

QUAGMIRE

NORTH WALSHAM & DILHAM CANAL TRUST CIO



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Three Years Ago - Ebridge March 2018



Photo Tracey Cosford

February 2021

Meet Mike Atherley



Mike has been a supporter and benefactor to the Trust for several years. I asked him how he first became involved with canals and restoration:

After buying my first canal boat in the 1960s, I joined the IWA and acquired a few maps of navigable and derelict canals. I found the Grantham Canal, which started in Nottingham, not too far from my home at Arnold. Although the canal was still owned by British Waterways Board (BWB), it had been abandoned as a navigation in the 1930s - with most now used for drainage purposes - and a section near Cropwell Bishop Dry.

The Canal was built to connect Grantham to Nottingham, and the national system, and had opened in 1797. It was 33 miles long with 18 wide locks. Being a contour canal, it twisted and turned to follow the easiest route. There are 11 locks, a 20-mile pound, then another 7 locks, and finally a 5-mile level. A large basin and buildings were built at the Grantham terminus, whilst a small transshipment basin and building at Hickling allowed Trent size barges to offload and return to Nottingham, saving overnight accommodation for their crews. These horse-drawn narrowboats usually carried on to Grantham, although wide boats could travel the whole way. After the purchase of the Canal, by the Great Northern Railway, it failed rapidly through lack of maintenance, resulting in several boats being abandoned even before its closure in the 1930s. The main cargoes were agricultural and finished goods from Grantham with return loads of coal, building materials and nightsoil from Nottingham's middy toilets. Nightsoil was used for manure on arable fields. One also finds broken crockery, clay pipes and glass in those fields, because they had been thrown in the middies. After the canal closed, the lock gates failed and all but one lock had a concrete weir placed at the top end to keep a head of water. All the wooden swing bridges were replaced by fixed concrete decks and Notts County Council started to flatten road bridges because the humps and widths were unsuitable for modern buses etc. Luckily, Leics C.C. did far less bridge flattening and Lincs C.C. only one.

I decided to investigate the canal by car, and, passing through Hickling, at around the mid-way point, found the village decked out with banners and bunting. Stopping to investigate, I discovered that the new canal society was having a boat rally and recruitment drive the following weekend. This was 1971. I decided to take a small dingy with outboard and launched it on the temporary grass slipway they had built. The basin and short usable section were badly choked with weed making it difficult for the outboard, but some of the other boats attending managed to move a little. Anyway, it was well attended, so two friends and I decided to join, thereafter going to the monthly meetings at the nearby pub. Within a couple of years, I took on the role of Honorary Secretary. This lasted a few years until I decided that the Work Party Organiser role would suit me better. This job kept me busy until I retired, due to health problems, in 1996.

One major problem at the time was the owners, BWB, not allowing any restoration - apart from limited towpath clearance - due to industrial problems with their staff. There were issues with any type of engineering restoration work right from the start. BWB staff were concerned about their own jobs; a proposal had been drawn up to build three deep coalmines in the Vale of Belvoir; and there was a national blockade of volunteers on BWB canals. I kept my team together by visiting many canals not owned by BWB over large parts of England and Wales. We came to be known as the "Travelling Posties", owing to our use of old Royal Mail wet gear. Back on the Grantham, we managed to construct several picnic sites along the canal, clear the whole length of towpath, and build a new slipway at Denton, for which we won a national award. We also tried to rewater the dry section.

Come 1990, BWB had a complete change of management, allowing us to begin real work. Lock 18 was chosen as the first to be restored. At the same time, British Rail permitted us to remove an earth embankment, which had replaced a trestle bridge and blocked the canal at Woolsthorpe, near Lock 18. All this work, after 20 years' messing about, stretched the team, so we sought help from WRG and also an international canal society. BWB also lent us a large digger with a driver, so that farmers could take away the infill - which was mostly track ballast - for roadbuilding. A Derelict Land Grant was also successful and allowed us to employ a company called Trainline, who enabled unemployed people to learn new skills with trained instructors. They rebuilt locks 16 and 17, whilst we worked on lock 18. BWB gave us several old lock gates, plus a skilled carpenter. He made a set of



Mike (centre - wellies) lifting the top gate at Cropwell Locks on the Grantham Canal in 1976

top gates for lock 18, but died before he could complete the bottom set. As such, BWB built them anew. The other two locks had gates and cills built by Callis Mills, and which were likewise fitted by them. We also had another stroke of luck - South Kesteven District Council agreed to replace the only flattened road bridge in Lincolnshire, whilst we replaced a flattened foot bridge nearby. All this was achieved in time to hold the first trailboat rally in 1994. After that event, BWB decided they needed to construct by-washes around their locks, so we built one around lock 18, and a Trainline one around lock 16. BWB also rebuilt the Carpenters Workshop at Woolsthorpe, and leased the site to Grantham Canal Society.

Since I retired, the society has received a Heritage Lottery Grant, and, under control of the C&RT, rebuilt locks 14 and 15. A breakaway group, the Grantham Navigation Association, persuaded Nottinghamshire County Council to replace three fixed farm bridges with new metal swing bridges near Hickling. Also, after Cotgrave Colliery closed, the badly subsided canal and two locks were rebuilt, all part of a new country park. A trip boat runs successfully between Woolsthorpe and the A1 bypass. However, due to many road projects near the Nottingham end blocking the canal, a new route back to the Trent will eventually have to be constructed, enabling the Grantham Canal to once again join with the River Trent.

Mike, having spent all that time on the Grantham Canal - Why have you now chosen to favour the NW&DC?

My reason for getting more involved with the NW&DC is twofold. Leaving Nottingham in 1999, with little hope of returning or seeing the Grantham Canal again, I thought that, after nearly 30 years of voluntary work for that cause, I had contributed more than enough. After moving to North Norfolk, and continuing to boat, I joined the EAWA and found out all about the NW&DC campaign. I joined, attended a few events at Ebridge, and the rest is history.

