War several "defence lines" were set up, many along the various river courses in Norfolk. However, much of *Line One* was in fact along the North Walsham & Dilham Canal. This involved placing pillboxes at strategic points, sometimes disguised, such as at Briggate where the pill box was "hidden" inside the canal coal shed. Pins were placed on the parapets of Spa Common Bridge for mounting mortar guns. Locks and bridges were mined, and the unbanked sections of the canal were dredged. The water levels were adjusted at Briggate and Ebridge and work carried out on the spillways.

The pillbox at Briggate

Whilst clearing the spillway at Ebridge, in 2005, the NW&DC Trust work party came across the date "1941" which had been drawn into the cement rendering that had been placed across the brick paving. A poignant memory from those workers of the day, who were hard at work preparing what could have been the first successive line of defence in case of attack



'1941' on the spillway at Ebridge

Hairpin Second World War Defences Swafield Bridge



Thanks to all who solved the puzzle of the Second World War defences at Swafield Bridge. They were called Hairpin roadblocks and consisted of bent sections of angle-iron or railway line so that they lay at a 60 degree angle which could then be slotted into pre-prepared squares dug in the road. Others, such as the ones photographed at Swafield, were permanently placed at the side of the road, so that only the central section needed to be blocked when necessary. When all inserted they appeared to be like dragon's teeth – hence

sometimes called that. (Although some call the concrete prisms Dragon's Teeth.) The sockets were about 6 inches square and closed with covers when not in use, so that local traffic could continue to pass. Bob Wright states that "on frosty mornings they sometimes show up as shadows on the road".

The defence would also, usually, be covered by either a mortar on a spigot, or a pill box. Apparently, there was a pill box on the side of the road at the entrance to the Quaker Meeting House until the mid 1990's?

Ivan Cane,

East Anglian Waterways Association's Archivist for the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Records.

Taken from a Book... from Perry Hampson, Wildlife Officer.

Angling on the North Walsham and Dilham Canal in 1958

Speaking to some of the anglers at Ebridge over the past few months, I recalled a small book that I acquired from goodness-knows-where many years ago. Delving into the darkest recesses of a cupboard at home, I eventually located it. It is entitled, "**Angling In Norfolk And Suffolk Waters And Sea-Fishing Around The Coast**", a nice, concise description of the contents! I believe this book has gone through many editions and a similar book is still available to this day.

The one I have, however, was published by Jarrold and Sons, Norwich, in 1958. As I was a keen angler when I was a boy, I think I must have acquired it as a gift, but sadly I can't recall from where or by whom. It shows a Copyright 1958, held by a Bill Cooper. There is a full-page advertisement for Bill Cooper's Fishing Tackle Shop shown as being "Near The Bridewell Museum, Norwich".

The book runs to 112 pages, although it is minus its covers, and has a rather basic map insert of the rivers and other bodies of water throughout the above-mentioned Counties.

Advertisements adorn the flyleaves, including one for the 'Angling Times', which was 6d, 'sixpence', the equivalent of two-and-a-half new pence in today's money. Another advert shows the 'Whittle' Packboat; a sectional craft made by T.Whittle and Sons, Ltd., Warrington, Lancs. These little boats, which allegedly could be assembled in 3 minutes, cost £28.10.0 for a 3-piece 12 foot model, or £24.10.0 for a 2-piece 8 foot 6 inch model. Six-foot oars were £2.10.0 a pair! Other advertisements include a 'Coypu Water Scythe' available from A.R.Taylor & Co.Ltd., Wroxham, and '100% Pure Pork Sausages' from W.A.Butler of High Street, Stalham, 'On the left coming from the moorings'. (I love this last snippet of information!)

Anyway, I appear to have digressed somewhat. As far as I could recall, the book contained a brief mention of the Canal. The following appears on page 9 under the Chapter heading, "River Ant". Here is what I discovered:

"The River Ant rises in pretty surroundings in the ponds at Antingham, the largest of which holds some fine specimen coarse fish - in the winter of 1922 a 30-lb pike was caught - but fishing is private and permits are not given. Wherries used to ply as far as Antingham Basin but the lock is now a ruin.

Flowing by Bradfield and Swafeld the little Ant passes under Royston Bridge to North Walsham, an attractive country town, and down to Dilham, the stretch between North Walsham and Dilham often being referred to as the Dilham Canal. The sports dealer in North Walsham will advise inquirers on the most likely fishing spots.

Below North Walsham, the Ant flows under the rather quaint Bacton Wood Bridge, designed to permit the passage of wherries, to Elridge Mill (1), its large wherry basin now fleet and the lock in ruins. The river, overgrown in summer, moves on to Briggate Mill at Worstead, where the impressive church stands as a reminder of the prosperity enjoyed when the wool and worstead trade formerly flourished there. The surrounding country is dotted with picturesque cottages, inns, and churches that stir memories of the past together with visions of the possibilities for the future if all the derelict locks were restored to working order. At Worstead fishing starts with a number of deep holes at the lock and down-river, from one of which Mr Hudson of Thatch Cottage, Worstead, took a roach weighing 3lb 5oz, and he recalls the taking of specimen bream up to 6lb., and large perch.

Further down, by Honing Common, and the old broad (see p. 50) (2) the river is not in a good state, due to the removal of the clay bottom (originally laid to prevent weed growth) when troops cleaned out the river in wartime. Weeds flourish and the river is impossible to fish and impassable by boat."

(1) Spelling as per the book, obviously refers to Ebridge Mill.

(*2) Page 50, referred to above, simply states, "Honing Broad, Norfolk, on the River Ant, is overgrown with reeds and willows".

I find it really interesting how the author views the canal and what the conditions were like back in 1958. My guess is that he probably researched this book even earlier than that. Unfortunately, I don't know what information previous editions may have contained, if indeed there were any.

It's strange to think that the Pike now being caught by anglers at Ebridge Mill are very likely to be the descendants of those caught all those years ago at Antingham Ponds.

It makes me want to dust off my fishing tackle and see what I can find.

Perry Hampson.

Dates for your diary

Sunday 17th April 2016 EAWA (East Anglian Waterways Association AGM. See details above in '*From the Trustees and Officers*'

Saturday 11th June 2016 **Moth Night.** See Perry's article in this newsletter and check the website for further details.

Saturday & Sunday 18th & 19th June 2016 We will be holding another of our popular **open weekends**. Expect photos, DVDs and wildlife presentations, home-made cakes, tombola, plus much more. We hope to be able to offer trips on the canal. Trustees and Officers will be there to answer your questions. We urge members to come along and don't forget to let us know you are a member!

Friday 26th June 2016 The Trust will have an information stall at the **North Walsham Fun Day**.

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

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

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

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

Other planned talks to interest groups include:

Wednesday 6th July 2016 Freethorpe Women's Group. Chris & Mary Black

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



Wherries at Spa Common in 1910...



...and 2016