Thanks Mike - Enjoy your well earned retirement

Work Party Roundup - Mark Shopland

Quagmire 4th Quarter 2020 - Work Party Roundup



October found us clearing the spillway at Royston, in preparation for the re-watering of the section from Bacton Wood to Swafield. You can just see, in the upper left corner of the photograph, where the sheet piling facing the spillway had been reduced to correct its height. The

excavator in the background is clearing vegetation from the right-hand drain, all the way down to the double culvert draining Purdy's Marsh.

The second photo shows the spillway and a section of



the soke, once the clearance work had been finished.



This was followed by seed-ing the newly

built-up section of canal top from the Ebridge spillway for about 250 metres. Dried out weed was removed



first,

followed by a light 'tickle' with a spring-tined harrow lent by Laurie. Chris Heath spread the seed, and the result was raked in by hand and consolidated by driving the tractor up and down a few times.

Honing Staithe was visited later on in the month to clear fallen trees and mow the grass both on the staithe itself and the Canal Walk.





The last work party in October was spent mowing the conservation area near the entrance to Pigney's Wood and then raking off the cuttings to encourage the growth of indigenous species.

November did not have any work parties because of the COVID-19 lockdown.

December was dedicated to the clearance of the wildly overgrown drain between the Royston Bridge northern car park and the upper Eastern penstock. We had permission to access the eastern side of the drain from the wooded

part of Mrs Purdy's field, but it proved as difficult as the steep access from the canal path.

In the end, the most effective solution was to use waders so as to access the sides from the drain



itself which - given the amount of soil that had washed down into the stream bed, and the temperature of the water - was nothing short of heroic!

As each part was cleared, the trunks were cut into small sections and left in the car park to evaporate whilst the

brush was burnt on the spot. All decaying vegetation was also removed from the stream bed, so as to improve the stream's water quality.

The clearance of this section took four separate work parties. (photos with thanks to Alan Bertram and Chris Heath)

Sadly, further work parties are cancelled until the

end of the lockdown, for further information, contact Mark at workparty@nwdct.org



Flora Report - Suki Pryce



Balkan Spurge



Red Maids

Balkan Spurge and the *Reds Maid* are but two of the unusual non-local plants that have been found growing along the Canal, by Suki Pryce, our Wildlife Officer.

You may have noticed this showy garden escapee *Balkan Spurge* south of Royston Bridge. The annual *Red Maids* was identified by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland's Aliens and Adventives expert as an ultra-rare 'incomer' in the UK.

Suki will be having a short piece published in the April *Newsletter* of the prestigious Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI). The article concerns the many unusual, non-local plants that have been found growing along the Canal since surveying began four years ago. The article describes how the fill used for building up the Canal banks, which comes from different sources, brings in a range of unusual 'out-of-place' plants. Plus how management of different parts of the Canal also creates a range of habitats - from regularly mown banktops to stable, undisturbed areas. Together, these create opportunities for many interesting imported plant propagules (root fragments, seeds, bulbs etc) to survive. The full article can be found at

<https://nwdct.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-01-19-BSBI-Newsletter-Adventives.pdf>

on the Trust's website; and Suki's full plant list at

<https://nwdct.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-10-20-FULL-Canal-Plant.pdf>

Photos of many of the plants referred to can also be seen in the website's Flora Photo Gallery

In addition, five other particularly rare/unusual 'incomer' species recorded will get detailed treatment in the *Newsletter's* 'Adventives and Aliens' section. These are: Hirsute Garlic *Allium trifoliatum*, Swiss Chard *Beta vulgaris* ssp *cicla*, Jerusalem Artichoke *Helianthus tuberosus* (to be confirmed in 2021), Poached Egg Plant/Meadow-foam *Limnanthus douglasii* and Greek Mallow *Sidalcea malviflora*.

Birds on the canal - Stu Buck

The Canal and neighbouring marshes, meadows and woods are great places for birds any time of the year. Wildlife oases in the barren deserts of arable fields. It may seem quiet in these winter months, but actually there's plenty going on.

On the Canal, you'll see the resident mute swans and moorhens. Little grebes and cormorants will be diving for fish. Greylag and Canada Geese and mallard ducks may make an appearance, along with the occasional tufted duck. I even saw a wigeon recently.

From the banks, watch for a beautiful kingfisher as it whizzes by or drops from a twig or reed to catch a fish, and the magnificent grey heron as it stalks its prey along the waters edge. I have seen a little egret in the past in the reeds. At Ebridge, you may see a grey wagtail feeding at the spillway, and look out for pied wagtails there, too.

In the bushes and trees that line the Canal and nearby fields - and in Pigneys Wood - look for birds you may ordinarily see in your garden, such as chaffinches, blue tits, great tits, dunnocks, robins, wrens and the like, along with long-tailed tits, coal tits, goldfinches and goldcrests, and maybe a treecreeper or nuthatch.

Listen out for squabbling jays and hopefully see them as they fly through the woods. Count the magpies in the fields and hedges and recite the old rhyme. There has been a noisy flock of the small but lovely siskin near Pigneys Wood, often settling in the large lone tree over the opposite bank. Finally you may see a pair of stonechats along the backsake foot-path.

Winter has seen an influx of thrushes from the continent, and they have stripped the berries from the hedgerows. Our resident blackbird, song thrush and mistle thrush numbers are swelled by continental birds, and large numbers of redwings and fieldfares also come to winter in the UK.

Look for soaring buzzards and hovering kestrels anywhere along the Canal, and over the fields and woods. You may even be lucky enough to see a barn owl as it hunts by a meadow, or a sparrowhawk as it chases unwary prey. In the fields, you'll see crows,

rook, jackdaws, pheasants, woodpigeons, stock doves, starlings and gulls. Woodpeckers may be seen and heard, with great spotted woodpeckers drumming for food in a tree, and green woodpeckers searching for food on the ground when their summer diet of ants is hard to find. Sometimes, hundreds or even thousands of pink-footed geese may be seen and heard flying high overhead in their typical v-shaped formation.

So winter isn't as quiet as it may at first seem. About 35 species of bird can be seen fairly easily in the winter months along the canal and in the woods - with another 20 or so being a little harder to find - plus the occasional rarity for good measure. A water rail has been spotted by others over the past weeks. A couple of winters ago we even had a dipper on the canal, an altogether rare visitor to Norfolk.

As we move into spring and summer these will be accompanied by the sight and sound of even more species as our summer migrants join us. The reed beds will come alive with reed and sedge warblers, and a few grasshopper and cettis warblers will join them. The sky will fill with swifts, swallows, sand and house martins, which will drop down over the Canal to feed on insects. Chiffchaff, common whitethroat and blackcap will frequent the woods and bushes. We will hopefully see lesser whitethroats, garden warblers and brambling, too. Meanwhile, of course, the quintessential bird of spring the cuckoo will arrive with its familiar song. Who knows, we may even see some more true rarities such as the Blythes reed warbler of last spring. Over a year, you could see 70 species of bird, plus a rarity or two. Take a walk or two and see what flies by.

Thank you Stu for your report. Stu is a keen birder, and regularly visits the Upper Canal and the Bradfield Beck Valley. We look forward to some more of his photos and spottings in the coming Quagmires.

February 2021

Male Stonechat



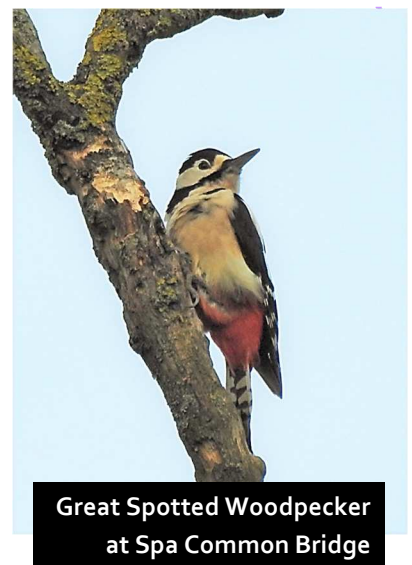
Common buzzard



Female Kestrel at Royston Bridge



Great Spotted Woodpecker at Spa Common Bridge



Fishing Notes - Tom Webster

We have had record catches of roach, rudd, bream, tench, pike, perch and dace, in what has been the best fishing season of recent times.



Steven Reynolds with a lovely canal pike 14lbs 4 oz.

It's very pleasing to report able bream to add to our specimen roach, rudd and tench, all thanks to the thriving ecosystem that restoration of the Ebridge section has made possible.

I am concerned at the silt levels and the causes of silt at Spa Common. This presents a significant danger to the canal ecosystem, and I really support the Trust in working to resolve this ongoing problem as a matter of urgency.

Membership amongst our regular anglers is increasing and I will continue to build on this. COVID-19 has prevented me from inducting our new fisheries assistant (Keith), although I intend to do this as soon as practicably possible.



Jamie Shields' slab of a Rudd weighing 1lb 10 oz.

the numerous catches of size-records along with plenty of

Dr Richard Joby

With sadness, we to relate that one of our long time supporters, Dr Richard Joby, passed away in 2020.

Richard Joby was a much-loved Geography teacher at the North Walsham High School for Girls, and later at Paston College. He had a keen interest in local transport history and was the author of many books about the history of the region's railways. Dr Joby likewise produced the first booklet outlining the history of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal (1977), combing through old newspapers such as the *Norwich Mercury* and the *Cromer & North Walsham Post* to find historical articles to augment his other researches.

Richard also liaised with the Bradfield family of North Walsham, which led to his booklet being illustrated with several of their early 20th Century photographs, as well as his hand-drawn maps. He concluded by suggesting that the waterway could be restored as an "...important leisure canal" and "...nature reserve...", in that "One can walk alongside the canal from Spa Common to Swafeld to sample its charm, or crash through the undergrowth elsewhere". Over time, Richard saw his prediction vindicated.

The Trust would like to thank Dr Joby's family for requesting that donations, in his memory, be split between the Canal Trust and the Mid Norfolk Railway Preservation Trust. It will be an honour to use Richard's kind gift in this way.



Boating News - Graham Pressman

Boating this season has been very limited, due to COVID-19.

There were a few weeks when we were allowed limited trips. Crews operated with a single skipper, who also took on the duties of giving a short talk and answered any questions. Passenger numbers had to be limited to five, all from the same household or "bubble".

Those trips were made almost daily, with just one trip per day. Of course, passengers' names and contact details had to be recorded, in case contact tracing became necessary. Unfortunately, there were occasions when it was unclear whether folk claiming to be in the same household, actually were. This was very rare, but, given that the risk to both the crew and the passengers seemed significant, the boat trips stopped altogether for the time being. Fares, of course, had to be reduced with fewer people on board, and I extend my special thanks to the majority of groups who so kindly paid more than was requested. That kind of willingness helps the Trust more than I can say!

The boats now need a jolly good service, so they are in the hands of the Work Party Organiser, to get volunteers undertaking that maintenance work. Hopefully, they will be ready to use again when the lockdown is over, whenever that is.

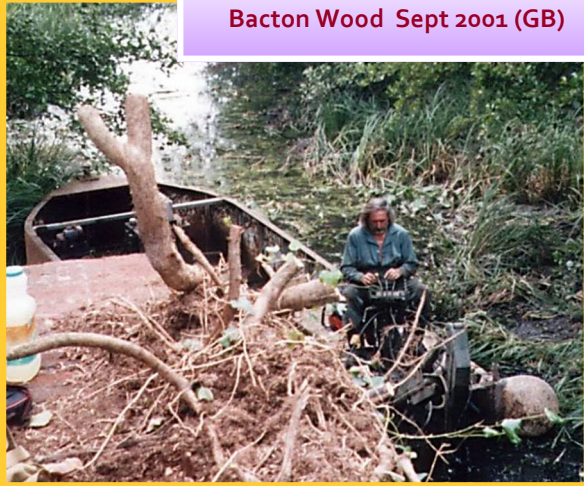
The Trustees have agreed to the purchase of a more robust (and therefore expensive) electric outboard for *Ella II*. There were two occasions, last year, when we had a motor failure, and on one trip we had to rely on a tow from Laurie in his little truck, whilst on the other, voluntary manpower from the bank was needed. I believe we even had a Man Overboard for a moment, up to his knees near the bank. No harm done, but embarrassing! We have always had a backup motor on board, but, since March, there had not been spare propellers available in the UK. Being towed like this is great fun, but not entirely professional! As Boating Officer, I look forward to the delivery of the new motor. Meanwhile, propellers for the backup motor are now back in hand, should the need arise again.

Weasel is beginning to look the part, with its new exterior paint job, thanks to heroic efforts by volunteers, and the inside paintwork is under way. It has been checked over mechanically by an engineer and Laurie has acquired a lighter-weight digger arm, which is to be fitted as soon as possible. Some new hydraulic pipe work will be needed. Whilst a further expense, it is well worthwhile, in order to avoid breakdowns once work starts. The canal is currently impassable between Spa Common bridge and Bacton Wood lock, due to silting, so *Weasel* will soon be having to do its stuff for that passenger boating to continue.

The *Weadeater* is also out of the water for winter, and is in need of an overhaul. One of the paddle wheels has been replaced and the other is due the same treatment. The threads which hold the paddle on their drive shafts will likewise merit attention. Nuts and bolts etc will need to be checked and tightened where necessary, the bilge pump will have to be installed properly by an electrician and I hope we shall be able to fit a small solar panel to keep the battery topped up, for when the boat is not in use and it's raining water into the bilges. The exterior needs a second coat of paint, ready for next summer, with interior cleaning and paintwork also to be carried out.

There is much to be done this winter, COVID permitting, to ready us for welcoming you back in the summer.

Bacton Wood Sept 2001 (GB)



Honing Lock Sept 89



Honing Lock
Jan 2004



Honing
July

TWENTY YEARS OF WORK PARTIES WITH THE EAWA & NW&DCT



BW Fitting lock beam Sept 2020



NW High Sch
DoE
Briggate Nov
2018

Wherry Inn Quay Heading
July 2014



Ebridge stop planks June 2019



WRGies Camp Ebridge Aug 2017



BW Lock Gates Feb 2017



Royston Spillwa



The first
workboat
Honing Lock
Sept 07



Honing Walk
Bridge July
2008 (AB)



Briggate Lock
May 2006



g Lock
2006



IWA Work Party Jan 2004



The Famous - "Only another
100 yards to go". David R at
Ebridge Reach Oct 2009



Swafield
Top June
2013



Mower and
trailer Oct
2010 (AB)



ay April 2017 (MB)



Swafield Spillway Sep 2014



Briggate Millpond breakthrough Jan 2011

Credits: AB-Alan
Bertram, GB-Graham
Brown, MB-Mary Black



Adventures of The Boy Roy

Many of you will have read some of Roy Webster's rural stories on the NW&DC Trust Facebook group, or maybe in the pages of the Just Regional magazines. Several of these narratives concern the canal itself, the fish he has caught from its waters over the years, and the wildlife Roy has spotted.

Having spent decades writing for local newspapers, he has had tens of thousands of words published, and, at 87, this is Roy's first book.

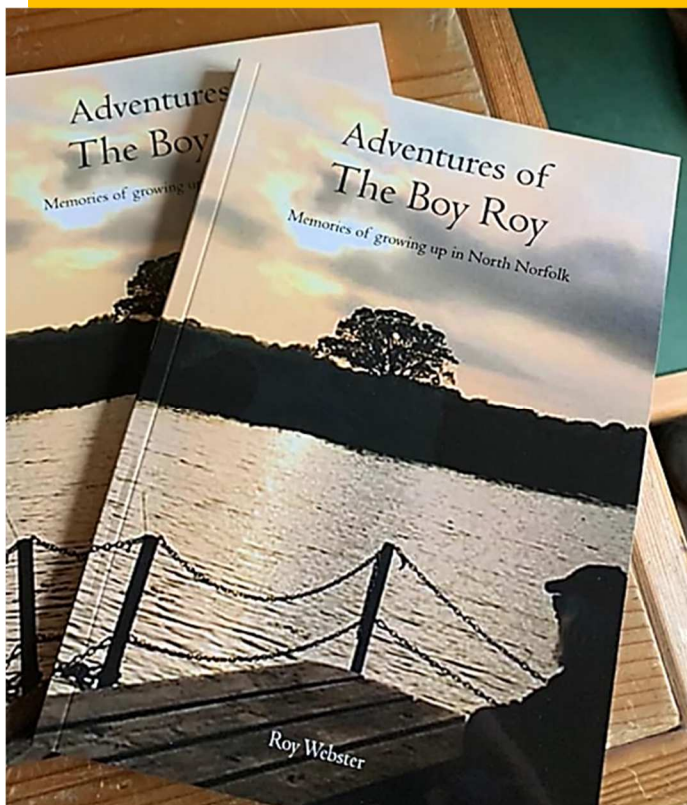
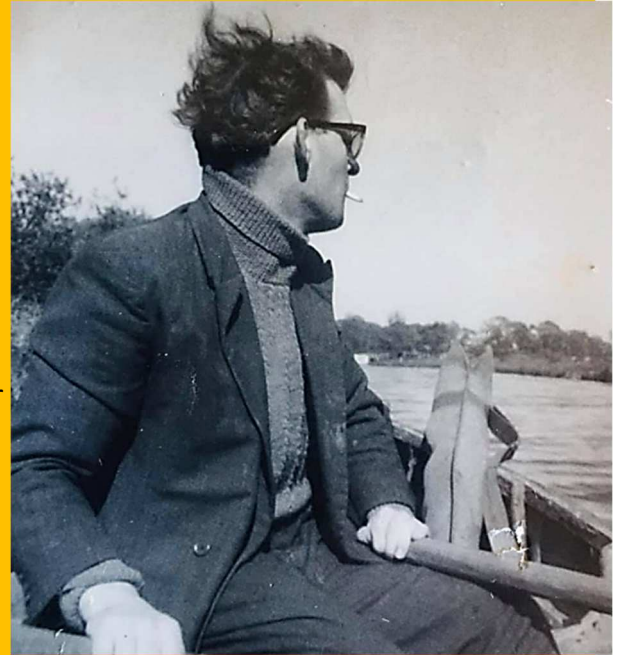
Adventures of The Boy Roy: Memories of Growing Up in North Norfolk features tales of a childhood spent fishing, observing nature and living in the shadow of wartime Britain. This is a colourful and entertaining snapshot of village life. There's a bit of

poaching, significant rural knowledge, some card playing and a few close shaves to enjoy.

The book has been produced, edited and designed by Roy's family, with big thanks due to our friend Adam Aiken for his excellent proof-reading skills.

The first print run sold out in days. However, more copies are now available - you can order books at £5 each, plus £2 postage and packing. If you'd like two copies in the same envelope, it is £3 P&P (£13 total).

If you would like to order, please email TheBoyRoyBook@outlook.com.



We just need to know:

- 1) Your name and address.
- 2) How many copies?
- 3) How would you like to pay – cheque or bank transfer? Once you have chosen we will provide relevant payment information.

Happy reading!

All profits from the sale of this print run will be given to the Canal Trust.

Roy's Family

Roy Webster passed away peacefully on Monday, January 18th. We were saddened to hear the news, shortly before publication. An article reflecting on Roy's life will appear in the next *Quagmire*, or can be found on the Trust's website at

<https://nwdct.org/piscatorial/>

Our thoughts are with Roy's family at this time.

Floating Pennywort Update

Kate Warwick of the Environment Agency, who is coordinating the Working Group involved with controlling the Floating Pennywort (FP) in the Broads catchment area, has recently (late December 2020) given us an update, paraphrased below:

Starting with some **good news**: the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) have successfully removed the large patches of FP from the River Ant between Tonnage Bridge and Honing lock. They have done a fantastic job within an incredibly short time and it looks so much better - all of the larger patches identified have now been removed using a machine, and smaller cuttings were removed by hand-netting from a boat. Well done everyone involved at the IDB. Paul Sims, the contractor on the ground, has also been doing a fantastic job of removing any remaining patches of Pennywort on this reach, as well as surveying downstream from Tonnage Bridge, past the confluence with the Smallburgh River and as far as Stalham Dyke. Thanks Paul.

The **bad news** is that Paul has found patches of FP from Tonnage Bridge, along the Canal through Broad Fen SSSI, and onto the Ant. The farthest extent now known is Stalham Dyke. Most of the patches are small, but this is obviously still very worrying, and control efforts will need to be scaled up this year.

The Broads Authority (BA) Invasive Species Lead, Abigail Leach, was made aware of the situation at Stalham Dyke, and has been really quick to coordinate a BA response. The BA has informed us that:

- Publicity concerning the FP problem has started to go out to boatyards and businesses along the Ant.
- Metal 'Check-Clean-Dry' signs are going up along the moorings on the Ant.
- A sweep of the river will be carried out ASAP by BA operations teams, and FP manually removed where it is found.
- Rangers are to put buoys where they spot FP patches, to prevent boat users from motoring through them, until they can be removed.
- Notices will be put out for mariners to make them aware of the problem, ask them to avoid FP patches, and e-mail sightings to Broads Control or the Norfolk Non-Native Species Initiative (NNSI).
- Canal Users are asked to be vigilant, follow the Check-Clean-Dry rules, and report any sightings.

In the meantime, the advice from Paul Sims is that they are aiming to survey Barton Broad, and at least 1km up the Stalham Dyke and 3km downstream of the farthest known patch, which is now at the Ant/Stalham dyke confluence. Additionally, during May/June, 2-3km will be surveyed above and below Honing Lock, including all dykes, ditches and ordinary watercourses. At the moment, the combined monies from the NNSI, BA, and EA will finance this work. The EA is also looking into additional Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF) funding, which may be available for this financial year. It is likely to take several years to eradicate the pennywort from the current known extent, and greater efforts may well be needed if the plant has already spread further.

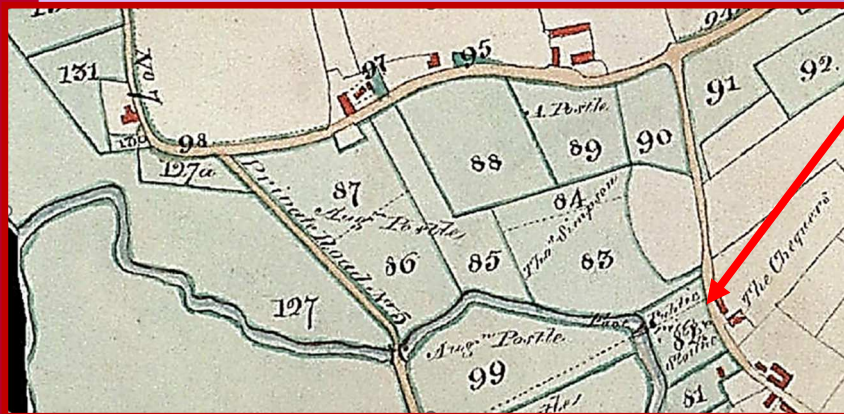
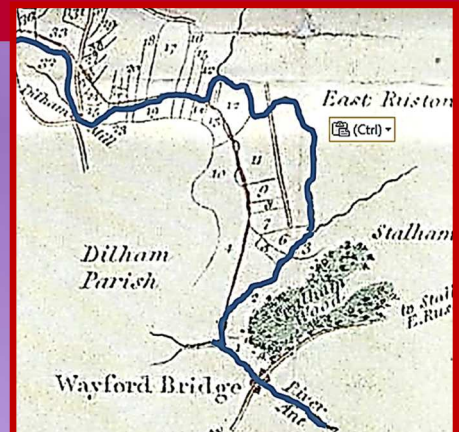
Suki Pryce



REMEMBER, ALWAYS CHECK - CLEAN - DRY.
CHECK YOUR RODS, BOATS, BOARD, PADDLES, AND KIT
FOR FRAGMENTS OR CREATURES THAT HAVE USED
YOUR KIT TO MAKE A NEW HOME.
CLEAN YOUR EQUIPMENT BY THE SIDE OF THE WATER
YOU'VE JUST BEEN USING IF YOU CAN.
DRY YOUR KIT THOROUGHLY BEFORE GOING ON AN-
OTHER WATERWAY.

Archive Slot— East Ruston Staithes

Prior to the building of the Canal, the River Ant had been navigable from Wayford Bridge to Dilham Mill, passing through the parish of East Ruston. The village's Inclosure Award for 1810, assigns one piece of land, No. 82, "containing by measure, three roods and thirty-four perches, bounded by the public road ... towards the north-east...by the river towards the south-west...and do hereby declare that the said last allotment hereby made to the said Thomas Cubitt is made to him and shall be held by the said Thomas Cubitt and the Lord or Lords Lady or Ladies of the said Manors of East Ruston, Burnells and East Ruston Vaux with Marshall, for the time being, for ever, for use and convenience of the owners & occupiers of lands and tene-ments in the said parish of East Ruston as and for a public staithe." (The words "Public Staithe" can just be spotted above and below "82" on the Enclosure map to the left). The same Award also allotted a small plot - 127a - to the Surveyors of the Highways, and the remainder of 127 to the Trustees of the Poor.



Millington's Canal plan of 1811, and the eventual building of the Canal in

1825, ignored the course of the river, cutting off the entire East Ruston Loop to the east (red line on map). This meant that a new staithe needed to be made to serve the area. This was done by deepening and straightening the original course of the Ant up to the junction with the Hundred Stream, allowing the waters from that stream to flow in the opposite

direction along the stretch of new dyke, thus feeding the Canal. As can be seen on the Tithe map, (left) a new T-shaped basin and staithe was built at the end of "the Cut" on part of plot 127 and 127a. The whole of the land between Chapel Road and the basin was laid out as a staithe, probably with a coal yard on part of it. White's Norfolk Directory, for 1864, re-



marks that there was a “small *wharf* for landing coals &c.”, and mentions a Robert Moyse. “coal dealer and wherry owner” The Tithe map also shows the Old River Ant at the Chequer’s Wharf, which is now just a stream.



The Gt. Yarmouth and Stalham Light Railway was extended to North Walsham under an Act of 1878. The extract from the deposited plans of 1877 (left, rotated 180° to aid comparison) shows the railway cutting through the middle of the staithe, with vehicular access to the Staithe via the Gatehouse crossing. This would suggest that the staithe was probably not that well used by this time, with either Honing (1882) or

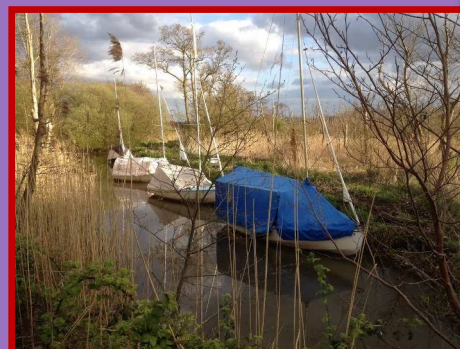
Stalham stations expected to offer a better service.

The railway ceased to be used in 1959, was subsequently sold to the NCC, and later became the Weaver’s Way Long Distance path.



Today, the original staithe at the Chequers is the village football/play area with a small stream running alongside. The remaining later basin was leased by the East Ruston Angling Club and much extended, leaving very little evidence of the former shape (the NCC map to the left shows the tithe map with modern overlay). To avoid the loss of fish to the Hundred Stream, the connection was also blocked, making the pond an isolated water. The pond is now an important miniature wildlife area - as its fences protect the birds and animals from predating otters and mink.

The East Ruston Branch continues to feed water from the Hundred Stream to the Canal, and hence to the Smallburgh River and Ant. These days, navigators - at the top of the Arm - find themselves on the Hundred Stream itself, and then being stopped at the old Railway bridge, especially since this length was dredged in the winter of 2013. Ownership of the arm cannot be clearly assigned - it was not included in the 1907 Sale particulars, so it is possibly owned by the East Ruston Poors, or by the riparian owners (Poors and Honing Estate). Responsibility for its care, though, lies in the capable hands of Norfolk Rivers IDB. The Cut can be a reasonable place for mooring for East Ruston, as shown by the Wayfarer’s Club picture, above, which used it as the venue for their 2016 trip.



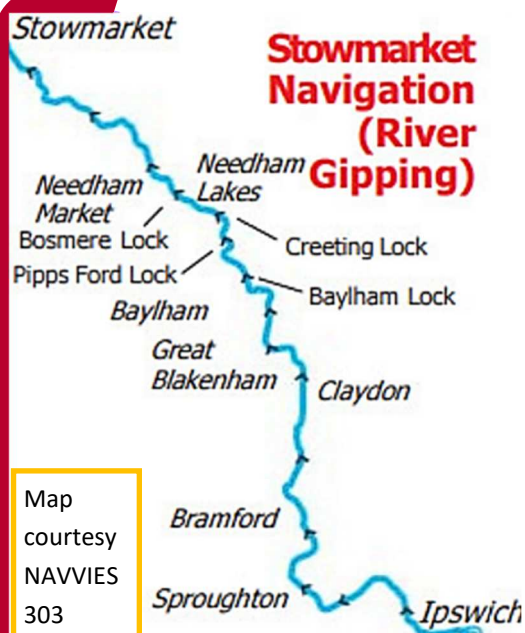
With Thanks to the East Ruston Angling Club for the later history of the site.

Bibliography

Woods, J.S.W. (1983) *A History of East Ruston Staithe* (Stalham: Capron & Helliwell Solicitors)

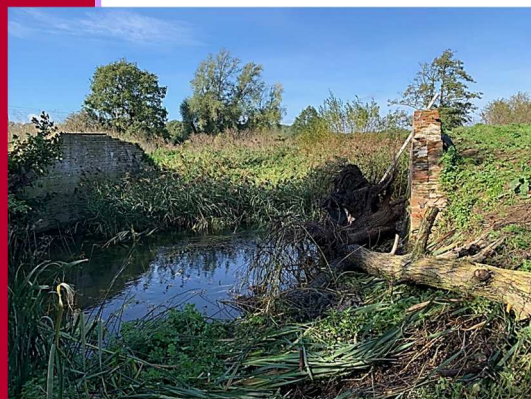
Website: Historical Maps of Norfolk (www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk)

Waters Elsewhere—River Gipping Trust



The Stowmarket Navigation (River Gipping), opened in 1793, was 16 miles long and had 15 locks, making a navigable link between the town and the Orwell at Ipswich. The main cargoes were manure, coal, gun cotton, corn and hops. A 30 - 40-ton lighter was able to complete the journey in eight hours. The enterprise was successful until the coming of the railways in 1846, at which point the navigation was leased to the Eastern Union Railway for 42 years. At the end of the lease, in 1888, the navigation was in such a poor state, that the railway company gave £2000 in compensation to the Trustees. By 1932, with no income, the company was wound up, navigation rights discontinued and the river bed passed back to the riparian owners. The water course is now looked after by the EA, whose main responsibility is flood control.

The Ipswich Branch of the IWA started restoration work in the 1970's, assisting with the establishment of the Gipping Way, a public footpath which mainly follows the towpath from Ipswich to Stowmarket. In 1994, work started on the restoration of the locks, with three chambers (Bosmere, Creting and Baylham) being completed to date. Other work has included the restoration of a bridge and weir at Pipp's Ford and the miller's sluices at Baylham. The Trust is now looking at the feasibility of restoring navigation along a three-mile, four-locked stretch from Needham Market to Baylham, which also requires work on Pipp's Ford lock.



The walks and the parks close to the navigation are popular areas used by the community, and the Trust is looking to eventually run a trip boat from Needham Lakes.



Between Pipp's Ford and Baylham, it has not been possible for the long-distance path to follow the original towpath, due to a missing bridge deck. This has made necessary the use of a track by the railway line for a lengthy, uninspiring diversion. The Gipping Trust (which has inherited responsibility

for the restoration from the IWA's defunct Ipswich Branch) are taking on the project of replacing the old bridge deck, using the original abutments, to utilise the route of the old towpath as a permissive path. The Trust has significant experience of bridge building, having designed, built and installed the Mathematical Bridge at Pipp's Ford in 2014. The Gipping Trust is now looking for £25,000 to fund the bridge and footpath works. It holds weekly (Wednesday) work parties, and more information can be found at <https://rivergippingtrust.org.uk/bridge-over-the-river-gipping>.



With Thanks to Spencer Greystong and Ian Petchey of the River Gipping Trust

Funding Round-up - Mark Shopland

The only grant sought, in this quarter, was from the Norfolk Recovery Fund for the purchase of materials for landing stages around the canal. The maximum grant was £10,000, and we applied for £8,218.

This was unsuccessful, because:

‘It was not a project benefitting the most vulnerable communities impacted by Covid-19’

Essentially, we were not providing ‘frontline’ services to those sectors of society hit hardest by the effects of COVID-19. Apparently, the NCF received requests for this fund totalling nearly £1m. It was a useful exercise, in that it indicated just how difficult securing monies is going to be over the next few years.

ICT Notes - Julie Kelleher

Website

The NWDCT website development is ongoing. Recently, we have added a *Work Party Archive*, going back to the EAWA Work Party’s reports from 2008, and many of these have brilliant photographs showing how the canal looked before restoration work was started. Our *Quagmire* newsletters from 2019 and earlier have their own archive. **2020 newsletters are not available on the website, because this is a benefit of your annual membership subscription.** We have added a *Shop* page and are looking to improve on this by also including an **Online** payment facility.

Social Media

Our Facebook page boasts 2,358 followers. The Facebook Group, meanwhile, has 980 member participants, where - on an almost daily basis - photographs of the canal, its wildlife and some accounts of rambling are uploaded. We also receive enquiries via this page, and, where possible, we aim to answer the questions promptly. Our Twitter account has 158 followers, and our Instagram has 136.

All of these accounts help to promote the good work of the Trust volunteers through the many images shared with trustees, officers, our volunteers, and the general public. Many comments really compliment the work being undertaken.

All links to our social media accounts can be found on the home page of our website - www.nwdct.org.

Our gratitude to everybody for their website and social media contributions.

Editor’s Note - *On January 17th, the Trust’s Facebook Group reached 1000 members - our thanks to the Group’s administrators and contributors for making this a lively, informative page.*

Press Date for the May 2021 edition of *Quagmire* is Wednesday 21st April.

Please keep those articles and photos coming in, to: qeditor@nwdct.org

From The Chair

Recreation and the North Walsham & Dilham Canal.

Members are aware of the widening recreational opportunities that, for the canal - even in its partially restored condition - have been generated. The latest and perhaps most unlikely use has been for "wild" swimmers, of whom I saw eight on one day last December. They seem unperturbed that it is seldom more than 4ft 6ins' deep at this section of Ebridge. Some were happy to swim without a wetsuit.

As they have got to know each other, there is something of a social event about the gathering. Of course, swimming in the canal during the summer is quite another thing, and many - mostly young people - cooled off in the canal after lying in the hot sun on the bank by the lock. It is a good place to shout, since there are no neighbours to object to an afternoon's jumping and diving, with a bit of water polo practice on the side.

Those who come in their greatest numbers are the walkers, often with dogs. I had a conversation with a man near the green penstock above Royston Bridge, who was exercising three straining Weimaraners. Many walkers begin at Ebridge, where the car park surface wears badly in the winter. A few come down from Swafield, where they park behind the butcher's shop, and those preferring the longer circular walk leave via the Paston Way next to the old railway embankment.

These walking facilities have added new countryside access on mostly level ground, and that is largely thanks to the willingness of the Old Canal Company's (OCC) directors to mandate permissive ways. Understandably, the public sometimes express reservations to the Trust about muddy and rutted paths, partly of their making.

Our fisheries officer, Tom Webster, sees more of the 'rods' than I do. Happily, my impression is that what remains a free activity during the season is much appreciated. Certainly, there are - above Ebridge Lock - plenty of opportunities to see wide skies and impending showers, watch the helicopters flying out to the North Sea, and hope for a bite. Some have asked for small fishing platforms. As with the construction of anything like that, it is for the OCC to decide. If the Trust were to erect them, they would have to be for public use, so as to meet criteria set by the Charity Commission, which governs the improvement of property not belonging to the Trust.

Tom Carr

Membership Matters - Andrea Lamyman

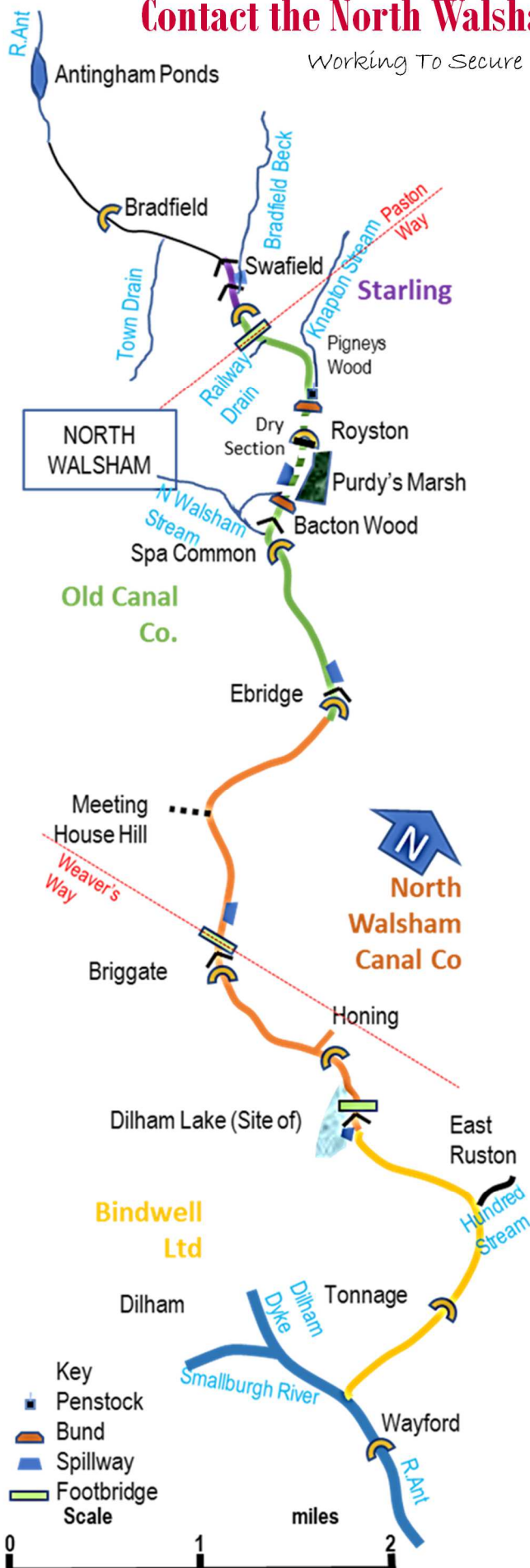
Despite the pandemic, we continue to receive a steady flow of new members. In December alone, we welcomed Philip and family from White Horse Common, Nicola, David and Trevor from Happisburgh, Tracey from Dilham, Stephen from North Walsham, and Graham from Birmingham! Welcome Aboard all new members!

Over the last few weeks, I have been working on migrating all membership data onto the new platform 'Membermojo', and am happy to report that we will shortly be able to go live.

The process of converting this data has highlighted the longest standing members among us. Whilst we regularly celebrate and welcome new members, I would now particularly like to recognise the long sustained support of members such as Crispin from Salisbury, Mike from Potter Heigham, Paul, Gill, Eric & Mary from North Walsham, David and Lucy from Stafford, and Roger G. from Horning, all of whom joined the Trust back in 2008. These men and women, along with other members of the 2008 cohort who have also been - or currently stand as - Trustees/Committee Members, have driven the restoration of the North Walsham & Dilham Canal for twelve years now, and we are grateful for their commitment and consistent generosity. Their leap of faith when the canal was - in many places - just a faint shadow of itself, has borne fruit, and I hope they are proud of what they have made possible.

Contact the North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust CIO

Working To Secure Norfolk's Canal Heritage



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Email the Trust's Officers:

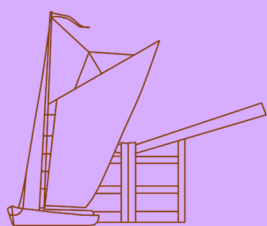
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A3

For copies of the Trust's Access Map of the Canal - showing access points, car parks, pubs etc on one side, and an O.S map with enlarged sections showing the locks, on the reverse, e-mail the editor - £1 + £1 p& p.

Spotted Fishing on the Canal

QUAGMIRE February 2021



Kingfisher by the Canal at Ebridge. January 2nd 2021 , David Cossey